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W.J. GAMBLE

Potlatch; b. 1884
manager of WI&M Railroad

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Side A

01  Shipping sheep east by train.
03  Weyerhaeuser interests come West. Agreement among the various owners on Weyerhaeuser management.
17  Management ran the town. He ran the school, calling in consultants to see that it worked properly. Company provided for all aspects of the people's lives.
23  Mr. Laird's concern for welfare of the employees. He was a strict disciplinarian. When Mr. Laird ran the schools, nearly all the teachers taught Sunday school. Laird took care of the finances and the town; Deary, of the logging. Bill Deary was a self-made man - his mistake building the Elk River mill. Men he hired didn't hear from him again unless their job went sour.

Side B

00 11 Deary was tough, and had the full confidence of the Weyerhaeusers. He'd go drinking with the men in Palouse.
06 13 Crude conditions in lumbercamps improved naturally through time. Japanese labor at Potlatch.
13 16 IWWs in the woods - their disturbances. The Potlatch militia, armed by the company, discouraged IWWs from getting into the town in World War I. The Four-Ls was organized by the company, and gave the men a welcome opportunity to get away from the IWW.
Operation of the WI&M. Examples of violations of ICC law in the first years of operation. Personnel positions on the railroad. "Longest log train in the world" was a promotion.

Shortline railroads.

North Idaho Forestry Association was a fact-finding body, set up to promote the best interests of lumbering. He represented them in the legislature, and their tax interests at the capital.

His opposition to a bill restricting sale of drugs. His lobbying for an emergency bill to spray tussock moths.

Reballasting the railroad. A bridge goes out because the fill gave way.

His attitudes as a supervisor of men. He liked to make his own men. He learned from them, too.

Early Potlatch social life and athletics kept people happy and busy. How he became manager of the railroad. (continued)

Becoming manager - experience in the east in many areas of railroad work qualified him for short line management.

Potlatch policies in the depression. Keeping the people busy with work and activities, and supplied with services. Government help to the town was quite limited. Selectivity of credit at the store. People eventually appreciated what Potlatch did.

Lumberjacks - one crew on the job, one coming and one going. Work for laboring men.
Company town was a good idea at first, because it was possible to have a good town right away. What's bad about a company town is that the people don't learn self-government; in Potlatch, they were lost after the town was sold. Potlatch was modelled after Pullman, Illinois.

Weyerhaeuser family and industry background.

with Sam Schrager
June 6, 1975
II. Transcript
W.J. GAMBLE: Anything that holds you up, why you're pretty serious. And on top of that, MacGregor, the man in the livestock company who we used to deal with, they had their men along with the train, and they planned on getting to the Chicago market on a certain day because of price fluctuations, you know. And that's the reason for a lot of that stuff on sheep, especially in the fall when they ship the lambs. So everything has to click, you know.

SAM SCHRAGE: About how often did they have to get off to be watered?

W. J. G: Every eighteen hours. Of course we, what we had to do would be load them to Bovill and we had to make Missoula, Montana. It was the only feeding spot. And when you were held up some place, why that's pretty bad. That's the reason we had to unload them at Palouse. We unloaded and fed them down there so the Northern Pacific could get 'em in to Missoula in eighteen hours.

SAM: I guess that to be in the railroad business you've got to be exact and on time...

W. J. G: Yeah, well there's a lot of things involved that's just part of the game. is all.

SAM: Well, I've got a lot (Break) that I have found except yourself who was so closely involved with the Potlatch management who is still around. And one question that I would like someone who is closer to the management to talk about is the background of Werthaeuser interests...
coming to Idaho from the Midwest. What's your understanding of
the process that was involved?

W. J. G: Oh, I think this'll answer that question.

SAM: The Debker article here.

W. J. G: Yes.

SAM: I know they came out a few years before you did.

W. J. G: That kind of goes into the cutting out of the timber in Wisconsin
and Minnesota. And all these stockholders had their money in that thing
back there and when the timber was cut out, Mr. Weyerhaeuser used to call
sugaring off. That's when they make their money. (Chuckles) Winding the
thing up. And so when they quit back there these stockholders had plenty
of money and they were looking for investments. And they sent their
cruisers out into Idaho here. And that was the way they got out
here. The Weyerhaeusers didn't own all this timber by any means. It was
owned by various groups of people, but the Weyerhaeusers manufactured it
for this group.

SAM: I see, I see. Well, was there an unmet demand at the time they came
out here? Was there becoming a shortage of timber in the Midwest to fill...?

W. J. G: Well, it was just opening up out here at that time. And a lot of
this stuff, they had no idea of the value of this timber out in this
country to start with until they got their cruisers out here and got to
lookin' around. Then they threw their money into the picture. For instance,
the Clearwater Timber Company, that timber was held down there for
twenty years, I guess, after it was bought before the Lewiston Mill
was started. They had bought it way long ahead. And the same,
over on the coast, on the west coast, Tacoma, that was, oh I guess
they're still by it. And this Idaho stuff was well at first they went into
Bonner's Ferry and Sandpoint. And that was their first operation.

In Couer d'Alene. They bought their first timber up there. That's what started them in Idaho because they got into this Idaho white pine which is a very valuable timber and very few stands of it anymore around the country. Part of Idaho is the only place it grows.

SAM: Do you know, was there much competition at the time in North Idaho to get a hold of the holdings?

W. J. G: No, these stockholders, they were pretty much all grouped together and they all threw their money into the pot. And they had certain timber companies that they invested in. But in the end Weyerhaeuser manufactured it for...Oh, Weyerhaeuser owned some timber themselves too; yes but never most of it.

SAM: These other interests, are they for example the Lairds and the Northors and those people or are they just...?

W. J. G: Yeah, Lairds and Northors and Thatchers. They all had retail lumber yards along the Mississippi River. (Chuckles). Lockmans and all. Directors meetings were quite a group. But there was never any descension among them. They trusted Weyerhaeuser and he was the man that cut the timber.

SAM: Do you know about when the first cruisers came into this part of Idaho looking at the timber?

W. J. G: No, I don't. I do not.

SAM: Was Deary among the first?

W. J. G: No, no there were cruisers out here before Deary. Bill Helmer and that fellah down on the Clearwater. Oh, what the heck was his name? I've forgotten now. But they were all early day pioneers out here. Bill Deary come out here to build sawmills, put the thing in operation. He was a lumberman, of course, but he came out after a large amount of the timber
had been bought. And he formed the St. Joe boom company and all that kind of stuff. Built Potlatch and Elk River and Couer d'Alene.

SAM: Was most of the timber bought from the state or bought from private individuals in this area? I don't mean exactly, but...

W. J. G: Well, a part of it was and a part of it was individual holdings. There's individuals that own timber, still own timber that they wouldn't sell. And that they lost their shirt of course because they couldn't get it logged. No, there was one other interest besides the Weyerhaeusers, which is a group of Pennsylvania lumbermen that opened up Spirit Lake.

SAM: Oh yes, you mentioned that to me when I was here before.

W. J. G: That was an entirely different group. They were lumbermen out of Pennsylvania that... Well, it was the same idea that they run out of timber back there and went out and they wanted to invest and so they brought their money west. And they were, shall we say, late comers. They come in late. And they didn't get near as much, but they got all that timber on Spirit Lake.

SAM: What do you know about the decision to build the railroad, the WI&M in the way that it was built as far as where it goes, the route that it takes?

W. J. G: Well, to start with, the lumber company set up their first mill in Palouse, you know. But they soon found out that they didn't have enough room down there for the size of the plant they wanted to build so they came up to Potlatch where land was cheap and they bought that whole site for townsit, and mill and storage and everything else. That's what established Potlatch. Well, there was no railroad at that time, the Northern Pacific had built into Palouse. And the lumber company wanted the Northern Pacific to build from Palouse up into the timber, in other words where the WI&M goes now. But they couldn't make them see the value
of a railroad into the timber. We couldn't induce them to build. They were invited to build their railroad. So Bill Deary, "To hell with you, we'll build our own." That's the kind of a fellah he was, y'know. So we built our own WI&M. We followed the drainage areas which is, I think that's the way most of the railroads are built. They followed the drainage areas, the valleys. That's where they got to put their railroad same as the highways. And we found out there was only one way to get to Potlatch of course was to follow the Palouse River up. And we followed that to Harvard. Then we had to get into this other ownership up toward Bovill, Elk River, so we had to go over the divide into the Potlatch drainage area. And we followed that area into Bovill. The intent was to build on into Montana. But about that time the Milwaukee started building west and the Milwaukee built from St. Louis down to Bovill. And then they induced them to build from Bovill down to Elk River. So that stopped the building of the WI&M any further than it was. But it was built and conceived as a lumber road . . . just the kind that it is. And we wanted different connections and we had connections at both ends—the Milwaukee at one end and the Great Northern and Northern Pacific at the other. We had to do that in order to get into the different territories and selling our lumber. We had our own sales company at that time, and of course during those days most of our lumber land and the building up of the west, that is the west as far as Dakotas and Montana is concerned, a great deal of our lumber went into that area. But as that got built up, why we started branching out and clear to the east coast. So we had to have good railroad connections in order to do that. And when we did, the railroad was a very good and prosperous railroad.
SAM: The length of time that it took to construct the railroad, do you know about how long?

W. J. G: How long it took from... I think they started in 1905. And in about two years, 1907, I think. The railroad started in 1907, and we had the railroad built as far as Harvard. And we was getting our timber out of the Harvard area. And we kept on building. We didn't build it; a railroad construction outfit built it for us. We paid 'em for it.

SAM: Who was this outfit?

W. J. G: I forgot the name of the outfit.

SAM: Well, the people that did the building, the crews, there were a lot of foreign workers among them, weren't there?

W. J. G: Well, these big construction crews, yes, sure. That's all we had out here. We'd get mostly Japanese to start with and Chinese. They were the laboring people in the early days in the west, y'know. Even in the mines and stuff like that, they were all Orientals.

SAM: I've heard of Italians also in the area, working out...

W. J. G: When I was in the sawmill operation the Swedish people followed west from Minnesota. They were sawmill people and woodspeople.

Most of these men that we got here, they were all Swedes, they had to be able to talk Swedish, y'know. And the same way with our sawmill men. The town of Potlatch was about half Swedes when I came there. They were from back in Minnesota, they followed the lumber industry out. And they were very good, reliable people too. That's one thing that Potlatch to start with was blessed with, good, honest, reliable, people. They took an interest in their work, but the company took an interest in them too. That's the reason we had a company town
for one reason. Mr. Weyerhaeuser me once, he says, "Gamble, I want a good school around here. Our children are entitled to a good education. That was in a company town. Of course, the reason he told me that, I was chairman of the school board. The foremen, different heads of different shifts had to take the place of, like city council, school rules, all that kind of stuff in a company town because the company run it, you know. And each one of us had our lot came to the school. And we did have one of the best grade and high schools in the state of Idaho. We made it the same as we done our sawmill.

SAM: How's that?

W. J. G: We run it, the teachers didn't run it.

SAM: What makes you say or know that it was of such good quality, the school?

W. J. G: Well, because we made it that way. And we paid higher money for good teachers than any of these other towns around or even Moscow. But we reserved the right to fire and hire teachers if they didn't fit the bill too. The teachers didn't tell us what to do as they are now.

SAM: Well, who made up your board, the school board besides yourself?

W. J. G: Well, I had two other men on. One was the cashier of the bank and the other was the land agent for the company. And we had to comply with the laws of Idaho of course. And we had a little election that nobody voted at. About twenty-three voted, elected these three men every year. And, now I am not a school man but I run the school. And the way I run it was this: I hired a superintendent to do as he was told, what kind of a school we wanted to run. And every year, well the Idaho Board of Education would send a group in from Boise to see if we qualified for Idaho schools. And besides that there was a group of instructors in Portland. I think they were the Northwest Educational Association. We hired them to send a group of
three men in every two years to check our curriculum and our teachers and see if they were getting good education. And on top of that every five years we sent to Iowa State and got that group to come out here. They spent a week with us, five men, looking over our schools. Now, that's how I run the school. I didn't know about this, but I hired men that could tell me what to do, and the company paid the bill. That's the reason we had a superior school. We built the schoolhouses ourselves, we furnished them ourselves. And the people paid no school taxes of any kind. And of course some of these other towns around here were a little bit jealous of us, but that didn't make any difference to us. We did that because of our men, and we wanted to keep them happy. And we did, we had good family relationships. And the school was one of them. The store was another. They could buy things at the company store cheaper than you could over here at Moscow. But as I look back on that now, all of that stuff, people gradually take all those things for granted. And they never miss it until they have to go someplace else to find out.

SAM: That sounds like human nature: The grass is always greener.

W. J. G: Yes, that's right, that's right. But it did hold our men. They were happy to live in Potlatch. They lived the way they wanted to. They had cheaper rents than they had anywhere else in the United States. Electric, telephone, everything else. We owned all that stuff. And we owned our own hospitals, even the churches.

SAM: So really the company pretty much provided for the social life and the educational life and all phases of life for the people.

W. J. G: That's right. That was all a part of the different outfits' duties, part of their duties on their job. I, afterwards, of course as you know, I got
out of the school business and got into politics and taxes of the lumber company. But then again that was a part of my job of running the railroad.

SAM: Was Mr. Laird very deeply involved in the town of Potlatch?

W. J. G: Oh, a hundred percent, yes, yes. Very, very strict disciplinarian. But he wanted everything done for the benefit of the employee. But he was very strict. For instance, nobody could sell liquor in Potlatch or anything like that. I don't say it wasn't brought in but (chuckles) ... No, and oh, he took an interest this way. This is just an illustration of how he was interested. To start with he was the head of the schools. Of course this thing grew so much that he had to get rid of some of those jobs, but to start with he was the head of the schools.

And he interviewed every teacher that was hired. The superintendent hired a teacher but they'd have to go up and see Mr. Laird. Pretty near every teacher that was hired was the Sunday school teacher too, that was a part of their job, extra job to keep the church going. We had three churches and a Catholic church and a Swede church and a church for everybody else. The company built them and heated them, furnished light and water for 'em but the people had to take care of the minister's salary and anything else they spent.

SAM: Well, what was Mr. Laird's title there in his ... ?

W. J. G: Mr. Laird was general manager.

SAM: He succeeded Bill Deary?

W. J. G: He succeeded Bill Deary. And when Bill Deary was here he was general manager and Laird was assistant general manager, yeah. And Laird was not a lumberman, he was a banker. But he knew enough to hire a good lumberman. Bill Deary was a logger and a lumberman. Laird was very successful in running the company. He had a very good reputation out among the other lumbermen and the other people he had to contact. I think if you go up
around Spokane and find the men that were instrumental in building
Coulee Dam and the Inland Railroad and all that kind of stuff, you'd
find that they'd say Mr. Laird was a very fine gentleman.

SAM: When Bill Deary and Mr. Laird were both there working together what was
the division of responsibility? Was Mr. Laird's responsibility the town and...

W. J. G: Well, Laird took up the financial end of it. Bill Deary didn't know a
thing about figures, didn't want to. And Laird, as I recall it, he had charge of
the sales department too. But not the manufacturing end of it or the logging
end of it. But we had our own bank and he had charge of that and he had charge
of the townsite, and he had charge of the taxes and the politics and everything
else. He took care of all that.

SAM: I take it too that he was probably rather well educated, Mr. Laird.

W. J. G: He was a little better educated than Bill Deary was, yes, yes. I don't
know the extent of his education, I don't know that.

SAM: Bill Deary, I always hear people talk about him they always say, "Boy, he was
a rough tough lumberjack."

W. J. G: Yes.

SAM: And I'm wondering what his character was like. Was he a very blunt man, very
direct? Was he short with people?

W. J. G: Oh yes, yes, yes, um hum. He was one of these self-made men. He had to
fight for a living when he was a kid, I imagine, because he was brought up
as a lumberjack in the woods of Minnesota and Wisconsin and on the river
and the sawmills. And he knew these things by firsthand knowledge. Planning
ahead—I doubt if he was very capable of anything of that kind. He knew what
kind of a sawmill he wanted to build and all that kind of stuff. He knew
what could make money and what couldn't. And he made one heck of a mistake
when he built Elk River.

SAM: Why was that a mistake?

W. J. G: Well, the logs could have been brought into Potlatch and cut into
lumber a lot cheaper than they could do it at Elk River. In the first place, Elk River is a snow belt and it was pretty tough operating up there, very expensive. Matter of fact, the days before and it was so wet and the snow lasted so long that they couldn't get their lumber dry in the yard, piled up in the yard to dry. All that was a complete flop, but...

SAM: Is that the reason that the mill lasted such a short time there?

W. J. G: Yes, yes, um hum.

SAM: It wasn't turning a profit to justify the expense of operating.

W. J. G: Oh yes, it was an expensive operation. It should never have been.

SAM: Well, did Bill Deary take advice from any people or did he make all the decision himself.

W. J. G: Himself, um hum, um hum. He'd give a man a job to do. That's the last you'd ever hear of Bill Deary unless the job went somewhere. Then you'd hear from him right now. But he didn't want anybody to come in and bother him about it or anything of that kind. And they didn't make money on that St. Joe boom company up there at Coeur d'Alene.

(End of Side A)

W. J. G: But it took that kind of a person to put the thing across to start with. I think you'll find the same type of man in the early days practically of mining in this country. That was the same kind of a man, these early day men that developed some of these mines.

SAM: You mean a pioneer or somebody who wouldn't let any obstacles stand in his way.

W. J. G: That's right. That's right, um hum.
SAM: What kind of confidence do you think that the Weyerhaeuser interests had in Deary? Was it a complete confidence? Did he make all these decisions?

W. J. G: Oh, yes, yes, you bet.

SAM: He wasn't expected to explain or represent why he was doing what he was doing very much?

W. J. G: No, they placed all the confidence in the world in Bill, especially in the timber area, logging. Um hum. And he was one of these fellahs that could fight at the drop of a hat. He was really pretty rough.

SAM: You wouldn't think of somebody in higher level management having to fight about anything anyway. I mean he's not gonna have somebody coming up and giving. ..

W. J. G: Well...

SAM: Or wasn't it like that? In the old days did that kind of thing happen it would more than today?

W. J. G: Well, kinda men he was dealing with. You had to know that he could take care of himself too.

SAM: Was he a big man physically?

W. J. G: Not tall but he was big, yes, yes. For instance Bill used to say oh in the early days somebody might come and they'd get on horses and ride to Palouse or something and go down to a dance and do a little drinking or one thing or another. They used to well, they used to run a passenger train from here to Palouse on a Sunday to bring a crew home from Saturday night. And well, Bill's idea was this: He says, "If you wanna drink, get the hell out of town. Don't do anything in town." (Chuckles). And that was his way of expressing himself in just so many words, and he meant it. Same way with Princeton up here. It was a pretty rough town at one time. And we had to keep our men out of there if we could.
And of course the railroad construction used to be pretty rough stuff all the way. (Break)

SAM: . . . see that the construction. . .

W. J. G: No, he hired a man who built sawmills. He told him what kind of a sawmill he wanted. And a man by the name of Horsecuddy built it. And he built two or three mills for the company, as a matter of fact. He built Coeur d'Alene and he built Everett. I don't think he was in on Longview, I don't believe so. But he was the sawmill construction man, and of course they was dealing with men of that kind. But he was a good man.

SAM: Did that mill go up fast when they started it to when they finished it?

W. J. G: Oh yes, yes, um hum. They knew what they wanted of course and all they had to do was put it together. Of course they owned this sawmill down at Palouse and they sawed all our timbers and everything for this mill down at Palouse. We used to ship logs down the river to Palouse.

SAM: Was it the largest sawmill in the. . .?

W. J. G: It was the largest white pine sawmill in the world at one time, yes. There were larger sawmills on the coast because the requirements over there for handling larger timber. But as far as white pine is concerned, it is the largest white pine sawmill, yep.

SAM: Well, talking about the character of the country as being pretty tough then. I heard that the conditions were pretty tough too in the camps when they first started.

W. J. G: Well, yes, only because they didn't know any better. But as we improved all things, in all lines of work, why we improved our camp conditions too. But I think to start with I would say that the camps of the Potlatch woods were about the same as they were in Wisconsin-Minnesota woods. Matter of fact they were patterned after them. And they were pretty rude. Yeah, that's right. But in the end they were pretty good. We had very good living conditions
in the woods when I left. That was just a case of natural improvement, y'know. Working conditions of all kinds have improved, y'know, over a period of years. That's all it amounted to.

SAM: The men that worked constructing, that came into the country, it seemed like so many of them just disappeared, no trace of 'em anymore. What's the story on them?

W. J. G: What kind of construction do you have reference to?

SAM: I'm thinking of the building of the railroad. . .

W. J. G: Well, naturally the trans-continental lines, they followed the line rails, one to the other. And as a matter of fact there were temporary camps all along the whole building of the road. And at W&I M here we had a camp at Potlatch to start with. The next one was at Harvard. The next one was at Yale; the next one was at Deary. We set those camps up for maybe six months duration or maybe something of that kind, y'know.

SAM: I wanted to try to talk to someone who was Italian who had been working in a camp. I found one old Greek who had stayed in Elk River, Dementus. I don't know if you knew John Dementus, but these foreigners, the eastern Europeans, certainly the Chinese or Japanese laborers are just terribly hard to find.

W. J. G: Well, when Potlatch mill first started we had a contractual agreement with the Japanese agency in Seattle to furnish us with labor. And we had a regular Jap town at Potlatch. It was kinda separate from the rest of the town. In other words we didn't want to get the people mixed up. And this fellah of course, he was a restless Jap. He'd bring a bunch of men in and he'd tell them what to do and that was that. If they didn't do what was right, why we'd send 'em back and oh, he was tough with 'em. And all the groceries had to be bought through him. And all that kind of stuff.
He had a monopoly on Jap labor. Of course we got rid of that as soon as we possibly could. It was replaced with Greek labor.

SAM: What did they do? What was the laboring work that they were supposed to do in Potlatch.

W. J. G: Common labor. Oh there was a lot of common labor around the sawmill, just a lot. All the narrow gage track work to keep up from yard to lumber yard, miles of it in there. And any of this common labor stuff. There common labor in the sawmills and in the fire hole and all that kind of stuff, just a lot. And the railroad or section crews, they were all Japanese and we dealt with that Jap for a while.

SAM: Do you about when that you...?

W. J. G: Once a month, payday the foreman would go into Spokane and go into Japtown, stay for three nights.

SAM: Were they Japanese, these women?

W. J. G: Um hum.

SAM: Would you know about when they went out and you got Greeks in to take their place?

W. J. G: Well, that was a gradual thing. The end of the Japs was of course during the war. We had to let'em all go. But they had been down to pretty near nothing before that. There were a few left. Oh, I had a Jap janitor at the store and there was Japanese gardeners. And oh, there was probably a dozen when the war broke out. But they all had to get out.

SAM: Did they mix very much with the townspeople when they were there?

W. J. G: No, no, no. Although the kids went to school and were all right.

SAM: Did most of them speak English, the adults?

W. J. G: The kids did. The parents didn't amount to... Oh we had one, the
Jap janitor at the store, there was some question about the fellah, and whether or not he might have been sent in here to. . . Of course everybody was under suspicion during the war. But this fellah in particular, I think he was planted here.

SAM: You mean was some kind of an agent?

W. J. G: Um hum.

SAM: Oh, that feeling ran pretty strong during the early days of World War I. We got quite a bit of feeling at one time, yeah, I suppose.

SAM: Was there a similar feeling about eastern Europeans at that time too, because it seemed like a lot of the, I've been told disappeared at World War I. They thought they went back to. . .

W. J. G: Germany, the Germans, yeah. The Germans and the Italians, um hum.

SAM: What was the management view of all the IWW agitation going on?

W. J. G: That was the start of unionism. That was the start of the unions coming into the woods. It started with the war. And this IWW was a fringe organization that was mostly to see how much commotion they could cause. I think it was part of the war deal to start with. But they got into the woods and they were pretty strong at one time. And we had quite a bit of trouble with 'em, yes. They developed into a labor organization and of course they didn't last very long as such because they were too radical.

SAM: When you say part of the war deal, are you thinking of, meaning that they were part of the opposition to World War I or fighting in the war?

W. J. G: Um hum, um hum.

SAM: What did they do mostly? I've heard a lot of different things about what they may have done or didn't do. Did they disrupt? Did they. . .?
W. J. G: They were mostly located in the woods, in the woods operation.

And oh they'd drive nails in logs and stuff like that, y'know.

And you couldn't find 'em, and first thing you know you rip the teeth off a saw. And things of that kind. They were destructive, no question about it.

SAM: Did they ever strike the camps in the woods around here?

W. J. G: Well, not exactly a strike, but they were infiltrated in there. We had to send some of our own men in to combat it. Mostly talk, and just little things that I say, drive nails in logs. They induce somebody to think that he was being mistreated, y'know. And anything to get members.

SAM: Did they have much influence in Potlatch as compared to what they had in the woods?

W. J. G: No, no they didn't. No, we had an organization in Potlatch, they were armed, pretty near National Guard.

SAM: What did that group do?

W. J. G: We organized that in the face of it to train men who were going to be drafted into the army. And we had an ex-West Pointer, he got kicked out of the army but he was a good drill master. And we had quite a company there. Oh, I belonged to it. And we'd drill every so many nights a week. But to start with it was started out to these young fellows that were susceptible to the draft. And by the way, most of those fellows that were drafted were taken into the regular army as corporals. They'd had that much military training. And they were real proud of that.

SAM: Did you have standing as a National Guard unit or...?

W. J. G: No, we'd our own guns, the company bought 'em and we belonged to
the National Rifle Association.

SAM: Do you think that that...

W. J. G: That did have its influence on keepin the IWW's out of Potlatch. It did, definitely.

SAM: And a fair number of the members of the group were sawmill workers.

W. J. G: Oh, yes, yes, yes, just the citizens of Potlatch.

SAM: When did the Four L begin?

W. J. G: That was the first real labor organization that developed. That was to combat the IWW to start with. There was a man that was connected with all the lumber companies. He organized that thing over at Seattle. And that was to combat the IWW. And of course it developed into a labor organization. And I don't think it's in existence now because it was conceived and organized by the lumber companies, yeah.

SAM: Did it get...

W. J. G: It was a very popular organization too, it give the men a chance to belong to something so that an organizer couldn't come in and call him a scab. And it served its purpose.

SAM: Did that become the labor union of the mill in Potlatch at the time?

W. J. G: Yep, yeah, uh huh. And of course, see I think we had a strike, Four L strike. And that kind of fizzled but, then that was about the end of the Four L's. And then the national organizations came in after that.

SAM: That was the strike in Potlatch. I know Hap Moody told me about some early strike when he was deputy.

W. J. G: Hap was sheriff and he over and deputized, I was a deputy sheriff, we were all deputized.

SAM: Was that part of the Four L strike do you think?

W. J. G: Yeah.
SAM: When Mr. Laird became the general manager, is that about when T. P. Jones became part of the company operation?

W. J. G: No, Jones came out here with Deary, yeah.

SAM: So he'd been around.

W. J. G: He came out with Deary from back around Chippewa Falls or some place where he was...Yeah.

SAM: Since Laird didn't know so much about the woods operation did more of that fall on Jones' shoulders?

W. J. G: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, he was woods superintendent. Yeah, he was in charge of the woods there was no question about that, yeah.

SAM: Well, as far as the way decisions were made on the operation of the railroad, how did the chain of command work? I assume that as general manager of the railroad you were at the top and had the final say on the basic decisions of the railroad.

W. J. G: Well, the railroad was an entirely separate corporation from the lumber company. There was no connection between 'em at all. Well, there was a connection in that the lumber company paid for the building of it and took stock and bonds for their expenditure because they owned the stock and bonds of the railroad company, the lumber company did. But we had to operate under the rules of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the same as any other railroad. And of course that was one of the things that they finally had to find out. And the hard way was to get somebody to do somethin' about a railroad. To start with the first year of the operation of the railroad they...Oh, there was a bunch of lumbermen, some of the people left over from the construction crew and it was kind of a haphazard thing. But they soon found that they had to...
SAM: You told me before that some guy got thrown in jail for not knowing what ought to have been done. What were the kind of violations that you could get into if you didn't know the way to do things? I'll cite.

W. J. G: Well, a one illustration: In the first place we built our stations and we built grain warehouses at each station, and we run these grain warehouses. Well, we soon found that we should get out of the warehouse business. So we leased the warehouses to a man by the name of Mark P. Miller here in Moscow. He run a flour mill here. And he run the grain warehouses. Well, we didn't pay much attention to Mark until one day an Interstate Commerce man come in and says, "You're indicted and Mark Miller's indicted. Well, Mark was shippin' stuff out of Deary and misreporting it and he had stuff in the car that he shouldn't have and didn't declare; and was gettin' it shipped over to Moscow at a cheap rate. Well, of course we didn't know anything about it because carload shipment we never inspect. And so we got over that one all right, but Mark P. Miller got... And then we had a superintendent to start with. He wanted to go farmin' and he bought a farm up around Harvard. And built a house and barns and everything else and the Interstate Commerce inspector come in there one day and says, "What you gonna do about this? The old man's shippin' stuff up there free." So he was canned. (Chuckles).

And those were the things...

SAM: Conflict of interest.

W. J. G: Um hum. Of course I think perhaps in the early days, the first couple of years there was a lot of that stuff done. It's our railroad we can do what we wants with it. But they soon found out they couldn't do that with the railroad.

SAM: Well, what was the personnel structure of the WI&M when you were the
the general manager? What was the chain of command within the railroad?

W. J. G: Well, I had a master mechanic who took care of the mechanical work.
I had a dispatcher who took care of the operation of the train. And
I had a road master who looked after the maintenance of the railroad
and the telephone company. And we owned the telephone company in
Potlatch, the railroad owned that and also owned a line from
Bovill over to Palouse. So I had to have a combination man who knew
something about telephones.

SAM: What about the various depot agents? Were they directly under you or
was there someone else in charge of them?

W. J. G: Well, the auditor took care of the depot agents. They came under the
supervision of the auditor. And we had an auditor, I'd forgotten about
him. Necessary evil. (Chuckles). No, I shouldn't have said that.

SAM: Well, you've gotta have physical management.

W. J. G: So I had my work pretty well distributed and all I had to do after
I got it organized was supervise it. I'd had a lot of experience before
I came here, of course.

SAM: We went into that last time. And you know the size of the trains is something
I was wondering about. I saw one picture labeled "Longest Log Train in the
World." What was the story on that particular train?

W. J. G: Oh, they just made that up for somethin' to talk about.

SAM: That wasn't a usual train.

W. J. G: No, no. And there was a lot of that stuff shouldn't have been done
of course. When I was operating our trains would consist of about
sixty cars. That was my opinion a good operation. So you talk about
hundred cars—that was just a build-up.

SAM: Promotion.

W. J. G: Um hum.

(End of Side B)
W. J. G: We had one of the better types of short line railroads. There was somethin like over three hundred and fifty short line railroads in the country. Most of em were connection with some big industry, y'know, like this connection with the lumber company. And others were connections with the steel companies and oil companies and what have you. And just a lot of em, three hundred and fifty of em, they have quite an organization, American Short Line Railroad Association. Had a president in Washington, had a Washington office. I was vice president of the organization for some little time, and it's quite an institution. One short line railroad don't have very much to say when you're talkin to these big lines. But three hundred and fifty of em with papas and mamas like lumber companies and steel companies have quite a bit to say from a political standpoint. And it was a very good organization, well founded and not radical. And well, we had to help our less fortunate short lines. Once in a while we had to send a man here and there to get em straightened out about something, y'know and things of that kind, 'cause a lot of them didn't seem to know what to do and how to operate. Matter of fact I had a letter from a fellah back in Wisconsin the other day. The Libbey Owens Glass Company, one of the biggest outfits in the United States owns a short line railroad back there. This fellah sent me a little folder that they got out and about their railroad. It's very interesting.

SAM: You talked to me a little about being in the legislature representing the, what was it? The North Idaho Lumber...?

W. J. G: North Idaho Forestry Association. I worked for them.

SAM: One thing that you asked about that happened before then was the creation of the forestry law for the state of Idaho, the writing of that law.

W. J. G: Well, there was no connection between those things.

SAM: Yeah, that's right. I was wondering about...
W. J. G: This North Idaho Forestry Association was set up as kind of a fact finding organization for all the lumber companies of North Idaho. And they would meet every so often and express their opinions about maybe legislation or taxation or things of that kind. It had nothing to do with operation of lumber companies. But the nice thing about it as far as politics and taxes were concerned, there was no dissent. When I would go to Boise I was talkin' for all of 'em and nobody would be tellin' me, well, I don't believe in this, and some, I believe in somethin' else. They were all in accord; it was easy to work for a plan of that kind. So they ironed out their difficulties in their office before it was handed to me.

SAM: Well, while you were representin' them what was the general nature of the interests that, the kinds of legislation that they would favor or the kind that they would be opposed to?

W. J. G: Well, on the taxes, lumber taxes and sawmill taxes are pretty terrific. And we'd meet three times a year. I had to go to Boise at least three times a year to meet with the Assessors Association, if you please. The Assessors Association, they had a lot to say about how some of this stuff should be taxed, and met with them. I went down in August to the Tax Board of Equalization meeting at which time you can express yourself as to what your taxes are or should be and to compare them with something else and all that kind of thing. So there was a lot in the tax interest and as far as legislation was concerned, I was down there, I had two lawyers with me—well, one all the time, the other only part time. One was a labor lawyer, but he was only there part time. The other was a general consul, Coeur d'Alene. He kept me advised on
the legality of things. And my job was to see that no adverse legislation was put through that would harm the lumber interest.

And once in a while we had something we wanted to promote too. And no, it's a form of lobbying all right, there's no question about that. Although I never asked a legislator to vote or not to vote for anything that I had thought of. You can't control legislation that way. I set up offices down there and more of the information bureau than anything else. And it takes a while to gain their confidence but once you do that they come to you and ask you how a bill will affect the lumber companies. And most of the legislators don't want to do anything that will affect industry in the state, you know. And if they trust somebody they'll come to them for their information because they don't have time to get it themselves. They don't have time to read all these bills that are put through.

SAM: So you had to keep abreast of the legislation.

W. J. G: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

SAM: You probably had to research it yourself in some cases.

W. J. G: Um hum. So on the whole we had a pretty good set-up. At least I was never criticized. (Chuckles). But the fellah that followed me took my place when I quit, he got half-way through the session and they called him before the state senate and told him to get the hell out of town. (Chuckles). Well, the poor kid, he was just overpowered with his authority, you know. Went to his head.

SAM: Were there interests in the state that ran in conflict with the lumber company interests as far as let's say promoting the legislation that you...?

W. J. G: Well, yes there were. There were the, oh you take the mines and the railroads and the telephone companies, power companies. We all have certain
things in common like say, safety rules and woman's compensation and all these social security things. They all affect all of us the same way. So we had what was called the self-insurers, that's the, we owned our own hospitals and our doctors and stuff like that. And the state law says that we have to protect our men. So we formed the self-insurers because our interests were, and we worked through that organization for legislation along that line. No, we didn't work at anything that would be competitive with somebody else or anything like that, no we just.

SAM: Could you give me an example of the kind of legislation that you had to oppose because it would have hurt the lumbering industry in the state?

W. J. G: Yeah, sure. This comes to mind and this is a kind of a funny one too. I was opposing a bill that the drug people had introduced into the Idaho legislature, oh like the selling of aspirin in drugstores and stuff like that, y'know. And all those minor things, they wanted to be a little more strict, couldn't sell them in drugstores or grocery stores. And they had quite a bill and I started out fighting it. And I got a call one night, about after midnight some night at my door. "Gamble?" "Yes." "Well, I'm so-and-so from Seattle." And I said, "I don't know you." Well, he says, "I represent the drug company. I'd like to talk to you." So I got up and let him in. He says, "What in the hell is the lumber companies opposing our drug bill for?" Well, I says, "I'll tell you. You know, we run camps out in the woods, maybe two hundred and fifty men in a camp. And we have to keep a certain supply of different things in that camp: heavy clothing, and tobacco and among other things, aspirin and drugs of certain kinds that we dare handle. Cough drops and things of that kind, we have to have that in our supplies at these camps. Your bill would prohibit that." And he says, "Who in the hell would have ever thought of that?" And that's an illustration of one thing.
Another is a different angle. A good many years ago we had an infestation of tussock moth. We've got another one now in the woods. And it was something new in this country and it got away from us, and we lost a lot of timber. It died overnight. So a man from the federal government here and he says, "We've got sprays. We have a spray that will kill that. And they got the airplanes and they sprayed the whole damn woods or everybody's going to lose their trees: national government, the state government, the lumber companies, individuals—everybody. It's got to be done and done fast." All right, we got the lumber companies to agree and we got the state to agree and the federal government to agree. That had to go through Washington, and all takes time. And we had to rush a bill through the legislature authorizing the state of Idaho to come in on some basis and spray those trees. And we had to put a bill up that way. That is the only bill that I actually came out flat footed and asked legislators to vote for. And I had a meeting of the legislators and I had the biologist from Coeur d'Alene come down there and give them a talk. I fed 'em. Give 'em what they wanted. I made a party out of it. And that had to be done that way and done fast. Now that was one of things that we were for and we handled in that way. It was rather a crude way but you couldn't handle everything that way.

SAM: Do you remember about when that was?

W. J. G: I forget what year that was, really do. They come out the other day in the paper, they supposed to have sprayed last fall and it said then when the other... I don't remember, I don't know what year that was.

That's been quite a while ago.

SAM: Well, that was just a vital piece of...

W. J. G: That's been thirty years ago.
SAM: You had to have that piece of legislation.

W. J. G: Oh yes, yeah. That's something we were for and we come out flat footed on it.

SAM: Was there ever any environmentalist, environmental group opposition in the early days to, not like there is now to any kind of development?


SAM: I was wondering about the maintenance of the railroad and about the kinds of adversities that you had to put up with. One that strikes me that must have caused problems sometimes were the mudslides and the track washing out and the...

W. J. G: Well, that's just keeping up the railroad, that's all. (Chuckles). Bridges have to be rebuilt and sure, I reballasted the whole railroad while I was there.

SAM: Reballasted?

W. J. G: Yes. Yeah, I brought in a contractor from Spokane and crushed rock for a year. And give the track a lift of so many inches and put new ballast under it. When it was built they tried to— which was all right, I guess— get their rock for ballast as close as possible. Well, the closest they got was darn poor rock. It was silica rock and didn't hold up at all. The first thing you know we was having trouble; we didn't have enough ballast under our rails if we wanted to operate fast and heavy trains. So we had to reballast. So I reballasted the whole thing and rebuilt all the bridges, twenty-one of them. That has to be done every, everything is built of wood; it only lasts so long. And it was just part of the whole, that's all.

SAM: When you reballasted where did the rock come from that time?

W. J. G: Right this side of Bovill. We got a basalt rock up there. This stuff they got here now up at Yale that's—oh, gets it wet and pounding it into the ties that disintegrate. And the first thing you got is just
kind of a soupy-like stuff. Same way with a big fill that we had. Well, I went down into Falouse one day and a section foreman called me up and said, "No trains today." "Why?" "Fill bridge number so-and-so slid out." Well, what had happened before I was in charge we had a roadmaster, he was a civil engineer too. And he decided that some of the bridges could be filled cheaper than renewed. And he talked the boss into it, and he filled em. There again his fill material as close as he could get it, y'know, and make it cheap. And he come into this silica again. Gee, it was slippery as can be when it's wet. Well, you notice in some of the concrete in Moscow here. (Chuckles). And this was a bridge that was eighty feet high and five hundred feet long. He filled it, and what had happened he had left the piling in the trestle and he filled it with dirt, and he put ballast on top of it, and he had a filled bridge. Fine, it looked good. Had a concrete culvert under it. Over the years as the snow fell and the rains came down to get in the top of this thing in the ballast, y'know, the ballast had let it through, let the water through. And this darn floor would hold that water like a pail, if you please, got clay. And it got to the point where it became saturated clear down to the base and the top weight was too heavy for it, what happened? Just went out like that. The whole damn works. Well, what to do, ye gods. Had the sawmill keep going and the woods department keep going so we put in a steam shovel and some dump cars and started filling with rock. It took us two weeks to do it, but we did it and the mill kept going. We didn't have to shut it down because we had enough logs. But those were some of the things that happened.

SAM: That sounds like a real crisis situation to me.

W. J. G: Oh it was, it was. It was something that hadn't happened around this
country before, and we had a lot of railroad men from other railroads come in and take a look at the thing to see what was happening. And it was quite a problem and they was taking it home to their own railroads because they had done the same thing. But it won't slip now, I know that.

SAM: (Chuckles). What was your attitude as the general manager toward the people that worked for you? What you expected from them and...

W. J. G: I never asked a man to anything I couldn't do myself, I wouldn't do myself. I resolved I'd never criticise a man in front of other men. I had a crew of men that most of em never worked for anybody else in their life. Talked to a man out here at a funeral the other day. "Gamble," he says, "we look back to the time we worked for you we're glad of it." I know how to treat men and what to expect of em. And I treat em fair. I never had any trouble. I like to make my own men.

SAM: What do you mean by that?

W. J. G: Well, I've taken kids that couldn't work for anybody else and made damn good railroad men out of em.

SAM: How does that work? Do you give em responsibility or...

W. J. G: No, I treat em right. Yes, I give them responsibility as they're capable of accepting it, sure. But I'm not a person to go out and go downtown and see signs in the window. I want an experienced clerk. Most of the time you have to re-train them the way you want things done, even with college students.

SAM: Doesn't surprise me.

W. J. G: (Chuckles).

SAM: What you learn in books isn't somethin you can take with you and apply a lot of the time.

W. J. G: Yeah, yeah.

SAM: But did you expect your men like Bill Deary not to come to you and take care of themselves?
W. J. G: If they wanted advice, yes, sure, sure, um hum. I think

the big thing in being a supervisor of men is to do the job yourself.

Men recognize that in a supervisor. If you don't know your job, why

some of the men on the job will be the first ones to find it out. And I

never hesitated about taking advice from the men regardless of how lowly

he was on the echelon, no. I learned something everyday from somebody, you bet.

SAM: Do you remember what Potlatch was like when you first came there, what it looked like to you, what the activity was like, what the feel of the place was? You told me before when we talked that you didn't expect to stay there very long, but I'm wondering what your impressions of the town were in 1910?

W. J. G: Well, it was pretty new then. There wasn't very much entertainment.

There were no automobiles and no good roads. We had to make our own entertainment, and we did. In the summertime we had four baseball teams in Potlatch. They were good ones too. People took an interest in it.

We conducted dances. We had an amusement hall. Oh, we had people come in and speak once in a while, like oh, political talks, had Bill Bowah in a lot of times. And the hall would be crowded, come up to hear Bill talk, politics or otherwise. And it was a big dance hall to accommodate a lot of people. And we divided the town up into departments, oh say, like the railroad and the store and the sawmill and the lumberyard and the planing mill. (Chuckles). And each one of em was responsible for a dance once a week. Every Saturday night we had a dance, big dance. And each group would have to be responsible for decorating the hall and furnishing and getting the music and all that kind of stuff. Those were the things we had to do ourselves in order to keep the people entertained, and it was very successful.

That developed through baseball or anything an activity of
athletics. We had an old livery barn there.

We quit ridin horses and we turned that into a gymnasium. We hired an instructor, if you please. We had a little basketball team there and we had gymnastics and boxing and all that kind of stuff. Then finally the company built this great big gymnasium, one of the finest in the country, and we had an instructor there. Well, we held the Idaho State Tennis Championship there one year and had tennis courts. There were an awful lot of athletic activities. We had inside gymnastics, indoor baseball, all that kind of stuff. And we did that to keep the people happy and busy. And I think they were happy. I don't know if they would be now or not. Of course there’s a big change in those things. Wasn’t very many automobiles in 1910. (Chuckles).

SAM: Did Potlatch have a pretty stable feeling to it as a town when you first came there or did it seem like there was a lot of turnover of people coming and going?

W. J. G: When I first came there, I come down there to play baseball and then afterwards got mixed up with the railroad, if anybody had told me I was going to stay there as long as I did I’d a told em they was crazy. But the longer I stayed there the better I liked it, the more I got involved with the people and the company the better I liked it, and it just developed into a good place to be.

SAM: How did it happen that you became general manager?

W. J. G: Well, that’s easy. I come down there to do a certain job, they come up to Spokane to get me and one thing lead to another. I had had a lot of railroad experience, they knew that and a lot of people as I...

(End of Side C)
W. J. G.: ...and the evaluation of the WM&W was another thing. The Interstate Commerce Commission came out and revalued all the railroads in the United States. And they had a crew of men they sent out and the railroad was supposed to furnish a certain number of men too, and it took about six months to evaluate our railroad with all the details they wanted. And I got in on that, and finally I took the superintendent's job. And from then on up I got to planning different things and so they gave me the whole works. If it hadn't been me, it'd of been somebody else because they had to have somebody.

SAM: Well, you stayed a long enough time to make me convinced that you must have been the man for that job.

W. J. G.: Well, you see when I was in the East I had had so many different kinds of jobs in railroading and for no particular reason I'd get tired of one place and go to another. And I'd had experience in the steel mills, and I had experience in Baltimore Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, and I had been on the Pennsylvania Railroad as a brakeman and a fireman, and on the New York Central in station work and telegraph operating and all that kind of stuff, so I had pretty wide experience. I was an operator and maintenance man both. That's the kind of a man you have to have on a short line railroad for this reason: on a big railroad you'll find your heads have developed through certain channels. He might have been a traffic man or he might have been a mechanical man, but once they're in that line they usually stay in that groove. Whereas a short line railroad has to have one person had a lot of these experiences because they can't hire a head for everything. And I was kind of lucky in a way that my work fit into what they needed here.
SAM: There's one more thing I'd like to ask you about and that is along the lines of the changing market and going with the economy and some of the ups and downs that the economy has had. How did Potlatch react to what happened there in the Depression? What happened in the town...?

W. J. G: In the Depression?

SAM: Yeah, the 19... 

W. J. G: In '32?

SAM: Yes.

W. J. G: Well, we shut down for three years. (Chuckles). And there was no place for the men to go; there was no work. They couldn't go anywhere else to go to work. And it was a company town and the company realized that they had to do something to take care of these men. And the idea was to keep them busy at something so that they didn't get off on the wrong foot on a lot of stuff. We had jobs there that we'd do mechanically that we'd ask the men to do by hand because it'd take them longer to do it and paid at a certain rate. And as far as their actual needs were concerned, through our work, we plowed up acres of land so that they could raise their own vegetables and stuff for the winter and all that kind of stuff. And they did. We gave every man a quarter of an acre of land and plowed it for him and harrowed it and give them the seed. And all they had to do was raise the stuff and they did. And for homes we forgot the rent and the electric light bill and stuff of that kind. After the Depression was over if they wanted to pick it up and pay it, all right. There was a few of em that did, a little self pride, y'know. Most of em didn't. That's all right, that was company. And that was part of my job to see that nobody got hurt. Oh, anybody's sick or anything like that, the doctor'd take care of em. We had our own hospital. And if they couldn't pay it, why the doctor
wrote it off. The store—we extended credit to some people who
were—we knew most of our people there. And they had pretty big bills
at the end of three years, but most of em were all paid off. And to
heat our homes, well that was easy. We brought down a trainload of
logs and dumped em off and gave our men, not every man a certain number
of saws and axes and they come down and made their own wood. We all
burnt wood in our stoves in those days, y'know. And they made their
own wood. Any widow or somebody that was sick, why we made them, cut wood
for them too. It served two things: it kept them busy and we
farmed
the wood, and we
formed
had
the
women
classes. A group of women came to me one
day and says, "Gamble, you've got to quit robbin me of all our clothes
we don't have anything to wear ourselves.
(Chuckles). In other words we was pickin up old clothes
and re-workin em. But we helped ourselves and it was a good thing for
Potlatch. We come out of it in good shape and the men had kept their
self-respect and their self-pride, no charity as such.

SAM: So the Potlatch.

W. J. G: Well, the company had to do that because it was a company town, y'know.
And we had to do something of that kind. We couldn't throw these men
out to the wolves. And they realized that, it made men.

SAM: You know a lot of these towns in the rural county that depended on the
WPA for their managing to get through. That didn't happen in Potlatch
very much, the WPA.

W. J. G: No, no, no. I did get from the government flour. We was puttin out
flour, we didn't have any flour, but I did get flour from the government, yes. And
they got material that women could make dresses and things like that.
And of course that was the start of the milk program for the kids in school,
We made every kid drink a pint of milk a day. But I was glad to have been in on all that stuff. You make a few enemies. Mostly not, you always had to tell somebody no.

SAM: Did the company try to be selective about who it would give credit to in the store?

W. J. G: Yes, they did. They had to to a certain extent because some of them would have gone haywire, you know. Anything like drugs, anything of that kind, that was never refused.

SAM: Did most of the men who were in Potlatch stay through the Depression?

W. J. G: Um hum, um hum.

SAM: Do you think they appreciated what the company did?

W. J. G: Yes, yeah. At first, no, because they'd hear in the paper about all this stuff on the outside, WPA, and all this kind of stuff, somethin for nothing and they had to work for their's. They didn't appreciate that until it was pretty near over with. And one fellah says to me, he says, "I come out of here and can look anybody in the eye and tell em to go to hell."

SAM: Could Potlatch have gone after WPA if they wanted to?

W. J. G: I don't think so, I don't think so. Oh we might have on the highway district, yes, we might have on the highway district. As a matter of fact we did have a little highway district work. But there again it was difficult to get men out very far, y'know, they needed transportation. We had a little highway work, that's right, yeah.

SAM: And for three solid years you really didn't operate in any manner.

W. J. G: Only about two and half, two and a half, yeah. Everything was down, absolutely down. Well, it was ro th, I'll tell you. No jobs anywhere, nobody
was workin. That was the second one I was through. I was through one
in 1908 too, just as bad. That's when you were still in Pennsylvania.

WJ.G: Um hum. Oh I had work. I always had odd jobs when I wanted one. But I
was not particular either.

SAM: Was there anything the company could do for all the men in the woods?
What happened to all . . .

W. J. G: No, well the lumberjack in those days we usually had three crews:
one on the job, one comin, and one goin. That was the lumberjack, he
was a traveler. That's right, yeah, yeah. Had it not been for that
I don't know what we would have done in the woods. We were doing nothing
in the woods at all. Bovill was having a hard time, a lot of
lumberjacks around Bovill. No, the lumberjack in the early days was
usually a single man.

SAM: I've never been able to understand although guys who work in the woods
have told me about the way the lumberjacks used to work and stay in
camps, get their stake, blow in and not have anything left afterwards
and have to . . .

W. J. G: Christmas and Fourth of July.

SAM: I just still can't figure why the men, everybody, almost all of them did
that and couldn't save any money.

W. J. G: Well, that's the way it was done. They kind of followed a precedent,
I guess, that was set before. I can look back on the time when my
father who lived in Pennsylvania, he worked in a sawmill in the summertime,
sawmill shut down in the winter. And in the winter he'd go into the
woods and work in the woods all winter. In the spring he'd help drive
the logs down the river and about that time the sawmill was started.
That was the regular rotation that they followed. That was not,
I suppose it was density of population to a certain extent that caused
those things. There was not the amount of labor available that we have
now all in line of work that I know of. I know that this big outfit in Philadelphia, Baltimore Locomotive Works, hired 3500 men. And I know we never had a surplus of men, always a shortage of men. I'd go down to the boat and hire a couple men as they come over from Austria, yeah.

SAM: Maybe it was as the country was being built up there just was so much more work to be done.

W. J. G: The whole thing was all different all right. The economy of the country and everything was entirely different. About the only thing a young person would do in a case of that kind if he couldn't get a job he'd join the army and stay in for a year and then come out.

SAM: If you look back on it is there any one time in Potlatch as stands out as being really the best time in the town or the most active, the most going on, the best time?

W. J. G: Well, of course the best time was when the mill was working two shifts everyday in the week. Sure, when everybody was busy that was when times were good.

SAM: Was that before the Depression?

W. J. G: Yes, yeah, before and after both, um hum. But before the Depression we had years of pretty good times. Work that anybody wanted to do, yes. And everything had a fair price, not big prices, no big prices of anything. No big price of labor, no big price of material. So we're just where we are now, everything's up, don't mean a thing.

SAM: Don't mean a thing because everything is up, is that what you mean?

W. J. G: Yeah, we're no better off than we were then.

SAM: Do you think that the company town was worth it to Potlatch...

W. J. G: To start with, yes, yeah, um hum. They would not have had as near as good
a town if it had been an open town to start with, no question about that. Every house had water in it; every house had electricity; every house had a telephone in it, and all that kind of stuff. We had good schools; we had good churches. And that would have had a hard time growing up naturally. And the families were just a lot better off under those conditions than they would have been if it had been an open town, um hum. I can see where a company town is not a good thing. Men grow up and children grow up in a town like that and have no responsibility to government of any kind. They had to accept everything as is. Now when this town over here was changed to an open town they were lost for a long time and maybe still are to a certain extent. They didn't know how to run their schools, they didn't know how to police their town, they didn't know how to keep up the town. And their sewers and their water and their police protection, the whole damn thing, and they had a pretty rough period there for a while. Just because people didn't have to do those things, y'know, they didn't know how to do it. I think that the time comes when the town should be made an open town but I think it should come gradually. I didn't believe in it the way it was done over there, but it had to be done some way. There was a couple other towns in the United States the same way. The town of Pullman, Illinois. Pullman Car Company was a company town. By the way, Potlatch was kind of patterned after that. We have a town down here at Shasta, right this side of Shasta, it was a company town, a sawmill town. It was a terrible comparison. Run down houses and oh, the company didn't pay any attention at all. And I can see where a company town can be a big disadvantage if the company were inclined to take advantage of things. It might be the store that would be higher prices. Ours was lower prices. The conditions under which people lived, if they didn't pay any attention to that
could serreate to a big extent. We even papered the insides of people's houses over there for em when they wanted it done and painted the inside of their houses for them, on the outside too as far as that goes.

SAM: Well, where did this kind of benevolent policy come from? Was this the Weyerhaeuser's idea?

W. J. G: That was the principle of the Weyerhaeuser's, that's right, that was their principle, um hum. When I went down to Boise as a representative, Mr. Weyerhaeuser came to me, he says, "Gamble, I can't tell you anything what to do or what not to do down at Boise. All I can say is this, "Whatever is good for the state of Idaho is good for the Potlatch Lumber Company."

And I think that spells the attitude of the Weyerhaeusers.

SAM: Whic Mr. Weyerhaeuser was this?

W. J. G: Rudolph, yep. Yeah, they were a great bunch of people. Well, when the original Weyerhaeusers came over here they were just common German people, y'know, that had a fling for mechanics and operated sawmills. And all the boys were brought up the same way. Believe me, they didn't spend money foolishly. Nor did they pile it up for the fun of piling it up.

SAM: Did the Weyerhaeusers maintain close contact with the Potlatch and the lumber company here? Were they out here much? Did they have much to do with the mill site?

W. J. G: Well, sure, they always had their directors' meeting at Potlatch. All the directors always come into Potlatch. Well, see to start with, the old man Weyerhaeuser gave a sawmill to each one of his boys. Well, Charles Weyerhaeuser was supposed to run the Potlatch mill, and Rudolph Weyerhaeuser the Coeur d'Alene mill and John Weyerhaeuser, the Tacoma mill, and Phil Weyerhaeuser the Lewiston mill, and that was the way it was.
But the one at Potlatch, he was on a trip to Europe and died. He didn't last very long at Potlatch so Rudolph took over. And they as a family, their whole family is built around this sawmill thing, every one of their family, even the girls. It's kind of a tradition with them in a way. I don't know what would happen if one of em would go haywire like some families do. I don't know what position the family would take. It'd be a calamity, I know that.

SAM: When you say haywire, what do you mean? If they got out of the business?

W. J. G: Well, you've seen a lot of these people that their father had a lot of money and done a lot of business and so forth and didn't do em very much good, um hum. But

SAM: But what you're saying is that they knew the business and they knew what they were getting.

W. J. G: Um hum, um hum, um hum. The whole family, the second and third generations have been just the same all down the line.

Transcribed and typed by Kathy Elanton