

1 Bonner History Roundtable: Working at the Mill

Jan. 25, 2009: St. Ann Catholic Church in Bonner

https://youtu.be/ebJZrs1jgmU?si=uZo7Q5k4_qFYtdC1

Glenn Smith, Art Bailey, Rudi Miller and Cal Bonnet

(This program has been edited for clarity.)

(Intro music and credits)

[00:1:23] **Minie Smith:** Hello. Welcome everybody. My name is Minie Smith and I want to welcome you to the Bonner History Roundtable, which are occasional gatherings of people in Bonner, Milltown and the communities to gather the history of the area and try and keep it from disappearing. I'm sure many of you have been to some of the other ones that Kim Briggeman organized on the streetcar and the baseball and various other topics.

Today we're going to talk about the mill and it's wonderful to see so many people here who I'm sure have endless stories that can help us preserve some of that history. So we're going to talk about the mill in terms of the various departments, and we probably won't.... we may, I'm sure we'll have more information than we have time for today, but we're going to have a second meeting in February on the 25th. The last Sunday in February. So, Judy, I wonder if you could say a few words about the people who've helped put this together.

[00:02:27] **Judy Matson:** Yes. As you know if you've been coming, Paul Layton was one of the instigators of the roundtable. And it's a very informal group. We have no officers; we have no budget; we have no rules; we just do what we want to do. And so then when we want to do a program like this, we're thinking, "how are we going to put it together?" And we have some very generous donors. And I'm going to try to... Minie warned me of this and then I forgot to bring my list up here with me. But we had many people who have donated materials and money so that we can bring this together and hopefully have another session next month.

And I'm going to try to remember these off the top of my head. Bonner School, the Friends of Two Rivers. The Missoula Community Access Television is here filming this so that we will have a permanent record and it will also be shown on tv. And we'll try to let you know when those times will be when we find them out. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality sent some information, the Missoula Rural Fire District as well. And then just many people who care so much about this community and about this subject have all been so generous. So thank you very much.

Minie Smith: Thanks Judy. And, of course, thank the church for hosting us here. Oh. And now Jim Willis is going to introduce the speakers and explain how they're... the sort of organization.

[00:04:34] **Jimmie Willis:** First we're going to have Cal Bonnet. He's going to be speaking about the old lam plant, the box factory, house plant, and the sawmill. And Rudi Miller, he worked in the planer as a grader. And then we'll have Art Bailey and he worked for Timberlands and also out in the log yard. And then Glenn Smith's going to finish it off and he'll talk about growing up in Bonner and the mill and all the jobs he had. We'll ask Cal to start out.

[00:05:11] **Cal Bonnet:** Okay. I guess to start with, I started, worked for the Anaconda Company. Excuse me. I started to work for the Anaconda Company in September of 1960, right after I got out of the Army. And my first assignment was in the box factory, which in later years it became the warehouse.

My first job was piling two-by-fours that were being made through a machine that was called a finger joiner. The machine would make two-by-four eight foot boards from short pieces of material that was salvaged from two-by-fours that had no commercial value. And so they would cut 'em up and we'd pass 'em through this machine. They could be anywhere from 10 inches long to several feet in length.

[00:06:00] The pieces would pass through cutters that would put finger joints on the end of each piece. And then they would proceed on and after they had the tongue-and-groove cut on the end of each piece, they would proceed onto another machine that would put glue in them joints. And once the glue was in the joints, then they would run through another set of rolls that would force 'em together. So the joints would be [a] real tight bond in the joints. And from that point they'd go on to cutoff saw to cut 'em to the proper length cuz it was just one continuous board all the time.

And they'd go to cutoff saw to get 'em to the proper length and then they would pass through an oven and they had to be baked because this was a fast process and that glue had to have time to cure, otherwise boards would just fall

apart 'cuz the glue couldn't hold it. So they went through the oven and they were baked and then they'd come out of there and I was got stacking it. My salary when I started was a dollar 97 cents an hour.

[00:07:18] The whole purpose of the box factory was to salvage products that could be made from low grade material that had a little value. Products that were made included several types and size of ammunition boxes for the military, an assortment of different boxes for fruits and vegetables, lath fence pickets, survey stakes, hub stakes for the state highway department. We also made wooden ladders for the Butte copper mines and made fir and larch wooden blocks that were about three inches by 12 inches by 24 inches long with an inch and a quarter hole drilled in the center for a rock bolt. The miners in Butte would drill a hole into the ceiling of a tunnel and install a rock bolt, and then put this wooden block on the bolt and put a washer and nut on it and screw it to the ceiling and that would prevent cave-ins and rocks falling outta ceilings in the mines. So we made them and people wouldn't get hurt that way.

[00:08:00] We also made cable reels for the facility in Black Eagle, Anaconda's facility in Black Eagle, and that was a wire making facility, and so we made the reels for them to roll that wire on.

Making cable reels was quite a process. The reels were up to four feet in diameter when finished. Making them involved positioning a layer of boards in one direction, a layer of boards this way, and then you'd have to put another layer of boards 90 degrees to that. These layers were then hand nailed all the way around, except for the center 16 inches. The nails were long enough to penetrate both layers of board and protrude out the bottom side, about a quarter to three-eighths of an inch. Once nailed up, the pieces were drilled with a hole in the center and hand carried to a set of rollers that the piece would have to pass through, and as a piece passed through, these rolls would bend over them nails so there was no sharp nails sticking out the other side.

[00:09:05] They would then be hand carried to a band saw, and the band saw had a little center piece on it. It was a proper diameter from the saw. And they, in that center hole, we drilled in that before we put it into rollers, we'd put it on that center plug and rotated in the band saw and that's how we'd cut the circle out.

And then from there it would go over to a router table and have just a regular router and it would cut a groove around that center inches where we didn't put that any nails. And it cut a groove around there. And that's where they put the staves in the, you see the center of the cable reels, how they are folded together. And this was the middle portion of the reels.

The nails were a special nail. They were a 16-penny with a duck bill point. And just like the name implies, it was shaped like the bill of a duck and annealed to make them soft so they would bend over easily. And annealing caused a problem with nails being easily bent when being driven with a hammer because they were so soft. When making cable reels was our assignment, it would get pretty boring driving nails all day long, so we'd have a contest, so who could drive a 16-penny nail with two strokes with the hammer?

[00:10:31] In order to accomplish this, a person would have a better chance of driving the nail in two strokes if you could hit the nail with your first blow about half a third to halfway in. Needless to say, our fingers were pretty bruised because not all the time you were hitting all these nails. (laughter)

The planers and the molding machines were located right beside the box factory on the north side of the warehouse, where the old box factory was and which later years became the warehouse. This is the area where we would pick up low grade lumber and take it into the box factory for processing into the products that I mentioned. We would load the lumber by hand on the carts and take 'em upstairs by elevator to the cut up area. During this period the large building was starting to be constructed to house the new planer lines that were installed to replace the old planers north of the box factory. The new planers and supporting equipment was state-of- the art for that time period.

[00:11:38] Once the old planers were removed, that location was used to install equipment to process lumber into molding stock of a multitude of different sizes. Also, a new hammer hog was installed and waste material was processed into fuel for the boilers to produce steam.

After new planers were up and running for a period of time, it was decided a new lumber processing plant was needed due to the decreased need for wood products from the Butte mines. On the west side of the old planer, a new precision edger was installed along with chop saws, scrap conveyors, and sorting tables.

Most of the products that were made were door jamb material, window-making material, and molding stock. We still produced some survey stakes, hubs stakes, and lath. The Butte underground mines production was slowing down due to the increase in production from the Berkeley pit. As time went by, there was less and less need for mine

ladders and rock bolts that we supplied. So finally, the old box factory was just come to the end of its life and it was dismantled and that was the end of the box factory.

[00:12:47] So as it happened, the maintenance and machine set up person that worked in the beam laminating plant was going to leave for other opportunities. I was able to replace that person. By taking that job, I learned firsthand how beams were made and how machines had to be maintained to make a quality laminated beam. I also started maintaining all power hand tools, sharpening band saws, and maintaining the beam planer and scarfing machine and how to use welding and cutting machines.

In the scarfing machine, I don't know often you see laminated beams, that was the machine that would put the slant on the end of the board, so they'd fit 'em together when they'd make the beams.

In addition to making beams, complete houses were being made along with roof panels and floor panels and pre-fabricated houses also. You could buy a pre-fabricated house, or if you wanted a complete like a trailer house made right there on the spot, we made 'em. I was in the beam plant, house plant department until Anaconda was sold out to US Plywood, and that was in the spring of '72.

[00:14:03] We were all laid off for after the sale, and I went to work for a welding and spring making company in Missoula. I worked for them all summer. I installed the stairways and all the railings outside of each room for the Edgewater Motel. I never liked that job, but I had a family to support, so I stuck with it.

That summer, US Plywood purchased all of Anaconda Timberlands in the Bonner sawmill complex with the plan to start the sawmill complex back up sometime after Labor Day. I received a call from one of the persons that took over the machine shop and asked if I would consider going into the sawmill as the lead millwright. The pay was a dollar and 25 cents an hour less than what I was making at the time. Like I said, I never liked that job, so didn't take me long to decide, "Heck yeah, I'll take that job." So began my association with the sawmill. Our first assignment was to repair whatever was necessary to get the operation up and running.

[00:15:01] One of my first jobs was to get the debarker ready to go. This was the first time I was around or even saw this type of machinery. The debarker operated on water pressure, and I see there's a picture of a debarker here, but this one here wasn't the same one that I, ... must have been at a later date as a different one was put in. The pressurized water came out of nozzles that were on oscillating arms on each side of the conveyor.

And these arms... The log would pass through and these arms was sitting here like this and just oscillating up and down, just taking the bark right off of them logs. If you stopped the log under there and left it there long enough, it would just eventually cut the log in half. There was so much pressure on that water.

So then the log after it came through the conveyor it'd pass, go on past, come out of the debarker, and then it would pass the saw that was about 10 feet in diameter. When the log would get past the saw to the proper length, the clamps would come up and clamp under the log, stop it moving on the conveyor. The saw would be activated and would cut the log off. The clamps holding the log were released. Then kickers would kick the log off the conveyor into the hot pond to remove bark. [The bark] would travel in a conveyor to a hog that would pulverized the bark in the small pieces. The small bark was then traveled to another conveyor to a bark press where the water in the bark was squeezed out of it. When this operation was complete, the processed bark would then be transferred to what was referred to as a serpentine belt. This belt would transfer the bark to the boilers where it was burned to create steam and operate various machines in the sawmill. This system was used until the new log presser was completed west of the plywood plant.

[00:16:55] Now to return to the logs that were debarked. After the log was kicked off the debarker conveyor and into the hot pond, it would be maneuvered to the conveyor that was referred to as the bull chain. Logs were floated on this conveyor and would be conveyed into the sawmill for processing. The conveyor went from below pond level and would rise about 20 feet or so to the sawmill level. Once the log was maneuvered to the bull chain, the log was transported up into the sawmill building. When the log would enter the sawmill, the operator would determine to which carriage the log should go for processing.

Later we installed an electronic scanner [that] determined the length of the log diameter, log volume, and board feet using the Scribner scale. Scribner scale was the log measure procedure used to determine the amount of board feet in the log. This new type of electronics was our first introduction to the computer era.

We had three carriages. The west side carriage, also referred to as the longside. It could handle the longest and largest diameter logs. The middle carriage could handle most logs except if they were too long or too large in diameter. And the eastside carriage, referred to as a short side, would process the shorter and smaller logs.

The logs were powered by steam cylinders connected to the carriages. The steam cylinders were referred to as "shotguns." The steam cylinders were about 10 to 12 inches in diameter and 30 or 40 feet long. And I've got some pictures of some barrels off of them shotguns back there when we repaired 'em one time. So you get an idea what I'm talking about, what they looked like.

[00:18:32] The carriages were the main processing machines. The carriages were used to set the log to the thickness that the sawyer wanted and transported through the band saw to make the desired cut.

When the log was loaded onto the carriage, the sawyer would position the log on the carriage to achieve the best opening face for that log. To position the log where he wanted it, he had a steam-operated log turner that was used to roll the log and push the log against the blocks of the carriage. The first pass would open the log with a thin cut and create a slab. The slab would pass down a conveyor and was transferred to a set of floor chains that would eventually move the slabs to a chipper. The next pass would take a cut the thickness of the board. The piece would be proper thickness, but the edges would be rounded from the curvature of the log.

These pieces would be conveyed to an edger. The edger would cut the width of the board into whatever width could be made. Four-inch, six-inch, eight-inch, 10-inch or 12-inch. On the next pass, the sawyer would turn the log onto carriage about 90 degrees or 180, depending, and start the process all over again. The sawyer would keep cutting on the log until it was down to the size degree to pass through the gang saws. This squared up center piece was referred to as a "cant." The cant size would be in multiples of two inches. Cant size could be anywhere from four inches, four-by-four inches up to 12-by-30 inches in width and up to 20 feet long.

[00:20:09] The gang saw had a multitude of saws in it and would oscillate up and down just like a hand saw only it was powered, and it had a multitude of saws each one two-inches apart. And so they'd feed this cant into that thing and it would sit there and just make pieces out of them. And if you put a cant in there, say it was 12 inches by 18 inches, the saws would cut the cant into nine two-by-12 boards. And so nine boards would come off the backside of it. The gang saw was later replaced, with a set of twin bandsaws that was used to cut the cant into desired thickness.

The boards coming out of the edgers and the gang saw would proceed to a transfer table and be transported to trim saws. The function of the trim saw was to cut the boards to length. It would produce a quality board. Once the boards passed through the trim saw, they went on a long transfer chain called the "green chain." The boards were stored and stacked according to wood species, thickness, width, length, and grade.

[00:21:13] The green chain was replaced with a 50 bin sorter, which was a computerized green chain. From the green chain the boards went into a stacker, which was a machine that would put down a layer of boards about nine feet wide. They had a couple arms on it to go under. It'd pick up a layer of boards and it would transport 'em out to the stack, and it would dump the boards. The arms would pull back and there was a stop. They'd pull the boards off and they'd lay there on that stack.

Then there was stickers that came out, and they would put three or four stickers on the length of that load. And the purpose of the stickers was that they had to leave the airspace in between each layer because as the boards would pass through the dry kiln, they would need the airflow through there so they could get the boards dry to the proper moisture content, which I'm sure Rudi will probably mention what that was, what was required.

Then from there they went, they were put on kiln buggies, dry kiln buggies, which were nothing more than carts that run on small railroad type tracks. When the carts were full they were transferred into the dry kiln. They were left in the kilns until the lumber was dried to the required moisture content.

[00:22:26] The heat source for the dry kilns was steam heat that was generated by the boilers. The boilers burned the bark and sawmill sawdust to produce steam. Steam was used to operate log kickers, log loaders, log turners, and our shotguns. Also, they used steam to supply the heat to the Bonner houses for a long period of time. The lumber exiting the dry kilns was stored in the outfit side of the kilns. This was the cool down area where the stacks of lumber would cool down to ambient temperature.

Prior to constructing the new planer building and the new planer lines, the stacks of lumbers would go to a lumber unstacker. The stickers were recaptured to be recycled again at the stacker. The lumber was transferred to a dry chain and re-stacked onto bunks. Bunks were somewhat like a pallet. They were fabricated for straddle buggies and

the straddle buggy, once you had a load, he'd come over and straddle, load, pick it up. You'd haul that load back around over to the planers, and then from there, planers would process it.

After exiting the planer, the planed lumber would be either stored outside under covers to keep the lumber dry or stored in what we called standup sheds to keep the boards from warpin' or go to shipping where it was hand stacked in the railroad box cars, depending on what the order required for shipping.

[00:23:58] The lumber was placed in the box cars with two man crews that would stack the lumber in the box cars. Some lumber was also loaded on trucks with a forklift. Once the new planers were up and running, the old dry chain was no longer needed and removed. The process of unstacking and recapturing stickers remained basically the same, but instead of going to the dry chain, the lumber was transferred to the chain that took the lumber directly to the planer.

There were two of these transfer chains, one for each planer. Lumber was put in box cars with a forklift, and lumber was transferred inside the building with overhead cranes. This system of processing lumber remained until the sawmill was shut down to build a new mill, new stud mill and planting mill. The sawmill and planer was shut down in 1988.

The reason the sawmill was shut down was at the old carriage system was becoming inefficient in handling the logs as they were getting smaller. The new plywood plant that was constructed was using in the larger and higher quality logs to make plywood. That left the sawmill with a smaller and lower quality log.

There were plenty of small logs that required a different type of processing. The criteria for the new mill was to utilize state-of-the-art computers to control scanning optimization, volume, recovery, and minimize manpower to operate the new mill and to utilize the smaller logs that are available. The machinery that was selected was a Nicholson debarker, Kockums Cancar double-end dogger and Kockums Cancar band saws, horizontal band saws, Sherman edger, Ukiah edger, and the chipper and hog that was required for the supporting equipment.

And that's where I ended it. I didn't go into after the sawmill remodel that was up until 1990 when we started back up. (applause)

[00:25:55] **Jimmie Willis:** Cal, could [you show on the] map here where the sawmill was?

Cal Bonnet: Sure.

Jimmie Willis: And the purpose of this [is] for TV so... people in Missoula won't know.

Cal Bonnet: (demonstrating on map) Here's the big building. The big building beside the highway. And so you go north up river. And right in here is the sawmill. We had the sawmill sitting here. Powerhouse sitting here. The boiler sitting here is where the boilers were at. The warehouse is sitting here and then here is when I told you when they would come out onto the green chain, this is where the old green chain used to run is right here. And eventually they put that new sorter in. He went in right here. And then this was the green storage area and the stacker area. The dry kiln and the whole works from on there.

Jimmie Willis: Thank you. Okay. Rudi, would you like to...

[00:27:03] **Rudi Miller:** I'm Rudi Miller and I started in 1962, the 22nd of January. It's something how I got the job. Couldn't find anything in Missoula and they had on the radio that they were looking for lumber workers out at the Anaconda Mill at Bonner. It was about 20 below in Missoula.

So I went to the employment office and they gave me a little yellow card and "take this out there." I took it out there and I thought, I gotta be crazy. I couldn't hardly take the cold getting from my car down there. When I got down there, why Mr. Riley was there and he said, "Yes, I'll hire you." not too many questions.

He said, "do you want to work in the on the green chain or do you wanna work in the planer?" I figured I'd been around planers and they had doors on 'em and they weren't that cold. So I said, "I'll take the planer." So I got the job and started in, and it was 20 below in Missoula and it was 30 below out here the day I started. I thought this is just..., so they put me to tying lumber. The coldest job you could have. They split a one-by-four in half. Then you had to tie it all back together again, and in about every 30 minutes you ran in, try to warm your hands up on a steam pipe. So that went on for probably three weeks, and it slowly started warming up.

Then I kept thinking if I could just get a job that was more physical, I could stay a lot warmer. By that time it was spring. So eventually, I started stacking lumber and I kept looking at these graders. That looked like a heck of an easier job. Turn it over, put a mark on it, let it go by.

[00:28:38] So when an opening came about 15 months later, I went into grading 'cuz they had then built the new building there and they needed a lot of graders. So I graded over there for the rest of my career. That was a good place to grade. It had a nice table. They had a lot of lights and they had heat in there.

So we went from there to... then they sold out and that was really panic in '72. And, but I lucked out when I got called back. Why? I had a seniority date of a number 60 instead of 600. So I was able to work a lot of overtime and everything, but what I did there, I graded lumber and that was... After [it] come through the sawmill, like Cal says, it was dried and then it came to us and we had to decide what grade to put on it or to cut off two feet or four feet and get a better grade.

Then that would go into stackers and they put it in nice packs and sent off to shipping. Although it sounds like a monotonous job, it really wasn't 'cuz each board had its own character. Then US Plywood, they didn't wanna grade any of this lumber outside, they ran it through the planers.

So then that really put a thing, we took three graders in the line. You had a stick in your hand and you had to figure out the recovery value of each piece about as fast as I'm saying it, mark it, and they'd go on down the line. So that went along like that for years. It was a good job.

And then, Stimson Lumber came along and all we had then was just studs. It was grading 60 studs a minute, which I thought was pretty fast. And eventually that went up to 80 studs a minute, and I finally retired from that. But it was a good job. I raised my family there and part of my grandkids and it ... I guess that's all I got to say on that. Thank you. (applause).

[00:30:52] **Art Bailey:** Well, I'm Art Bailey. Started there in '64. And I've gotta apologize a little bit for being here today unprepared. I really didn't know what the subject was gonna be today. And so I came unprepared and I'm gonna shoot from the hip a little bit, which not all that bad because Clint Eastwood did that for years and got by with it. (laughter)

Also, I'm honored to be here today and offended at the same time. It's good to see a lot of the faces that I know and be back again with family. And it's always an honor if you can work with this group out here. They're always been a very wonderful group.

I'm a little bit offended by it. We're talking about history today and, of course, that throws me in with the old timers and I don't know if I can accept that. So I gotta bring something in that maybe really doesn't fit in this picture, but I want to. I come into this plant at a very unique timeframe. And that I was hired on when the majority of the old timers and the people that really knew the mill were about to retire or moving on.

And those people took me under their wing and carried me through those times and taught me the trade, taught me their trades. And, of course, a lot of stories went on, storytelling. But they were a wonderful, wonderful hardworking people that you just couldn't help but to love. And I cherish those thoughts as I will until I die.

[00:32:34] They were wonderful people. And I know a lot of you here had grandfathers that worked there. I did. As a matter of fact, both my grandfathers worked there and I'm sure a lot of you do too. So it was a really a unique time and I really cherished that. A lot of the old timers ... I started out in logging industry.

At that time, Timberlands had their own logging industry. And we used to sit around in the wintertime and build a little campfire and sit on blocks of wood and, of course, reminisce. And the old timers always had stories to tell. And I come to find out in a hurry that lumbermen and loggers really weren't that much different in that this guy would tell you that he caught a fish yesterday that weighed a pound, and this guy caught one that weighed two pounds.

And the lumbermen were the same way. The stories got stretched. But it was a good time. I started out in 1964 in logging, Timberlands and Timberlands at that time, Anaconda had their own logging crews and which consisted of a crew boss, shovel operators, a loading operator, crane operator to load the logs onto the trucks. The truck drivers, of course, skidder operators, choker setters, sawyers. I hope I haven't left anybody out, but that was kind of a good time for me. I learned a lot and a lot of wonderful people to work with. I didn't last long in the woods. I was... at that time we were doing a lot of the log sorting on landings, so to speak, and landings took a lot of room and a lot of space and damaged a lot of the ground area.

[00:34:28] So in order to get away from that, they, the plant decided that they would do most of their sorting on the plant site rather than to do it in the woods and get away from these big landings. And I was transferred down to the log yard area. And in the log yard area, we started sorting by species and by size for the demands of the mills, whatever they were operating and really what was selling on the market that at that time.

That's how I got started in the mill. We did do several jobs other than that out, and I guess I forgot foresters that were also working in there, and also some of the tree planting, and that's ...Tree planting, I want to touch on that just a little bit. That's a misconception in the world today. We did a lot of tree planting, but that's really not what we really needed. What we really needed to do was more thinning. When you leave the seed trees in the woods that we did, the trees would come up a lot thicker than you would expect, and you really needed to be concentrating more on thinning than planting. We did, however, plant some of the more harsh environments on the south slopes, mainly where there was less water.

So I came into the mill and sorted logs. And at that time, of course, we were using the pond area to feed the mills. And actually we fed both mills as Cal said, and came through the water debarkers, through the pond, through the water debarkers, and done some sorting in that area as the larger logs would go into the sawmill area and the smaller logs would be sorted out to go into the studmill area.

[00:36:30] I spent many, many hours on that pond. The cleanup on that was almost inevitable. Every weekend you were gonna be cleaning the pond. It was from the leftover bark that the chains didn't pick up, would eventually end up in the pond, and you'd have to continuously clean that out. That fuel was then dried out and used for hog fuel to burn into the boilers later. Later on, the plywood plant, of course, came in. And, of course, that has to be one of the biggest things that happened to the mill in my time and probably in everybody's time, was the plywood plant.

I left out a part here. I've gotta go back to these crew bosses in the woods. Crew bosses, that's a four letter word. You don't call'em bosses, although we did. And later on, that became a supervisor job. Now you were a supervisor. That came with a big title, but no more pay and no less responsibility. But that changed over time. You very seldom hear of, in any of the industries, bosses. You don't have bosses anymore. I have one at home, (laughter) but you don't really, you don't really hear that language.

I guess the other two things that, that I really wanted to touch on that changed for me over my time period was one, when I first started it was very, I don't even remember...there was very few women that worked in the plant site. Very few. Most of the women of that era were office help. Very, very small majority. And in fact, I don't even think there was no women in the logging area that I know of. And very few in the plant site. Later on, however, that changed and changed dramatically as time went on and a new generation, so to speak, came in and there was a lot of women that came into the plant site and worked side by side with a lot of wonderful people, a lot of good, hardworking people.

[00:38:47] And the other thing that changed over my time frame, which was kind of hard to accept, I guess, because we're creatures of habit. If we go to church, we sit in the same chair. We did that when we went to school. So accepting change is hard for all of us. But one thing that changed over the years, over the 40 years of my time, was safety. And safety became a big, big issue. Lots of rules and regulations came down from the government and from the state and it was for the better. It was really for the better. When I started out in logging in '64, they threw you a hard hat and said, "Go to work." That was your training period, and you better not be late. After that timeframe, we got into a lot of safety issues and safety meetings and safety regulations, eye protection, hearing protection, fall protection. It just goes on and on. And I gotta say that I think that was probably for the better. A lot less accidents over the years, and especially, a lot less serious accidents.

That's where I started and where I ended up. I sorted logs in the plywood plant and eventually, I worked up into a supervisor's position. I had a crew of about 20 men and very good workers. And we would sort by species, by size. By that time the new stud mill had been in place and we were sorting for the stud mill, 14 inches and down for that side. And over that was into the plywood. And we actually had a couple head rigs running at that time too.

Pine was not really one of the better wood products they put into the plywood. And also it drew a little better price. Depending on the markets, we would take the better pine and send it. Unlike what Cal said, the sawmill got the best of the pine because that was high price commodities and the plywood was actually better with the fir and the larch.

I think at one time we had 14 sorts in the mill from the Ponderosa pine to the Doug fir, to western larch, to some of the spruces. Cedars we sorted out. We did not cut a lot of cedar, although there was some cedar that got slipped through the mill once on occasion. And, of course, when it got down to Rudi here, they cabbaged onto that because

that was a kind of a high commodity, and they'd take that home. (Laughter) So that's kind of where, that's where that ended up - in Rudi's house.

[00:41:40] **Rudi Miller:** Buy it for number four. (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah.

Art Bailey: 'Cause they were grading it so they would cull it out.

We didn't get a lot of cedar. It was a byproduct. And speaking of byproducts, there was a lot of products and a lot of product mixes over the years. For one thing it was shavings, which we sold to the plant in Missoula there. And, of course, the chips that went to the pulp mill. And hog fuel became a big issue later on in my time. It was hard to keep up with the hog fuel that run the boilers and actually Stone's boiler as well.

The operation took about 20 people. And another big change that came along in that time was the big Wagners and the big equipment that we had. It was a lot safer to handle these loads. We could run up to a load and pick off a load with, a whole load without any problem. So that was a lot safer.

At one time during that operation, we were unloading a truck every four minutes. It took 300 loads of logs when the plywood was at max, to keep that mill operating. It's a lot of wood, a lot of handling, and a lot of material. And that, of course, diminished as time went on.

[00:43:13] **Unidentified Speaker:** Is that per day?

Art Bailey: Per day. 300 logs per day, actually over a million board feet per year, or excuse me, 400 million board feet per year went through that mill. And that included the saw mill and the stud mill and the plywood plant. A lot of different mixes over the years. And not all of them in my time they were taking the motors out as I went in.

(Name unclear) could probably tell you about that. The beam plant. My grandfather worked in the beam plant. The trailer house factory. A lot of people probably forgot about that. That was a flop, but it was tried. A lot of different mixes, a lot of different products over the years.

And it was just a, it was a wonderful time, a wonderful job, and a lot of very wonderful people to work with. Thank you very much (applause).

[00:44:20] **Glenn Max Smith:** Okay, I'm next up. My name is Glenn Smith and boy, our other speakers here have pretty well covered the operation of the mill, so I'm just gonna highlight on some of their things. I've got some neat little anecdotes here that can go along with that.

When I first came to the Bonner area, it was in the late 1940s, and we came in with... my mother had a habit of changing husbands about like some guys that change their socks, so I had a variety of stepdads. This particular stepdad in the late forties was named Thomas Headley. He was in charge of the steam locomotives that pulled the logs down from the Blackfoot. The fellow before him was named old Sam Kenley. Sam was retired. So Headley come down along with myself and my illustrious mother, and we looked over a railroad house at, right up here by the crossing.

And I grew up out here, and I'll tell you, growing up out in Bonner was classic. But let me get back to the old steam locomotive, the big locomotive at the time - and we had some fun in that old thing - it was a class C oil fired steam locomotive. The number on that was 1246. It was a 2-8-0 wheel configuration.

And these things are brutes. But boy did they have an appetite for fuel and water to make that steam. This thing had 63-inch drive wheels that could produce 43,131 pounds of tractive force. So one of the favorite pastimes out here was to find out just what that converted to. You hook an outhouse up to that and it don't have a prayer (laughter). It's gone.

[00:46:29] But on a serious note, that locomotive was used to haul the freight out of the Blackfoot Valley, and the Milwaukee at the time thought they had a real good thing going. We got this spur line up here, and it's developin' and we're going to do all right. So to make this whole thing work, they had a facility. I'm not sure too many people remember. The old timers, I guess I'm now one of them, these old timers, can remember that just past the crossing up here on the left hand side was a big water tower. This was used to fill that old steam locomotive and some of the old shays that would bring a load of logs down here. They would fill that water.

And later on I checked to see what this locomotive could use for water from Bonner to Clearwater Junction to back, that old thing drank 3000 gallons of water to convert into steam. The fuel consumption, I never did understand. It

depended on the local or the engineer you were talking to. Some of 'em just had to have a good head of steam and charge up that canyon, and come back down. But the grade of that canyon is about 3% on that railroad, which means that what is that about...? She raised about three feet for every a hundred yards or every a hundred feet somewhere in there.

Anyway, to pull up that canyon took, they would take about 16 cars and pull 'em up there. They were empty. But comin' back down, the only thing they had to do because of that grade - and believe me, we found out just what that grade was about. That's a whole 'nother story and I'll have to have another meeting to tell about that.

But anyway, all that engineer had to do was just maintain enough steam to keep the air system going for the brakes on the cars so they could break in the turns. And you didn't want to hit a trestle at a too high a speed at a curve, or you'd straight the whole thing out and just dive the whole contraption right down into the river.

So this maintenance facility up there that was located just past the railroad tracks had the big oil tower. They had a water tower and they had a sand house. And that sand house also held spare parts for that locomotive. And just recently, just before I retired, we went up there and found a few of them old discarded parts was laying there, there were grates out of the boiler.

[00:49:05] Anyway to accommodate the forest fire issue, instead of burnin' coal or wood that made sparks, this old engine was an oil burner. So they had two great big elevated oil tanks that they pumped this crude oil looking stuff, looked like tar, nasty stuff. They pump it up into there that was pumped up in there with steam driven pumps. They had, the pumps were coal fired off a coal fired boiler, and produced the steam to offload this crude oil up into this tower and then warm it enough so that it could flow back to the engine tender for fuel. So that whole area up there was, boy, that was nasty. Underneath those oil towers where the oil had dripped and spilled as they filled that old engine became a collecting area. It looked like the tar pits out of a horror movie. It was full of dead birds and all kinds of stuff. And one of the rights of passages - if you had a young fellow out here that didn't quite fit, he was usually a little bit mouthy or something. He was introduced to that tar pit and the dead birds and everything else that was in there. I kept my mouth shut. Did help put one fellow in there and his mother, what his mother said to me I would not dare repeat (chuckles).

[00:50:40] Okay. About that time Bonner went to Hollywood, or Hollywood came to Bonner in the form of *Timberjack*. This was in about 1956. And we had an old steam locomotive sat over here at the mill. It was decommissioned. Painted with an army red, army lead paint, which faded into the sun, and it turned pink. To me that was the biggest insult. That mighty old engine in there, that faithful old machine was pink. I never liked that.

But once *Timberjack* come along, boy, they put a new coat of paint on that thing and they patched her up and we made us a movie. Pretty good movie. In fact just recently come across the DVD and we recorded some copies of that old movie. It's kind of a corny plot, but a real cool movie. And parts of Bonner then are shown in that. If you ever have a chance, get that and look at it. It's a great, great movie.

[00:51:52] Okay, getting back to our locomotives, the old 1246, which we hooked all the outhouses on and tried to test that tractive force, was retired and it was replaced with a little, what they call - some slang of that was for those engines was yard donkey or... It was a little diesel electric switch engine. A weird shaped little guy. I think Rail Link might have one down here that looks similar to that. They used that for a while and then they went to a general purpose switch engine, which is a lot like what Rail Link is usin' out here now.

That general purpose switch was the last one that went up the valley. They went up to Pyramid Mountain to pick up some finished lumber. The number on that, the designated number of that was 282. The other little yard donkey type switch engine, the numbers on that were 1648, and I have some pictures here if anybody - those old engines that you're welcome to look at if you have the time.

Now, those memories of those days were laid to rest. They tore the towers down and got rid of the sand house and everything, and then that oil came back to haunt us, came back up through the surface again, and we had this big mess. This happened with Stimson and they were a little bit alarmed to say the least. They didn't want to clean that mess up. Didn't have a clue where it came from. So I got ahold of a picture was taken at the time we filmed *Timberjack*, and in the background Sterling Hayden standing up there in all his glory, with the rifle in his hand, and he's standing up there and right behind him is that whole complex.

We got the oil towers, we got the old pump house down there, we got the sand house, we got all that stuff. So I drug the old picture out and got a hold of Dick Shimer and we and Ed Roberts and Daryl (Higg?), and we all went up there and I pointed that out and in relation to what it was, to what it is when that oil came back up through the

surface. And everybody was pretty well relieved. That was the Milwaukee's baby, let's throw that in their park. They can clean that mess up. So we laid that to rest.

[00:54:37] Okay. Growing up in Bonner, I want to touch on the fact that out here, I don't think Mark Twain and Tom Sawyer, his characters Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, had any more fun than what we did outside of tying up outhouses, I had my first shot of whiskey. And how that came about was, we had a fellow over here, his name was Johnny Magnuson. I think probably some of the old timers might remember old Johnny. He was pretty well deaf, but Johnny had a taste for the whiskey. He liked a little nip after he put in a week at the mill. He was entitled to a nip, anybody was. But Emma didn't. Emma was religious and she didn't take too much of that little nips of whiskey.

So what he did was, he had a bottle hid out in his woodshed in between the pieces of firewood. They also were not blessed with children. So they had a little fox terrier dog which took the place of a child. Now, Johnny, towards the end of the week, you could tell he, he kinda lickin' at his lips and rubbin' his mouth there. He's wanting a snort. So what'd he'd do is he turned that dog out. And boy, that dog would hit up the side of Bonner Mountain, right over here. And Emma, boy, she'd let out a shriek, crank up her skirts. "Johnny, Johnny, the dog's got out!" Up the mountain she went. Johnny said, "Be right with you, Emma." Go out the back door, into the wood shed, take a snort, put the bottle back away, and up the mountain he'd go. They get the dog back in.

[00:56:23] And we watched this and thought, "I wonder what whiskey really tastes like. Let's go out and have us a sample." So the next time that happened, why, Johnny went up the mountain. We went straight to the woodshed, took our belt. I liked to died right on the spot. Didn't think I was gonna get outta the wood shed before they got back (laughs).

Also as kids out here I learned to smoke, smoke a cigarette. That was about the coolest thing I could ever imagine was to smoke like the old timers did. So somebody heisted a can of Velvet Pipe Tobacco, we couldn't find any paper, so we gotta roll of toilet paper. We rolled up this cigarette that I'll tell you, it was a big old thing. Like about a cigar. Lit that thing up, took a puff. The paper all burned off, and here's all these sparks down your neck and oh man, we 'bout burned our fort down. This was bad stuff. How in the heck can anybody do that? You know the smoke in your face, in your stranglin' and coughin' (laughter).

So this was growing up in Bonner. This was a great place and I'm sure the surrounding areas, Milltown and West Riverside they, I think they called it the Flat then, was great places. We didn't have TV or anything, so we had to use our own imaginations. Boy, did we come up with some dandy stuff.

[00:57:56] Okay. That 10-year period or 11 years was drawin' to a close. I was getting' to be a little bit older and lookin' over here at this mill, I thought this is going to be a cool place to work. I know all these guys over here. They're, like Art said, they were some of the finest folks out here that you would ever care to meet. They were hardworkin', religious, you just couldn't ask for a better place to work. So on August 8th of 1960, I got ahold of Yum Karkanen. He got ahold of me 'cuz seems like I was always getting crossways with him. And he decided the best way to keep tabs on me was to put me to work over here. So he says, "come on down and get you [a] job."

And my first job was on the green chain night shift, 12-foot station. Bob Clubb was the supervisor. And boy did I have an upcomin' on that green chain. I'll tell you what, as Cal said on, on that gang saw, we had one fellow that liked to back all them cants up and run 'em through all at once. What was it? Nine cuts that thing could make?

[00:59:10] **Cal Bonnet:** They can make a number of cuts. Yeah. And not only that, they, some of them guys would stack several cants on top of each other. They did get pretty good at 'em. Boy, there would be a pile of...

Glenn Max Smith: Oh, they come out there like a deck of cards and you had to pull this stuff off, put a pile and them guys up in the sawmill just thinking that's just the funniest thing they ever saw. Killed us off down there. So one day I sniffled and boy Bonner was a place you did not sniffle at. There was a fellow there named Anton Iverson. I think at one time he became our union president. He looked at me and he says, "This is where the men work. If you can't stand the pace, go home to your mommie." (laughter) I didn't need to hear that. So I bucked up and I went to work and by damn you were expected an honest day's work for an honest day's pay and they expected that.

[01:00:06] Okay. About this time President Kennedy and old Nikita Khrushchev were really mixin' it up over there in Cuba. And I was in the National Guard at the time and I was with the 154th Field Artillery Group and of all damn things - a nuclear war. We were put on alert. We had to load our equipment on the trains and we were getting ready to go. And thank God, we didn't have to pry those Russians outta Cuba. They finally went away. But that meant that bein's I was in the National Guard, I could no longer work night shift. I had to train out at Fort Missoula nights for this possible Cuba thing.

So I had to take a day shift job. At that point I went from the green chain, which really didn't hurt my feelings that bad, at least I thought, to the dry chain. And again, a lot of lumber come out that dry chain. Hertz, right here in the audience, ornery little bugger. He was a grader over there. And boy could they - and he wanted - he'd look down there and see what station you was pullin' and that chalk of his made the grade that you had to pull. And you pulled till your tongue hung on the ground while he had a big laugh up in there.

So I survived that until it came time to - this new building was being built, this big square one on the corner. Cal made mention of that. And we had a big ceremony out here and the governor come in with a helicopter and we had speeches and a picnic and some of the guys down on the green chain wore neck ties and a white shirt, which raised a few eyebrows, but whoever really killed it was somebody made a sign for the public, which was invited to tour the plant. They made a sign saying, "Please do not feed the animals." That did not set at all. Sign come down.

[01:02:23] But anyway, here we are with this brand new building, and boy, I'll tell you, compared to what we had, this was something. Rudi mentions the cold. We had steam heat in there, rotating heaters. First year or two it was great. After that, the vibration of the building and everything made those heaters so they wouldn't work. And there was, for some reason, we always had cold water running through them in the dead of winter. And in the middle of summer they'd get around putting the steam to 'em. But we managed to survive all that.

And we run that plant until, oh boy, about the early seventies, about '72 when US Plywood come in. They bought the whole outfit, lock, stock, and barrel. We were outta work. Cal mentioned what he was doing during that transition time. I'd taken on several mechanics jobs. I had a little shop in East Missoula, so I had enough work to keep me goin' and then all of a sudden we got a call from US Plywood, "We need you back here. We want to get this plant goin'." So I came back in and as I had worked in the planer, I had most all jobs except graders. I never did get one of them gradin' jobs. These guys over here, they hoarded that job, but I was in maintenance at the time and, of course, US Plywood wanted anything that would do with maintenance. "Get 'em back here. We want this plant runnin'." And I was hired back right off the bat and got a pretty good seniority number. It was pretty high up. So I felt real good about that. And I was on night shift again at the time, and then I had to, if I stayed in maintenance it, I would have to stay on the night shift.

[01:04:24] I didn't want to do that. I wanted a job that really rang my bell of being an overhead crane operator. And the top of this big square building was three overhead cranes. Those monsters weighed 65-ton each. And you sat up there in your own little world and it was a cool job. You could sit down. Al, he run the crane right next to me for years. We run those things for over 20 years and then we're sold out again. Doggonit. Well we weren't sold out, we were shut down for a rebuild. And I have a lot of pictures of that rebuild in my album here if you want to see that. And during that rebuild, boy, they cut the roof out of the sawmill and they tore down this, and they tore down that and remodeled that mill to take on studs. And it's pretty much what we have over here now.

I worked for a while, as Art mentioned, as safety became a real big issue here. I worked with Champion in the safety department, and when it came to build this new plant, boy they were hammerin' that safety something fierce. And Al worked with me on this too. Together, we worked on that safety. We wanted to be able to not actually show an individual how that machine run as far as the hand and eye coordination goes and what makes a good operator and whatnot. We wanted to show them basically how they were turned on, how you disabled the power to 'em in the case of a making an adjustment or things like that. Just the basic safety issues. That title was called, we were safety trainers and we stayed in that position until about 1993 when they sold the whole operation to the Stimson Lumber Company.

At that time, had to reply for a job. The gravy job of being the safety trainer was definitely out the window. It was back to old Tony and his, "This is where the men work." So I went back to work as a precision end trimmer-operator, but still, Stimson liked to get the most bang for the buck they could out of any guy. If you had one job - here, have this one. And by the way, we need you on this committee and that committee, and the other committee. And I figured I'm reaching the end of the road. I'm an old timer now. I'm getting' gray around the edges, hair's fallin' out. I'm getting' ready to retire. So I think I can put up with this. So in about the summer of 2005, I retired. They gave me a cake and I got a little plaque thing in here, and all the goodies going with retirement. Had a great time there. Said goodbye to all my fellow workers, and I was out the door.

[01:07:35] My time period at Bonner - lived in the town, like I said, for 11 years. And I worked in the mill for 45. Seen a lot of changes come down, a lot of, I worked with a lot of good people. But before I end my part of this, one thing I wanted to show everyone was the old Hotel Margaret. It was a beautiful old building, and there's a song that's out on the country western charts right now. I can't remember the name of it right now, but the singer's, some of his

lyrics were, "You should have seen it in color. You should have been there in color." So what I did, it was always a, something I wanted to do was I colorized that old hotel as to what I remember it being and I'll have this picture available here.

You'll notice, rough and tumble sawmill. You'll notice some pink curtains in here. They're not part of rough and tumble, and tobacco chewin' and swearin' and all that. But what they were put in there for was the mill manager at that time named Jack Root. He had two daughters, Dorothy Laird, they called her Dottie Laird. She lived over here on Central Avenue for a while and he had an older daughter named Madge. But Madge would come to visit and she would stay in the tower room of this old hotel. And she wanted something more feminine other than smoke stained curtains and stuff like that. So her and her mother and her mother's name was Eve, Eva, went down and they got these kind of pinkish curtains. They're not as harsh a pink as what I put into the picture. But it's just so that when I tell this story, I could say the pink curtains there was because of Madge.

But as I talked to various people on this old building, and it was a magnificent old building, we, everybody had their own ideas. It should have been a bed and breakfast, or it should have been this and that and the other. Sue Hogan and I spent the most time talkin' about this. She wanted a gift shop, and, of course, I graciously could see... "yeah, You have your gift shop in there." We could, we can have a bed and breakfast and all that, we can do all these fancy things with this old building." Unfortunately, it was torn out due to taxes and upkeep and the heating of it and all that prompted them to shut it down. But it, I always wanted to colorize this and make it available to anyone who would want to see that as I remembered it. And at this meeting here was a great time for me to be able to show this. So I thank everyone for puttin' up with me for this brief period and I enjoyed it. (applause)

[01:10:41] **Jimmie Willis:** Anybody have any questions? Thank you. Certainly ask questions in the panel.

Keith Lerback: A question for Art. You worked in the woods the same time I did. You didn't tell them about your truck wreck.

Art Bailey: I didn't want to bring that up. (laughter)

Unidentified Speaker: It was cold. It was cold.

Art Bailey: I didn't go off the road.

Keith Lerback: I'm asking the questions. (laughter)

[01:11:09] **Art Bailey:** There was a lot of those stories that could be told. Believe me. I gotta tell you one. I was haulin' outta Gold Creek and in younger years, and I came around the corner and this loggin' truck was sitting in the road. No driver around. It was just sitting there runnin'.

Unidentified Speaker: Was that Keith? (laughter)

Keith Lerback: No. (laughter)

Art Bailey: And what had happened was this truck was getting' away from this driver and he put it into the ditch on the inside, which was fairly deep, and it held the truck, and then he bailed out. And the truck went down around the corner and stopped. (unclear) I don't remember who was driving the truck at the time. It wasn't me. (laughter)

A lot of stories that go on. One thing I don't think we mentioned that's probably important. Not only was this the largest plywood plant in North America, which it was, by volume. Also one thing that I don't think, I think Cal hit a little bit on it, was the double-end dogger that was put in at the time. And I know Cal can fill you in more than I can on that, but that was one of a kind, one of the first, by the way. And for those of you that don't know what a double-end dogger is or have no idea, it squared three sides of the log being the bottom and the sides. And a double-end dogger was picking up a log as this one's going out, and then they came back this way and this one's picking up a log, going out and it kept that up all day long. Now, if you can imagine this thing cut a log every four seconds. Every four seconds there was a log.

Not only did it cut that log, and again, Cal, I'm sure fill in on this better than I can, but it was called, there was an optimizer on this machine. What the optimizer did was actually X-rayed that log. It actually x-rayed it before it went into the machine and centered the machine to get the most productivity out of that log that it could, including various items of defect inside the log, the curve of the log so forth. That optimizer would take a picture of that, (snaps finger) that fast and run that log to get the most material out of that. Is that about what we done?

Cal Bonnet: That's about right. Yeah.

[01:13:38] **Art Bailey:** It was totally amazing to sit there and watch on the screen and they had a screen in the lunchroom. And this screen would show you the next log that was about to come up. Not only did it show you that log, it would tell you what they were going to cut out of that log, what widths, what different variations of that log. Also to get away from whatever kind of defect was in that log. It was an amazing piece of history and technology there. It's too bad that, and in fact, I think I do have a film at home, that I would be more than willing to donate to those of you who would like to see that. It's very interesting. Thank you.

Unidentified Speaker: When it ran, it was (unintelligible)

Art Bailey: I notice it kept you fellas busy. Actually, that's another one that came into play there when and these fellas well know that better than I do and Rudi. When the lumber was put into the dry kiln and graded, that lumber was going through that, through the dry kiln so fast that they had to actually put a belt behind that to slow that down. Is that not right Rudi? They had to slow it down. It was like a bullet coming out of this thing and very dangerous. So they had to slow it back down. Because, you know, these guys weren't really workin' real hard. (laughter)

Unidentified Speaker: (unclear) the hardest workers out there.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, you were,

[01:15:18] **Rudi Miller:** Well, U S Plywood and Champion, they liked quality. They wanted a real good, put paper on the lumber and make it so the time the customer bought there was no dirt or any flaws on it. And as time went on, we got a different boss and he didn't think he should have small (unclear)

Art Bailey: Supervisors. Supervisors, not bosses.

Rudi Miller: So he should have a, you should put this thing out, just get it through and that customer will never see you. You don't know him, and that started putting everything down. He lowered the grades so bad that we finally just had to stop and have a meeting. And he said, "just go back to the old way that you graded lumber. Forget what I told you."

And, but it was a quality product. And they would come from Japan and all over to see our lumber, 'cuz that's what they wanted. They knew if they bought one pack of lumber, the quality was so good, the next one would be exactly the same. And I think that's what really happened at the mill. They wanted a lower product all the time and just get it out. We were putting out probably 200,000 a shift. After a while they wanted 300 and then it's (unclear). After I left, 2000. They said sometimes they hit almost 400,000 and they just flooded the market and we got all these houses out there now that they can't sell.

And that's what everybody does. They just keep putting this product out there. Finally, you got a glut on the market and these mills are down. This mill, I think, if they'd never built a plywood mill would still be going today. But like Art said of how many logs it takes and with the environmentalists wanting all these - preserve these trees, we'll never see that again in our lifetime. And even if we do, they won't let you cut it. So it's a combination of things that put this mill down. 'Cause I think they could still be cutting the logs out there if they selectively cut. Thank you.

[01:17:13] **Steve Adler:** I'm a newcomer in Bonner (unclear) and so to speak. Grew up in Missoula but have been out here for the history aspect of it and got to take a tour of part of the plant. And in the old stone building, there are notes from history all over the beams upstairs which was just fascinating to me. One name that got a lot of board feet on the beam, which was Amy, I think.

Art Bailey: Was what?

Steve Adler: Amy? I think was the name that repeated itself or people repeated the name Amy, in some context. Does anybody know who Amy was or (overtalking and laughing) board feet of historical (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: Keith, do you remember?

Keith Lerback: I didn't write it.

Glenn Max Smith: Rick, do you remember who that was?

Rick Swanson: No, I don't, I don't remember a name, Amy. Wasn't an "n" in front of it, was it?

Steve Adler: I don't think so. It might be fun for everybody to go back and look.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah.

Rick Swanson: Niemi was an (overtalking) old timer up there, but I don't recognize the name Amy.

Art Bailey: Yeah. Speaking of that old stone building where he was in

Unidentified Speaker: the name wrong (overtalking),

Art Bailey: I dunno if I can find it on this map. There's a, there's an old water well somewhere I, let's see, somewhere between the main shop and here that old water well was, amazed me because it's probably three to four foot in diameter, about 80 feet deep, and that well is rocked all the way to the bottom. Now I'm just amazed. How do you go about that? How do you dig a hole and rock it going down? I guess is what I couldn't understand. Yeah, it's a very good water. And it's the historical records now, but it totally amazed me that they had the technology. I don't know how they do that. I wouldn't be able to do that today. Were there any other questions? Anybody?

Unidentified Speaker: I'll just put a side note out there. I'm very interested in that. Good job (unclear) so much longer. You guys. I was one of the last ones to go out and you (unclear) for hitting boards constantly. They're running 400,000 shift nonstop.

[01:19:46] **Art Bailey:** I can tell you a story one time, I probably shouldn't bring this up at the time, but we were working in the log yard and we had this bee tree come in, big pine. And we thought it'd be, we thought it'd be pretty funny to send that down through the saw mill. So we plugged up the hole at night with some mud. Everything went well and we threw it in the pond and lo and behold, that hit the pond the next day and they sliced that tree open and they had to evacuate the sawmill. And we were never allowed to tell anybody about that problem. We probably wouldn't have been there very long. Now, that opened up a whole new can of worms, I'll tell you. No more bee trees going in that mill. Pretty mad sawyers. (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, I think some fellow set up a

Jimmie Willis: Any more questions? Does anybody in the audience have stories they'd like to tell about the mill?

[01:20:45] **Rick Swanson:** Well, we didn't mention about the log mill, the small log mill.

Jimmie Willis: No, nobody mentioned that.

Rick Swanson: The ones that made the post, caps, and gerts for the, and the ladders for the mines in Butte.

Judy Matson: Excuse me. May I interrupt and invite you to the microphone so that MCAT won't be showing...

Rick Swanson: I don't have that much.

Judy Matson: Oh, please do the ID stories and you'll be a good example for others to, to do the same.

Rick Swanson: The small log mill was just west - no, it would be east, wouldn't it? East of the sawmill before they had that tore down, but they made small timbers for the mines in Butte. They called them caps, gerts, and posts. And when I worked down there on the small log mill, they had a chain that was also the part that they made lumber beside the posts and they were loaded into bundles. The forklift would pick 'em up as it came out and they would stack 'em in piles out in the yard. From there, it was taken to the flat cars that were down there. There was seven or eight of them at one day. Each day they had that many, and they were, we were loaded, and I went, my job was to tie the posts that were put in the side, make sure that they didn't flop to the side. You know there were two-by-sixes that you shoved in the pockets and then you tied the tops and you banded the ends. And we did eight of those a day. And also, if I remember right, that was after, 'cuz the sawmill had some down there by the machine shop. Remember we loaded cars there too?

And also piggybacks. The NP would come in and load up their trailers and that was my job to tie those the same way. But that was very interesting, especially when it was like you say 20 to 30 below zero with that Hellgate wind down through there, and, it was very interesting. I remember Frank (Kerse?). I don't know if you remember him or not, but we worked together many days down there in that. And but that's about all I have to - I didn't even think about that until just now.

[01:23:57] **Glenn Max Smith:** Story I remember about that... Rick's crew down there in the stull mill was... I was on the green chain and, of course, I shouldn't say this bein's I pushed safety so many years, but we had some great snowball fights. That first snow with those guys. Somebody'd holler down there, "Stull mill sucks," and boy, I'll tell you, the air was full of snowballs.

One particular time we had a fellow named Mutt Teague. Made a great big pile of snowballs and he was all ready. He stepped off under the green chain, mouthed off at the stull mill crew. He was going to step back in and get his snowballs to get ready for this fight. He run back underneath the green chain and right smack into a steam pipe, laid him out colder than a wedge. (laughs) Those are some of the good old days. And something a safety guy never talks about.

[01:24:56] **Cal Bonnet:** You talk about how cold it was out there. When the bull chain would come out of the pond taking logs into the mill, of course, the logs were wet and they'd drip water and so this would, this bull chain would form icicles on it and it would just become completely covered in ice. So one day, I think it was around January, darn chain jump jumps off the return track as it returned to the pond and when it jumped off, it hit the framework and just tore everything out. There was just a mangled up mess of steel and it was like 20, 30 below out there and the wind was blowing and, of course, those maintenance people – it was our job. We had to get out there and fix that thing. So you'd go out there, and it was so darn cold, we'd work in shifts. A couple guys would go out and they'd get on the welders and and weld that thing and put it back together.

And you could only be out there 15, 20 minutes and you'd have to go back inside and get warmed up and somebody else would come out and relieve you, and you'd get in there, get yourself all warmed up again, and pretty quick, 15, 20 minutes later, it's your turn to go again and it continued and we finally got it fixed.

And it was about two days later, the same thing happened. The darn thing jumped the chain and tore everything out again. Then we finally smartened up and put a guy out there with a long pole and he was breaking the ice off of there, getting rid of it before that could happen to us.

But there was some times on when that wind coming outta that Blackfoot, you could not hardly stand it out there. We was working on a hydraulic pump on a loader one time, and it was so cold out there. Me and my friend was working on this pump and we had to change pumps and he looked at me, he said, "You better get in there." He said, "Your cheek is getting all white." And sure enough I was getting all frost bit and everything. So went in there, get warmed up again. We had a lot of times like that, and winter, and I don't know, the winters just seemed colder then. I think maybe the global warming is taking effect.

[01:26:50] **Art Bailey:** And a lot of times when the millwrights didn't want some of these tougher jobs, they pawned 'em off onto some of the rest of us. And I can well remember the time when we were sawing the ice off the dam down there with power saws while these maintenance people were inside drinking coffee.

Glenn Max Smith: Probably with Hertz.

Art Bailey: 40 below weather. Do you remember that, Glenn? Did you get in on anything?

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah. And you could count old Gene Hertz bein' down there drinking coffee right along with them instead of up there gradin'.

Art Bailey: We had to cut the ice off from behind the dam to relieve the water pressure. Because the ice would build up so thick that the water forming underneath had no place to go other than putting pressure against the dam. So we would go out there with chainsaws tied off with a rope. We were very safety conscious. (laughter) And we would cut back probably 4, 6, 8 feet behind the dam to relieve that water pressure. And like I said, you didn't get much help out of millwrights. That wasn't their duties.

Cal Bonnet: Can't blame 'em. We suffered plenty. We, when the mill would... in that cold period inside the mill, the mill was also cold. There wasn't any heaters or anything in there. And so the night shift would - they'd get off about three in the morning, you know, and so we didn't dare shut the machinery off. We had to leave it run all night. Otherwise, in the morning, if we stopped it, it would freeze up. We couldn't get started the next morning. So we just let her run until the weather changed. It never did stop.

[01:28:29] **Art Bailey:** I think we did that and also in the logging. Probably Keith can remember. During the real cold times in 30, 40, 50 below weather we'd let the equipment run all night long. They would have a crew that would check on them. The dozers would freeze to the ground so hard that it would break the final drives out of them. And so they would run 'em up on logs and leave 'em sit on the logs overnight and leave 'em runnin' and we'd have a crew go out and fuel 'em up and make sure that they were still runnin'. I don't know. Did you ever get into any of that, on watchin' the equipment at night when we left them running?

Keith Lerback: No, I never got any of that.

Art Bailey: Yeah, I got in on some of that.

Keith Lerback: Yeah. Some of the logging trucks..

Art Bailey: Yeah, that's what I'm

Keith Lerback: (unclear)

Art Bailey: It would freeze so hard, the dozers would freeze so hard to the ground that it would break the final drive. Anybody else have anything?

[01:29:24] **Gene Hertz:** Yeah, I got one thing. You're talking about your low wages. How much you were getting paid an hour? The credit union was out there too. And when I started in '58 and I wasn't there more than... Do I have to get up?

Art Bailey: Yes.

Glenn Max Smith: Get up here. God darn it.

Unidentified Speaker: (unclear) your mouth.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, now you done it.

Unidentified Speaker: You know the rules.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah. You were good at taking trips.

Gene Hertz: My little buddy over there. Him and I, we worked together there side by side there for 25, 30 years. And he would always say, "That doggone Hertz is off doin' credit union again. And I, when I just barely got started and they needed somebody to run the credit union. And I thought, "Well, I'll put my wife to work. She's at home." And we had a whole bunch of little ones. And matter of fact, the wife and I, we had seven children. So anyway, there I thought I'd put her to work and the, and I would work the mill and I would get these guys to throw in their quarters and dollars, what few dollars they had, so that we could run the credit union so we could make loans to one another.

And this went on, the credit union got a little bigger, and I had the credit union in my house for 15 years. Never charged them rent. Never. Yeah. So we could have enough money there to loan out. And all the while there my kids kept comin'. And Odegaard, you remember Arnold Odegaard? He was our little auditor. He would audit the books all the time. And the kids would run around the house and the first thing you know, the kids were supposed to go to bed and they wouldn't go to bed. And Ode just kept coaxing them. And Mother was getting madder... and then the credit union was takin' up all my time. So when I got these guys to sign up to the credit union there, in order to, for the credit union to save money at statement time we'd hand out the statement every quarter. I would go around and I see all these guys. And I think at one time there I must have knew two thirds of the guys that worked at the mill. I knew them all by name and I also knew how much money they had. It was a lot more than I had. (laughs) Yeah. I even got Art Bailey over there. I got him in the credit union too there. I had him there. Cal Bonnet here, he was a little harder to get in, but I finally got him.

[01:32:47] **Cal Bonnet:** I was in there for a little while. I remember going to a meeting.

Gene Hertz: Yeah.

Cal Bonnet: And I was on the committee that had to evaluate people that wanted loans. And so I had to know their background and their credit history and stuff. And I just didn't like that type of thing to know what people's business was. I got the heck outta there.

Gene Hertz: Jimmie Willis says that I was supposed to tell you my name, but everybody knows my name because

Unidentified Speaker: which one? (laughter)

Gene Hertz: 'Cause I worked with the credit union a long time. I served on the board of directors with the credit union for 21 years. I literally supervised it, ran it, and with all the help of these guys that volunteered to work on the credit committees and the board of directors and all that stuff.

And if you see this one person that I know real well, is a dear friend of mine. And we needed a president of the board for the credit union. Nobody wanted to be president even though I was treasurer. So what happened one night

we was having a meeting in the basement of my house and nobody wanted to be president. And one guy, one guy happened to excuse himself to go to the bathroom. And when he came back, he was president. (laughter) He never forgave me of that. He thought I was behind it all, but I was, I was the instigator of a lot of stuff. But these guys out at the mill, they were thrifty people and they knew how to handle their money and they borrowed a little, but they were always the good payers. And then we hardly ever lost a loan. Hardly. Once in a while we did, but most of the time they were good, conscientious, hardworking people. Thank you. (applause) (Returns to his seat)

You know you know that planer? That they made that conversion, that one planer there that was fed with rubber tires.

Cal Bonnet: That was that Newman, wasn't it?

[01:35:46] **Gene Hertz:** Yeah. Newman. (unclear) And I, my little buddy here, him and I graded behind that thing and that damn thing would never break down. (laughter) And then the one that Miller was on over there, that thing was always breakin'; down, (laughter) and (Prentis?) and I, there, we were turning boards two at a time and between the two of us there. So we graded two thirds of the lumber.

Rudi Miller: It only seemed like that.

Unidentified Speaker: They switched that though, didn't ya?.

Cal Bonnet: Yeah. And that was a used planer we went to.

Unidentified Speaker: That's right.

Cal Bonnet: We went to Ken McMillan. I don't know, remember Ken? We went to Georgia. And Champion owned that mill in Georgia.

Unidentified Speaker: Oh, that right?

Cal Bonnet: Yeah. And we went down to Georgia and looked at it and see if it was something we could utilize in the new mill. And it was, and then that's how it got here. We went down and

Unidentified Speaker: So you was the instigator eh?

Cal Bonnet: Yeah, I'm one of the reasons it got here.

Unidentified Speaker: (unintelligible).

Cal Bonnet: I know. I never would admit it till now.

[01:37:08] **Keith Lerback:** My name's Keith Lerback and I thought I'd give you a little history too. I was one of your credit union guys and I remember that I was down in your basement and he had the most beautiful knotty pine basement. And I wonder where all that came from. A piece at a time just like the guy with a Cadillac, a piece at a time. It was really was nice. (laughter)

Gene Hertz: It's still knotty pine (unclear)

Keith Lerback: Still the same house, huh? Yeah. Anyway I started about the same time Max did, a little before him in 1960. Of course, my dad started in '49 or '50 and worked there until about 1960 or '61, somethin' like that. But I worked there in the box factory, did a lot of the jobs that a lot of these guys did here and making all them different things, the ladders for the mine and all these different things. And then I got a job - they wanted to train some electricians. So I got into that and I was doing pretty good. I got shocked pretty good a few times, but I was still alive. I got across 440 one time. That knocked me on my butt .

But anyway then we had the efficiency expert, but we called him a head hunter came through. And he started going through and telling the company where they could cut all the jobs and stuff and make money. So I lost my electrician job and so I transferred into the woods in, I think, about '66.

And it's not like it is today, I'll tell you. Back then I was a choker setter and I rode on a Cat with a Cat skinner, and we'd go up the (unclear) and we'd bring the logs in. They were brought in in tree lengths at that time, and they had a big landing and they had two buckers on the landing. They'd buck it up and then they'd load 'em on the trucks, put 'em into decks and stuff. But anyway, I was, always wanted to be a truck driver. Never been a truck driver, but that was my goal.

[01:38:56] So Ron Bailey. I got, finally got a job after about a year choker settin'. I got a job to train, to buy, to drive a logging truck, and Ron Bailey took me up and had me one trip and he says, "Now it's yours." And so I guess, I had a lot of fun for a couple days there trying to figure out how to shift that thing.

Had a five speed main box and four speed (browning?). You had to try and figure all them things out. But anyway, from then on I got into the logging business and I drove for Art Koch. W. A. Koch. He was the contractor at that time, had the, all the trucks at the camp up there. And Al Dawson was the woods supervisor and Art Koch owned the truck.

They both liked their little hooch too. And invariably somebody would be stopping you on the road. We wasn't allowed to have radios, so we had no contact. We, you had to drive by looking across the corner and seeing where the dust was of another truck coming down. That's why Art Bailey got in a wreck. Couldn't see the dust. (laughs) But anyway, every once in a while somebody stop you on the road and say, "Hey Art or Al or both of 'em are down there in the ditch." You gotta stop and pull 'em out. And invariably they couldn't quite handle the road and they'd be off in the ditch someplace. I remember one time I was haulin' the right way out of old Potter's place up there on that Sunset Road, and it was nothing but a gumbo mess.

[01:40:23] You couldn't keep a truck on the road if you tried. So I come down there one time with a load of logs and my trailer slipped off in the ditch and over it went. And there I sat. Old Art Koch come up and he chewed my butt off and he went up the road about a hundred yards and he was in the ditch .

But anyway, the logging really changed. It was quite an experience then. And then, of course, Anaconda took it over and when they sold out, I never did go back there except for just a short time. And I worked a lot of different jobs and wound up driving later years for a couple of the guys part-time. But the logging industry had really changed from then because it was just a great big crew that would go up in the bus in the morning and you'd stay there all day and they had a big oil bus. They called the oil bus, and that's where you ate your lunch and stuff. Knot bumper, he'd be the one to be in there getting' the fire going so everybody'd be warm while they're eatin' their lunch and stuff. But now it's, of course, it's changed. Everybody's got their own rigs and everybody's got brand new rigs and brand new loading equipment. And it's quite a thing. Anyway, that's my history. I never did have many wrecks. (laughter)

[01:41:37] **Glenn Max Smith:** I might add to that. Ed Roberts sent me up there on assignment. I was writing a little article for the Tamarack newsletter and he says, "You need to jump into one of these drivers and spend a day with 'em. See what they do." So I thought, " Boy, I know Keith, he's my brother-in-law. I got an inside track here. Jumped in with Keith and some of them roads you guys drove was something else. And I remember asking Keith, I says, "How in the hell do you get a load of logs down a road like this?" And he told me, he says, "You just point that radiator cap downhill and the rest of it's going to follow. (laughs)

How the hell these guys could pull that off was beyond me. But they did. Did a hell of a job at it too. I still think I got white knuckle marks. You know that seat (gestures holding on)

[01:42:34] **Art Bailey:** I gotta tell you a story about Al Dawson. Al Dawson was a supervisor for the logging department. Big, burley, husky. One of these guys with a, with an ax handle in his hand. And went up to the office one morning and there was two guys there that he just got done firing. And there was two other fellows looking for a job sawin' in the woods there. (unclear) beside him and he said, "If you two guys are going to stand around here, you just as well pick up your tools and get out too. And he fired both of 'em before he even hired them. (laughter) That's the way it was back then. I really liked the man though. He was well respected, but you didn't cross him either.

[01:43:30] **Gene Hertz:** You know the gentleman over there, he was talking about the pine in my basement? (laughter) I have to let you in on it. I was, I graded on the pattern machine. The pattern machine made patterns on boards and I was the last one to look at it before we bundled it up and shipped it off. Anyway, any board that would come through there that I kinda liked... (gestures moving it off to the side) (laughter) It didn't come to the load. It, it took a little route. And we were talking about the cedar two-by-fours and stuff?

Art Bailey: Right here. (gestures to Gene) His house is full cedar.

Gene Hertz: I've got a lot of 'em. (laughter) I got a lot of, but if you ever get a chance to come to my house, my basement has got this paneling in it and in this, in these boards... there was very few of 'em there, but it was hard to get. They had little black eye and black dots in them, in the pine.

Unidentified Speaker: Bird's eye.

Gene Hertz: Bird's eye. They called it, we called it bird's eye pine. My basement is boarded with that. It really looks nice. But it was all hand-picked. I'm guilty. (laughter)

Unidentified Speaker: How long did it take you to get it?

Gene Hertz: Oh, couple a years. (laughter)

[01:45:18] **Glenn Max Smith:** When it comes to the lumber deals like that, there's one fellow we should have made mention to it. His name was Lefty Pleasant. If the world had six thousand more Lefty Pleasants, it would be a great place to live. He helped the mill worker out, by God. If you wanted wood, see Lefty, you gotta buy that just wouldn't quit. You know what a great individual that man was.

Unidentified Speaker: How about Art Ackerson or Charlie Teague?

Unidentified Speaker: You talking about Mutt?

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah. I've never seen Mutt without a smile.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, he was always up some kind of issue, wasn't he? Yeah. I remember as a kid there, Mutt was gradin' out. We had the Victory Gardens, remember down by the mill, right where that stull mill sat. We had these Victory Gardens. You could rent a plot of ground in there and raise a garden, whatever you wanted. But the stull mill come along. Those were to be bulldozed out of there. So the fad in Bonner at that time was these flipper slingshots, and the ammunition was mountain ash berries. And here's Mutt down there in the road maintainer. He's grading that log yard out. He's concentrating on that. And we zinged a mountain ash berry through that cab. And he looked up and seen who it was. That man could run. He chased us halfway up the side of the mountain here. Last time we ever shot a mountain ash berry at old Mutt.

[01:47:16] **Art Bailey:** It's a, it's been wonderful being here and I'm getting' thirsty for some coffee and a cookie, so if there isn't anything else...

[01:36:49] **Judy Matson:** Thank you so much. This has been a joy and really welcome you to the ranks of the old timers because you certainly have earned it with your wonderful stories. And even though I can't believe that any of us are really in that category.

But once again, I've got my list this time. I'd like to again thank Bonner School, St. Ann Church, Friends of Two Rivers, MCAT, the Rural Fire Department, DEQ, the Blackfoot Land and Water Company for making this all possible, and especially our panel and especially all of you who have come to share today because it's really a significant day, I think. We will try to get the word out to you when this is going to be aired on MCAT and it'll take some editing and as soon as we find out when it will be on, we'll get our list there and get the word out so you can get your tapes ready and tape yourself.

One other thing I'd like to mention, some of you have brought pictures. Jim Willis, just the other day, brought some pictures that he had found in a box in his house that had wonderful pictures from the 1920s in the mill. And I know a lot of you also have materials that you perhaps would like to share. The University of Montana archives will accept these digital copies. You can keep your originals and they would be used for educational purposes not commercial purposes. So if any of you are interested in that, let me know or let Jim know and he can put us in touch so that these things can be saved because they're truly a gem.

So I believe as Art said, we have goodies. We have coffee, we've got pictures to look at and more stories to tell, so thank you very much. (applause)

(outro music and credits)