

Boots

By Glenn Smith

Manly Foot Wear--Mill Worker's Choice -- or Attitude Adjusters

Rumors concerning a major rebuild were running rampant at the Bonner Mill during the late 1950's. Everyone seemed to have their own theory, but no one had any idea of the magnitude of this undertaking. Three years later the project was completed, with a state of the arts Planer Complex, Lumber Shipping Department and other improvements in the Sawmill and Dry Kilns. The local news paper featured an entire advertising supplement explaining this mammoth modernization project, and a copy of this Supplement has been preserved in the Bonner Milltown History Center.

The Old Planer

Some important items not mentioned in the Missoulian Supplement was Weather and Supervisors with over inflated egos. This is where my story begins, so lets' go back to the Old Planer Complex which was located much closer to the Blackfoot River. This complex was housed in a drafty old structure which kept the Planers out of the weather, but offered very little else to the hourly employees who operated the machines and sorted and packaged the finished lumber. After all---This is where the (Men worked)---it is not a Country Club!! It did however have a heated restroom which was considered to be the ultiment extravagance, compared to the old rest rooms, which were suspended on floating log booms on the Hot Pond in the river.

Winter on the Blackfoot River

Winter winds could rage down this river with a wind chill factor that would easily rival Siberia. On a calm winter day it was not unusual to see temperatures of -20 and -30 Below. Working in these conditions would inspire the most hardy of workers to seek out a few minutes of warmth during an eight hour shift. Loitering in the Lunch Room was forbidden so the next best place was the Restroom. You could go into the restroom, sit on the Commode, close the privacy door, then soak up a little heat. Great Idea?? Not if you worked with an egotistical Bafoon for a supervisor. The supervisor at this time made a special point of keeping an eye on the restroom and took great pride in charging inside to brow beat any potential loiterer.

Setting up the Bafoon

As the promise of spring and warmer weather was near, the planer crew decided to have a good laugh. After some careful planning it was decided that an old pair of worn work boots would be used as an excellent prop for this simple but effective plot. When the supervisor wasn't looking the old pair of boots would be carried into the restroom and carefully placed in front of the commode. Next the door on the privacy stall around the commode would be closed. The third and final step in this plot would be for an excited employee to inform the supervisor that there was a Slacker in the restroom!!!

Boots

By Glenn Smith

Pg.2

The plot thickens

An excitable employee was chosen to inform the supervisor about the slacker in the restroom, and it was hard for the crew to stifle their snickers as the supervisor took the bait, Hook--Line--and Sinker. With a predictable response, the supervisor almost ran into the office to pick up his pink slips in preparation for an anticipated Termination. Next he crept into the restroom to wait in quiet seclusion while enough time expired to make his termination legal. A loud voice could be heard in the restroom as the supervisor announced his intentions, and demanded that the Slacker come out of the Commode, and pick up his Time Card, as he was now terminated. The lack of a fearful response on the behalf of the slacker, seemed to further antagonize the supervisor. Once again he repeated his threats and this time he kicked the privacy door on the commode open!! This was the Que. for the elated crew to burst into laughter---especially after this elaborate plot worked out so well.

Eating a Little Crow

Word of this humorous set up traveled throughout the entire mill and it was even discussed during staff meetings. It seemed to tickle the funny bones of upper management. With the start up of the new planer complex and the tune up process that followed, this story seemed to die out with the exception of a few "Old Timers". Was the attitude adjustment effective? It lasted for a little while but eventually many more diabolical and equally humorous plots played out before this supervisor went into retirement. Was he missed after retirement?? NO!! But the stories about him and his ego continue to this day.