

11 Bonner History Roundtable: Women Working at the Mill

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Glenn Max Smith

Lola Mae LeProwse

Maybelle Bonnet

This program has been edited for clarity.

(intro music playing with credits)

[00:00:59] **Glenn Max Smith:** Is everybody ready for the show? Okay. First off, my name, if you don't know me: Max Smith, Glenn, they call me, Hooligan - just depends on what part of Bonner you were from. Today we're going to do a series on the women that worked at the mill. Before we get started, I don't wear a hat in church, but I'm gonna wear my jelly bean hat.

So, the reason I wear this is right after I retired, I went to Germany. I went to France. I've done some neat things in this old hat. I've stood underneath the Eiffel Tower. Had my picture taken at the castle of Versailles in France. I've stood in the middle of Paris. I've done some great things. Today, this is another great thing. So I'm going to wear my jellybean hat and I'm going to take it off now, for all the ladies who worked at this mill. I can't imagine it without them.

So, to get started, I'll start a little bit about myself. I started back in, August, 1960, it was the 8th of August. Yum Karkanen, I believe was your uncle.

Diana Hendrix: Yes.

Glenn Max Smith: He came up to me and he said, "Hey, there's a job down here, you get down there and sign up." So I did. I went down to personnel, my clock number was 1102, and I went to work and they told me, "You be here tonight, go on the green chain, you're working for Bob Clubb."

I went down to the green chain, found Mr. Bob Clubb, and he says, "You're going to be pulling the 12-foot station and help out wherever you're needed if it doesn't get too busy." So, okay, I think, "I can do this."

Little did I know, that green chain was a killer. I mean, you needed - and I think I fit that bill pretty good - you needed a size two hat and a 56 coat. Some of that lumber that came out of there was huge. Some of those boards were over 200, 300 pounds a piece on shop. So it was no place for the weak at heart.

So, I'm down there and I'm thinking, "Oh God, get me through this shift and I won't ask for much else."

So, the next day I came out, and [it was the] same thing. Mr. Anton Iverson comes up, he was union president at the time. He said, "How are you doing?"

I said, "Man, I didn't bargain for anything like this."

So, he looked at me and he said, "Well, I'll tell you right now, this is where the men work. If you can't handle it, you go home to your mom." (laughter) And oh, what an attitude adjustment there. All right, take a deep breath, let's buck up.

Now a little bit about the equipment in that old mill: there was one piece in there, called a Swedish gang saw. Cal, I think you remember that.

Cal Bonnet: Yeah, I worked on it.

Glenn Max Smith: That thing had a production of 60,000 board feet per shift. And where did all that go? It went through there, right out to the green chain. Guess who was down there pulling that stuff?

To give you an idea, of some of the weights, we had 14 dry kilns. Each one of them had a 45,000 board/foot capacity and the amount of water that could evaporate out of those kilns was 40, or excuse me, 125,000 tons per shift. So, to give you an idea how heavy that stuff was before it went to the dry kilns, it was damned heavy.

[00:05:14] I'm thinking, you know, "Just how long am I gonna stand up to this?" Tony Iverson, a few of the old boys, Haagland, Ole Hallgren, a few of those guys, they made it. I'm wondering, "Boy, can I do this?"

Fortunately, at that time, Clyde Weed was chairman of the board for the Anaconda Company, Edward Renouard was vice president, and of course Bob Sheridan was plant manager at the time. They all had a big huddle.

"We're going to build this great huge complex." And that's the big square building you see there, right by the highway.

That thing came in and it was supposed to be state of the art, and it was. There were machines there that can now stack the lumber that we used to struggle off that green chain and the old dry chain. It had a trimmer system in [it] that was rather unique. Lola here, worked on that trimmer and it was not so much labor intensive, as it was requiring a person, or an operator, who had good hand-eye coordination. Because, a lot of lumber went through there, but you had a series of keys. So when the lumber came to you, you had a lug loader, from the lug loader it was singulated into an input zone of about 24 inches, between two yellow lines. So, that board flopped in there and you had to make a decision, in fact, several decisions: how long the board was, how much to saw off the near-end, how much to saw off the far-end, and where it was going to go to be stacked as there were four stackers below it.

So you had to pick out and set that machine up for one of those four stackers, or if it didn't fit the stacker, set it to a hand-pull chain. Lola operated that, and I thought, rather well. That thing could click up to 60 lugs a minute. So every second, a board was flopping in there, and Lola and some of the other gals that ran that machine had to make all those decisions within those two yellow strips, and they had to be accurate. And they were!

I went in after shift, later on I went into maintenance, and part of my job was to go through and see the quality of what we were producing. I'd break a load down, and it would be right on the money, the right grade, the right grade stamps, right lengths, everything was there. So that pointed out that you don't need a size two hat and a 56 coat. At that time, you needed good hand-eye coordination. That also led into straddle buggy operator. Where's Sylvia [Bolke]? All right, Sylvia. Everybody know what a straddle buggy is?

unknown speaker: Yeah, I do.

Glenn Max Smith: It's a big, long-legged thing that drives completely over the top of the load lumber, sets the shoes, lifts the load, and away you go - provided you've gotten all of the carrier bucks hooked. Sylvia could run in there with that, right along with the best of any guy operator I ever saw, pick those loads up, and she transported them out of there.

Same with the lift truck operators. A lot of these gals ran a lift truck. Any lift truck operators out here? That took a lot of hand-eye coordination. But again, it didn't take this size two hat and a 56 coat. It took good hand-eye coordination to get the forks in, get the balance right, and lift it. They had to consider centers of gravity; which way that load was sitting going up a hill, down a hill, sideways on a hill, you didn't want to tip that thing over. But they made those decisions every bit as well as the guys did.

So anyway, we have the new square building. We've got the state-of-the-art stacking machines and trimmers. We've got some overhead cranes, I ran one for a good many years. Which reminds me of a funny story, we had a little gal come in- I wish Joanne was here, or Lou- she was just a young gal who came onto the workforce learning how to stack lumber on a resort chain.

[00:10:07] And I thought, "Wouldn't it be funny if I got halfway up to my crane, wadded up a handful of big old snow balls, and pelted her with them?" Because I could be safe, I'm halfway to my crane. There's a bunch of bracing, and Gus is up in the roof to protect me, so there's no way she can retaliate. Wrong. I should not have done that.

I tossed that snowball down there and that little gal was a slow pitch softball champion. She ran around the side of the building, grabbed up a wad of snowballs, and I don't think there was one square inch of my body mass that wasn't pelted. I got down in the crane and I had the window open about that far in the cab, and I think before I could realize what in the blazes happened, there's about another a hundred pounds of snow coming through that window. So again, I had to reevaluate, you know, don't mess with these gals. There are some things they are really good at, and if you have to find out the hard way, don't pick slow pitch champion.

So anyway, we ran the big square building and we had a lot of fun. Hank, Sylvia, Lola, lots of gals worked in there, Joann McDonald worked there. We had a good time, this was a good crew, and then we started running to the end of the wire.

That old building with those cranes, there were three cranes in there and each one weighed 65 tons, running back and forth and back and forth until the old building creaked and started shifting in their bolt holes. And some of the gussets got a little bit egg-shaped, so it was really tough to keep those cranes and their tracks lined up and true. So we had wore out the machinery, we had wore out the building, and we had also sawed every big log we could lay our hands on.

The plywood plant came in. They needed big logs. Now, traditionally a stud mill takes the tops and the smaller stuff that the plywood folks can't use. So here we are with a great big building and - where's Cal?- Okay, if

hadn't been for Cal, that sawmill as we had it towards the end there from 1988 to now, I don't think would ever have gotten off of the ground.

That man put more work into that mill to make it work and make it produce. And it did produce. But now we've gone from sort of high-tech machines that don't need much physical labor- a lot of hand and eye coordination - now we're going to tie on a computer to them. We've got these programmable logic controllers that can be wired into that machine, or several machines, and tell them to do A-B-C-D, whatever else was programmed in. Also, there was a series of scanners that could look at that damn log and activate a machine to turn it, to get the best cut, to cock it, and line it up for that end dogger to grab. And then it was wham-bam, it went through there, and had boards come out the back end.

I was called on one time to make a video for Whitey Heist. He wanted to see this plant when she run. So I made a video and I had one shot in there I was real fond of. Sittin' in the operator's chair of that end dogger was Alice Yeager. She's got ahold of the controls and Alice was going to go out, I think it was her anniversary or some special occasion, so she just had a fresh manicure. Her nails looked perfect. And here's this lady with this beautiful hand, runnin' this machine that was just gobblin' up logs like there was no tomorrow. So she pulled that off. She did good. Of course, there were a lot of other gals down in the plant, and that's why I take my jellybean hat off to these ladies. They're pretty spectacular.

unknown speaker: Amen.

Glenn Max Smith: What they did out there. So, with that, I'll turn it over to Lola a little bit, if you want to tell how that trimmer ran or can you remember that?

Lola Mae LeProwse: Well, what I'd like to say is, Marge Bogus, Marion Benedict and I were the first three women out there. Stand up, girls. (applause)

[00:15:02] We worked on, we pulled on the, you tell it. You tell it.

Marge Bogus: Well, we worked on the, when we were first hired, we worked on the round table.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Oh, that's right. Yeah. Okay. Mm-hmm. And the planer where we worked on that, we pulled,

Marge Bogus: You pulled on the one up there, you ran the stacker, didn't you?

Lola Mae LeProwse: Yeah. But when we first started, we pulled on the dry chain underneath the overhead cranes. Yeah. And where did you go from there?

Marge Bogus: I had the worst nightmare learning how to band the packages coming in.

Lola Mae LeProwse: All the banders?

Marge Bogus: Yeah.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Oh yeah. I had one of the bands break and the whole machine hit me in the face and I flipped back on my back, so it really hurt. So, oh no! (gets microphone)

Glenn Max Smith: Now you're on the spot.

Lola Mae LeProwse: It was really fun working out there with those guys and the guys in overhead cranes. They gave us a bad time, but we got even when they would go to sleep, they'd go home from work and they'd be sleeping up in their cranes and we'd leave them up there.

Glenn Max Smith: Gene Donaldson.

Lola Mae LeProwse: No, it was really a fun experience and a lot of years of... and then I didn't work there very long. Then I came back to plywood and then I worked in plywood for 15 years. So, I put in a lot of years there, do you want add something girls?

unknown speaker: No, you did good.

Judy Matson: I have a question. Can I ask a question? (Lola Mae LeProwse: Sure.) How did you happen to apply for a job there?

Lola Mae LeProwse: I don't know how to...

Marion Benedict: It was a friend that worked there at the mill and told us they were going to hire women.

Lola Mae LeProwse: That's right.

Marion Benedict: And so he told my sister and I that we should go up there and apply for a job because we lived on a ranch

Lola Mae LeProwse: And it was the three of us. Yes. And oh, an interesting thing. My dad and their mother were good friends when they were young people and he'd ride his horse from Beavertail Hill to Missoula to go up Miller Creek riding with them. So it was kind fun that we were family friends way back.

Glenn Max Smith: You know, another lady I think we need to pay tribute to, I don't see her here today, is Betty Jo Flemming Johnson.

unknown speaker: Oh. Yea.

Glenn Max Smith: I think she was instrumental in getting this set up to try...

unknown speaker: For the women. Yeah.

Glenn Max Smith: The ladies in the workforce. Betty Jo, I'd known her since my Hooligan days in Bonner, and she was the go-to lady. If you needed information on something within the plant, somebody who worked there or whatever, you went to Betty Jo, and then there were other secretaries and whatnot that took her place and did just as good a job. But Betty Jo was the first one, and I think she got this ball rolling.

unknown speaker: Yeah, she was a great lady.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, she was great. Her mom was a postmistress at the post office down there.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Oh really?

Glenn Max Smith: And she was just a Bonner fixture for a long time. I kind of miss her. I wish we could have seen her today.

Maybelle Bonnet: Never thought of her. I should have called her..

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Sylvia, have you had any comments on running that straddle buggy?

Sylvia Bolke: All I know was just the towing. It was great to run, you know, and I always liked machinery, but really didn't have a head for most of it. But, that straddle buggy was just fantastic.

Glenn Max Smith: All right. Yes, sir.

Jim Habeck: Somebody's gonna ask this eventually. Did you have your own restrooms?

several speakers: Yeah, yeah, we did.

Glenn Max Smith: Kind of all along those lines, we had several restrooms. Somebody took an old pair of coveralls, stuffed them with newspaper, I think, and put a hard hat on it and set it on the commode in one of the ladies' restrooms. We had the one lady that had to go terrible. She said, "Do you think they would mind if I used the men's bathroom? I can't wait."

Seeing the look on her face prompted me to say, "Go in and throw that stuffed dummy out of there. Somebody's pulling your leg."

[00:19:53] **Lola Mae LeProwse:** Who somebody is. (pointing to Smith. Laughter)

Marge Bogus: We've not played your joke too. When we were in cut-up and they shut down cut-up for a while, they put us over in the planers. First thing we would do was to pull the boards into the conveyor that went to the chipper.

Glenn Max Smith: Oh, okay.

Bogus: And we were using shovels and well, we didn't know nothing, but we got down there by that like the eye and shut the chipper off. That was a big... that was funny.

Glenn Max Smith: Hank, where are you at? There you are. Hank worked out on that conveyor for a long time. I think we pulled toy stock down there. So they called it Fisher Price, there were some good pieces of that. Yeah. And Hank took care of that, ran that show real good.

There was one night in particular, and I shouldn't tell these damn funny stories, but here's another one. The chipper was down, it was a hog then, we didn't have a chipper.

unknown speaker: Yeah, a hog.

Glenn Max Smith: It went down and Bob Paulson went and got a dump truck. He's going to get his winter supply of firewood. He's going to do it the easy way. "You just bring that truck in there, he'll raise the box and they'll throw those trim ends up in there. That way we can keep running."

So the first half of the shift, we generated about three quarters of a dump truck load, and as the box fell, they would just pull the lever and the hydraulics would relax and the dump would go down. By noon-time the box was full. "Get ahold of Paulson and tell him get this danggone truck out of here."

Paulson jumped in, fires the engine up. He didn't go 10 feet - in fact, that box was still in position to be lifted - and as he started out the door, he raised the box up and scattered the whole load right back out the door again. So he was ready to kill all of us. So he said, "Oh, it's your wood, you loaded up down there. See, you around." Okay.

unknown speaker: That was fun.

Glenn Max Smith: I better shut up.

unknown speaker: Keep going.

Glenn Max Smith: One other area I'd like to hit on, I don't want to cut anybody's time down. We had a lot of fun in the mill granted, but there was some secretaries out here that a good friend of mine, Roy Robinson, told me, "[If] You treat those ladies with respect, you can just about do anything you want in this plant. They will support you."

For me, it was, "Where's the donuts?"

So by behaving myself and respecting these ladies, all I had to do was ask where the donuts were and they would point them out. I lived high on the hog there for a while, once I minded my manners.

But, when we rebuilt the mill the last time, corporate headquarters wanted a training program and they picked a bunch of us to be trainers.

We had to learn how to write these manuals and whatnot. We had on our team - and I see Dick Anthony in the back - he was responsible for recruiting a gal to help write these manuals, to give a lady's point of view on how these machines should be operated. Because, for a guy's point of view, we're interested in the horsepower of the drive motor and the size of the drive chains and all this.

But to explain this to a lady is a little bit different. And Terry Yeager was good at that. During high school, or the little high school I had, I didn't pay much attention to how to type. So I could get by, I knew the basics of A S D F, but I'd sit down in there beside Terry Yeager and she would just slaughter the words out. I mean, they'd come out of there, so daggone fast, you couldn't hear the clicking of the keyboards. But yet, I would sit there, you know, peck, peck, peck. So they had talents, those ladies had real talents and they kept the business part of our plant going, I think. There was no way any of us guys out there could have done that.

Okay. I don't know too much about plywood, but I do have, sitting beside me right here... oops.

[00:24:43] **Judy Matson:** I have another question. I'm full of questions... would anyone like to just tell us what was it like after almost a century of a man-dominated thing to go into a big noisy building for the first time. How did you find your way around? What kind of training did you get? How did you learn the terminology and did you get any guff from the guys?

Sylvia Bolke: Oh yeah, we did. One of my first things that really got my attention, I had this one fellow, and I don't even remember who he was, but after shift, I stayed an hour longer than everybody else. After the shift was over, then I had to clean up the press over there in the dryer thing. See, girls don't really remember what you call them. He came up to me and he told me that I was keeping a good man with the family from having a job, and I never will forget how that felt.

And I told him, "That good man with the family had just as much chance to get a job as I did. And if he didn't mind, I would continue my job and he could take his mouth elsewhere." (applause)

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Along those lines, this tricked another little memory. You all know Lu Waddington?

several speakers: Oh, yeah.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay, Lu had an unfortunate situation happen to her, where her husband passed away. She was now, after that death, was the breadwinner. And I think Betty Jo helped get her, because now she had to step up to the plate. She had three kids, Mike, Eddie, and I can't remember the girl's name.

unknown speaker: Debbie. Debbie.

Glenn Max Smith: Debbie. Three girls [kids] she had to support and I think she started out at the old box factory and then came to the planer. But while she was in the planer, there was never a day that went by that she didn't have some kind of story to tell us. And usually it was humorous. And one particular story I remember her telling was, I think she told Jim Willis and I the same story at the same time, and it sucked us both in.

She says, "Hey, guess what? I got a new boyfriend."

And we said, "Well, Lu, that's fine. You know, really good."

And she said, "Well, I don't know. He's moved in with me and I can't get the son-of-a-gun to move out."

Well, instantly I'm mad. Who is this clown that's taken advantage of my good friend? And she could not suppress her laughter.

She said, "His name is Arthur. Arthur Itis." (laughter)

I was hoping Lu would be here to tell that story 'cuz she could tell that such a way that would put you in stitches.

But I do remember the good old boys, like Judy said, "This is a man's mill." What a load of crap. It was up until, I think, about 19, the early 1960s. Once we remodeled and these newer machines came online, that old theory went out the window.

And I should pick on the old timers. Some of these old boys are pretty good. But, if we look at good old boys' attitudes, look in the Blackfoot River, and the bottom of that river, now that the water's come down. This was, back in those days, if you came up with a good idea, "Why don't we bring those logs directly into the mill on a truck or railroad car?"

"Baloney! We've done it this way for the past hundreds of years. It's worked, there isn't any sense in changing." Their attitudes were kind of like that. So every time I look in the bottom of the river, that thought hits my mind. It's a good thing that those old boys kind of got shoved aside. And while progress took over.

Marge Bogus: Well, I was gonna tell you, why we got hired in the first place. We were hired just to cut up the round table, cause none of the guys liked to stand here and put boards up here and there. And that's why they tried hiring the women. That was such a tedious job, they didn't like it and increasing[ly] the round table was just piled with wood all over, and they'd just stand there looking.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, there were places out there where we needed both the men and the women. Now there were some jobs out there, like wrestling a big drive motor around, or changing a heavy shaft or something, it didn't take a rocket scientist to know that a lady couldn't handle that, or a big piece of piping in Frank's case.

[00:30:01] **Dick Anthony:** I can, I disagree with you there?

Glenn Max Smith: Okay.

Dick Anthony: Carrie Yeager, I don't know how many of you know her because she was just over anything, up on the log deck. She used to run that. "Can you go up there to help her wrestle those big logs around?" She'd have nothing to do with it. You left her alone to do her job.

Glenn Max Smith: All right.

Dick Anthony: She did a lot of that.

unknown speaker: That's right.

Dick Anthony: Her mother, Alice, I... Cal [Bonnet] can... boy, used to set the small log side, and I wasn't used to being around women in the mill, and we had our little sign languages for numbers. Well, I had to get her to set that canter at eight inches. Well, this was eight. (gestures with middle finger)

I'm sitting there... She said, "Go like that." (Gestures emphatically with finger)

Glenn Max Smith: I love it. Thanks. Okay. Any more on the mill side? Any more comments on that?

unknown speaker: What do you mean, the plywood mill or fiber mill or both?

Glenn Max Smith: We broke this up into the lumber department and the plywood department. So everything to do with lumber production was from the sawmill back to plywood.

Now the woods crew, they supplied both of us, but when I speak of the lumber or the mill, I'm referring to the lumber department and then the plywood department. Was there any more on that, for the lumber mill? So I'll kind of shift gears and we'll get into plywood.

Judy Matson: So, here I am again, but for those of us who don't know, I don't know anything about the mill except the wonderful information I've learned from everybody in this room. So, being a woman, and I wouldn't know the name of any of the machinery anyway, but I wanna know, what did you do when you got home? Were you like mad? Were you tired? Were you...

several speakers: You were tired. Tired. Tired

Judy Matson: So when you went in there for the first time, who took you to where you were supposed to work and showed you how to do it?

Maybelle Bonnet: You didn't do anything. You went there that night and you met a boss and they told you what to do. (several speakers: That's right.) That's how you learned your job. So you didn't have no idea what you were in for until you walked into that plant that night.

Henrietta (Hank) Hernandez: When I first started to work over here in Bonner on the planer, they said there'd be somebody there to meet you, huh? And they'll direct you to where you have to go? There was nobody to meet you.

So all of a sudden you just take off walkin', so where am I goin' and so I keep on goin'. I'm sure if I get through one of these doors, I'll find out where I'm going. So all of sudden find yourself where you're supposed to go. You ask this guy, "Where's the boss?"

"I don't know."

"I'm here to work."

"We'll see if we can find the boss." Well, by that time, you're already late to work. (laughter) So, all of a sudden, they find the boss and here he comes.

"Oh, I'm sorry I didn't meet you."

"No, that's fine." I'm late for work. I'm probably gonna get in trouble. You go work, scared to death. So anyways, he finally (unclear) along, "Here's where you go."

Boy, I'll tell you, it was a scary, scary place. Not knowing where you're at, where you're going, the work that you're gonna do, you don't know one thing from the other. So you start out in utility cleanup, you get done with that. And then you go from different jobs, like from utility cleanup on the dry chain, or pulling the lumber. You don't know what you're really doing because you don't know one thing from the other. That's a two-by-four from the one inch.

We had this old chain boss, he'd say, "Well, they didn't build Rome in one day." So that's how that went.

Well, when you get off work, you'd go home. You were scared to death, you were crying cause you'd say, "Man, I don't know how am I gonna ever learn this job. I don't know one thing from the other."

So, you had sore hands, sore feet, sore everything- shoulders and neck. Well, you did survive 'cause you kept on going and going. And, you finally learned where you had to do this and that and it went on, and on, and on. That's how that went. I put in 17 years, and it was fun, it was a challenge, and I loved it. I wish we still had it, I'd probably still be gathering the challenges.

[00:35:06] **Judy Matson:** So did you guys have each other? Or, I mean, were there enough women that you talked to somebody else about it or were you just kind of there?

several speakers: You were just there.

Frank Betts: Sometimes you could talk to somebody else who had been there, if you had enough time to before the job started. If you came early enough to work to find out where you were supposed to go. Quite often though, on-the-job training was maybe from two minutes to an hour, you know, at the most. But they put you on a job. That's what you're supposed to do. Don't forget what he told you or she told you, better just remember what to do.

unknown speaker: So that's for men and women?

Frank Betts: And that was the training. Later years, yeah, they did get better about job training. But, for the most part, a lot of it, training didn't last very long. You got started right now.

Henrietta (Hank) Hernandez: Yeah, you'd either work it or you weren't going to have a job.

Frank Betts: Might as well go home and stay there. Go back to mama, like he said. (laughter)

Marion Benedict: It didn't take much brains to know how to stack a little block so it wouldn't fall.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah.

Marion Benedict: You know, it just took time.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah. This was embarrassing, and it never really changed, until we rebuilt the last time. And I've got to take my hat off to Dick for this. I think the team was a task force, was what they called us, the training team task force, was to go through and identify some of these problems. And it was not just for the ladies, it was for the men too. So we had what we called, we made up a kind of a little manual for new employee orientation. And in that manual was the department that they worked in, their supervisor, the breaks, the times with the breaks, where the restrooms were, where the fire extinguishers were, emergency evacuation if we had to get out of the plant, what to do if somebody got hurt, what procedure we would go through to get the ambulance, EMS, out here into the mill site. So this was quite detailed. It even included a lockout procedure. Some of these machines, you had to lock them down so they couldn't accidentally start up and get you. It was quite a procedure.

So, we actually took them through a lockout procedure with just one lock to one motor and had them go through and make sure they knew how to disconnect it from the stop/start switch first, over to the MCC panel to throw that MCC panel, to put the padlock in. All this took place, but how many years did it take us to get to that point? Since 1896 until 1988.

unknown speaker: More than 50 years.

Glenn Max Smith: It took a long time to get to that point.

Lefty Pleasant: I would imagine that procedure though, with all industry, you'd have seen that from the beginning of time to (unclear) what to do.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, we made a lot of progress. What I hate to see is the fact that we still ain't over there doin' it. I think there are new generations that could be coming in that could have as much fun and an accept a challenge like we did. I'd love to see that happen. Its kind of lonesome over there now, except for this big huge deck of logs out here.

Judy Matson: So who interviewed you girls? Who did you go to when you applied? How did you know you got your job and stuff?

Maybelle Bonnet: The way I did it, I went in and gave them my application and they called me and said, "Go and have your physical." You went and had your physical and you were called to work that night.

Frank Betts: Right. You went right to the main office and filled out an application.

several speakers: I went to Jim Conley. Yeah. Jim Conley's, right? Yeah. Well, I called the white (unclear) after. Oh, they were there together. Julia. Yeah, Julie. Julie wants to talk.

Julia Nagel: I came in late. I just got here from Coeur d' Alene. I haven't been home yet, so I don't know what I missed, but I worked for 33 years up there. When I first started, it was Anaconda Company and they took me in and I started out making laminated beams.

I didn't work there very long because someone else liked that job better than me, that had more time. So I got bumped and they put me back over into the saw mill and I was on utility and I was put in quite a few different places. I even worked down on the pond. And every time I was put on a job like that, my supervisor always apologized to me because he hated to put me out there.

[00:40:09] But, you know, I liked it. I did step off the water once because there was so much bark. You couldn't tell what was wood and what was water, and I stepped off and went into the pond. But, I worked a few (unclear) down there and it was always graveyard.

And then I worked in the center of the saw mill. I'm not sure just what they called it, but it was where you would sort the lumber and send it according to the size and whatever it was. And you would push buttons when it went through. And it seemed like I was the only woman in there. A lot of the guys were watching me to see me make mistakes and, I didn't make very many. But, I was also put out on the tramway and that was a hard job.

unknown speaker: Been there.

Julia Nagel: But you know, the foreman thought that I could do it pretty good because he would take others off and put me out there and I didn't mind doing that. I usually had a pretty good partner and you could flip those, they were like six-by-six-by-twelve. They were good size pieces and you'd pull them off and stack them up. And I didn't have too much trouble with that. The only thing is, where you would stand was getting kind of rotten and I fell through that once.

I was off for a year before U.S. Plywood started, and that because we went up ranching at my folks' place. So I started about a year later, after most of the others had started.

I worked on the round table. I worked in the molding department. I worked, I guess that was pretty much it there. And then I worked for all the companies up through Stimson and I really enjoyed it. I got to know a lot of people. I worked 12 years on graveyard and I did that because I had kids and I was able to go home, get them to school, and I had a baby even, and I would sleep when he slept. I didn't get much sleep. There were times I'd get about three, four hours sleep a day. And, it was hard, but it was a way that I could be with my kids. I could take them to school if I needed to, be at home when I needed to, and when my daughter was in the eighth grade, I even started the drill team. I'd go home from work, go up to the school, worked with the eighth grade, seventh and eighth grade girls, and I was able to do those things because I was working graveyard. And, I liked it.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Didn't you run the lift truck over in (unclear) for a while?

Julia Nagel: Yes.

Glenn Max Smith: Yes. I think you were one of the better operators.

Julia Nagel: Oh, well, I don't know about that.

Glenn Max Smith: Well, that's what Jim said. Anyway,

Julia Nagel: I drove the lift truck for quite a while, quite a few years.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, you had a lot of experience on it.

Julia Nagel: Yes.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, she was the kind of lady we went to if we had a question on operating procedure. She was one that always came up, because of her time on that lift.

Jim Habeck: Is that a job she could do while being pregnant?

Julia Nagel: No, when I was pregnant, I was pulling veneer off of the tables. It was a hot job because that was a hot spot.

Jim Habeck: What was the actual hire date of the first women when you first started out there?

Several speakers: It was in '68. It was '68. Yeah. '68. Yeah. I think so. Yeah.

Glenn Max Smith: Rumors were flying about the big remodel for the square buildings and boy, there were all kinds of rumors. Yeah. It was going to be this and that and the other. And finally, when it got started, it was huge. Like nothing we could even imagine. And I think that took about three years to finish that. So we're up into the early sixties, one, two or three years into that. Then, when Lu had that unfortunate situation with her husband, I think that was about '68 when she came in.

[00:45:14] **Jim Habeck:** Are we talking about married couples both being employed?

several speakers: Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.

Jim Habeck: Maybe in different shifts?

Frank Betts: That lady back there, she ran the forklift in plywood. Her husband ran the forklift on the front of the planer over here. He ran a bigger forklift, not that she couldn't have handled it. But yeah, they employed both husband and wife.

Unknown speaker: Were there any serious accidents in this particular mill?

Glenn Max Smith: Yes, we had some terrific ones, but it was men mainly.

Lola Mae LeProwse: No, wait a minute, there was one in the planer, right? I was feeding the dryer and there was a little gal on the other end sorting it and she caught her arm in the cog and it took her arm off. Yeah, it was the dryer that I was working on.

Glenn Max Smith: What was her name?

Lola Mae LeProwse: Sandy. Sandy something.

Glenn Max Smith: Blush. Sandy Blush.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Okay. That was the day I'll never forget.

Glenn Max Smith: Yes. You know, we'd like to lay some of those things behind us, and I think we made a serious attempt towards the end. But boy, there for a while, we did have a wildcat strike. I don't want to get into that too much, but it got to the point to where it literally came to that, and I wish some of our nurses could be out here because they in turn, helped turn that around.

They set up an emergency..Let's say that plant was to get hit by a terrorist or something, they had plans in place. They coordinated with the hospital and civil defense. They had a really elaborate well-working plan but, it didn't happen until after we had hurt so many people in that sawmill and other places in the plant, before we finally got to that point. I'm kind of proud of those gals for what they did. Helen Homme, for one. What a grand lady she was.

Judy Matson: 33 years is a wonderful career at any job. How about the rest of you? Did you work a long period of time there as well?

several speakers: I worked 12 years, 43 and a half years. 15. 17.

Marge Bogus: Well, you only worked about four. We worked for Anaconda.

Lola Mae LeProwse: I worked four to start with, then I came back and went in plywood, and that was 15 more.

Glenn Max Smith: That's a long time. That's a long time.

Judy Matson: How about some of the rest?

Unknown speaker: 33.

Frank Betts: 43 years.

Several speakers: 33. Jim. Have Jim. How many? How many Jim?

Glenn Max Smith: Hey Jimmie, how many did you have?

Jim Willis: 43.

Glenn Max Smith: 43? I had 45.

Jim Willis: I worked though. (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: (laughing) You got me on that one!

Judy Matson: And we have to know what some of the pranks were because at the History Center we get these stories. So, I know Hank has a few, but I don't know if she wants to share. But that, putting the wood...

Henrietta (Hank) Hernandez: Oh, putting those trims in that guy's truck?

Judy Matson: Yeah. Do you wanna tell that?

Henrietta (Hank) Hernandez: So. He says, I'll say his name, "Would you pick up trim ends and put them in my truck and I want the good ones."

"Huh? Okay."

"Not too much pitch, just a little, not much."

And so, you know the old saying, "What goes around comes around?" Well, I'll get even with him. I'd get the trim ends and then I'd put the good ones here, and then in the middle I'd put the really pitchy ones, and then I'd turn them upside down and really have a lot of pitch. And I'd put those on the driver's side because when he got in, he could move them wherever and he wore cowboy boots and slacks and the western type thing. So when he got in the truck, he slides those over and all that pitch was there.

He'd say, "Next time, would you not get so much pitch."

I said, "Hey, these boards have a lot of pitch. What do you want me to do about it?"

"Well, I don't want a lot of pitch." He said,

[00:50:11] "Okay." So I'd try not to, but it was kind of hard not to. (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: Oh, so you better tell us his name cause we want to have a good laugh. Hey, he ain't here. If he was, we promise he won't beat you up.

Henrietta (Hank) Hernandez: I ain't afraid of him anyway.

Glenn Max Smith: I didn't think so.

Judy Matson: So how about the rest of you? Are there other things, we don't have to name names, but, ways that you kind of equalized the playing field a little bit?

several speakers: I hoping the plywood plants. Okay, I'm gonna talk. That's alright. It doesn't matter.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay, I guess we're ready to go into the plywood plant. I'm sure there's great stories coming out of there.

Maybelle Bonnet: Yeah, I started on the dryers when I first went there in '76.

unknown speaker: And your name is?

Maybelle Bonnet: Maybelle Bonnet. Anyway, but I'm not going to go on the dryers first 'cuz I spend most of my time on the green end. I started as a chipper operator down there, and that was really a demanding job because there were three chippers going at all times. We had four lathes running, and if the chippers weren't running, the green end was shut down.

So, you really had to be on your toes. You really had to run underneath these chains because the lathes were over these great big belts that were coming from the lathes over the top of you. And when the chipper would go down, you'd have to run and shut all the lathes off. So, I mean, it was just constantly running back and forth, keeping everything going. So anyway, I did that and then, they broke me in as the clipper spotter. There, the sheets of veneer would come from the lathes and you would sort them out. And if the wood was bad, then you clipped it in spots. And they were random lengths. The big boards were 54 inches wide, then they went to 27, and then it was like a fishtail and they were random pieces.

And that went to the green chain and the guys pulled it off that. I did have to pull on the green chain once in a while, but not too often because I had other jobs that the bosses would put me on.

I did work out in the vats and the vats were where the logs were put in the water, a hot bath of a hundred eighty five degrees, and they stayed in there from six to eight hours. So the bark was usually off of it, but that would take all the frost out of the logs. And we had two women that ran the vats, ever since I went there, the whole time I was there, they were running them and they were still running them when I left the plywood plant.

I also worked out on the corner and that was where the logs came from the log processors. I had a couple of guys out there that were just really turds, that's what they were. (laughter) We had logs 30-inches that would come around this corner and if they came and you weren't watching them, you might have a pile of logs before you could get out there to stop the chain and you'd take your peavey and go out there and get them big logs running on the chains again.

I can always remember, and every time Bob Hall sees me, he was the supervisor over in the log processor, and he always says, "I cannot believe that those guys wouldn't come out and help you."

And I'd say, "You know, it's a man's world and I wasn't going to let those guys say that I couldn't do the job when I was there." And sometimes it took me 15 minutes to get those logs movin' again, but I usually got 'em movin'.

Glenn Max Smith: You betcha.

Maybelle Bonnet: So anyway, from there I went... That was most of the things that I did in the green end. From there, when I first started, I went on the dryers. When I walked in that night, I was scared and my boss was a good person and he said, "Well, you're gonna go on cleanup."

And when you go on cleanup, the first job you have to do is learn how to feed dryers and (unclear) on the dryers because the dryers never shut down. So they're always ... So, for the breaks and for the lunch hour, they run constantly on the shift. There were two people and you'd feed this wood in as fast as you can, and you wanted to keep it full because the bosses really liked them to be full. And so anyway, then it would come out the other end and the graders would grade it and go from there.

[00:55:16] There was one job I never did do, and I never did work on the plug machine. That was where the veneers had holes in them. They would go to the pluggers and they could be a dollar size or whatever, and there would be a plug that would go into that hole to make a good sheet of veneer.

Then I went down to the spreaders. And, you only went on these jobs when somebody didn't show up for work and stuff, unless you had a bid job. I was just on cleanup, and so I was from here, to there, to everywhere. And I really enjoyed the spreaders. There were four people that worked on the spreaders. One would feed the veneer through the glue roller, and it would come out, and there was a guy that would lay it on the piece of veneer.

There were two guys that stood on the other side and they would flip this big piece of veneer over their heads and it would make the piece of plywood. I know when I first started, I hit a, the guys in the back of the head and I thought, "Oh my God, they're gonna really scream at me." But they were really good about it and said, "Well, you've got to learn."

But, I worked on there a lot because I was tall and I could really flip it with the guys that I was working with. Plus if you really got good production out, you got a bonus with your paycheck. So I really enjoyed working on the spreaders.

So really, I worked from one end of the plywood to the other end. I didn't work in shipping or anything, but I have to say I worked with a good group of people.

And another thing I did when I got down on the green end I started ... When I worked on the dryers, they always had a Christmas party and we didn't have one on the green end. And so I went up to my boss, which was Bob Clubb, and I said, "Hey, Bob, how about me getting' together with the guys and doin' a Christmas luncheon?"

And he said, "Well, I'll talk it over with John Peters and we'll see what we can do".

So he went and he said, "Oh, yeah, you can do that."

So anyway, I started making coffee every morning when I got there and we charged, I can't remember, it was five or 10 cents a cup, and that would always supply our silverware, our paper plates, and our meat for our Christmas luncheon. The guys, their wives were so good about bringing different potlucks and stuff and we just had a really good time. And I have to say, I really enjoyed working at the plywood. I had really good bosses and I think that women really got respect from the men too. If you showed that you really were willing to work with them, they respected you for what you did. (applause)

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Another comment I'd like to make, during my career, some of it I worked, some of it I didn't. This one might be one that maybe I didn't work on too much. I shouldn't say that because Sue helped me through a lot of this stuff. We were on the Tamarack editorial committee, and for our mission statement, I think we had hashed this over, and hashed it over, and Sue and I were close and we got nowhere. But finally, at the end I said, "You know, I love what you say, let's use it." And we did.

But because I guess I have a gift of B.S., which is a nice way to put it, I wrote a little column on the Early Days at Bonner. Some of the stories that had been told to me by old timers like Walford Olean, I think he started working about 1916, Ole Hallgren, you know, a few of the really really old timers. A little bit about the Shay engines, and I just talked to Dennis before our meeting here, we've got some more really good stuff coming on those Shays. That was a good time. And, I'd always wondered what it would be like if I could work at this mill, don't you laugh, Jim, and be put out on an assignment, go up the Blackfoot and check out that helicopter logging crew and write a story. Man, what a way to make 18 bucks an hour! Go up there with a clipboard, pencil and ask for some stats on that thing. So the Tamarack editorial committee, for me, was a good thing. Plus, I had the privilege of working with Sue [Hogan].

One last thing, and I thanked Sue for this when she came in. Her son and my grandson was in Iraq at the same time. This was kind of stressful for both of us. And, I hope in our conversations I may have eased some of the burden on her, I know she did for me. Because, when you have a loved one in a situation like that, it's pretty hard to deal with on your own. But, if you got somebody to share that with, and Sue was there for me a few times, I appreciated that.

[01:00:43] Okay. That's the end of my schmoozin' stories about the Tamarack editorial committee. But you know, there was a lot of chances for people to step into something above or beyond just going to work. There was lots of other activities out there if you were just willing to be a part of it. Okay. What else?

Sylvia: I have a story that happened in my home. You know, you'd get lots of slivers in you when you're working at the pine mill and stuff. I even have another really weird story about that one. But both my brother and my sister, their spouses had passed away and they both had just married new persons. So, they came to visit me, and I live in Lolo, and I was off the shift for the weekend and everything. So, I was sitting on the hearth and they were sitting around the corner visiting and the new brother-in-law said, "Oh, it's so pitiful that you have to work at a place like that."

And I was feeling my hand a little bit, and I happened to just pull out a sliver about that long, I guess it had gotten into me like acupuncture or something, because I didn't feel it or anything. And I just pulled it out and they just almost fainted.

And my husband had the classic thing to say. He said, "How else do we get our kindling?" (laughter)

Frank Betts: Well, I'm just going to say something about the group of ladies that are here today that we've kind of missed so far, all the secretaries that we have here, about five or six of them, and some of them were really influential in making this operation work. I don't know what their jobs were completely, but I know anytime I worked in maintenance and anytime we wanted parts, I'd go to Sue and she could find any part you needed, for any machine that you wanted parts for.

And I think we need to tip our hats to every one of them because they did a fantastic job of basically keeping that place going.

Glenn Max Smith: I have to add to that, I just recently asked Diane for some names of some cheerleaders that she provided for us. So, I guess as long as these ladies are out there and can respond, I'll be still asking them questions and favors.

Frank Betts: I think we ought just have a hand for every one of them that are here.

Glenn Max Smith: I think so. (applause)

Jim Willis: Glenn, Sue and Dorothy are going to talk. These two are going to talk.

Maybelle Bonnet: They're going to talk. These two are gonna talk.

Frank Betts: Oh, they are going to talk to us today? Oh, okay, I didn't know that. Because I thought they were being left out.

Maybelle Bonnet: That's what Jim told me they were gonna talk.

Sue Hogan: My name is Sue Hogan. When I started at the mill, I was Sue Jeszenka. It was back in 1979, and my father was working out at the mill at that time with my brother. And I had recently graduated from high school, and I got a phone call from my cousin Diane Karkenan Hendrix saying, "Would you be interested in working at the mill?"

And I thought, "Well, maybe."

And she said, "Well, they're going to be firing our town runner." At that time, we used to have Twin Creeks logging, we had the pulp mill out at Frenchtown and she said, "He's been a really bad driver. He's wrecked the car about seven or eight times and they're going to be looking for a town runner."

So I came in the next day. I got a phone call that night from her boss saying, "Would you be interested?" So I went in for an interview and I was called that night, they said, "Start tomorrow."

I thought, "Okay, I'm not even sure what I'm doing, but I'll start."

[01:05:01] And I went to work the next morning to be the town runner, and it turns out the town runner who had wrecked the car seven or eight times didn't even know he was getting fired. And I had a crush on him in high school and here I was... (laughter) So, he found out that morning he wasn't going to be the town runner anymore, I was going to take his place, and for a week he trained me. And for a month I had this job of just running mail back and forth to the pulp mill and Twin Creeks and Bonner. It was great.

I remember that Shorty Thompson came to my rescue. Everybody remembers Shorty. I got high-centered on a fire hydrant out by the plywood plant and I thought, "Oh great, I'm going to get fired now." But Shorty came to my rescue and got the car off the fire hydrant. And so, it was literally a month and a position came up in purchasing for a purchasing clerk and I applied for that position, and I got that.

And I worked with great people like Rick Swanson and Pete Peterson and Dale Bender **and wa? Walters**. Lots of names out there, Jack Fisher. And I think I was in that position as a purchasing clerk for about five or seven years. And I had a lot of great mentors and Kathy Morris, if anybody remembers Kathy, she was one of my mentors, she worked in central services. But we worked in the old brick building, with the old purchasing and inventory system. And it was just amazing because everybody came through that department. Central services, it was just kind of the hub of the mill. And it was a very fascinating job, but Kathy was awarded a position in purchasing and they needed somebody to take her place.

So, I applied for that position and got it and so for about another seven years I was in central services and still in purchasing. We saw a lot of changes then too because I think I started with Jack Fisher and Stan Will? came in and then Dick Shimer. And so then I pretty much worked on purchasing and central services and then they came in and announced that Champion was selling out to Stimson Lumber.

And really none of us knew who was still going to have a job, literally until the day before Stimson came in to take over. And I was very fortunate 'cause Dale Bender was just offered the position of purchasing manager and he was given a pool of about 11 to 13 people to continue. Actually it was 11 to 13 people between purchasing in

Libby and Bonner. And Dale said that they found out that they were gonna do all the purchasing for Bonner and Libby and he only got 10 people to go ahead and handle all the purchasing. And so he was given an order of about 11, 13 names. And I was very fortunate because he picked me.

We saw a huge change from the day Champion stopped on Friday and Stimson started on a Monday, and there were literally just two of us doing what 13 people used to do. They took the old warehouse away from us, the old parts, and the challenges really started about that time, but I was very fortunate. I worked in purchasing for another 10 to 15 years. I was there until the end of Stimson, so I was there for about 29 and a half years. Towards the end there, Stimson, as people were retiring or let go, they weren't being replaced any longer.

So the order loads got pretty heavy, and I know when I left I was ordering all the parts for Bonner and Priest River, Idaho and Caldwell?, Washington. And so it was pretty stressful. But like I say, probably some of the happiest days of my life. Everybody here was like family. It's so good to see everybody here too.

But I know, when I left, I just went to school for a couple years and got a degree and I'm fortunate I'm still working in purchasing, but now I'm at the University. And, I can't thank everybody enough for all the experiences that I had which led up to what I'm still doing now. So just, it's good to see everybody again. We're a family. It was a lot of fun. (applause)

[01:09:40]**Dorothy Erickson:** Okay. My name is Dorothy Erickson and I started at the mill in 1969 right out of high school. They hired me as an invoice clerk and over the years I worked my way up into the accounting department. I went to school with Richard Anthony and, talk about family, the one thing I found out not too long after I started at that mill is there are a lot of people who are related in that mill, so be careful what you say. (laughter)

Helen Petrov, I see her here today. She was one of the secretaries when I started there. I put in 36 and a half years at the mill, and when you gals talked about how scared you were when you first started your jobs, I was equally scared.

Right outta high school, it was my first big job. George Neff was the general manager, Jim McLafferty? was the controller, and Betty Jo Johnson marched me through that door of that main office and I was so scared, I was shaking in my shoes.

But I enjoyed all the years I had with the mill. My last three years I was put in the scale shack and by the time they finally closed the mill, I was pretty much ready to go. I worked for Anaconda for a year, and then U.S. Plywood hired me on when they took over in 1972. I worked under six general managers and only about three controllers, so they actually lasted longer than the general managers.

I don't know what else.

When they talk about family, the worst and the hardest part of leaving when I left, was all the people that you had worked with all those years: Rick Swanson, Dick Anthony, Cal Bonnet, Jimmie Willis, Lefty Pleasant. And the thing that was so interesting is when I first started there, it was family members that worked out there. At times there were like three generations and they talked about their grandparents that had worked there. And I just think that's really special and I think that's something that you don't see anymore.

I did find another job. I was doubtful, I was 57 years old when I left that mill. I hadn't been on an interview in 36 years and things had changed and so I thought, "Well, I'm too young to retire." But I almost felt that I was too old to start over.

I went on a few interviews and finally, I did go on an interview for the State of Montana and I now work for Child Protective Services. And I love it. It's a whole different world and, I feel fortunate that I was able to spend that kind of time in one place. And I'm sure, Diana, you have some things you'd like to say. Diana worked in the office with us too, for many, many years.

Diana Karkanen Hendrix: Well, best thing that happened to me was I met my husband, like a lot of us did.

Dorothy Erickson: That's right.

Diana Karkanen Hendrix: Still married after 27 years.

I started out, in the land department as a secretary when the secretary went on leave and when she came back. And went over to the plywood plant. I did production recording for the plywood plant until the day I left practically, along with payroll.

I just, I had a great time in plywood. I can remember one funny story though. A supervisor used to give us a hard time all the time. And so my friend and I that worked there, (unclear), decided we were going to fix him. He used to ride his motorcycle to the plant and we took three or four cans of silly string during a break and went

outside and silly stringed his Honda, or whatever. And after that he would park inside the shipping department. (laughter)

But, I had a lot of good years there and I worked up until I left seven years ago, with Stimson. My job was going to move to Coeur d'Alene and I decided, no, I'm not moving my son, who at that time was a high school senior and I wasn't gonna do that to him. So, the ladies and I, when we'd go to lunch, we'd say, "Wouldn't the secretary job at that school be fun, instead of being around a bunch of grumpy, old men?"

And wouldn't you know, that's the job that I have today that've had it for seven years, and I really enjoy it. I grew up in Bonner, I never really moved away. I'm still here.

Glenn Max Smith: Cool! Another Bonner kid. (applause)

Jimmie Willis: Jan, would you like to do the same for your job for us?

[01:14:52] **Jan Helson Anthony:** Oh, okay. My name's Jan Helson(?) Anthony and I started in June of 1983, working in the plywood office, or the main office, at the White House doing production. And did that from June until about November. And then I went up to scale check for three months on break, and that was when we were getting log loads up to about 300 plus a day. And I would sit there and we'd have the South Gate open until midnight and open it up again at four or five o'clock in the morning. So, literally the last guys at midnight, from Thompson Falls, were my first ones in the morning, and it was just amazing. They'd do a turnaround.

But anyway, they decided since I was working graveyard, that it'd be good for me to do the plywood production reports back at the White House on graveyard. And that's where I was for nine years on graveyard in the house by myself. And the guard would come down every two hours and keep an eye on me and see if anything was going on. And there were a couple deputy sheriffs that dropped in once in a while, to have a cup of coffee and, they were surprised to think that the company let somebody work alone by themselves, let alone a woman. And I had a couple instances where, you know...they thought there was a peeping Tom one night, but that turned out to (noise in background, unclear) (laughter)

But another night there had been a sonic boom earlier in the day. I remember that well because I was asleep. But anyway, that night I went to work and it was about midnight, one o'clock in the morning, and I heard this awful sound upstairs, like somebody had crashed in through the door. So, I was on my beeper to the main gate to get somebody right over there. I crept over to the door at the basement, 'cause that's where my office was, and the guard came and we snuck up the stairs, and you could hear this (imitates scratching noises), we started in the front and went to every room. We got to Paul Van Gordon's office, and the ceiling had fallen because it had a suspended ceiling and it hadn't been done, but maybe six months earlier, but it had fallen.

But, it was a fun time to work out there, and even on graveyard.

I tried to walk back and forth from the main office over to plywood to take my reports over in the morning. I'd also, for several, years ran the monthly report, the bi-monthly reports, and the statements for payroll, and distribute them along the way.

I'd go and see Jim Willis sometimes in the mornings with his sawmill reports and whatever else, and these other men like Ray Robinson or Mr. Willis, would come over early in the morning to pick up things. Or some mornings I'd go out to the scale shack early and open up the scale shack. So, if Lisa, she was always running a little late, which is another story.

The morning that she was pregnant with her first baby, she called at midnight. She was waiting for her husband to come and get her. And he was on a dairy route. And so we were back and forth on the phone. I went out to the scale at five and so I was talking to Lisa every hour. And then, at about six o'clock, her husband still hadn't showed up, so I called our boss at the time, Steve Erhardt, to ask him if he would go get Lisa and take her to the hospital. He said in no uncertain terms, that he wasn't going to pick her up.

Then, about an hour later, her sister came by. She worked out in plywood and I ran her down, and I said, "You've got to go pick up Lisa."

And 20 minutes later she delivered her baby. (laughter) So, it was interesting times. I guess I could go on with stories about working graveyard in the White House.

I left when Stimson sold out and I went to nursing school, and I work for the Veterans Administration as a nurse now. I see many old timers that come into our clinic. And it's been fun to take care of them for the last 10 plus years, it's a privilege.

unknown speaker: Wow. (applause)

Jimmie Willis: Would you like, to say something, Kathy, about your job. She worked in plywood.

Kathy ?: Yeah, I started for Bill Nelson at Intermountain in town, in the office and, I worked there for a year and then they moved that office out to Bonner in the White House in the basement. We were just doing data entry and purchasing, I guess.

Then I decided I needed more money so I went out into the mill and worked there 14 years. So a total of 16 for Champion and it was good.

[01:19:57] **Carla Green:** I feel like I have a really short career. I was only out there for about four years. (unclear) in the spreader. I was out there from probably '75 to '76, '77, beginning of '78 maybe. Maybe. I don't know. I don't know exactly, but I was out there for four years. It seemed like an eternity, in a lot of rounds.

But , I remember the first night. You always started on the night shift and on the first night I went in there it was akin it to walking into a nightmare. Because you start on a cleanup and here you are walking in... these dryers are 300 feet long, there's like 12 feet between them, for those of you who know exactly what I'm talking about... they're 350 degrees or something like that. They're hot and the place looks like Missoula on a foggy day. But it is not fog, it's smoke. And so it was really totally like walking into a nightmare, the building is screaming at you. And I'm not used to getting up in the middle of the night anyway. So I'm kind of going, "Is this reality or is this..."

You know, it was freaky, but it was amazing to me how fast one would get used to the environment. I did everything. Everything. I don't think there's a job that I didn't do. I didn't run the clippers and I wasn't maintenance, but almost. Yeah.

When you push the broom, you start out and do everything. But what was amazing to me was like your first week or so, you feel like every day it's like, "Oh my God, how can I do this?"

And then there's a switch that flips in your brain and, everybody that's here, that's done this, knows what I'm talking about, I'm sure. And all of the sudden, a set at a job at two hours until you get your next break, literally feels like 15 minutes. And I don't know how in the world that happens, but oh, it's just such a godsend.

So yes, I remember the total monotony of feeding the dryers. Oh my God. And pushing broom, I really liked that actually, because I liked to go see how hard I could work myself. Then I went down to the green end. So I went down to the green end and, none of the guys would talk to me and , I didn't quite know why that was. I think I was only the second gal besides probably you down there on the clippers?

unknown speaker: No, there was another girl, Lynn Hoffman was a clipper operator when I got there.

Carla Green: Did she have black hair?

unknown speaker: No, she was blonde.

Carla Green: Somebody named Kathy with dark hair. Kathy, I don't remember her last name. She was down there.

unknown speaker: Kathy Hanson.

Several speakers: Yeah, yeah. Yep.

unknown speaker: Kathy Hanson. Yep. Oh, yes, Kathy. So her husband ran the lathe

Carla Green: Right, right, right. So, but there weren't very many women down there and I always thought, and finally I said, "You know, the reason they're not talking to me is because they all chew snus and they don't wanna talk to you."

But I think it was still kind of a man's territory down there. Then I finally discovered the joy of mischief making towards the end, and it was really what made the time fly.

But before I talk about that, I wanted to speak to the exhaustion of it. I pulled, 50's and, and 20, well, I pulled the green chain. And, I would get, so I could see how far off the chain the lumber was. I'd climb on my pile. I would literally fall asleep for 30 seconds, and get up and be able to pull what I needed to pull off because I was that exhausted. I guess I was really proud of the fact that I could do that job and I think I did it pretty well. Stacking 50's, fishtails were the hardest.

But, the mischievous part, as I finally got over on the mischievous chain, over on the, I don't know what it was, North Wall, I guess. East Wall? West Wall, it was the West Wall, number four, I think.

[01:24:53] And they'd get two guys on the side and we'd stack up fifties as high as we possibly could. This is veneer that's a quarter inch thick and 15 inches wide and eight feet long. And we'd stack up this veneer and then let it go and let the person on the bottom of the chain pull it off. The trick is, to get on the bottom one, you just

put a little slit in it and you slide it under the chain. And so, when the guy goes to pull off this whole stack, the whole stack explodes. But, I got involved in that and it kind of made time fly.

You could stack a pile of 27s by yourself and I could do that when the guys were busy playing, and doing whatever they were doing. And, they just couldn't believe that I could do something like that. So they were just all getting mad each other and it took a long time to figure out that I was actually doing my share of making it possible to pull the wood off the chain.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Barbara? I don't know how long she's worked here. Could we ask her?

Glenn Max Smith: Sure. Go ahead.

Maybelle Bonnet: She's not here.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Barbara, is Barbara, you ask still here? Oh yeah. How many years did you work in plywood?

Barbara ?: 31.

Lola Mae LeProwse: 31? Yeah. And you've fed the dryers all the time?

Barbara ?: Well, I worked on (unclear) for a short time.

Lola Mae LeProwse: Okay. So she's one of the old timers here.

Glenn Max Smith: I think I worked with your husband, Jerry. We were in maintenance together. I have a story, it kind of ties some of the shenanigans together. Now this is a Roy Robinson story, so Dick, you can appreciate Roy.

Dick Anthony: Yep.

Glenn Max Smith: When he came up with a shenanigan, he put a lot of thought into it, and he'd usually come up with one heck of a shenanigan.

I won't mention the lady's name, but she worked on the switchboard in the White House. Roy got the bright idea... now Stimson has taken over the plant, and he decides he's going to call this lady and inform her that this mill has been here close to a hundred years and all the telephone wires are packed so full of sawdust you can't hear anybody. So she was to call everybody around and tell them that their phones would be out of service while the phone company blew all the sawdust out of the phone lines. And she did. (laughter)

And somehow word got out and Roy was ecstatic. He just laughed and laughed over this. But what goes around will come around. I don't know how many ladies were involved in making him a rather ornate necklace out of peppers, dried peppers, and he was impressed with that. He showed everybody his peppers. Then he had to go to the bathroom, and he came back and told me about that experience in the bathroom and his voice was up several octaves. (laughter)

So, you know, you wanna be real careful if you're pulling a shenanigan. What goes around could come around, but in Roy's case it came around. So, I had to tell that one.

Dick Anthony: He didn't think very long on blowing lines 'cause we were sittin' down in the planer shipping office in the middle of a conversation when all of a sudden, he picks the phone up and calls Mary Ann. I'm sittin' there and he told her this story about blowing the lines out.

And she said, "No. Baloney." Because he had it on speakerphone. He said, "Dick's sitting right here. The guy just walked out." And I'm going, "Uh, uh, yeah, he just left." (laughter)

Well it was about, I don't know, half hour, 45 minutes later the plant manager called down to the planer shipping and asked Roy, "What the hell are you guys smoking down there?"

Glenn Max Smith: One of our better moments. Okay. Anybody else got a good shenanigan story?

unknown speaker: I just wanted to say Cal was supervisor when I was down there on the green end.

Maybelle Bonnet: He never worked on the green end in the plywood.

unknown speaker: He didn't?

Maybelle Bonnet: No, he didn't.

unknown speaker: Was there another Cal? There was another Cal then.

Cal Bonnet: Must have been. Cause I never did work over in plywood.

several speakers: Johnson was Johnson. Okay.

[01:30:04] **Dick Anthony:** We had a women's bathroom down in the basement, and I don't know if Cal remembers this, but I had a mouse I threw in the door, closed it, and the ladies were in there taking a break. It wasn't 10 seconds before all of them came barreling out of the bathroom down there, the break room. Cal just walks by. They thought he did it (laughter).

Rick Swanson: I don't know how many remember Roy Rasmussen from Industrial Services. I can tell you a story on him. He was one for doing stories and shenanigans. Somebody from the machine shop had done something to him, or he had done something to them, I mean. So it was wintertime and we had a bunch of snow out in front of the warehouse.

He comes in, says, "Hello," and goes into the office. And I kept on with what I was doin'. I happened to look out the window. There were a bunch of guys from the machine shop with shovels. They shoveled the whole truck inside with snow. You should have seen this look when he came out! (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: That was quite a shock. We got time for another one. Whoop. Dennis, go ahead.

Dennis Sain: Yeah. Well, in the woods, we didn't have many women up there. We had a secretary in the office, but we did have Robin Lamley. She was our parts girl in the warehouse and her little thing at Twin Creeks, if anybody asked, she said, "I work at the cat house at Twin Creeks." Which the warehouse was at the Cat shop [Caterpillar dozers] and through the union we had a bidding process if a job come open you could bid the job.

Well, there was one job come open and through the union contract you had about five days if you wanted to take a job. If you didn't like it, you could go back there to the other job. Well, she wanted that job. She lasted two days and she said, "The only reason I took it, is so I could say I was a hooker." [attaching chokers to logs] A hooker job on a line machine." (laughter)

Glenn Max Smith: Excellent. One last story that I got... Lola brought up the cranes. And in August, that plant got hotter than the hubs inside. So there were water fights on that night shift that wouldn't quit. I won't mention any names of the crane operators, but I did know this guy pretty well. He went down and got himself a coffee can of water. He pulled a crane out over that chain crew and he dumped the water on them, and of course they knew what was going on. They would step out of the way, and the water would harmlessly hit the floor and they'd just hoot and holler. But, what he did was he brought the coffee can up in addition to a five gallon bucket.

So he very ceremoniously dumped the coffee can out and they'd say, "Ah, you missed," you know, "what a dummy." And then, he kicked that five gallon bucket out and just literally drowned that crew.

I think we could probably spend the whole evening here telling shenanigans about what went on in that mill. You know, what happened out there.

Jimmie Willis: I worked in the shipping office and I used to get quite a bit of mail from the main office and I brought some out here, if anybody would like to see it. I was gonna give it to one of the secretaries but she didn't show up.

Glenn Max Smith: Okay. Do we have any more on the mill? Any more ladies got some good stories they can tell us? Go ahead.

Jim Habeck: I had nothing to do with the mill, but I'd like to know if, when the whistle blew at the end of a shift, was there equality in the bellying up to the bar?

Glenn Max Smith: Hey, at night there was.

Jim Habeck: Well we were listening to young women coming out of high school, but then eventually marrying somebody perhaps on the mill grounds. And there has to be stories that they won't want to tell about that. And I'm just thinking that, when they got off the campus of the mill, what level of sociability or equality or gender equity, or whatever you want to call it, when the beer was being poured?

Glenn Max Smith: Dick, didn't your crew on nights in the sawmill... Bob Martel, didn't occasionally you tip a few over here in the old east log yard or west log yard?

Dick Anthony: Yeah, they did. I worked graveyard at that time, so I never got too involved with it. Yeah. (unclear) a beer, go over there on the riverbank and proceed to see the sunrise.

Glenn Max Smith: Yeah, they socialized quite well. I heard some very good stories about that.

several speakers overtalking: They didn't apply. They always bought bottle.

Glenn Max Smith: Cool. Okay. Have we covered everything?

Jimmie Willis: I'd like to thank all the ladies that came out today,

Lola Mae LeProwse: Thank you for having us. It's really been fun reminiscing. (Applause)

(Outro music and credits)



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