

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #21 - Sides A/B

Subject: Ralph Christensen, Sr.

Place: Hines, Oregon

Date: March 14, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

(A portion of this transcript is a summary of the conversations between Pauline and Ralph.)

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen, and I'm interviewing Ralph Christensen on March 20 --- what is today?

BETTY CHRISTENSEN: 14th.

PAULINE: March 14th, 1972, at Burns, Oregon. Ralph came to Harney County on March 10th, 1930 from Sand Point, Idaho to go to work for Edward Hines Sawmill. When asked why they came, Ralph said emphatically, "We were starving to death every where's else!" Ralph had been working in a restaurant in Sand Point and at sawmills in the area whenever he could get work. He says he still has wages coming from the restaurant where he worked. The only way he could collect was to draw about every night, and there wasn't enough money in the till to pay a day's wages.

PAULINE: Well you said you were cooking, at a mill you were cooking?

RALPH: I was cooking at a restaurant.

PAULINE: Cooking at a restaurant in Sand Point.

RALPH: I was working in a sawmill whenever I could get a job in one.

PAULINE: Well how did you happen to hear about the jobs in Harney County?

RALPH: Well her brother came over here from Klamath Falls, said there was a big mill starting in here in Burns, and it was all new country. It was all new timber; there wasn't any other mill within a radius of better than a hundred and some miles, 200 to 150 miles in here. Well Bend was the closest mill. But they had enough timber for over 50 years. It looked like a good --- and it was the most modern mill in the United States when it was built. It was the first mill that was ever built where there was no horses used at all in the whole operation. And the logging, well in the logging there was some horses used in the logging here. But there was no horses used in the sawmill or any part of the mill.

They bought it from a fellow by the name of Herrick. And they bought the railroad from --- and got the timber. He went broke, or he was practically broke. He started to build the mill down here. There is still an old concrete foundations and everything else Herrick put in down there, that they had to tear out when the Hines came in. It was all, a complete different operation altogether than what Herrick had pictured out.

So when they --- the mill originally, when they blew the whistle from Chicago, that was about three months or four after the mill was started. Or four months or five after, or four months after the mill started here that they had the official opening. And then they blew the mill (whistle), old Charlie Hines blew the mill back in the, in Chicago, and boy they had a big celebration. All the farmers, and everybody in town, and everybody else was out there for free sandwiches, and ice cream, with everything else that they served out there at the mill. It was supposed to have been the official opening.

PAULINE: How did he accomplish blowing the whistle from Chicago? Did he ---

RALPH: Through different buttons that they had. There was different --- just like you ring a telephone.

PAULINE: Yeah.

RALPH: And they had a deal rigged up to blow the whistle from Chicago. And they blew the whistle out here clear from Chicago.

PAULINE: He pushed a button in Chicago ---

RALPH: And it blew the whistle out here.

PAULINE: That's fascinating.

RALPH: That started it, yeah.

PAULINE: That was Charlie Hines.

RALPH: That was Charlie Hines --- or Edward Hines, Edward Hines. Pardon me, that was Edward Hines.

PAULINE: Ed.

RALPH: That was the old man. Charlie Hines was one of the boys. PAULINE: About how many men were working out here when it first opened, do you remember?

RALPH: About, oh it was over 300 or something in the sawmill and the shipping department. Shipping department, dry sorter, and planer was over 300, about 350.

PAULINE: Did they do, have gypo loggers like they do now, or did the ---

RALPH: No, at that time, that was before they had --- let's see, yeah they had gypo log, and they had gypo fallers. But they had, the other logging, it was just a regular ---

PAULINE: Part of the mill, part of the ---

RALPH: It was part of the operation. It was --- It was the mill and the logging was always two separate operations. The same as the railroad, and the logging, and the sawmill, you see. It was the three; you might say three different operations. But they all tied into each other.

PAULINE: And you've always worked in the mill.

RALPH: Yes.

PAULINE: You were in the shipping department, or you were a millwright.

RALPH: I was a millwright. I was on the green-chain for ten, about ten years. And then I was on the stackers for about, let's see I was on the stackers for almost 15 years. Well not 15, I was a millwright for 28 years, and the other time it was divided up on the stackers and the green-chain.

PAULINE: And how many years all together were you out there then? RALPH: I was out there 40 years.

PAULINE: Forty years.

RALPH: I seen practically the first log that came through that, or came down the incline, the first --- all us stackers put in an experimental stage, all the stackers, and the green-chain, the sawmill, and everything was put in, in an experimental stage. And they hadn't had the bugs worked out of it yet. They had all the stuff worked out of it yet, from electric mill --- from the old steam mill to electric mill, when I came here. It used to be an all; most of that stuff was all run by steam and everything. And now you see it was run with electricity. It's the most modern mill in the United States when it was built.

PAULINE: Well they had their own; they've always had their own generator to generator -
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RALPH: They had their own generator. They furnished the power for the City of Burns, and Hines. They had, from that old generating plant at first in Burns, you know, the one down there by the railroad tracks. But they was always, and they always sold power to the town of Burns and Hines. And then when they built the houses there, this Stafford, Derbes, and Roy took a contract on building the houses in Hines, the town of Hines. See they had to have a town, a place for all the people to live when they built the mill. So when they came in here people would have a place to live. Well Stafford Derbes and Roy took a contract to build a 100 houses in the town of Hines for a \$100,000, at a \$1000 a house, at that time. That's all them houses cost, was a \$1000 a house.

And used to be able to buy the equities in them. You see to move in all you had to do was pay the rent and move in. They would take the rent out of your check every two weeks. But the fellows that made the money there, like the foreman and the people that had a little money, they used to sell those equities. You see now maybe I'd work there for two or three years and maybe I'd have two or three hundred dollars built up, or a couple hundred dollars in equities, built up. I could sell that equity for \$10 if I wanted to, or \$15, or \$20, or anything like that. Well these foremen, and these other fellows was buying those equities for, heck just a little bit of nothing. And then they'd apply it onto this one house, you see.

PAULINE: Until they had a house paid for.

RALPH: Well you could take and buy about seven, eight equities and pay for a house.

PAULINE: Did you ever live in one of these houses?

RALPH: No, I never did. I bought my place when I first came here. ... addition. And I moved a little tarpaper shack in there that the millwrights used when they built the mill.

PAULINE: Well Allan was telling me that you told about too, about going out and hunting jackrabbits to ---

RALPH: Beg your pardon?

PAULINE: Allan has told me about your going out to hunt jackrabbits to kind of fatten out the meals a little bit. What about that?

RALPH: Boy, oh mighty, I'll tell you when I first come here, why I used to go to work with not enough in my lunch bucket to eat see, when I first came here. You didn't have nothing. There was no way to make any money. I went up here to the second hand store where they had what they called the trading post here then. Went up town when ... bought my old oil stove, then one of them doggone old, or to cook on, one of them old three burner oil stoves, the kerosene stoves. And that's what we used. And a three-

quarter bedspring, I couldn't buy a whole bed. I just buy the three-quarter old bedspring, one of them link springs. Now this house was made just the right length to set one of them in, the mattress in, and that's all we had practically. And a table, and cups and saucers, and some-thing like that piece, first to live on when I started working at the son-of-a-gun.

PAULINE: Well you have come a long way then, haven't you?

RALPH: There was times there that I made as little as \$5 in two weeks. There was times that we, I made as little as \$5 in two weeks, payday. But I don't think there was any time during the 40 years that I didn't have a payday coming in 40 years. But there was as little as \$5. I made as little as \$5 there.

PAULINE: I wanted to ask you just about what the going wage was at the time when they first started in.

RALPH: It was 37 1/2 cents an hour. The green-chain paid 60 cents an hour, that's why I went on the green-chain. No, the green-chain paid 57 1/2 cents an hour. But I was only on the chain just a little while, and went to the gypo ... And we took the green-chain for 28 cents a thousand. We pulled the green-chain for 28 cents a thousand. That was to get away from the Bascos in Klamath Falls. They wanted to give it to the Bascos in Klamath Falls. That's what they bid on that. So we had a bid down to 28 cents to get away from the Bascos in Klamath Falls. And we took the green-chain for, with 8 men.

PAULINE: Who were some of the other men that were working with you then, do you remember?

RALPH: Well there was Hank Hofman, there was John Berg, and Ed Klause, Homer Delemeter, Tom White, and Vickstrom, and Phil Kanack, and ---

PAULINE: Well that's seven, yourself makes eight.

RALPH: Well let's see, there was Phil Kanack, and there was Jim Brophy.

PAULINE: Jim Brophy. Well he stayed around this country too, didn't he?

RALPH: Beg your pardon.

PAULINE: Jim Brophy, he stayed in this country.

RALPH: Yeah. And they were all people that still worked --- that they are practically all dead now. John Brophy --- let's see there was Jim Brophy he is up in the hospital, he's right on his last leg. Old Hank Hofman is still alive, John Berg is dead, and Phil Kanack is dead, and Homer Delemeter is dead, and Tom White is dead, the rest of them I don't know just exactly where they are all at. The old time sawyers in the mill was Tappy Douglas, Jens Strand, and Sunderlin. Now let's see ...

PAULINE: Is that Rudy, or ---

RALPH: No, that was the old man Sunderlin, he was a sawyer. He is the one that had the one leg taken off.

PAULINE: Was he Rudy's dad?

RALPH: Yeah, Rudy's dad. Rudy Sunderlin's dad. ...

BETTY: Al ... dad's too, wasn't it?

RALPH: Beg your pardon?

BETTY: ...

RALPH: Well no, he was just ... he was ... brother, see. And then there was Tony Osa mill foreman, Tony Osa, Earl Sloan, and old Louie Jervas was the mill foreman. And George Butler he was the planing mill foreman. And Gregory was a master mechanic, and the C. T. Gibbons was the chief electrician.

PAULINE: That's Tom's dad.

RALPH: Beg your pardon.

PAULINE: Was that Tom's dad?

RALPH: Yeah, it was Tom's dad.

PAULINE: He was the ---

RALPH: He was the chief electrician.

PAULINE: Chief electrician.

RALPH: He was the one that installed all the new machinery, and all the new electrical machinery that was put into the mill. He was a wonderful fellow, Clarence was.

PAULINE: Well did I understand this right now about the electric-city? I understand that this mill always run on electricity.

RALPH: Yeah.

PAULINE: From the very beginning.

RALPH: Yeah.

PAULINE: Uh huh. And up until this time ---

RALPH: They put in their boiler room and their turbines. When they put in the boiler room, you see they put in the boiler room to run the turbines. And all the scrap that was used was the bark and the slabs and all the sawdust, and everything else was taken to a fuel house. And from the fuel house back to the boiler room, and from the fuel pile then to the fire room. And they got, they used their own, made their own fuel. During the depression there I remember ... when there was local lumber piled there for over a quarter of a mile, a half-mile. Lumber that had gone through the sawmill, over the green-chain, through the drying kilns, over the dry ... through the dry sorter and out, and they just loaded it up and then bring it right back and throw it in there to keep the steam up, to keep power going. Throw it into the burners there, to throw it into the furnaces there to keep the steam a going, to keep the mill, and to keep power a going so it wouldn't freeze up and this and that. I bet they used to burn as high as, high as two and three hundred thousand feet sometime. But that was all common lumber, oh two and three and four, three and four common. And some of it --- now a lot of number two common was burned

up, just to keep the power a going during the depression.

PAULINE: Was there, during this time was there a good market for the lumber, or did they ship it out just about as fast as they could make it? Or did they ---

RALPH: Well yeah, they could ship it out, but you could buy a doggone good shiplap, or good siding for about \$19 a thousand.

PAULINE: So it took a lot of lumber to make a dollar then.

RALPH: Oh my gosh yes. But they figured then, at that time, if they could make ... I don't remember just exactly what it was, they figured if they could clear that much lumber, that much on a thousand feet of lumber, that they could keep operating at a profit.

PAULINE: Was the millpond out here put in just right during the beginning, or did they build that later?

RALPH: No, the millpond and everything was put into the --- it was put in when the mill was built. That was important to the mill, you see.

PAULINE: I understand one of the reasons they located the mill there was because they had the warm water.

RALPH: Yeah, it was the warm water, you see. And not only that, you see, they wouldn't allow them --- they wanted to build the mill either in Seneca, or they was going to build it at Crane. But they wouldn't, the county and that went together and they wouldn't allow them to build the mill. If you're going to buy this timber in Harney County, the mill has to be located in Burns. You see they wouldn't let them build it over in John Day, that would have been over in the Grant County, you see. If they had built it out at Crane, they would have been away from the county seat, and so they had that one place designated, and that's where you've got to build the mill.

PAULINE: I hadn't heard that particular statement before, that's interesting.

RALPH: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well it would have made quite an impact on an area, different at Crane.

RALPH: Yeah, you see out at Crane they had the hot water, out at Crane.

PAULINE: Yeah, they did.

RALPH: You see they had the hot water there at Crane for the pond, which would have really been better. You see at that time they had the big swimming pond, pool out there at Crane. They had a big natatorium out there at Crane.

PAULINE: Yeah.

RALPH: But they had the hot water here at Burns, and they said that's going to be the outlet to the, for the timber in this area. Burns will be the center of it. So that's why they had to build at Burns.

PAULINE: That's interesting. I didn't know just exactly how they happened to pick that location, except I knew that they had the warm water there for the millpond.

RALPH: Yeah, they couldn't have built it any other place, the county wouldn't allow them. They would have built it if they could have, they would have built it over at Seneca. Or they would have built it out at Crane.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well Seneca would have been in Grant County too.

RALPH: But the county seat being here, and the ... and everything, that's why they had to build it in Burns.

PAULINE: Well I read one of the interviews that Jim Baker did with, I don't even remember the name of this fellow, but had worked at the mill, and he mentioned that there was quite a lot of hostility between Burns and Hines and all this. Did you really---

RALPH: Oh, there was at one time, they put out a notice down there that anybody that didn't live at Hines, to come and see them, or they'd can them, or lay them off there. You see if you was renting, or didn't live in Hines --- see when they built them houses for \$100,000, they guaranteed Stafford, Derbes and Roy a certain interest on that money.

And when the people wasn't living in them --- heck everybody was living in shacks and everything else up town, to keep away from them. You could live in a shack up town for \$5 or \$10 a month. But them houses out there, the ones on one side of the highway rented for \$20, and I think the ones on the other side rented for \$25, the houses on the right hand side. And the houses on the left hand side, down in the lower part there, they all rented for \$20 a month. Well lord you could rent a house for \$10 a month, all kinds of them. But they put out a notice down there one time, that everybody that didn't live in Hines; they wanted to talk to them. And they called me into the office --- a lot of them was laid off there.

PAULINE: An effort to get them to live in the Hines houses.

RALPH: Yeah, well you see Hines was a paying, he had guaranteed this Stafford, Derbes, and Roy a certain percentage on his money, on his \$100,000 you see, for building that hundred houses there. And Hines was on the block, you see, they was a \$100,000 --- you see that mill cost over \$3,000,000 to build.

PAULINE: In those days that was quite a chunk of money.

RALPH: Yeah, \$3,000,000, and now you couldn't even --- \$3,000,000 wouldn't even build, start to build the sawmill.

PAULINE: We've seen quite a few changes out there over the past, well its been about the past ten years hasn't it, where they are putting plywood in, and they built up one mill pond, and ---

RALPH: When they put the plywood in, then done all of this doggone automation. What that automation, it is just like --- Mr. Hines, old Charlie Hines, was up on the stacker, him and Whitten, he was a big fellow in the company too. And him and Whitten was up on the stacker watching that machine run back and forth. Old Charlie Hines, he patted old Whitten on the back, he says, "You know Mr. Whitten," he says, "that machine is worth its

weight in gold." And it really has, for the amount of years that them stackers out there has stacked lumber, and the very little maintenance that they had on them, they was going to make a big improvement on them.

You see when what's his name came here, him and Blagen (sp.?), they was going to make a big improvement on the --- and automate the green- chain and the whole works. Well the green-chain was run without any overhead, hardly. The stackers run without any over-head at all. They come in there and they was just going to tear that stackers and that green-chain and all that all to pieces, and boy they was going to run that without, just a very few men. Well they just got a few men there now. But they've got almost as many as they had before, and they spent over a million dollars in that one department, and they haven't got it running yet. Oh, this ... old sawmill.

PAULINE: One other thing I was going to be sure and ask you about, and that's the old hotel down here. Now the story that I've always heard that they came in, someone came in and was going to build this big hotel, and they got it up as far as they got it, and the concrete was condemned and so they just left it, and never finished it.

RALPH: You see what they done with that hotel, you see that hotel, you see they had that old Whitten house up on the hill, and the Pettibone house. And the Whitten house was just like a, more of a hotel all the time for all the big shots and everybody when they came here, to hold their big parties, and for a rooming house and that for them. And the Pettibone house that's where the general manager always stayed there.

But when they built that hotel there, you see they started in --- that's what they called the old Hoover Hotel. That was built with the idea --- at one time they had all the windows in that, and the heating outfit in it. The heating outfit in it, is the one in the post office up there now. It's in the Burns Post Office up there now. The moved it from out here at Hines to that new Burns Post Office when they built that.

But see after they built that hotel, they had it all up, and all set, they had the studding in and everything else, all, every-thing was all on the inside, and everything ready for it to go, and then this depression hit. But you see when the depression hit why everybody just, everything just stopped. They couldn't get any money to finish the hotel, and so they just stopped right there. And the years went by, so that concrete in there deteriorated to quite an extent, and it was finally kind of condemned.

But the kids knocked all of the windows out of it, and the people stole all the doggone 2 x 4's, and all the timbers out of the inside of it. And so all there is, is just a big old cement building standing there now.

PAULINE: Well was it, was the Edward Hines Company that was building it, or was it an outside party that ---

RALPH: I think that that was --- oh Pauline you've got me there, I just don't remember for sure now whether that was Hines, or whether it was Stafford, Derbes and Roy built that.

PAULINE: Well had they started the housing and one thing and another when you came in 1930?

RALPH: Oh yes, they had most of the housing pretty well, it was under construction yet. But they had the housing pretty well built when we came here. And they had the mill pretty well built too. There was still a lot of work, they worked on the mill for --- and the shipping department and all the sheds, there was a lot of tin, and everything else to put on and everything after we came here. But it was running when we came here, the mill itself. And the dry kiln, the biggest part of the dry kiln was starting up, and the dry sorter, and stackers --- everything was on the, was pretty much in the experimental stage.

PAULINE: You said they had about 300 to 350 men employed when you first came here. What's the most that they ever had out there? I've heard they had as many as 600 or

800 men.

RALPH: Well that was on both shifts.

PAULINE: That would be on two shifts.

RALPH: Well that would mean that 300 --- that would be on the --- you see they didn't run the planers and that at night shift. You see they run the sawmill on the 24 hours, or on the 16-hour basis. And they run the shipping department, that all was run just on the 8-hour basis. They could ship as much in 8 hours as we could cut in 16, the biggest part of the time.

PAULINE: So this figure of 600 or 800 would be the sawmill, and the logging, and the whole ---

RALPH: Well no, the logging and that there would have been about --- that's just the sawmill and the shipping department, that 300 and something. But the logging and that, that would have entailed another bunch. I don't know, it might have been maybe a 100 fellows, 125 something like that on the logging end of it.

And then the railroad, I don't know, there was quite a bunch on the railroad. Let's see there was three crews on the railroad. Oh, about 25 would have been on the railroad, something like that, or 30. That's just on the railroad itself, that wouldn't be on the maintenance on the railroad. They had their maintenance shop there at Seneca, you see. They had the shops all the time at Seneca. And they had their maintenance on the railroad, on the section of that; they had that at Trout Creek. That's always been at Trout Creek.

PAULINE: This is what they call the Jap Camp?

RALPH: Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. And this is the, wasn't during World War II, wasn't this --- a lot of the Japanese weren't they sent there to be there during the war, or am I mistaken about that?

RALPH: Well some of them. At one time during the war down there, they had them towers all around the plant down there, and they, and they had watchmen with rifles, in all those towers down there at the mill. They had a man up there with a rifle in each one of those towers that was watching the mill during the war. And I think at one time they did have some of them prisoners on the railroad at Trout Creek. Now I'm not sure, I wouldn't say for sure on that, Pauline. I'm not sure on that.

PAULINE: I don't know for sure either. I'll have to look into that further.

RALPH: Yeah, I don't know whether they did or whether they didn't. Yeah, I put in 40 years there, and 40 years I never, I don't think missed a payday in 40 years.

PAULINE: That's quite a work record. There is a lot of people that can't make a ... like that.

RALPH: That, I think would just about be a record, wouldn't it? Forty years on the same damn job.

PAULINE: That's a pretty good record.

RALPH: I think the guy that, every time the boss was watching, they'd always lean on the shovel. Well ... says, "You know I've been watching you a long time." And Oley said, "Yeah I've been watching you a long time too." (Laughter) I watched him a long time.

PAULINE: Did you grow up in Idaho, or did ---

RALPH: I was born and raised on a farm in Malad, Idaho. That's about 65 miles south of Pocatello. My dad was --- I went to a little old country school. But I never did graduate out of the 8th grade. I got in a fight with the schoolteacher just before school was out.

PAULINE: Bad timing.

RALPH: Yeah, it was. ... And I was about ... something like that in the 8th grade. And the doggone school teacher jerked me out of line, we had to march in all the time, and I wasn't in step or something, he jerked me out and I punched him right in the nose and

walked off. He come down and he told --- well you just as well quit you ain't going to graduate, ain't going to pass anyway. So I just took off, and I went to work on a ranch out there. And he come down and told Daddy, he said, "Nels," he said, "I wish Ralph would come back to school again. He was a good ... he would have passed all right and everything." Dad said, "Well I think you would have a hard time catching up with Ralph now, he's left the country." Dad, my dad was a blacksmith.

PAULINE: Where did he come from, was he from Michigan or Minnesota?

RALPH: He came from Denmark.

PAULINE: He came over from Denmark.

RALPH: Yeah, when he was just a boy.

PAULINE: You know, I've known you all my life, and I knew that Betty was Danish. I hope I've got that straight.

BETTY: I'm German.

PAULINE: You're German, well I really am mixed up then, because I thought Betty was Danish. And I didn't know whether you were Norwegian, or Swedish, or what.

RALPH: See I'm a quarter Swede, and a quarter Dane, and half Dutch. My grandmother was Swedish. And Dad was a full Dane, and my grandmother was Holland Dutch.

BETTY: I've got a cup of coffee for you when you're ready.

PAULINE: Okay, just one minute. I want to ask him a couple personal questions, and then I --- When were you and Betty married?

RALPH: Well you should ask her that.

BETTY: April 16, 1929.

PAULINE: That's April 16th, 1929. Okay.

RALPH: Yeah, April 16th.

PAULINE: Okay, and you have three children, and that's ---

RALPH: We had five children, and lost two. We lost a boy and a girl.

PAULINE: You have Ralph, Jr.

RALPH: Ralph, Jr.

PAULINE: He lives in Hines.

RALPH: Nadine (McGinnis) in Hines, and Ina (Simpson) in Nampa. And I've got 12 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

PAULINE: Was there anything else you can think of that you could tell me about this operation out here, especially about the early days when it first started?

RALPH: I'll think about a lot of things after you leave.

PAULINE: Probably. I might come back and talk to you again.

RALPH: I can't think of anything else there right now, Pauline. Doggone thing, you know --- I know there is an awful lot of hard times when we started here. Old jackrabbit didn't dare run across the mill from us ---

PAULINE: You had him.

RALPH: --- because we eat jackrabbits. That's awful ---

PAULINE: Well you've always been a hunter too; you've always gone out and hunted deer.

RALPH: Oh I've always hunted.

PAULINE: Well back in, oh say 1930, did you have to have a license, and did they have deer season then? Or could you just go out anytime?

RALPH: We used to buy license, I think it was \$2 a license here. In fact that included two deer. And one of the first years I came here, first two or three years, I don't know just which it was now, that we was allowed two deer. I think it was \$2 on a license. I've still got some of them old licenses around here. And no duck stamps or nothing like that, they didn't have any of them then.

PAULINE: Any time you wanted a duck, why you just go out and get one.

RALPH: Beg your pardon.

PAULINE: Any time you wanted a duck; you just go out and get one?

RALPH: No, you didn't go get one. You had the game laws the same as you got now. But you didn't have this duck stamp, the federal deal. They wasn't under the federal government, they was under just fish and game.

PAULINE: State.

RALPH: Yeah, state is all it was. They wasn't under federal. But there was a game refuge down here when we came here. It was the Malheur Game Refuge down here when we came here.

(The following is a summary of the conversation between Ralph and Pauline.)

PAULINE: One other example of the attempts of the company to control their workers, Ralph tells that in the presidential election between Hoover and Roosevelt, the Company posted a notice that if the workers did not vote for Hoover the Company would close down. A straw vote was taken at the school shortly thereafter. All the students voted for Roosevelt but three or four.

While we were having coffee, Ralph told me about the organization of the union at the mill. He said that at first they had what was called the 4-L, or the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen. And this was an organization that included other sawmills, but each group was a local group. And they didn't have any real national organization, and so didn't have much strength or power. Later they had the Lumberman's Industrial Union, which was a local union, but again they didn't have the force and strength behind them to back up their demands, or enforce the contracts and guarantees that the company gave them. The Company would make them guarantees, but they would go back on their word if they felt like it.

So, although Ralph wasn't sure of the date when they affiliated with the AFL. At the time that this was done the Company was very opposed to it, and they organized in secrecy. He said that he attended a meeting at Ray Scott's house. There were about 15 of them and they pulled all the blinds down, and lowered the light, and worried a great deal that some of the officials of the Company would drive by and see them there.

They also had an organizational meeting at the Oasis Theater; this is located where Duke Tropf and Maggie Tropf have their rock shop now, next to the Copeland Lumber. And the Company officials sat outside and took the names of everyone who went in, and the next morning when they reported for work they were told that they were fired.

Ralph said that he was even canned one time. He had been talking with one of the men in the mill, something to the affect that he heard that the AFL was going to be organized in this community. And the other fellow asked him what he thought of it, and he made the comment that he thought that they needed some way that they would have more strength to enforce the demands of wages and working conditions. And this was --- the subject was dropped. The next night when he reported for work the foreman told him that he had been fired. Ralph said that he had never been fired before on a job, and he wanted to know why. The foreman said well go ahead and go on to work, but the next day that he should go to see Mr. Pettibone. He worked that night, and the next morning, or the next day did go to see Mr. Pettibone, he and another man who had also been told he was fired.

When they went to see Mr. Pettibone, Ralph asked why he had been fired. And Mr. Pettibone said, "Well don't you know?" And Ralph said, "No, that he don't know." So Mr. Pettibone asked him to recall a conversation he'd had the day before, a couple days before, with the man who he had been discussing the AFL with. So Ralph told him, "Yes,

this is what had happened, and repeated the conversation." And Mr. Pettibone said, "Well this is just as the other man had told me, but he said that you were trying to get him to sign up." And Ralph said, "No, that this was not true, and that he would be willing to confront the other worker with the fact that he way lying."

So Mr. Pettibone sent him on back to work, and this ended the matter there. But evidently Company feeling about the workers organizing with the AFL was quite strong, and repercussions were that if you were suspected of promoting this affiliation why you would be fired.

Ralph said that he felt that the unions were good, because they had made it possible for the workers to have some guarantee of what wages they would receive, and under what working conditions they would work. He said that before the union was organized that the foreman could fire a man for just not liking him, or he could make him do dirty work, dirty jobs like digging ditches, and the hard low paying labor no matter how long they had worked with the mill, simply because he didn't like him, or had a bone to pick with him.

Also because of the union contracts the worker could know that he was going to receive a certain wage throughout the year, and could better plan his life. He said he fells there is a lot of things wrong with unions, and that there is radicals in the organization which demand things which he does not agree with, but on the whole the work, the union has been good for the worker. Ralph Christensen is an example of a person who came into this country with nothing, and who by working at his job conscientiously throughout the years has really made a very nice life for himself. They built a home, which they lived in for many years, just a simple wood frame house. And here a few years ago built a beautiful new modern home in which they now live.

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