Oral History Interview
With

Earl M. McGowin

Chapman, Alabama
March 17, 1976

By Elwood R. Maunder
Forest History Foundation, Inc.

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Elwood R. Maunder: What do you recall about your father's origins?

Earl M. McGowin: I don't know too much about the specific geographical origins in this country, or when they came over from the old country. I presume they came through the Carolinas and Georgia. I remember my father saying that our immediate family came into Alabama from the Ocmulgee District of Georgia. It's an area on a river in Georgia. Alabama became a state in 1819 after the Creek Indians were cleared out by General Andrew Jackson in the battle of Horseshoe Bend. Alabama had been part of the Mississippi Territory. During the 1820s there was a considerable immigration of people from the Carolinas and Georgia. Many settled in what was then known as Monroe County. It included all of what is now Monroe, Escambia, and Conecuh counties. Sparta was the county seat. A lot of people were of Scottish origin and the movement came to be known as the "Scotch invasion." My father's family was in that group. I can't pinpoint the exact date but it was sometime during the 1820s. Some of the family names were McGowin, McDuffie, McMillan, McCorvey, McIntosh, McLeod—many are still here.

ERM: One [John] McDuffie was a congressman.

EMM: His family and my mother's family were great friends. My father's great-grandmother, Mary Lewis McGowin, had married a second time to Thomas Floyd. She brought her family into Alabama including a son, Samuel Lewis McGowin. He was born in Georgia on May 13, 1805 and died March 19, 1892. He is buried in Escambia County, in McGowin Cemetery. Samuel Lewis McGowin married Martha Mason and they had a great many children including Alex [Alexander] McGowin who is my father's father, my own grandfather. Alex was born January 16, 1835 in Escambia County and died on July 19, 1914. He is buried in Brewton. There were eight boys in his family. Seven of them went into the Confederate Army and five of them lost their lives. My grandfather with four other brothers was in the Army of the Tennessee. They were together for four years but one by one they died. The originals of their letters are in the Department of Archives and History in Montgomery. My grandfather would address his letters, "Dear people at home," and one by one he told of the deaths of his four brothers. A fifth brother, Peter McGowin, died of fever in an army camp near Mobile. Alex and James, who was stationed with a different army, returned home after the war. Thomas, the youngest son, was not in the army.

ERM: Were they farmers?

EMM: Farmers, yes, mainly with timber. Timber had to be cleared for building and cultivation. There were limited markets for timber because trees were everywhere. There were some markets along the coast for squares for shipment overseas. One of the first things they got out of Jamestown Colony were masts for the king's navy. Farming was

the principal occupation and my grandfather returned from the war and picked up the pieces as well as he could.

ERM: How big a plantation did he own?

EMM: I have do idea but I would guess it was a matter of several hundred acres, maybe up to a thousand.

ERM: You have no accurate information?

EMM: I know the location but I have no accurate information as to size. I remember going there as a boy many times, driving out with my father in a horse-drawn buggy. Grandfather had a little blacksmith shop in front of the house. The bellows that he had are in Keville Larson's museum. He operated that farm and also had a small lumber mill. They would make squares and float them in ditches and streams (they built sluices in streams) from Escambia down to Pensacola, to tidewater. There they were sold to merchants who would assemble them and ship them in cargoes overseas.

My father was born June 24, 1871, six years after the end of the war. Obviously this was a desolate country at that time. There was no such thing as a Marshall Plan or rehabilitation or any help. The Reconstruction era on the other hand was ugly, vicious and intemperate. It was one of the worst, ugliest chapters in American history. It was during that period that my father was born. So obviously the going was very tough. There were extremely few schools in the area. You were educated by your own family in your own home the best they could. I've always understood that as a young man he spent a few weeks in a business school in Lexington, Kentucky. I remember him telling of driving an ox cart into Brewton many times to pick up supplies.

ERM: Where was the family home?

EMM: Boykin, a community in Escambia County, sixteen miles from Brewton. He would camp, and sleep alone along side of the road on the way in and back. In 1892 at age twenty-one, he and his brother-in-law, James I. Robbins, opened a mercantile business in Brewton under the name of Robbins & McGowin Company. They presumably operated that successfully because my father had a comfortable house in Brewton and lived there until 1903 when he moved to Mobile. Floyd and I were both born in Brewton. Incidentally, the establishment still operates under the name of Robbins & McGowin.

ERM: Who was your mother?

EMM: My mother was Essie Theresa Stallworth. The family was from Monroe County, now an adjoining county to Escambia. My mother's mother was Parthenia Jane Riley and her father was Nicholas Chesley Stallworth. Both were well known families. Dr. Ben Riley was president of Howard College in Birmingham which is now Samford University. One of his brothers was Captain Tom Riley who was in the Army of Virginia for four years and was actually with lee at the surrender of Appomattox.

I had an old friend named Otto Eisenschiml from Chicago who was a keen historian. Eisenschiml told me during the middle thirties that he had never met a man who had actually commanded troops in the Confederate Army, although he said he had met several Union officers. I told him of this old cousin still living who actually commanded troops. Mr. Eisenschiml came down from Chicago and I drove him over to Beatrice to interview Captain Tom Riley. We had a very happy visit. Eisenschiml wrote about it later in his book Historian Without an Armchair. In that book's opening chapter Mr. Eisenschiml described his visit with my cousin. I remember vividly one part of the conversation. Mr. Eisenschiml said, "Captain, you must have known that you were defeated. You must have known months, even years ahead that you didn't have a chance. What made you stay on?" Captain Riley said with deep feeling, "So long as Lee was there, we had hope."

The Stallworths came to Alabama from the Edgefield District of South Carolina. My mother named our home "Edgefield." Our parents were married near Beatrice in quite a ceremony in 1898, and settled in Brewton. We have a picture of the house taken in 1903. It still stands and is the parsonage of the Universalist Church. It's the house where Floyd and I were born.

ERM: Your father was a Universalist by religious persuasion?

EMM: He inherited that religion from his father. My grandfather some way became interested in it. He was not a fundamentalist, so to speak, but was a very thoughtful man. My grandfather was an exceedingly able man who read the Bible assiduously and who spoke with a beautiful accent. I can remember it well. He was meticulous about his grammar. He'd correct anybody who made a grammatical error around him.

ERM: And yet without any formal education?

EMM: Yes, without any formal education at all. My father got his religion from him. He and my mother both were devoted to the church during their entire lifetimes. As a matter of fact, my father and Mrs. T. R. Miller were responsible contributors to the Universalist Church which stands in Brewton today.

ERM: This is closely related to Unitarianism, isn't it?

EMM: I believe so. It merged with the Unitarian Church and is now known as the Unitarian-Universalist.

ERM: In his early years in business your father established some capital of his own.

EMM: Apparently so. It must have been a successful enterprise because along about 1903 he sold his interest (I presume his brother-in-law did, too) in the Robbins & McGowin Company and went into the lumber business with his brothers Joe [Joseph F.] and Alex McGowin, Jr. in Mobile.

ERM: Was the McGowin Lumber and export Company the business your father entered into with his brothers in Mobile?

EMM: That was one of them. They had a sawmill in a place Called Magazine, up north of Mobile.

ERM: What were they involved in in this lumber and export business? Were they wholesalers? Were they exporters?

EMM: They were exporters but not wholesalers. I presume they sold in the local retail market what they did not export.

ERM: Did they have any retail yards of their own?

EMM: I don't believe so.

ERM: But they sold to the foreign markets. Do you know the markets?

EMM: England, and the West Indies, especially Cuba. My father used to use the expression "Liverpool squares," which were large timbers sold in the British market. In the early days at Chapman we would ship squares of ten inch by eleven inch and up, sixteen feet and longer to average thirty cube, which meant they had to average at least twelve inches by twelve inches, thirty feet long. Timbers had to be merchantable heart timber. When you said merchantable, that meant you had to show some heart on all four sides of the stick. Those squares were shipped to Liverpool and many of them went to the continent where they were remanufactured into window casings, doors, and all the other building materials.

ERM: This was made primarily from prime long leaf pine?

EMM: Exactly. It had to be in order to have the heart content. In 1905 my father participated with his brothers in acquiring a considerable interest in the W. T. Smith Lumber Company. His original interest was sixteen and a fraction percent.

ERM: The transfer of ownership in 1905 was arranged through the Foshee family which was related in some respects to you.

EMM: The Foshee family had bought out W. T. Smith in 1902. I understood that the Hanover National Bank of New York had a mortgage on part of it to satisfy a loan. The Foshees sold out principally to Alex and Joe McGowin. Each had 25 percent of the company. Incidentally, Alex, Jr. was a half brother, not a full brother. Joe and my father were full brothers. Then William Foshee, whose wife was my father's sister, stayed on as the only Foshee in the company. He owned sixteen and a fraction percent and the remaining ownership was taken up by Will and John McGowin, who joined the company in 1907.

Will and John McGowin were cousins of my father and contemporaries of Alex and Joe. John McGowin and my father were first cousins. John McGowin's father and my grandfather, Alex and James, were the two surviving members of the Confederate Army.

Will McGowin's father, whom we called Uncle Charlie, was a cousin of theirs. SO Will McGowin was not as closely related as John McGowin.

ERM: In a very true sense, the purchase of the W. T. Smith Lumber Company in 1905 was almost exclusively a McGowin family investment.

EMM: Except for William Foshee whose wife was a McGowin. He was not only an in-law but a cousin as well. The four, John and Will McGowin and my father and William Foshee, came to Chapman as the operating management. Alex McGowin and Joe McGowin, although they were the principal owners, were in Brewton and Mobile respectively.

ERM: What other businesses were they involved in in Mobile that gave them the capital to invest in this venture? Was one of them on the board of the Merchants National Bank?

EMM: That was Uncle Joe. Uncle Alex was a major stockholder in the Bank of Brewton. Both were entrepreneurs and had a good many businesses. Later, as you know, Uncle Joe came to be the principal owner of the *Mobile Press Register*, a morning and afternoon paper. Uncle Alex spent his principal life in Brewton but he was one of those enterprising young men who had the capacity to make money—in lumber, in banking—in whatever he did. While he had a home in Brewton, and spent most of his life there, he also had a home in Mobile.

ERM: What was the purchase price of the company in 1905?

EMM: I have no idea what that was. Maybe Floyd told you this story. It ought to go into the record. I was told by the onetime probate judge of this county, Fred Winkler, a friend of mine in his lifetime, that at the turn of the century when he was a young law clerk in Birmingham, his firm had represented Mr. W. T. Smith when Mr. Smith sold his interest to the Foshees. Judge Winkler recalled Mr. Smith coming into the office clicking his heels and saying, "I've unloaded that lemon at Chapman."

A curious sequel to that story occurred some years later in 1949. Margaret Bourke-White was doing a story for *Life* about the new South.* She came to Chapman and took many pictures. As a matter of fact, she used a picture of Floyd, Julian, and me on a pile of logs as the lead picture for her story. I told her what Mr. Smith had said and she used it in the text below the picture. One of the editors of *Life* telephoned sometime later and said that one of Mr. Smith's surviving sons had complained to *Life* that their father had never said that. He wanted to know how could I prove it? I said, "There's no way to prove it. The man who told me is dead." That's all I know about it. But what they paid for it in 1905, I don't know.

ERM: How much land was involved in the purchase?

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*"The New South," *Life* 27, no. 18 (Oct. 31, 1949): 79-90.

EMM: I would guess around fifteen or twenty thousand acres.You must remember that at that time land, per se, did not have a lot of value. It was the timber on the land that gave it value. I can remember my father telling me that in 1907, the company bought the Dunham Lumber Company at Dunham, Alabama, six miles south of Chapman on the L & N [Louisville & Nashville] Railroad. It was owned by the Stolenwerck family in Montgomery. He said they paid $450,000 for the property. I don't know many acres went with it. They paid $50,000 down and the rest to be paid in installments. That was a considerable purchase at that time for young men. He said that the day after the papers were signed, the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York failed to open its doors when the panic of 1907 was on. A week later, his older brother, Alex, died. Alex had been the financial man in the company and my father said they would have given anything if they could have gotten out of that trade at that time. They rode through it and that's why we are here today. That opened up a new area for the company.

ERM: You were able to continue in business?

EMM: Yes. Instead of working for two or three years on a cut-out and get-out basis, we operated a good many more years. Then about 1915, there was a large tract of timber in Conecuh County known as the Atkinson Tract and we bought a sizeable part of that at the time. My father took the family to Detroit where we stayed at the old Book-Cadillac Hotel in the owner's suite. With the family were a nurse and cousin of my mother's. My father negotiated a trade with Mr. Atkinson for this tract. Floyd and I remember vividly seeing the Detroit Tigers baseball team when Ty Cobb was at the height of his power. What a thrill it was to see Ty Cobb play baseball.

The Atkinson Tract in Conecuh County involved considerable logistics in getting the timber to the mill. In those days all logging was done by railroads. We'd had one track out east on what was known as the Crenshaw line, from Chapman into Crenshaw County. Then with acquisition of the Dunham property, we ran another railroad that went under the L & N between Chapman and Georgiana on down the west side into Dunham territory. That track was known as the Dunham line. The third line made necessary by the Atkinson purchase was known as the McKenzie line. All in all, we had about one hundred twenty-five miles of operating railroad at the peak. To get to the Atkinson tract, it was necessary to run over a branch line of the L & N for ten miles or so. Up to that time, all of our railroads had been narrow gauge, so this necessitated buying new standard gauge equipment. We bought two new locomotives, Number Seven and Eight from the Baldwin Locomotive Company. Some years ago we gave Number Seven to the Kershaw Manufacturing Company in Montgomery, a manufacturer of railroad equipment. It is used as their showpiece.

In order to run these trains over the L & N, even a few miles on a branch line, our conductors and engineers had to take the Interstate Commerce Commission examination.

ERM: You had to operate them as common carriers?

EMM: Not as common carriers. We had to operate them to meet

the rigorous requirements of operation safety. We built connections to a branch line from Georgiana to Graceville, Florida, known as the Alabama & Florida Division. Between Georgiana and McKenzie, we established a station called Bulgosa, and below McKenzie, we built another station where it went off the branch line to the woods. It was called Karen.

ERM: Did this mean that you had to rebuild all of your branch lines from narrow gauge?

EMM: No. We kept the narrow gauge roads, and simply added a third rail for the standard gauge trains. In the mill yards we used narrow and standard gauge trains on the same track. The stations were only a little shack where the telegraphic equipment was located. Where the names of the stations came from or what's happened to them, I haven't the slightest idea. I do recall them vividly because I used to go to the woods as a young many with the paymaster. In order to get on the mainline, our train would stop, the conductor would go in and telegraph the dispatcher located in Georgiana, and get written orders that we could proceed. The whole thing was very formally stated. Then when we got off, he had to clear with the dispatcher again. That went on twice a day as each train came over that strip of railroad. It was standard operating procedure.

ERM: I found in the company's old correspondence file a letter dated during the late twenties from someone in the L & N organization. The letter to your father stated that a new regulation was being enforced that all locomotives operating on L & N would have to have automatic fire doors on their boilers. At first your father was not inclined to respond to this and they sent a second letter to which he replied, "We don't operate on L & N Lines." From what you just told me, I gather that for at least ten miles, you did share the track with L & N.

EMM: Yes, this branch called the Alabama & Florida Division.

ERM: Do you remember how he got around that automatic fire door?

EMM: I don't know nor do I remember when we discontinued that line. They must have got that track going about 1914 or 1916 and it operated for many years. It was a beautiful stand of timber.

ERM: Did you own most of that back to Chapman, or did you have other mills?

EMM: All of our railroads operated out of Chapman. But we had other mills at Greenville, Linden, and Fountain.

ERM: How far did the railroads haul logs?

EMM: Up to thirty miles or more on each line. As I said, we had 125 miles in operation at one time. Railroad logging, remember, had no mobility in it. You had to lay your mainline down and then lay spur tracks out from each side to cover the area; a skidder line would only reach about a thousand yards.

ERM: What kind of equipment did you use for skidding?

EMM: Great big steam skidders. Tremendous things. They used to take those trees from the forest, and knock down anything that came in front of it. But, of course in those days, we were only logging big trees.

ERM: Did you use the McGiffert?

EMM: The McGiffert, as I remember, was a loader. The loaders would stand on legs and lift their own wheels in order to pull the empty log cars underneath them for loading.

We maintained living quarters in each of these areas, the Dunham camp, the McKenzie camp, and the Crenshaw camp. Camp was a series of sleeping cars, rough wooden boxcars with bunks—pretty rough, too. You'd have a kitchen car, a car for eating, and a commissary car. In those days they worked "from can to can't" as they would say—from till you can see until you can't see. They worked about five and a half days a week. All you did was sleep and eat and work.

ERM: How often did your father go out and inspect the woods operation?

EMM: He didn't go too often. Will McGowin and John McGowin looked after the woods operation primarily.

ERM: Your father was more concerned with the mill operation?

EMM: That and the overall supervision and financing.

ERM: I understand from your brother, Floyd, that it was your father's practice every morning to get up early and before breakfast, make a walking tour of the mills.

EMM: He got up at five-thirty and drank a cup of coffee and was in some mill by six o' clock in the morning when the mills started. He walked over the entire plant every morning. It would take him about an hour and he'd get back to the house about seven-fifteen and have breakfast. Mind you, the office was only a hundred yards away. He'd walk on to his office and be there by eight o'clock and come home at twelve for lunch, take a little nap after lunch, and be back at the office by one. He would always take a tour around the mill in the afternoon and stay at the office until six and then come home.

ERM: He was well acquainted with the people who worked for him.

EMM: He was not only well acquainted, but they worshipped the ground he walked on, for the most part. He was available to anybody who wanted to see him in his office.

ERM: Did he inherit a labor force from the old company when he came here?

EMM: Oh, yes.

ERM: But then the company grew, did it not?

EMM: There had been an operation here since 1883 and it was a corporation since 1887, first as the Rocky Creek Lumber Company and then as the W. T. smith Lumber Company.* I remember asking my father why we kept the name of W. T. Smith Lumber Company, and why didn't we change the name. The question has been asked me many times. He said they thought they would only be here two years or so, and since the W. T. Smith Lumber Company had been operating fourteen years and had a good reputation in the trade (as with Smith squares in Liverpool), they just kept the name. When we liquidated the company sixty years later, it was still the W. T. Smith Lumber Company.

ERM: Where were the sales of the company made in the days when you were growing up?

EMM: When I was growing up, the principal market was in New England, and to a lesser extent the Middle West, and, of course, export to Europe, South America, and the West Indies. We'd sell to firms in New England like Rice and Lockwood Lumber Company, a wholesale firm in Springfield, Massachusetts. Mr. Hubbard, one of the partners, would come to Chapman once or twice a year for two or three days and buy several hundred carloads of boards, flooring and finish, which we would ship out over a period of several months. Then we always sold large quantities to the railroads, material such as stringers, sills, and siding. Most of the railroad freight cars were built of wood. We could cut up to fifty-foot lengths. In addition, we always had big orders for railroad material through the creosoting plants as well as for highway bridges and any other plant where timbers were used.

ERM: You were also in the box business.

EMM: I'll come to that later. I remember my father saying, "When the Panama Canal was opened, it spelled the doom of the eastern markets as far as the southern mills were concerned," because that meant the west coast mills could get their lumber through the canal up the eastern seaboard to Providence, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, cheaper than we could by rail. His prediction was right. They took over that market and drove southern pine back into the interior.

ERM: Couldn't you have shifted from tidewater just as easy?

EMM: No. Our rail costs from here to Mobile plus the sea freight was too great. We didn't have solid cargoes like you had from the West Coast where you could load right at the mill. By the time I got out of school in the mid-twenties, our market had shifted to the Middle West and our principal markets were Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan. I guess Ohio was our biggest state. There was a smaller amount into Pennsylvania and Illinois. We had difficulty going east of Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and north and west of Chicago because of railroad rates.

ERM: The old Lake States forests had been cut out by that time.

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*from 1891 on.

EMM: They had been largely cut out by then and the Middle West became our prime market. Wholesalers such as W. R. Willett Lumber Company of Louisville and Hagemeyer Lumber Company of Cincinnati and Barnaby Brothers of Chicago and others became prime distributors. We all had many warm personal friendships in those days because they would come on passenger trains and stay two or three days. They had to stay with us as there was no other place. My mother was very gracious about it and entertained them. We had servants and plenty of space. We came to know them as warm friends. Roscoe Willett, for instance, brought his bride here on his honeymoon. Their daughter is one of my warm friends in Louisville today. But now, so much for the lumber end of it. You asked about the box business.

ERM: When did it come into prominence?

EMM: We built a veneer mill after world War I. We had fine gum logs but we didn't have a hardwood mill so we established a veneer mill. We'd sell it to the meat packing plants who used sheets of veneer to make their boxes. From that we got into making vegetable and fruit crates. We made lettuce and celery crates and shipped vast quantities of those up to Long Island and such places as Batavia, New York, and the surrounding area. We had an agent up there who would distribute them for us. We made pineapple crates for Cuba and Puerto Rico. Then we got into the orange and grapefruit crate business. One of my first jobs when I got out of school was to peddle orange crates in Florida. We stayed in that business until about 1935. I made several trips a year to Florida during that period.*

ERM: Did corrugated boxes knock you out of the wooden box business?

EMM: No. Let me go back a little bit before I get to that. We also had built a tight barrel stave mill, a tight stave as opposed to a slack barrel. They were made from oak. Our red oak staves were sold, for instance, to the Standard Oil Company in New Jersey for oil barrels and the white oak staves were used for whiskey barrels. The white oak will not permit evaporation. We operated that for a good many years.

Then we looked around for something to do with the small pine trees that were not large enough for saw logs and we went into the heading business for slack barrels. Slack barrels were for products such as lime, sugar, apples, and fish. I don't know if Floyd covered this for you or not, but at one time we had three double heading mills, two of them here at Chapman and one at our Ruthven plant. I remember we made enough heads for twenty-one thousand barrels a day. That was the extent to which barrels were used them. That trade is completely gone. In those days they shipped bananas in bunches and they built a container of veneer slats with a round head, top and bottom, to hold a single bunch of bananas. There was a company in Chicago called Leigh Banana Case Company, and I remember the thrill we had when Floyd went up there one time and sold Leigh one million banana heads.

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*For information concerning the box industry in the West during this same period, see *Twentieth Century Businessman*, and interview with Walter S. Johnson conducted by Elwood R. Maunder (Santa Cruz, California: Forest History Society, 1974).

In 1935, after our father's death, Julian, my brother who is now dead, became interested in forestry and somewhere he met Les [Leslie K.] Pomeroy. Pomeroy had been very successful in his own operation out in Arkansas, and had been the subject of an article in *Reader's Digest* called "Pine-Tree Banker."* Julian brought him here to Chapman to do a survey of our mill and that brought about a remarkable change in our lives. It took him about one year to complete it. That was the first time that anybody had ever looked at our cutover land in years. When we cut over a section we would simply mark it off on our land book and nobody would look at it again. So when he went back there he found we had considerable new growth of timber, in spite of uncontrolled fires, mechanical logging, indiscriminate cattle grazing, and all that. Nature still had put a sizeable number of trees back, so we then and there decided to go into the business of growing trees and to start a long-range forest policy, which we did. But that's another phase.

ERM: There had been no efforts at practicing forestry before that?

EMM: Never heard of it. Mills cut out and got out. After you cut over an area you pulled up the railroad track and never expected to see that forest again because there was no way to get there. What makes all this possible today? The truck. Trucks provide a flexibility that railroad logging never dreamed of. It provided a way of going to isolated tracts. You could take on tree or a hundred trees. That was impossible in the old days.

ERM: You didn't sell your cutover land.

EMM: There was no market for it.

ERM: You father received in the late twenties a number of letters inquiring about fifty thousand acres of pine land that could be purchased by an eastern buyer. They probably wanted timber and not cutover. Would you have sold your cutovers in those days if you could have?

EMM: I wouldn't be surprised. I think we would have sold anything for a price.

ERM: Then you sold farmers small parcels of land.

EMM: Yes, that was going on all the time.

ERM: I can't find much evidence of it.

EMM: Of course, the farmer had a problem. He had to clean it up. He had to get the stumps out. It was a big job.

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*Leslie K. Pomeroy, et al, "Pine-Tree Banker," *Reader's Digest* 35 (December 1939): 60-3.

I told you about my father's practice of getting up early and going around the mill everyday before breakfast. He would take occasional trips into the southern area to call upon his customers, especially wholesale people like the Willetts in Louisville, or the L & N people there , or to see Lawrence Leonard in New York City, and he'd occasionally go up to New England. More often he would go to Mobile of Pensacola to deal with the exporters because exporting was a sizeable item in that day. He would go to the Southern Pine Association annual meeting in New Orleans. That always made a great trip. He would take his family with him. It was a great pleasure for all of us. I can remember going to New Orleans and staying at the old Grunewald Hotel. It later became the Roosevelt and now the Fairmont. Southern Pine held their meetings there regularly during the first part of April for fifty years or more.

Other than that, my father didn't do traveling just for pleasure's sake. He rarely went to a resort. He rarely would go just for a pleasure trip although he would take his family to the coast every summer, generally to Biloxi, Mississippi. We would go down and stay at the Old White House. But the rest of the time he stayed here. His personal recreation was in a farm that he acquired two miles from Chapman—the old Hammond place. It's where we live today. He acquired about fifteen hundred acres and he had a foreman and probably eight or ten tenant families living on the place. He first built a little log cabin and would drive his horses out on Sunday afternoon. Then about 1918 he built a seventeen-acre lake on the place. It was a natural depression in the ground where some drainage streams came together. He built the dam with mule scoops, lifting up about half a yard of dirt at a time until he got that whole dam built. Then around 1920 he built what was called the lodge. He would come out and stay weekends here. Then in 1926 after I'd come home from school and the other children were living at home (Floyd was married at the time), he said, "I'm tired of living in a sawmill house." He had expected to live there two or three years in the beginning and instead he spent twenty years. As a matter of fact, when we came to Chapman he did not want to bring his family from Mobile at all but my mother insisted on coming up. Then he wanted us to live in Georgiana three miles from here but she wouldn't agree to it, so he compromised and then rebuilt a sawmill house alongside the railroad track and within a hundred yards of the office and two hundred yards from the mill. It was fixed up and made into a very nice house. The other relatives lived alongside so they had four large two-story houses at that time. After twenty years, he got Frank Lockwood, an architect in Montgomery, to design a home. Work was started in the summer of 1926, fifty years ago, and we moved in in the spring of 1927. I can remember very well the day we moved into that house because of a storm that night. It's a beautiful house and he enjoyed living in it for seven years. He was always very proud of this house. That was my father's recreation.

As far as the early life in Chapman is concerned, there were no public schools and my father and the others helped provide public schools for both white and colored. My first school was in a little building out in back of the house where my mother's sister, Miss Stella Stallworth, taught Floyd and me, Stewart and Mary Foshee, and two or three of the neighborhood children. It operated for three or four years until a school was established in Chapman with my Aunt Stella as teacher. Then we got schools established to the ninth grade. Teachers were hired from outside and frequently during the scholastic year they boarded at our house. There was Sunday school every Sunday and church once a month. Preachers came from Brewton and most always stayed at our house. There were a lot of

them—Ross, Scott, Gay, Crumton, Bishop, Strain, and Levitt, the one who married our parents. After we all finished school here, we went to high school in Greenville, twelve miles away. in those days high school were only eleven years so Floyd and I only had two years of high school. We boarded all week at the Porterfield house in Greenville. The local train got to Greenville about nine o'clock, which would cause us to miss the first hour of school and since that wasn't tolerated in those days, we had to take an early train. It didn't stop at Chapman but did stop at Georgiana, three miles south of us. It was due at Georgiana at six o'clock in the morning, so for two years, I got up at four-thirty in the morning every Monday and drove Floyd in a horse and buggy to Georgiana to catch Number Two at six o'clock so he would be at school on time.

After Floyd graduated, it came my time to go to high school. By then we had acquired a Model T Ford so we didn't have to use the horse and buggy. A man at the mill would drive me down to catch this same train at six o'clock every Monday morning and I'd come home Friday on an afternoon train. I suffered through that, and it was real suffering I thought, for four years. Bu a strange coincidence, my graduating exercises were on a Friday in May, 1918, and the following Monday morning the L & N Railroad made Chapman an official stop for Number Two. All I would have had to do then was walk across the street and get on the train and save all that tortuous business of driving to Georgiana. I've never quite forgiven the L & N Railroad for doing that to me. From there we went on to the University of Alabama.

ERM: Did all of your brothers and sister go there?

EMM: My three brothers and I did. After going here to the Chapman school, my sister Estelle went to Margaret Booth School, a private girls' school in Montgomery. She lived up there with our aunt, Mrs. Foshee, and spent I think two years at this school. After that she went to Vassar where she graduated four years later. While I was at the University of Alabama my father said to us one day, "I want all of you to go abroad for a year but I want you to come home after your stay there and go into business here at Chapman."

To go back a little bit, Floyd was two years ahead of me so after his graduation, he went to Columbia University for a year and then came home and worked for a year so that he and I could go abroad together. In the fall of 1921, the beginning of my senior year at the University of Alabama, I asked President Denny where we should go. I told him of our father's wishes and asked how best to go about going to Europe. He named several European universities but then said, "Why don't you apply for a Rhodes Scholarship? There is going to be an election in the next two or three months." I had never heard of a Rhodes Scholarship but I inquired about it and did apply and was elected. Subsequently, I was accepted at Pembroke College and Floyd put in an application and was also accepted. And as a result of that both Julian and Nick [Nicholas], and Greeley, my nephew, have all gone on to Pembroke College. It has opened a new era to us. Incidentally, on the ship going over I met Keville Larson, a Rhodes Scholar from Wisconsin. He and I became warm friends and in 1931 he and Estelle were married. The Rhodes Scholarship then has come to mean a great deal in our lives.

ERM: What were your major fields of interest as undergraduates at Alabama?

EMM: Absolutely nothing. We took the routine academic course at Alabama. At Columbia and Oxford Floyd did a great deal of reading in English literature and I did most of my work in political science and economics.

Back to Chapman. We had those four large family homes, all with big families. All the parents had a great respect for education. The children in every one of those homes went away to school. Some of the girls went to Ward Belmont in Nashville and Huntington College in Montgomery; some went to Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley; and some to California. Going to school was routine and the older people insisted that the young people get an education which they themselves had missed.

ERM: And yet they wanted you all to come back to Chapman.

EMM: They all wanted us to come back to Chapman and work. My father, particularly, wanted his family to come back. To go back to the life here, he was the dominant character. The schools he established ran a full nine months, teacher's pay being supplemented by the company since the average rural school in Alabama would be five or six months. We had nine months of school for both white and colored as far back as I can remember. He built churches for both white and colored, lodge rooms for both, and there were playgrounds for both races. The races lived completely separately. There was no question about integration in those days. The question was never raised. We never had the slightest concern about racial unrest. I have no recollection of any racial unrest in my young life here in Chapman. As a matter of fact, I've known some mills like the Allison Lumber Company at Bellamy, Alabama that employed only black help with the exception of a few key personnel. Then, I've known mills like the Urania Lumber Company in Louisiana that employed only white help. By sheer happenstance our personnel were about fifty-fifty, white and colored. It remained that way as far as I can remember. There never has been any concern about it one way or the other. We had separate living quarters. There must have been three hundred houses in Chapman, half black and half white, but they were completely separated. The black section was known as the Negro quarters.

ERM: Were the houses rented to these people?

EMM: They were rented for a song. A house in those days would rent for about two or three dollars a month depending on the size. A little cabin would rent for a dollar a month. It didn't have great deal other than shelter but it would have a little plot of land. So everyone had garden plots. When the watering system was put in, they all got running water.

ERM: Was there a company store?

EMM: There was a company store up until the early sixties.

ERM: Did you have company scrip?

EMM: In the olden days they had company coins and scrip, and

we used to pay in so-called scrip checks. Those checks would be usable at the company store, but they were cashable twice a month into cash. That was the pattern of the countryside then. There wasn't anywhere else anybody could go because there was no transportation. This was before the days of the automobile. The only transportation were the railroad tracks and people didn't have money to go anywhere else. So they spent their entire lives close by.

ERM: How was the administration of a company town like Chapman carried out? Was it through the company?

EMM: In the early days we were not incorporated. It was just a community. If there happened to be an arrest or fight or some disturbance, the sheriff would have to come down from Greenville and make his arrest and then when they got ready for the trial, the trail would be in Greenville, twelve miles away, and transportation was very difficult to and from Greenville. It got to be a burden to get the defendant and his witnesses to a trail. Around 1912 or 1915 the town of Chapman was incorporated. A mayor was elected but the mayor was first designated by my father and then formally elected by the few people who voted at that time. He would hold mayor's court. Floyd served as mayor for some years and we kept a mayor form of government up until the time we sold to Union Camp Corporation.

ERM: Who did the voting electorate consist of?

EMM: A handful a people who lived in the community. In those days practically no blacks voted. I doubt that there were over fifteen or twenty people who qualified as voters in Chapman.

ERM: And there was no quarrel over the structure?

EMM: None, whatever. It was a benevolent dictatorship.

ERM: It was a feudal situation in a true sense, wasn't it?

EMM: It was. And consequently a benevolent dictatorship. But I remember when we had a long and bitter strike in the fifties. The CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] sent a man here to do a story for their paper—a tabloid. And he headed that story "Chapman, Alabama lonely feudal outpost." We laughed and said he misspelled feudal. As far as we were concerned it was futile. Nobody wins a strike. After three bitter years, we were still here and they were gone.

ERM: What are some of the things you remember most vividly of what your father did with you as boys growing up?

EMM: He made us work. He was a keen disciplinarian. We didn't dare contradict our father. We didn't dare argue with him about a thing. All during the school year we had chores about the house such as feeding the stock and bringing in firewood. The only heat we had in the house was from wood fires. We had plenty of help but we were assigned jobs that we had to do everyday. We didn't go a single day without some work to do.

ERM: That was, of course, something that he drew out of his own experience as a boy growing up on a farm.

EMM: He was determined. Hell, in the summertime, he'd give us one week after school was out to play and one week before school started to play and the rest of the time we worked. There were no child labor laws in those days. We'd go to work in the mill at twelve or thirteen years old. One of my first jobs was straightening lumber on the grading chain all day as it would come out of the machine. I would straighten it out so that the grader could get to it and mark it. It was a tedious job, but I did it. As we grew older we did our summer work in the office.

I remember when we used to sit around the family table at Edgefield after we had finished school. Floyd was married and all of us were grown. We would get into a discussion and our father would take one position and we would take another. I remember I would say frequently, "Papa, I just can't understand how you can take that position." But he had one devastating answer. He would say, "When you're as old as I am, you will." I know he was right, but it was infuriating at the time. In our household, as I said earlier, we entertained customers, we entertained preachers, we had the teachers living with us, so it was not dull. Mother brought music teachers in. She was musically inclined and made us all take music lessons as children and we kept that up for many years.

ERM: What part did reading have in your home?

EMM: It was a very large part of our lives. We all read books. There was always something to read.

ERM: Were you ever given to reading aloud as a group?

EMM: No, we never did that.

ERM: The evidence of your mother and father's strong cultural interests were always in front of you and encouraged you, I suspect.

EMM: They encouraged us very much, particularly our mother. Mother was determined that we were not going to be the products of an isolated sawmill village.

ERM: You were going to grow up and be cultured young men and women.

EMM: And my father supported my mother fully, completely, in everything she wanted to do in that regard. They were a great team.

ERM: She liked to travel and traveled abroad a great deal?

EMM: Yes, she made several trips.

ERM: And he never went with her?

EMM: No, he was coming my last year at Oxford in the summer of 1925, but one of the sawmills burned that spring and he had to stay here and supervise the rebuilding of the operation. My sister, Estelle, went over with my mother.

ERM: Your mother made a diary of that trip which I saw the other day.

EMM: Under my father's instruction, I stayed on two months that summer and served as their guide over Europe. I'd been living there three years. I'll tell you about another incident. I'd been in universities seven years—four years at Alabama and three years abroad. We got home from Europe on a Friday afternoon and sometime over the weekend my father let me know that come Monday morning I was on my own, and I need no longer look to him for support. I was a grown man.

ERM: Did he make you an offer of a job?

EMM: There wasn't any question about me going to work. He didn't offer me a job; he put me to work. I went to work the following Monday morning and I've been working ever since.

ERM: What did you do in the beginning?

EMM: I've forgotten the particular assignment but I worked all over the office.

ERM: You will recall that your father made a point of sending you and your brothers and your sister, and lots of other people who left this community to go somewhere else, gift subscriptions to a number of regional newspapers. I presume that was done with purpose. Do you remember getting copies of regional newspapers while you were a student?

EMM: I remember the local papers but not the daily paper.

ERM: I found evidence of his sending subscriptions of *the Montgomery Advertiser* to your sister and her husband when they were in New York City. He sent newspapers to Nick while he was at Oxford. I wonder if he did the same thing for you.

EMM: I don't remember him sending them to us. The whole burden of what I'm saying is that while we were raised in an isolated sawmill village, because of my mother and father, I say this with deep pride and respect, we were given special attention. They saw to it that we were given every opportunity to develop.

ERM: In many families, especially those in rural areas, the tendency has been over the years for the children to go away to school and never come back.

EMM: And never come back? My father made a fetish of that. He said, "I want you to come back to Chapman after Oxford and go into business here." He believed deeply in business, and businessmen. He didn't have any use at all for men who were school teachers.

ERM: What about doctors and lawyers?

EMM: Oh, that was fine. That was different.

ERM: I was going to ask you what he did for the medical needs of the community.

EMM: He kept a full-time doctor living in the community, and for some years two doctors, and also a nurse. There was a little clinic and an office. A doctor and a nurse were on duty all the time right here in this community and nowhere else.

ERM: To what extent were their salaries and fees subsidized by the company?

EMM: The office and the equipment facilities were, of course, donated by the company. But there was a medical fee, as I remember, of about seventy-five cents a month for a single man and a dollar and a quarter a month for a married man and his family. That gave them full medical attention. There were no further costs except for medicine. The doctor was also available for house calls. It was sort of a system that was to their advantage to keep everybody well. They never took it easy because there were lots of people here, and somebody was always sick.

ERM: Was this medical system mandatory, where every employee had an automatic deduction from his salary?

EMM: Yes. It made enough to provide a handsome income for a doctor in those days. He made money on the side with medicines, like a pink liquid he prescribed whether they needed it or not.

ERM: Were the doctors and nurses that came here people who stayed for extended periods of time?

EMM: Oh, yes. One of the doctors, Dr. H. K. Tippins, stayed here for probably twenty years or more. Then his brother, Rankin Tippins, joined him after World War I and the two of them were together here for probably ten years. When they left, Dr. Johnston came and stayed many years.

ERM: I recall the great flu epidemic that hit this country in 1918-1919. How did it affect this community?

EMM: I can't remember. I was a freshman at the University of Alabama. I remember when the school shut down I came home. Then after a week or two we went back to the university. They made hospitals out of some of the fraternity houses but that's about all I can remember.

ERM: You don't recall what the impacts were on Chapman?

EMM: No.

ERM: Has Chapman ever been victimized by any health problems like yellow fever?

EMM: Not that I know of. We had high-water problems periodically, once or twice a year, a flood in the sense that the water would get high enough to close down the mill and play havoc for a day or two.

ERM: Did that every foul your water supply?

EMM: No, because our drinking water came from flowing wells which have a lot of minerals. The water was very hard. We got water for the boilers from the creek and the creek was either feast or famine. You either had the floods I was talking about or damned thing would go dry. So we put a whole series of dams in to get enough water to keep the boilers going. But the water was poor and we would have to use all sorts of boiler treatments. It was very expensive. And it was not until after World War II that we dug a new well and went down six hundred feet and tapped a strata of beautiful water which runs right across the county from north of Greenville down below Georgiana. It's called an aquifer and we seem to be right over that stream. It is delicious, fine water. We didn't have this water in the olden days when hard water was a very real problem.

ERM: Your father's correspondence reveals the fact that spring floods were very often a problem.

EMM: Particularly this time of year. We had many of them on Floyd's birthday, march 15. They'd come along about the same time.

ERM: What about fire in the woods? Fire was a perennial problem to the lumberman because his economic interests came into conflict with those of the people in agriculture. How would you describe that problem and particularly how it evidence itself and was met by your father in his time?

EMM: My father, in his time, ignored woods fires. There was no hazard to standing, mature trees in the South because the big trees don't burn. The old forest doesn't burn, only the underbrush. Nobody cared about eh cutover land because we never dreamed that we'd go back there again. And as you said, it was the custom of the countryside for local farmers to burn the woods every year. There was unlimited, indiscriminate grazing of cattle. There were few fences to keep cattle out. It was not until after we started selective forestry in 1935 that attention was paid to woods fires. I remember being in the legislature in 1939 after we tried to control this practice. With both Floyd and Julian working very closely with the state chamber of commerce, we proposed a statewide stock law which I handled on the floor of the House of Representatives.* I was twenty years in the House and that was the toughest political fight I ever got into. Farmers marched on the capitol. They said to us, "You pass this bill, and we'll show you some fires." Well, we passed it, except for a handful of five or six counties. We got 95 percent of what we wanted to achieve on that first go-round. It didn't take long for those counties

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*Alabama, Act No. 368, Acts of Alabama, Regular Session, 1939, p. 487.

that voted themselves out to see the benefits of it. Now there is 100 percent stock control in Alabama. And of course that's very effective when it comes to fire control.

ERM: In 1939 Alabama was still primarily an agricultural state. How did you put together a coalition to pass legislation like that in the face of heavy rural representation in the legislature?

EMM: By gradually getting public opinion on our side. I remember saying to the governor at one time, "We can have fire towers and manpower but unless we have public opinion on our side, we can't win." We had to convert people to the benefits of fire control. We worked long and hard making speeches over the whole state and finally got the message over. In the olden days when a man going down the highway saw a woods fire, he'd just let it go. Then they began to report them and even helped put them out. It was a great change in public attitude.

ERM: But it really did not develop until after your father's death.

EMM: Oh, no. For in his lifetime there was no need to restore forests. That's another whole subject. It wasn't until the mid-thirties that the balance between supply and demand started to become about even, and as we looked down the long road we saw that we had to start restoring forests if we were going to have any wood for the future.

ERM: It was also a time during which the first big inroads by big paper corporations began to be felt in the South.

EMM: That didn't come until after the war. Gulf States came to Alabama first.

ERM: And Crown Zellerbach came into Bogalusa at this time. I. P. [International Paper Company] began to move down into the South. St. Regis came after World War II. However, it seems that there was beginning to be an earlier impact from those big companies.

EMM: But mainly after the war, after 1945. I think maybe we are going into an area that's beyond the scope of this job because you want to limit this, I believe primarily to my father's time.

ERM: That's right.

EMM: He died in 1934 and he left as a heritage a fine operation and one hundred forty thousand acres of largely cutover land. It was on that very large base that we were able to pick up and build whatever we have done. We had good tools to work with including a heritage of many years in the business and a good name and reputation.

ERM: It is my understanding that he had a modest interest in trade associations but was not an active participant. He was content to assign those responsibilities to others, and you boys came into the role of filling those jobs.

EMM: That's right. Floyd devoted his attention primarily to

the hardwood and heading associations and I devoted mine primarily to the southern pine and the crates.

ERM: To what extent were you involved with the National Lumber Manufacturers Association?

EMM: Both of us were very much involved. Floyd was president of the National for two years. We all went to the national meetings and did committee work.

ERM: With the advent of the Depression and the New Deal, there came the National Industrial Recovery Act and out of that emerged the attempt at industrial self-government which produced the various lumber authorities.* In 1933 your father was a member of the labor committee of the Southern Pine Association which was to contribute to the discussion of NIRA legislation and the various conditions that went into it. He demurred from taking part in that discussion and put you to the task.** Do you remember that?

EMM: Not too much about the labor committee but I remember the Lumber Code Authority in the so-called "Blue Eagle" days. Government then tried to do just the opposite of what is being done today. They tried to make people raise prices and not cut prices. They issued a series of regulations and I remember my father got us all together one day and told us to adhere strictly to each regulation. He ended up by saying, "This is not going to work, but it's not going to be the fault of the W. T. Smith Lumber Company."***

ERM: There were violations all around.

EMM: All around us. We actually closed down the Chapman plant for three weeks because we could not sell the lumber. I remember going to Washington, D.C. and presenting this case with some of the other large short leaf manufacturers. Short leaf was a little more difficult to market than long leaf. Long leaf always had a market of its own, but in short leaf the Code Authority established three prices. Take the item of six-inch number two common which was a commonplace commodity. The regulations said a mill producing over a certain quantity, say a million feet a month or more, would be known as a "Grade A" mill and would have to get twenty dollars a thousand. Now a mill producing between half a million and a million—these are relative figures—would be known as a "Grade B" mill and the price would be nineteen dollars per thousand. Then mills producing less than that would be "Grade C" and the price was eighteen dollars

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*Act of 16 June 1933, 48 Stat. 195.

**J. G. McGowin to A.G.T. Moore, 14 September 1933, W. T. Smith Lumber Company files, Chapman, Alabama. For a copy of this letter see Appendix D, p. 126.

***For J. G. McGowin's written views, see letter to R. J. McCreary, dated December 11, 1933, in Appendix D, pp. 127.

per thousand. We happened to have one mill in the “Grade A” category, two mills in the “Grade B” category, and one mill in the “Grade C” category. I told our plight to the Code Authority: A customer would want to buy a carload of six-inch number two common and I said, “That’s fine. Which kind do you want? Do you want the eighteen dollar variety or the nineteen or the twenty dollar variety?” He said, “What’s the difference?” I said, “There’s absolutely no difference. They are all grade marked alike; they are all guaranteed to be the same quality.” Well, he said, “I’ll take the eighteen dollar price.” We had no trouble selling the eighteen dollar. We first sold out of that and then we’d sell the nineteen but we couldn’t sell the twenty dollar. It stacked up in our sheds and we literally had to shut down for three weeks until we could get relief.

ERM: Wasn’t that basically the problem of the industry at large, overproduction at that time?

EMM: Oh, yes.

ERM: Mills were producing lumber at a rate that the market just couldn’t possibly absorb, and they would not step down their production.

EMM: No, no. Many mills went down. You must remember that the small mills came on heavy during this period. The portable mill was developed in the middle or late twenties. It flourished more in the thirties as the trucks provided more mobility. But in those days a small mill could turn the spigot off and on easily. If the market went up the least bit you’d get more production. The big mill couldn’t stop and start. It had to run. You either ran or you shut down for good. There was no middle ground.

ERM: I suppose these little mills operated under the “Grade C” category and could sell their lumber at the lowest price.

EMM: Sure. When they raised the price it made it attractive for them to go back into business. It was the first example of planned economy and planned economy won’t work in the lumber business. It won’t work in any business in my opinion, but this was an industry of rugged individuals during my father’s lifetime. I think it’s very much to his credit that he achieved his success in a time of extreme competition where there were no benefits from the government, no subsidies of any sort. Timber values and labor costs remained fairly stable during this period. But it was dog eat dog. You had to scratch for what you got. He ran this mill successfully for thirty years even during the bottom of the Depression. It was a great achievement.

ERM: How would you characterize the pattern of profit margin within your company and within the southern industry during the period from 1905, when you became operators here, through the time of the Depression? How has the profit margin varied and what were the ranges of it?

EMM: I’ll see if I can answer that. Take a mill like the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company sixty miles below us. They acquired some two hundred thousand acres or more at the turn of the century and built a mill in 1900. Therefore their town was called Century. Obviously, that timber stood them at a very low price and thirty-five years later what

they marketed still had an extremely low acquisition cost. Their profit margins would be considerably higher than those of us who were buying timber from day to day on the market and if some profit was made we'd go out and buy some more.

ERM: But stumpage values didn't increase.

EMM: Yes, it would go from two dollars to five dollars to twenty dollars in that range. Land values remained fairly stable until after World War II. Stumpage has gone over one hundred dollars a thousand now.

ERM: Would you say that the profit margin was on a flat plane or was it an ascending plane through those years?

EMM: Probably what I would call a flat plane until after World War II.

[Norman Floyd McGowin entered the room at this time.]

ERM: I talked with Floyd this morning about relations with customers and I read to him a portion of a letter that I picked out of your files yesterday addressed from your father to Moseley & Gaines of Mobile dated February 18, 1927, in which he wrote:

I was over at our Ruthven mill yesterday and noticed that you have not paid them for shipments made January 7th. I told you some time ago that I wanted to sell you, but I couldn't unless you paid cash for your purchases. I also note that you still owe some here at Chapman that should have been paid before now. I have written to you about this before, but do not seem to get any answers from you. I would like to help you boys out until you get back on your feet again, but you understand I can't afford to sell you unless you can make some arrangements to pay cash for your stock. Be very candid and write to me about these accounts. There was no evidence of any response from Moseley & Gaines and he wrote them again.

EMM: Moseley and Gaines were former employees of Uncle Joe's and they went into business on their own during the Florida gold rush—the boom in the twenties. I remember going to Tampa in January, 1926 on one of the first trips I ever made for this company. My father sent me down there to look around and see what was going on in the Florida boom. Well at that time, t was beginning to crack. But I went to Tampa two or three times over the next few months and Ed Gaines—Mr. Gaines to me—was stuck with a cargo of lumber that he got in from the West Coast. The ship was at the dock in Tampa. Mr. Gaines was living at the Bayview Hotel. He stayed there weeks trying to sell that lumber so he could get it off and discharge the clip. And that's why he was strapped. Papa knew that.

ERM: What became of it?

EMM: I don't know. Our father's relationship with his customers was very warm.

ERM: And he kept it on a very personal level with the principals of those companies, visiting them and their visiting him.

EMM: That's right. We dealt primarily with wholesalers, so we didn't have to have many accounts. The wholesalers had the small retail accounts.

ERM: This company never got into retail line yards or anything like that?

EMM: We did long after this period—after World War II.

ERM: Did that work out successfully?

EMM: We established about eight or nine small yards in different communities. On the whole, they were successful. They are still operating. Union Camp retains them all.

ERM: What percentage of your production did they take up?

EMM: As I remember, about 10 or 15 percent, a relatively small percent.

ERM: But enough to scoop up the slack sometime.

EMM: It told us so much about merchandising lumber. After World War II when we realized that we were a permanent operation, we stopped selling to wholesalers and sold directly to retail yards on the theory that we wanted our name on their books and their names on our books. Wholesalers, of course, operated with mills who were here today and gone tomorrow. They maintained the continuity, not the producing unit. Once we got the concept of being permanent, we wanted to be known in the retail trade.

ERM: Do you remember the evangelism that was prevalent in the teens and twenties in which men like Henry E. Hardtner and people in Bogalusa and other places were convinced that forestry was the wave of the future, and they made every effort to convince others in the lumber industry, particularly their associates in the Southern Pine Association, to follow their lead?

EMM: Yes, in a vague sort of way. The Hardtner brothers started first. They were the first commercial foresters and later came Allison Lumber Company in Bellamy, Alabama. Great Southern Lumber Company at Bogalusa started off with a complete large forest, so they had something to work with.

ERM: Was that true of Urania Lumber Company as well?

EMM: Yes. Urania had a hundred and some odd thousand acres of land to start with.

ERM: You had to build yours.

EMM: We had to build ours. We would buy a few thousand acres and then cut it and then add some more. As I say, at the time my father died we had a hundred and forty thousand acres but at no time during his lifetime did he ever see more than eight years ahead. Most of the time it was two, three, four, five years ahead and in that position you simply can't be planting a tree for a tree. This was a cut-out and get-out industry in basic

truth. If we made any contributions at all later, it was in taking over a cutover forest and restoring it to commercial production.

ERM: Would you comment on what you think the importance of the trade journals have been in your industry. I am thinking in particular of the journals that you've had here in the South, the *Southern Lumberman* and the *Southern Lumber Journal*.

EMM: I think Stanley F. Horn of *Southern Lumberman* was number one of the lot. He maintained a continuity and a running account of the lumber industry as it unfolded over a long period of time. Stanley's particular interest was primarily hardwood rather than pine but he covered every convention. I think the files of the *Southern Lumberman* would give you as good a picture of the lumber industry the last seventy-five years as anything you could find. Stanley Horn was a great man. He wrote a book many years ago called *This Fascinating Lumber Business*.*

ERM: Do you think he was a leader who imposed his thoughts successfully or unsuccessfully on his readers?

EMM: I'd have to answer that question no, frankly. I don't think he had a profound influence. How many people read his editorials, I have no idea. The *Southern Lumber Journal* was not as important as *the Southern Lumberman*.

NFM: Not at all.

ERM: Or Jack Dionne's *Gulf Coast Lumberman*.

EMM: Relatively unimportant. Now some of the Texas papers may have.

I was making the point that back up to World War II this was an industry of rugged individuals. There was Mr. Hauss at Century who came from Michigan, Mr. Neal in Brewton, the Harrigans over at Scotch Lumber Company from Wisconsin. The Vredendurghs from Illinois came down around 1910 and bought about seventy-five thousand acres.

ERM: Isn't there a [John L.] Kaul?

EMM: Kaul was a great man from Pennsylvania. His son is still here. Then there was a Mr. Lathrop and Mr. Mitchell. All these were strong, rugged individuals who were owners of their own businesses. When they went to Southern Pine Association meetings in New Orleans they would see old man [Lucien Olen, Sr.] Crosby from Mississippi, and all the Laurel, Mississippi crowd; John Henry Kirby, Bob Wier, and Jasper Peavy from Texas; old man [Edwin Ambrose] Frost and C. C. Shepherd from Louisiana; the Crossett-Watzek-Gates people from Arkansas. Most of them were principals. Ernest Kurth and the

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*Stanley F. Horn, *This Fascinating Lumber Business* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951).

Carters; I remember them all because my father took me down there before his death. When one of them would speak for his business, he spoke with authority.

ERM: Your family had a great cultural interest in music and paintings and books.

EMM: I don't want to sound sentimental and childish, but I'll quote a friend of mine, Louis Davidson, who said, "There's no great man who doesn't have a great mother." We were blessed with a great mother as well as a great father, and our mother in developing those aspects, had the full support of our father.

ERM: Would you agree that that was a rather rare combination in the lumber industry?

EMM: Exactly.

ERM: In the course of the many meetings you attended you must have been aware that there were people who did not have quite the same view of the world because they did not have that background.

EMM: Yes, but I always enjoyed people. I had a deep and healthy respect for those men in the lumber business. They were characters and very strong.

ERM: In the decision-making process, it is sometimes a lot easier to reach agreement if you have more cultural compatibility, when you come out of the same mold.

EMM: We were fortunate in that we were three brothers of the same relatively equal capacities and abilities and interests and we were able administratively to set one another free from time to time. if Julian wanted to go off and do his forestry work and take time, that was fine. I went into the legislature and took time with that. Floyd did a great deal of public work in the chamber of commerce and on his various boards. That was fine. The business didn't suffer because one of us went. These other people you must remember had one-man businesses.