WESTERN RED CEDAR

THE SHINGLE WEAVER'S STORY

An interview with Harold M. Stilson, Sr.
conducted by Elwood R. Maunder

Forest History Society, Santa Cruz, California
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Forest History Society
P. O. Box 1581
Santa Cruz, California 95061

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INTRODUCTION

The solid-wood industries in America followed the blazed trail of pioneers in their migration across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Shinglemaking has played a significant role in the story of western red cedar, one revealed in part in the Harold M. Stilson, Sr. oral history interview. Stilson was born to the shingleweaving craft. As a young man, his maternal grandfather, Charles A. Whipple, began logging in the woods of Maine in 1844. As easily accessible resource supplies dwindled, he repeatedly moved westward with the forest products industries, first to the shores of Lake Michigan and eventually to Astoria, Washington. He reached the West an accomplished shinglemaker as were his sons and grandsons after him. Through the oral tradition, much of the story of the family and its involvement in the production of shingles has been preserved.

In 1973 the Forest History Society, recognizing the need to preserve the history of the shingle industry, appealed to the Red Cedar Shingle & Handsplit Shake Bureau of Seattle for funds to mount a search for its documentary and oral history sources. Mr. Paul R. Smith, president of the M. R. Smith Shingle Company, promptly agreed to provide half of the project's funding; the other half was guaranteed by the Bureau.

Preliminary research was begun by Barbara D. Holman in the trade journals of the Forest History Society library. I conducted further research in the Historical Manuscripts Collection of the Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington in Seattle. I am indebted to Dr. Richard C. Berner and Mrs. Karyl Winn for their assistance in probing the rich collection of lumbering and forest industry materials which, over the last two decades, they have gathered and organized for scholarly use. The pertinent files of the M. R. Smith Shingle Company and of the Red Cedar Shingle & Handsplit Shake Bureau were also probed, and one of the ancillary benefits of the project has been the placement of these materials in the permanent custody of the Suzzallo Library.

Four respondents were selected to interview in depth: Paul R. Smith, head of the largest shingle manufacturing company in the United States; Charles Plant, a Canadian manufacturer; Virgil G. Peterson, secretary-manager of the Red Cedar Shingle & Handsplit Shake Bureau; and Harold M. Stilson, Sr., shingleweaver. Each interview has been bound in hardcover complete with illustrations and an index to provide easy access to contents.

In the volume at hand, Stilson relates how the workers in the shingle mills performed their daily tasks, describes machinery with which they worked, often at terrible cost; he relates his accounts of strikes and of how labor was organized into unions; how the unions were instrumental in achieving improved working conditions, standards of pay, and an unparalleled hourly workweek. The impact of the Great Depression on Stilson and his family are noted here. He served as a cook in the Civilian Conservation Corps during the long depression of the housing industry in the middle thirties, and he sees that institution and like New Deal measures as necessary national solutions for unemployed workers in times of economic trouble.

The interview probes for expression of a twentieth-century workingman's philosophy, his considered views (several years after retirement) of the labor union movement, of his former employers, of the economic system, of the future of the craft of shinglemaking in the face of a declining supply of western red cedar.

The interview was made in two sessions on May 3, 1974 in the Stilson family home at Napavine, Washington. The respondent's wife, Mildred, was present during part of the time but she carefully refrained from intruding even though, as became obvious to me in the course of the very generous lunch she served between tapings, her own powers of articulation and recall are as sharp as those of her husband of fifty years. I shall remember with pleasure always the warmhearted hospitality extended to me by the Stilsons.

Students of public opinion will find of considerable interest Stilson's comparison of the world in which he lives now in simple retirement with that of his heyday (the 1920s) as a young workingman. Those who look back on our time a century or two hence may find the homespun analysis of Harold Stilson more engaging than that recorded by many a pundit. From his words may be drawn some explanation of the habits of life and the state of mind which produced and sustained our twentieth-century society.

Transcription of the tapes was completed by my wife, Eleanor L. Maunder, and final processing of the manuscript was by the Forest History Society's oral history staff.

Requests for permission to quote from the publication should be addressed to the Forest History Society, P.O. Box 1581, Santa Cruz, California, 95061, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user. The legal agreement with Harold M. Stilson and Elwood R. Maunder requires that both be notified of the request and allowed thirty days in which to respond.

Elwood R. Maunder
Executive Director
Forest History Society

Santa Cruz, California
August 25, 1975

Elwood Rondeau Maunder was born April 11, 1917 in Bottineau, North Dakota. University of Minnesota, B.A. 1939; Washington University at St. Louis, M.A. (modern European history) 1947; London School of Economics and Political Science, 1948. He was a reporter and feature writer for Minneapolis newspapers, 1939-41, then served as a European Theater combat correspondent in the Coast Guard during World War II, and did public relations work for the Methodist Church, 1948-52. Since 1952 he has been secretary and executive director of the Forest History Society, Inc., headquartered in Santa Cruz, California, and since 1957 editor of the quarterly Journal of Forest History. From 1964 to 1969, he was curator of forest history at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library. Under his leadership the Forest History Society has been internationally effective in stimulating scholarly research and writing in the annals of forestry and natural resource conservation generally; 46 repositories and archival centers have been established in the United States and Canada at universities and libraries for collecting and preserving documents relating to forest history. As a writer and editor he has made significant contributions to this hitherto neglected aspect of history. In recognition of his services the Society of American Foresters elected him an honorary member in 1968. He is a charter member of the international Oral History Association of which he was one of the founders. He is also a member of the Agricultural History Society, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Society of American Archivists, and the American Forestry Association.*

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*Adapted from, Henry Clepper, ed., Leaders of American Conservation (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1971).

SESSION 1, THE MORNING OF MAY 3, 1974

CHAPTER 1

Elwood R. Maunder: Mr. Stilson, this interview will focus on the working force in the shingle and shake industry. In the last several months, I have obtained the story from management and from the trade association. With you, I'd like to emphasize the story of people who worked in the mills and in the woods.

First, I'd like you to trace a little of your family origins. I understand your family was involved in shingle making for many generations. Where did it all begin?

Harold M. Stilson: My grandfather on my mother's side, Charles A. Whipple, was born in Maine of Welsh parents. He took to the woods and worked there awhile before he went into the shingle industry. This was before he ever knew there was such a thing as a shingle machine. In New York--he always called it York State--he worked in a little shingle mill which had a hand-operated machine. The carriage had to be pushed back and forth over a saw that ran horizontally instead of in a vertical position as shingle saws are now. A man had to put the block in the carriage, and with the strength of his arms and shoulders he would push the block across the saw and cut off a shingle which would drop down a chute. For eight years my grandfather was champion sawyer in the state of Washington, having cut eighty-six thousand shingles. A thousand shingles consisted of four bundles, twenty-five courses to the bundle.

ERM: That implies he had moved all the way across country.

HMS: From New York, he went to a little mill town called Edgerton on the shores of Lake Michigan in the state of Michigan. The town consisted of a shingle mill, a crew, and bolt cutters. The bolt cutters are the fellows that cut the shingle bolts in the woods. My grandfather always worked in a place until they ran out of timber. This didn't mean they had cut all the timber in Michigan, in New York, or in Maine. It

meant they had cut the timber which was available and could be pulled into the creek, the pond, or the lake. The mill was always situated near water, and when they ran out of timber which was close enough to haul in with oxen or horses or whatever they had, they ran out of work. So they moved on and kept coming westward. He was really headed west from the time he left Maine.

ERM: When was he born?

HMS: In 1830. He died in 1918 when he was eighty-seven years old. His folks were born in Wales and must have migrated to America about 1820. He had three sons and three daughters. His sons all became shingle weavers.

His education was limited. Schooling amounted to what they then called the fourth reader, which was equivalent to about an eighth-grade schooling of today. When a person got through the eighth grade, or the fourth reader, he was supposed to be a man. Then he would go to work in the woods, on a farm, in a mill, or wherever there was work in a community. My grandfather never learned to read or write until after he was married and then his wife taught him. He was born in a backwoods area where there wasn't any school. He had ambition to learn, and after he was married, he learned to read and write and became a very good conversationalist.

As I said before, he held a shingle sawing championship. His record cuts were made while he was working in a little mill in Cosmopolis, Washington, across the bay from Aberdeen, on Grays Harbor. He was still sawing in this mill when he lost the record to a young Swedish man who came down there and worked on one machine while my grandfather worked on the other. They sawed for the championship. The young Swede sawed eighty-nine thousand shingles and my grandfather sawed eighty-seven and a half, so he was beaten by six bundles. That's a square and a half or a thousand and a half in those days. So my grandfather hung up his apron and quit sawing. Sawyers always used a leather apron to keep from wearing their clothing out. He said that when a young man could come in and saw more shingles than he could, it was time for him to quit. He ran several big farms after he quit the shingle mills, which is a story in its own. Of course, by that time he was quite elderly, and he should have quit earlier, while he was still champion, then he never would have been beaten.

ERM: Can you roughly trace the transcontinental migration of your grandfather and family? Do you have any idea when he went to New York?

HMS: He worked about three years on the way over to Michigan and arrived when he was eighteen years old. He started at fourteen years of age in Maine greasing skids, and he worked approximately two years in the woods. I did that myself when I was fourteen. He was probably greasing skids for an ox team which consisted of about eight oxen that pulled the logs or shingle bolts. Shingle bolts were loaded on big sleds. They pulled in two, three, or sometimes four cords. They were drawn on a skid road made of poles about eight feet long, embedded in the ground, so that the tops were practically level and the sled could run on it.

Grandfather moved from Maine to New York when he was about sixteen years old. This was when logging was done in that area. He worked for a couple of years in a shingle mill, at first nailing bands and packing culls. A cull shingle is a fourth grade shingle which is used mostly for sheep shed covering and things like that. It's an odd shingle they used to get a few pennies for instead of wasting the timber. Then he learned to saw. A young fellow like that who wanted to better himself--instead of getting, say, fifty cents a day for greasing skids or some job like that--could make a dollar and a half if he was a good shingle sawyer. All he had to do was work ten hours. You worked hard and you sweated all day, and if you earned a dollar and a half or two dollars in those days, you were one of the elite as far as the working man was concerned.

ERM: What was he sawing in the East, white cedar?

HMS: It was kind of a yellow cedar. It was a very beautiful wood, a grade comparable to our white pine. I hear they also have a lot of this pine in the southern states. About all they have in those states is white pine and oak. He finally learned the trade after sawing shingles for almost two years at Edgerton, Michigan. This is where he met and married his wife, Adelia Bradley. The Bradleys were an engineering family--they ran steam engines for the mills. The mills were all run on steam made from the refuse of shingles, lumber, or whatever they were making. They'd have a steam boiler with a fire pit underneath it, a big Dutch oven, and they would develop the power. This was before the days of electricity. They

worked ten hours a day because that's all the daylight there was. At that time they didn't have any way to see at night to run two or three shifts as they do nowadays. He worked in the Edgerton area until they ran out of timber.

West of there were the Great Plains States, and the Dakotas, and Montana. There was no place where he could continue his work in that area, so they came to the conclusion they would go to Astoria, Oregon. By the time they left Michigan in 1885, he and his wife had six children. They stayed in Astoria two years, and then they moved to Washington in 1887.

ERM: What did they do when they first arrived in Astoria?

HMS: Grandfather decided he had worked long enough in the shingle mill and wanted to try his hand at fishing. He had heard wondrous stories about fishing on the Columbia River. Men would go out and catch sturgeon that weighed ninety and a hundred pounds and pink, red, and sockeye salmon that came up the river. It was easy to make a fortune. All you had to do was dip a net in the river and pick the fish out. This was the story that came to Michigan. They went out there and bought themselves a sixteen-foot boat and some nets and they towed out into the middle of the Columbia River. No license was necessary; they had only to get a permit and sign up indicating what they were going to do. After they caught the fish, they had to find somebody that was in the market to buy it. At certain times of the year, canneries would can salmon, but they ran only a few months during the salmon run. When you were fishing for a living, you had to sell something all year around or your breadbasket would run short.

He and his sons did that for a couple of years, and then they decided this wasn't for them. Since they had this shingle-making ability, which had gone through a full generation by that time, they decided they would go back to that. They had heard about a little town called Rochester, close to what was at that time known as a hub city, Centralia, Washington, and they migrated up there. They loaded the several animals they had brought from Michigan onto skows, along with all their belongings--furniture, household goods of all kinds--and came up the Columbia River to the Cowlitz River which they followed to a little place called Toledo. That was the head of navigation in those days for skows and rivercraft.

ERM: How did they do all this traveling across the country? Did they travel by wagon or by public transportation?

HMS: They came across the country on a rented railway car. The railway had been finished several years before they came. Each migrating family would rent a car, mostly an open car with one end boxed in where they could eat and sleep. The rest of it was open--kind of boarded slatwise along the sides so the animals could live. They brought them right out to Astoria. The end of the line was where they hit the Columbia River. There was no way to go any farther except by boat, there being no bridges yet across the Columbia River.

They came on the Great Northern which was the only railway then. A little later they had the Milwaukee, which is where the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company got their start, from holdings of timber that were given to these companies for building the railroad. The idea that I got from hearsay was that the federal government, in order to entice the companies to build a railroad westward, gave them every other section of land, timber or whatever it was, on each side of the railroad track.* They were alternate sections forty miles wide, and it became a practice of the companies to build little sidings out to all the harbors and places throughout the timber country. The railroads amassed a great deal of timber which had a lot of value.

This is the way they came north. Then they started working in the shingle mills, which they found in great abundance when they arrived. Even in 1887 there were shingle mills which were mostly water-powered because no steam engines were available. That was before there was any transportation to get the steam engines from Astoria to Rochester, Washington. Construction would be set up near some swift-running creek, and water wheels would power the mills. These mills were all flat-machine mills. They worked shingle blocks with a carriage, powered by the mill. There were single blocks and double blocks and hand machines at that time.** Not until after 1900 did they finally get an upright machine.

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*Act of 2 July 1864, 13 Stat. 365.

**On February 25, 1975, Mr. Stilson registered the following clarification: "I meant to state, there were several different models of flat machines. Some were equipped with only one carriage or block-holding device, and others had two carriages which

If the saw was lying flat, there wasn't much weight on the bearings; it just spun around. The shaft would go down about three feet below, and there would be a bearing on each side. The only weight was the spinning, but when you set the saw upright, then real weight came right down on the bearings. In those days the bearing was made of melted babbit poured in there to make a bearing. They tried and tried, and they never could make them run satisfactorily.

Finally, an upright machine was invented, a Flynn machine by the Flynn brothers. It was way ahead of the old flat machine in that one man could operate it--feed it and cut the shingles all in one operation. Previously, they always had to have what they called knot sawyers underneath the flat machines who would cut the knots out of the shingle as they came off the machine. There would be three or four knot sawyers under a double block, and they would make them into square-cut shingles.

Another thing that held back the shingle industry was the fact that the shingle saws were not the type we have today with the swage tooth; they had what they

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(Footnote ** from p. 5 cont.)
passed across the shingle saw in a repetitious manner, so that when one block was being cut, the other was returning to its starting position and making ready to start into the saw for another cutting.

"All of the double-block machines were power-fed, the same as the present Sumner upright machines are today, the only exception being that the shingles dropped free below the saw onto a table where they were handled by men called knot-sawyers whose work was to take out all defects and also to square all edges so the packers had a finished product to put into the bundles.

"I might add also that the shingles were packed into bundles of twenty-five courses or rows and were sold by the thousand. A shingle is four inches wide, so an eight-inch shingle had two shingle count, one twelve inches wide really contained three shingle count; therefore, there were four bundles of two hundred and fifty count to each thousand shingles.

"The other type of flat machine was known as the Hand Machine and was so named because the carriage that held the block was pushed over the saw by hand-power or so-called manpower. Those were the times when men earned their living by sweat and blood. And at that time, from about 1890 to about 1907, these machines made the greater part of all roofing materials for the house-building industry."

called the spring-toothed saw. Every other tooth alternated. One would be sprung to the left and one to the right, which would create a kerf so the saw would run free. But they ran into difficulty because they couldn't cut knots with it. They had to cut the cedar tree up to the knots and leave the rest of it in the woods since the saws couldn't run through a knot. They did that for years and years, leaving approximately two-thirds of the cedar in the woods for people that were making handsplit shakes. After the mills had cut what they wanted, these little family-type mills made shakes and handmade shingles out of the tops of the trees. This salvaged a lot of the stuff that otherwise would have been burned over when the stump ranchers came in and cleared the land.

ERM: In the early days, did the shingle weavers think of themselves as superior to the shake makers?

HMS: It all depended on whether a man had the ability to produce more than someone else could. If a man could do this, he rated himself above the average.

ERM: Was this the measure of men at that time?

HMS: Yes, it was the measure of everything. Money was important. If you could earn two or three dollars more than anyone else, like sawing shingles or bucking logs, then you'd naturally consider yourself better. You became almost a self-made titan. The shingle weavers would walk on one side of the street in a town, and the loggers would walk on the other side, and if they got across the halfway mark, there would be a fight. The shingle weavers naturally thought that they were a little better because they were able to make more money and they had the wherewithal to do more things.

ERM: Do you think that philosophy prevailed throughout the early days of our country's history?

HMS: I think so, not only in shingle mills but in everything. I think that philosophy has dominated American history. The striving of a human being to better himself is what has made things progress. There would have been no progress if everybody had been satisfied to achieve the same as his neighbor. It's the same on a farm. If you can raise a better potato than your neighbor, people will make a trail to your house. You remember the better mousetrap episode.

ERM: There was fierce competition or spirit within the communities out here in the early days. Shingle

weavers saw themselves as somewhat superior to the shake makers and the loggers.

HMS: That's right, although there were two types of loggers, the head faller and the bullbuck, who were looked up to in the logging industry because of their ability. A bullbuck would have charge of the crew and the head faller told the other fellow where to fell the tree. The other man on the saw couldn't say "Well, I'm going to fall it over here," because he wasn't the head faller. To go on down the line in the woods, the buckers were below the fallers in esteemed ability and wages. It was the same as the chickens' pecking order. I learned that since I retired. I loaded chickens and learned how to debeak them. I got tired just sitting around idle so I got out, and that is where I learned about the pecking system. If you get a good education, even if it's only in one area, such as keeping books or pulling teeth, and you're good at it, you are looked up to like you are a chief or a senator.

CHAPTER 2

HMS: I never had much education. I went through the eighth grade in school and went to work in 1917 because there was a big demand for shingle packers. I learned to pack shingles at the M. R. Smith mill at Moclips, Washington in 1914. My father's last job was packing shingles. They had put in these new type of upright machines, and they were cutting many more shingles than one man could pack, so I would go to the mill right after school and help my father. I worked about two hours and would catch up the swamp that would be piled up during the day.

My father came from Philomath, Oregon. His father was also born in Philomath, and they came up here in 1887, the same year as my mother's folks came from Michigan. My mother and father went to school in Rochester for the last two or three years of schooling until they had attained what education was available. So when he was nineteen years old and my mother was eighteen, they were married. In those days, there was nothing else to do except raise a family. They didn't figure, "I'll go to college for four years and the government will pay for it." There was no federal aid in 1800.

ERM: What were the full names of your father and mother?

HMS: My mother's full name was Nora Belle Whipple. My father was Fred Arba Stilson and they were married in 1897. My oldest brother was born in 1898, and I was born June 8, 1902. I had two brothers and four sisters; counting myself, there were seven children.

ERM: Did all the boys go into work in the shingle business?

HMS: Yes. My two brothers are dead now. My youngest brother, Robert, died when he was thirty-five years old with lobar pneumonia. He caught pneumonia and in three days he was dead. He was a young man with a wife and four children. He lived right here in Napavine, across the railroad track in a place called Park Addition. He had built a new house and was one of the first men to use plywood to cover the inside wall of a house. He went to some lumber company that had bought a couple carloads of plywood. It was the first time I had ever heard of it, and I went over to

see what it was like, and helped him put the walls up. He died only about three years after that.

My oldest brother was one of the best shingle sawyers in the state of Washington. I wouldn't say the fastest, but he made beautiful shingles. He was working for M. R. Smith Lumber and Shingle Company in Tacoma, sawing shingles, at the time he died of cancer of the liver. He was fifty-four when he died.

I almost had cancer myself one time. I was living in Aberdeen, Washington at the time, and I was sawing shingles at Aloha Lumber Company when I got this awful pain. I went to Grays Harbor General Hospital for treatment. The union would take as much care as they possibly could of anyone if he was in trouble, so they came in to see me. The secretary of the union went up to talk to the doctor, who told him that I wouldn't be going home because I had cancer. He came right back and told me and I said, "I don't have cancer. I've got to get out of here." So he released me from the hospital, and I went back out and worked a few days. It started to swell again and got a little pussy, so I went back in and the doctor said, "Well, you're all right. Cancer will never form puss." So he cut out the infected area. This was Dr. I. R. Watkins, a surgical specialist, of Aberdeen, Washington.

Getting back to my father, he came up here and married into the Whipple family who, as I mentioned earlier, had long been in the shingle business. My father didn't go by the route of packing first; he went right to sawing shingles on one of these Flynn machines, which you walked behind to put the block in. Instead of having a clipper saw to trim the shingles like they do now, they had what they called a wheel joiner. A wheel joiner was like a big wagon wheel which had planing knives on it. You stuck the shingles into it, and it would plane off until it got down to where you wanted it; then you would turn it over and do the same thing on the other edge. In order to make shingles that would fit in a bundle, you had a thing that you broke the shingles over. Then you'd have to joint both sides where you had broken it to make what they call "fits."

Dad learned to be a real good sawyer. He and two Roles brothers, Al and Dick Roles, were three of the fastest sawyers around and there was a lot of competition. When they went into the mill in the morning, they'd take their hats off, and they'd go to work and sweat all day. They were cutting about sixty-two to sixty-five thousand on one machine. It wasn't as much as

the old double-block machines had cut, but they had things to contend with, like poor timber. At that time they were cutting the timber farther up into the knotty part of the log. Of course, they had what they called a knee bolter. The knee bolt sawyer would cut all the sapwood off and cut out what knots he could because the machines had a spring-toothed saw which wouldn't saw through a knot. The knee bolter would take out a lot of knots, and they could cut more shingles then. They were cutting from sixty-two to sixty-five or sixty-seven thousand in ten hours. They were still working ten hours in those days. The eight-hour day did not come until 1918.

ERM: How long did that fierce competition for individual production records continue?

HMS: It still continues. The shingle mill operator didn't give the men a fair day's wages. If he had, they would have gotten a better grade of shingle, maybe not quite so many, but they wouldn't have had any trouble selling them. That competition still exists in the shingle mills. You can go in any shingle mill, a four-machine mill or larger, and you will notice there's always competition to get from the last machine away from the log deck to get closer to the block deck. They figured that the closer you are to it, the better wood you would get, especially if you gave the block piler a little tip.

Things like that go on--always did and always will. They never seem to realize that they would be better off and have a better grade of shingle, if they had done away with competition and the men had to work to make a better grade instead of a larger amount of shingles.

ERM: In other words, they would have gotten a better quality product in lesser amount?

HMS: Yes. They are doing that now in those Canadian mills. I was up there last summer with my son; he took me up to Golden. Golden is a shingle mill that used to be the Saginaw mill in Aberdeen that was moved up there. My son had charge of that operation. In fact, he had charge of seven mills--the mills in Canada that belonged to Evans Products Company. They are doing the same thing there that they have always done, paying the men mostly by the square. And the man who can cut the most shingles makes the most money. He had two good American shingle sawyers up there, older fellows, and these two men would make two thousand dollars a month and the apprentices, new men, would each make about a thousand dollars a month.

ERM: Do you think the owners of the mills made a bad mistake in not organizing their labor force on different lines than they did in the early days?

HMS: Yes. I got a letter from Paul Smith. I gave him one picture and this picture was a fellow by the name of Homer Stump who was a saw filer. I sent it to Virgil Peterson and asked him to give it to Paul Smith for his collection. He thanked me for the picture, and then he said that they had worked out a different type of payment in his mills up at Lake Pleasant and a couple of other mills in Seattle and Tacoma.* They paid the men so much a square, just like they do now, and then they gave them a percentage of the profits. He said that profit-sharing plan ran for years. He wanted to know what I thought. Paul Smith is the man that really taught me the value of good work. Paul had a system of grading. He would come in sometime during the day and open a bunch of shingles from each machine. He would lay all the shingles out, and if there was a bad one he would put it to one side. Over forty inches of bad shingles was off grade. He taught me when I was about sixteen years old to do a good day's work making a good-looking bunch of shingles, and then he wouldn't have any trougle selling them. That way there'd always be a paycheck at the end of the month; there would be money to pay the men. When you are sixteen years old you believe anything, at least I did, and I made a good bunch of shingles. That was at Moclips in 1918.

ERM: What did you find was the situation as far as the labor force was concerned when you broke into the business? Was there any union?

HMS: There was a shingle weavers' union. By the time I started to work in 1918, it had been going strong for eight years, but there were still some backwoods areas where a man would build a shingle mill in a good stand of timber, and he wouldn't have his crew join the union. He'd make them compete with each other for jobs because in those mills were real good jobs. They were in virgin timber. A man would own eighty or a hundred and sixty acres of timber where he would build a mill and cut shingles. Some of those mills were like one at Trap Creek down near Willapa Harbor. Trap Creek Mill was in Pacific County, Washington, about thirty mills west of

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*Paul R. Smith Views the Western Red Cedar Industry, 1910 to the Present, typed transcript of tape-recorded interview by Elwood R. Maunder (Santa Cruz, Ca.: Forest History Society, 1975).

Raymond, which is on Willapa Harbor. It was a two-machine mill and one of the best mills to work in the country, but there was no union there. I worked in one of these nonunion mills in 1919. It was the Onalaska Lumber Company which was owned and operated by Carlisle Pennel and run by W. A. Carlisle who was the son of the old gentleman that built it. These fellows came up from Louisiana. They had a Carlisle in Louisiana and one in Texas. Every place they went they had either a Carlisle or an Onalaska. This one over here was Onalaska. They had one down by Aloha which was Carlisle, and I worked in that one also. I worked in the Onalaska in 1928 also for about four months when a fellow came in the mill one day who was a top shingle packer. He was looking for a job and he was a friend of the sawyer that I was packing under who was Sang Pore. He was a very good friend of the filer who was also the foreman of the mill, Perle McCandles. He did the hiring and firing of the crew. A sawyer had to use his saws or he would be fired. If his saw didn't cut smooth shingles and they made a rough shingle, he still had to use those blades or saws because McCandless was the boss.

This is what happened to me, except I was packing shingles. This sawyer and the filer got into a scheme, and the sawyer set the butt plate on the clipper board so that when he chipped the shingles, they would be about a half-inch narrow on the tip. Whenever anything went wrong like that, when you're packing, you hammer on the bin and the sawyer looks down the chute and you tell him to correct his mistake. He wouldn't correct it so I took a big armful up and showed him what was wrong. He said, "Oh, well, they're all right. There won't be any inspection." So I said, "Well okay," and I went down and packed those shingles for the rest of the day. The inspector from the Red Cedar Shingle Bureau didn't come until the mill had shut down. The tallyman never took away parts of a square of shingles so there were two odd bunches that were left until the next day. So a couple of bunches were sitting there and he opened one up and every shingle was narrow on the tip, making it off-grade. There were two hundred forty inches of shingles in a bunch, so I got two hundred forty inches off-grade. The next morning, I went to the mill and the boss met me there, and he gave me a slip and said, "Go to the office and get your time." They never gave an explanation. I think the reason they did that was because they wanted this other fellow to take my place packing. He had packed for this sawyer out at Trap Creek, and he was out of work so he got my job.

This was a thing that should never have been because it put everybody in danger.

ERM: Was this a trick that the saw filers and sawyers pulled a lot?

HMS: Not all the time. They used some different tricks because they wouldn't want to get caught with the same kind of a deal; that would show what was going on. They used different excuses, and generally the filer would fire a sawyer quicker than he would a packer because he would have trouble with the sawyer changing saws too often when the shingles weren't smooth or something. Then a filer would have to file that many more saws so he would naturally get rid of that sawyer and get someone else who would run his saw. Maybe the filer was conscientious, and trying to learn, but there was some little thing about filing that he didn't quite understand. If the saw kind of wavers on the rim--on the teeth as the teeth go around and it kind of wavers--it would cause a wave in the shingle. Maybe he didn't know just how to pound the shingle saw to get the tension right. It had to be a certain tension for the speed it was running to make it run in line all the way around.

ERM: It was a real art, wasn't it?

HMS: It was. My father was one of the best shingle filers ever. He never filed for anything over a four-machine mill.

ERM: To what extent did the owners of these mills know that this was the practice?

HMS: They knew it, but then filers were scarce and in demand. It was quite a jump from sawing to filing. There was no school to go to, you just learned from another filer. You take a job, as maybe a second filer, in a big mill where they had to have one man to point up and one man to run the swage and shaper and grinder.

ERM: In other words, it was not easy to become a saw filer.

HMS: No, it wasn't.

ERM: Did saw filers tend to keep the work in their own families? One man would teach his brother, his brother-in-law, or his son?

HMS: Mostly his son. Now one example of that is a man they called Sag Andrews. He came from Saginaw,

Michigan out to Saginaw, Washington. That's down close to the mouth of the Columbia River. Sag Andrews had worked a long time for the Saginaw Shingle Company as head filer. He was called Sag and I never heard his true given name. He filed at Saginaw and then years later he came up to Aloha where I was working and brought his son Babe Andrews with him. Babe was second filer, and he was working on the second shift, the night crew. The father would kind of instruct him and help him until he became a real good filer in his own right. This is one example of a family-type deal, handed down from father to son.

It would almost be impossible to get a filer to even let you look at his tools. They each had what they thought was a better method than any other filer. They figured out some way they could hammer a little better tension in the saw. There's a big heavy collar on the saw which they took off and put the saw blade on an anvil; starting in from the center of the saw and tapping all the way to the rim with a saw hammer, they just pushed the tension right out with the hammer. I used to help my father sometimes. I could have been a saw filer if I had wanted to, except I didn't have good enough eyesight.

ERM: During the course of running through a day, does a saw get tense and have to be relieved of that tension and refiled to a sharp condition before it is returned to the machine?

HMS: That's right. Nowadays a saw runs eight hours a day in Canada and six hours a day in the United States. There's a differential of two hours in the day in a shingle mill. The filer will point the saws up at noon while the sawyers are down for lunch. You just pull the tightener or turn off the switch--if it's an electric mill--and shut your machine down. This is the time the men go down and gather up their bad shingles, or "hoodlums" they call them. It isn't the right kind of a grade, it's off-grade--something has broken off. Then he brings those back up and puts them on the swamp table, and eventually he'll make good shingles out of them so there is no waste. They don't throw them away when it's just a little piece because you can cut another half-inch off or whatever it takes to make a good shingle.

There are sawyers, and there are sawyers; just like there are filers and filers. A good sawyer may not make the most shingles, but he is a conscientious man, and he will never go to the mill with a hangover or

drunk. I won't say he wouldn't drink, but he will never go to work with a hangover because that is the way most men lose their fingers. Good shingle sawyers were known for keeping all their fingers. I have my fingers. My father sawed for years and years and he had his fingers. My brother never lost a finger. We were a shingle weaving family, and we considered it an honor to be a shingle weaver. We liked it; we had pride in the work and in our output.

That's one thing that bothered me about that thing over at Onalaska. That was the first time in my life I ever go an off-grade bunch when I was packing. The reason that happened was because they were a non-organized mill. If it had been a union mill, I could have gone to the vice-president of the union. They would have taken it up and I wouldn't have lost my job. You had to have some protection. Now these fellows at Onalaska, the Carlisles, had this idea that you were slaves and that you belonged to them. Their first mill was in Louisiana where they had hired almost all Negroes.

ERM: And they carried that same idea up here?

HMS: Yes, they tried to get by with it. When they came in and got in with a bunch of shingle weavers, they got a good education because shingle weavers are one set of people. It's the only union in the United States that has a real six-hour day. There are others, like longshoremen who have six hours, but first they have to work thirty hours a week before they get overtime. But if you go in a shingle mill and work one six-hour day and they ask you to split a shift with somebody, if somebody doesn't show up on the other shift, you get time and a half for that three hours, even if all you work is only nine hours that week you still get time and a half. This is the only true six-hour day in the industry.

CHAPTER 3

ERM: Tell me a bit about the labor organizing situation in the earliest times of which you have any recollection. You say that the shingle weavers became organized into a union during the first ten years of this century?

HMS: That's right.

ERM: To your knowledge, there was no earlier organization?

HMS: No earlier shingle union. There might have been somewhere in the East, such as in Michigan. They may have been organized there, but there was none out here.

ERM: What part did your grandfather have in that union?

HMS: Grandfather Whipple wasn't a union man. He never sawed shingles under a union in all his life. There was no union then. So I can't say that he was a union man.

But my father was involved with the unions. He helped organize the union on the West Coast. They first tried to organize in 1908. In 1910 they had a big meeting at Marysville, and I was proud that my father was involved. Then in 1911, they came to Raymond and had their next convention.

ERM: What was the response to their initial efforts? What did the industry people have to say?

HMS: They didn't like it because it broke into their habitual way of manufacturing. After the ranchers got their crops planted, they had about three free months before harvest time. Most of the stump ranchers were shingle weavers with the dream that they were goint to live the "life of Riley" and not have to work. They were going to buy a chicken ranch and live for nothing, but they couldn't do that. As stump ranchers, they had to pull the stumps before they could plant anything, but there were times in the year when they didn't have much to do, so they would go to some shingle mill nearby and compete with the laborers there. Maybe they had sawed shingles years before

this, and they'd go in and say "Well, now I'll work for fifty cents a day less, or two cents a square less, or two cents a thousand," whatever the case may be. They would make a deal with the operator, especially if the owner, or rather the operator, was a filer--he was also the boss.

ERM: Was that often the case?

HMS: The boss and filer were the same person. The owner would generally be somebody that didn't know much about a shingle mill, but he had a little money and he wanted to make some easy cash. So he would build a shingle mill, then he'd hire somebody to run it. The fellow he hired would be the filer. Sometimes if it was a small one- or two-machine operation mill, he would saw and file for his machine and the other machine and still be in control of the dozen or so men. The filer would run the operation, and this was the thing that made it sort of hard to organize. You previously asked what was the difference between the shake men and shingle weavers. The shake operation was a family-type deal.

ERM: A kind of cottage industry?

HMS: Yes, that's it. They are not organized even today. The only shake workers that are organized are such as those in Aloha where they have seven or eight shake machines. At Aloha they hire mostly Indians from Tahola Reservation. They are good workers as long as they stay sober. If they get drunk, they don't come back to work for a few days. When some of them get a little too much money, they go out and get drunk.

There was an incident--I think it was in 1928--that had to do with the time they made the changeover from the four-pack thousand to the five-pack thousand, and they packed twenty courses to the bunch. The operator came to the mill and asked the packers if they would pack twenty courses instead of twenty-five because the twenty-course bunch was lighter and easier to handle. They could load five light bunches more efficiently than they could four heavy ones. They offered the packers two cents more per thousand for packing five bunches, because they'd have to nail an extra bunch and it took a little more time. They couldn't pack as many thousand in a day. So they agreed to pay more. Since the sawyers never cut any more shingles, it wasn't any trouble to them. They just threw them down the bin like they always did, so they didn't pay the sawyers any extra money. This

went along for quite awhile, and the packers were satisfied, but the sawyers were always sort of grumbling because the packers got something they didn't. One day one of the workers had to put a new roof on his house and bought some shingles, but then they were selling them by the square. They changed it to four bunches per square, but they charged him just as much as they had been paying for a thousand or five bunches. Instructions were that you put them five and a half inches to the weather instead of five inches. So they would still cover ten feet square or a hundred square feet.

ERM: Fewer shingles would cover the same amount of roof by more exposure.

HMS: Yes. He came back and said something about it to the crew, and they said, "What's going on here? We've been making five bunches per square and they have been selling them four bunches." We realized they had slipped one over on us for about seven or eight months. Finally, we confronted them with what was going on. Of course, they knew what was going on, but we let them know that we knew. I was a shop steward at Aloha Lumber Company then, so it fell on me to talk to Dave Kurtz, the office manager, and Paul Brinn, the mill foreman. I had to go and talk to them and tell them we had made arrangements for a meeting. Paul Smith came down from Seattle, and we met in the Mork Hotel in Aberdeen, Washington with a man named Stillman and Duncan Eddy who was quite a Scotsman and one of the best shingle sawyers in the world. We'd all gone along fine until this happened. Stillman, Eddy, and I were crew representatives at the meeting. When we got them down there and told them what our gripe was, they said, "What do you think it's worth? We are already paying the packers for packing those bunches. We gave them two cents." But the sawyers wanted three cents a square because they felt it was worth more to saw shingles than it was to pack them. They said that they would take it up with the red cedar industry and let us know. We were told to go back to work, and they would let us know the next night. They settled it and that was all there was to it. The final outcome was that the sawyers in the whole area received a three cents per square increase and packers received two cents.

This was just one of those little things. It didn't cost them a lot more money to pay that. It was the idea that it was their mill and they wanted to let us know they were running it. People are that way, not only the workers but the manufacturers also. You

are working for yourself, your own family, and your own kind. It's the whites working against the blacks, so to speak. Everything is the same. To the whites, black isn't beautiful. That's what it amounts to. It is the same thing with labor; it doesn't matter whether you are running a cotton gin or if you are running a whaling boat, there are always certain people that are getting the best of everything. The other people are going along with it because they have to in order to live. I believe this is what's happening in the whole world. That's what is happening in the Far East about the oil. Of course, that has nothing to do with shingles.

ERM: I was curious to hear what you said about the blacks. What about the blacks that might be working as members of the union?

HMS: Do you have any black neighbors in your neighborhood?

ERM: In my neighborhood? Yes, we have some.

HMS: Are they congenial, do you visit with them?

ERM: Yes, as a matter of fact, there is a black man on our board of directors, and his wife and he attend our meetings. They are very fine people that contribute quite a lot to what we do. He's chairman of our Library and Research Committee and has a very responsible position in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. He is highly regarded by his profession.

HMS: We have a daughter who lives in San Diego. The best neighbor she had was a black family with four children. He worked for Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, and they transferred him to the East Coast. He had a good job, about $24,000 a year. They moved away, and she hated to see the family go because they were their best neighbors in San Diego.

ERM: I don't find that it's so much the color of the skin or the nationality that counts; it's the quality of the character and the upbringing of the person.

HMS: I think there are some fine black people. I don't really think it is time yet to absorb them into our race. It might be, I don't know. My son always says if they had started absorbing the Negroes as soon as they were freed, we'd now have the most beautiful bronze race of people in the world.

ERM: Historically speaking, there has been a kind of anti-black attitude in the unions, hasn't there?

HMS: Yes, there has. Even with farm workers that aren't organized, it's the same thing.

ERM: Yes, Mexican-Americans are very much inflicted with this too. It's kind of traditional within the union movement.

HMS: Yes, it is. It is also true in some of the organizations such as the Eagles, the Elks, and the Moose. For years and years they wouldn't let a black person become a member. Just lately they have been forced to do it because of the Supreme Court ruling.

Another thing is the inauguration of the six-hour day during the Depression. Just before then, in 1929, was when the movement first started. The union's attitude was that there weren't enough jobs at that time, and we figured that, instead of running two shifts, we could run three shifts on a six-hour day and put one-third more people to work. Each person couldn't cut quite as many in that period, but we contended that a man working six hours at full capacity was a lot better than a man working on an eight-hour shift at full capacity for four or five hours and then dragging his heels the last two or three hours.

ERM: Was there a safety factor involved in the shortening of the day? Was there a tendency for more accidents to occur in the longer day?

HMS: Yes, there was because a man would worry. When you worry, you are not so alert to the danger. An example is a man sawing shingles; a carriage is going back and forth and a saw is standing up here and you are reaching over, not even looking because you know where your hand is. But if you get a little bit dizzy or fatigued toward the end of the day, you might lean a little further and stick your finger in there. Regardless of that consideration, we went on strike. I can see now that it was a poor thing to do.

ERM: Was this in 1929 that you wanted a six-hour rather than an eight-hour day?

HMS: Yes, about then. We were trying to do something to alleviate the Depression. We wanted to put more people to work, so they would spend more money and build more houses, thus using more lumber and shingles. This is what they do now and look at the skyrocketing prices! But in those days they wouldn't do it, so the mills closed down. I have been in correspondence with Paul

Smith about it. He wanted to know what I thought of him and his operation. I told him I thought he was very good; he was the man that taught me the right way to saw a shingle and pack and make a good product. But I told him that it bothered me that, when we were trying to inaugurate the six-hour day, he brought scab workers in from Everett. It was a scab on humanity as far as we were concerned. Anybody that was a union man was welcome to stay on the job, but nobody would stay, so they had to bring in a full crew. We did things that were really terrible.

ERM: What kind of things?

HMS: Two or three different nights in a row, the strikers went down there at a certain time to find out when the shift was changing from the day shift, and these fellows were leaving the cookhouse. They were penned in, and the strikers wouldn't let them walk into the mill to work.

ERM: Were they afraid?

HMS: Yes. We found a way to get in there. We went there at night when the shifts changed. A man got on each side of the door where they had to come out to go to the mill. As the guys came through, we would clout them alongside the head. With four over there, two would catch one and the other two would catch the other one and drag them back and tell them they had to get out. There was a bunch of fellows that wouldn't get into this operation. They had been brought from Everett, Washington in boxcars.

ERM: Were they hauled out bodily?

HMS: Yes, hauled them out bodily, where our men could herd them, stand them up and put them in boxcars and send them back to Everett. The only way that Smith could bring the strikebreakers in there was in boxcars because the strikers had the highways blocked. The picket line was across the roads and they couldn't get a car through, so they brought them right in on the railroad; in the cars that they loaded shingles in. It was several weeks before we discovered this ruse.

ERM: I see, and the strikers loaded them off the same way?

HMS: Yes, we loaded them off the same way, but we sent them back to Everett in automobiles. I think that this was the only black mark that Paul Smith ever had, as far

the union was concerned. They paid those fellows twice as much as they had paid us, to get them to break the strike. They were professional strikebreakers.

ERM: Were they just drifters, or were they workers from other mills?

HMS: They had been workers at other mills; they were from all classes of mills. Some of them weren't good shingle weavers, but they came down and ran the machines. Maybe they would cut only ten or twelve or fifteen thousand, whereas, we had been cutting thirty-eight to forty. But they were breaking the strike; they were professional strikebreakers. This lasted six years, during which time they never ran a union crew. There wasn't anything else to do, so I joined a CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp.

ERM: Were all the other union people out of work during that period?

HMS: If they stayed union people, they were, as far as work in the shingle mill. But some found something else to do. They wanted experienced woodsmen in the CCC, so they hired forty experienced woodsmen and they put one hundred and sixty men,eighteen years old and up,on the crew. Ours were mostly from Illinois. During my career as a worker, I learned a lot about meat. I had cut meat and I had a store on wheels for three years, so I became a mess steward. Even though I couldn't cook a thing, I was a mess steward. I had to learn, so I went to Fort Lewis for a six weeks training period. It was something to tide me over until the mills finally started again. I had to do something so I tried everything. I worked for farmers cutting their winter wood and helping them put their hay in for a dollar a day.

ERM: Did you continue to be a member of the Shingle Weavers Union?

HMS: I remained a member of the union all the time.

ERM: Did you keep on meeting with the union during that time?

HMS: Well, I put three years in that CCC camp, and I was in the mountains all of that time out of reach. I couldn't get to the meetings; I had no transportation except the army trucks. The cooking end of it, the feeding and clothing of the men was directly under the army, and the work labor force was under the Forest Service or Park Service, depending on where the CCC fellows worked or what they did.

CHAPTER 4

ERM: Let's go back in time to when you first began to work in the mills. You were just sixteen and that would have been around World War I, wasn't it?

HMS: That's right, that was in 1918. I first joined the union in 1920 when I was eighteen years old.

ERM: That was about the time of the Industrial Workers of the World, and there was a lot of trouble in the mills. What can you tell about that, what experience did you have?

HMS: There was a little place over by Tenino where I packed shingles for a couple of partners that had a little one-machine mill. That's when they changed from ten hours to eight hours. I would work eight hours. Then I would come home and these two partners would saw and pack their own shingles for the last two hours of the day. That's when they first started eight hours in the lumber mills. That was mainly caused by the need for production and the shortage of men because of the men in the service. This was the only reason it ever went through; otherwise there would have been a big strike.

ERM: There wouldn't have been a change from the ten to the eight-hour day if it hadn't been for the war?

HMS: I don't think the Wobblies had anything to do with that. I gave the Wobblies credit for bettering the conditions in the camp; making them put sheets and pillowcases and mattresses on the beds and good food, transportation from work, and all that.

ERM: To what extent were the Wobblies infiltrated by Communists?

HMS: That was before Communism was thought about.

ERM: The Russian Revolution came right around World War I, and when did this happen?

HMS: 1918 [1919]. But it was too soon, the Communists were just getting a foothold in Russia at that time. They had just dethroned the czar in 1917, and it was too soon for any backlash to get over here.

ERM: But there was fear of Communism, wasn't there?

HMS: A little later. Along about 1925 to 1927, they began to mix them up with Communists. But at that time, the thing that kind of irked the workers was the returning of the war veterans. There was quite a few returning prior to 1918, and when they came back, they went right to work. The other people who had taken their jobs were thrown out of work. A lot of people with families were thrown out of work because the person that hired them had a war veteran returning. There wasn't any regulation at that time that their job would be permanent. They brought the soldiers back and hired them, and they laid these fellows off which made a lot of discontent. This is another thing that the Wobblies worked on because they figured it was unfair to the man who had stayed and done the work. Well, the same with the man who went to war; I guess they both had a right.

ERM: Were any of the people in your family thrown out of work because of this?

HMS: No, we weren't because we didn't go to war and we didn't take any soldiers' jobs. I was too young, I was sixteen at the time. My brother was twenty, but he had a goiter on his neck and it caused high blood pressure so they would not take him as a soldier. He went to join but they wouldn't take him.

ERM: So, at the root of this problem there was animosity between the people who had worked during the war and the returning veterans?

HMS: If you were a worker at the time, you would naturally be in sympathy with the worker. The reason that I am in sympathy with them is because in 1912, just before we moved to Moclips, there was a lumber strike in Raymond and they shipped in a lot of foreigners. They were Greeks or Italians, and people called them Dagos. They took the jobs of the local people in the lumber mill. They took the jobs and the strikers were loaded in boxcars the same as was done down there, only this time the strikers were loaded into boxcars. We had a couple of fellows boarding with us. My mother ran a boardinghouse at the time in Raymond. This was after my father got injured and he couldn't work much so she started a boardinghouse in order to keep things going. There were two young fellows and they were Wobblies but they were just young kids, eighteen years old. They were in sympathy with the strikers. They went up one night about five miles out of town. They took these cars and put them on a

sidetrack and opened them up--or were going to open them up and send them away, but these fellows went up there and opened the door of the boxcar before the special police got up there to drive them away. They let them all out and they were going to march back to town. Just as they started to march back to Raymond, this special police force came along. Now this is something that's a real God's fact--they grabbed these two young fellows, stripped their clothes off, laid them right down alongside the track, and put cinders--the stuff that they used to use for ballast--on their backs and took boards and beat that stuff into their backs. They took their clothes away from them and turned them loose, and they came home naked. My mother doctored those fellows for three or four days and picked that stuff out of their backs. The doctors wouldn't come up and have anything to do with it. She did it herself.

That doesn't mean that we were in sympathy with the Wobblies. This is just what happened because they were boarding there and we knew them. They were young people that she and my father had known for years, and they were raised around there in Raymond. This was a special police force. This is another reason my mother quit the church, because the pastor of the Baptist Church--I had been baptized a couple of years before in the church in Raymond--carried a gun to help drive the strikers out of town. In those days things were pretty raw. Raymond was a town and in that time it had about thirty saloons, four grocery stores, a red light district, and all. It was a wild place, and when those lumber boats would come in and dock at Willapa Harbor, the town was full of sailors. You can figure what they did.

SESSION II, AFTERNOON OF MAY 3, 1974

CHAPTER 4

ERM: Your father had a leading role, you say, in starting the Shingle Weavers Union. What was the name in the beginning?

HMS: International Shingle Weavers Union of America. In 1911 when they finally organized a full union in Raymond, my father was the president and also the secretary-treasurer of the union. He was the union, practically. He controlled and acted as a one-man steering committee until he had trained other people. He was not all-powerful, but he spent a lot of time working on the union. He was sort of self-educated. As I said before, he had the equivalent of an eighth-grade education. He took a correspondence course and learned to type and keep books when he had this job. He learned as he went along how to enter all those items in the books. He also had to preside at the meetings and choose people that he thought would know enough about different parts of the organization or could learn enough to carry on. There are a lot of things entailed in organizing a bunch of men who had never been accustomed to unionized labor. Previously, they had always just dickered for themselves with the employers and sold their own ability, personality, and whatever they had to offer.

It was a lot to do. I remember that, when I was about twelve years old, he was always away at meetings and things, so I could hardly ever see him in the evenings. He had to get people organized and make them believe in what they were being taught. A lot of them were skeptical. People were so used to taking care of themselves and fighting for everything they got, they could hardly believe that there was one big union that was going to make everything rosy for them. It's like thinking about the hereafter; it wasn't going to be that way.

ERM: How did he go about getting people organized in the union?

HMS: He talked to them on the job. He was working in the mill besides doing union organizing. He would talk

to them at the mill at noontime when they ate their lunch and show them the advantages of being organized and having more power. In numbers there is power, but when you stand alone, you are alone.

ERM: Where did he get the ideas for this? Did he read a lot, or did he see examples set by other unions?

HMS: He got the idea the year before, in 1910. He had heard about this International Shingle Weavers Union, and they were having statewide or West Coast meetings. They were trying to organize Oregon, Washington, and Idaho shingle mill workers. There were quite a few mills in the northern part of Idaho, and they were trying to organize them. He went to a meeting in Seattle and there met J. G. Brown who was head of the Seattle organization. They were both working for Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor, the AFL. That organization didn't believe in violence and destruction of the government by force or anything like that. This is one thing that was laid onto the IWW, that their ultimate goal was to destroy the government and take over. This is, I imagine, how people got them mixed up with Communism in those early days.

It took at least five or six years to get the men organized, and only the big mills were forced to use the labor unions, like the Case Shingle Company, and Hinkle Shingle Company of Raymond, Washington, Ballard Lumber and Shingle of Seattle, and M. R. Smith Shingle Company of Moclips, Washington. At the same time there were dozens and dozens of small unorganized mills out in the wooded areas. They were away from the population and were more or less segregated. They were the hardest ones to get organized, and they never actually did get those little mills organized. They turned out to be a family-type deal with a man who would saw shingles, his wife who would pack, and the sons who would cut the blocks. They would run their own mill and they'd have nothing to do with the Shingle Weavers Union. They didn't believe in that.

ERM: They were really working for themselves, they weren't working for anybody else.

HMS: That's right. Nowadays they would be rated as a self-employed unit.

ERM: In a written statement, you mention the Roles brothers and Dale Wilson. Who were they?

HMS: Dick and Al Roles are still living. They are old men but their sons are doing most of it. They were shingle

sawyers and they have two or three shingle mills in Oregon. The Roles brothers were the ones that worked with my father at the Case Mill. I told you they used to take off their cap and go to work and see who could get one bundle ahead of the other by the end of the ten hours. They were very good workers, good people, and they had ambitions which showed because they are now shingle operators and manufacturers.

Dale Wilson was a shingle sawyer, and he came from Little Rock with my father. They went to Raymond at the same time. He had two sons, Clyde and Roy Wilson. Roy was drafted into the army in World War I and got an injury during the war that left him with an impediment which eventually killed him. I think that Clyde is still alive. Last I heard, he was in Oregon. I don't know whether he became a manufacturer or not.

ERM: Who is Ray Aleshire?

HMS: Ray Aleshire is or was head of the union. At least the last time I heard, he was head of the Grays Harbor union local. He was the president of the shingle weaver's union local in Aberdeen and Hoquiam. They called it Grays Harbor local because it took care of that whole area.

ERM: Who was Frank Baker?

HMS: Frank Baker was president before Aleshire. Frank Baker was a shingle sawyer, and he also built a good two-machine mill on the Little Hoquiam River north of Hoquiam. He had a real nice thing; he finally died about seven or eight years ago. We had known him before; we worked with him. In 1928 we got out of work up here and my brother and I went down to the union because we knew that Frank Baker was in charge. It might seem unfair, but they had the labor board, an employment office, located in the union office. If a shingle operator wanted one sawyer or two sawyers or packers, they would call the labor board and leave an order for a certain number of men, whatever they needed. We knew that if we called Frank Baker that that was a real good job. He was like Nixon you know--he'd take the cream of the crop. He told us that they wanted two sawyers at Aloha. We went out there and went to work. This was the first time we had ever worked at Aloha.

In Centralia they had two shingle mills, one was the eastern and one the western but they both belonged to the same Dale Hubbard, his father, and Sam Agnew.

Their main occupation was running this lumber mill, Eastern Railway and Lumber Company of Centralia. They just had maybe a scattering of cedar mixed with the lumber, and they would pile the cedar up in the pond until they got three or four months run. Then they'd start up the shingle mill and work until they ran out of timber. Then you'd have to wait for more logs. In the meantime, we'd go to some other place and work where we could. I knew Paul Brinn was running the mill at Aloha and one time he said, "Well, by God, you fellows just come down here when you can't work at Centralia." That was in 1938. And then he said, "Now this time, you're either going to work here and stay here regardless of Centralia or else I'm not going to put you to work. You're gonna really have to stay here." So at that time, I worked there from 1938 until 1946 when I retired from sawing and went to contracting mail. I haven't worked in a shingle mill since 1946.

ERM: What made you leave the shingle mill?

HMS: It was sort of unpredictable. You never knew when somebody would pull a wildcat strike or something. Someone would come up with an idea that you ought to get this or you ought to get that, and they'd want to strike. There would always be somebody like me or the shop steward who would be the go-between. I kind of got tired of that. For two or three summers, I had something wrong with me. One time it was that thing that didn't turn out to be a cancer. So I just decided to quit. I made a bid on a mail contract and got it, although I didn't expect to get it. I'd been doing that every four years. I carried mail for four years from 1922 to 1926 from Chehalis to Riffe, and I thought it was a nice easy way to make a living. It wasn't as much money. I always had more money; shingle weavers are sort of what they used to call "nigger rich." You made a lot of money and you spent a lot of money. But if you are carrying mail or something like that, you set your budget to stay within your income.

It seemed to me it would be a better way of life, which it turned out to be. I was on the mail contract about two years when I went to Washington, D.C. with a bunch of carriers and contractors, and we came to a renewal agreement with the Postal Department. We had them present House Bill 169 that provided that we could reinstate if our work was satisfactory at the end of four years and they were satisfactory to us. We'd come to an agreement where they would just renew the

contract and you didn't have to bid again, whereas, before we bid every four years, and just when you would get the thing lined up, somebody would underbid you. That's the way I lost it at Chehalis in 1926. Even if someone underbid only five dollars less a year, he would get the contract.

ERM: Was no preference shown for people who had seniority?

HMS: No, not a bit. This was just a contract and that was it. You bid on it and it was supposed to go to the lowest and best bidder. But it never worked that way at all, it was always just the lowest bidder. I went to Washington, D.C. personally and met the post-master general and presented a bid to him. It just happened that I put my contract up because I was going broke after World War II and prices on every-thing got so high, just like now. Suppose you had been caught a year ago with a mail contract and have to pay the prices you pay now. That's the situation I was in there. These were four-year contracts.

ERM: Who was Jack McCloskey?

HMS: Jack McCloskey ran the employment office and he was the secretary-treasurer of, Grays Harbor Shingle Weavers Union local. He made his living as a shingle packer. He was a nice little guy and he would do anything in the world for a person to help him get located at some mill in the area. He liked to have you come to the meetings. There's a certain number of people that come and they do everything. They stand the brunt and get no credit. So he was trying to get everybody to come to the meetings and be part of the union, not only a paying member but an acting member.

ERM: What's been done about writing the history of the International Shingle Weavers Union of America?

HMS: I never heard of anybody doing anything until my son was down here one weekend and he said he had been talking to Paul Smith who wanted to know if I would be interested in helping. He'd been down talking to the Roles brothers in Oregon, but he couldn't seem to get any cooperation from them. They were busy running their mills, that is, the younger generation. It didn't mean anything to the old fellows; they'd out-lived their interest in it. They just left everything to their sons who are the power behind the mills now.

ERM: They are on the other side of the fence now.

HMS: Yes. They have one foot down on the other slope.

CHAPTER 5

ERM: Lots of sawyers became independent little mill-owners, did they not? Your family did.

HMS: I'll tell you about that. In 1918 and 1919, after the war, my father and I became partners and we started this mill at Forest. That's just four miles from Napavine right across the valley. We were on the north fork of the Newaukum River. There had been a shingle mill and a lumber mill combined and they had sold it. Dad Shaver--that was Clarence Shaver's father--had built the mill just before the war broke out. When the war broke out and the prices went up, he didn't have enough business acumen in order to see what it was going to amount to. He sold it to a fellow by the name of C. R. Pope who was a relative of the Pope and Talbot family. He bought and ran it for about a year until they had a fire at Forest that burned the shingle mill down. They saved the rest of the mill, but the shingle mill burned down. It didn't hurt the lumber mill much. The furnace and all of the boilers and everything were still standing. We talked it over with Clarence Shaver, and since his father had already owned the mill once, he thought there was a pretty good chance that we could buy it for practically a song. We actually had to give them a song and a dance in order to get in on it. Anyway, we finally bought it and rebuilt it--the shingle mill only.

ERM: Did you rebuild it yourselves?

HMS: My father did most of the planning of it, and we hired a fellow by the name of Corbin Sabin who was a real good construction carpenter. I didn't have too much to do with it except to earn my share of the money. While they were building the mill, I went down to a little place called Markham, Washington on Grays Harbor.

I don't know if you read the story about "This is How I Met My Wife" in one of those pictures. I went to work at Markham packing shingles, and I earned about one hundred and fifty dollars a month. Those were fairly good wages for the time. That was in the red cedar shingle mill owned by Hays and Hays Bank in

Aberdeen. I worked there about five months and I sent home eight hundred dollars as my initial payment on my share of the mill. By that time, the mill was ready to go and they needed one more partner. They preferred a sawyer and they wanted somebody that would be interested in buying a share, putting down what he could, and paying the rest out of his earnings from sawing. I found a sawyer that I was working with at Markham named Bill Evans. I talked to him and he seemed quite interested in it. He went up with me one weekend and looked it all over and decided to go in. That made four of us, my father and I, Bill Evans, and Clarence Shaver. Then we had to figure a way to get a steady supply of cedar, because this lumber mill was like most lumber mills, they just had a little bit of cedar mixed in with the fir. They would buy a tract of fir and then they would run the shingle mill when they had enough. Sometimes we would get some farmer who wanted shingles to bring in his timber and they'd cut it fifty-fifty. We gave him half the shingles and we'd take half. They'd deliver the shingle bolts right to the mill. Somehow we had to get a better stabilized supply of timber.

One day my father and I went over to Onalaska, which was about twelve miles down the road, and we talked to W. A. Carlisle about some timber they owned which was just about two miles from our mill. It was all divided up into eighty-acre sections. You had to buy eighty acres and pay them cash in advance. It would amount to from four thousand to eight thousand dollars, according to the cedar cruise, and we didn't have that much cash. There was a Fred Nieman who was a quite well-to-do farmer and he loaned money. He sort of dealt in usury. He had money but he wouldn't loan it to you for a percentage, like eight percent. He'd say, "Well, I'll buy this in my name and you cut it, and when you get it paid off you pay me five hundred dollars for loaning you the money." It would generally take about four to six months to cut that eighty acres. Sometimes you'd come out all right and sometimes you wouldn't. The last wood we bought cost us an average of three dollars a shingle square, or a shingle thousand, for timber. That's right on the line, I'd say, and we were selling shingles for seven dollars and a half. That was clear shingle, before the time of vertical grain. They were Clear or they were Star-A-Star. Star-A-Stars were ten inches clear, and the Clears were twelve inches clear but they were thicker. They were five to two--that's five shingles to two inches on the butt and Stars were six to two. We

were just starting in on our third eighty-acre section and we were doing pretty well. We had the mill about half paid-off, and we were going along real well making a little money. But we were putting a good deal of our wages back into paying off the original cost of the mill. Do you remember about the middle of 1921, they had what they called a recession? When that recession hit, shingle prices went down from $7.50 to $2.50 per thousand, and we were still paying $3.00 for timber. We couldn't get any reduction on that because we had already bought it for that much. We also owed Mr. Neiman five hundred dollars. It should have only been about two hundred if we had just paid eight percent. It just happened that Dad Shaver had a little money. He was just waiting until we went broke. Then he paid it off and gave it to his son. So he got the mill.

I think in the long run we are just as well off. We lived and it was an experience. I know that if it ever came up again and prices were right and we had another chance to buy something, my father and I could have operated it real well.

ERM: Because you had the know-how.

HMS: Yes, we had the know-how; Clarence Shaver just kept the books.

ERM: How did you sell your product when you were making it yourselves?

HMS: We sold some to Paul Smith and we hauled it on a truck to Chehalis. We bought a truck and hauled logs on it. Then we put a flatbed on it and hauled the shingles to town. It was one of these old-time Mac trucks and it had hard rubber tires. It had a great big front end on it like a railroad engine.

ERM: Who did Paul Smith wholesale the shingles to?

HMS: He bought wholesale and then resold them. He'd send them to some of his yards in different places in California and on the East Coast. Even if we had been selling to him then, he would have had to cut off when the Depression hit. That was the time when Hoover was elected over Al Smith in 1928, and no one was buying shingles. We kept going along and I worked at different jobs until 1928 when they had the election. My father had never voted Republican--only once--and I never had voted. This time Al Smith was running and I didn't think that Al Smith was much; they had all this talk about religion, that he'd make the

whole country Catholic and all this, as they do with political talk. Anyway, I voted for Herbert Hoover who said we'd have a chicken in every pot.

When I voted for Hoover I was working at Onalaska in a lumber mill. That's after I'd gotten fired from the shingle mill, and I went to work in a lumber mill. I knew a French fellow, Schweineer, that ran an extra-gang and he gave me a job. I worked on the extra crew for four or five weeks and we patched and roofed all over the mill, dry kilns, and everything else. Finally, he asked me how I'd like to go in and work on the green chains. All I had to do was stand there and pump these levers back and forth, stop one chain and then start another and keep the lumber coming even. I'd line it up for the horizontal resaw. We cut the big cants that came from the head rig. I ran that for quite awhile, although I wasn't on the head end of it, I was on the tail end. I did that until they needed a man on the carriage one day. The boss asked me if I'd like to work on the carriage in the head rig. That was one of the first double-cut band saws. They generally had two big round saws and the log went between the two hubs. My job was to set the ratchet. I was doing a good job. I worked for about six hours in the eight-hour day, when I got seasick and couldn't stay on the darn thing. I told Schweineer, "My gosh I just can't do it. My stomach just rolls over." He said, "You try it just one more day." So the next day I went back and worked about an hour and I got seasick. I couldn't do it, so he put me back on the tail end of another horizontal resaw, and I worked there for quite awhile.

First thing, Herbert Hoover started to take ahold and the Depression started again. It hit there in 1928. They were running two shifts and they had all these fellows that were what they called key men, running things like I was running, and they shut down the second shift. All these key men came back on the first shift and there was no union and no protection. So I was idle once more. They all started coming back and they'd take your job. I was one of the first ones to get fired when the Depression hit. It seemed unfair, but I pulled myself together and went down to Grays Harbor again and got a job packing shingles at Aloha. Paul Brinn knew that my two brothers and I could handle a lot of shingles. My oldest brother was a good sawyer and my younger brother and I were good packers.

In fact, one time I won the second prize for state championship at packing shingles. It was over at Centralia, at a little fair they had for a Fourth of July celebration, and packers from all over the state of Washington came down there for the contest. The first prize was twenty-five dollars and the second prize was fifteen dollars. I won the least time for packing two bundles of shingles. I had two or three places that I didn't break the joints. Breaking the joints means that you put shingles on the roof and fix them so there is no hole and the roof won't leak. You had to break the joints in the bundles the same as you put them on the roof to make it look right. The hole would be by itself instead of one hole on top of the other. The shingles were just a bunch they threw into a big bin out at the fairground, and they didn't fit quite right. In order to make time, you couldn't fool around fitting them, so in two or three places I had little holes, and one was right above the other. They knocked off so many seconds for each hole, and I was about two seconds behind the guy, but I was ahead of him in speed.

ERM: But you lost it on penalty points?

HMS: Yes.

ERM: You say that the Depression hit the shingle business very hard?

HMS: Yes, up in this area it did. Then we went down to Pacific Beach, and I worked at Aloha Lumber Company. We built a house in 1929 in Pacific Beach and we were still working. Then when the six-hour day strike came along the last part of 1929, they just closed up. They tried to make a go at Moclips and, even after Smith put so much money into strikebreaking, he finally quit. Just shut them all down.

ERM: Just shut down because their product wasn't selling?

HMS: It wasn't selling and he was worse off then ever. He was just dropping money down a rathole. He'd lost the goodwill of the shingle weavers. We were doing everything in the world we could to make him try the six-hour day so we could go back to work. We were willing to go back to work at a reduction in pay if he would just run six hours, but he didn't dare to do that because the association wouldn't let him. They wouldn't make it industry-wide because they couldn't see how we could make enough shingles. But it proved out after they did start it in 1936 that we were right because

we cut within two or three squares in six hours of what we had been cutting in eight hours because we were fresh. We were never all worn out, and maybe they gave us a better grade of timber.

ERM: Didn't that fact impress itself upon the industry?

HMS: It finally did on the manufacturers.

ERM: Their production was high then for a six-hour period, nearly as high as it was for an eight-hour period. That would make for a better profit for them, wouldn't it?

HMS: Sure, and with all their day labor, they saved money because they had to hire for only six hours. As far as our hourly wage was concerned, they would have to pay that no matter if we worked twelve hours or six hours. I mean they wouldn't save anything per hour.

ERM: What's been the difference between the unions in this country and those in Canada?

HMS: This is something I was going to mention. Last summer, I took a week off from retirement and went on a vacation. My son Hal took me up there with him and I went around to all those mills. We had a real nice time. We finally came to Golden, way up in the hills between the Frazier River and the Columbia which drain in that country, just about forty miles from Banff. It's a nice little town. That's where they moved the old Saginaw Mill with the nine machines. It was a big operation to move that mill way up there in those mountains and get it all running.

Hal told me they weren't having very good luck with a foreman that they had at the shingle mill. He didn't seem to understand and couldn't teach the new hands fast enough to make production and make money. You have to get the production up at least thirty or thirty-five squares for eight hours before you can make any profit. They asked me to go through the mill with them and make observations to see what I thought they weren't doing right. So I went in. They were cutting their logs with a power splitter. It just drops down on the bolt and breaks it apart. This saves the sawdust out of the saw cut. They forgot that the splitter goes with the grain. By the time they cut that block off, it's sixteen-inches long, and if it runs half an inch in every six inches, when you get down there you've got a couple of inches. It isn't straight, so by the time you get your block straightened up you've lost three times as much as your saw-cut was

when you had that saw splitter. I didn't say much about it because they figured this was a good thing. If the block is perfectly straight grain, it works nice. He can set it anyplace he wants to and he doesn't have to run the carriage back and forth to split the block. There is a lot of advantage to it. I went up into the mill where the sawyers were, and they were training new sawyers. The sawyers' blocks are kind of cut in quarters, and then you start sawing from either corner and the shingles get wider and wider and narrower and narrower. When you get past center, you saw off one shingle and then there's a saw kerf there and another shingle. This one shingle would be an inch and a half wider than the last one. Those fellows were cutting them off and squaring them both up to the size of the smallest one. When you are sawing shingles, you work your fingers and you push those back and forth. You've got two singles. The machine is what they call a double-butter; it makes two butts on one end and then it changes and goes on the top and the bottom, making two tips and then two butts. A sawyer will just kind of put that up against the saw and push the spring-board down and butt it against there. Then you turn it over and butt it the other way. Then you throw your shingles over. You've got one shingle that is, say, five inches wide and one that's three and a half. Otherwise, the way they were doing it, you would have two shingles three and a half inches wide. You see what that does in a day's time? I explained a few things like that.

There are a lot of other things about a shingle machine. You just have to work on one seven or eight years before you know what it is really doing. If you can get a shingle sawyer to saw fifteen or twenty years, you've got somebody that knows how to make shingles. He knows just what his machine will do all the time, what it's capable of doing, how to keep it full, how to turn the block so you get the right grain, and even stop and pull it out a little bit and cut a little knot off and go right into the clear wood again.

I was talking to the filer, and it just happened that I had met him in Aberdeen years ago. We were talking away and pretty soon Hal came over. It's awfully noisy in there, and you can hardly hear a man above the noise of the mill. He tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Dad, I had better get you out of here. You're liable to get these fellows in the notion of a six-hour day." I said, "Well, it might be the best thing in the world that happened to you, but I'm not about to say anything like that. I realize that this

is your way up here, and I'm not about to say anything like that." Anyway, we left them. Hal said they were having a lot of trouble trying to get a crew that could cut shingles. They had husband and wife teams with the man sawing and the wife packing. They both had to work in order to live because the employers had to guarantee them only a certain amount of pay per hour. I'm not sure how the Canadian law works, but it isn't like we have down here. They both had to work in order to make enough to keep a family with four children going.

ERM: Would you say that work conditions and pay has generally been better stateside than in Canada?

HMS: I don't believe I've ever seen the time when I would have changed jobs with anybody in Canada. We have a regular old hard-shoveled capitalistic system in this country. We all know it, but it's the best system in the world. There's no place else in the world like the U.S.A. They always compare how much more we are doing in the United States than they are doing in some other countries.

There are only twelve men in the United States or in the world that really know how money works and they control the money. The Bank of England and the American Association of Bankers are two outfits that control the money in the world. There's no way of getting around it. They've got it hemmed up, but of course the Russians are horning in on it a little now. They're getting so they can furnish products to other countries, their satellite countries, like guns and ammunition and goods, instead of money. That's what is the matter with us; it is why we lost the Vietnam War and why the Israelites are losing the war to the Arabs, because in just one week we lost twenty of the best planes we can make. The Israelites flew them over there and the Arabs shot them down. The Russians are producing things that have got us out-matched. This is what is going to happen to the world. We are going to have to do something or we are going to all be under Communism, one way or the other, because there is not much time left. Right now the Russians can pinpoint from underneath the sea anyplace in the world that aren't their satellites, their controlled countries. They've got big guns stationed in the mountains in South America, and I don't think we should have let them be in there in the first place. Just like that Cuban deal. I'll tell you, letting Russia come in and run Cuba right under our noses is a disgrace to the United States. What are we thinking about?

ERM: Where did you get the information that there are guns in the mountains of South America?

HMS: I heard it on the news. On the eleven o'clock news at night, sometimes there will be one man on and sometimes they'll have two or three men on the news having a kind of panel. They tell things that are really happening. To my way of thinking, they have let it go a little too far already. They can talk all they want about Nixon, but I think he has already sold us down the river as far as the Russians are concerned. It would be a big thing in his pocket if he could sort of be under the Russians and rule this country. If I were in politics, I would certainly go into his background and see what he accomplished when he gave away our wheat for half-price and they sold wheat for $1.37 on board the ship here and Russia didn't take it home and use it. They sold it to all those other countries for about $5.50 a bushel. This is what happened.

ERM: I've read that in the early days the shingle manufacturers and shingle weavers in this country accused the British Columbia people of running their mills with slave labor.

HMS: Chinese labor?

ERM: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Is it true?

HMS: I wouldn't say it was slave labor. But they were probably bidding against the world. They say the Chinese are the best shingle sawyers in the world when they are trained. They did use a lot of Chinese in Canada, and they say that it just happens to be something that they are good at because they are accustomed to using their hands a lot. They cleaned fish and did a lot of other things, and they got used to using their hands. They are capable with their hands, and they made wonderful shingle sawyers. They were used for sawing shingles and packing shingles, and at one time most of the shingle workers along the Canadian Coast were Chinese.

ERM: Were they ever organized into unions?

HMS: Not that I know of. I never heard of them being organized except that they were like we used to be here. They were selling their ability and they had lots of that.

ERM: I asked Charlie Plant in Vancouver about this.* He said, "Well, of course, there were Chinese shingle

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*Typed transcript of tape-recorded interview with Charles Plant conducted by Elwood R. Maunder. Scheduled for publication summer 1975.

weavers up here, and they were paid on a slightly lower scale." He said that the difference was that in order to keep them employed, they had to be housed and all kinds of facilities had to be built for them right by the mill, because they wanted to live among their fellow Chinese. So the companies that employed them had to go to that additional expense to keep them happy. That made the difference. Because of that he felt that there was not any really great difference between labor's cost in the States and its cost in Canada. Would you say that is a fair appraisal?

HMS: I would say it is. I remember fellows telling me they had sawed in Canada on Vancouver Island and along the coast and on that little island up above Vancouver Island which is called Unalaska--it isn't Onalaska, but Unalaska. They have several shingle mills on that island, and they said that they were all doing real well up there until the importation of Chinese labor. All it did was throw those fellows out of work and they had to come back down here and put themselves on an already overcrowded market. That's the reason they went up there in the first place. I think that this was the thing that has caused a whole lot of labor trouble--just little things where there hadn't been enough foresight.

That's what happened during the days of the strikes. They got those foreigners into the lumber mill, and they had to build little shacks for them along the river which cost a lot of money to fix up. There was so much competition in the early days. All of a sudden some other company would come in and they would get the orders. Then the ones originally there would say, "Well, now, can we do something? Isn't there something we can do? So three or four millowners would get into a huddle--"Couldn't we get a bunch of Mexicans up here or send to Italy? There are a lot of people over there getting only fifty cents a day. Why not bring them over here and give them seventy-five cents a day? It will sound good to them." But then when they get over here, they can't live on the ground. They need to have at least tents in the summertime and houses in the wintertime. These are the problems they have been running into for ages and ages. It isn't only in this country; it's all over the world. The same thing happened when they built the Panama Canal. They had to house those people when they got down there, and they got malaria and had to be doctored.

ERM: What seems to be an answer to a problem ultimately proves to create new problems maybe as great or greater than the original problem.

HMS: That's the thing that the Russians are going to run into. They think Communism is a great thing, but sooner or later they are going to find out that these people that are working for practically nothing will want their fair share of what they produce. It is just a matter of time until it all comes back. It's been that way all through history. The Romans who once were on top of the world went a little too far and lost everything. These countries lose out, not because they don't have good warriors or ammunition, but because they are causing dissatisfied people. That's what's happening now.

ERM: Do you think that the world, the people of this community for example, are more dissatisfied with life now than they were when you were a young boy?

HMS: I do think so.

ERM: Why?

HMS: Because they have too much. Do you remember the time when you worked for a certain wage? The best time that I can remember is in the days when I earned about ten dollars a day. You took that home with you, unless you paid hospital fees and state insurance, but the rest of it was yours. They gave you a check and you got at least ninety-eight percent of what you earned. But nowadays, it's different. A man in Canada pays out over fifty percent of his income. If he gets sixty thousand dollars a year, he pays thirty-two thousand dollars income tax. That same man who would earn sixty thousand dollars in the U.S.A. would net about twice as much.

My father was a Socialist, he wasn't a Communist and he wasn't a Marxist or anything else. But he believed that the people should own public utilities and things like that which a lot of legislation has brought to pass under the Democrats. The Democrats have progressed. They are more progressive than Republicans, and they just fell back on all these old socialistic beliefs, putting them into effect. My father would have been the happiest man in the world if he were alive today to see these things.

ERM: How have you felt about all this? Have you been of a different belief?

HMS: Yes, I'll tell you I believe, and I have always believed, that a person shouldn't have too much and should have nothing but what he earned. Nothing should be given to him on a platter. A third of the people in the United

States are on relief in one way or another, and a third of them are getting a government check for doing nothing. I think we've got to come to some kind of understanding.

ERM: Do you think some people get paid too much?

HMS: Yes. Maybe not for their ability, but I think for their own personal good. If you get too much money, it causes dissension in families between husbands and wives. A man gets so much money and the first thing you know he's got something special to do on the job. He goes away and stays a week or ten days in a motel. First thing you know, he thinks, "I'll get myself a couple of mixed drinks," and then he gets lonesome and gets himself a gal. He's no longer the real man that he was before. He's overstepped his truth with the Maker and he's overstepped himself. If he didn't have the money, he wouldn't do that because he couldn't afford to.

I have a few shares in a product's company. If I had two hundred thousand shares on which I made six dollars a year on a share, that would be a lot of money. But when you have only eighty or ninety shares, you're not getting rich. I can't understand why their shares came down so low. I paid $59.50, and now they are selling for $9.75. This isn't making any money, and the prices of things are higher than they ever were before, so why aren't we making a little money? That's what I can't figure out. What are they doing with the money?

ERM: The small and medium-sized stockholder is not making it.

HMS: No. But this is what you have to depend on. Most of the small stockholders are working at something and they are producing, but these big fellows are just sitting on the top.

ERM: Do you think that the top business managers are milking the kitty too much?

HMS: I surely do.

ERM: You mean they are also the top officers and members of the board, so they are really the governing body of the organization, the ones that vote. The other stockholders usually just vote by proxy.

HMS: You just sign what they send you. There are two men and it doesn't make any difference which one you vote for. It's just like voting for president. My father

always said it didn't make any difference. He said, "You vote for whoever you want, either Democrat or Republican, and it doesn't make any difference because you are voting for their man anyway. They nominate him and put him on the ballot. I couldn't nominate you and you couldn't nominate me. There's no choice.

They have a bill before the Senate--I know they haven't completed it yet--that will take one dollar off everybody's income tax. If there are eighty million people paying income tax, there is a potential of eighty million dollars in that fund. This money would be used for campaigning funds for all nominated or elected officials. Then nobody would be obligated to a certain guy for a million dollars or five hundred thousand dollars. I think that's the best thing that they ever thought of. Nobody can give big sums of money and get a favor for it.

We are so close to the greatest depression that ever hit that it isn't funny. Day before yesterday's paper said that the profits of the big automobile companies have dropped ninety-eight percent in the first three months of this year. Ninety-eight percent over what it was in the last three months of last year. This is something to worry about because they haven't sold ten percent of the cars that they sold the last two or three months of last year. The automobile industry and oil are the pulse of business today. Oil is not going to get anyplace if automobiles don't move. I figure that when I go down to a service station and buy gasoline that was selling for forty-two cents a gallon and I pay fifty-seven cents for it, that's too damn much money regardless of what they say. They say, "You won't notice it; it should be sixty-five cents." Well, okay supposing it should be. Now the oil companies are going to make a lot of money.

ERM: Their profits are way up.

HMS: Yes, but the car manufacturers are losing money. You have to equalize things. I don't believe I drive ten percent of what I did when gasoline was a fair price. I just don't go anyplace. What's the use? Go down and fill your tank, and it costs you eight or ten dollars, where it used to cost five or six dollars. I do say one thing though--I've got a car that's too expensive to run. It's a Thunderbird, and it costs a little more. A man in my position shouldn't have it, but I do.

ERM: You might trade it in and get yourself something small and economical, especially if you are using your car a lot less.

HMS: I figured that, but the thing is, you don't get any comfort in a small car. I've had little cars and I've had medium-sized cars. I think I get more comfort in a large car. This car is all automatic; you just sit there and steer it. It does everything, but I just don't go because it can use only premium gas, and this is too rich for my poor blue blood.

ERM: You are not living like you were when you were earning ten dollars a day, and you said that was the best time of your life. You weren't riding in a Thunderbird then; you were probably chugging along in a Model T. Would you want to go back to those days again?

HMS: No. You have the wrong idea. I said that was the best time for humanity.

ERM: You are part of humanity.

HMS: I know and it was the best time for me. I had nothing to worry about except work eight hours a day. I'd come home and on weekends, we would go on a picnic up around the loop by Forks.

ERM: Do you not enjoy your life as much now as you did then?

HMS: I enjoy it just as much, but I have a different kind of enjoyment now than I did then.

ERM: Do you feel you have more anxieties now?

HMS: No, I don't. I just figure that the children are far enough along. They are worrying over their families, and I don't have to worry over mine anymore. They took that all over. In about ten years from now you'll be in that place, and you'll start to feel the same way. They took over the money worries.

In the days of the Romans, they got prosperous and they attacked all the rest of the known world which then had to pay tribute to Nero. Those fellows just ran the world as far as they knew it, and the world was a little bigger than it was in the time of Noah. They said that there were two hundred and thirty-four million people in the world in the time of Christ, but that was the known world. It didn't include Indians and South Sea Islanders that lived across the ocean; the world didn't go that far in those days. There were two hundred and thirty-four million people in the world, and they weren't all shingle weavers or they'd have been good people.

CHAPTER 6

ERM: Were you ever a member of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen?

HMS: No, but my father was. He had a card. I never joined it because I didn't think it was necessary.

ERM: You were in shingles and the 4-L didn't apply in your field. Why did your father belong to it?

HMS: Because at the time he joined it, he was a packing room foreman and he was running part of the Onalaska Lumber Company. It was required that it be done.

ERM: How did he regard the 4-L?

HMS: He didn't think it would accomplish anything that the American Federation of Labor couldn't. He thought it was just a stopgap to keep things sort of under control while it produced things that were needed at the time.

ERM: You mean during World War I?

HMS: It was just a temporary deal like the CCC.

ERM: It continued until the Wagner Act was passed.*

HMS: Yes. The Wagner Act was a very much disputed thing and most of the union leaders weren't in favor of it.

ERM: They weren't? Why weren't they in favor of it?

HMS: It gave too much leeway to control hours and wages without any representation. It was too much of an enforced act, like a wartime act.

ERM: I thought the Wagner Act was primarily an act that outlawed what were called company unions. This is what knocked out the 4-L.

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*National Labor Relations Act of 5 July 1935 (Wagner-Connery Act), 49 Stat. 449.

HMS: Yes, it knocked out the 4-L, but we still didn't need it. We already had the American Federation of Labor, and at that time they were inaugurating the CIO and IWA. They had plenty of good experienced men that could control labor and dicker for them. They didn't need the Wagner Act. Why did the Wagner Act become obsolete if it was a good thing? The American Federation of Labor has stayed ever since it happened and it's still with us controlling the longshoremen and the teamsters. The Teamsters Union, to my notion, is forcing itself on all types of labor; even waitresses belong to the Teamsters Union. They are trying to take over the farm labor, like Chavez' union.

ERM: How do you feel about that?

HMS: I feel that the Teamsters ought to leave it alone. They have no business in that.

ERM: The farm workers ought to be allowed to organize themselves like the shingle weavers did?

HMS: Sure.

ERM: Do you feel that the tendency to amalgamate all workers under one union is a bad thing? Does it give too much power to the union boss?

HMS: It's a bad thing. It makes a number out of a person. It's like Social Security in that way. Do you know that your Social Security number is on everything, in a hospital, or wherever you are, you go by just your number? We used to be people. I think we need a little independence. But the Shingle Weavers Union [currently the United Brotherhood Carpenters and Jointers, AFL-CIO], maybe it had a lot of room for improvement but it took care and still takes care of what it has to look after. It still does a good job.

ERM: It has kept its independence from big unions?

HMS: It's a member of the American Federation of Labor, but is still an independent union.

ERM: Would you say it is a craft union?

HMS: That's what it is, a craft union. It takes care of people who are working in a particular industry producing shingles.

ERM: Since it is foreseen that red cedar is going to run out in a few years, what is the future for shingle weavers?

HMS: Somebody will develop a shingle that can be made out of fir sawdust--a beautiful shingle with no knots. It will be perfectly smooth like a hardboard only weatherproofed. They will be able to treat it so that it will last for a hundred or a hundred and fifty years on a roof.

ERM: In other words, you are confident that eventually technology will provide a means?

HMS: Sure, something is always going to come up. I was talking to a fellow named Howard Roberts. He and I went for a drive past an old barn that he used to know of. It is sixty or seventy years since they put the shingle roof on the barn and the shingles were made out of yellow fir rather than cedar. Kind of a yellow fir, something like pine. They were hand-split. We stopped and looked at it, and this roof was practically as good as it was when it was put on. I think the main reason they began to use cedar was because fir makes such good lumber they didn't want to use it for shingles. I think that's the reason they began to make cedar shingles in the first place, and then it just got to be a habit to make them out of cedar or redwood. They could have made them out of pine or fir or anything else.

ERM: There hasn't been much technological change in the shingle business over they years. There have been a few minor changes in the machinery in the mills, but not a great deal. I guess machines have been developed having a smaller kerf so there is less waste.

HMS: That was the thing. It was the Simon Saw Company that developed the saw that would carry a narrower swage on the tooth. They had better steel. The saw would stand up better and hold its tension better than the old-type saw. They didn't have to be so thick. Now they have a wire, a little fine wire, that runs at such a terrific speed that it will cut lumber and won't take a bit of kerf out. You can't see the dust that it brings out, if it brings out any, because it's so small and runs so fast. It's just like the weed eliminator they advertise on television that you walk along with. It has a little wire that runs so fast, it just pulverizes the weeks into nothing. You don't have to scrape them up or pick them up; it pulverizes them into real fine dust and there's nothing left.

ERM: What do you recognize as the real accomplishments of your union over the years?

HMS: Do you mean in monetary accomplishments?

ERM: Not necessarily just monetary but others also.

HMS: The union created such things as hospitalization and it forced the states to make compensation and pay for injuries and sicknesses when you were off work. All these things gave a man security against illness or accident in the industry. When my father was hurt, he never got five cents. The only thing that the shingle weavers used to have in those days before the union was a collection they took up, and if anybody was in trouble or got sick and had to lay off, the union would come around to the house and give them, say, forty, fifty, sixty dollars, or whatever was collected. This would hold them over to buy groceries until he got back to work. Then if he didn't get back in a certain length of time, they'd do it again. But now with the union they have a guaranteed wage. If you are off the job, the state pays you an approximate average of sixty-five percent of your regular income, and that's pay. That's a collection taken out of your regular income, and that's pay. That's a collection taken up from your coworkers and all workers in the state because they all pay a certain amount for fringe benefits like state insurance and unemployment.

ERM: In your view, has this been a good thing?

HMS: I think so. Wouldn't you think that that would have worked out better?

ERM: This is a form of Social Security.

HMS: Yes, it's a form of Social Security. It's the state unemployment insurance supposedly paid by the employer, but the money comes from profits on goods produced by the workers. You don't even have to be sick. If you are unemployed for some reason or other that isn't your fault, like if your job isn't working, you can go down and sign up for unemployment and draw about sixty or eighty percent of your previous salary, according to how long you had worked and how much you had paid. In a way you pay in, but your employer also pays in. It really doesn't come out of your check. Instead of giving you a raise at a certain time, he agreed to pay so much percentage to Unemployment. It was better for the worker. This is a wonderful thing, and I don't think it would ever have happened if the men hadn't been organized in some form or another, because it just isn't the nature of anybody, a worker or an employer, to just give somebody something for nothing, unless there's a reason. This benefits the employer also because he is assured of a crew at all

times. If a man gets hurt and he's in the hospital for six months, the employer calls the unemployment agency for someone to fill his place. Then they'll take a man off unemployment and put him on wages. It's a very good thing.

ERM: What other benefits has the union brought about, in your view?

HMS: It has brought a lot of benefits in our social life. Like gatherings and meetings and so forth. If you're a good union man, you'll go to a meeting at least once a month. You'll go down there and express your opinion. It might be something that has to do with a better way to make shingles, a better way to put shingles in a pack, a better way of doing anything around the factory, or even a better way to get together and enjoy weekends, like going on a little outing or fishing trip with some of the other members.

ERM: There's a lot of comradeship out of union membership, apparently.

HMS: I think so. It always was with me. We'd get acquainted with a lot of people. When the union members started to get a little prosperous, a lot of sawyers bought fur coats for their wives. Then the wives got together, and if they didn't have a fur coat, they brought pressure on their husbands. They said, "Mrs. so and so got a new fur coat, why don't I have one?" My wife never did that because she didn't like the feel of fur. In those days you could buy a pretty nice fur coat for four or five hundred dollars. They weren't three or four thousand dollars like they are now.

To bring this right down to facts, maybe we benefited monetarily and maybe we did not. We have more dollars, but this whole thing depends on how much you can buy for an hour's labor. If at one time you got twenty-five cents an hour, you could buy as much at that time for twenty-five cents as you can buy now for two dollars. You're just making two dollars instead of twenty-five cents, but you haven't increased your buying power one iota.

ERM: How would you compare the standards of living you had when you were a young man only recently entered into this work with the standard of living of the average shingle weaver now? Does he have a higher standard of living than you had back then?

HMS: Yes, he might have. A lot of gadgets that people have today weren't even thought about in those days, and you didn't miss anything that wasn't yet invented. My father never saw television; he didn't miss it and he was just as well-off for not having it. We spend seven hundred dollars for a color television; in the 1920s there wasn't any such thing.

ERM: You wouldn't need to pay much more than that for a car in those days.

HMS: In 1918 my father, myself, and my oldest brother bought a brand new 490 Chevrolet, and it cost us less than seven hundred dollars. They called it 490 because that's what they first sold it for, but by the time we had bought it, they had raised the price. It was a nice little car. I remember we lived on a farm over at Deep Lake at the time, and had eighty acres of farmland that we had rented with an option to buy. We were milking about ten or twelve head of cattle and selling milk to a little cookhouse at the Beaver Creek Lumber Company. These people were feeding the crew there and we were selling milk to them. My father went down one day and bought a motorcycle with a sidecar to deliver the milk in. We put a couple of cans of milk in the sidecar and strapped them in. By the time we got up there, most of the cream on top had turned to butter from bobbing up and down all the time. We had to do something else, so we took the motorcycle into town and made a down payment on this Chevrolet. Of course, then we had the back seat and could set the milk right in. There wasn't a large trunk compartment in the rear. They used to have a trunk on the back, a little old trunk with straps on it, but we could set two milk cans right between the seats and it rode real nice. We didn't have any paved roads; we had a car but there wasn't any road. Just ruts in the old wagon trails. Cars went into the same place most of the time so they cut ruts and you'd get in up to the axle.

ERM: Apparently, then, in those early days, you were shingle weavers, farmers, and lots of things, all at the same time.

HMS: That's what I say; everybody was competing with everybody else. At certain times in the year, like the fire season, the shingle mills couldn't run because there was too much danger. If they'd log, the friction from pulling the log would set a fire when the humidity got down to a certain point. Then we would all be out of work and we had to do something. We had to figure out a way to have enough coming in

so we could buy our bread and beans to go with our milk. We raised some potatoes and a few things like that. We were in sort of a pioneer state, we were pioneering the country and we didn't know what the country could do for us or what we could do for the country. You had a desire and a willingness and the muscle and so forth to do something big, but nothing happened to come along that was as big as your dreams.

ERM: What would you say about the character of the workers in the shingle weaving field? How did they differ from people who were in the lumbering end of things? Loggers and sometimes mill people were more transient in those days than they are today. Was that also true of shingle weavers?

HMS: Yes, they moved around. There was one old fellow who was a shingle packer, and he never worked over one day at a time in anyplace. He would go from mill to mill, he was sort of a traveling newspaper. There wasn't any newspaper in the community, and the only thing you got was by word of mouth. Well, this fellow would travel around the country and arrive in the evenings just before the mill closed down. Then somebody would invite him into the cookhouse, and he'd sit and eat dinner and stay overnight in the bunkhouse. He always carried his pack. In those days, he had a blanket and a suggan--that's a heavy quilt--and he'd wrap his blanket in it, strap it on his back, and go walking from place to place. He would get a free night's lodging, free supper, and a free breakfast and if somebody wanted to lay off, he'd work a day. But he would rather they didn't because they generally each gave him a quarter which would come to three or four dollars, and then he'd be all set for another three or four days on the road, with what he could bum.

ERM: They'd give him this because he was always full of news?

HMS: Yes. He knew every shingle weaver in the country, where he was working, how long he'd been there, and where he was going to go next. He also knew how long the mill was going to run before it would run out of timber and if it had been threatened by fire. I can't remember his name, but he was one of a type. There were several of that kind in different parts of the country. Each one seemed to have a certain area that they traveled through, and he was most important to your locality.

ERM: What did you call that kind of guy?

HMS: I don't think they had a name, like Johnny Inkslinger or anything. I don't think he really had a special name. We just expected him to come around every two or three months. In wintertime he wouldn't come much because snow was on the ground and it was hard going. He'd stay put someplace and maybe work a little in the wintertime, like in Oregon where weather wasn't so bad.

ERM: Who were eligible to be members of the Shingle Weavers Union? What jobs were covered by such a union?

HMS: A shingle weaver is a man who weaves them into the bunch; this is where they got the name. Packing in the bunch. In those days, they did weave them; they never had what they call straight courses or flat courses. One course would end and then another would start. Shingles were all different sizes. The way they packed them into the bunch was called shingle weaving. That's where they got their name, but they did away with that because these tips would overlap each other, and when you'd put the binder on they'd kind of crush. It didn't hurt too much because in those days a shingle had to be only five inches to the weather. These tips that cracked still had about three courses of good solid wood above them on the roof, so it didn't really hurt anything. But somebody got the idea that this was a terrible thing to do; against the rules, and you couldn't do it anymore.

Uncle Vern Whipple was the best shingle weaver in the country for years. He could start a bunch and have about five courses on one side, where he'd be working on about the eighteenth course on the other side, and then work them all in and come out even. Twenty-five courses all the way across.

ERM: Was he putting them in on one side with his left hand and on the other side with his right?

HMS: No. First he'd put a wide one in, then the next time he'd come to that course, he'd put one just a little narrower so he could fill those all up. He'd get the right width shingle. That's what you call shingle weaving. Then they went from that and included the sawyers and the packers. The first shingle weavers' union was nothing but sawyers and packers who were paid by the thousand of shingles produced in one day; no day laborers were allowed. The filer didn't belong. He was generally the boss, and the union people wouldn't take in anybody if they thought he was the boss. You had nothing to do with him because he was thought to be a fellow that was looking down your neck and

frowning on you because you were inferior to his way of life. He was above you because he got higher pay and he could hobnob with the owners. He was the supervisor and could deal for himself; he didn't need to be in the union. For about eight or nine years, just shingle packers and sawyers belonged to the union.

Then came the time when the union included deckmen, knee bolters, tallymen, and cleanup men and even the man that poked the logs up--people that needed to be protected the same as we did. They all had grievances. The shop foreman would always be a union member, and he had no authority to deal for the man who didn't belong to the union. If you would go to the office and try to get some benefits for somebody that was working for half-pay or something, like a cleanup man who would come in and work three or four hours a day and maybe they'd give him fifteen dollars a week, you couldn't go and say "This fellow is doing his job whether it takes three hours or eight hours; he's still doing a job that is necessary to running the mill, keeping it cleaned up, oiled, and one thing and another. We would like you to consider paying him a fair monthly wage so he can support his family." These things eventually worked out also for the migratory sort of people that would come in and work a few months for practically nothing just to get a little bit to move on, farmers that needed a little supplemental pay. It became an organization that protected all the workers all the year around.

ERM: How long did it take to reach that point?

HMS: It really hasn't reached it completely yet. The wage and hour law has helped a lot because it guarantees a man so much an hour, and the company can't pay less than that although union wages are generally way above that. It didn't really help you as a worker right on your job, but it helped to keep other people from coming in and trying to run you off a job. Take the minimum wage now which is two dollars an hour or two dollars and ten cents, there are thousands of people satisfied to work for that. That's all they need; they don't have any hopes or aspirations. Thousands of people live that way from day to day and there's too many of them on welfare. All the people that are able to work should work for at least a minimum wage and produce something. I remember one of the things that the union people used to talk about is that if we produced so much and made so many things, the market would be flooded and we couldn't work and couldn't buy anything.

Warehouses are full of everything, the way it is now. They are full of automobiles and I don't know what they are going to do about foreign cars. We are making more automobiles in the United States than we can sell today. What are we going to do about the trade we worked out on foreign cars? When foreigners have had a taste of our way of life, they are not going to give it up. They are going to demand more and more of what we have had for years and years at their expense.

I do think that the union has helped us. It might be like I've heard a lot of people say on television and in the news, that the unions have finally overstepped their demands. They are getting too strong for the benefit of labor or industry. They are going to have to start receding a little bit. There is going to have to be a balance because there is too much of an imbalance where things don't coordinate. It's something you can't put your hand on. You can't say they are making too much of one thing and not enough of another and that people are getting too much money and not spending it; people are earning too much money and they are saving it instead of putting it back into buying products like they should. I don't know how many billions of dollars it is, but it's a good many billions of dollars that the people are saving that they never had before. Bankers are always advertising "Why don't you put your money in this and put your money in that? so we can invest it." It's a good idea if they can invest it in something that will produce something that people need. This is the whole idea of capitalism.

I retired ten years ago in October 1964 when I was sixty-two and a half. I'd known a lot of fellows that had intended to wait until they were sixty-five, but about the time they were sixty-four they dropped over on the job. So I figured I'd retire when I was sixty-two and a half. I had no reason in the world. I felt good, but I just figured I'd do it so I did. I've never regretted that, but the only thing is, at that time ten years ago, your dollar was worth two dollars compared to the dollar today. Your retirement is based on what you earned before that time and what your savings were. Supposing you had twenty thousand dollars and your home was free and clear, you would be pretty well set. You could put that twenty thousand dollars in the bank with interest at six percent which would give you a pretty good income to add to your Social Security and you would have nothing to worry about. But it doesn't work

that way because the longer you go, the less your twenty thousand dollars buys, no matter how you invest.

We used to go to a little place, Lacey, twice a month. There's a retirement home there with a retired state patrolman and one couple we know is retired from ice cream manufacturing. A lot of different types of people had what they thought was a comfortable amount to live on, between four and five hundred dollars a month, but now they are feeling the pinch. It isn't enough money anymore. They are offering $4.50 for a silver dollar on the market today. There are ads printed in the paper every day, and people are investing in silver.

ERM: There is a growing lack of faith in money, isn't there?

HMS: There sure is, and also in the interchange of money between countries. It's coming to a time when there is nothing secure. Now the Canadian money is worth two percent more than the U.S. dollar.

I do think that the unions have brought about more good than they have harm and they've made things better for the people who were born in the right era. People that needed help and lived to receive it are getting more through Social Security and different things.

ERM: What did the Shingle Weavers Union accomplish in terms of better working conditions in the mills?

HMS: When I first started, they changed over from the ten-hour to the eight-hour day. This meant that in the days before I started they had to work ten hours for about four dollars a day, the average between sawyers and packers. Now the sawyers get about seventy dollars a day and the packers, fifty dollars. So it averages sixty dollars per day against four dollars a day, and now they are working only six hours.

ERM: What has the union accomplished in terms of greater safety in the factories?

HMS: The health hazard that I think bothered the old-time shingle weavers more than anything else was the shingle dust. This caused what they called cedar asthma. They didn't know until just the last few years that cedar asthma was not caused by dust.

Most of it was caused by the juices from the sap in the cedar which sprayed when the saw hit it. When the saw hit the sapwood, this sap would mix with the dust. If you breathed this sap, it would cause cedar asthma because it would get into your nostrils and down into your lungs. The first thing you knew, you had developed cedar asthma which is about the same thing as they now call emphysema.

ERM: How did they overcome the dust problem? How did the union deal with that problem?

HMS: The union couldn't do much about it. They just protested it, so the manufacturers finally took it on themselves to see what they could do about it because so many people complained about it. They put blowers in the mills. Even in that little mill in Golden, now you can rub your hand over the machine, and you won't get any more dust than you would in a cookhouse in the army. You won't breathe any dust. The minute the saw hits, it sucks just like a vacuum cleaner and vacuums it right out. This all goes in a bin, and they ship it out to make wood products.

ERM: They save it?

HMS: They saw that they could make something by doing it, which was the main reason they took an interest in it.

ERM: You mean they didn't do it for the health of their employees?

HMS: Not necessarily. They did it to get the griping off their backs and to get people satisfied. They knew they could produce more and also make a little bit out of it with very little expense. They had all this machinery potential, and they had the power to run it. All they had to do was to install it. All the big mills--it isn't only the shingle mills--the big lumber mills and even clothing and wool manufacturing places have a lot of lint and dust.

ERM: What about safety as far as the saws and the dangers to fingers were concerned? What did the unions do about that?

HMS: Just like they did about anything else, they protested. I had a friend named Jimmy Carroll. He had been a family friend for years. In fact, one time he was going with my oldest sister and we thought a lot of him. I was working at Aloha at that time, and he came there to saw on Monday morning. Evidently he'd been out over the weekend on a party and he was still woozy. He was sawing on the machine right next

to mine, so I could look over and watch him. All of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a red streak or something, and I looked over there toward him. His hand had followed the saw back. The shingle wasn't quite cutting off. They were running saws that were a little too small for the size of the block and the carriage, so you'd have to grab them and jerk off the block every time. It goes through twice, and then you jerk those two shingles off. He followed back a little too far and he cut off a finger. He was just woozy enough so that he didn't realize what he had done. He followed back the next two cuts and he cut off another, and then by the third time he cut the end off his thumb. Three times in a row. By this time I was over there. I just pushed the button, stopped his machine, and pulled the whistle for the foreman. He took Jimmy to the hospital. After that, I don't know what became of him. He never came back to work.

ERM: He couldn't function anymore without those three fingers, could he?

HMS: Well, he could have packed anyway. I used to know a packer that just had one hand. He had his left hand, but his right hand was cut off. He had a padding on his wrist. He'd pull the shingle down and then slide it around where it belonged in the bunch with the padded wrist. He had a gadget fixed on his arm with a handle and a hammer that fit tight, and he'd use that to pound in nails, because you had to put four nails in, two on each end of the band-stick to hold the bunch. He was a good shingle packer, and he worked that way for years. He had lost his hand right up to his wrist when he used to saw shingles.

ERM: Is it impossible to provide a guard in making shingles?

HMS: Yes, because it's got to be open. You face the flat side of your clipper saw, and a clipper board is held up with a spring. You push it down--two shingles or four shingles or whatever. Sometimes the shingles are twenty inches wide and you stop to cut off a knot, a worm hole, or something else, and you just work that over and keep picking these off. Then you throw them over and you open your fingers so they go in the right bin according to their grade. You just learn that. It's just a thing you learn. Some sawyers put on different guards according to the size of their arms and their fingers, and they fix it higher or lower to protect themselves.

Then you have a shingle bender. A bender comes around right in the back of your clipper saw springboard. There's a space that goes around in behind there. You can pull a shingle, and if it's no good, you can just tip it down and it goes into the waste. But otherwise, they come around and they come two shingles with two butts on the bottom and two on the top. You reach over there and if you are cutting the butt down here, you tip two of them over and then you pick them up. It doesn't take long because it's going about thirty-four clips a minute, taking off thirty-four wide shingles. You've got to grade them in your mind as they go. Your eyes grade it and your hands do the work. Two wide shingles will generally make about eight finished shingles.

ERM: Is there any enforced break time in operating a machine like that?

HMS: Do you mean, like a coffee break?

ERM: That's right.

HMS: No, there isn't one enforced, but this is because they work on machine-cut. They pay you by machine-cut, so you do not take any time off unless you absolutely need it. If you take ten minutes off and you lose a square of shingles; you lose quite a bit of money. Nowadays, if you are making four squares of shingles in an hour and making ten dollars, you are losing about ninety-five cents just for getting a drink or smoking a cigarette. No, there never was any break time because they never paid by the hour. If they had paid them by the hour, then they'd give them ten or twenty minutes off in the morning and afternoon.

ERM: You wouldn't get the production then?

HMS: You wouldn't get the production because the shingle weaver is after every square he can get. If he's conscientious enough, he'll cut himself out of about two to five dollars a day by making good shingles and cutting less than he would if he'd sluff off on the work. You will find someone who will sluff off and make a little more money, but he is taking a chance. He might not last long. Sooner or later they will catch up with him in the inspection.

ERM: When did industry-sponsored inspections start whereby all mills who were members had to meet certain specifications?

HMS: I think that started about 1912 or 1913. At that time there weren't any vertical grain shingles; it was Clears and Stars or something like that. There were just two grades of shingles, but they also had a cull shingle that they used for barns and sheds and things that they sold cheap. They had two grades of good shingles, one thick and one thin. It was about this time that the Red Cedar Shingle Bureau was organized.

ERM: There was a Red Cedar Shingle Association back then, but the Bureau didn't exist until much later.

HMS: Yes, that's what it was. That's when they organized the Red Cedar Shingle Association.

ERM: There was also a Shingle Branch of the West Coast Lumbermen's Association.

HMS: When that came into being, they started an inspection system. They sent a man around once a week to all the mills that belonged. It kept him busy, and he worked every day. When he dropped in, he'd just take a bunch of shingles from each machine and set it off to one side and that's the one he'd open up. Of course, some fellows figured that they would watch him and see which bunch he took. They'd pack a nice bunch and set it there and always get a good inspection, but once in awhile he'd fool them and take the fourth bunch, etcetera. Human nature being what it is, they were always trying to put something over on the inspector.

At one time the Case Shingle Company had three big mills in Raymond. Mr. Case got so he was handling a lot of shingles from other mills and was shipping a lot of orders mostly to California and the East Coast. He wanted to control the shingle market. He owned Case Shingle Company and he was trying to control the shingle market. That was about 1911.

When they got this association established and got their own inspection, their shingles were just as good as Case's, so he had nothing better to offer than they had. They had the same thing; they had the integrity and honesty of the workers to make a good shingle.

ERM: What has been the history of relationships between the unions here and the unions in Canada? Are they now one and the same union?

HMS: They are different. They can't hire anybody from the United States. My son told me I could have gone up there and sawed shingles for twenty-four thousand dollars a year, but they can't hire me because I'm in the United States and I'm a six-hour man and they are eight-hour men. They have a different working schedule. To go up there, I would have to sign up to work two years and take out temporary papers. He couldn't hire me anyway because I'm a relative, and they won't let them hire relatives.

ERM: Has it always been that way or only recently have they done that? Didn't there used to be traffic back and forth across the line? Shingle weavers that worked down here would go to Canada and they would come down from Canada and work here?

HMS: I don't think they ever did that after the Chinese came in to work.

ERM: I read that in 1915 the British Columbia operators were losing a lot of their men to military service. Canada got involved in World War I long before the United States, so they started offering special inducements to workers in the industry to come across the line and work over there. Do you recall that?*

HMS: It seems to me I did hear something like that. You see, I started back in Moclips in 1918 and I had packed a little bit at Tenino in 1916, but it seems like I did hear something about that. I think this was prevalent just during the war period. When their soldiers came back, it was the same as it was here; they had plenty of men.

ERM: Have there always been more people wanting to work in the industry than there were jobs? Do you ever remember a time when there was a real labor shortage?

HMS: Yes, I've known men who could go almost anyplace and get a job. There weren't enough shingle weavers to go around.

ERM: Were these mainly wartimes?

HMS: Mostly during wartime or scare times, but not in depression times. In depression and recession times, there were always more laborers than there were

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*"Shingle Makers Strike in the Northwest," Lumber World Review 30, no. 11 (June 10, 1916):47.

opportunities. I don't think this affected either the union workers or the manufacturers to any extent one way or the other. I don't think it ever helped or hindered either one from going along in their regular vein of operation.

ERM: How does a young man get into the union?

HMS: It is hard to get in. I was trying to get a nephew of mine in when I was working at Aloha. Delbert Roberts is his name, and he lives right here in town in a new addition. At that time he was just out of high school, and he was having an awful time getting placed anywhere because he had to have a union card in order to get a job and he had to have a job to get a union card. That was the regulation.

I was batching down at Aloha and sawing there, and I couldn't get him into the shingle mill. I tried to teach him enough in about three days so he could re-pack out in the shed, but he had never worked. He was just out of high school and he didn't know any more about working than he would about swimming the English Channel. I got Paul Brinn to let him go to work. I was working six hours a day so I figured I would have time to go out and help him a little to get him started since he was working a different shift than I was. I guess it was very exasperating work for him as well as it was for the company, because he didn't know one grade of shingles from another. He never did get along, so Paul Brinn just came and asked me, "Stilson, where did this fellow ever pack shingles?" I said, "He never packed shingles. He's eighteen years old and he just graduated from high school. I told you that in the first place." He said, "Do you suppose he could pick wood?" They had a conveyor then and they sold cedar wood to all the people around. They'd haul it in truckloads. I said, "Sure, he'll do anything. It doesn't make any difference what it is." He said, "We are going to need a wood-picker Monday morning." So I said, "I'll tell him." That was Friday. On Monday morning he went and picked wood. But he didn't like that and quit after a few days. You know when they get out of high school, they think they are pretty good and they ought to have a nice clean job and make a lot of money, but no such thing was available. One thing he could do was drive a car. He had driven a pickup a lot, so I asked him if he could drive a gravel truck if they'd give him a chance at it. He said he'd try that and he did. I talked to the woods foreman, Frank Milward and Frank gave him a chance, and he made it. He pulled a few boners like unloading a load of gravel in a heap instead of flat and smooth like they do on a road.

One day he said when he came in that he was just ready to quit. Frank Milward took off his hat, threw it down on the road, jumped on it, and bawled him out. He'd never had a bawling out before in his life. I told him the next time Frank does that, he should just go over and jump on Milward's hat and see what he says. So he did. Old Frank took his hat off and threw it down, and my nephew went over and jumped on it himself. Frank looked at him in a funny way and said, "My God, Kid, I guess you're all right." And he helped him from then on. He gave him a little advice and Delbert worked for him for a long time. He went from gravel truck to log truck, and he worked there a long time. It was pretty hard to break into anything then.

ERM: How did one get to be an apprentice in the Shingle Weavers Union? Was there such a thing as apprentices?

HMS: You learned just about the way I did. I'd go over after school and help my dad catch up the shingles that were in the bin. That's where I learned to pack.

ERM: You weren't getting paid for that.

HMS: I didn't get paid for it, I just got my room and board as always. I'd have got that anyway.

ERM: You just had to learn how to do it before you could get a job?

HMS: Yes, you had to know how and by learning that when I was about eleven or twelve years old, I was able to take a job by Tenino when we lived at the Deep Lake place where we sold milk. I got a chance to work at that little shingle mill that was working ten hours and I worked only eight hours. I'd learned enough about it so that I could pack four thousand an hour and that's what they were cutting up there. I did all right. I had to walk back and forth to work; it was about four miles. I finally traded a little calf that I was raising for veal to the partner in the mill for a bicycle. I had to lead the calf over there four miles because I didn't have anything to haul him in. I didn't know anything about a bicycle, but now that I had one I learned to ride it. There were quite a few hills and I had a hard time because this bicycle never had a coaster brake on it. You braked it by pushing backward on the pedal. Going downhill, sometimes my foot would slip off and away I'd go. I just had to let go, look for a good place to land, and jump off. After several days, I finally learned how to ride it. From then on, I was all set.

I remember when the Shingle Weavers Union people and a lot of farmers made a bicycle trail from Little Rock to Olympia. They donated all the work, and it took a lot of sweat and work to make it. They made it alongside the wagon road. You couldn't ride on the wagon roads because you'd scare the horse. They made eight miles of bicycle road to go into Olympia and back. It wasn't to go to work on, although there were two or three mills on the way where you could use it for that. It was mostly just for people who wanted to get into Olympia without having to walk.

ERM: And they went by bicycle mainly?

HMS: They weren't called bicycles; they called them wheels. Everybody had a wheel, that was a craze.

ERM: I suppose this bicycle track was wide enough so it permitted traffic coming and going to pass.

HMS: You probably wouldn't meet over a couple of people going in. Most of these fellows who went to Olympia would go five or six together, one behind the other, and when they came back it was the same thing. You would hardly ever meet anybody going the other way. There wasn't any big traffic in those days. The same thing was true on the roads, you could drive your car from Deep Lake into Olympia and hardly ever get out of the ruts. There were no paved roads. The ruts in the roads were from four to six to eight inches deep. The only paved road they had was four miles of paved road about eight or nine feet wide from the Lewis County Line into Centralia, and that was on just one side of the road. That's all the pavement there was between Olympia and Centralia in 1918, and they never got paved road in there until quite awhile after 1920. They always started out paving it on one side, and you'd have to turn off and wait for a car to go by. You always stayed on the right side. When driving into Centralia the paved strip was on the right side and the left half was gravel.

ERM: What did shingle weavers do for entertainment in their leisure time?

HMS: They didn't have much leisure time. Maybe once a month when they had a payday, they would go to town, and the young guys would go around to the saloons and get a drink or a girl, just like they do now. That's about all there was to it. Even in those days, the people weren't so religious. I mean, they didn't go to church much. We lived out in the country where there wasn't any church. Nobody could afford to pay

a preacher, and he had to live too, so they were mostly in towns. When we lived in Raymond, I was baptized in the Baptist church and I went to Sunday school. I was nine years old at that time and I don't believe that anybody ought to be baptized until he or she is old enough to form an opinion between right or wrong. It's all right to go to Sunday school, but actually being baptized into a certain church is different. Last Sunday we went down to the Christian Church and they baptized a little girl about seven years old. They ducked her under. I don't think she realized what went on except she was getting wet. The only thing she seemed to have on her mind was trying to keep her hair dry. This country was built on the right of free speech and choice of religion, but what choice does a child at birth have?

ERM: Is the church more or less important to your community and to you now than it was when you were a kid?

HMS: I don't know. Everybody has a different opinion at a different age. When I was going to Sunday school in those early days, I never had any money to spend. You never had even a nickel. When I got old enough, I sold the Saturday Evening Post magazine and everything I could think of in order to make a few nickels. My mother would always give us a dime to put in the collection in Sunday school. This was one way we figured we could have a little money. We'd put in a nickel and we'd have a nickel. If she only gave you a nickel, you put in a couple of pennies. Among the bunch of kids, we could make change.

ERM: In other words, you were going fifty-fifty with the Lord.

HMS: Yes, that's about what it amounted to. My father, besides sawing shingles and being the president of the union, organized a baseball team. He took the team every Sunday and played baseball. It was called the Raymond Shingle Weavers Baseball Team. They won most of the games. They had a good bunch of guys. Especially Vern Whipple, my uncle, who played baseball all his life and was a real good player. He could steal a base better than a lot of these fellows that get honored for it.

ERM: Your father certainly kept busy, didn't he?

HMS: Oh, yes. He was doing something all the time. He couldn't work too hard after he had his accident.

He was walking behind the Flynn machine to put the block in. The block table was behind the carriage, and he walked around there and grabbed the block and put it in. One time he went to put the block in and this hole where they kicked the bad blocks out when there is just a little bit left was wide open, and somehow his foot hit the hole and he went down there. He had a big block in his arm and tore a muscle loose in his heart. From that time on, his heart only beat on one side. It would beat on one side and it'd just squish back in. A heart valve was ruptured, so it only pumped from half the heart. The other side didn't have any resistance to the blood. Nowadays they could put a valve in the heart but in those days they couldn't. They just told him he would have to be careful and not exert himself too much. That was when he was about twenty-six, and he lived until he was fifty-nine, which I imagine was good for a man in that condition.

ERM: Do you think that's what turned him in the direction of union organizing?

HMS: Yes, and after awhile he found out there wasn't any way to make a living just by organizing the Shingle Weavers Union. They got that all organized and there was nothing else to do. Then he got in touch with Samuel Gompers and started to organize for the American Federation of Labor in different unions. We have an order signed by Samuel Gompers which names Fred A. Stilson as an official organizer for the AFL. He even helped to organize the waitresses. In 1912 and 1913 he organized the first union on Grays Harbor, and that was a hard job because they didn't understand unions. Then he went up to Marysville, above Seattle, and organized the miners. He ran into an awful lot of opposition. He organized for quite awhile, but this entailed being away from home much of the time for three years. Mother got tired of that, so she told him that either he got back into the mills or else; that was it. That's when he went to Moclips, the last of 1913.

ERM: How well did he know Samuel Gompers?

HMS: Just through the union. He'd met him once in Seattle at that convention in 1910. I don't know if they corresponded. My sister has two trunks of letters and pictures where I might find something.

I know Dad had a lot of pictures down at Moclips. The shingle weavers were mostly single men at that time down in that area. I think my father and two

fellows by the names of Charlie Woods and Dale Northrup were the only three married men that lived around there. The single men built a shack they called the shag board and this is where all these shingle weavers stayed. They just sort of batched. There wasn't any housekeeper, they just stayed there. Sometimes they'd eat a meal or two over at the hotel. My father took a lot of pictures. He had a camera and there are hundreds of postcard size pictures. I know he has one of this fellow named Red Day--you may have heard of him--the most notorious shingle weaver in the states of Washington and Oregon.

ERM: Notorious for what reason?

HMS: He was the best shingle weaver. He'd start a strike or he'd do anything. He was just one of these fellows who was always in the limelight.

ERM: Did you know him?

HMS: Yes, I've seen him lots of times. He was working there at Paul Smith's mill. Paul had a habit of going under in the conveyor and picking out spaults. If they were too big, he'd take them back for resawing. If it had two or three more shingles in it, he'd gather up an armful and he'd bring them up to the sawyer and put them on the swamp table and tell them to put them back into the machine and saw them up. They were wasting timber when they could kick big pieces out. They could put in a block and start right in on a wide one and make more shingles. Old Red was watching for him one day, and he had to take a leak. When he saw Paul down there, he just let go all over him. He'd do anything like that.

ERM: What did Paul do?

HMS: He got out of there and he didn't come back up for quite awhile.

My father took a picture of Red Day and Jack Ackels, another sawyer. A bunch of them stayed in the shag board. One Sunday my father went by there, and they were sitting out in front. Jack Ackels had cooked dinner so he had a big apron on. My dad lined them up and took their picture. Underneath it he wrote, "Mr. and Mrs. Ackels-Day."

ERM: Tell some stories about the days when you were involved in the shingle industry. They add a little color.

HMS: I can tell you a little story, but it wouldn't be good to put in print.

ERM: Oh, that's all right.

HMS: This is a thing that actually happened in Little Rock. A shingle mill owner had a brother that was bright enough, but he sort of lisped. He couldn't talk plainly. They used to have dances and parties at houses, and they had this dance at a worker's home. This guy who was a little off wanted to dance with the sister of the millowner. So he asked him if it would be all right. He said, "Sure, you go and ask her." He went over and asked, "May I have thith danth?" And she said, "What?" "May I have thith danth?" she said. "I don't understand you, what did you say?" And he said, "You kith my ath." She was just putting him on, so she went and told her brother. He called him over and said, "You know you insulted my sister. She's feeling pretty bad about it. You're going to have to apologize to her." "All right," he said, "I'll do that." So he went over and said, "You don't have to kith my ath. I made different arrangements with your brother." This was the story that came down.

ERM: Were there any legendary figures among shingle weavers, like a Paul Bunyan type?

HMS: No, but we heard a lot about Paul Bunyan. Of course, that was a logger's thing. Paul Bunyan was crossing over the mountains there in the upper peninsula with his blue ox and his plow and they cut across country to plow out a road to get the logs down off the mountain. He got on the side close to the bay and he got the blue ox hooked onto the plow and he started up, giving him a whop with his quirt. Babe took off, and he jerked the plow right out of Paul's hand, and he went down and gouged a place for several miles and they called it Hood Canal. You've probably heard that one before.

ERM: Were there any heroes in your industry or your craft?

HMS: There were some sawyers that had made records of sawing more shingles than anybody else as far as the craft was concerned. There were quite a few of those fellows, and it seemed like each community had a sawyer that they thought was the best, like this Sang Pore that I worked under over at Onalaska. He sawed at Trap Creek, which is down between Chehalis and Raymond on that Milwaukee tract. They used to tell big stories about how much they cut. They would cut from seventy to eighty thousand shingles in eight hours, but when they got up to Onalaska, they couldn't

do anything like that. Of course, they always told about how good the wood was, but to me, wood is wood. When I was sawing shingles, I cut about forty-two or forty-three thousand for eight hours work. That would be around fifty square. But when I started working six hours, they'd keep giving you worse timber and put the good timber into lumber so naturally it kept cutting your production down and you run down anywhere from thirty to thirty-seven or sometimes thirty-eight would be about the high. But you wouldn't have gotten much more than that in eight hours with that same kind of timber.

ERM: What kind of timber are they working with now?

HMS: It's poor all the time because there is a big demand for this lap-siding, cedar siding, in lumber. They put all the good wood into that. They put the first three logs from the butt into lumber, then you get up to where the knots start. You have to dodge around those knots or cut right across the heart of the wood where you don't get very many knots. They want everything vertical, so you knock a chunk off with a knot in it and then you saw until you come to another knot, then you pull the block out and go again. You are working sort of against yourself. We used to have good wood. We would put the block in and we'd just tip them over and clip them on both sides; once in awhile we'd clip them into about three pieces to make them fit when packing. But you don't get that kind of timber here anymore. Up in Canada they come nearer to it. They cut up the whole log because they just haul their cedar to the shingle mill and the rest of it is either fir or hemlock or some mountain pine and they make most of that into plywood. I never saw them cut such small cores, but down in this country they cut the core and they aren't over three and a quarter inch on center. They'll even make lumber out of those. They run them over in the lumber mill or a two-by-four mill and they buy those cores. They can't make a two-by-four out of them because they are only three and a half inches. So they make some sort of squared-up thing and use them inside, like studs, for the inner walls.

I remember a story that they used to tell about the loggers. They would work out in the woods all week, maybe two weeks, they'd stay out there and they were always telling about what a wonderful woman they met the last time they were in town. Then they would go to town and spend a little money and get drunk, and then the women would say, "You loggers! When

you're out in the woods, you are talking about women, but when you come in here, you're always talking about logging." That's the way it was.

ERM: Were there any words that were coined by the shingle weavers as there were by loggers?

HMS: I don't think that there were many because of the conditions. Loggers worked together as a group and they coined words, but shingle weavers worked in a noisy mill and they couldn't talk to each other. You couldn't hear yourself above the noise of the operation.

ERM: Also you had to concentrate all the time on what you were doing.

HMS: Yes, so I don't remember even one word that was coined by the shingle weavers. I know that shingle weavers kind of felt themselves a little apart from the common laborer or a logger. Or some of the loggers, the head sawyers, and the filers felt they were a little better even than the shingle weavers. I have an uncle, Glen Whipple, my mother's youngest brother who is now living in a rest home. He was the best wood's filer in the country. He just knew how to graduate the length of the rakers on the saw, so that when you pulled the saw back, this one let go and the next one would take ahold. He could bring out shavings that would reach all around the hatband inside the brim. It was really something. I have quite a few of those old saws and things. I bought a cabin from a fellow up at Lake Quinault when I was carrying mail. The Post Office Department passed a regulation that you had to wait with the mail until five o'clock at the far end to give people time to mail and when I went up there I was generally through work at one o'clock and I had to wait until five o'clock. Since there was nothing to do, I bought this cabin and with it I got a whole lot of tools. The fellow that owned it was a saw filer and he'd been filing saws for little gypo outfits around the country. I bought all of his tools with the house, anvil, forge, and all kinds of filing tools, saws, felling saws, and all that stuff. I still have a bunch of them out in the woodshed; I nailed them up on the wall. I figured someday somebody might want one for a memento of old times.

ERM: Do you happen to have a froe or a mallet?

HMS: I have something out there that was used for a froe, but it's different, it's something like a broadaxe. A fellow that used to live over here that came from Sweden in 1923 brought it with him. You could split shakes maybe eight or ten inches wide with it, but if you had a wide block, you couldn't split it with this thing. I used to have a froe and a wooden mallet also. They used wooden mallets so it wouldn't hurt the froe. The mallets would wear out about a couple of times a year and you'd make a new one. They were made of real hardwood, maple or oak that would last as long as possible.

ERM: Did you have any contacts with the Simpson Timber Company at Shelton? Did you know them?

HMS: Not too much. They were strictly loggers, and I wasn't logging.

ERM: They got into the lumber business too. They probably have a shingle mill here and there, as well.

HMS: They may have. I don't know who owned the Saginaw Shingle Company. I think Mark Reed had something to do with it.

ERM: Mark Reed was Simpson.

HMS: I think he also had something to do with Saginaw. That's probably where they branched into the shingle business.

ERM: Did you have any contacts with Mark Reed?

HMS: He was at McCleary. He started a box factory about 1916, and father, my oldest brother Clement, and I went down to hire out. I wasn't quite old enough to work anyplace like that, then. We got as far as Malone, that's only a little way from McCleary on the road to Grays Harbor from Centralia, and that's where the old mill by the dam was, the Malone Shingle Company. We stopped there and my father and Clem both got jobs in the shingle mill. We never went on to the McCleary mill; otherwise we would have wound up in a box factory where they were making doors, mill sash, and all kinds of things.

ERM: At that time that door factory was not owned by Mark Reed. It was owned by the McCleary Company. Old man McCleary owned the whole town. The Simpson Timber Company bought them out later.

HMS: Well, I didn't meet any of them. We stopped at Malone and they both got jobs on Saturday, and had to be to work the next Monday, so they took me back home because there wasn't anything for me to do. I went back home and took care of sawing the wood for winter and one thing and another.

Mrs. Stilson: His father used to tell him when he'd go by, "There's a dam there by the millsite, but there's no mill there by a damn sight." So when we'd take our children by, he'd tell them that and when our son Hal used to take his children by, he'd tell that story too. Funny how things are handed down like that. I don't think even the millsite is there anymore.

HMS: We used to sing when the kids were little. I couldn't sing them any lullaby but I used to sing a bunch of songs that my uncles taught me when I was eight or nine years old. They got more fun out of that than they did when she'd sing them pretty little lullabies. They couldn't go to sleep when I was singing to them.

Mrs. Stilson: I feel sorry for children that aren't sung to or told stories. We always had to tell them a story. Hal was telling them his favorite story one day which was "Sleeping Beauty," and I could hardly bear the sound of it.

ERM: That's what kids like, stories or poems or songs that you repeat over and over again.

HMS: Yes. Children like something steady, something they can hold onto. I feel sorry that our son's children are moved from one place to another so quickly. Since we got the tape recorder, our children have been having their dad sing a little song of Uncle Vern's and playing old lullabies on the guitar that are almost forgotten. We got them started again so they can hand them down. My granddaughter wanted to know if I remembered one her mother and I used to sing to her, and we got that on tape.

ERM: They appreciate those things. That's good. That's a part of the culture, you know. It gets lost in time when it isn't handed down that way. I have enjoyed this day very much and I hope you have too.

HMS: It's been something new in my life.

Mrs. Stilson: I want to know if you folks are going to eat that pie that I made.

ERM: You bet we are. We'll turn off this machine now. Thank you both very much.

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