Idaho Panhandle Oral History Project
Interview with Henry Janusch
October 18, 1979
324 15th, Coeur d'Alene
Interviewed by David Barton
Questionnaire Information

HJ = Henry Janusch
DB = David Barton

Tape 2; Side 1

HJ: And they'd skid 'em into....depending on the lay o' the ground, they'd skid 'em into a chute, and 'course some of 'em would skid 'em right down to the flume, and then they'd...you had your men workin' there with peaveys and roll 'em in.
DB: What is a tong?
HJ: A tong?
DB: What does it look like?
HJ: Oh, it's...I could give you a...fast picture of one.
HJ: She's one 'o them that's out at the...
DB: The museum?
HJ: The museum.
DB: And then...would they hook the tong around the log?
HJ: Yeah, just against the end, and the tong would grab hold of 'em.
DB: OK.
HJ: And then the...then they'd...would put 'em in these chutes. Well, when they got 'em in these wood chutes, then...
DB: What is a chute?
HJ: Well, it'd be...they built frame work all the way down the crick (creek) bed, an' they they, where there isn't water enough and then they'd put logs in...it's like two logs down, and then they'd put logs in...it's like two logs down, and then here the logs would be flat on the inside. And make a V, well, it wouldn't be a prefect V; it'd be a 30 degree V.
DB: Um hum. And how would they get the logs from the woods to the chute?
HJ: They horse skid 'em.
DB: How did they do that?
HJ: Well, the...they'd go up the hill with the team, and hook on to a log and bring it down.
DB: OK, where would they...would they hook on to the tong...on the log?
HJ: Yeah. Yeah. Mostly.
DB: I see. And then drag it down to the chute.
HJ: And they didn't go right straight down. They'd pick the hanger and then sometimes they'd have to...put a log the

side o' this between stumps so that the log wouln't get away on 'im and roll down the hill.

DB: Um hum. Um hum. Where did the log go after it went down the chute?

HJ: Well, it skidded usually, down the chute, unless it was steep enough, and they they'd turn 'em loose.

DB: Uh huh.

HJ: And they they'd go down to a...a landing there, and they'd come up to stop there, and then they'd roll 'em into a flume. Sometimes they had a pond above the flume. Just like Winton Lumber Company. ~~They had I don't~~ know how many dams they had up there at the Little North Fork River. And they would dump...let the logs go right into the pond, and then they, once in a while, then they'd sluice 'em out...(mumbling).

DB: A flume is just another name for a dam?

HJ: What?

DB: Is a flume a dam?

HJ: No. A flume is a high-sided trough where the water runs in and they jump the logs in there 'n convey 'em that way on more or less level ground.

DB: Did they have a name for the dams?

HJ: No. Well, yes, they did in a way; now when you start up from the mouth of the main Coeur d'Alene River, the first one was Breakwater then. And the next one was, uh, Leiburg Dam. And then the next up on the river was Bootjack Dam, and the next one was Honeysuckle. And then they had one up in...the Devil's Hole. And then we had two more above that on the North Fork.

DB: Um hum.

HJ: Part of the Bootjack Dam is still there.

DB: Um hum. Did they ever call the dams "booms"? (Pause) Did you ever hear the term, "boom" for a dam?

HJ: No. No, I don't think I have.

DB: OK. So they did the logging and the skidding through the Summer months?

HJ: Always in the Summer and the late Fall.

DB: When would they shut down the operation?

HJ: Oh, it's, I suppose as soon as they got too much snow.

DB: Uh huh.

HJ: Because they had to cut the stumps to a certain height and they wouldn't...they didn't shovel out them days.

DB: When did they start the milling operation?

HJ: They made, er...?

DB: Yeah, what time 'o year did they start doin' the milling?

HJ: In the mills?

DB: Um hum.

HJ: Oh, it's usually about the first of April. Sometimes they...

DB: When they started the logs, then they'd start the milling immediately?

HJ: Yeah. Oh, they'd try to bank up enough logs all, uh, summer long to keep the mill a goin' for about...9 months, 10.

DB: Uh huh. So, uh, you were steadily employed for 10 months out of the year, I take it? (pause) When you worked in the mill?

HJ: Yeah, I've worked continually. I've worked to 12 month a year.

DB: Uh huh. What was your title? Did you have a...?

HJ: I started in for about 12-14 years millwright.

DB: Um hum.

HJ: I took care of the machinery, and...well, orginally you had to be a good belt man, too, to be a good millwright.

DB: What...what kinds of things would you have to do to the machinery?

HJ: Well, conveyor chain would be totally repaired. Have to keep them agoin'.

DB: Um hum.

HJ: And if...you burned out any bearings, when there were babit bearings, then you had to rebabit.

DB: Would you sharpen the saws, too?

HJ: No, that was the filer's job.

DB: OK, how many people worked in the mill?

HJ: In the sawmill?

DB: In the sawmill.

HJ: In the sawmill probably orginally I think they had about 20 men. And they cut it down now 'till there's only about 12.

DB: I see. What were the different jobs the people had in the sawmill? The different names for their jobs.

HJ: Well, you started in with the pawn man, he fed the log hauler. And brought the logs up in the mill. And, uh, then the next year was...a scaler, and then the sawyers, and then setter, dogger, tail sawyers. And then the next man was edgerman. Maybe he had a helper; maybe he didn't. And then the edging pickers and the trimmerman, and then graders, and then it...was out of the sawmill.

DB: Uh huh. Could you tell me just a little bit of what each one of those men did?

HJ: Well...pawn man, he put the logs on the log haul, and the scaler, he scaled 'em and put 'em on the log deck. And the sawyers would take 'em from there, and put 'em on the rig, and the setters would see it...er, doggers would see that they were held on the rig.

DB: Now did the setter or the dogger do that?

HJ: Both of 'em.

DB: Both of 'em. OK.

HJ: And then the sawyer would cut 'em up.

DB: When you say that, uh, that they put 'em on the deck or they put 'em on the rig, did they have special equipment to move 'em around?

HJ: They had steam cylinders.
DB: Steam what?
HJ: Steam cylinders with kicker arms on 'em...on the deck, and there was two cylinders on the, what we call a nigger, or a log turner. And one was larger than the other one. And the sawyer had just one lever to control both levers...er both of those cylinders. And with a sweep from his lever, he could...bring the nigger out, turn the log(s) and stop it against the knees so the doggers could get hold of it. I've seen sawyers that were so good that nigger they'd put, uh, two 12-inch logs on the rig at one time; and turn both o' them with one turn.
DB: I see. Um, after the sawyer, who did that?
HJ: Then it was the tail sawyer and he kinda like took care of the slabs from the boards. He let the slabs go down through because the slasher...an' then...
DB: What did the slasher do?
HJ: Slasher cut 'em into 4-foot lenghts, and the reason is they made lathes out of some of the better grade stuff.
DB: They made what?
HJ: Lathes.
DB: Oh, lathe. Who is after the slasher?
HJ: Uh, you mean after the slasher?
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: Well, you had the edgerman before the slasher.
DB: OK. So there'd be a tail sawyer and then an edgerman?
HJ: Yeah.
DB: OK. What did the edgerman do?
HJ: The edgerman, he'd edged the boards that needed edgin' or ripping whichever they were doing.
DB: OK. OK, and then the slasher came?
HJ: Yeah.
DB: And who came after him?
HJ: Well, then the...the next man down the rig...or down the line was the trimmerman. One was a saw puller and the other one was a spaller. He spalled it all; and the saw puller, he could pull any...any saw from 4 foot up to 20.
DB: OK, when you say he pulled the saw, what did he do?
HJ: He had a lever there, and he just, uh, pulled this old time saws up, just pull 'em up. Now they just hit a button and then the saw drops.
DB: Um hum. OK, what happened after the trimmerman?
HJ: Well, then they run out to the chain, and they had two graders working there, grading the lumber.
DB: I see. And then after the grader?
HJ: After that, then there was a green chain for a...for 'em to pull the lumber off o' that and put it on buggies.
DB: I see.
HJ: Or trucks, little railroad trucks.
DB: OK, would this operation be in a line? A straight line?

HJ: It'd be a continuous flow.
DB: Continuous flow. I see. How long would it take a log out here at Potlatch to get from one end to the other?
HJ: Oh, maybe two minutes.
DB: Two minutes. Is see. And that's...
HJ: Depends on the size o' the log.
DB: How about the bigger ones? How long would it take?
HJ: The bigger ones would take a little longer because it took longer to cut 'em up.
DB: I see.
HJ: But, uh, Potlatch originally, the original mill would cut, uh, about 85,000 logs scale in eight hours.
DB: When you say log scale, what does that mean?
HJ: Well, the...log scale is on the decimal C rule and the decimal C rule gives you a pretty close idea of what you're gonna have without waste.
DB: I see. I see. You said after the scaler, there was a sawyer who worked on the rig. And then there was a setter and a dogger and another sawyer. What's the difference between the first sawyer and the second sawyer?
HJ: Tail sawyer, all he done was sort out the board from the slabs, and to see that they went down the line.
DB: I see. Where would the waste boards go--the waste slabs?
HJ: The waste? Originally, they'd run right out to the burner unless they's cuttin' firewood.
DB: Um hum.
HJ: Then, they had a man fix firewood while they picked out the best clear stuff for edgin', er...for lathe.
DB: Um hum.
HJ: Now it always goes into a hog and then ground up; or into a chipper, and ground it up for chips.
DB: Um hum. OK, what were the best jobs to have? Which were the best jobs in the mill?
HJ: Well, the best payin' job was a filer. And the next best payin' job was a sawyer. And then setter, and then edgerman, and then trimmerman. See, it's however you got only 5 cents above common.
DB: When you say common, what does that mean?
HJ: Common labor.
DB: And everybody else besides those people you just named were common laborers?
HJ: Yeah, they were all above common labor.
DB: I see. Um, how much would a filer make back in the early days, in the '20's when you were working?
HJ: I don't actually know for sure.
DB: Would it be more than ten dollars a week or...
HJ: Oh, 10...I imagine $10 a day. Maybe 12.
DB: $12 a day. Would that be a day or a week?
HJ: A day.
DB: A day. OK. And then it went down from there?

HJ: Yeah.
DB: Were people paid by the hour or were they...
HJ: They were paid by the hour.
DB: I see. Which jobs were considered the most important?
HJ: Well, it's...the sawyer, he was the producer. That was the most important job. And actually he was the driver for the rest of the crew.
DB: When you say driver, what do you mean by that?
HJ: You know, instead o' cuttin' ten logs, you maybe could cut 15. If you cut 15, that meant the rest of the crew had to take care of it, too.
DB: Um hum. Were there, uh, did everyone have a lot of respect for the sawyer?
HJ: Oh yeah, more or less. Some sawyers were hard guys to deal with...ornery devils.
DB: Uh, did most people consider the sawyer's job the most important?
HJ: Well, actually, the sawyer's job is very important, but I think right today, the most important job is the filer. He's gotta make the soil stand up so the sawyer can produce.
DB: Um hum. I see. Back to the actual woods. The trees. What sort of things were nuisances to timber? What kind of diseases or, you know, problems were there with timber?
HJ: Disease?
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: Well, they used to have what they called, uh, whitepine beetle here.
DB: Beetle?
HJ: And, uh, they claimed they killed the trees; and then they also claimed the blister rust. And blister rust was caused by what they call black kurnts or whatever, ribes.
DB: Um hum. Did, uh, were you here when the blister rust came in?
HJ: Yeah.
DB: Can you remember people talkin' about when it first hit?
HJ: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I suppose it'd been here for years before, but they'd just discovered that it's out, that actually they were killin' trees.
DB: Um hum.
HJ: In my own mind right now I don't think the bugs are killin' the trees like whitepine or did then. I think it is what they have now--root rot.
DB: Hum. What causes that? Is that a kind of a fungus?
HJ: Well, yeah. I suppose it is; a fungus or old age.
DB: Uh huh. Could be.
HJ: Have you ever been out to the woods here?
DB: Uh, couple of nights ago, I did.
HJ: Do you live around here?
DB: No, I live in Indiana.
HJ: Oh.

DB: We have a lot of forests out there, too.
HJ: Well, we have...here we have what they called an experimental forest. Down here next to Coeur d'Alene River.
DB: Um hum.
HJ: And you have maybe seen what that looked like?
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: You know, I can't figure out the Forestry Department that'll let them trees keep standin' there year after year, and more dyin' and more dyin'. Why don't they clean the whole deal off and let somethin' new start there?
DB: Hum.
HJ: Yeah. But they's always one area down there with helicopters on the river, and they took all the dead ones out there.
DB: Um hum. Um hum.
HJ: The first year that they died, they were still good fer sawin' they get a blue stain around, but that's about all--around the edge, sap wood.
DB: Have logging operations changed much since you've been here? Have they really increased over the last 40 or 50 years, or have they gone down?
HJ: Well, I think, uh, I think there what I call a drag line deal is about as good a logging as any. Oh, originally on the flatter country, they used Caterpillars for skidding. And some of 'em, now they don't use Caterpillars; they use a rubber-tired Cat.
DB: So what's a drag line?
HJ: Well, it's, it's just the same as, uh, a crane with a long rope and they had two drums on 'em.
DB: Where would they set the crane up?
HJ: It'd be settin' on, uh, on the truck. And then they used skylines to hold it steady, because when the...
DB: Would they be in the top of a hill, on a tall place, or...?
HJ: No, about every, uh...timber cruisers, they contour a road. And then after they go so far, they contour another road, and that's where they work it, the way they work it.
DB: So they drag the logs up or down?
HJ: Well, they drag some down, but not very far because it's dangerous to drag downhill.
DB: Uh huh. Speaking of danger, what was the most dangerous job in the woods?
HJ: That's a toss up between any of 'em when you work in the woods. You gotta' be on your toes.
DB: How about in the mill, what was the most dangerous job?
HJ: I couldn't say any of 'em was more dangerous than...
DB: Was it more dangerous in the woods or in the mill?
HJ: The job danger was more in the woods, originally in the olden days.
DB: I see. How many mills around here were there? (pause) To take care of the logs that were bein' cut?

HJ: One, two, three...
DB: Could you name 'em?
HJ: Yeah. We started Post Falls Mill, and then Diamond National is Huetter and Atlas Tie was Huetter, and then Winton. That's uh...
DB: How do you spell that last one?
HJ: Huetter? H-u-e-t-t-e-r.
DB: OK.
HJ: And Winton was at what they call Gibbs then.
DB: Is that W-i-n-t-o-n, er? Winton.
HJ: Yeah. W-i-n-t-o-n.
DB: OK. And where was that at?
HJ: At Gibbs. G-i-b-b-s.
DB: Oh, I see.
HJ: And then Blackwell was on Blackwell Island.
DB: When did the Post Falls Mill get started? Do you remember that?
HJ: Oh, I guess it originally was...Post started it when they first made a settlement in this country.
DB: Before you came?
HJ: Oh, yeah. Long time. Post Falls Mill was runnin' when I come here.
DB: How about Diamond National?
HJ: It was Ohio Match, it was only two years old then.
DB: How about Atlas? How old was it?
HJ: Atlas. They, uh, they were a very old mill.
DB: How about Winton?
HJ: Winton, they'd come out here, I don't know...they were long, here a long time, too, already.
DB: OK.
HJ: Blackwell, I guess, was one of the older mills here.
DB: Um hum. And where was Blackwell located at again?
HJ: On Blackwell Island.
DB: OK.
HJ: And then Potlatch is over...east o' town they say.
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: That was Ruttledge Timber Company then.
DB: Um hum. Let's see. So you were always paid by the hour for the timber?
HJ: Well, no. I was paid by the hour as long as I was a millwright. 'N when I took the sawmill foremanship, then I went on monthly pay.
DB: I see. Were all the people, the sawyers who worked out in the woods, the sawmen, were they, uh, were they paid by the hour or by the boardfoot.
HJ: Well, they's...some were paid by the boardfoot and some were paid by a piece, each log. And then if they had a long-butted one, they cut the butt off. And got paid for them. Some of 'em didn't.
DB: When you worked in Wisconsin, were you paid by the hour, er, by the...?

HJ: I was paid by the 1,000.
DB: By the 1,000? Do you remember how much you were paid?
HJ: No. (pause) It averaged up to be about $.20 a log.
DB: $.20 a log Did...
HJ: And the logs (very fairly) run an average of about 14 logs to a 1,000.
DB: I see. 14 logs to a 1,000. When they cut 'em up out in the woods, about how big a length did they cut 'em up or did they take 'em whole?
HJ: No, it's 16 foot; 16 foot 4 inches.
DB: I see. Did most men prefer to get paid by the hour, or by the foot?
HJ: Oh-h...way back in the days when my dad worked in the woods, it was all monthly jobs. And then finally the sawyers decided they could do better by...goin' gypo work. Well, they did for awhile, then the company just kept cuttin' the price per 1,000, or price per piece down until they got the same as monthly made...monthly sawyer.
DB: Uh huh. Uh huh.
HJ: Now it's all piece work...out in the woods. It's gettin' in everything.
DB: Uh huh. Did anybody join the Industrial Workers of the World around here?
HJ: I guess, uh, all the sawmill men were Industrial Workers at one time here.
DB: Did they...they had a name for them, didn't they?
HJ: IWW's.
DB: I mean, didn't they have nicknames for 'em?
HJ: Wobblies.
DB: Wobblies? What did that mean?
HJ: Crooks.
DB: Crooks?
HJ: Yeah.
DB: Was your dad or were you ever a IWW?
HJ: No.
DB: Was that before your...
HJ: I, uh, I belonged to the Industrial Woodworkers in, uh, when I worked in the sawmill in Bemidji, Minnesota. And I lost a good job there because I joined 'em.
DB: I see.
HJ: And then when I come out here, they kicked out the Wobblies, your IWW.
DB: When were they kicked out? Was that before you came?
HJ: During the war?
DB: It was before you came, though, that they were kicked out?
HJ: Yeah, in 1918.
DB: Were there any Wobblies when you were here at all?
HJ: Not then. No. They were back there in Minnesota and North Dakota in the harvest country.
DB: Were there any unions here when you were here?

HJ: When they come out here, we had a union that was controlled by a workin' man in the company. They called it the Four L's.
DB: What did that stand for?
HJ: Loyal Legion Lumbermen and Loggers.
DB: Loyal Legion Lumbermen and Loggers. Did many men belong to that?
HJ: Well, practically all the men in the companies.
DB: So all these companies like Diamond and Winton were all...
HJ: Yeah, they all used to have a big picnic on Labor Day then.
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: And they used to have log rolling contests, and...rope pulling contests.
DB: Um hum. Did you ever get any timber from the company for your own use.
HJ: For my own use?
DB: Yeah.
HJ: Oh, yeah. You see when I bought this place, I only had the front part--16 feet. And I bought all the stuff that run out (mumbled last part).
DB: So you built it all yourself?
HJ: Oh, yeah.
DB: Did you get a discount by working for the company?
HJ: Yeah, at that time they did. That was about 1937 when I built this on.
DB: Uh huh. Well, one of the things we're interested in is, uh, transportation--the way people used to get around in the old days, back then. About how often did you leave Coeur d'Alene, when you were living here back in the '20s and the '30s?
HJ: Oh...whenever I went over to Dishman's church, and then in the fall when I went up to the Moyie River country to hunt deer.
DB: Um hum.
HJ: And then during the summer months, my wife, she loves fish. Well, I used to love fishin', but why should I catch fish, if I don't like to eat 'em.
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: But she did, and I'd fish for her.
DB: Where did you usually go fishing?
HJ: Oh, different places. Streams mostly.
DB: Up to the north?
HJ: Yeah. Twasn't always north.
DB: Uh huh.
HJ: First stream north they used to fish in was Sage Creek and that's a thing o' the past. An' the next one was, uh, Voo Doo Creek, and that's a thing o' the past. And then I went up north and fished. I fished mostly where I could find Easternbrook, because she loved them better than anything.
DB: Uh huh. So your family owned a Model A, you say, or Model T?

HJ: Yeah, I had a Model T and then I bought a Model A.

DB: Um hum. Did you ever have a horse and buggy when you were here?

HJ: No. Now, you take it, a man is crazy to work 'til like on Saturday, we used to have to work 'til 10:00 o'clock-10:30. And then you'd come home and have lunch. And then you'd take a automobile--a bunch of us would get together--and, uh, we'd drive way back in the Coeur d'Alene forest after they built the road, and then still hike twelve miles to fishing grounds.

DB: And you didn't even eat fish, huh, at the time?

HJ: No, but I used to like to...

DB: Just for the pleasure of fishing?

HJ: Yeah. Out there, when I was out there, I had a doggone good teacher from Spokane--a doctor. He was a fly caster to perfection. He tried to teach me to put the roll in the...

(END OF TAPE 2; Side 1)