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ORMAN: My name is Orman Darby and I am being interviewed by Allison Ampe.

AMPE: Great. I just wanted to start by asking you a couple biographical questions. When were you born?

ORMAN: I was born November 25, 1940, in Pittsburg, Texas.

AMPE: Are you married?

ORMAN: I am married. I've been married since 1965.

AMPE: Where were you married?

ORMAN: I was married in Midland, Texas…George Bush's home town. [Laughs]

AMPE: Where else have you lived besides Bellingham and obviously those two places?

ORMAN: I was a paper reporter in Olympia, Washington. I was in Birmingham, Alabama working for the federal government as a communicator. It's a long title, it's called the "Appellation Regional Commission." But it's a commission that reports directly to the president and it's for the enhancement and the improvement of the southeast and the areas where poverty is still grinding. My organization at the time was rebuilding… or building health care teams around scarce rural physicians, and the county we concentrated on was Lawrence County, Alabama that had 27,000 people and seven doctors, which weren't enough. So we used paramedic workers from Vietnam that had already been trained to go help these physicians, and that's why I was down there. After that I lived in Portland for a while as I joined Georgia Pacific [in] Portland, Oregon, and then I moved up to Bellingham.

AMPE: Where were you educated?

ORMAN: I went to North Texas University and the University of Texas, but I did graduate from North Texas University in Dentin, Texas.

AMPE: With what kind of degree?

ORMAN: Journalism. I was journalism major and went into newspapers immediately.

AMPE: Do you have any other hobbies or interests?

ORMAN: Yes, quite a few.

AMPE: Okay.

ORMAN: I am a furniture maker and I am a HAM radio operator. That is a short for an amateur radio operator, it is not CB, it's the different kinds, it's much more. You have to have licenses and things. I am a traveler, I have a large RV, I'm a fisherman, and I write books.

AMPE: Are you part of any clubs or groups?

ORMAN: I am the past president of the Mount Baker Amateur Radio Club and I have belonged to almost every organization in this town. Over the years, as a GP public relations manager, I saw fit to belong to a lot of organizations. I was a chairman of the Chamber of Commerce for Bellingham, and many, many boards and positions of responsibility at the museum, and I am currently a technical advisor for the American… Museum of Radio and Electricity.

AMPE: Is that downtown?

ORMAN: Yes, that's the one, and I am a technical advisor.

AMPE: Do you have any awards or honors?

ORMAN: I got walls of plaques. If you go out there and volunteer you're going to get rewarded. You're going to get lots of recognition because volunteers are valuable, and of course because I was at it for so long, I have lots of them. I've been named businessman of the year some years back, back when… In early Chamber of Commerce work I had lots of recognition with good, nice labels on them about contribution to the community. I can't think of anything though that's so outstanding that I'd name it, although if you want to come by, I'll bring you out bundles of them.

AMPE: Where did your family originate from?

ORMAN: We went back to England, my wife and I, several years ago, and found my roots are in the Severn River Valley, west of Birmingham, England, in a community called Colebrookdale – Colebrookdale is just like it sounds, where the first iron furnace was ever built. And the whole group of the people who did this were Darbys. In fact it was Abraham Darby I, Abraham Darby II, Abraham Darby III, and Abraham Darby IV. We went up to the cemetery to see it. It was significant enough – their contribution to iron making – that NOVA – the television educational program – made a show on it. That's what put me on to going back 'cause my wife was doing our ancestry chasing and found all of that, and so we went over. So that's where it started. But we got poor really quick, I guess, because my relatives all moved to Pennsylvania… into the iron county of

Pennsylvania – you've heard of Darby, Pennsylvania, maybe? – named after my family. And then they split up into all sorts of directions and went south, and my little limb of the family went to Mount Pleasant, Texas where my Granddaddy Darby was a contractor, built houses, and sold insurance.

AMPE: How did you get to Bellingham?

ORMAN: I came to Bellingham because Georgia Pacific offered me two opportunities. I could either go to a large wood working facility down in Fort Brag, California, where the red wood was king, or come to Bellingham and I choose Bellingham… for all of the obvious reasons for someone who lives here already. It's a beautiful place to be, wonderful people, it has a good balance. Bellingham has its feet on the ground. It's got the right foot in Bellingham Bay and the left foot in the mountains, and we have everything else that we would want, from the snow to the salt water, from the high mountains to the beaches, beautiful trees, closeness to the desert if you want it – we're only a hundred miles away. So it has everything and that's why I picked it.

AMPE: Was religion or ethnicity important in your family?

ORMAN: Was the what?

AMPE: Religion or ethnicity?

ORMAN: The family was all protestant, we were all Methodists… except for my grandmother on the farm, and my grandmother on the farm was from the Scotts side of the family. They were Scotsmen and their last name was Gunn, G-U-N-N. And my grandmother was very holy person and she really couldn't… The little churches out in the country, way out in the farm lands, couldn't always financially maintain a preacher. So periodically preachers would come and go and little churches would fail and my grandmother didn't much care what church it was – to her it was all the same. So she probably went to at least four different denominations just so she never missed a Sunday. I commend her for that. Lots of people recognize that: that most protestant religion is pretty much the same, and that's what she did. But on the Darby side they were very much Methodists and always went to Methodist churches.

AMPE: What was your childhood like? Did you live in Texas your whole life?

ORMAN: I was born just before World War II, about a year before the war, and I spent the war years living between the two parents: grandparents' homes on the farm and in town in Mount Pleasant. While my mother worked for the government… She worked for two organizations: one was the FCC: the Federal Communications Commission – and she was a code breaker and typist and she could do that at extremely high rate of speed which made her valuable, then she moved in the Eighth Service Command – which is a legal wing of the United States Army – and became a legal secretary. And she continued being a legal secretary for the next, oh, twenty five years and made a good living at it, which was good. My father passed away when I was three of a chronic respiratory disease and,

because of that, she had to raise the family… and I had a sister at the time. Later my mother remarried and she's had two more kids. And my mother is still alive, by the way. The husbands are dead but she's still alive at age ninety-one and still drives a car.

AMPE: Oh, my goodness! What [were] the biggest things that affected you as a child?

ORMAN: My grandfathers probably impacted more in terms of my values. My grandmothers also, but living with those people with their very basic roots in the soil and in early America gave me a fairly conservative view of life and how to save your money and how to work hard to get ahead and how to be polite and how to avoid unfortunate conflicts… to try to be a peacemaker, to try to be a compromiser where necessary and to keep my nose to the grindstone. From my mother's side, my mother herself, I would say her vigorous pursuit of the good life, her energy and her good humor and her strength of holding a family together under adverse conditions, and that… that also impacted. I'd say there's probably a third area and that is [that] all of that upheaval of World War II probably planted a bit of insecurity in my sister and I, causing us to be a lot more security-prone in our older years. We're more careful with our money, more controlling of our environment because we were raised in rather a hectic period in American history.

AMPE: What was Bellingham like when you moved here?

ORMAN: Bellingham was like 1946 when I moved here in 1973. [Unrelated material removed] Where was I?

AMPE: Bellingham…

ORMAN: Oh, Bellingham was… almost comical to us. We moved in the Edgemoor [neighborhood] and drove around and discovered that there actually was a little public swimming pool – and it turned out it wasn't public at all it was private – and we thought, "Geez, maybe one day we can belong to that club." Within a week we had the keys to the gate because they were so anxious to have volunteer workers to help keep it. And those were the so called "rich" people in the community at that time… And it was an interesting mix: you had the old guard of Bellingham – the ones that hadn't died yet that were very old but who had really started and founded many of the businesses – then there were the younger ones about our age or a little older and we found ourselves very comfortable among all three: the very much younger; the yuppies in Bellingham, the middle group that we fit into, and the very much older ones. And Georgia Pacific, because of its prominence in the community, gave me quite an intro to nearly everything. We were able to join a lot of organizations and be accepted quickly and I don't know if that would happen to everybody. We were nobody, but certainly the organizations that took us in were something. And so we were swallowed up by Bellingham rather quickly and did all the things that newcomers do: we went to Canada a lot, went into the mountains a lot, we bought a boat and went out into the islands a lot, we enjoyed our family, our yard, our community… in everyway we knew how. We had one son who started school that year and so we followed him right though all of elementary and junior

and high school… frankly all the way beyond that. He ended up graduating from Western so [laughs] we were we a dedicated Bellingham family.

AMPE: What was the waterfront like?

ORMAN: When I first came to Bellingham and drove around the waterfront in 1973, the garbage of Bellingham was still being pushed by bulldozer up to the edge of the bay down in the waterfront. The sewer system that use to be right down beneath the big post office on Whatcom Creek had been shut down and the garbage dumped there had been shut down and that just showed by example how far people had gone in getting rid of waste back in those days, and how acceptable it was back then. But [the] early seventies was a time of cleaning all that up so it quickly went away. So we got to see, in lightening fashion, the move from very improper ways of disposing with garbage and sewage and other wastes into local streams and waterways to high tech systems of… management. So we watched Bellingham grow and watched the city council take on the important… responsibilities, and the county for taking on [the] responsibilities of cleaning up and making things right in Whatcom County. As that occurred over the years, so did a great expansion of the town, particularly out to the north. So almost every week we were saying, "My, that's changed since we got here," and we continue to say that. But we are saying that miles to the north now because Bellingham used to be old abandon farms and rabbit fields out where now are solid houses and shopping centers and so forth. There was a huge nursery and a drive-in theater out where Meridian crosses… the freeway – I-5 – and that was pretty rural at the time. And then going north from there, clear to the border, of course it was very rural, very much farm community and a lot of it still is. I have to say that other then Meridian it's still… a lot of it looks a lot the same. Close into town, though, we are drastically different, and just about anything you would want to see is available here in architecture and types of businesses. So Bellingham has really grown into the twenty-first century quickly, and I think there is still culture shock here in the community over it. In the downtown, out in Fairhaven, even in the neighborhoods, I think people are – the ones who have lived here a long time – are still grappling with the rapid change that occurred in a thirty-year period.

AMPE: Besides GP, what other companies were here in Bellingham and really prominent?

ORMAN: Well, certainly the Intalco refinery… aluminum plant was a great big one, Arco refinery, the other refinery – it was British petroleum – and, I think, Costco. There's been a lot of names for our refineries, but those were big, high-paying, family-wage job industries. Certainly government is a large industry in Whatcom County. Between city, county, and state workers we also have the university. And so those have been big anchor… activities. On top of that we had a huge forest products industry, a coal mining industry here until the 1950s, late forties, 1950s, huge fishing industry here that dwindled a lot over the years. So what's happened? We completely lost the coal mining industry, we've lost, say, in many ways maybe seventy-five percent of the overall timber industry as we knew it, we lost all of the pulp mail chemical processing in the waterfront… probably a few other things that I'm not remembering very well. There were some things

out on Lake Whatcom. There use to be a thing called White City out there and a big entertainment center that was much like a… combination of a circus and a carnival and a theme park… all out there on the water. A number of things like that have gone away. What's happened in Whatcom County and in Bellingham is that we have a lot more businesses, hundreds and hundreds more and, unfortunately, most of them do not pay an extremely high wage compared to, say, heavy industry. So it's changing the make up of the town. You're seeing more and more residential areas, brand new but small, two and three little bedrooms, small kitchens, maybe ten feet separating house to house. This is not unique. It's happened all over the country and it's certainly has happened in Europe and other parts of the world where population pressure and costs of building structures causes a blossom of little places. And there is a lot of good things to be said for it, it's not all bad. Houses with two people living in them is not very efficient, but that is the face of Bellingham changing. I'd say for the young people there's a lot more to do, a lot more of excitement, a lot more lights at night. There is probably less family life than we had thirty years ago or more, thirty-five years ago – but that's because there's such a variety – and television's a babysitter and kids have a thousand places to go, and most of them have cars when they're past seventeen. But that's the Bellingham today. It's like other towns particularly on the west coast. It's a busy community twenty-four hours a day.

AMPE: What was your first day at GP like?

ORMAN: When I arrived at GP – I had interviewed a week earlier… two weeks earlier, so I had met my boss – but when I showed up he put me in the hands of a secretary to get my office together and then I was introduced around the offices as the new public relations manager. I was really the first public relations manager Georgia Pacific had in Bellingham so they didn't have clue what I was going to do. And I had a good time figuring that out myself. You have to really size up the market before you do a lot, so I did spend a lot of time in first, but I have to say that those first days at GP were very warm and comfortable memories because they greeted me… with friendship and with understanding that I was coming in to a blank page. I didn't have a clue. I'd never been in a pulp mill before in my life and I had to go out there in that mill and walk around as many weeks as it took to learn what was going on, and I did, and I got to know the people and within a year I felt very, very much at home like an old shoe. But those first few months were hard, hard work. I'd wake up at 4:30 in the morning, flip on the radio, look out the window at the bay and listen to a Canadian FM station play "Oh Canada" to start the day on that radio station. It was… I think CKWX, but at any rate I would look through that window and think, "Gee, that town out there is waiting for me to go in and try to explain Georgia Pacific to them." So I felt a large burden. [There] was lots of controversy even in '73 about the mill, so I had a large job cut out for me, and I spent thirty years doing it.

AMPE: What did the community think of Georgia Pacific when you first started?

ORMAN: There was an article in the newspaper, in the *Bellingham Herald*, announcing my arrival, and it was written very… circumspectly. They didn't jump to any conclusions or say anything really unusual. I was very interested that they even bothered to mention

the fact that I arrived. I have to say that I got really nice article in the tutorial page when I left, mentioning the fact that I'd been there a very long time and that I was always honest and no matter how bad the news was I was always there to answer the questions… and I appreciated that a lot. But that was Bellingham at the time, much simpler life, much simpler set of values to work with. As time went by news media changed and so did the relationship between news media and PR men, I have to say. In Bellingham, though, specifically, the media here, I got a good shake. I'd say that Seattle media would come up when something big happened and they were used to very confrontational news coverage and they would come at me, and when they would see that I was more than willing to take them around [and] show them everything – show them the best camera angles, tell them when something was going to be loud, so just watch out for their microphones or cover up the speech – they would see that I was not there to be in their way but to help them get their job done. So I actually had very good relations with the press. I almost never had disagreement with any news media. I'd say maybe a half a dozen times in thirty years that I feel like something was being done on purpose in a negative way. I think most of the time they were trying to be responsible in their job.

AMPE: Can you describe a typical day where you worked?

ORMAN: A perfect day?

AMPE: A typical day.

ORMAN: Oh, okay. I'm an early riser so I would usually be at work by seven-thirty or even seven. In the summer time even earlier than that 'cause I could get rid of all my early paperwork, read mail, whatever, email, clean the desk, so-to-speak, of the loose stuff, and then map out what I was going to do. That was very important because I had a special role at GP. A lot of different people who worked in the offices would come around to my office knowing that I reported directly to the general manager and vice president, and they would either be trying to plant things on me [that] they wanted me to repeat or they would be asking me my opinion. And then later, after I'd been around a long time and became an old dude, people came to me with their troubles, and I had the honor of being thought of as someone who might even have a clue as to how to help them. I did the best I could. We had wonderful people, very intelligent people working there. By and large people [had] graduated from high school or had college degrees in a time [in] particular back in the early seventies when there was still a lot of people in the world and around America who did not have even [have] high school diploma. Most of our people had been trained through various training schools, skill-type training. The union mandated training processes that they went through… And they were all very intelligent. We had two or three different people whose classical training took them into the area of symphonic cello, oboe, we had one that was a full – when he wasn't working at GP – organist, and many other special people who had lots and lots honors. So we had [a] microcosm at GP of a large city in terms of the depth and breadth of their capabilities and their skills and arts. It made wonderful opportunities for me, and writing our company newsletter and doing our magazine because these people became [the] focal point of a lot of stories. I would spend the whole day with people like that. I'd get off

work at 5:00 or 5:30. Lots of times we'd end up down the hall with the boss to kind of sound off [against] each other and what happened, and talk about things that were upcoming in meetings. I had five general managers while I was there. My first one, to me, was more like a father then just a boss. He was brilliant. His name was Jack Dunkak, D-U-N-K-A-K, Jack Dunkak, and he was a beloved man in this community and did a lot for it beyond his responsibilities at the mill. He sure did a lot for me. I listened to his every word. I hung on to what he said. I learned a better vocabulary from the man. I had a college degree but it did nothing for my vocabulary in the pulping paper industry. And he helped me weigh things out so I would understand what was more important than the other. And I appreciated him in a very, very big way. When all was said and done we would settle down at the end of an afternoon and I would sling my leg over the corner of a chair, he'd be behind his desk and we would just sit there and chew that fat for a while… and it was very good for me – I hope it was anywhere near as good for him as it was for me – and it helped me do my job and it helped me provide services to my mill.

AMPE: What did your other family members do in Bellingham?

ORMAN: Well, my son was a student all the time and played on all the various kinds of teams you play on when you're in elementary, junior high, and high school. He did not end up running… he was not a football player in high school. By that time he had many other hobbies though. He was a scuba diver, he was a skier, he went out on the boat quite a bit with me. He was in the… it was a new soccer league at the time. It wasn't the school league, it was the Whatcom County Soccer, and his team was the undefeated team called Mate Raider Marine, and Raider Marine…got its name from the business that sponsored them. And all the boys on the team, or about half of them lived in our neighborhood. And that was a very good experience because he saw the hard knocks, and when they would win a lot down here and then, for non-league play, go up to Canada and get their socks beat off of them. And that was good, too, the humbling of it, because I was kind of concerned that they were winning all the time. And to go up there where the fellows had been playing soccer since they were four years of age made them very, very good… very competent.

John later on adopted many of the Asian, more meditative martial arts. He now has about five different belts that are black or darker. I don't' know, I don't know all the words to describe it, but he was deeply involved it… and currently has a class of his own at a school in Everett. He works in Everett for a Boeing contractor as their… information resources manager/computer systems manager. And so he's a computer wiz. But he still runs that martial arts class and goes to tournaments occasionally. And he's a going on forty. He'll be forty later this year.

But my wife has been, in a way, more busy then I have in the community. She was the president of the First Mates at the Yacht Club four years running. She's been the president several years off and on with the docents at the Whatcom Museum. She helped run a dental hygiene program free of charge for the city of Bellingham that did dental hygiene screenings for all the students. It was a record breaking, brand-new idea to do that. She and… Barbara White – Barbara was a dental hygienist and the wife of local

orthodontist Tom White – and they did all this together and that was quite a contribution. My princess has been in a lot of other organizations like the YMCA board and so forth. But I consider her museum work probably her number one contribution. It has been large and very time consuming for a lot of years.

AMPE: What's the greatest change that you've seen in Georgia Pacific since you started working there?

ORMAN: Georgia Pacific is entirely a newer company since I joined it. Before, we – you almost have to understand the roots of the company – but it came up as Georgia Hardwood Lumber Company out of Georgia, back in 1927, starting then. It finally moved north in the 1950s and set up office for a short time in Olympia, then it moved to Portland to build its international headquarters and several years later, in 1953, that's when I joined the company. At that time the corporation was a company of acquisition. It had many, many, many locations and they were all in the forest products industry primarily. They grew some after that, worldwide and nationwide, up to the point where I think we had sixty thousand people on our employee roles nationwide and worldwide. But what happened is they changed our production mix, they changed our transportation system, they moved the headquarters back to Georgia. The emphasis of the company went back to making… tissue paper, and the pulp and paper industry became to… take it in the shorts. Pulp mills have had a lot of troubles over the last twenty-five or thirty years and Georgia Pacific's mills were no exception. In Bellingham alone where we had about 1300 people… employed when I came in, it's down to 250 now. That was with the loss of a chlorine plant, a lignin chemical plant, which is wood liquids from cooking trees. The big pulp mill itself is gone, a large paper board recycling plant is gone, all of the wood handling is gone, all the timber lands were sold off, and so there's really only… one little part to be the nucleus of the whole thing and that's the tissue making. And they do still make a very fine product. They do very well at what they do and I commend them for it. But it's nothing like the gigantic complex that we had when I came. Georgia Pacific is not so different in all of those things. In the nationwide, major corporations have either pushed their facilities offshore or they have diminished them in a lot of ways through mechanization, through subbing out their work, and through trying to manage with fewer and fewer people at the top… and it sort of been a national phenomenon. I don't know where it's going, there's no way to know… until it happens. But corporations in America are definitely on the change and have been for quite sometime.

AMPE: How was your job that you had there changed or developed in the last few years?

ORMAN: There is currently no public relations manager in Bellingham, and at many other locations in Georgia Pacific there is no longer a manager of public relations. It has been centralized back to headquarters, and that was underway while I was still here. The corporation became to hold closer and closer to its head quarters, decisions about public relations, to the point where I could see that retirement was far more an option for me than before… because I'm a busy mind and a busy person by habit, by… my leanings. I have to work hard, and even though the job was hard, I don't think I was working hard. I don't think I was productive those last several years and I was relieved when I retired…

because it was a different world. The mill had changed completely and the need for me was certainly not where it used to be. All those earlier years were wonderful, fulfilling. I felt there was a real need for what I did. So I had the gratification for the first twenty years of that period and [then those] last few years just got a little slower. I know it looked hectic from the outside and it was, but it wasn't the kind of job that you could go and produce a whole lot and hand it over as your work product. It was mostly just a holding action hanging on and seeing if the… mill worth was going to ride out all the storms it was meeting.

AMPE: How do you think the communities thought about the company and attitudes towards it changed… more recently?

ORMAN: I think our employee attitude varies widely between those who are still working there who are grateful to have a good job with good pay, and those who were old and retired… already or who retired about the time the mill got smaller. Because those people look back on all that they think of as the good old days so they don't really look at the… they either don't have much of an opinion or they look at it as almost a cipher. It's no longer the major impact organization that it used to be on the community. It does have an impact. 250 well-paying jobs is still a very important and influential factor in the tax base that's supported by Georgia Pacific… is very good. It's not like it use to be but it's still making a major contribution. But I think the employees overall have it sized up pretty well. Those who no longer have anything directly at stake in it have sort of put it in their… back burner of emotional reactions, and they try to – I meet with them monthly so I know what the Retiree Association feels about it – and those who have to [do a] job… we're still proud of them for doing what they do. We think they make a great paper product.

AMPE: What do you think were the most significant events that happened in Georgia Pacific's history?

ORMAN: The most significant things in the history of the mill would go back clear to when it was called Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Company. Georgia Pacific didn't buy it until 1963, so prior to that time Puget Sound Pulp and Timber was the biggest thing in town. There was no aluminum plant, there were no refineries, the coal industry had gone into the dump, timber was still good, the marine industry, particularly fishing, was still good way back. But those jobs in town [that] supplied union scale working conditions and income were very, very influential on the community, and there was a great deal of pride and it was shown at the mill and in the community. [Y]ou can look at old issues of the *Bellingham Herald* and see full-page adds bought by others… bought by other businesses in town, thanking Georgia Pacific or Puget Sound Pulp and Timber for being there. We actually got a few of those said about GP early on, but as time went on I think no one really wanted to stand up and say a lot of good things about GP in public because they were afraid that people who were environmentally radical might take sanction on them. So I think we appeared to be almost friendless toward the end, before the pulp mill went down, the chlorine plant went down, and the lignin chemicals plant went down, and the alcohol plant went down. But it was influential… in those early, early days.

Afterwards, during that time and then afterwards, I have to say that, other then making and selling the most paper product on the west coast of any other brand, the MD brand at GP – that's MD as in Medical Doctor – MD Grand was the best selling. It was the one that every other company measured their own products' success against. That was a big deal. And then, of course, in our laboratory, we had many, many PhD's and research scientists and they were creating patented products constantly, hundreds of them, and there were many chemicals that came out of that plant that had major impact on the world. We made [L/dopa?], or provided the product for making [L/dopa?] for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. We had all kinds of liquids used in drilling oil wells, coal beneficiation in mining, road dust palliatives, leather tanning agents. We took all of that old tree juice that had sugar in it and made the purest alcohol in America. It was used to fortify wines and make gin and vodka. It was… so good that we had a rabbi come around every year and would bless every thing in the alcohol plant, as an inspection and so forth, because it was kosher-grade alcohol. A whole bunch of the alcohol was even converted into vinegar and sold to the Speas Company – S-P-E-A-S – Speas vinegar, which ended up in all of our pickles and peppers and other salad dressings and things like that. So I would say that it was a really big influence both on Bellingham directly and in west coast and around the United States.

AMPE: Do you remember any of the historical events that happened and any ways that it affected GP, like the 1970s or the Cold War?

ORMAN: I kept quite a… vault actually, a vault full of photographs and historical documentation, newspaper clips, and things that go… went way back, and so I got acquainted with the historical… events that occurred prior to my arriving and the mill's involvement in it. During the war the mill was considered a… strategic industry because the pulp was dried into a fiber and then converted into gun cotton… using nitric acid, to make explosives during World War II. Also, all kinds of paper products were needed during World War II so people were actually allowed to not take military service in order to stay on their jobs. Others who left to go to war came back and got their jobs back. Later on… the impact of the mill's great financial wealth and tax impact became extremely obvious in the late-sixties and through the seventies while the town had some down time, some really poor economic times, the mill was there to save things. There were times when the mill could make huge cash donations to local organizations and keep them alive – like the old museum. Back when it was starving, Georgia Pacific kicked in a lot of money to keep it alive. Georgia Pacific built – with a $400,000 gift – the salmon and hatchery system… The fish system down on the waterfront, at the mouth of Whatcom Creek, that $400,000 was local money from GP. A lot of other things like that… I think people know the big industrial pipeline that brought water to Bellingham was bought at such a high price and paid for every year at such a high price that it allowed Bellingham to not put in water meters for residences. There was so much cash available to maintain the water system because of GP that we maintain low water prices here, did not meter it, and that's… and metering [has] only started and it's far from even being done yet. But the cost of provision of water and the cash incomes for selling water to GP to the city really was a huge benefit that made a difference in the quality of life in Bellingham. There were things that were quality of life that were not big plusses. It didn't

have the traditional pulp mill stink but it did have an odor – it had a sulfur odor the whole time… Sulfite mills did not stink like the other type – the calcium based mills that had a strong, strong odor that you would smell in Everett, or you might have smelled in Tacoma. But we did have an odor so that was a downer. Also, all of the lignin liquids not used by the mill, the tree juice went right into the bay when we were done with it. In later years, of course, we had to put in the big lagoon and treat the water to keep that from happening – not because it the poisoned the fish, to the contrary, what it did was it created so much food environment in the water that it ultimately caused an oxygen depletion. The little microscopic creatures used up all the oxygen in the water so bigger fish didn't have a very good climate here and the bigger fish would swim through on their fish runs but they didn't hang around Bellingham Bay. Now they do because that's all been treated. I'd say that Bellingham reached out around the world many, many, many times through the mill, both for patented pulp mill machinery that we invented here and sold around the world, and for our products that went all over Asia… you name the country, we sent it there. And those dollars came right back to Bellingham, and… the majority of the money was used right here in town, and turned over four times before it went away.

AMPE: How did environmental legislation affect your job?

ORMAN: Environmental legislation was a focal point of my activity from the day I arrived. This was accruing at every level – government level, university level…, the general community, certainly the journalistic community – and it was a spirited… controversy. Seeking the truth was hard, and we by in large had found it, but in finding the truth we also changed our directions even before we had the truth. So a lot of our shifts in our way of life moved ahead of absolute proof. Some things were proved to be true and some not. I'll give you an example: there was a time when the government said you may, for instance, not cut trees and let them drop in a stream. If you have tree trunks or anything left from logging in the stream you must take them out. Now we, or the industry, will drop trees into streams with helicopters. They will place them there. They found out that the fish need the shade. So here was an area where legislation was way ahead of reality and way ahead of science, and now trees aren't all bad dropping into creeks. Same way with burning, slash burning: there are times where slash burning is actually a long time benefit for killing off very diseased areas. We have lots of diseased forests between here and… Alaska that cause white spot in the wood, and there are insects… Well after a slash burn you can start fresh and so it wasn't always bad to slash burn either. Those are places where our perception and our action got ahead of the science. There were other places where we were dead on. For instance, DDT no doubt hurt the eggs of bald eagles, and now that we don't have DDT anymore and a few other factors you see bald eagles everywhere. You know, they are nearly on every square block in Bellingham. Somewhere you will see an eagle if you just drive around. They are everywhere. And I know they made a big recovery because they were treated better and weren't' exposed to DDT. At least I've been lead to believe that, and I do believe that.

AMPE: What were the difficult things you had to deal with in working in the plant?

ORMAN: The most difficult thing dealing in the whole world is people. Certainly it was people. Nothing about the hardware or the tools, or the bricks, or the glass windows was a problem. We dealt with that. People are everything and people are the source of joy and the source of all your pain, nearly. We had employees who had their own personal problems and brought them to work, and we had to deal with those folks. We dealt with them in a lot of different ways, but fairly. We had major changes in the way in employees legally could be treated. The… equal opportunity acts certainly did affect the way that we went though our hiring processes. Laws concerning work conditions improved and improved over time. We use to – all of us in industry, in any industry – use to do things, and take chances with our employees that you wouldn't dare do to today. But that was the value system back then, that's the way it was, and it wasn't perceived as a crime or a wrong thing, it was what you had, you know… Over time we learned how to put guards on pulleys and gear boxes. We learned to put electric safety switches and double electric switches on things to keep from electrocuting people. And we learned how to train them so they would spot problems in advance. So… the people were both the joy and the problem… at work and in town, you know, the same way. We had our champions in town who cared very much that we would continue to operate, and we had people in the community who would just [be] chomping at the bit for us to leave. And some how or another there was a compromise because… there's still a mill down there, and yet some of the things that were disagreeable, like the chlorine plant, are gone.

AMPE: Did you ever have to compromise your beliefs for the sake of something you didn't believe in?

ORMAN: I never had to compromise the truth and I never had to compromise my concept of morality. There were times when I kept my mouth shut, which was not a compromise in that if I had… I wouldn't let a man get run over in the street. [Laughs] I'd have to shout. So I wouldn't say that I kept my mouth shut in the face of something horrible, but there were times when I would have said more if I could have, and there were times I would probably have said less. [Pause] I always felt like – I'm not trying to take a shot at lawyers here – but I always felt like that the lawyers knew what worked in court but they didn't know what worked in town, and I always… had misgivings when I was told to not talk about something, which is typically… Lawyers are like beavers – they get in the main stream and damn it up, and… that's their job, I know that, and they are trained for that. But my job was to communicate and I was trained for that. So I guess we had a little bit of a conflict there sometimes. The company lawyer we had here – we had two, three, at one point we had three – that had offices right in the building, we were good friends. I wouldn't want to make that… be mistaken about that. I had good friends among our legal staff and we were encouraged, I think, to debate our issues with each other, and we did.

AMPE: What was the most important aspect of your job?

ORMAN: The most important aspect of my job may have been at the mill and not in town. Even though I was considered public relations manager I had a very important job of trying to interface the employees to management. You had supervisory people, you

had departmental manager, managerial people, you had then the staff underneath the vice president, and all of them tried to do their very best to do a good job of talking to their people. But sometimes it just didn't work, and if I could reach them through other means, though the newsletter, through the magazine, through setting up… internal communication… A lot of the time I just walked around – it was called management by walking around… in some circles it's called that – and I walked around and talked to people and tried to impart, as best I could, management's view of what was going on, without using any of the strident words or the business-like words that are usually employed to say those kind of things. And so I think that was my most important thing. Second most important was to do the same job with the community – to make them understand what we did, how we did it, why we did it, and what our motivations were, and to give them the assurances that I understood to be true in a way that they maybe would have more faith in what we were accomplishing down at the mill.

AMPE: What did you enjoy the most?

ORMAN: [Laughs] Going back to people again, the thing I enjoyed the most was the people. I still love them. I have… I guess I'd have to say I have hundreds of friends among those who still work there and those who are retired or working somewhere else. And I know hundreds by first name. In a lot of cases I know their wife's name or their children's names. I know a lot about their history, their family history and things that happened to them at the mill. And to me that's a source of great comfort and warmth. Living in Bellingham, having that many people that you have an association with and a commonality with is a very, very good thing for me. I don't know how good it is for them, but [smiling] I know it's been good for me.

AMPE: How did you decide what to write about in the magazine?

ORMAN: When I wrote a magazine… my company magazine?

AMPE: Yeah…

ORMAN: Okay, yeah. For the newsletter and the magazine both, the topics really needed to be… pretty much about what we did and who was doing it. I would salt-and-pepper it a little bit with a little bit of humor. I would put a little insight into personalities. I would occasionally do features, particularly in the magazine, about individual employees and the unusual things they knew how to do. I also would highlight things that they could be proud about. Following a particular forest chemical, from the time we cook it out of the tree, to the… end products such as the medicines that were made from our tree liquids where the alcohol went and the good things that were done with it, where our pulp went and the products that the pulp and paper were made into. Those were very important things to put out front. Occasionally we carried stories that explained the company policy on things, whether it be health care delivery, you know, getting your health insurance, stock purchase plans, things like that. We would put that in, too. But I… even though those were very important I didn't rate them… high on my list because I wasn't the creator of those. It was the stuff that I wrote myself that I cared the most about. It was

canned copy from headquarters on employee relations of some kind. I just printed it for them. But my own stuff about my own people was very important.

AMPE: What was the most memorable event you can think of from working at the plant?

ORMAN: Retirement parties were sometimes the most memorable events because you had old timers who had worked for forty-five or close to fifty years leaving and they would have tears in their eyes and they would some times talk about what had happened during their span of years at the mill. Those were probably the most touching and affecting. On the negative side there were some memories of events that were not happy. And one was the stick of 1978-79 when we stopped being a family for about seven months. That was… devastating to me and it took at least a year later to get over it. I suffered a lot during that, as every one else did. It was very hard on all of us hourly and salaried people. We kept the mill running and we did it safely, but it was a very hard time and not a good memory. We were really glad when it was over. We also had a few tough memories when we had an explosion in the steam plant. No one was hurt or killed but we had a small vesicle explode. Another time we had an explosion in the alcohol plant were a very small… a little vesicle about the size of a refrigerator blew up and knock[ed] bricks out of a wall and that scared everybody and that was a negative time. By in large, though, if you look at how big we were and what all we were handling it was very, very safe and we did a very good job of keeping things safe.

AMPE: How would you hope that future generations remember what you did when you worked there?

ORMAN: For journalism students and public relations students, people who study the cause-effect relationships of communication professionals working together, I'd like them to look at it about like World War II. But not like they were the Axis powers and… or vice versa, and I was the Allies. It was like a war footing. Everyone was working in intensity to get a job done, and occasionally we might disagree but we weren't really the enemies of each other at all… It was, but we were working… I'd say that the war was really the war of values in America, and everyone had a piece of it but didn't have an exact stand on it. People didn't know always where they exactly stood on environmental issues in particular, 'cause it was complicated, technical, and new information came out the next day and make you all wrong. But… that was an area that I would like the college students and any student of my craft – public relations and journalism – which I was – [a] newspaper reporter – to look at. And there are papers to… in the library and other places, to look at that.

I would like the general public to look back finally on the great timber industry of the Northwest and to know that even though there were a lot of mistakes made, foolishly made, made out of ignorance, that by enlarge the people that were in that industry were family people who were loving of their community and believed they were doing the right thing. And it took a long time to change the way the timber industry and big industry to shift gears and change along with society. It wasn't like all along society was right and industry was wrong. In fact, industry was there because society put it there.

The pulp mill was put there because Bellingham wanted one. Bellingham was glad to have one. But over time there had to be adjustments made and that's what it was. I want people to look back on it and realize that, along with coal mining, cutting timber, catching large quantities of fish, making aluminum, refining oil, that the pulp mill was one of the biggies, and it made a major contribution, and that the people who did it were good people.

AMPE: How would you hope people would remember the waterfront itself?

ORMAN: The waterfront in a fascinating historical treasure. There are treasures all around it to this day. There are edifices [that have] been raised to show it off in the future even as we speak here in February of 2006. More things will be happening regarding museums in this community and the next several years than it has in all of the years past put together. We have quite a… population of those can contribute, both money-wise and skill-wise, and in management. But we have a major, major project going on at the Whatcom Museum, with new construction. We have a brand new American Museum of Radio and Electricity downtown which is one of its kind in the world, in many aspects, as well worth being down there in the city core to be part of the overall museum… network. Also, right along the waterfront there are many historical places and… things that have anecdotal stories to tell… right from the Pose Point – also called Post Point – all the way around to the Mount Baker Plywood Company in Squalicum Creek, and then on around to the reservation. The Native American population made gigantic contributions to where we went here. First of all, we couldn't have stayed long if they hadn't have let us. When the white people moved in here in the… around 1850, to stay permanently, they had to have friends and they had them, and they… help[ed] to do what they did to stay.

AMPE: What do you think will happen to the waterfront and in Bellingham in the near future?

ORMAN: Bellingham waterfront will never again be the large working waterfront we knew fifty, sixty years ago. It is less today then it was ten years ago. And the arrival of as many as five or six major ocean steamers per week no longer occurs here. We still have the fisheries, not as big, but we still have it. We still have the Alaska Terminal for their southern terminus for the ferry line of Alaska. We have the promise of possibility of various tour boats. There's a lot to be said for what goes on out in the San Juan Islands in the future. I know those islanders don't really much want it to be developed out there, but there are a lot of people that are willing to spend money to make that happen. And I have a feeling we are going to have island… a lot more island taxis and more boats of that kind around. There is going to be a great deal of waterfront attention paid to the creature-comforts of visitors and to educate visitors on what this was before they came, and to enjoy being in Bellingham and spend[ing] their money here. So there will be money made because of the waterfront and the bay, and the fact that this is a departure point for a lot of wonderful places to go. We just won't have the smokestack industry here to make the bucks. We'll be doing other things, certainly. I have to add that the pay isn't as good. Per individual it's about double to triple if you have a large family-wage job and industry than if you work at one of the major discount stores. And so that's a fact of life. But

Bellingham will have to learn to deal with that. Other communities have and Bellingham will too.

AMPE: What has been your greatest lesson thus far in your life?

ORMAN: The greatest lesson so far in my life, probably is to keep my mouth shut. [Laughs] That's probably the best lesson I've had ever had and has been very hard all my life. I like to communicate, I like to talk, I like to share with people what I know. [Pause] But you're not learning a darn thing when your month is open. So I would say that is a very, very important thing I learned. I grew up loving people, being responsible and caring and obeying my parents, etc. But learning how to behave around people in a way that's the most useful to them as to yourself is always a struggle for everyone. And I think I need to listen more. And even at age sixty-five I need to listen, listen, listen. Just because I'm sixty-five doesn't mean I've accumulated sixty-five years worth of priceless items to share. So, I'd say managing me is the big challenge.

AMPE: Is there anything I didn't ask you about your life or Georgia Pacific or Bellingham that you wanted to add?

ORMAN: I would say that if I had a message for Bellingham it would be… live life like a rage, put your whole heart into everything you do, pick more flowers, stop and dance, do total unexpected and outrageous things that help people, and always give more than you think you can afford. That's it.

AMPE: Thank you so much.

ORMAN: Yeah.