

Title: Interview with Jarve Loney and Bob Elsner

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LONEY: I don't know what it was. I thought I had a good education but Ferndale was a funny place at that time. I could get away with anything. I'd do anything, get away with anything, get good grades. I sang in the choir with the principal and the math teacher and English teacher. So I was a good boy and I never once, in all the years in high school, made a book report, a written book report.

MCALLISTER: Really?

LONEY: Did it verbally, they said I could do it verbally. Hell, I would ask the girls what the story was, and I would tell [the teacher] and she [would say], "Oh, wonderful Jarve, wonderful." [Laughs] I got to Western and it didn't work.

MCALLISTER: So where did you grow up?

LONEY: Ferndale.

MCALLISTER: What brought you to Bellingham?

LONEY: Well, my folks [were] in town. My dad worked at the pulp mill before me so then I tried to put my name in there and... had a heck of a time getting a job but I finally got a job 1950. Before that I worked at Dairygold and a bunch of other places part time. I used to commercial fish once and a while. I never made any money or anything like that. How do you like my big fish up there? My brother makes that.

MCALLISTER: Oh yeah?

LONEY: He makes those out of steel and paints them, or has them painted. They are powder coated, what they call it... What a deal.

MCALLISTER: Yeah. What kind of work did you do at the plant?

LONEY: Well, I started out 1950 in what they called the paper board mill, and that was considered the hell-hole of the mill. Nobody wanted to go there. And what it was... there was an old... they made cardboard like for soapboxes and matchbook covers and all that kind of stuff, egg cartons. That plant was started in 1947, it was brought in. It was [a] really, really old shot mill when they brought it. Puget Sound Pulp hired a guy [and] he put it in there and they went together. The pulp mill furnished all the motors and they started this old paperboard mill. It was extremely hazardous, just a terrible place to work.

Out of thirty two guys that worked there, I would bet you, maybe me and ten other guys were the only ones to come out with our fingers out of that place. I'm not kidding you. Almost all of them lost part of their fingers because they had these big calendar stacks, great big rolls with nips, and the paper went like this through them. You had to stack that by hand. If you had a glove on or anything, it got caught and you would lose your fingers like that, see. It was just a really bad place. That's why nobody wanted to work that part, it was so dangerous. It had ream cutters that would cut great big sheets of paper like this, you know. It would come down [and] cut a whole pile of paper, and then you would reach in there to get the paper out and that damn thing once in a while would go "Zzz," again. I'm not – literally! – I'm not trying to scare you. This is the kind of stuff...

When I first started a lot of people walked into the place and said, "Ha, you're crazy. I'm leaving," and walk right out again. But I looked for a job for a year or two, and I was getting married and had to have a job. And it paid pretty good but it was... [we] worked like hell and it was hazardous. We didn't have any showers or [anything] like that. I think my wife would have never married me if she would have known it. We used to dye cardboard purple for pear boxes and stuff like that. They used to have this paper that is put in pear boxes. Of course that purple dye would get all over you. Oh, here is Robert, come on in Robert! Come on in. This is Bob Elsner, and Ken...

MCALLISTER: Ken McAllister.

LONEY: ...Ken McAllister.

ELSNER: Nice to meet you.

LONEY: He is from Western and he is talking about the mill. Sit down, Bob. I told him you worked there about as long as I did, or longer. I was telling him I started at the board mill and what it was like...

ELSNER: I worked harder.

LONEY: Yeah, I know you did. [Laughs] But it was a hazardous, dirty place to work, and hardly anybody wanted to work in the board mill. Am I right?

ELSNER: Yeah, oh yeah.

LONEY: Nobody wanted to work there because it was just hard work. There [were] only thirty-two of us and we had our own little local union. They were considered...

MCALLISTER: In 1950, then?

LONEY: They had a paper makers union by itself and there [were] only thirty-two guys in it. So, anyhow, I worked there for ten years, or twelve years I guess – year '64 – well, fourteen years I guess it was, yeah. Then they started the chlorine plant. We had a boss that they brought in to run the chlorine plant. His name was Luther Dunn and he was

quite a guy. He hired, sort of took his choice from all over the mill. The guys he wanted and he picked out what he thought were leaders in their departments and stuff like that. So how many of us went to the chlorine plant, thirty-some of us? I guess it was about that many. And we all went over there and, man, it was complete mystery to us because it was completely different work. But they treated you royally. I mean, you never got treated so good in your life [as] when you went to the chlorine plant. They furnished us [with] coveralls, they furnished us [with] showers, boots, gloves, hats, gas masks. I mean, anything you wanted. They even brought us coffee. They had a coffee maker there. And the chlorine plant treated us like we were special. We were really something when you went to the chlorine plant.

MCALLISTER: Why did they treat the chlorine plant workers better?

LONEY: For some reason we were the new department, our wages were higher then. The wage was like a dollar an hour higher than any other place in the mill when we went over there. We had to wear our green hats – boy, that was a sign of things – we had to wear goggles and we had to wear boots and coveralls because there were a lot of hazards and stuff, acids and stuff. But they just treated us really, really good.

ELSNER: Then they found out in job analysis that they [were] completely underpaying us – from other chlorine plants.

LONEY: So then we [got] good, big raises. So it was the difference between night and day for me, from the paperboard mill to the chlorine plant. When I went there, man, I [was] hooping and holler[ing] and my wife jumped up and down. We thought, boy, I got out of this place. It was just completely different and the wages were good. It really paid good.

Now, we did, as I say, work with sulfuric acid, muradic acid and – what was the other one we pumped up the...? – that was phosphoric acid.

ELSNER: Phosphoric, yeah.

LONEY: And then, of course, we had caustic soda and chlorine gas and liquid chlorine, too, and lots of mercury. When we ended up there were thirty-two cells with eight thousand pounds of mercury in each cell. You're talking tons and tons and tons and tons and tons of mercury.

MCALLISTER: Now, how did the workers do with all the exposure to all these different chemicals?

LONEY: They... first we had go have a physical about every six months. They checked us all. Before we went into the place they sent us to a doctor – Dr. Rude... no, it was another guy, some old guy gave us a check-up.

ELSNER: Yeah, he was just a short guy.

LONEY: And they made sure that you felt healthy and could good... They made us wear rubber boots. Everybody had to wear rubber boots when you came to work. You had to wear glasses, safety glasses. You had to wear a hard-hat, gloves, and coveralls. We all had white coveralls, had to wear white coveralls. They had to be cotton because cotton wouldn't absorb anything. Nylon would let the stuff go through and bum you. So we had to wear cotton coveralls. They just, man, if you wanted it they would give it to you. It was really different. So, now go ahead with the questions. We're just talking. [Laughs]

MCALLISTER: How would you describe the relationship between the union and the management, and how did that change?

LONEY: You know, I always... of course, we only had, what, two strikes, three strikes, in all the years we were there.

MCALLISTER: When were those?

LONEY: We had one in 1960, no, '76, no, '78. Maybe we had one before that, I don't know. Actually [there were] good relations with the company, I think. I was on the grievance committee and all that stuff. We would get mad and we would argue, but we would settle it. We always got along good.

ELSNER: We got shut down a couple times by other...

LONEY: ...other locals would come and put a picket line up and we would shut down. We would honor the picket lines and shut down [for?] a week.

ELSNER: I don't think it lasted that long most of the time.

LONEY: Maybe not, but we always had good relations. I remember Toledo – that was the one – Toledo, Oregon. They had a mill down there. Now this was Georgia Pacific at that time, yeah. They had a mill and they [had] a big disagreement with the company and so they sent pickets up. So we had an agreement to honor the picket line and the company wanted us to let them know ahead of time so they could shut down early – because the worst thing you can do in a pulp mill is walk out and leave it. It goes to pot. You have to shut [down]. It takes, what, a whole day, or two to shut it down. Yeah, we said sure. Now not everybody wanted to do that but that's what we did anyhow. I would put generally that I had – I think Bob and I both – we had good relations with the company. They treated us fair. You had one or two stupid supervisors but I'm sure we had one or two stupid people on our side to.

ELSNER: Oh yes.

LONEY: Overall we could sit down and talk and work out our problems. All the strikes that we did have were big things that were started down in Portland – that was our

headquarters. Other locals... The one big strike we had lasted for a seven months. That was a big one – '78, '77, '78 – that lasted for seven months.

MCALLISTER: And that was started elsewhere then?

LONEY: Well, what happened was one of the locals down south negotiated and they couldn't reach a settlement so they recessed. Two of three other locals tried it and they couldn't make an agreement and they recessed. So finally... it was [almost] a coast-wide thing. We just went down and someone didn't negotiate but they honored picket lines. Now the tissue mill – which is Local 309 next door in the tissue – they never did go on strike but they honored our picket line for seven months. So same thing, you know.

MCALLISTER: Did anybody cross the picket line?

LONEY: No, not one person crossed the picket line in seven months. That's the amazing thing. Now not in our local anyhow, but some of the other locals might have had it. Not in our local, and I don't know whether it was... Everybody understood what it was about and what we [would] have to give up because they wanted some pretty big concessions and stuff. Never anybody crossed the picket line or anything like that.

ELSNER: We had one guy that was real outspoken about going on strike and two weeks later, well, he is back at the union hall hollering, "When are we going back to work?!"

LONEY: Yeah, right, "Who is going to feed my family?!?" [Laughs] Our wage scale down there was really pretty good compared to the rest of the county. I think we were about as good as Intalco or anybody [else], maybe better than most of them, you know. Now, we didn't have all the fringe benefits that... our pension wasn't near as good as it was out there. They are likely the best health and welfare program in the world.

ELSNER: Yeah, till they started taking things away.

LONEY: Well, in the latter years they took it away. From '50 up until '80, I suppose – those thirty years or so – we had complete medical. I mean, prescriptions were \$3.00, I think – something like that – to start with. Complete dental; my wife has got a mouth full of gold, and it [didn't] cost a penny. I mean it was just complete. The benefits there were really good. Now in the last fifteen years it's gone down bad. But we did have good relations with the company I think. We had some good arguments, some crazies, but we had them on our side, too. I think half of our problem was our own union guys more than it was for the company. Because we had some... well, you always get a bunch of kids come in there and – not a kid like you, I mean – young guys [who] didn't want to work, that's all. We had a job to do and we wanted to run the place. I think most of the guys that were there for a long time, we felt that mill was ours more than it was the company's. That was our job. We wanted that job to go and make a go of it. Well, Bob and I, we have talked about it a lot. I think we had more concern for the job than a lot of management.

ELSNER: Yeah, that's true.

LONEY: It was ours. We couldn't go out and get another job like some of those guys. That was our living and we work[ed] there for years and years. We felt it was sort of ours.

ELSNER: Well, most of those guys were engineers and so on, you know, and they could [say], "I'm an engineer. I can get a job someplace else."

LONEY: And we couldn't. So if somebody wasn't doing their job we would try to make them do it, or get the company to make them do it or something like that. We had some funny ones. We even... after the strike we had a guy that, during the shift, he went long shoring. [Laughs] Yeah, he did, and I had to tell the boss, "You better straighten the guy out," and he says, "Who is it?" and I didn't dare tell him because we had this thing where we didn't tell about each other – union guys, you know. But I says, "You better find out." I guess it didn't take him too long to find out.

MCALLISTER: What other industries were on the waterfront at that time, and how did that change?

LONEY: Well, way back they had a plywood mill down there. But Georgia Pacific had a plywood mill on...

ELSNER: ...on the south side...

LONEY: ...on the south side in the forties. That was in the forties I think, yeah. But that shut down before I started. Then there was Uniflight, the big boat-building place. There was...

ELSNER: Hey, that plywood mill was still going...

MCALLISTER: ...Morrison's?

LONEY: No, [that] belonged to Georgia Pacific, the original one that they closed. And then there was another one. Well then, of course, Mt. Baker Plywood, that came in.

ELSNER: But I got plywood from that mill when I was building my house.

LONEY: Oh, is that right? Okay, I don't remember when it closed. And of course fishing was a big thing. Fishing was a real big thing, and the canneries were down here, my gosh.

ELSNER: P.A.F [Pacific American Fisheries].

LONEY: P.A.F. And all that they used to [do was] can salmon and all that. And then the shipyard, during the war there was a shipyard. But the pulp mill was very likely the mainstay. The pulp and paper mill was probably the mainstay of industry on the waterfront. There was a lot of other stuff but nothing was as big as. When I first started

there were about 350 guys in the pulp mill, and maybe three hundred or so in the paper mill, in that area: 250-300. So I think there [were] very likely seven hundred to eight hundred people total – hourly guys then plus salary.

MCALLISTER: Now how did the work change at all when Puget Sound Pulp and Timber got bought out by Georgia Pacific?

LONEY: No, hardly any change.

MCALLISTER: Really, just a name.

LONEY: We thought part of it... some of the things didn't change. That's when they built the chlorine plant, when Georgia Pacific took over the pulp mill. They had made a move up into Ketchikan. I mean, Puget Sound Pulp and Timber they were part owners of a Ketchikan mill and they were doing orders but not expanding the mill down here, and Georgia Pacific came in and put the chlorine plant in and improved the barking stuff.

ELSNER: They put the acid plant in.

LONEY: They put the acid plant in, I think it could have been. So, no, it wasn't a big thing when they changed, just a different name and a little more advantage I think for advancement and stuff. I know for me, it didn't bother me. Now there was a...

ELSNER: There was a lot of overseeing from Atlanta though!

LONEY: Yeah, that kind of stuff. And they did change a things like, well, I don't know when our pension plan changed, that was a little later. That was later when we had that because the old Puget Sound one kind of a pension plan, and we changed around but for the better, the better, the better, and so. Now I want to [get to] this thing about the board mill – how dangerous it was – that changed. The state came in and said, in the early sixties, the state came in and says, "Hey, you can't have this," – you know, that ream cutter they took that out of there. I was telling you about how many guys lost their fingers, my gosh.

ELSNER: Oh yeah.

LONEY: My gosh, you go up there, it was just unbelievable. And guys pinched their legs. There was just a lot of dangerous...

MCALLISTER: Did it happen all the time?

LONEY: Well, you know, a couple guys a year would loose a finger or something like that. Too damn often, I know that.

MCALLISTER: Yeah.

LONEY: I ran my fingers through the belts, but it happened to be a flat belt. So you know it just pinched like hell and I thought, “Oh god, you know, it could have been someone else.” And almost all the time you did get hurt it was inattention and stuff like that. You would get pissed off about something – work – and you go up and do something without thinking and all of a sudden it’s gone. That’s how it happened to most guys. I noticed that when it happened. It was just a hazardous place to work. But it changed over the years and it closed down – I can’t remember when it closed down – but it was a lot safer place the last ten years than it was when I first started.

MCALLISTER: What did they do to change that?

LONEY: Well, [they] started spending money, for one thing. We had a big cutter, what they called. A sheet would come off the dryers and through the calendar stacks and it would go in. They would go in, cut it into sheets or else roll it up into rolls. If they cut it up into sheets the sheet would go through this great big cutter and two big rolls like that with knives on them would go “blink, blink,” and you would adjust the length of the cut for the different sheets. But in order to get the sheet from the back of the blade – the front blade – you had to reach in there and let this blade come down and cut right by your hand, pick up the sheet and go and put it in the front blade. And I’m telling you the first time you did this the sweat rolled off your head like you can’t believe because you never got to practice, you had do it, see.

That went on for five or six or seven years when I was there. Well, you learned to count one, boy, you really got to figure it out. And then they finally came in and put a clutch in so they could throw the back blade out, and they would take the sheet and put it in the front blade and throw the clutch in. It cost a lot of money for that clutch and they didn’t want to spend it – just all kinds of little stuff that they changed. And the supervisor we had was like... we would buy one gas mask for ten guys so we wouldn’t use the damn thing you know.

MCALLISTER: Was that the management just trying to save money, cut corners?

LONEY: Well, it was. They put this one guy – I’m not going to name names – but they put one guy in charge and he was trying to make a name for himself. He was a young engineer and the bottom-line was what was important to him. So he had to make money, make money, make money, and he just wouldn’t spend any money. And management let him go ahead because they were trying to make a go of it. Gosh, he was there for a long time. But finally the other people got involved. The state and the union got involved, too. We had to file some grievances and stuff, get some stuff straightened out. Oh, we had this big long ramp that went up into what they call a hydro-pulper which is a great big tank the size of this room with beaters, and then you put the dried paper – the old scrap paper – and it goes up into this belt and it drops into this hydro-pulper.

Well, this paper would get on there and slip back, slip back, you know. So he told the guys to get on the belt and ride up there and jump off before you got into there. Well, if you didn’t jump off you were hampered. Well, when we saw it, we said, “What the hell?”

you know. [The manager said], “Well, that’s the only way we can do it. That’s the only way we can do it.” But we had to put a stop to it you know. Now we told that to management and they just stopped it right away and they had to put some kind of rollers in there to push it up some bit – that kind of stuff. “Oh, just jump up there and run up there,” – it was just all kinds of stuff. [In] the chlorine plant there [were] hazards, like I say. Nobody got hurt physically, I don’t think, did we? A lot of us breathed chlorine. We had leaks, some acid burns, caustic burns. The fumes were... I got a disability for my lungs. I don’t know if it’s that or I smoked when I was young, too, see, so that might have been it. We changed the whole procedure around what seventies when we went to the high pressure...

ELSNER: Oh, yeah.

LONEY: ... for about a year.

ELSNER: It didn’t last that long.

LONEY: Not hardly, but we lived in gas masks for that period of time. That’s when they gassed part of Bellingham out – all kinds of stuff – so then they switched – maybe only it was seven or eight months – and they went back to the original design.

ELSNER: That was the only two months in that stretch that the chlorine plant lost money.

LONEY: Oh gosh, yeah. It was a very, very profitable business. I can’t remember, I think they told us Bob – what was it, what did they spend...? – seven million dollars or something like that.

ELSNER: Seven and a half million.

LONEY: Something like that. One time my boss told me that we made a million dollars a week, fifty-two million a year, that’s what he told me. Now... the main thing was the price of electricity, the price of salt, mostly electricity and salt – labor didn’t count hardly at all, it was just not there – and nothing else. It was just those two things. That’s why right now they couldn’t make [it]. Our power is so cheap, you couldn’t believe how the power we got so cheap, but that’s how they made money. The chlorine was a... I guess we will have to get into this a little bit. When we first started and nothing [was] wrong I didn’t blame the company for it, it was just the way it was. Everything went into the sewer. I mean, acid went into the sewer.

MCALLISTER: Straight out into the bay.

LONEY: Everything. That was just [a] big gold pipe there. That’s where everything went, everything went out, the acids and the caustics. Hell, we blew the lids off of the tanks and everything else sometimes, you know. But that went on until finally, you know, they put in a great big pond to catch all this stuff. Hell, when we left you had to filter the rainwater that came down.

ELSNER: Yeah

LONEY: It came [from] one side to the other.

MCALLISTER: That [was] because of the state?

ELSNER: Pressure from the government.

LONEY: I don't think they would have, did it too much by themselves – unless they could save money on it. Now we used to dump all the acid – the spent acid, sulfuric acid – we would run it. We used that to dry the chlorine, spray the chlorine with acid through this tower and the chlorine would filter through it and sulfuric acid would go... Sucks in moisture and it would dry the chlorine gas out. But after awhile it gets diluted. What was it, seventy-six percent or something like that?

ELSNER: Yeah.

LONEY: Then we had to dump it, you know, so we used to just dump it down the sewer and out in the bay. And all of a sudden they decided they could ship it back over [to] the pulp mill and run it through their machine again and make money, and so that's what they did. That was very profitable for them for years. But, no, they didn't do a lot of the stuff without somebody pushing them. Spent a lot of money, wasted a lot of money. They built... I think the government built a mercury recovery unit – that's a big furnace – and they were going to take all the mud and everything else that comes out of the unit, out of the brine, and they were going to dry it [out] and then put it through this furnace. I don't think... it ever worked, did it?

ELSNER: No, no.

LONEY: But it kept a lot of people working for a while I think. There was a lot of concern from Georgia Pacific. I used to bargain contracts with [them] for years. They would send their top brass out from Atlanta and we would get into big arguments about this and that, money usually. He would... [say], "We don't like this liability of that plant sitting in downtown Bellingham," he said, "because the potential is..." – well how big were our chlorine tanks, three hundred thousand pounds? And we had, I think, seven...

ELSNER: Nine...

LONEY: ...nine tanks with six hundred thousand pounds of liquid chlorine. A bucket of liquid chlorine is a lot of gas so the potential was there. I mean it was just huge and they knew it. They didn't like it, besides all the railroad cars sitting around with eighty-five tons in it. So he used to say that this is a potential liability... Unbelievable that [at a] chlorine plant... Of course the bleach plant, Bob worked at the bleach plant all those years and you had railroad cars sitting there all the time.

ELSNER: Oh yeah, yeah.

LONEY: Bob started in... what [year] did you start in?

ELSNER: I spent fifteen days in the yard then I went [to] the machine room for about three and a half years.

LONEY: That's were they had the pulp machines to make the pulp.

ELSNER: And then I went to the lab for a couple years, and then I went [to] the bleach plant.

LONEY: And that bleach plant was considered the better job in the mill. That's considered the top job, very likely, in the mill.

ELSNER: Except the chlorine dioxide fumes [are] so bad out there, man. Of course, my job [was] over all three floors of the bleach plant and, man, I sure like to go downstairs and make bleach slick early. Hook up a gasoline car...

LONEY: No. In the bleach plant... we had gas masks. We always carried this little escape mask [at] work... most all the time right around our neck. Then we also had the canisters, and then we also had the Scott air packs available to us. It's hard to work in that stuff.

MCALLISTER: Now, did they have policies that certain people had to wear safety equipment?

LONEY: Oh yeah, boots, the coveralls.

MCALLISTER: Did they enforce it?

LONEY: Yeah, in the chlorine plant especially. We were required to wear almost all safety equipment. I think it paid because I got bleach in my eye one time. I went out there and it was raining like mad and we had this big place where we made bleach. You take chlorine and caustic soda and you mix them together with water and it makes bleach. It was raining, and I thought, "What's it raining so hard for?" I looked up and took my glasses off and bleach went right in my eyes. They had a leak up in the pipe and it was raining down. Burned like fire. So they run me up to the doctor's office and they wash it all out. But it still had some scarring in there.

ELSNER: Funny part, when I was in the bleach plant I don't think they had the Scott air packs. We had just barley got the... So we had this man lift, a big endless belt and you went up through a hole in the floor to get up to the control room floor. Well part of the drill [was] I was supposed to put this air pack on and go up that man lift. I couldn't get through!

LONEY: We used to have drills putting this stuff on and trying it out and making it work. We even had – I don't think hardly anyone used it – they bought a acid suit. It was a complete rubber suit, hood, and you had to have air pumped into it, because we had all these acid pumps down there. If that stuff ever started leaking you had to go do something. So that was where you were supposed to put this on. But I don't think we ever had anybody. I put it on one time. I used to have this thing with the... movers – that's the bottom guys. I knew what those little bastards were going to do. They were going to turn the air off when I got that suit on. I said, "By God, you do it, you're dead." And they didn't do it but it scared the hell out of me. We had a bunch of good guys down there, bunch of real good guys.

We did have [a] hydrogen explosion a couple times that lifted the cell lids. A cell is a great big tank – what, about three four feet wide – that high. We had a metal plate and that's what the mercury ran on the bottom, and you had a rubber cover over it. We used two hundred thousand amps, and one hundred thousand, 150,000.

ELSNER: Well, we would get up to two hundred thousand amps.

LONEY: I think so, but real low voltage, four volts, or three volts, so you could grab a hold of the thing and nothing would shock you. But there was enough magnetism out there so if you flipped your knife on there, it was just like that. It made hydrogen. If you lost your mercury or something like that or your brine [got to] the wrong pH, you could make hydrogen. Anything would light it off. Hydrogen and oxygen together are explosive. We had a couple of booms and blew cells through the roof and scared [the] heck out of everybody. Stinked like mad, too. But we didn't have too much of that. We had a lot of instrumentation. The whole cell room was a lot of instrumentation, and one guy had to stay there all the time and watch them and listen and other guys went and did their job. It was pretty well run. Of course, now we are just talking about the chlorine plant, you know, most of it, see. There was a whole bunch of the rest of the mill that I didn't work in. I did barking plant and all digesters and acid plants and [the] steam plant. I didn't work there. I just worked at the paperboard mill and the chlorine plant. Bob worked at the bleach plant and then the chlorine plant. I quit in '89. When did you quit Bob?

ELSNER: '94.

LONEY: I worked, what, thirty-eight years.

ELSNER: We had a couple of what I thought were real good bosses. Jack Duncalf, he was a great boss.

LONEY: He was very, very fair, honest. Before him was Eric Eckholm who was a wonderful old guy. He taught me a couple of things. I have always told this story. I [had] just started the mill, hadn't been in the paper board mill very long, and we have a grievance procedure. So, God, I was only twenty-one, or something, I think it was. I had to go over and talk to the mill manager about this grievance. All it was [was] somebody

thought they had call time coming. I went over there and had it all prepared. I had worked days getting it all written out. [I] walked in and he said – we introduced ourselves – “Your dad works here, don’t he? Oh, he is an honest man.” He says, “What do you want?” So I told him and he says, “I will take your word for it.” He says, “Don’t ever make me question you after this. I will take your word for it. We’re not even going to talk about it.” I thought, son of a gun, it was very impressive. But he was a really good guy, and Duncalf, he was excellent. Now we had a couple of bad ones, too, Bob.

ELSNER: I liked old Ducey Chads. [Some content removed].

LONEY: John Anderson, he was really a wonderful little guy. We had really good management. They would do the right thing, treat you right.

ELSNER: Old Ducey Chads... One day the first acid car – they used to truck in acid before we had the acid plant – so then they got brought in by railroad car and they brought me in on my day off to hook it up and unload it. Of course, it was a first time thing. Boy, we had the whole area roped off and full raingear on, and old Ducey Chads, he was out there right with me. He would say, “Alright now, open that valve real slow or that railroad car,” and so on. So we got it going. Pretty soon old [name omitted] – he was [a] young guy then, a young engineer – he is not wearing a hardhat or raingear or anything. He comes trotting out there, jumps over the rope and comes in. Man, I’ll tell you, that was so impressive, that ass-chewing that old Ducey gave him.

LONEY: Some of the supervisors, superintendent sand stuff, bottom line was it. They had to make an impression with Atlanta and above. Some of them were trying to move up the ladder, some trying to move up the ladder so bad they would do anything. Others just weren’t that way. They were really good guys. We had one, oh, I won’t mention his name. I bargained with him and he gave us his word about a whole bunch of stuff. We used to do this. We would shake hands and that was as good as gold. Two days later he wasn’t doing it. I went and talked to him. He said, “Jarve, you got to understand, sometimes you just have to tell a little fib.” I was like, “No you don’t. I [knew] all these other guys and they didn’t do that.” He said, “You just have to do this once in a while.” He went back on his word. It was no good. So of course you didn’t trust him from then on in. But that was just the way he felt, the way he acted. Bottom line, I would say, most of them were really good people to get along with. Of course, they all had a job to do. Naturally you would expect them to do that job. They hired a lot of the guys from the ranks, up over the years. There was always that ceiling that if you weren’t a chemical engineer you were only going to go so far. That was just about a given.

ELSNER: Some of those guys knew more than the engineers did because they had the practical experience.

LONEY: And they did really good and some real good. No, the company, I always thought they did a real good job. As far as a job I had a chance in the early days. My dad was an electrician there. Oh, I don’t know how or what it was. I had never made an application. We had a bidding thing you could bid from, job to job to job, in all these

different places. The senior guy you would pick out the job if you were qualified. They asked me to go over into the electric shop. I said, “No, I don’t want to go and work with my dad,” because I had seen some of that before where brothers or dads, you would get accused of favoritism even if you weren’t. So I didn’t want any part of it. So I never went over there which would have been a good job. The electric shop was considered one of the better jobs. When I was in the paperboard mill... I thought about it a lot of times. We had the bid books and you would go put your name in the bid book if you wanted to go to some other job. Usually if you were the senior guy and had the qualifications you would get in. Now, when they picked the guys for the chlorine plant we all had to have some chemistry [and a] certain amount of math, a little bit more than you had at the rest of the mill.

ELSNER: One guy didn’t have chemistry – [name inaudible] – he went anyway.

LONEY: Good guys. Then we had guys that would bid in mechanics and bid out of them. Now the company didn’t always like that because they would spend years training you for this job and then they would say, “[We] want to go over here.” Better money and better hours, a lot of people didn’t like tour work. Always we would work around the clock, tour work, different shifts and then it changed. When we first started it was all five day, you would work five day on, two day off.

MCALLISTER: How many hour shifts?

LONEY: Eight hour, and then later on back in the eighties we went into the twelve hour shifts. The chlorine plant was the one it started at. It was pretty popular, everybody liked it, but it was the kind of job that wasn’t that hard physically so you could usually do it, but it gets kind of sleepy. But some of those jobs down there, you put twelve hours in, boy, you knew you had it. Like over in the steam plant, that was real work.

ELSNER: Or bailing.

LONEY: You do that stuff for twelve hours, it would be real hard. But where we worked, you had to stay awake and watch what you were doing. Well, you were supposed to, well... Bob, he would go to sleep. [Laughs]

MCALLISTER: So how did the community in Bellingham, the city of Bellingham in general view the mill, and how did that change?

LONEY: I will give you an example. When we went on strike I had an old aunt that... We had a march through Bellingham, a parade. She come over to my folks’ house and said, “I don’t... what a matter with you guys anyhow, you make twice as much money as you should.” She was a nurse and you know, back in those days nurses didn’t make nothing. She was very P.O.-ed because she thought we were making all this money, we got all them benefits. “What are you doing out here strike[ing]?” I think the general public, I think there was some envy of a lot of the stuff, the wages.

ELSNER: Yeah, when they asked us to work weekends or work graveyard, the guys didn't last very long. They didn't want to do it.

LONEY: They didn't want to do it. But I think the general consensus about the mill and stuff was not too bad. There [were] always some people... like today there are people that don't like the mill and other people do. The merchants and stuff are pretty good. I mean, my gosh, I can remember that [they] used to do stuff for us. Like if we worked overtime there for certain hours they would give you a meal ticket and you could go uptown and eat. For a long time... and man... Of course, the Horseshoe and all those places, they served really good meals and all that stuff. That went down the drain a number of years after that, too. But for a long, long time we had meal tickets and meal drafts.

ELSNER: Well, that one – Automotive Parts, I think it was – got a lot of bearing and stuff for us. Anytime there was a shut down, no matter what time, day or night, you would call them and they would send parts down when ever you need it. We got a long... We didn't have a lot of outside contractors. We [had] some painters, outside painters, Mills and Haskels, local maintenance and that stuff belonged to the union. We got along alright.

MCALLISTER: Now, with all the dumping the chemicals in the bay in the sixties...

LONEY: Is it...

MCALLISTER: ...the fifties and the sixties.

LONEY: You're right.

MCALLISTER: Did people complain about that?

LONEY: No. You know, we talked about this. I've watched... the herring used to come in by the sewer there and float up to the top. I would say, "Son of a gun." Well you dump acid, the herring would come right in the bay there and we would see them come up to the top. We didn't like it but everybody was doing it in those days. The big thing [was], where they are going to make a marina or whatever, that wasn't even there – no pond or nothing. The bay was black. It was black when I started, it was black before that.

ELSNER: The bay was black all the way to Lummi Island one time. [Laughs]

LONEY: Everything was dumped in there, now it wasn't just the pulp mill. The fish cannery dumped all its stuff in the bay. It was sort of the thing to do...

ELSNER: ...until people figured out what it was causing.

LONEY: The mill spent twenty million dollars on that darn lagoon. Boy, then they really started correcting. We had to do this and that.

MCALLISTER: And that came from the government, pretty much.

LONEY: And pressures from, well, the company knew they had to do it. Yeah, it was terrible for a few years there. We all knew it. You see the darn herring turn up and then, well, good example: we had this big barge we had to load and it went down to – where did it go? – California, Samoa, down there in California. It carried caustic, which is very... sodium hydroxide and chlorine and acid. We would pump it out there to the barge. Well, at that time if somebody wasn't awake you're supposed to shut the valve off at the pump before the tank got full. Well, sometimes somebody wouldn't do it and we had a line full of something, and the tank was full and... over the side. Turn the whole bay white. It was terrible. Everybody knew that and they would catch hell and stuff. All you needed to do is to put a line in so you could come back with it. They finally did that – but it cost money – but they just put a crossover and a line so they would shut the valve off and turn the air on, blow it back into the tank. Saved money, too, but it just took a while learn to do that. At the end there you couldn't drop a drop any place. But as far as the public, I don't know, I never heard an awful lot of complaints about [it].

ELSNER: Well...

LONEY: When we used to gas out [the] Columbia Valley there, they didn't like that very well.

ELSNER: Well, there was some old lady that lived up on the hill. She called four or five times a week that she could smell chlorine. Sometimes she would call security, sometimes she would call the chlorine plant. So with a call to security they would immediately send somebody up to her house. They would go all around her house trying to locate a smell of chlorine. They never did find it.

LONEY: What it was, she would see the steam coming out of the stack and she would say, "Look at it there its leaking." Every time we had steam coming up the stacks she would yell about it. One time we used to say, "We need an alarm," so if we have a leak we can set off the alarm. The boss we had at that time said, "No, no, you will scare the hell out of people uptown if you have an alarm, so we're not going to have an alarm." So we said, "Is it better to scare them or gas them?" I can't remember if we ever did get an alarm, maybe we did, I can't remember.

They started the chlorine plant. A guy from Canada did that. It was an experimental place. Terrible smells sometimes. It was just a bad thing. I don't know if you have ever been around chlorine but if it dried on [and] you rub [it] in on cloth it would burst into flame. Oh yeah, it was bad stuff. If you had liquid you could put it in your hand – the liquid – and it wouldn't hurt anything. If it dried, watch out. I brought a... It would kill anything I'm telling you. It would kill any grass. I brought some home. I had some grasses on the driveway. I poured it out there. A week or so, it was nice and dry and everything was dead. I threw a match. It was just like throwing it on gasoline. Instantly, holy... it [would] scare you.

MCALLISTER: Any fires at the mill?

LONEY: Well, not much. Well, we had one over there in the chlorine plant. What was it? Water wouldn't put it out. Well, I remember that was in a barrel. Somebody was working over there, one of the Haskells or something like that. They had this barrel full of rags. But that was the only one.

ELSNER: Yeah. But that was kind of spontaneous combustion.

LONEY: Different parts of the mill had fires. The lignin plant used to have fires in the dryers. We had explosions and we had stinks is what we had.

ELSNER: The paper mill had some fires over there. But I think that was mostly a buildup of dust.

LONEY: They have an awful dust problem over there, terrible... In the late sixties after they started the chlorine plant they merged the two locals there. We got rid of the little local and they all went into one local. When the tissue mill still had their local... But there were just the two locals then. We had a pretty active local, big union meeting and that stuff. Then in 1964 we broke away from an international union. We used to belong to the International Brotherhood of Papermakers and the International Brotherhood of Pulp and Sulphite Workers. We just weren't getting the treatment we thought we should get. They would never come to the meetings. You would never hear about them. If they would come up they would come talk to management before they talked to their own people. It was building up over years and years. Twenty-four thousand people on the west coast, we just formed a revolution and we broke away... walked out of the bargaining and formed our own union and called it the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers. That was the first time we had a strike because the company didn't want to honor our union. [It] only lasted for thirteen days. But we had a very democratic union. The other thing [is], the president appointed all the reps – not in ours, boy, we elected everybody from the bottom up. If we didn't like a president we would kick him out. If you didn't like the rep you would kick him out. I mean, it was all rank and file [that ran] the place. It turned out to be a pretty strong outfit.

ELSNER: They got voted on every so often. People got voted on to keep their jobs.

LONEY: Some of the area reps had been there for ten or fifteen years. [If] the guys didn't like them, they are out the door. So it was a really... we called it the democratic union. It was really, really run from the bottom up. It turned out to be pretty helpful. But we still had good relations. Now we scared the hell out of the company when we first formed it because they had been, all those years, thirty, forty years with no strike. Never a strike, cause they just never had a strike in the international. [It] wasn't that we wanted to strike, we wanted some changes. One of big things we argued about was, when I first started, for all those years, they would say that pensions weren't a bargain-able issue. Each company had their own pension. So they weren't going to let us bargain pension at the big convention. We ended up we didn't have any pension at all to speak of and we couldn't

bargain at all to speak of. That was one of the reasons we said [we] were going to bargain that. After we got our own we did that. We started changing. That was one of the big changes when we broke away from the union. That took us a whole year. Scared the hell out most of us because we didn't know what was going to happen. But it turned out pretty good, so...

ELSNER: You know, another thing, too, they had that waterline that they put in from Lake Whatcom – it was unfiltered water. In fact, we had filters down there at the mill. This was basically what they used for cooling and so on. I understand that the pulp mill paid to put that line in.

LONEY: I heard that, yeah

ELSNER: Also, that any maintenance done on that line, even if the city did it, the pulp mill had to pay for it.

LONEY: It was big. It was huge, you know. It didn't come through the filtration plant, it came straight right out of the lake, a special line. It's still there.

MCALLISTER: So everything that was in the lake came with it?

LONEY: Yeah, we would get little fish once in a while.

ELSNER: The city got paid a million dollars a year for that water running through that line.

LONEY: Then, of course, in the chlorine plant... they had put potable water in so we could drink it and all that stuff. Then in the production of chlorine we had to have soft water so we had to make... oh, God, we had great big soft water tanks. What had to come out, no calcium, no magnesium. Matter of a fact, the first assistant had to check the water every two hours to make sure there were no chemicals in it at all – pure. So we had to filter that water, we had great big filters and stuff. We used a lot of water for cooling mostly. Yeah, you're right Bob, they did pay a lot of money for that big line. I remember that.

ELSNER: When they shut the pulp mill down they didn't take into account that million dollars a year that the city was going to make [and is] not getting anymore.

LONEY: That was the other thing. When they started shutting the pulp mill down there was a lot of, oh, anxiety, and pissed off people. There [were] a lot of people that were saying, "Let's soak GP, soak GP, soak GP." All those generators that were making all the fumes... I think there was more, during that time, more apprehension or disagreement with the guys working and the city and Western, because a lot of people from Western, you know, they wanted to do the research on much pollution and all that. But that's nothing different. Heck, I went down to Toledo and they had the big college right there

by Toledo and they would go in their little boats out there and check the water all day around the mill, all the time. But that's alright, sometimes that's what you need.

MCALLISTER: Gives them something to do.

LONEY: If somebody didn't push you wouldn't get it done sometimes. There [were] quite a bit of bad feelings about [it]. Just about the time from when the mill went down they thought that the city was pushing them. Of course, let's face it, your job is really, really important to you. When that's what you do that's really important. Like I say, we knew something was wrong when we were dumping stuff into the bay, but, geez, you never wanted to do anything to ruin your job. Your job is important. You didn't want to go jeopardizing yourself. That just wasn't the thing to do, too hard to find jobs in those days.

ELSNER: When I went to work there I was down there every week. I would walk into the personnel office and say, "Anybody die this week?" "No Bob, come back next week."

LONEY: In the fifties it was tough getting a job. All the guys had come back from the service and they had priority and stuff like that. There [weren't] that many manufacturing jobs. I looked for a year.

ELSNER: Well, we did have the refineries then.

LONEY: That was about it, that and a couple of lumber mills.

ELSNER: Well, I worked, before I went to the pulp mill, I worked that fall cutting blanks [inaudible]. They are on Meridian Street at the railroad track.

LONEY: For cedar blanks?

ELSNER: Yeah, and I was getting seventy-five cents an hour. The guys would take a break at ten o'clock. I couldn't take a break 'cause I had to keep enough blanks ahead to keep going till noon.

LONEY: That's the way it was. I worked at Deregulate, same way, worked in the cold room. You would go in, it would be thirty degrees below zero with a big fan blowing and then they would take you out on railroad cars shipping ice. But that's the way work was in those days. It really, really changed in our work life. Work did change.

MCALLISTER: Was that because of technology?

LONEY: I think a lot of it. Pressure, technology, peopled wised up and got a little smarter or something. I think the companies figured out that it just didn't pay. It paid to treat people better and get better. This kind of thing... We used to get a turkey ticket. Every year for Christmas we would get a ten dollar turkey ticket. Boy, everybody looked forward to getting that damn turkey ticket at Christmas. That was a big thing. Well years

ago it would buy a turkey, then after a while it wouldn't buy a hind leg hardly. So we got a new mill manager after a while who says, "We're going to take away the turkey tickets," and they did, and I suppose they saved themselves – well, what, ten times three hundred – three thousand dollars, maybe six thousand dollars they saved them. It must have cost them [a] hundred thousand dollars because people would stop for hours and talk about losing their turkey tickets. I told him one time, I said, "That was the dumbest thing you ever did." He said, "Well, we made all that money." I said, "No, you lost money." I could remember fifteen guys getting around talking for an hour – "Damn, they took our... them guys took our turkey ticket away," – no work getting done at all, and some people realized that, you know. I mean, I think some managers said, "Hey, we just don't do that, it don't make sense." But he was one of those guys that [said], "By God, we're going to do it."

ELSNER: You know, it was before I got there, but they used to make these four hundred pound bales, you know. They did have tow motors.

LONEY: Is that right?

ELSNER: They hauled them around with hand trucks and they wheeled them out the railroad cars. They put them in the railroad cars and muscled those bales around by hand. Then they got the tow motors and man that made a whale of a difference.

LONEY: Well, when I worked in the paper board mill, the sheet [would] come out all the time and the cutter would cut these big sheets. They might be anywhere from thirty inches long to sixty inches long, and thirty-seven inches wide or whatever it is. We would have to pack them... pick them up by hand and put them over on this pallet... put them on the backboard and straighten them all up. Oh God, I suppose we would make twenty to thirty tons a day. We had to carry that by hand. After about five years of lifting that stuff, I had shoulders that, man, I used to be able to arm wrestle anyone anywhere – because your shoulders and arms are just... Of course, I went over to the chlorine plant and I all went blah, just like that. It was hard manual, physical work in the early days. Over the years, yeah, yeah, it just changed, especially where we were. During the seventies the wages were really... we had some huge increases. Well, not all at once, but over the years.

Like, I bought a house on Eldridge when I first started for ten thousand dollars. I was making sixty four dollar a month house payments and that was a big worry when I did it. Well, heck, three or four years later it was nothing because wages had gone up so much. And we lived through a good time for making money, making a living and stuff like that. I think when I'm good and everything else. I thought we were treated good, we lived good. In fact, I don't think I would like to be in your shoes right now. I think it would be tougher now. You got to have an education, that's for sure. You got to have that. My granddaughters and all, they're getting a really good education. It's great. Without it now, I don't think a guy could get out of high school and find a job and make a good living now. I don't think you can do it like we did. But that was a common thing when we got

out of school. They were supposed to train us for college. We had to take Latin and something else to go to college – forget about writing and English.

And I think we have talked about it a lot – the change from the fifties to the seventies and the safety and stopping the pollution – just a whole bunch of stuff. Really, [it] was a huge change, all for the better, almost all for the better. When I worked at the paper board mill they had these great big chests twice... well, about the size of this room. And you would put pulp... you would chew it all up and make slush and stuff out of it. Then we would color it, like I say, purple or blue or whatever color it was, and they would run this order out. Well, they might have a half a chest of stock left. They would pull the plunger and out it would go out into the bay and the whole bay would turn purple out there. But that was a huge cost of losing that stuff. So then they put in what they call a – I can't remember the name of it now – a machine that collected all that stuff, it saved all the stock. Then they would bleach it out again and save it instead of dumping it out into the bay. But that was technology here again, somehow to change it. All that... Bob knows more about the... They re-changed the bleaching process later years, didn't they, or just before they shut down. They were going to go to oxygen bleach.

ELSNER: Yeah, they were trying to get away from the chlorine bleach to try and use as little chlorine as possible. They would... it [made] a lot white sheet, and of course they all just really pushing to get whiter paper.

LONEY: That was a big, big... I don't know why. I think that says something about ourselves. I used to travel to Jamaica, all those places, and, hell, they had blue and purple toilet paper, and brown, unbleached. Everybody used it. That's what they had. But here, I remember the company saying "Hey, they tried it." They had to be the brightest white there was. So then, of course, they started the alcohol plant down there.

MCALLISTER: Yeah, I heard about the alcohol plant.

LONEY: When they started it the government put it down there to see if they could make alcohol. It made a lot of alcohol. That stuff was drinkable, you know.

MCALLISTER: That's what I heard.

LONEY: I only tried it once. That was enough. They would make it... was what, 190 proof?

ELSNER: I think so, yeah.

LONEY: It was made out of the acid or the sugars out of the wood. But the government, boy, you couldn't even get near it. Every valve was checked and blocked. The government had it for years. You couldn't get a drop of it. Then over the years, of course, they left, and the guys, nobody took it home because it was too hot. The only time I ever tried it somebody diluted it down – put it in grapefruit juice, a couple ounces of it. You know there was no taste to it but it was there. Now that's the same thing with mercury. It

was available to us. You could get all the mercury you wanted. Nobody took a drop of it home. We didn't want the damn stuff. It's dangerous to have it around. So, I don't know about you, I never took any of it home. I didn't want it.

ELSNER: I took some home on my shoes. I would take my shoes off and put them in the closet. I ended up finding mercury all over the floor.

LONEY: In the chlorine plant we had to take a shower everyday, and we had to wash our coveralls, and our shorts, and all that stuff. We had to take a shower and wash our hair everyday, after every shift. That was a requirement. Now when I worked in the paperboard mill, we didn't have showers, see. But the chlorine plant, man, we had showers and they furnished everything and the whole works. That was an added precaution. And then they used to send us up every six months... well, I don't think the physicals were very much. We had to breath in a tube. They checked for shake, for mercury shakes and all that.

MCALLISTER: Were a lot of people being exposed to mercury?

LONEY: Oh yeah, it was there all the time. There was mercury all over the floor. It's hard to explain it but you get leaks, you get leaks here and there. And we had ditches, special ditches made to trap... and wash down these ditches and they would run it down into what they called a mercury sump pump.

ELSNER: Mercury trap

LONEY: A mercury trap, or whatever it was. And then we had a pump and we would pump it into three gallon buckets, and then you would bail it... back into the thing and we would reuse it. But there's a lot of fumes going off, especially if it got hot and stuff.

ELSNER: The hotter it would get the more fumes you would get. But they washed down once a day. That was their job, first thing in the morning, to wash down all the floors.

LONEY: And, of course, all the mercury was covered with water where we used it. But of course you would have spills and stuff like that. I can remember that one time when I went over and got Dave Jenkins and he was the safety director. I said, "You got to come look at this." There [were] puddles on the floor. We had leaks and they didn't want to shut down and fix the leaks. We would wash it out but still it would come right back and leak again. When they first started out they said, "Boy, we're going..." We had to pee in a bottle, we had a urinalysis. We had to do that every month or so, didn't we? Couple months, oh, every six months. We had twenty-four hours and they would send it away and check it, and they would say, "Now if this goes very high you're going to have to go to the chlorine plant for a week or two until you get back." Well, I think the first guys that got up there, they raised the number. I don't remember anyone going out. I don't think anybody ever left. It got a little more lax.

Boy, this Luther Dundan boss, boy we didn't have a drop of mercury any place. He was really, really insistent on it. It cost money to do all this. Well, it gets older, too. Well you get a little pinhole leak and mercury squirts out. You don't want to shut down and fix it. Oh yeah, a lot of it was our own fault. You get lazy and don't do stuff exactly the way you should. Most of us, I would say, most of the places I worked, guys were very conscious. They wanted their jobs, they wanted the... The bottom line was, hey, I got to keep this thing going. You know the company has got to make money or we're not going to have a job, so we're going to do our best. We had supervisors that would do dumb things and we would have to go raise hell with them. "What are you trying to do, get this place in trouble?" It sounds funny but that actually happened.

ELSNER: It did, yeah.

LONEY: We had one guy, he was a nice guy, but every time he would go up for lunch with a bunch a guys he would come home halfway drunk. We would get after him. We weren't allowed to do that. In the early days there was no alcohol or drugs. I guess later on there [was a] certain amount of drugs partnered through the mill. I don't think it was very prevalent. I just heard guys talking about [it], so and so.

ELSNER: Oh, that one guy, [some material omitted], he was working relief on another shift and he... come staggering in and says, "Hell, I've been smoking pot all day, drinking beers, God I'm beat. I haven't been to bed." I looked at him and thought, "Oh God, he is going to be on my shift in a week. What am I going to do?" So the next night he comes in same way. And I told him, I said, "Look, when you get on my shift you're coming in sober, otherwise you're going to be in trouble." He says, "You can't do anything to me, the union will protect me." And I says, "All I have to do is call the shift foreman and have him come over here and tell him I would like to take a look at my crew boy, if he can't see what I see..."

LONEY: Our theory was that the guy was hurting us more than anybody else because he is liable to cost us our job and we have to cover for him. We have to do the work and all that stuff. We didn't want that stuff going on. It didn't make sense at all.

ELSNER: And he came in cold sober.

ELSNER: He ended up... he held a union office.

LONEY: Yeah, he was a pretty good guy [some material omitted]. We had a bunch of crazy people down there and stuff. I think the guys actually straightened more of the guys out than the... In the chlorine plant we didn't have any supervision except in the daytime. No night supervision at all for years. They just let us run it. We ran the thing.

ELSNER: Yeah, if we needed somebody, they told us [to] go ahead call them in.

LONEY: We ran the place by ourselves. We had the operator and two or three assistants.

ELSNER: Then finally they says, “Well, you guys got too much authority. The shift foreman is going to do it now.” Then we got in a northeaster, I called the foreman and said, “I need somebody.” He says, “I’ve got everybody in that I can get a hold of,” and I said, “Yeah, this is an emergency and we need somebody in a hurry...”

LONEY: ...because the place would freeze up in a hurry.

ELSNER: Yeah. He says, “You try to get somebody, if you get somebody, fine.” So I got on the phone, I got somebody in. An hour later here the foreman is over there, “I see, got so and so in. I need him over in the bleach plant.”

LONEY: They let us pretty well run the chlorine plant. We didn’t have hardly any supervision at all. That, again, was this first original boss. He was a pretty smart guy. He knew how to work people pretty good. But he trusted us and that was our job. It was a good place to work, I thought. So shoot some questions out.

MCALLISTER: So how do you think future generations should remember the plant and the waterfront in general?

LONEY: Ah, well I’m glad it changed. They should appreciate the changes that were made. I don’t blame the company or anything else – the way they were doing it – because that’s what people did. I mean nobody thought there was anything wrong [with] dumping something in the bay. The city had all their dumps down by the bay, you remember?

ELSNER: Yeah.

LONEY: We dumped all the garbage and everything right down by the bay. If the bay washes out that’s good. We got rid of the garbage. See, that’s just the way it was. So I think that future generations should think that a lot of changes were made, for what reason and all, I’m not sure. They were made for the better. It’s a hell of a lot cleaner now than it ever was before.

MCALLISTER: Now can you tell that, on the beach, like back in the, say, the fifties?

LONEY: Well, I will give you an example. When the bay was dirty the pilings were all clean. There [were] no bugs in it. As soon as they took the poison out of the water the bugs started eating the pilings. Now this is true.

ELSNER: That’s true.

LONEY: The toridos, or whatever they were, they eat the holes in the pilings, see. When all the pollution was there it killed all the toridos. So now we’re losing the pilings. When I first started you walked down to [the] citizens’ dock down there, where it was. The water was this color – absolutely brown. You couldn’t see two inches in it, the whole bay, and it stayed that way all the time because everything went out there black, that’s all. They finally cleaned it up. The water looks clearer. Oh yeah, there is a huge difference.

Now there is a lot of mercury we know – everybody in the city knows – down in the bottom of the bay. Most of that went in there in the early years, before they started trapping it and stuff. That was accepted. Everything else went in the bay, why not that? That’s just the way it was considered. Yeah, I think one of the things is that there has been a huge improvement. Well, a lot of people are a lot more environmentally concerned than they ever were. Part of it was we all fish and stuff like that.

MCALLISTER: Did that affect the salmon runs, obviously...?

LONEY: Oh, sure. You lose all the herring. You don’t get no salmon and all of this.

ELSNER: You know where the international cross-arm plant was?

MCALLISTER: Can’t say I do.

ELSNER: The foot of Cornwall Avenue, right where you go across the railroad tracks. You go back up the hill, if you continue on out, that was all garbage dump.

LONEY: That whole thing was garbage dump, where they got the mill and some of the stuff down there.

MCALLISTER: Isn’t that where Bloedel-Donovan was?

ELSNER: Somebody had a bunch of logs down in there.

LONEY: But that was all dump down there, right on the water. No bank, no nothing. They just dumped it, kept dumping it and dumping it.

MCALLISTER: And filled it?

ELSNER: Yeah, and out into the bay.

LONEY: That was just the expected thing, you know. Over the years, for some reason or what reason, but they made huge improvements. Now we have got some beautiful parks down there on the waterfront and stuff. There is a lot of debate now, and I had to serve on jury duty just a few years ago. I happened to serve with Tom Glen, who is one of the old, old port commissioners – a lot is named after him. He and I had a big discussion about the waterfront, the port and all that. And he is the old-timer. He says, “Jarve, that place is not made for parks, it’s made for industry, making work and jobs.” He said, “They are ruining it, all they are putting is those damn parks down there.” I said that the parks are nice and he said, “Yeah, the purpose of the waterfront was industry – making a living for people,” and he was very, very set on that. I sort of agree. A lot of jobs are gone that were there. But I also like the parks and I like clean water. Maybe that’s a little selfish because I’ve got mine. If I was young again [laughing], looking for a job – well you know what I mean – if I was going to look for a job and they would say you are working for the mill, and I would say, “Damn right.”

We're not the only one. I had good friends in Everett at Weyerhaeuser, all those mills down there. And they went to put that Navy base in there and all the guys were madder than hell. You know, you are going to run us out of here. You are going to run the mill out of here. They didn't like it at all. And Al Swift – senator at that time – and I talked to him. He said, “Gosh, I thought everybody wanted that Navy base there.” I said, “No, you better talk to those guys down there ‘cause they don't want it.” They were scared [that] they were going to lose their job, you know. When I first started in the union twenty-four thousand people on the west coast belonged. Now I think we got, what, eight thousand. They closed so many mills up and down the coast, but that, of course, it's like logging. You go on down the hill... And we don't have too many buggy-whips and all that stuff anymore. It will never comeback. But things change, technology is taking over now. I don't have any bad things to say about Georgia-Pacific.

ELSNER: Well, it raised my family.

LONEY: It raised mine, too. Like I say, we live good. Bob, he don't have to worry about anything, he has got more money than the rest of us... Good job. We worked hard. I don't have nothing bad to say about GP or Puget Sound Pulp and Timber. I thought they treated us good. We earned it. We worked hard and earned it. It turned out good. There [were] other things that happened... What was it, the caustic truck with the acid train on the cars. Somebody said that they had to put a, inside and outside valve because you get going down the railroad track and it would dribble, dribble caustic acid. My boss, I remembering him telling me this. I said, “When are we going to do that?” He said, “We're not. It's cheaper to pay the fine than it is to put the valve on.” And I thought, “Son of a gun,” – dribble acid down the road or whatever it was. But that again was bottom line again, see. Now what was right, but was bottom-line. Well, of course that didn't last very long, ‘cause they says, “You are going to put them on,” so we put them on. Again he had the pressure on him to make money.

MCALLISTER: Well, I think that's all the questions I have.