

Updated 28 Oct 2000. All others obsolete.

LO-00INTV-K
WALKER
CTCO-00-MERV BIC

August 17, 1998
INTERVIEW WITH MERV JOHNSON
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY KIMBERLY WALKER
TAPE 1 OF 2, SIDE 1

Walker: It's August 17, Monday morning and I will be talking with Merv Johnson and I am Kimberly Walker.

Johnson: Do you have to write it down? These are the activities typically involved . . . [inaudible]. We can put it on tape, or I can list them.

Walker: Wow, that is exciting. So where did you grow up then?

Johnson: In Vernonia and Glenwood and Tillamook. I was born in Vernonia at my grandparents home- up there on the Oregon-American hill - just a few houses from where the museum is now which was the OA office. Then I was taken home to Kostur's Camp which is - do you know where Treharne is? Yeah, Kostur's Camp. We lived outside the camp - on the edge of it because my Dad was working for Kosters at the time. Then from there we moved over to Consolidated Camp. Then from there to Tillamook. All three were logging communities at the time.

Walker: So what was it like growing up in a logging community? [Photo # 3]

Johnson: Oh, it was great. It was just great. Yeah, especially for boys. I have always liked machinery. My Dad ran yarder, but he was at that time a mechanic there at Consolidated. I just kind of got turned on to a love of machinery because of him. You could see steam everywhere. Most everything was steam, including the blacksmith hammer at the shop. Steam donkeys, steam locomotives - they had steamers running up and down the railroads. But, of course there were gas and diesel engines as well - a few log trucks - the railroad speeders had gas engines.

And then I had a friend who lived two houses away whose father was a fireman on one of the locomotives there. [Photo #7.] We got along real good. We both liked steam locomotives and so we had a lot of fun just roaming around, going down to the yards watching the trains come in. We used to pretend we were running locomotives and things like that as we hiked up the hill behind our houses.

Sometimes this carried this over when we were in school. School was pretty basic then. Basically it was the three Rs, but out of the four years that I went to school there, I remember at least one year where the teacher was pretty tolerant of what Bud Rogers and I were into. When we had a little bit of free time, we would go up to the blackboard. We'd draw all these railroads and locomotives and all that kind of stuff. So maybe in our way, we educated the class to what steam locomotives were all about - trains and stuff.

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Walker: Where did you learn about steam locomotives, just by watching it?

Johnson: Just by watching it. Because we were there. Then of course, Bud's father was fireman and that's how he learned. My father was able to answer questions about steam.

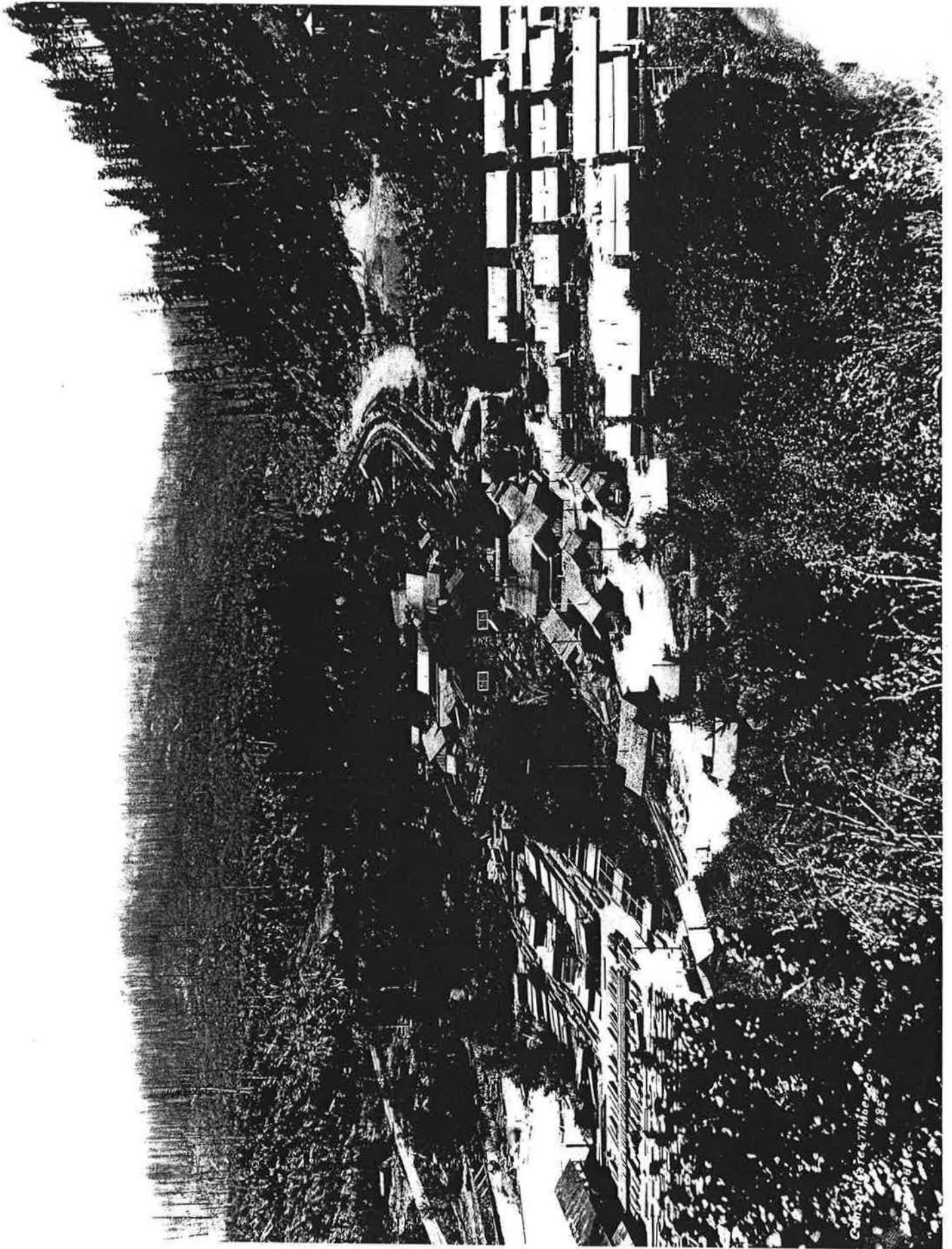
I was more familiar with the trains at that time than the donkeys. Then later on when I got a little older, he started taking me up in the woods with him and that was really neat. You see, my Dad was what they call a donkey doctor. He was the mechanic for the donkeys in the woods, whereas the railroad came right into camp. It's been kind of - it's always been my first love as far as occupation is concerned - is logging. Even though I didn't stay with it.

Walker: When your Dad took up to the woods, what was that like?

Johnson: Well, my - what I remember mostly is Camp Two, which is near South Saddle Mountain. We are talking about South Saddle off the Wilson River, not the one that is over at Seaside. I need to get my glasses on to find that. There's Owl Camp - now this has been renamed Rogers because of the forester. And I think it is kind of neat that they named something after him, but I wished they had named some other location, because this was Owl Camp on the railroad. I would have liked to see all these names remain that were used when the railroads were there. . . [looking at map] Owl was at the summit of the Wilson River Highway and Saddle Mountain, Camp two was South of there. There some place. 1938 - oh that was before Camp Two was put in. I have got two other maps which I couldn't find this morning. If you are so inclined, I can dig them out for you. If we could find Saddle Mountain, I could tell you where it is. Here it is - okay the camp was like over in this area somewhere. [Map]

Walker: That's where you were with your dad?

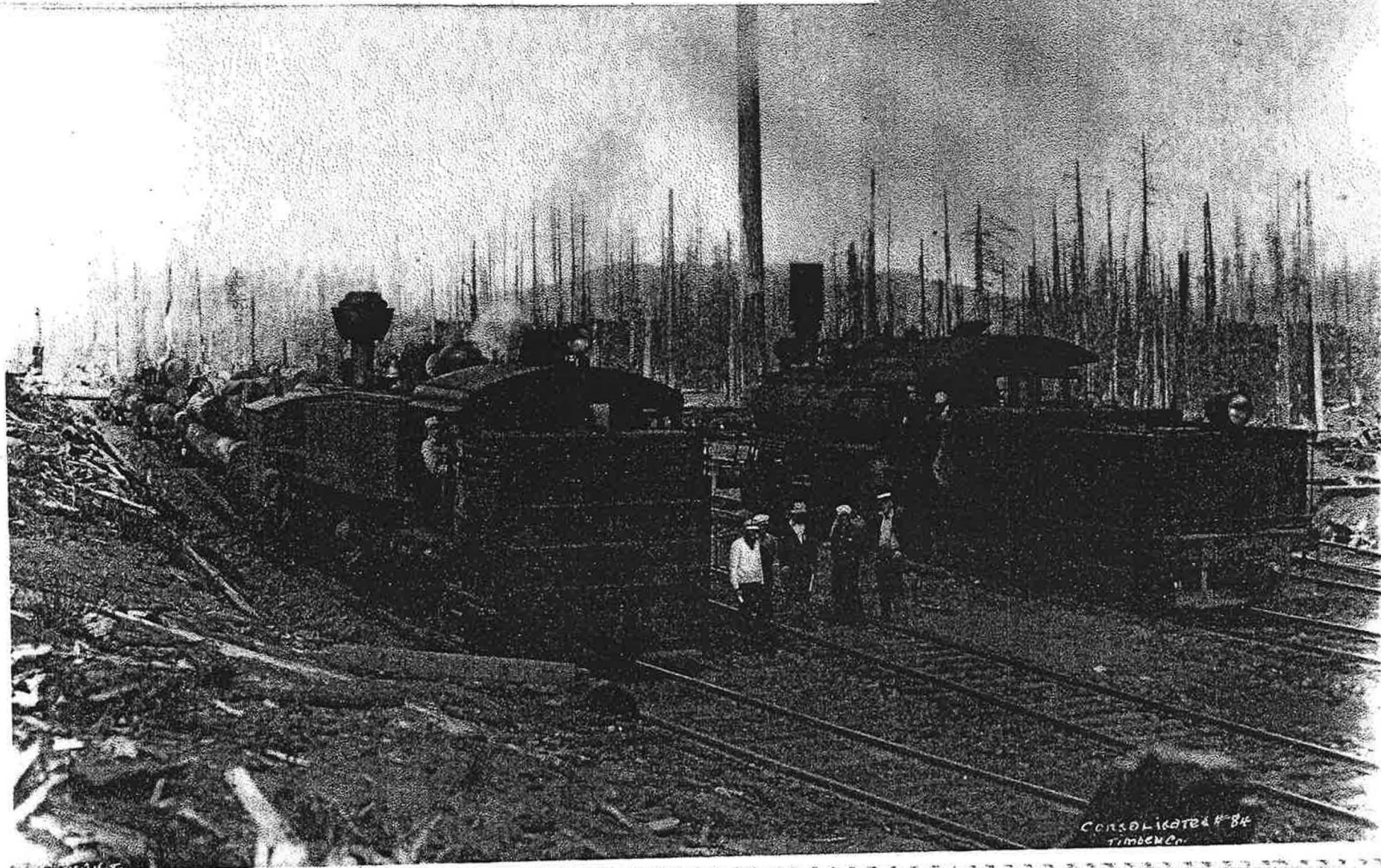
Johnson: Yes, but this railroad has got to be Stimpson's, which was South of Consolidated Timber Co. But anyway you questioned what was it like - well, my Dad had his own bunkhouse up there across from the canyon from the river camp. It had a shop on one end and the sleeping quarters in the other. I use to go up in the summer time when school was out and stay up there all week in a tent we put up. So I got to see the trains arrive and leave. Occasionally, I would go out in the woods with him. That's where I saw the steam donkeys run. I will tell you a little story now - you're interested in human interest stories. Well, he taught me how to run the speeder - the railroad speeder. But he was always with me, you see. They had telephone lines all along the railroad there. That's how they communicated. They didn't have two-way radio back then, you know. At least not there anyway. That was in - that would have had to been before '44 somewhere in the early '40s. One day he got a telephone call from somebody who wanted a ride at the end of the railroad, which was one mile out to the end from Camp Two. He wanted to be picked up and brought back to camp - Camp



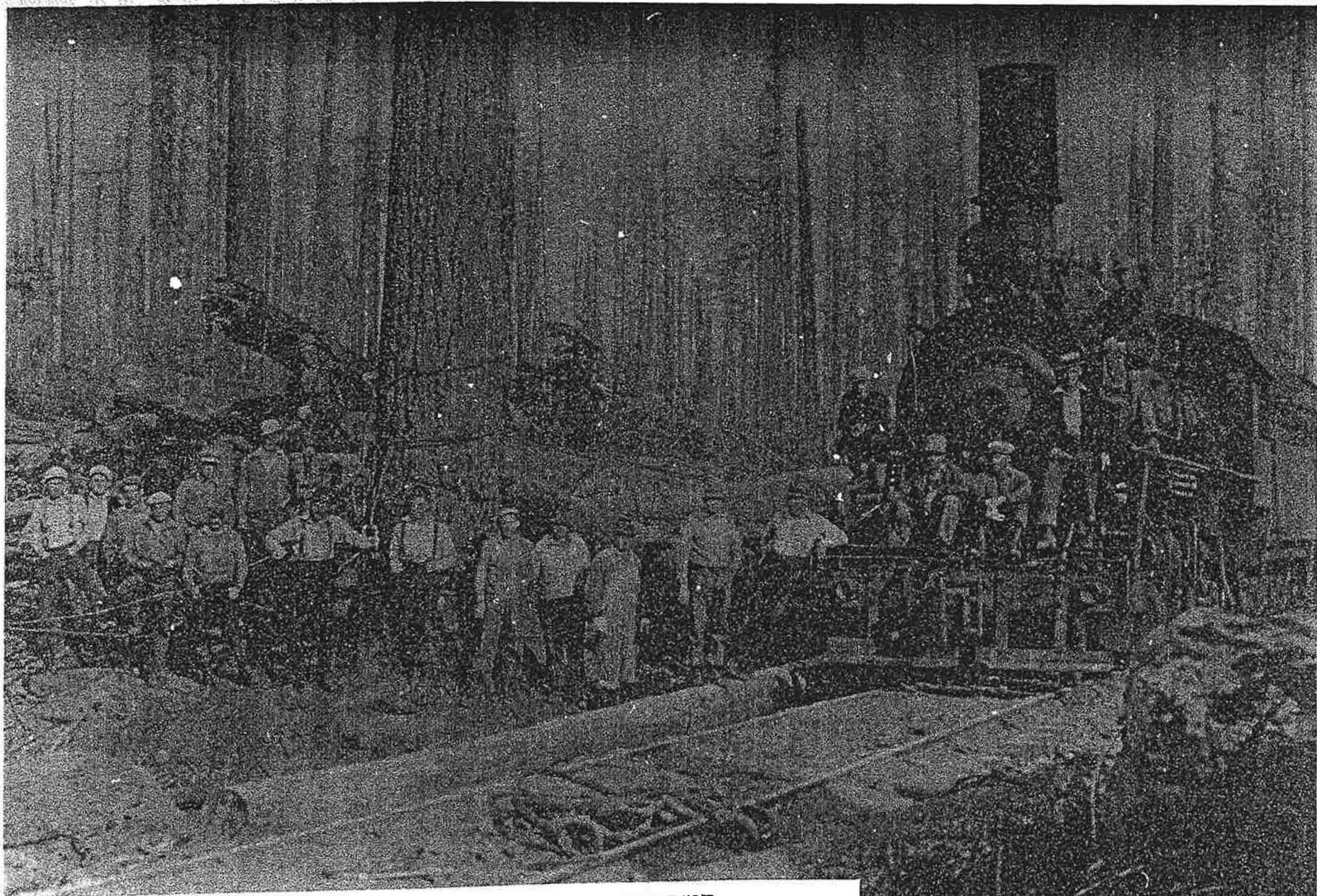
Cambridge, Mass. 1885

#7 120 BALDWIN #4 ON LEFT. IN CAB: BILL ROGERS, BERT CLOSE. ON GROUND: L. CHAS. VAN DORN, 2. JIMMY PHONES, 3. S.J. DE ROCK, 4. ERNEST JOHNSON, 5. CASEY SHARP, 6. ED DANIELSON. 2-8-2 #3 BALDWIN ON RIGHT. ACCORDING TO LEE, ELMER SWANSON AND BILL VAN LOO IN CAB. FELIX OFFERS THE FOLLOWING INFO: THIS PHOTO TAKEN AT THE "WYE." THE #4 HAULED FROM THE WYE, MAYBE ALSO THE WEST BRANCH. ED DANIELSON AND CHARLIE VAN DORN WERE BRAKEMEN. "SWIVEL HEEL" WAS SOMETIMES ENGINEER ON #3. (FROM THE BILL VAN LOO COLLECTION.) (KINSEY PHOTO # 84)

p12



CONSOLIDATED #84
TIMBER CO.



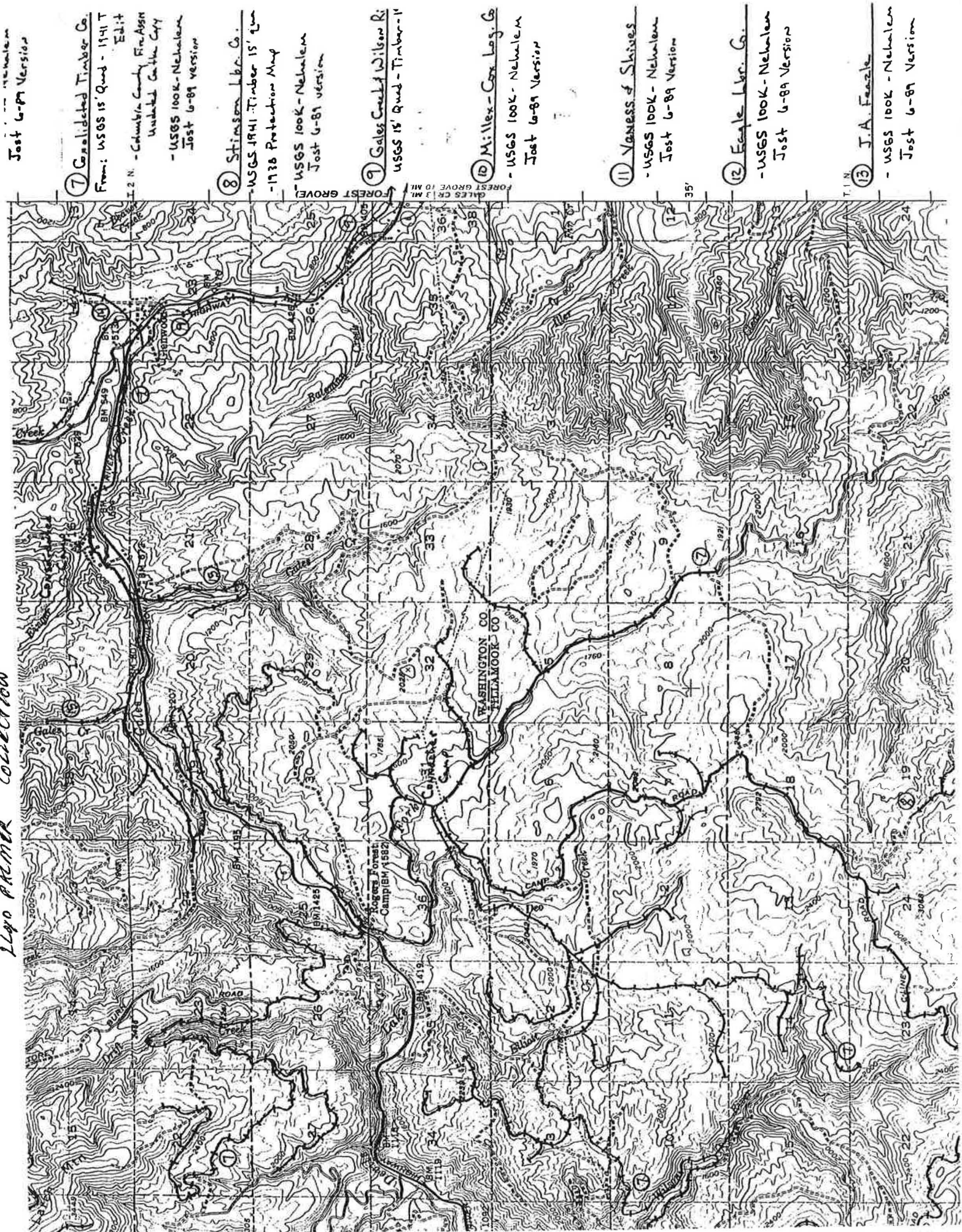
CTCO #37 KINSEY PHOTO #77 *Desinger*

(CTCO#37)

Some names L to R: Heine Desiner (extreme left,) probably Ed Keller (hanging in the pass chain. He was not the climber, however.) Probably Jim Harleman immediately below and to Ed Keller's left (Ed's right,) Pat Soderberg was the climber who is standing in front of the tree, Bill Cupp (watchman,) Dan Neadeau, next to Dan is Hy Davis (woods boss, leaning on engine.) On engine L to R: Ernest Johnson, Elmer Swanson, Jimmie Phone, Ed Danielsoh (straw hat) Lee Eger.

*Consolidated Timbers
#77*

LLOYD PRIMER COLLECTION



- 7) Consolidated Timber Co.
From: USGS 15' Quad - 1941 T
Edit
- Columbia County Fire Assn
Unshaded Galtus City
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version
- 8) Stinsons Lbr. Co.
- USGS 1941 Timber 15' Quad
- 1938 Protection Map
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version
- 9) Gates County (Idaho) R.
USGS 15' Quad - Timber-11
- 10) M. N. Cox - Cox Log. Co.
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version
- 11) Vaness of Shives
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version
- 12) Escalpe Lbr. Co.
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version
- 13) J.A. Frazier
- USGS 100K - Nelmalem
Just 6-89 version

A MORE DETAILED MAP IS ON THE NEXT

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Two. Lee (my father) was real busy with a lot of work to do. He turned around to me and said, "Do you think you could run that speeder by yourself?" And I said, "I guess so - why not." He said, "well, there is a guy to wants to be picked up, why don't you go get him." So here I was, ten years old, or maybe 12 at the oldest. The main line went like this and then you had a little spur to his shop. I had to throw the swich to get on the mainline. He said be sure when you get out on the mainline, to throw the switch back again. You always throw the switch back to the mainline. Okay - so I went out there and switched it and everything and he was actually watching me out of the corner of the window. Actually, I had to throw it just to get to my destination. But anyway, I went out to the end and low-and-behold, there's the wood's boss. The superintendent. The big guy, He was one step under the manager. His name was Hy Davis. I was pretty young, but I knew that this might not be too cool:

"Do you know how to run that speeder?"

"Um, yeah."

"Well, take me back to camp."

I took him right on past Lee's bunk house and across the trestle that led into camp. As we went by, my Dad was looking out the window. As soon as I got back, Lee said, "What did he say to you?"

"He didn't say anything."

You know what? He never did say a word to Lee about that. Never said a word. There are different kinds of bosses. There are the bosses that scream and holler all the time and they get things done. Then there's the low key, laid back type, and they get things done too - just a management style. Just one of those guys that never got too excited.

Johnson: The picture on the back? - Oh, just happen to pull the right one out. Hy Davis is there. He's the guy leaning on the pilot beam. [Photo #37]

Walker: And you're logging snags then?

Johnson: Yep, that's all that came with the burn. We had problems with the ecology. People just would say all this timber got burned up. We got to log it and get it out of there before it rots. We were still logging the burn when I went to work in the woods - it wasn't cleaned up until about '58. We were just salvaging it and getting it out as quick as we could. [Merv's editing note: There are two meanings for "snags." One is burned or dead timber, an additional meaning refers to non-merchantable timber. Walker refers to the former.]

What was it like? Well, I got to tell you I made my own little toys up there - my little logging toys. And I got to watch my Dad make chokers. He used to heat them up and make those chokers and dees. He melted babbitt in a molten pot over a bark fire Bark

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gets hotter than coal. At least, hotter than the coal that was available to them at the time.

He had an accident there. There was a lean-to roof on the east end of that bunkhouse where Lee melted babbitt. If you get water in molten metal, it explodes. It was kind of misty that day. *Oregon mist*, you know. He was underneath the roof pouring babbitt making chokers, and it blew up in his face. But he wore glasses and anything that would have come this way, hit the glasses, the rest of it went up this way. (Hand gestures.) It never blinded him or anything like that. It burned up his face some. Years later, there was no evidence of the accident.

What was it like for me? Well, they had a couple of old donkeys that weren't being used. A donkey, pile driver, and what they called *iron mule*. I use to play on those and pretend like I was running them. I knew where the controls were and I'd pretend like I was doing the real thing.

Walker: Were you the only one there - just you and your Dad?

Johnson: Yes, on the West end of camp, and we were only the ones there with cats, that I recall. They were good mousers. I don't know of any other kids that went up there.

Down in Glenwood, the main camp, there were few kids my age. There were only two other kids my age that lived there in camp. One was a good friend, and the other one used to beat up on me.

Walker: That's no good. So how many people were in the camp of Glenwood?

Johnson: Gee, I don't know. Oh, gosh, I would have to sit down and look at a map of the camp and count the number of houses and figure out how many bunkhouses. There was married people in one part, then bunkhouses for the single men. Maybe 100 or 200, or something like that.

Walker: How was the camp kind of neat? What was in it? Lots of people, schoolhouse?

Johnson: The schoolhouse was at Timber Road, you know where Wilson River meets Timber Road? You go up around the bend up there and you make that left turn, it is right on the left. I don't know if anyone has any pictures of that school, unfortunately. Even though the school remained there a long time after it was abandoned. I don't know of any pictures.

The camp - what was it like? [Photo #3 again.] Looking southeast -left in the photo - is the Wilson River Highway. And by the way, right about 1940 is when they built the Wilson River Highway. I can remember them building that. That sharp bend (out of

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photo) you know where the sharp bend is - well, they had to blast that. I remember what kind of dump trucks they used to haul rock. [Photo # 3 again]

Walker: What kind of dump trucks?

Johnson: They were Fords - some were single axles. Apparently, they were on their last legs because they took them into camp and they sat there for a long time. I don't know if anyone ever rebuilt them and put them back to work after that. That bend there at Glenwood - okay have you been in there? On the right side as you drive in- looks like *Okeyville* now, but there were several homes along there, including two nice ones up on the hill. One of those was the Camp Carpenter - Charley Uhlin . His son, Donny is a little younger than I am. When they were blasting, a big rock went clear across Gales Creek and through their porch roof and down through the floor. It's probably still there underneath that porch. It was either Uhlin's or the house next to it.

(Looking at photo.) We lived in this part right here. We called this area *Hollywood*. I can't locate the house on this map. In fact, I have been up there several times and I can't find the house anymore. It has either been torn down, rebuilt, or remodeled. The house wasn't worth much. They were basically tar-paper shacks.

Walker: Did they have rooms or just one big room?

Johnson: We had four rooms. Then my uncle came along and built a walk-in cooler. We didn't have any refrigerator. He insulated it with sawdust. It had no refrigeration- just a cool place. There was a carport. We probably didn't even use the term *carport* then. A *lean-to* roof. I don't remember if it was there when we first moved in.

Walker: So you didn't build it yourself. It had already been built.

Johnson: The house? Oh no, it was already there. Residents bought those houses. We had outdoor toilets then. We lived cheap. We had running cold water which was free. Since we had only a light bulb in each of those four rooms, electricity was cheap also. Basically, when the camps shut down, you could miss your payments if you wanted to. The arrangement was that employees needed to buy the house, and then after Consolidated went out of business, or you quit, then the company would buy it back from you. I think a house cost \$500 or something like that. I don't know if my parents got it paid off.

Walker: Did you share that house with anybody else or just your family?

Johnson: Just our family. There were only three of us. I am an only child.

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Johnson: By the way, Pat Soderberg lived next door to us. We were up in here someplace. [Out of sight to right in photo.] South of there, was a spur on a steep grade for their oil cars. They were called them *oil cans*. They also had sandhoppers on that spur, which were built after this photo was taken. They dumped sand into the hoppers which was conveyed down into that sandhouse. The sand was kept warm and dry to keep it from binding up. The locomotives used it when the railroad was slick or on steep grades. That water tank was for the locomotives – no- that wouldn't be for the camp. Our water came from a creek west out of photo. Bud and I would play in that sand house, which had sheet metal chutes like a playground slide. It was warm and dry.

Let's see- where are we?

Walker: You are doing great. It is wonderful to hear about what these camps were like. They look like small little towns.

Johnson: If you attend conventions like the one we had yesterday, you'll find that for the most part, the people liked living in the camps. It would appear the men liked it more than the women, however. One thing they all liked was that people would help each other when there were hard times. There wasn't much privacy, but then on the other hand, there wasn't much crime either. Kind of a close-knit community. People are still getting together after all these years. I am secretary for the Tidewater Timber Co. re-union. Even though the company folded in '43, and most of the original people have died, those that remain and their kids are still coming. To me, that tells us a lot about the logging communities of the time.

Walker: What was a typical day like? You would get up and what would your day be like?

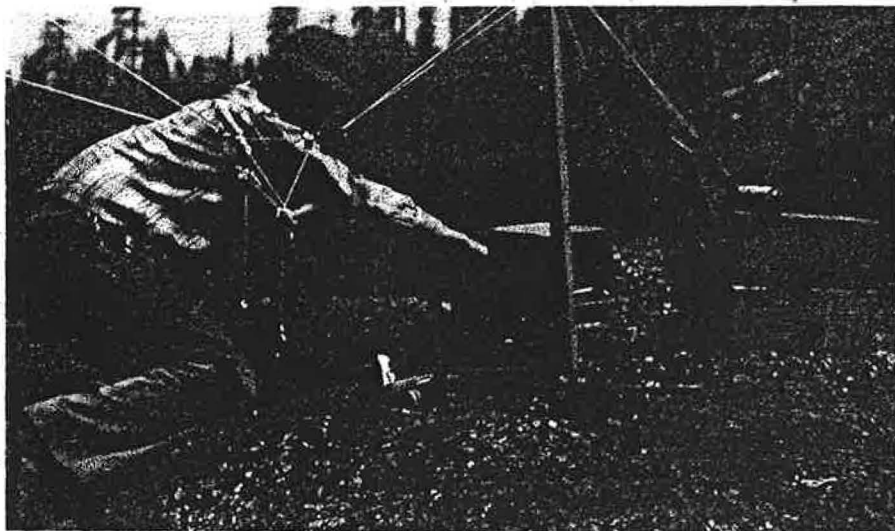
Johnson: As a child?

Walker: Yeah.

Johnson: Well, by the time I got up, my Dad was long gone. Loggers get up early and go to work. They used the railroad to get to work.

What was a typical day for me? Well, if it was a school day, we'd get up, get ready for school, and walk to the school bus stop which was in camp. They eventually built us a little shelter. We went one mile, or whatever it was, to Jedmore on the school bus. Jedmore was a two-room school with 60 kids. I think there were 30 kids in each room. The school was wood-fired and it had huge woodshed. Sometimes, we'd go play in the woodshed during break. The principal we had at the time was a really nice guy. He taught the upper four grades and then the other teacher taught the kids below. The one teacher that I liked the best was named Okrasinski. I found her in Gresham in the 80's, and went to see her. We had a good visit. I have some of the things she wrote,

64



44. MERV AT CAMP 2 - SADDLE MOUNTAIN

PHOTO # 44

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by the way. She died, but her son is probably still alive. He lives in Portland. Anyway, we often played softball during lunch. The principal had kind of a funny way of playing the game. The principal did all of the hitting, the big kids were in the outfield, and the little kids were runners around the base. That's how I remember it. Now I am sure if you go talk to somebody else, they would tell you that it wasn't like that all the time. Anyway, I think probably those who were there will verify that many of those lunchtimes probably ran into overtime. Of course, we never complained. We just kept on playing ball. For playground equipment, there was a "ring set." They don't have those in playgrounds anymore. Possibly a hazard. Visualize a post with a swivel and several chains with rectangular rings attached. We'd grab hold of those rings, and we'd run around in a circle. If you went fast enough, you could keep your feet off the ground. Usually however, you were only airborne part of the time. You would hit the ground, kind of skip around, and go around and around. That's the only playground equipment that they had that I remember. If there was anything else, I don't know. The school grounds were just a clearing in the woods, sort of like you see here. Then around the fringes were maple trees, and probably some fir trees, sort of what the area is like now. Some of the older kids had cigarettes and they would sneak out there in the woods and smoke. Then us younger kids would go out there and blackmail them. If we got a cigarette, then we wouldn't tell.

Walker: Did it work?

Johnson: Yeah. It's kind of interesting about education. Basically we learned the three R's. But Bud Rogers and I - we kind of got into the technology of steam locomotives - and kind of spread that around a little bit. We never learned much about our environment. We never learned plant or tree identification. It would have been a golden opportunity to do that - like they do now. There is outdoor school now, and all this kind of stuff. Lots of Maple trees to identify, but that wasn't the thing in education in those days. So we really didn't learn much about the natural world around us. I see the emphasis in education as a sign of the times. The emphasis was on industrialization then.

Another little interesting thing - you saw the photos of me with my logging toys up at Camp Two. [Photo #44] Well, that was in the Tillamook burn. There was greenery around the main camp, but at Camp Two, most everything had been burned. I didn't have any round logs for my toy log truck, so I used split firewood. We had plenty of firewood made from those big logs. I had rectangular logs on my log truck!

Walker: What fun. Did you understand why, you know, there was pretty much no forest? Did you ever see the forest before it was burned?

Johnson: Well no. Let's see, it had burned in '33 when I was one year old. We were at Vernonia (Kostur's camp) at the time. When we moved to Glenwood, however, the burn was much in evidence. I thought about it, but the emphasis at that time was on prevention. All logging communities are concerned about the possibility of fire. Fire

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has always been a danger, a concern, a worry. You would never know which way the fire was going to go or whether or not we should evacuate camp or just wait and see. It was always a concern, you know. It was probably the fire of '39 where my Dad had to go out and help fight fire and he was out there for a long time. When he came back, his eyes were all red, and he was all dirty and everything. The only time I saw him both tired and crabby was when he had to go out and fight fire. And I know he was tired lots of other times, but not crabby. He was pretty much of an even tempered kind of guy. Part of that material you gave me shows the map of where it burned in '39. We were worried that the fire would come into camp. We could look that up on the map . . .

Yeah, he used to come home with these greasy hands. When you're a mechanic and work on those steam engines you had to be inside those boiler lots of times to roll those flues. (That means to tighten them up.) I found out years later how hard work that is, because I helped overhaul that steam donkey what's now at the Tillamook museum. I found out how his arms got strong, because he had to get inside the firebox and hammer up. Not only that, but you got all kinds of soot coming down in your face and the noise inside the boiler is just horrendous. That's one reason why he lost his hearing. He didn't lose it completely, but he had to wear hearing aids later on. His hearing got pretty bad. So I got a lot of respect for the kind of work he had to do. Then laying pipe line - picking up pipes and pack them by hand to lay out a line to the pump which would be down in the creek somewhere in the woods.

By the way, speaking of water pumps: Up there at camp two, Howard Stratton and I went up there to find the remains of the camp. Howard actually worked on the crew that built that railroad, but he and I had a terrible time trying to find that camp because the trees have all grown up now. We couldn't see anything. We finally found it. I have a picture down here some place. There is Camp Two - it is right across the draw which had a trestle across it. There was a pump in the bottom of the creek below the trestle that supplied water to a storage tank by the railroad. When I stayed there with my dad, and the tank was full, it was my job to go down there and shut the engine off. I had forgotten the magnitude of the canyon getting down to the pump.

Walker: You have some wonderful pictures.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

Johnson: Pat Soderberg lived next door to us. He is in this picture, (Consolidated Photo # 37, Kinsey Photo # 77) he was a young husky man and high climber at the time. Right after Consolidated shut down, he went into partnership with Lloyd Crosby and they got some timber in the Jordan Creek area off Wilson River. Their company was Portland Lumber Mills. He moved up fast in the logging industry. I went to work for him in 1979 in Kake, Alaska. By that time, he had a yacht which was worth somewhere between a quarter and a half million dollars. He did real well in the logging

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industry. But I saw him here about a year ago and he has osteoporosis. If I didn't know he was expected to show up that day, I wouldn't have known who he was.

Walker: It must have been strange though seeing these forests the way they were as a kid and just seeing nothing but snags.

Johnson: Well, that is all that we knew. In fact, one of the reasons I quit the woods was that I could see that the Tillamook burn was coming to an end. I just didn't think about going to work some place else. I didn't know that outfits like Stimpson Timber Co. were to continue logging. I was attempting to get a college education and get out of the woods. Also, my wife was putting a lot of pressure on me. However, I temporarily went back to logging several times after that.

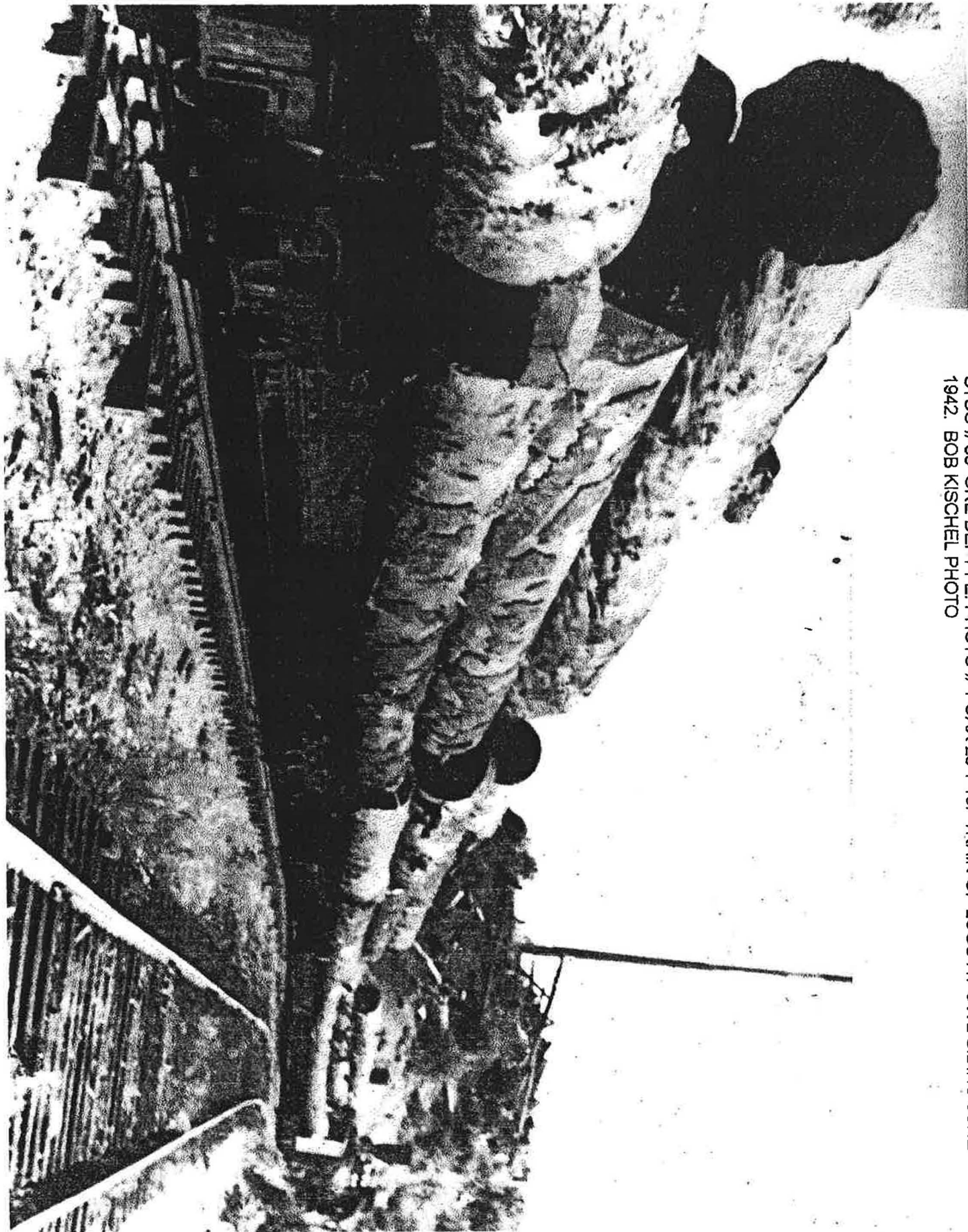
There are a lot of advantages to working in that burn. We didn't have the brush. We had big logs, and if the ground was good, we could move really fast without any obstructions. We could run on logs going in and out. Things moved really fast until we got into steep ground. When you're in steep ground, you're just crawling. It's all you can do to stand up, let alone do the work.

A disadvantage is that the barren land caused temperature extremes. In the summer, those rock canyons were just like a bake oven. Not much vegetation to hold it back. Although Vine Maple, Blackberries, Huckleberries, Oregon Grape, Salal, Devil's Club, etc. were coming back. Other than that, there wasn't much vegetation. It was hot in the summer, and cold in the winter. In the winter, the wind would whistle up through those canyons with nothing to hold it back. In the summer, those bare rock canyons were like a bake oven.

bake
I have ^{been} in Beaverton since '54 off and on. We had hotter weather when the burn area was still barren. I remember one time it was really hot out here in the valley before the burn grew back. We took the family down to Oceanside at which time there was a dry east wind blowing all the way to the ocean. We waded out in the ocean. The water was cold. Our feet were freezing with that blast of hot air blowing at us. We also had air pollution back then. Sometimes the pollution would continue almost all the way down to the coast. I have not seen that since the burn has grown back. In my opinion, that forest that is growing there now has moderated temperature a lot in this area. I called that the Tillamook Burn until not too many years ago.

Walker: A lot of people still do. Did you ever see the smoke from the 1939 fire?

Johnson: Oh yeah, that one, plus '45, and '51. What was it – yes, every six years. In '45, I was at Portland Lumber Mills' Jordan Creek camp. I would go up during the day because Lee was commuting between there and Tillamook. The camp contained repair shops and bunk houses for single men.



CTCO # 88 ORE DEPT.FE. PHOTO # 1 CAX 28 T 15. TRAIN OF LOGS AT OWL SIDING JUNE 1942. BOB KISCHEL PHOTO

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The fire was burning west of the camp. The fire didn't come into camp, but the fire fighters had to go through camp to get to it. This was during the tail end of WWII, so they had soldiers fight the fires. That day, here came 6 x 6 trucks with canvas canopies over the back loaded up with soldiers. I waved as they went by. I waved at truck after truck, and they waved back on their way to fight fire. Some of those soldiers were from the big cities and hadn't experienced anything but level terrain before. Some of them did well, and others didn't do worth a damn.

Walker: What did the smoke make you think? Was it a major concern?

Johnson: We always wondered if fire would come our way.

Walker: But never really got too close?

Johnson: Not to our house, but one weekend during that fire of '45, my parents and I decided to drive over into the valley via the Wilson River at which time traffic was being held up because the fire was near the highway.

Walker: You saw it burning?

Johnson: Yeah, we saw it burning as we drove up. We had to stop. They had hoses across the road - they held traffic for a while - and finally waved us on. In a timber community, you can get drafted into fighting fires. My dad was getting concerned. I wanted to watch, but he said we better get out of here as quick as we can. We got through it okay. We were always concerned about fire as to which way it was going, having to fight it, or the possibility of evacuation. You never know for sure. By the way, the Tillamook Burn started close to Glenwood - I am sure you know, but that was before I lived there. Just over the hill west of what was later to be Consolidated Camp. I had to fight fire one day when I was working for Trask Lumber Co. As we were going home in the crummy, we saw a fire well above the road. We quickly put it out. I have no idea how it got started so far from the road.

Walker: You saw these locomotives come into the camp all the time. What did they look like? What did they do with them?

Johnson: That is that an interesting item for those who like railroads. They loaded logs onto disconnect cars. [Ore. Dept Fe. Photo #1-CAX28T15.] Each load, consisting of two railroad trucks, was held together by the weight of the logs. Trains went to the main camp, then were hauled out on the Gales Creek & Western Railroad by SP&S motive power to the Columbia River. At that time, it was rare to allow disconnect trains on a mainline railroad, but the war effort was probably instrumental in the waiver of rules which allowed it.

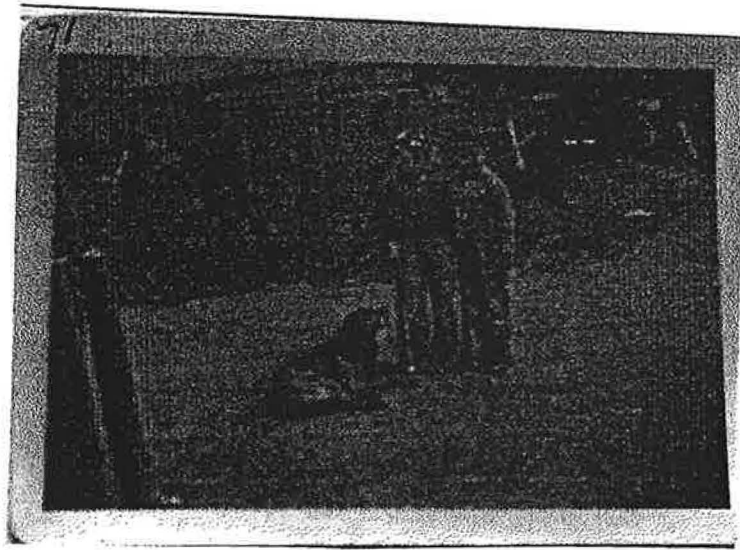
52. (KINSEY # 19) MAIN YARDS, SHOWING MILL TREE AND WHAT AS I RECALL, TO BE THE CAR-WHACKERS SHOP.



Kinsey Photo #19 Consolidated Timber Co.

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17



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I am going to mention a couple of items about my dad and his careers. Dad used to get black, greasy, dirty and his joke was, "I should get a job selling ribbons behind a counter." After working several years as donkey doctor, he went back to running yarder. He mentioned it being quite a thrill to remember how to run them after a long absence. By that time, yarders were dieselized, but he caught on to that quickly. He experienced what he had always known, that it is a lot easier running a yarder than it is being a mechanic. At his age, it was a good change. He didn't work as many hours, but made more per hour.

This photo shows the railroad yards at Glenwood. [Photo #52.] They added more later. Here is Bud Rogers and me in camp. [Photo #71] There is my dog. He was a great dog. This was a bathhouse for the single men. One big building with showers, etc. I am not sure, but that might be our house there.

(Looking at another photo) This guy here - I am digressing quite a lot from your original question - Harry Gedderson ran that yarder, you notice that he has one arm behind his back? I was told his hand got caught in the gears when he was greasing it. He had one of those two-wire hooks, those things that kind of go like this. Well, the throttles on those machines were cast. (Pause.) This is the throttle - notice the slot. To accelerate, and you pull it out like this. I was told that he could stick that hook in there without even looking at it.

Walker: Wow, that's great.

Johnson: Well, here we are. Here is Camp Two. That's Howard Stratton, he died a couple of years ago. We hadn't been up there since - I don't know - maybe 50 years or so. The cookhouse was on the west side. There is a trestle there. Now, both ends have been removed. I would like to go up there again. I have been talking about going up there with your forestry people for some time.

Walker: It just gets busy.

Johnson: Oh by the way, you know where the Gales Creek forest camp is? (The camp on the right side of the Wilson River Highway as you go up the hill.) There are probably a few remaining pilings where the first trestle on Consolidated Railroad was. It was called Fir Spur. That's where the railroad crossed that creek and started the grade. There were several trestles as the railroad worked its way on up to what was Owl Camp.

If the railroad was there now, you leave the main camp, then a bend to the right at the end of the yards, eventually a straight stretch as it heads west. At this point, you would be in what is now Gales Creek Camp. On that straight stretch, there still exists a wide level area, which once included a siding named Willkie. Named after Wendell Willkie, who ran for president. I got way off the subject.

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Walker: I had asked you about the logging and you know what it was like to see these logs come in and how they got them there.

Johnson: Let's look at a train again. [Photos #88 & #52 again.]

Walker: They are huge. How big were these logs?

Johnson: Those are probably bigger than they look in diameter, because they bucked 84-foot logs. That is, a lot of them were 84's, which in some cases was a one-log tree, because they didn't take the smaller tops the way they do now. You can see that the weight of the logs held each load together. They never used binders on them either. They might have lost some logs with the train in motion. If so, they were picked up with the railroad crane when it was in the area. There was a sign over the railroad trestle that said "*BEWARE OF FALLING LOGS WHEN THE TRAIN IS PASSING OVER*". That trestle was where Owl Camp was. (Now Rogers Camp.) That trestle was double tracked. Maybe you saw a picture like that yesterday at the O-A picnic. The same message on the sign.

Walker: Did they ever fall over on the highway like that?

Johnson: No, but the railroad eventually crossed the highway at grade, rather than going over it. The trains always had the right of way, of course. A car collided with a train, and they tried to sue the railroad, but they lost. I was looking for that railroad grade here a few years ago and I had a real problem trying to find out where it was. I might have finally figured it out. The probable reason I had trouble finding it, is because of shifting of terrain in that area. Its not as noticeable today, but over the years from the time the Wilson River Highway was first built, there has been a lot of shifting of the earth between Consolidated Camp and the summit. (Owl camp.) The highway has been repaired time and again. The shift in elevation is at least 10 feet from the original. I don't see much shifting anymore.

Did I ever answer your question?

Walker: Yeah, talking about the logging.

Johnson: Well, I can just hear that sound today.

Walker: Was it loud?

Johnson: Yeah, good sound.

Walker: Do they sound like the trains that you hear in the movies?

Johnson: Yeah. The tourist railroads of today are an example, but not very often are they really opened up to hear good "stack talk" that we had back then. Occasionally

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they do. The 4449 sounds good. They run it close to the same pressure that they did back in its time. The 700 as well. I don't know if you are familiar with those engines or not. The 700 will be running this next weekend to Astoria and back, with Greg Kamholz, as engineer.

Walker: What happened once the logs were loaded on these railroads, where were they going?

Johnson: Okay, they took the log trains down to the main camp, then the SP&S locomotives hooked on to them and took them to the Columbia River. The railroad was Gales Creek and Western. They used old steam locomotives that were nearly junk by that time. They would use two locos at time, called double heading. When they got into camp where the two railroads joined, there was a bad spot in the track. They had derails every now and then. Bud and I would go down and sit on that rock bluff above, and watch them as many hours as it took to get them back on the rails.

Walker: That must have been an interesting thing to watch.

So you went up in the woods with your Dad and you saw logging?

Johnson: Yeah. One of the guys that ran one of these loaders only had one leg. Walt Webber. He was really good at it. Running a steam loader is easier than running a diesel loader. It was not necessary to have a brake on the main drum, so he didn't need a right leg.

Walker: What was logging like in winter and summer?

Johnson: Well, in the winter if you got too much snow, you would shut it down. In summer, it often got too dry, and you would shut it down. I don't know when they first started shutting down the woods down for humidity. They sure didn't previous to the Tillamook Burn. By the time I went to work in the woods in the 1950s, we were shutting down in the summer quite a lot.

We were discussing the Tillamook Burn, which occurred every six years. I was working in the woods at Kilchis River Logging Company out of Tillamook in '51, and I don't remember us referring to that as the Tillamook Burn. We thought it was just another fire or two. Being dry, and because of fires in other parts of the burn, we were shut down a lot that summer. I thought that was kind of interesting when I read the records that you people have on the Tillamook Burn, that 1951 is now considered part of the Tillamook Burn.

Walker: What did you do when they shut you down? What did your Dad do? What did you do?

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Johnson: Most of the guys would head to the nearest tavern. The mechanics would keep working - not in the woods, but in the shop.

Walker: What was the longest - do you remember - what was the longest time you were shut down for?

Johnson: '54 was just awful. I worked just one week and they shut the whole woods down. This whole area down here was shut down. I was newly married then, and living in Beaverton. I went to work for A. J. Bliss, who was logging the burn from the Forest Grove side. When they shut the woods down, I was desperate looking for a job.

I picked strawberries for three days for my wife's uncle. I have a lot of sympathy for farm workers. I went to a place in Hillsboro where the farm workers hang around waiting for somebody to come pick them up and take them to a job. I was out there with the rest of them, and I was a pretty husky guy then, but they didn't choose me. A foreman would drive up and pick out a crew. I guess those he picked look like they had done farm work, or they were known. The rest of us would stand there without jobs, so I finally went to work in the cannery nearby working graveyard shift, which I hated. All I had to do was stand there and take these packaged foods off a conveyor belt, put them on trays, then stack them up. You had to work really fast to do that. I thought I worked hard when I was in the woods, and I was good at logging, but I wasn't much good working in a cannery. I must have stayed there quite a while, however, because I never did go back to work in the woods that summer. That was about the worst summer that I can remember. Any summer that I can't go work in the woods, that's a bad summer.

Walker: So what did you do in Tillamook when you moved there? You said you were working in the woods.

Johnson: Yeah, that's where I started working in the woods. In Tillamook, I worked for Trask Lumber Company, Kilchis River Lumber Company, Browning Brothers, Henry Brothers, and Diamond Lumber Company. Later on, for George Churchill.

Walker: What did you do?

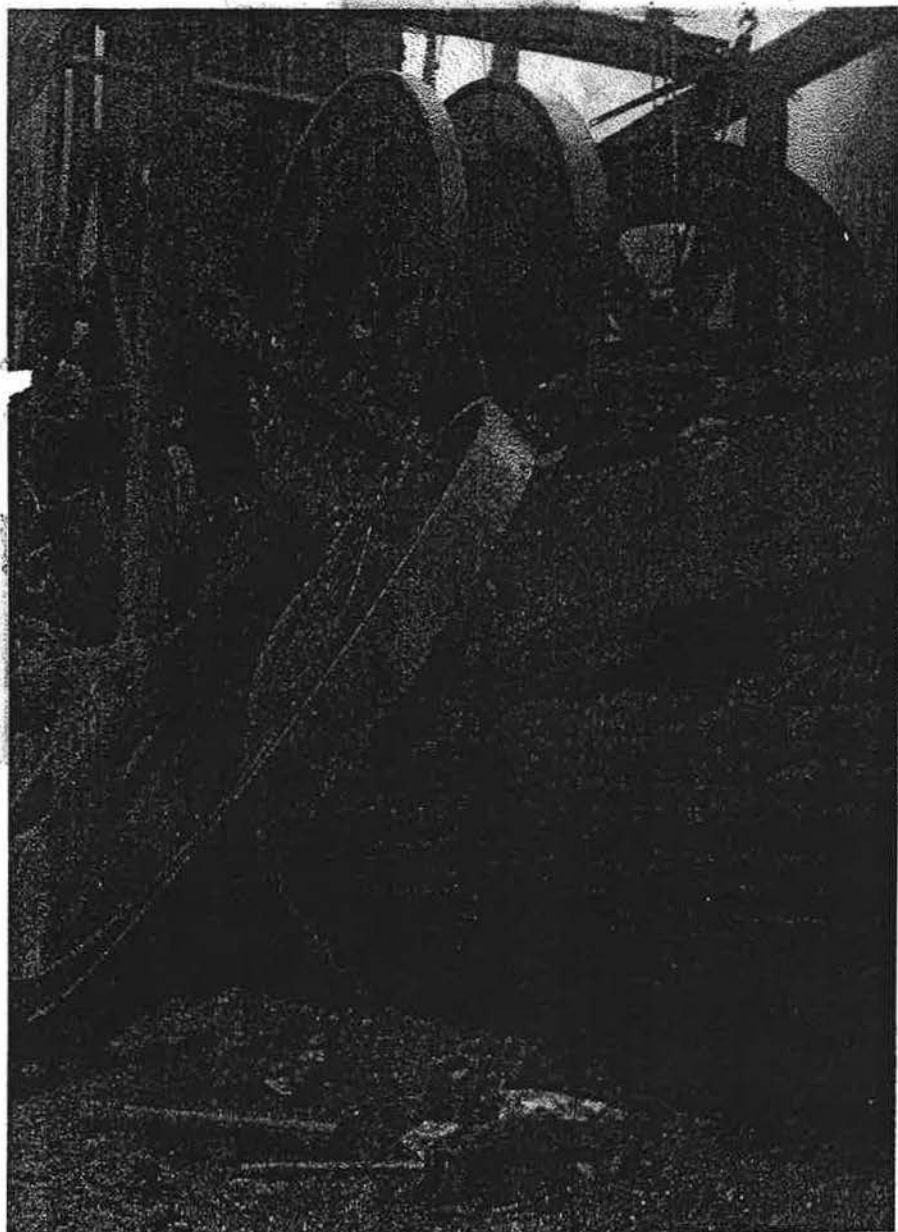
Johnson: Most of the time, a choker setter.

Walker: Were you still working in the burn then?

Johnson: In the 50's.

Walker: That's right, you said you never had any experience working in green timber.

Johnson: Well, I did work in green timber at Sand Lake. '52 I think it was. That was a real different experience for me. But it's all like that now. Walking on all those limbs,



#19a & 19b. 1942. Lee Johnson, donkey doctor at Consolidated Timber Co. It appears that the donkey was burned in a fire. Lee lists this as a 13 X 14 Willamette two-speed yarder s#2482. 225 lb working pressure 72" boiler with 2" tubes X 8' long. Fire box = 7' X 5 X 4.' Westinghouse air compressor supplied air controls except to strawline drum. The engines were faster and had more line capacity than the 12 X 14. 7/8" haulback, 1 1/2" mainline. the main-line drum ~~barke~~ = 6' in diameter, and was located on the left side of the drum. This type had 1 1/2" injectors on each side and represented the latest and best of Willamette Iron & Steel Works.

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brush, and logs, you seldom see the ground all day. It was a big deal then. It's not now. Biggest problem working out there, is being able to stand up.

Walker: So were logging camps all pretty similar to the camp that you were at? What about Owl Camp?

Johnson: Yeah, but Owl Camp had moved on by the time I came along. I don't know when it was moved. They kept moving the camps further up the railroad, you know.

Walker: The timber got further and further away, so they picked up and moved. Did they leave the houses?

Johnson: They load those on the railroad and move them up to the next location.

Walker: Did you ever move like that?

Johnson: Never did move the main camp. Our houses were not moveable. They were built right on the ground without any kind of concrete. That's why most of those old houses are gone. Probably rotted out underneath.

Walker: So they would move the smaller camps?

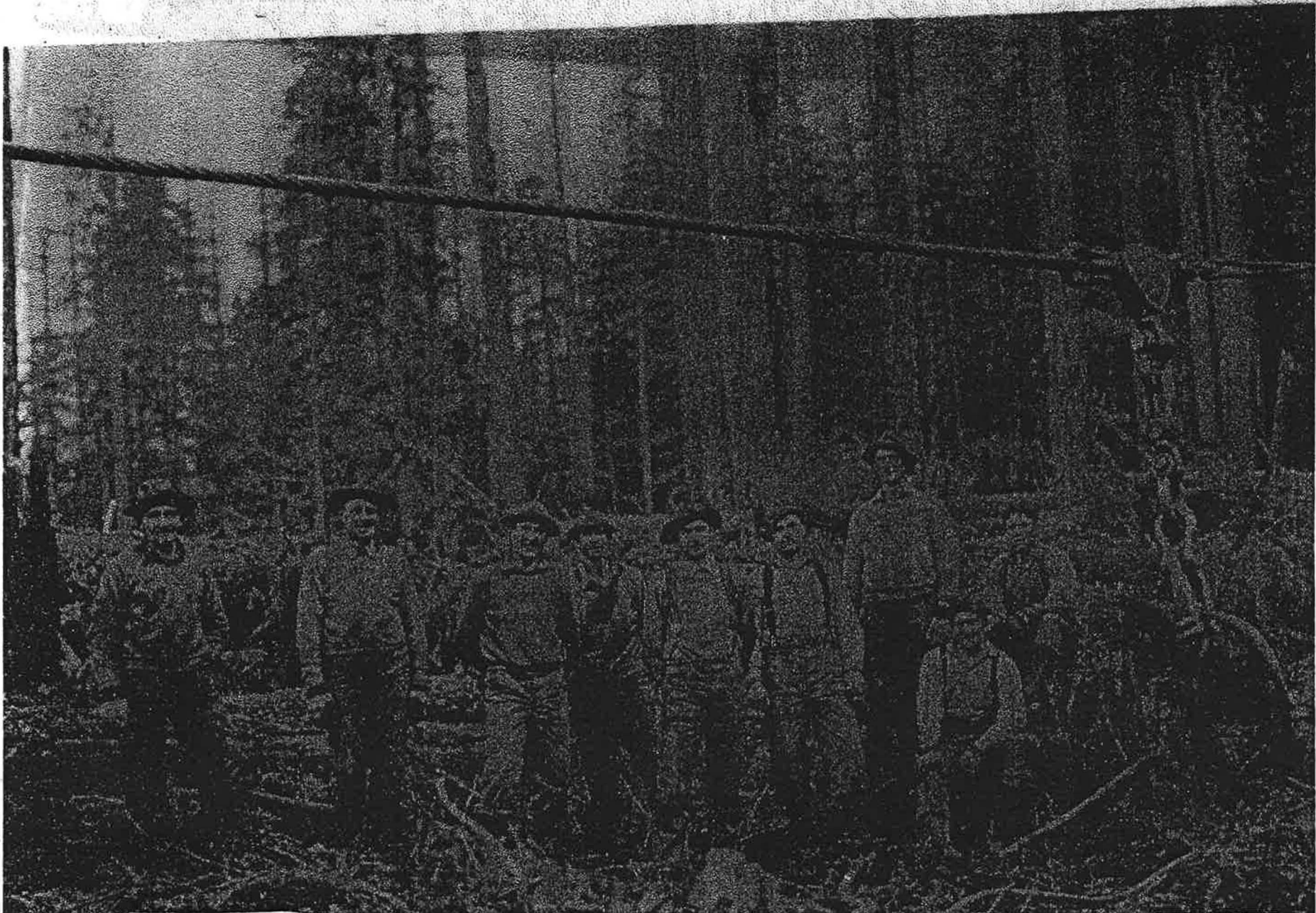
Johnson: They would move the bunkhouses - the single men's bunkhouses. They were mounted on sleds.

It would be considered a hardship now, but we didn't think it as a hardship of not having hot -running water. If you wanted hot water, you had to heat it on the stove. We had two wood stoves - one was for heating in the front room and the other in the kitchen for cooking. Summertime it got hot. My parents had a three-burner bottle gas stove. My mother set it out on the back-porch for cooking in the summer when it was hot, instead of using the wood stove. The wood stove would have over-heated the house. We took a bath once a week in a big square tub, whether we needed it or not! Outdoor toilet.

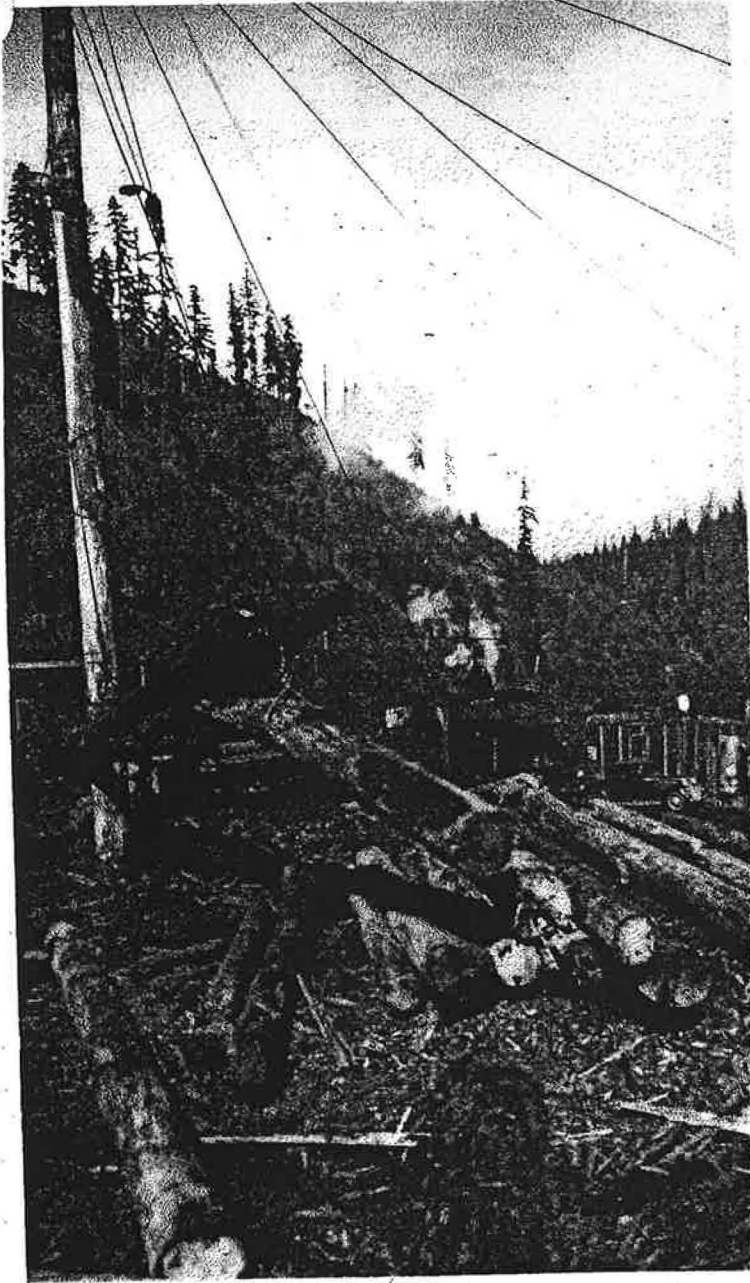
(Photos #19a&19b.) This has been burned, see that? When the fire came in and burned around those donkeys, sometimes they could save the machine. If it was hot enough to melt the babbit, but didn't melt the iron, you could take them apart and pour new bearings in them.

Walker: What were the meals like at the camp? Did you all eat together?

Johnson: If you were married, you did your own cooking. For single men, eating in the cookhouse was just great. The food was unlimited. I worked for Pat Soderberg and stayed in his bunkhouse in Kake, Alaska. At home, if there was a little something left



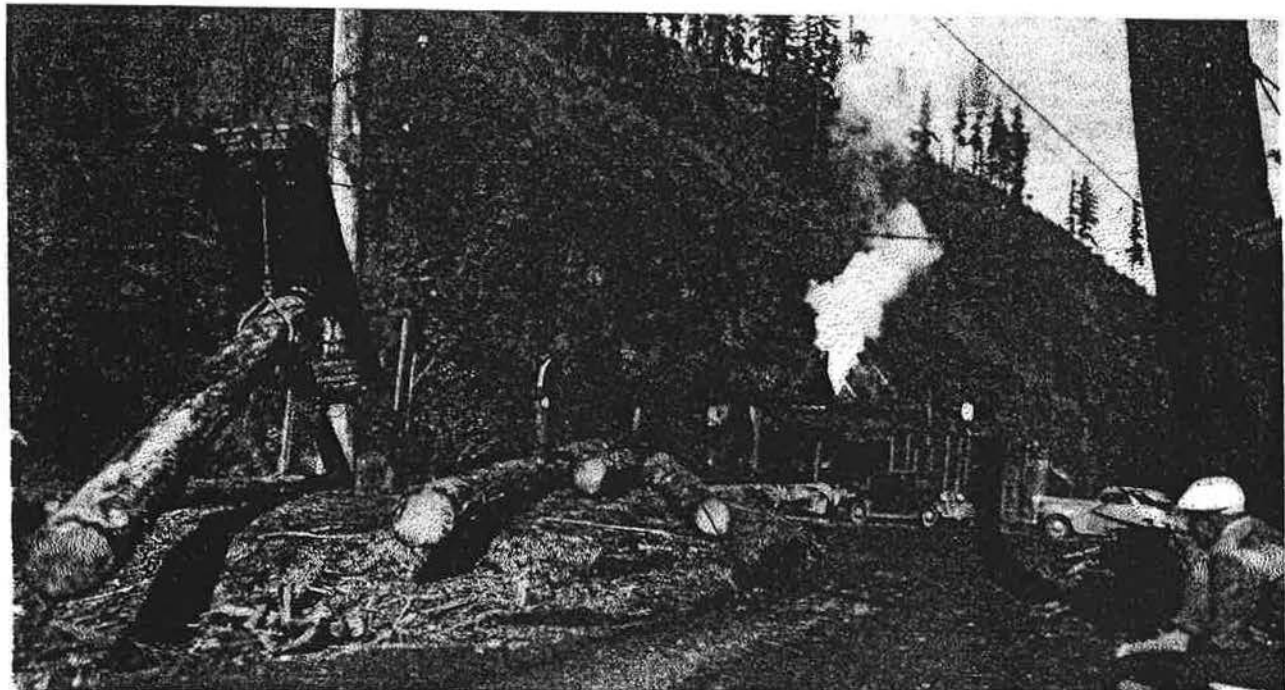
#29. CTCO. (PROBABLY KINSEY PHOTO VIA THE FRANK HEISLER COLLECTION.)
 L TO R: 1. DAN NEADAU, 2. JACK BLAKWAY, 3. VIRGIL BROWN, 4. FRANK HEISLER, 5. HEINI
 DESINGER, 6. ED WILSON, 7. JIM HARLEMAN, 8. (SITTING IN FRONT) PERCY HINES, 9. "DOC"
 (SITTING ON END) WICKSTROM & WYCAHT INVENTED THE SWIVEL SHOWN WICKSTROM WAS FROM



CTCO # 13 THRU 16

Paulson ran this oil fired loader. The railroad had been dismantled from here on up, but the SP&S hauled trains out from this re-load which was at the upper end of the yards at the main camp. At this time, Pat Soderberg and Lloyd Crosby were partners at Jordan Creek with Portland Lumber Mills. All logging was internal combustion by this time. Log trucks hauled over the Wilson River to this re-load. There was a water hose across the Wilson River highway about a mile up for the log truck brake tanks. Some truckers I remember are: Truie Schneider, Russ Britton, Lee Woods, Hedberg, E.B. Butterworth. Ernie Anderson photos circa 1944-48.





13



14

106



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in a bowl I'd finish it up. In camp, they just bring you another bowl! Food goes right through me, so I finally decided to stop stuffing myself.

(Looking at photo # 29.) This swivel was invented by Andy Weigant, according to an article in the *Timberman* magazine. I have more information on this interesting device. Andy was a blacksmith at Consolidated

(Re-load photos # 13 thru 16.) I was talking to Marion's uncle about the man who ran this machine. He said Paulson could bring that log over and set it right in the crease of your hat. He had perfect control of that machine.

Walker: The workers seem to be good at what they did.

Johnson: [Photo #106] There I am at camp.

Walker: Oh, snow.

Johnson: It used to get cold in that camp, which was between the mountains. In the wintertime you wouldn't see the sun that much. With ice and snow in there, it seemed like it would never warm up.

Walker: When you moved to town, which one did you like better?

Johnson: Camp. Any day. Any time. I hated the city. To me, Tillamook was a "city." I would have gone back to camp in a minute. I felt like a fish out of water. All kinds of reasons, including a lack of kids who liked logging machinery, railroads, and modeling. I related more to adults than I did to other kids. The men were pretty good with us in camp. They liked us. I got a lot of attention, because there were so few kids around. I didn't get that kind of attention in town where I was just one more kid.

Walker: Did you know most people? Could you walk down the street and use names?

Johnson: Oh yeah, knew them all.

Walker: That must have been kind of neat. You kind of know everybody and everyone knows you.

Johnson: That's one way of preventing crimes.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

Johnson: We lived in the west end of camp. We called this part of the camp "Hollywood." When we moved away, I found out there was another Hollywood. There's one in California.

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Walker: Oh, you didn't know. Why did you call that one Hollywood?

Johnson: A spoof. We knew how different our lives were from say - Bing Crosby.

We got in trouble. The train was moving a railroad car to a spur that crossed our road. Stanley and I made a quick decision to run in front of the train. Do you know what a brake hickey is? It's an iron bar about this long and they use that to tighten up the brakes on cars. When the brakeman saw our risky behavior, he chased after us with that thing in his hand. Boy, it scared the hell out of us. We ran and ran. He never did tell our parents about it. He just tried to scare us I guess. Boy, we were scared. It worked. We never did that again.

Walker: A good thing.

Johnson: We used to go to the shop and watch the blacksmith work, but we didn't go inside. That was not allowed. We could go outside and look in - peer inside the door and watch them work. Heat metal from red-hot and shape it.

Walker: Bet that was neat to watch.

Johnson: It was neat to watch. A movie entitled *Spar Tree* was made in Vancouver, B.C., which includes a blacksmith making a shackle - hand form method. Quite a dramatic movie.

Walker: Did they have turntables?

Johnson: No, they didn't have turntables.

Walker: How did they turn them around?

Johnson: They didn't. Wasn't necessary. Locomotives headed up to the woods, then backed down.

Walker: So they could run either way.

Johnson: Run either way - forward or reverse.

Walker: But they would always have to pull the cars, they didn't push them?

Johnson: I think they pulled them up, and got below the cars coming down. I don't know if I have a picture of them coming down or not. It was not necessary to turn them around. I am not sure how the railroad rules worked on all logging railroads, but the policy there was to put the locomotive below the loads. Those brakemen really earned their pay, because they had to set every one of those brakes by hand. They didn't

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have air on those cars. They moved from load to load set them. If too tight, the wheels would slide, but not too loose to keep the train from running away. It was a big responsibility to be head brakeman.

Walker: Wow, so they walked along them?

Johnson: Yep.

Walker: . . . loaded with logs that weren't tied down.

Johnson: Right. By the way, my father's uncle got killed doing that. That was at Rainier. Then his dad, my grandfather, was killed a month later when Lee was about 14 or so. So Lee had to go to work to help support the family at the early age of 14, 15, somewhere along there. Went to work cutting brush. Started running donkey about a year later. He ran donkey all those years until he went to Consolidated.

Walker: Did you ever run a donkey?

Johnson: No, I never did. (Editing note by Merv: I did run a steam donkey during a logging demonstration in the woods at Yacolt, Washington in May of 2000.)

One of your summer interns was interested in writing something about Consolidated Timber Co. I welcome anybody who wants to do it. I have the corporate information, photos, names, etc., if anyone wants to do it. I probably will never get around to it. This is an index of the photos, and there is other various sundry information that I've gotten by talking to guys that worked there. I also have a little bit of the corporate history, some of the history on the engines, and also several *Timbermen* and other magazine reference notes on CTCO. See this *Timberman* magazine? CTCO won an award during WWII for production. Timber was really needed in WWII and if you were a logger, you wouldn't get drafted. There is a side to that story. Buck Mountain was a high-ball outfit . . .

Walker: You did?

Johnson: No, I didn't, but Buck Mountain logged during WWII and they were high-ball which means you really had to move to cut the mustard. Well, if you got fired, you got drafted.

Walker: It must have been amazing to be up there then and watch the logging. How has it changed?

Johnson: Looking back on it now, it's a whole different world. It is pretty hard for me to try and describe it in some ways to someone who has never been around it. There is a trolley park there now. I stopped in a couple of times and tell them what it used to be like when I lived there. (Merv's editing note: the trolleys have been moved out, and are

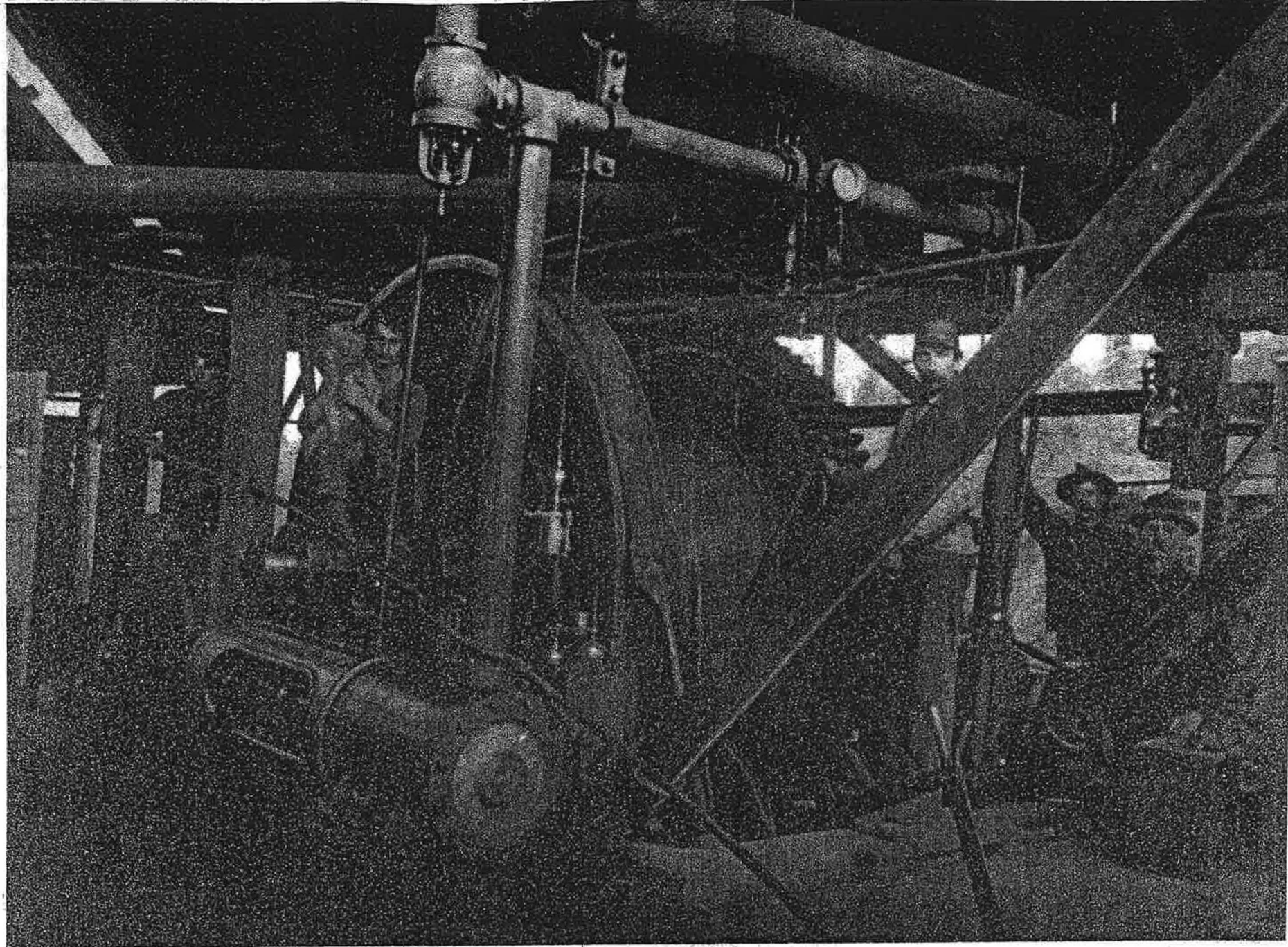
A1-44



YEON & PELTON INCLINE

Three loads nearing the bottom at Yeon and Pelton incline, Rainier, Oregon. This operation used a 16 x 20 engine especially built to lower loads down the steep incline to the bottom land of the Columbia River. Lee Johnson has identified the men from left to right as "Blondie" Frederickson, Harry Frederickson, and Joe David; also that the Spring freshet always flooded the bottom land in the early 1900s. Yeon and Pelton's railroad was 42 inch (bastard) gauge. *Lee Johnson collection*

BY 1905 JOHN YEON REFINED THE FIRST LOGGING ENGINE WITH TWO CYLINDER REVERSIBLE ENGINE. THE CYLINDERS WERE 16 X 20. WHEN LOWERING THE LOGS DOWN GRADE, THE REVERSE LEVER WAS PUT IN THE OPPOSITE POSITION TO CREATE MORE HOLDING POWER BY COMPRESSION. NOTE THE COMPRESSION CHAMBER OVERHEAD. LEFT TO RIGHT: HARRY FRIEDRICKSON, WILLFORD YEON, ANDREW PETERSON, OSCAR JOSEPHSON, JOHN YEON'S FATHER.



A1-18

18. YEON'S LOG ROLLWAY, WITH CEDAR PILING IN BACKGROUND.
LEE'S UNCLE, JOE DAVID, IS STANDING ON THE BROW LOG.



Updated 28 Oct 2000. All others obsolete.

at Brooks, Oregon Antique Powerland as of 2000. The trolleys were never a part of the original railroad.)

Walker: . . . knew anything about the Tillamook area.

Johnson: Typically, what you usually hear is that it was never appreciated it until it was gone. I appreciated it when it was there. I really liked it. I thought I was the luckiest boy on earth to live in a place like that. Moving away was just awful.

My Dad was more or less born and raised in the Rainier area, and his grandfather fired on that incline which was near their house. [Photo #A 1- 44.] It was Yeon & Pelton Logging Co. at Rainier, Oregon. I have a collection of photos from there. I will just go through them quickly and tell you. There was a log chute at one time which was about 90 degrees away from the incline you see. Around the bend to the right from that incline. They just dumped logs down the chute.

My dad (Lee) and his family lived near the top, and the house caught on fire when his father was down at the bottom. Adrenalin shot into him, and he actually ran down that steep chute to tell his dad that the house was on fire. But, when they got back to the top, the house was pretty well burned up.

[Photo # A1-8] This is the machine that they used to lower the logs on the incline. My grandfather fired on that. At 16X20, it was probably the largest size donkey ever built. Got a dog in the picture there. I never knew my grandfather. Yeah, it was pretty sad, because Uncle Dave was killed there, and then Lee's father died a month later. The two families got along with each other, so they decided to live together.

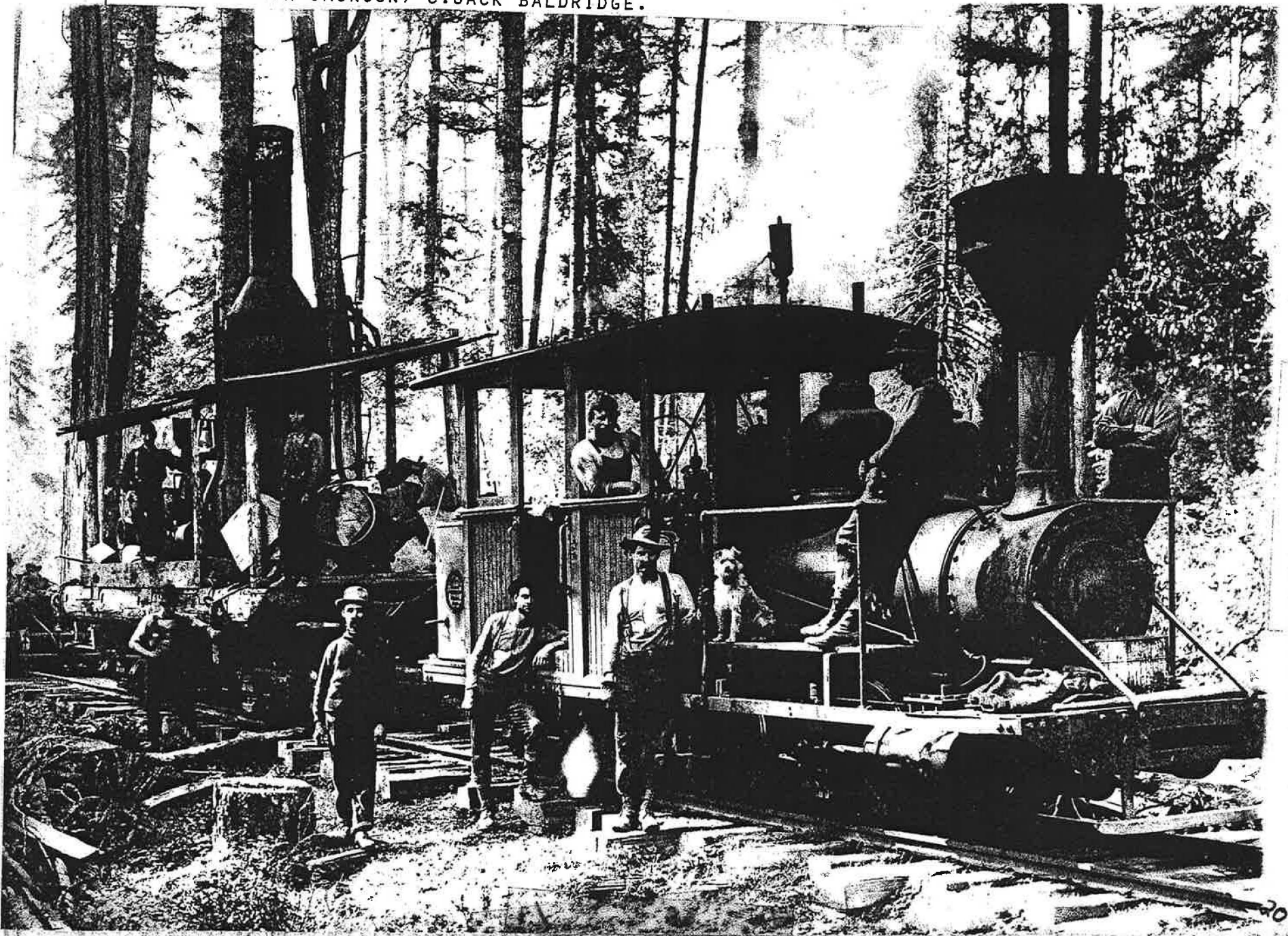
Walker: This is how they loaded them on?

Johnson: Yeah, that was before they had high lead logging. Lee started running donkey at an early age. He knew how to run them, because his dad ran them. His first job was responsible, but not all that difficult, i.e: running donkey rigged to a parbuckle system. [Photo #A1-18.] They'd attach cables over the logs, then roll the logs onto the cars.

I don't know how many people realize this, but high lead logging was not popularized until 1916. They had it long before then, but not many outfits used it. Then all of a sudden, everybody decided to get on the bandwagon. Similar with computers. Computers had been around for quite a while and then all of a sudden, everybody wants a computer. Well, in 1916 when logging started up in the spring, all or most of them, went to high lead logging.

Walker: Just roll them right on?

1. ANDREW PETERSEN, 2. CLAUDE BANZER, 3. JOHN YEON, 4. BERT RICHARDSON, 5. HARRY COLEMAN, 6. TOBY
7. JACK JACKSON, 8. JACK BALDRIDGE.



41-20

DRAM COPY

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Johnson: Only one bunk high - didn't go any higher than that as a rule. They just pulled them over. I have been corresponding with one of Jack Baldrige's relatives, Bill Baldrige. He's over in Bend now. His uncle, Jack Baldrige, is in this picture. [Photo # A1-20]

Walker: Was it much different comparing your father's logging experience with yours?

Johnson: When I started logging as compared to what it was like at Consolidated, is that what you're saying?

Walker: Yeah.

Johnson: It was similar, except diesel instead of steam, trucks instead of railroads. A lot of things were the same way. We still used wooden spar trees with boom, and most of the guys I worked with had worked on steam.

Walker: They didn't have any of the power tools that they have today, did they?

Johnson: Didn't have chainsaws. In fact, when I went to work for Simpson Timber Company in '73, I had very little experience with chainsaws, because the last time I had worked previously was in '57. When rigging up, one of the things you have to do is notch all the stumps for guylines. The only way I had notched them in the past was with an ax. Even though they had chainsaws, axes, and everything there, I notched the stumps with an axe. I could have used a chain saw, but nobody complained. It took me longer - but I got no complaint.

Walker: You were probably pretty good at it too.

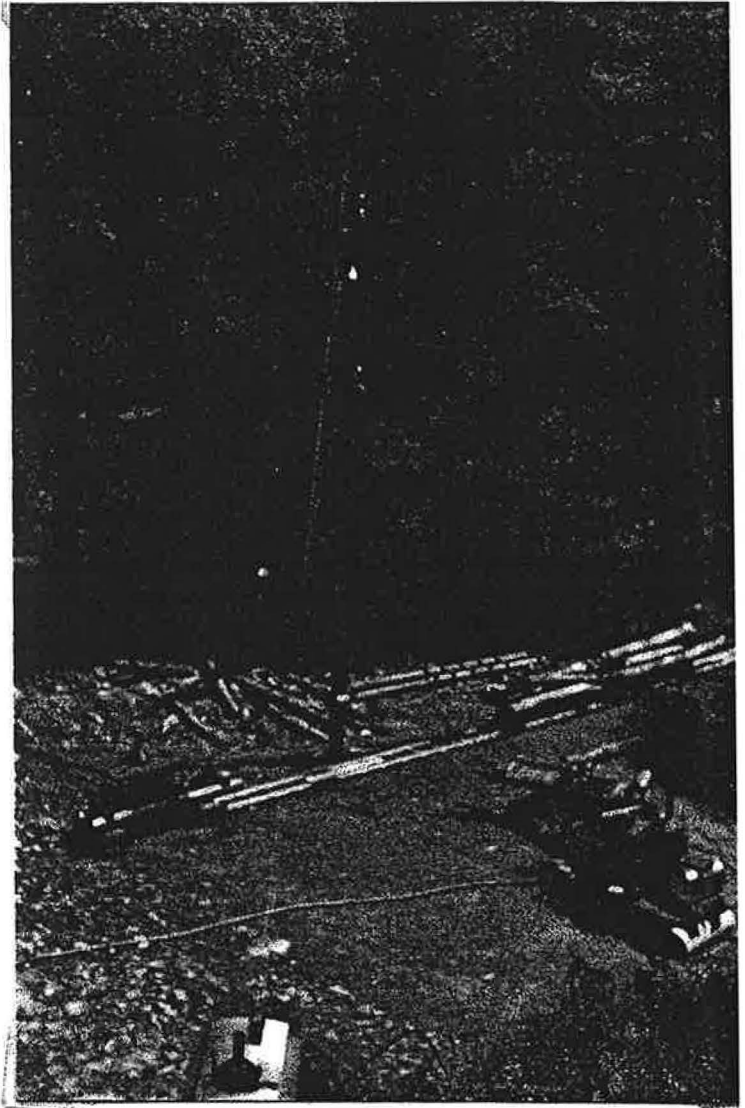
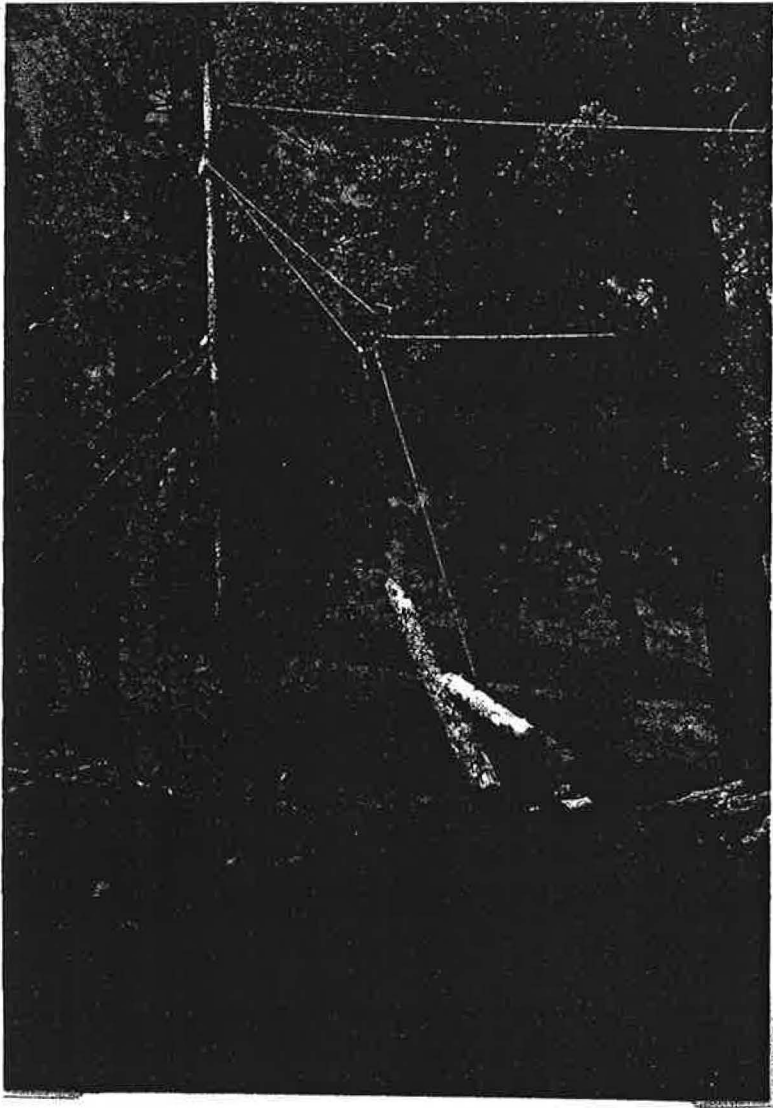
Johnson: The way they notch them now, they just cut a vee. Problem is, there is a lot of friction, and they seize up. It's hard to get them loose, and I'm a little surprised that they don't do it differently. I guess they do sometimes.

Walker: What was it like watching the forest grow up?

Johnson: Well, I was living in the valley by the time it really started to grow. Every time we went down the Wilson River, there would be more growth. It was gradual, but I was aware of the changes. It was sad to see the familiar sights disappear, but a good feeling to see a forest grow. Here is another thing, too, I am glad that you have the tape recorder turned on, because when I was a boy, I didn't expect to live long enough to see this Tillamook Burn logged again, because in those days, we figured it took a 100 years to grow a forest. Now here it is, 1998 and they're logging it already.

Walker: That's amazing, so you never thought you would never see it?

Johnson: Right.



216
1A →

216
18A ↑



216
↑ 2A