

**STUDENT MILL WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

Emeril Bergeron
(Interviewer not identified)

SMWOH #04

Emeril Bergeron: . . . my first house since I was at the mill. I go to the City Hall, you know, they said, we didn't get no money from the state, as veterans, you know, a lot of states were giving money to their veterans when they came out, they were discharged. Well Maine didn't give any. What they did was, they gave us something on taxes. I bought a piece of land, and so I went to City Hall, I showed them my discharge, I said, I want to apply for this. They took off four hundred dollars worth on taxes, you know. For, say the land was worth I think about fifteen hundred dollars. Well, I'd be insured, I mean I'd get taxed with just amount to a thousand and one dollar, eleven hundred dollars.

So she said to me, so I said, well, I just came in for that. You know, she said, we're not obliged to give you that money. But, I mean, you know, common sense. Now I, it would really hurt me. Then I didn't give a darn. But she said, you know, they're, I never found out who she was. I could find out because I knew the woman that was after her in there. But I don't want to. But after a while that did hurt me. And anyways, that's how we were treated in Maine. Probably all the other states were different, but in Maine that's how we were treated. But anyways.

Q: Where did you grow up, where's your place of birth?

EB: Here in Lewiston, oh yes.

Q: Lewiston, Maine?

EB: Oh yes.

Q: Where?

EB: Nineteen twenty four.

Q: Oh wow, '24, so this has been your home for, wow. What was the community like when you first grew up? You were talking a little bit about that with (*unintelligible phrase*).

EB: Well, a lot of them were fighting with the Irish, between the Irish and the French people. They threw them in New Auburn. They were fighting most of the time. I had a boss at the Bates Mill, he used to be quite a sport person, and he used to tell us a lot about how they used to fight.

You know, I never went to town until I was about thirteen or fourteen, never went in the city. We rode, a few times I rode in a horse wagon up to, close to Bates College, that's as far as I ever went, and then we'd come back this way. This was in the horse and buggy days. So -

Q: What was the most popular like religion, or what was -?

EB: Well, it was separated. There was the Catholic and the French and the Irish, so they didn't mix, they just didn't mix. No Irish member would go to French church, and no Frenchman would go to an Irish church. The Irish probably wouldn't let them go to their church anyway, so, because they were always fighting.

Q: That's really interesting. What was the community like socially, was there a wide division between the Irish and the French?

EB: No.

Q: What church did you go to? I'm just curious.

EB: Pardon me?

Q: Which church did you, did you go to a -?

EB: Holy Family, I was baptized here.

Q: Is that a Catholic church?

EB: Yes, and that was, it opened up in 1923, I was one of the first ones to be baptized here. I had a brother that was baptized the first one here. And the church wasn't built then. They used that corner building, that big corner building there? Not here but, you know, on Sabattus Street. They used to have the service there. Not all the time, but when they couldn't rent the hall. Otherwise they'd walk to Sabattus, to go to church in Sabattus. You know how many miles that is from here? We lived down below here.

And we used to go, then when they opened up here, I was just a young kid, I remember in the winter time we had to walk in the middle of the road because there was a lot of snow, and it was cold. We used to go to early mass, seven, I think it was seven, seven thirty mass, and most of the time I was frozen, I passed out in church. And so, but we had, you know, if you didn't go to church.

Anyways, then I started school at Holy Family. But we were about as poor as mice, you know? Though my father was the only one that owned a house here. It

wasn't a palace, but it had a roof and, so, we didn't have a bathroom, we had to go outside. We washed up upstairs in a tin tub, and my mother used to wash us every night sitting on the kitchen, she used to wash us in the sink. Anyways, and I come from a big family, there's eight of us.

Q: What were your parents' names?

EB: Anna and Alphonse. And they, my father had a little money in Canada, but his, because he owned land and he sold it, he had about, in 1927 he had a thousand dollar, ten thousand dollars. You know, that was practically like a millionaire then. But my grandfather remarried, he remarried a school teacher, so she had three kids and she wanted her kids to go to college. They didn't have the money, so they took my father's money and had the kids educated. So my father had to go back to Canada to sign over that ten thousand dollars to them. He wanted money here, you know.

But he built a house, but I had a brother that died over in Auburn, he was seven years old, and he was insured, so the money, the insurance, it wasn't that much money, probably they were paying like ten cents a week for insurance then. I remember when they paid that for us. The Metropolitan Insurer. And so he built the house on that. He sold that piece of land he had over in Auburn because that's where my brother, the one that died, wanted my father to. And anyways, my father didn't want to go back there, it practically killed him.

So, I had an older brother that lived, and then they moved up here. So my older brother went to Holy Family, he graduated from Holy Family. He's the only one that graduated from, not high school but, grammar school. He wanted to go to college at all costs, he just, he tried all kinds of things. He used to order books, you know. And in fact we were sued by one company because he had ordered books and they couldn't pay it. So, but one lawyer here in town, Clifford, which was very popular then, he took

the case and he never charged my father. He said, I'll fix that up. I don't know if he sent money or what, but it cleared that up.

My brother never went to, but he was a smart person. You should have seen his handwriting, he had the most beautiful handwriting. In French and in English, he could write in French and English like, well his handwriting was, I always, and he used to get a lot of, like for catechism, and he used to draw stuff, he used to get all these diploma like stuff, you know, from the school. I had them, but when they sold my family's house I never went to get the papers back.

And I started writing all these stories when I was seven years old, I used to have a book and I used to write all the things that happened during the day. I had a niece that died, she was a year and a half old, I know she was a year and a half old. I had all this written in my book, everything that went by, that went during the day, I had different dates on that book. That would have been quite a book to, hey, I was only seven when I started.

What I knew is what I learned by myself. Like, we couldn't go to public school, because they took you out of church if you did. So we couldn't go to public school, so I went to Holy Family but I sat with my sister in second grade doing nothing. And the people that could afford the books, the nuns would give the books to the people that could afford books. The people that couldn't afford it, they just, out they went. So I couldn't go to school. I was quite a few years old when I started school. I went here at Thorn's Corner.

Now, we had Ellen Murphy, which was Irish, but her mother was French, and she was more French than Irish. Ellen Murphy, she's quite a, she was quite a teacher. At night after school she used to take us to her house and teach us the catechism. Can you imagine in the days now, she's probably be, but, and she taught us a lot of French.

Because she had graduated from some college in Paris, and she, oh, she got so much, you know. I was with her when she died, she was such a wonderful person. When I was overseas she used to write to me, send me stuff. She was a (*unintelligible word*) woman.

But she always, in fact she used to come here, she didn't live far from here. And I got married, and she went crazy over my oldest son, he was very smart. She took him to the dances and, with nuns. And, oh yeah, she, I was with her when she died and she, I almost bought her house, you know. And I almost bought some piece of land that she had. I didn't want her to give me that land, so I didn't. I bought this here instead. And anyways.

Q: Was your family from Maine, or were they from Canada? Where was your family from?

EB: My who?

Q: Your family, your father and mother.

EB: Oh, they were from Canada. But they brought, they came to Lewiston; my father was all by himself, he came to Lewiston, he thought he was going to get better, you know. So he lived across the street from St. Peter's church, I think it was 111 Ash Street. Anyways, my mother, my father-in-law, my grandfather on my mother's side, he owned a hotel, some kind of a hotel on Lisbon Street, across from Cedar Street, that big building. And he, my father lived there, he was working here and there and he lived there. That's how he met my mother. So they were married in 1910.

Q: So how did they meet again? How did your father meet your mother?

EB: Through my grandfather. So, yeah. And, but he came from, my grandfather was

from Berlin, New Hampshire. His other children all lived there. My mother was the only one that lived here. She lived with her mother's sisters, the kids, she lived here. I don't know how come, I never, why they left her here, you know, all by herself. That I can't, all the others all stayed in Berlin and they, I don't know what the reason was, I never found out. I should have asked my mother but I, it didn't register then, you know. But then after a while here I, yeah, so she actually lived all by herself. But she, her aunt, she was crazy of her aunt. And all her cousins, well they were like sisters to her, and they, I'll show you a picture, it's quite a picture.

(Pause in taping.)

EB: At the mill?

Q: Oh, how long did you work at the mill?

EB: Forty years.

Q: Wow, tell me about the mill, like what were -?

EB: Oh, I had beautiful pictures, I don't know where I put them. I had one huge one where one of the boss retired and we're all there around him, and oh, I don't know where I got that picture, I was going to have it made in a big one, you know, to put in the Bates Mill. But I can't find it, I looked all over. I must have put it somewhere and, anyways.

I was there forty years. When I first went in all I did was clean the bobbins. You know what bobbins are? That's where the, it's like a, the threads. And then after that they got me in the weave room, I learned how to weave. But then they signed me up as a, to repair the patterns. So I worked on that for quite some time. And then, you know

we only worked like six months a year, and then the rest of the time we were out. But they used to transfer me from one room to another. And every time I'd change rooms, you know, they always want (*unintelligible phrase*), they always wanted to kick me but Number 5 never wanted to let me go. In fact, my future father-in-law, he was a boss there, he wanted me in his room, to work on the design, you know.

But, no, then I learned to weave with one of the elderly person. So this guy next to him, he was an older person. He went to see the boss, he said listen, this guy won't teach him right. I want him, and I'll teach him. And that took a little trouble, you know.

Q: Yeah, and did you get along pretty well?

EB: Yeah, so I was transferred with this other guy, he was a mean person. I had to learn the right way or else. And then I had not, a lot of people, they were on my wife's side, her aunts and uncles, and they showed me a lot of stuff, too, so. But then I went with the elderly people and they used to help me. I learned so much. And all the other people that used to come in there, they always wonder where in the heck did I ever learn all this stuff, you know, that they never learned.

So, but everybody in there, we were like a family affair. We were very close. I still, all those that are living that used to work with me, I know them just like, I miss them and they miss me and, in fact even my boss, his sister died a couple of months ago. And you know, we were so close, to me he was a, and I never loafed, you know, if there's, if I, I was a weaver, I wove on all the stuff, I changed shift and I wove on the Martha Washington. For a young man, you know, that was quite something because you couldn't make any mistakes, because you wasted a whole spread.

And I worked on third shift. And I'd, even I'd go in, you know, I was sick as a dog but I would still go in and work. And then after a while I taught a lot of other people how

to weave. Then they needed a warp tier. That was quite a job. But you know, they weren't paying, they were paying just so much for every warp you tied. Well, hey, I was making top wages as a, so I told the guy, the second, not, he wasn't the second then, he was an overseer, he wanted me to have that job at all costs. I said, I can't, unless you give me the price, the top price that I was making on the weaving, I'll take it. Otherwise I won't take it. So one of the fixer, I don't know why, they took that to the union, and I had quite a fight. But this overseer came with me and he fought for me, and I won, we won.

Q: Now, what was this fight about?

EB: Not to give me the price that -

Q: Oh, that you want.

EB: That I wanted. Why should I take a cut, you know?

Q: So did you work with the union a lot, or/

EB: No. We fought it and we won. And in fact, the lady that was in charge of part of the union, she's still a friend of mine. She's an elderly lady. And she fought for me, she said if they want you to have it I don't blame you, why take a cut, you know? Because I was going to go down, they was going to put a loom downstairs on another floor, and to teach different people, I was going to be the teacher on that job. But they wanted me as the warp tier, the overseer wanted me as a warp tier. Then, and this was a machine, you know. I had the pictures, everything I did on that warp, and it was quite a, that would have been a real good picture for the outfit. I'm still looking for it.

I got thousands and thousands of pictures. You know, we went all over the

world, we took pictures like there was no tomorrow. But I can't find my pictures. I had three pictures or four on warp tying, and I had this picture on, with the group, when one of the boss retired, and, but I don't know where they are.

Q: Now, did you think that when you worked in the mill, is it good to have good connections with people? Or to get favors, were there a lot of favors being given in there?

EB: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: There was?

EB: We were like brothers. There was a few, you know, against it, but most of them, you know, you needed help, they were always there to help me, like on the warping, you know, I have to put the warping, that's quite a job, you know, big, big rolls and. But they always come and help me, and when I had nothing to do I'd go help them. I never stopped, never, never stopped. That's why he wanted me on the that job. But this guy, this overseer, when he retired he lived around here, you know, I used to meet him at church, and he was always proud of me, you know.

Q: How did they decided like who got what job? Was it based on how hard you worked, would you say, or was it based on -?

EB: I never stopped, I never, I always found something to do, always. If nothing to do, I would clean, I would help other weavers or, and I would teach them different stuff that I knew, you know, I had learned from the elderly people. And, but no, they were all like brothers and sisters to me, they were, and still today, you know, those that are living.

Q: Was anyone like looked down upon at the mill, or was everyone, did everyone work together? Was anyone like looked down upon or not liked at the mill?

EB: A few. There was a woman, you know, she used to make a lot of mistakes. I was weaving at one end, she's still living, she knows (*unintelligible phrase*), and the boss comes up to me and says, she's making more mistakes. Well, I had seen the mistakes that she did but she, and you know all these mistakes she did, they had to throw that stuff away because it ruined the whole spread. So he asked, he came in my work, you know, he was watching her from behind and he saw her doing some of the mistakes. Oh, and he really got after her, you know. She's still living. She wants to be, she wants me to be a friend of hers, you know, she would have wanted me to stay with her. No.

I knew her for a long time because my first house was built in front of where she lives, so I knew her. And she was a troublemaker, you know, all kinds. Anyways, she's still living. So, but I never talked against her, it was none of my business, you know. I wouldn't harm nobody because, you know, you never know when you might need them. But that wasn't my, I learned a lot of stuff as a kid in the service. I was in the infantry so, you know, we were brought up with a stick. We did nothing wrong because if we ever did we, and -

Q: Do you think, who do you think were the like most creative, or inventive of workers, do you think it was like the bosses, the salaried workers, or like the piece makers [*sic*] sort of people?

EB: Well, the people that worked on the designing, that was quite something. My father, my future father-in-law was the boss there, and his mother was Irish, my grandmother, my wife's grandmother was Irish, and her husband used to be a, my grandfather, was a, he used to make clothes for men. He was the top one in Lewiston.

And he never wanted to spend up the French Canadian way, spend money on education. They figured, to milk a cow we didn't need to have a college education, you know, that was their saying. But she wanted her son to go to college.

So she couldn't get no money from him, so she went to work because she knew the head guy that was from Ireland, they were from Northern Ireland. And he got her a job in there, and the money, she used that money, she sent him to college in Canada, my father-in-law. She only had one son. She had a daughter, but she died, she was about seven years old, and that kind of killed her quite a bit, you know. So my father-in-law went to college.

But then my, it's funny, my mother-in-law was one of those, she was a very smart woman, I always liked her and, but she had no education and she was a smart, smart person, very good cook. But she never believed in education. When we had our kids, now she had a son, he's still living, they never bothered sending him to college. But they saw what we were doing with our kids, you know, they went to all kinds of school. In fact, we used to travel to Boston, like my oldest son learned accordion from an Italian guy that used to have a place in Boston. We used to travel once a month for him to learn, yeah, the, and then we sent him here, he learned piano. He's got one of the most expensive piano in the world, in California. His daughter, the number two girl, she played that like, she's so good at it.

But, you know, they never had, just like my son, never had to push them for anything. You know, they, we never had to scold them to go to school, never, never, they were sick and they would go to school no matter what, the three of them. And my oldest son, he said if I'm, he could have, he had quite a few diplomas, stuff from Bates College. I have the stuff here somewheres, from Bates College. But he said, if I'm going to college I want to go to one of the best in the world, and he wanted to go out, you know, go out of town.

So I knew this Jewish lawyer here in town, he used to go listen to my son to play the organ, not the organ, the accordian at Marco's restaurant. Is it Marco? No, not Marco, the Italian restaurant on Middle Street, it's closed, now it's something else there. He used to go every weekend to watch him, you know. So I guess he made friends with my son. So my son, he asked him where, if he was going to college, and he said well, he'd like to go to Harvard. Well, it so happened that this guy was a Harvard -

Q: Graduate.

EB: Yeah, and not only that, he used to spend big money every year to Harvard College. He said, you want to go to Harvard, he says, I'll get you there. There was no problem. He sent the papers, and well he was always one of the first ones in high school here anyways, he had quite a, and no problem, he went to Harvard. But, and you probably know his son, that lawyer's son. He's the one that's in charge of all these repairs that are going in town. He's the head guy. In fact, my younger brother works for him, and he treats my brother like, and my brother had no education or anything like that, but he's his boss, he takes care of everything that he has, he makes. Now I can't remember his name, you know, names are, but he -. Yeah, he went to Harvard, and then he went to a medical school, and that's where he met his wife. And I don't remember the medical school, it's in Boston, too.

Q: Tufts?

EB: Tuft. And he, that's where he met his wife.

Q: Oh, that's a very good school as well.

EB: She's a doctor, too. And, yeah. And he worked there for a while. But then a place in California heard about him, you know, they wanted him on their staff. So he

went there to work, but then Harvard wanted him back, you know. So finally he made it back here, he was a professor for a while.

Q: At Harvard Medical School?

EB: Yeah, but the other place wanted him again, you know. He had a huge piano, I had the picture, they're taking it out, he used to live on the second floor, they took it out of the second floor, through the window. So he moved back there. He was making good money. And they always wanted him back, when he went back all the people there, you know, they went crazy over my son. They still do. I go there, you know, I'm like the king of kings, you know, all the people there, it's a, don't know how big that place is, but it's a huge place, you know, they discover a lot of stuff. So, yeah, he's one of the top person in there, so I don't think he'd move out of there.

And all my kids, they all went to college. My number two son went to, well he had friends that went to high school, they went to University of New Hampshire and, well, we didn't care too much for him to go there, but anyways, he came out one of the first ones there. And then he went to another college in Boston. I've got a big picture of the outfit, the big college, to learn business like, you know. Then he started his own business and he, now he, he used to travel, he traveled all over the world, too. And he went to a lot of these places where the war is now.

And in fact, he was next door to the Empire State Building when it came down. He was right across, he saw the plane going in that building and, you know, he never got over that. He walked for almost two days, when he left that place, you know, everybody went wild. He looked for a place, he got on the train to go back to New Hampshire. Finally after a couple of days he found a station and he went back to New Hampshire. But he was in that building, next door to that building. He had gone in that building quite a few times because he had business in there.

But, so that was quite a thing for him, you know. It's a good thing he came out. He called me up, you know, that day, he was on the road, he had a, and he had left all his stuff in the hotel, all his business stuff. But that wasn't torn down, so he got his stuff back, but months later. And he called me, he had been walking for about two hours, he said did you watch TV this morning, did you see what happened? No, I didn't. I open the TV and I see this stuff. He said, I was right next door, I saw all this stuff happen. You know, as a young man, that's quite something, you know. I figured he went just as bad as I went through in Europe, in WWII. So, I wonder if he ever got over that. I don't know. But anyways.

And then he worked for different companies, and he owned his own company, he built a big house, he bought some buildings in Manchester and, he's all over the place. But now he works for, he has the biggest chocolate company, from Switzerland, you know, they have, they have big places, and it's expensive chocolate, very expensive. They opened up quite a few stores here and there, and now, right now he's in mid west somewhere, where one of their headquarters are, and he goes there and works there, and then he'll probably go to Switzerland, (*unintelligible phrase*). He has quite a job, and he's quite a person, he's quite a business person. You can't walk on the wrong side, it's just one way and, anyways.

Q: That's interesting.

EB: And my daughter's, I'm going there this weekend, she has this outfit, she went to this, what's that girls' college in Boston?

Q: Wellesley.

EB: Wellesley.

Q: Your daughter went to Wellesley?

EB: Yeah.

Q: Wow, your children went to very, very, very good schools. Oh, wow.

EB: Yeah, she liked it, and she met so many friends. They used to come here, you know, when they had their vacation, we used to keep them here for a couple of days and they treated, and she's still friendly with them. Now she's in charge of a company that, oh, it's a big outfit. But she has her own, she had her own office there, private office, and she had all these workers. But then she changed job because they were moving to Boston, the company was sold to a French Canadian outfit, and they would employ most of the people from Canada. So she left and she got in another outfit in Boston, the name of, but she likes it there, and she has her own private, she's always in charge. All my three kids are, but they went to some of the best colleges, you know. But school was their main thing, they all, all went crazy. And they never lost a day, never, never, never. And when my number two son was head in college in New Hampshire, he was always the top guy in there, you know, he ran things and, you know, you have to go straight or else you wouldn't be there. Anyways. So they all made out good.

Q: That's wonderful.

EB: Yeah, yeah, I was lucky. But you know they, that's the way we brought them up. We never had trouble with them, they never gave us trouble. Anything they wanted, we made sure they had. And my wife traveled all over the country to find, like they wanted to go to different colleges, you know, so she would take them on weekends, and go upstate New York or where they were, they had friends at different colleges. And so, oh

yeah, we were always, and they always learned music, piano and different types of music.

Q: Now, when you were working in the mills, did you ever feel like you were overworked, or?

EB: Never.

Q: Never?

EB: Now listen, I worked on the third shift at Bates, and at seven p.m., I'd cross the street and went to work at, what's that mill they're going to tear down? Don't tell me I don't know the, my wife was working there as a nurse, too.

Q: Oh, so did your wife work as a nurse at the mill?

EB: Yeah, she was a nurse at Bates, and before that she was a nurse at Cowan Mill, is it Cowan? Because there was two mills there. Anyways, I worked there from seven to, all I did was just walk around with the top brass, and that's all I did. And I worked two shifts, plus building the house. You wonder where I slept. I never know, sometimes I'd go to bed at nine o'clock at night, and I'd get up, we started at eleven o'clock (*unintelligible word*), eleven to seven. And then I worked at the other mill. So I was making the money for, that's how we built these houses, you know, and then we bought a big apartment building in Lewiston. I sold that, I fixed it all up and I sold it, because all the kids were going to college and we needed the money, so. But my wife and I, it was just one person.

Q: So no one really, did anyone take care of the money and organizing the family, or was it like a team unit?

EB: We never borrowed money from nobody. And she took care of all these elderly people, and she invested money in all kinds of stuff. I'm still getting money from all over the word. She invested in so much stock, I don't know, my number two son's in charge of all this stuff because I don't know if I'm coming or going with this stuff.

And we were supposed to do a lot of traveling. In fact when she, on the road, just before the accident, this I'll never forget, her last words, she said, when I get home, I got to sell a lot of stock because they'll all be going down within a month, month and a half. That's when the building came down in New York, and that's where after that the, she knew ahead of time, can you imagine? That I'll never forget, that's the last thing she told me. And we were only about an hour and a half from here, and I passed out on the wheel and I just, I guess I went across, and this guy with a big Cadillac hit her right on her side. And she always said, if we ever have an accident, it will kill me.

She had part of her, the bones, it was all taken out. When she was a young girl, nine years old, she went to Boston, she had, they lost a brother, he was seven years old, from this same, and she practically went blind and they took that bone off. And she said, you know, if I hit on the side, that's going to kill me. And that's just what happened.

Q: Now, one thing about the mill that I was going to ask you, do you know of anything about like illegal discharges into the river, the Androscoggin, was there any?

EB: I worked there and I was drafted from there, from the Androscoggin Mill, 1943.

Q: Oh, was there like any, did they put anything in the river, do you know, or was there any like illegal things put in the river, or illegal discharges?

EB: What do you mean?

Q: Like, I don't know, did they dump anything into the river, the mills?

EB: Well, see, I was drafted from where I was working at the Androscoggin Mill. I was doing all kinds of work. All I did was I followed the boss here and there, we'd go up five floors, we'd pick up something, come down, and I had to do the errands. But when I come out of service, the place was going to close. I didn't want to go back, because they would have taken me back, because the people there, they never believe that, I looked like a twelve year old kid, you know, that I would be drafted, they never believed that. They always took care of me like I was a twelve year old kid.

Q: Now what war was this, (*unintelligible phrase*) you were drafted for?

EB: Was I what?

Q: Did you say you were drafted?

EB: I was drafted. The first eighteen year old to be drafted out of Lewiston.

Q: For which war?

EB: The Second World. And I was all over Europe, as far as Budapest, Hungary. I lived quite a while in Czechoslovakia, we fought our way through there. I fought in every country in Europe. We used to, I was in the infantry, but we used to replace, in fact I was even with the English army when we, we landed on the coast of Le Havre, which is next to Belgium. And that's where the English were, but they were having a hard time so we were taken in with the English, we relieved the English and we kept going to Belgium and Holland. And in northern Germany, I, when I went out to Germany.

Q: Were in you involved in any, when you worked in the mills, like any special activities, union activities or different kinds of, were you involved in -?

EB: No, I never bothered with the union, I never, because you know, I used to do all kinds of work and probably I wasn't supposed to do some of the work but I had to keep going. I never stopped, never stopped. If I thought something needed cleaning, or I would, if I didn't have nothing to do I would sweep the floor or do something, or I would help the other people here and there. I always did something, always.

But when I was a weaver I, in fact I worked on Navy, bedspreads for the Navy. And the overseer came up to me and I, I'm bragging about myself, he said, Roger, you had the best amount of spreads, and they were all first class. Well, I said, I had a good warp fixer, loom fixer. You know, that helped, when you needed help. But I used to do a lot of that work myself because I'd been there long enough, you know. But he said, you have the highest and the best.

After that, you know, he was after me all the time. In fact, when I was a warp tier, he had this group from Germany that came in and they were going to sell us a warp tying machine. Now, this would take two men to work on it. And I was doing the same work, one man with just a small machine. I said, so he came up to me, I'm not making this up, he said, what do you think, Roger, we should do. I said, I'll sit next to them and I'll do my machine and they'll do theirs, and I'll be done before -

End of Side A

Side B

EB: ... that was one of my, after that, you know, he was always after me. So, oh yeah, that person was quite a person. He knew I never stopped working, you know, I

always have something to do, I always clean or help somebody, I, that was my, I was brought up that way. And in the service, you know, we helped each other.

And the movie I made -

(Tape interrupted)

EB: . . . you see me, and you know, there was a stack of bodies when we got in that camp, and that stack was about probably a little over six feet high, and a couple of hundred feet long, all bodies stacked on one on top of the other. And at the end of the place there, where they burned them in the furnace -

Q: Now where was this again, just remind me?

EB: Camp Buchenwald. They used to burn them and throw the ashes in front of the building, there was a whole stack of ashes there, and all these bodies on the side. All stripped, no clothes on or shoes, it was all stacked up inside. And when you went through that building, out of the skin they used to make lampshades and all kinds of stuff, the Germans did that. And with the bones they would make all kinds of stuff.

And then there was a place, a round building, it was all cement, it was cool in there, high roof, it was round like this, and they had small benches here and there, and a rope. So they'd stand the prisoners on that, tie the rope, and then one guy would go by, after they were all tied up, he'd kick the bench off and they'd hang. Can you imagine a human being, and as smart as the Germans were, to do that? I don't care if they're Jews, they're human beings. They killed, we had trains full of women and children, and they used to put, gas them in there, kill them in there. You know, I, you know, for a person that had never been to, out of Lewiston, it's quite a thing to see, it's quite, just see those bodies, you know.

But I don't care what they were. I lived in the service, hey, I had all types of Jews, they were all my friends and they took care of me like one of theirs. They were smart people. That's why they killed them, they were too smart. You know, if you know any Jewish people, you know, went to, they went to college and they, you know, they.

Q: Yeah, one of my good friends is Jewish, yeah, (*unintelligible phrase*).

EB: You know, education is their main thing. So, you know.

Q: No, I completely agree, yeah.

EB: Oh, you know, for me they're, a Jew is -

Q: Now did, were -

EB: They're my brothers.

Q: Were there Catholics in this area, or I'm sorry, Italians in this area?

EB: What's that?

Q: Were there Italians in this area?

EB: Oh, a lot of them.

Q: Did you get along with (*unintelligible phrase*)?

EB: We took, we fought places where there was Italian fighters. But we used to take their guns away and shove them in the back. They didn't want to fight. We took them prisoners, but then we left them in back, to go back to Italy. But they were nice people,

you know? How they ever got mixed up in there. And I was, I had taken a trip to where Mussolini was hanged in one of the trees there in Italy. And this was a summer place and, yeah. But I went through, all over it.

Q: Were there many, was there ever any strikes when you were working at the mill?

EB: Any what?

Q: Strikes?

EB: Oh, yes.

Q: Lots of strikes?

EB: Oh, yes, but it never lasted too long.

Q: Did you partake in them, or did you participate in the strikes?

EB: I never, it never bothered me. A lot of that stuff was crazy, you know. I figured we were working and, I don't know.

Q: Yeah, that's really interesting. Well, thank you so much for -

EB: Well I didn't tell you too much about the Bates, but, all the workers there were related.

Q: They were all like family, yes.

EB: All of them. And they were very kind, all kind people, and we always tried to help

each other. Always did, we always did.

Q: Do you find that the boss or supervisor treated the women differently than the men, or would you say everyone was treated equal?

EB: What do you mean?

Q: Oh, like the boss, your boss, would you say that he treated women in the mills -?

EB: Oh yeah, oh yeah, we were treated equal, oh yeah. In fact, the last boss we had, around three o'clock in the morning on third shift, we'd all wind up in his room and we had laughs and we had, with this boss, he's still living, you know, the nicest, smartest person in town. He sees me, you know, and he goes crazy. Yeah. He's quite a person. But we were all like brother and sister. We help each other, if we needed help we're there, and if you saw them today they'd say the same thing about me as I say about them. So, yeah.

I never missed a day for being sick, never. I worked in there and I was sick as a dog. I wouldn't lose one day. No. But, no, I would have done anything for the mill. I figured they hired me, you know. But the only was the, I'll never forget that guy that said they didn't want to hire ex soldiers because they were lazy. Where in hell he ever found that out. He was a smart person. But to tell me that, you know.

Q: Was he Irish, or -?

EB: Yes. But to tell me that, you know, that they were, hey, he never went in the service because maybe some of the places could have been, but not in our place. We learned everything from all the other guys, and they were very strict. We were brought up very strict. We learned from sewing to cooking to whatever there was. And I, in fact, on the gun I was on, I was a first gunner, but then I had to be relieved because I didn't

have the education. You know, it's shameful, I only went up to seventh grade. Can you imagine? I used to cry to go to school, but I couldn't go to Catholic school.

Q: Is that because they wouldn't pay for the books?

EB: They wouldn't allow us. But, and that was the nuns' fault, you know, they were, hey, the nuns we had here were the most educated nuns in the world. But still. You know, I was sitting with my sister in her class, in second, learning nothing because I learned more at home with prayers and catechism than I could learn there. Because, you know, it was higher than I, but I learned French on my own, I learned to write French on my own as a young kid. They never taught me anything. And in public school they never showed you French.

But I can read French and I, in fact when I was overseas in France I used to, if they wanted something, you know, I used to be the one that went to talk to them. Well, I was brought up with a priest here, he was from France. He was a mean person, but if we ever knew a holy person, he was a saint, we knew a saint, this priest that was here. I used to be with him almost seven days a week, you know. On Monday we used to go bring the money that they collected on Sunday, and I used to do some work around the house and (*unintelligible phrase*) a couple of times, bought me suits. And the woman that was working there made jackets for me, and she, but I can never say, I can swear, never said anything wrong or did anything wrong. Never, never, never. And when I was in the service, you know, you, I came back and he was there for me.

You know, I wonder, I must have been quite a sinner, to be put to what I've gone through. Lost my wife, she was the most important thing I ever had in life. We always worked together, and we only made one, the two of us. You can ask all my kids here. We never argued if we wanted something, we was going to repair the whole works, the year she died. And, but she had this cabinet put in, new cabinets, I had some nice cabinets before but she wanted white and she, she never saw those. She was

(*unintelligible word*). I miss her so much. I'm alone, I cry, you know, I, she's with me all the time. I figured it's my fault, you know, I killed her.

Q: Oh, no, no -

End of Interview

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