

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

Roland Gosselin
(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

MWOH# 009
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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Mill Workers Oral History Project. Today I'm interviewing Roland Gosselin at his home in Lewiston, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu, and the date is October 27th, the year 2005. Could you start just by giving me your full name?

Roland Gosselin: My full name is Roland J. Gosselin.

AL: And where and when were you born?

RG: I was born in Augusta, in Augusta, Maine, and then we moved to Berlin, New Hampshire, I started school in Berlin, New Hampshire, and then moved back to Augusta and continued my schooling there until 1932 when we moved to Lewiston. And I kept going, my school, at St. Peter's School in Lewiston.

AL: And what is your birth date?

RG: May 19, 1926.

AL: And so, did your parents come from Augusta?

RG: My mother came from Augusta, but my father was born in Canada, but they got married, they been together, they both passed away now.

AL: What did they do for work?

RG: Well, my mother started working in the dime store, and also she had studied the piano and during the end years of the silent movies, she used to play the piano in the movie, for movies. And my father went to college in Suffern, New York. Originally I think he wanted to go to be a priest, but in those years, you know, money was scarce so he didn't continue his schooling, although he continued schooling in Augusta. And then I believe his first job was working at the office at the Edwards Mill in Augusta. So, and then he started working in a shoe store, and this is how come we relocated, when my father was transferred to Berlin, New Hampshire as manager of the Hazard Shoe Store, and then when that closed he came and worked in the Lewiston Hazard Shoe Store. And when that closed, he went to work at the Bleachery in Lewiston until that closed.

AL: What year did that close, do you remember? About? I don't know.

RG: It had to be late thirties, '38, eventually to the forties. Because I started working at Bates because my father was out of work. He was working only on Saturday at the Boston Shoe Store in Lewiston, so he was, he wasn't working. So being the oldest, I thought I had to go work and that's how come I went to work at Bates Mill, and I got along fine and I stayed there, I never did another job.

AL: You were there for like forty eight years?

RG: Yes, I was.

AL: How old were you when you started there?

RG: I had to be sixteen, because they were hiring at sixteen. So I started working, I started first as a cleaner in the weave room, and didn't last, that didn't last with me. Right away I started working how to weave, I was being taught by the people over there, they teach me how to weave, and then I became what they, at that time they used to call a spare hand. You were going from one set of weavers with work to the other and going around all day. This way, you know, you were, I was helping out and at the same time I was being helped by the weavers working on regular jobs.

AL: So is that what you did for a lot of the time?

RG: I was a weaver, yes, I was a good weaver for a good part time, a good time that I was there. But then in the fifties, I went to the union. When the union got involved in the mill in the late fifties, I went to work for the union office, I became a business agent at the union office in Lewiston. And I went to work there with the understanding with Bates Manufacturing, the manager Fred Lebel, that if for any reason whatsoever they closed or I couldn't do the job, they would take me back at Bates on my regular job that I used to do, and on the same shift, without loss of seniority, and this is what happened. And I'm, you know, I'm kind of grateful to Bates Manufacturing for having done that, because that's how come I never lost my seniority as far as working at the Bates Mill.

And I was a very active person from a very early age. School activities, always involved. And as I went along, eventually I helped with decorations for school parties, for plays, and so I got involved to a point where I was doing stage sets and direct French plays.

And after I went in the service, in the fifties, and then when I came back I had, I went back to work at Bates of course, and I did, I worked barely a week when my father died suddenly. And being the oldest in the family, I had to stay working so I went back to the job.

So in the meantime, when I was in the service I had some friends in New York and I stopped in New York and I started looking for work. And being bilingual, right away they'd take my application and they were kind of interested. And of course I stayed a week, and then I came back home. And lo and behold, during the wake of my father, I had a call from New York, Roger (*name*), one of the leading mens department store in New York was offering me work. So, I couldn't go because being the oldest I had to stay home. I'm the oldest of nine.

AL: Nine, there are nine of you, oh wow.

RG: So after I knew I was going to stay home for good, I was, I always been interested in theater so I joined the Lewiston-Auburn Little Theater Group, and I've been involved over there for a good twenty two, twenty five years. I went all through the chain, became president of the Little Theater at one time, but my primary job with Little Theater was I got involved, I started designing sets and building sets for plays.

At the beginning we used to have three plays a year, and I used to do the production for the three plays. And then we were doing our work on, like building and rehearsing was done on Sylvan Avenue, the old Sons of Italy Hall, Little Theater had acquired that. So when I joined Little Theater I, then I started working over there and, for the Little Theater, I directed three or four plays besides, but my forte was doing musical. I've always loved doing musical, and through the years I've done, I've been involved in I think it's fourteen or sixteen musicals for the Little Theater in Lewiston.

AL: Have you performed at all?

RG: I performed a few times, but I always work, love working backstage building the sets and

everything. And I never, I've never lost this, what would you call it, this reverence for the stage. Because whenever they'd start tearing the stage down from one play, I used to hide because I'd cry like a baby. And it's always been like that. And through the years I've always been involved with theater. I used to do French plays at St. Dom's with Sister Selange. And we did two musicals in French in Lewiston, I was involved with.

And back in the forties, during the war years, what do you call it, the *(name)* in Lewiston were doing an operetta called The Chimes of Normandy, Les Cloches de *(unintelligible word)* in French, and they were going to do that at the music hall. At the time, the music hall on Lisbon Street was closed, but it had not been teared down and nothing was, everything was still in there. And so I said I was going to go, because I had read, you know, through the years, Lewiston had done The Chimes of Normandy, or Les Cloches de *(unintelligible word)*, *(unintelligible phrase)* four times. And so I said to myself, I'll do Les Cloches de *(unintelligible word)* when I'm able to.

And this is what happened just, well, barely ten years ago, we did Les Cloches de *(unintelligible word)* under my direction. And I, I was involved in everything, the stage set, I helped Bernadette Morin work the costumes, get ideas, you know. And then Madame Juliette Bouvier was the French diction, because it was being done in French. And so we did Les Cloches de *(unintelligible word)*.

And then for the *(name)* in Lewiston, I did The Merry Widow in French, we did The Merry Widow in French. So I was, I did, for that I was doing the stage set, but I was involved in it because I'm the one that had wanted to do it. And at the time I was a member of the *(name)* in Lewiston, and one day we had a program that we did at the Ramada Inn, and the ladies were saying, why don't you do something in French? And off from my head I said, let's do La Veuve Joyeuse. They said, and so it went around to the office and by the end of the night everyone was saying *(unintelligible word)* Les Cloches do *(unintelligible word)*, well, not Les Cloches *(unintelligible word)*, I mean La Veuve Joyeuse.

And all local people, in French, so, and the hard part of it I can't go through because it was getting the rights to do it from France, and, but being French and bilingual, you know, I get along one way or the other. When I wanted something, I wanted something and I made sure that I would get it, I would get it. And that's how come we got the rights to do The Merry Widow, got the books from France.

And again, it was Bernadette Morin, you know, the local rental for weddings, she's the one that did the costumes. Who else would do costume, I remember for the leading for the last act, she needed a very elaborate dress, and she took a wedding gown and she dyed the wedding gown a nice peacock blue, and she added dozens, dozens, dozens of yards of sequins on it.

So, I can't start to say how involved in Lewiston and Auburn and theater, it's been my life, it's been my life. And of course, I mean, then I worked at a, I was a member of the Richelieu Club in Lewiston, and through the years I became president three different times. And for them was, I got involved, everything I wanted I got involved.

During that time we had the Festival Franco Americain in Lewiston, and there used to be a big parade. So I used to decorate floats and do floats for the Richelieu and we won first prize twice for the Richelieu Club.

AL: And what is the Richelieu Club?

RG: The Richelieu Club is a, it's a group of French people, you have to keep speaking French at the meeting. And I remember when I was president, if somebody spoke English during the meeting, they were fined twenty five cents. It was, yeah, money for the club. But I was president three different times, and one of the occasions was the silver anniversary, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Richelieu, so I was involved, I was involved with that.

And then thirty years came, and I was involved with that. We had a Richelieu from Manchester, New Hampshire, from Lowell, from (*name*), Rhode Island that used to come. But it's originally a French Canadian organization, it's very involved in Canada (*unintelligible phrase*), we were affiliated to the Canadian, so all our money goes over there. So this is what discouraged me from staying. The last eight, ten years, I quit the Richelieu because I couldn't do nothing, you couldn't do nothing. We had to send everything to Canada.

And coming back to Bates, I started in the forties at Bates. And when I started working at Bates and I became a weaver, I was involved over there, too, because you know, I didn't think it was just a work thing. And during the early years, Bates were paying us with currency, and then they decided to go to checks. And it was amazing, you know, a lot of the people that I was working with couldn't sign their name, and couldn't read in French. And so I taught maybe a dozen people how to sign their name when we first started being paid by check. We had a lunch hour, you know, half an hour, and I taught people how to sign their name because they couldn't, they were all, they were Canadians and they didn't have that much schooling.

So one of these person is (*name*), his father, I used to work with him, and when came their check, when they started talking about a check, crying, crying because he wouldn't be able to sign his name on his check. And so we used to have a half hour for lunch, and I taught him how to write his name. And I did that to three or four other person in my room, you know.

I was helping, helping, helping, was always like that. And when I started working there, Roland was not going to wear a pair of dungarees. I've never, never wore a pair of dungarees. I started working washable pants and t-shirts. And, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*) only the very older people that kept the overall and the dungarees. They started wearing pants, and I used to wear pants and use an apron with the (*unintelligible word*). So we didn't ever use our pants that much because of that, because we'd wear and apron.

But I remember that, and of course during the holidays, these people are all French, so the holidays were something special, you know, at that time. And there was no such thing in the mill as having a party. So I started parties and came Christmas, sure enough, the last week or the week before the holidays, I used to talk to (*name*), the other weaver, and we'd chip in money and buy the food. And of course I was involved in a little share, so I had the advantage of being able to get this, like the coffee urn, I would bring a coffee urn from the Little Theater.

So that half hour lunch, we would have a Christmas party. We would buy meat pies from Lacasse, and we used to have an oven to heat our food, you know, so it was good to heat four meat pies at a time. So we'd cook the meat pies in there, long enough I mean, and we had pickles, olives, cheese and crackers. And I'd bring tablecloth and there were cups and saucer, and we would have a party.

And so, it became too big after a while, you know, they stopped me from doing it because it was, but I'm grateful to Steve Crawley for saying yes and keeping his eyes closed when we would have these parties, you know. And even the boss would come over and have lunch with us.

So, you know, I brought a little cheer just the same because I, we were in the mill, you know. But I had made up my mind for early life, you know, I told my brother and sister, find yourself a job somewhere from the mill, don't go work in the mill. That's what happened, but I'm the only one that stayed, you know.

And of course, I was familiar with the inside of the mill, okay? Because my teen, my young years, I used to bring dinner to my grandfather and grandmother that was working in a mill in Augusta. In the summer time, I'd never stay in Lewiston. I would take the bus, I would go to Augusta and stay with my

grandparents, in Augusta. And of course in the summertime I used to bring them their lunch.

And my grandfather, my grandparents on both sides are fifty years recipients of a watch and a chain from Bates. Both my grandparents, both sides, my father and mother's side. And of course my mother, before she got married, she worked a few years in a mill. But then we moved to Lewiston here, and she started working here in Lewiston at the Hill Mill, but of course by then she was raising family so she stopped working.

And my father, early in life, started working in the office at the Edwards Mill in Augusta, but then he started working in the shoe stores selling shoes, a salesman, and he did that most of his life.

AL: Now you said you told your brothers and sisters not to go in the mill if they could help it. What were your reasons for that?

RG: Because we worked too hard, and it was dirty, it was dirty. I remember when I started working at the mill, we would come in on Monday morning and see the rats, we would see the rats. And at that time, in the 1940s, the men were not clean as they were years later, as we went along. You know, they used to chew tobacco and they used to, they'd spit that (*unintelligible phrase*) the wall all around. That wasn't clean.

And seeing the rats and, you know. And of course, like I say, it was not all clean work. A weaver was okay, but when I started to work there as a cleaner we used to clean with air hose, clean the waste under the looms with air hose, and do the sweeping and all. You know, I didn't stop them from working in the mill, but I told them if they could find something else, you know, and by then, you know, there was more work and progress was coming around, so they didn't have to go work in the mill.

And I heard that so many times at work, by the old people. I'm going to work, but my children are not going to work in the mill. And I think this is probably a reason why the textile deteriorated, because of that. Because of the fact that the parents would, you know, the parents would work very hard. I remember the years, the war years, when we used to work ten hours a day, six days a week.

(*Telephone interruption*)

AL: So, you were -

RG: And, you know, when I was at work, everything that would come along I would be involved in. We had a Bates news magazine, I was a reporter for that for years. Something special, Red Cross, I worked with that, and of course being involved in theater I would need this, I would that, you know. And Fred Lebel, the manager, thank God for him, you know. I would need some material to make drapes for a stage dressing, I would tell Fred Lebel, Fred Lebel would say, well, I'll think about it.

All of a sudden, maybe in the afternoon, he'd say, ask for somebody to go on your work and we'll go see what we can find. And he'd give me material and I would make drapes for plays, whatever. If I needed material for, to make costumes, I'd say Fred, I need this, you know, and through the years him and Steve Crawley would come around and they'd say, well, I see you're going to do a play again. I'd say, yes. What are you going to need now? So they would accommodate me with that. I would have material.

I remember during a scene decoration at St. Dom, and I needed some, like some red poplin to do a vest. I told him, so he told his secretary, he says, find him some red material, we needed material to make a vest for the waiters. The girls, you know, we've got committees at school, so a couple girls knew how to sew, they made these little vests, and they made the sash, and they made like little berets, they made the berets, also red.

And I told them, I says, that's not nice, just red like this, I says, well, what do you want now? So I said, you know the little pom-poms, the trimming, I says, it would be nice to have some red one on, red trimming, red pom-pom. Lo and behold we got it, and it's been like that through the years, you know.

And after years I was so involved, people knew me, you know, I'd just say, well, you want to lend me this for a play. They knew I would take care of it and I would bring it back to them.

I remember doing a May ball at the K.C. in Lewiston and I needed a lot of green. I must have gone to eight stores, they lend me the artificial trees, the artificial big plants. I must have had forty pieces for the decorations. And I brought, they knew I would, I'd bring them back.

I did it, I did a K.C. prom at St. Dom's, and you these candelabras that they have, the florists have for weddings? I had three florists lend me all they had, the candelabras, and I had a whole dance floor by candlelight. That's how crazy I was.

AL: That's great. Do you think that your feelings for the theater and musicals came from your mother's love for music?

RG: Oh yes. My grandfather didn't know how to read or write, and he could play fourteen instruments. And after that when my father got, you know, my father and mother got married, my father's the one that showed my grandfather how to write, and how to write his name and how to read the music. My grandfather used to play the violin, he used to play the (*name*), he used to play the whole battery, the drums, and he used to teach it.

And I remember my younger years at Christmas time, my grandfather used to have a 16-piece orchestra in church for the midnight mass. I'm seventy nine years old, but I still remember that, and my mind is as vivid, I still remember that, that he used to, I have his violin here. And I used to, and he was good enough that he used to teach boys the drums for drum corps.

So, you know, I was surrounded by music all my life. And in the winter time there, I would leave here right after school on Friday, I would go down to Augusta, my grandfather, and Saturday afternoon my grandfather and myself used to sit by the radio and listen to the Metropolitan Opera broadcast. And so that's how I love music.

And I was only sixteen, seventeen years old when I went to the Metropolitan Opera, to the opera, and so I started loving classical music. And upstairs I have basically over five hundred complete operas on records, and now VCR came around, now I've got them on VCR, I've got maybe three hundred, four hundred operas on VCR.

And musical, I like musical as much as, because I've done musical, Little Theater, I worked on the first musical they did, Showboat, and then, and we went along and then I remember I did Carousel, I did The King and I, I did Song of Norway, I did Fiddler on the Roof, all before Little Theater in Auburn got involved in the, later on, later plays. Now I go to plays, I go to plays and I still worry, I sit and listen to a, see a play, listen to a play, and I can visualize the work they do backstage, how they're waiting to come on stage, what has to be done. And, you know, especially a musical, you know that you only have so many bars to do this, so many bars to, so.

You know, without exaggeration, I'm a self-made individual. And I suffer for it now because whenever I had to throw away, I had all this stuff, decorations, and when I throw that away I cry, I still cry. Because you were, nobody realize how hard we worked to be able to do a play, to get it all together and to get it going so that you have the finished piece, the finished (*unintelligible word*).

And so, like I say, I was president of the Richelieu Club, the Knights of Columbus, I've been all

through the chairs, I've been Grand Knight and I've been Faithful Navigator, so I was involved as you can well imagine on all these levels.

And it's the same thing, you know, I didn't think that work was that hard at Bates, but you know, I've never done anything else.

AL: What was it like for you being the oldest of nine children, and what responsibilities did you have being the oldest?

RG: A lot, because my father died, he was only forty-eight years old and I became, you know, head of the family. So at that time we were living in a rent on Blake Street, and so when my father died we found a house and we moved here. And at that time there was still, six of them were still in school. My youngest brother was only four and a half then, when my father died so, and went to school here at Holy Cross. And all went to St. Dom's, all graduated from St. Dom's.

So, and I've done, you know, I have pictures of everything, all these decorations that I did and all the plays, all the, of the plays at St. Dom's, decorations for the May Balls at the Knight of Columbus.

You know, I used to choose a theme, and I used to build it up and when I'd decorate it was this theme, it was not (*unintelligible word*), but it was a theme. I did, for St. Dom's I did a prom called Indian Splendor, Egyptian Splendor I mean. And I had an obelisk thirty five feet in the middle of the hall at St. Peter, the stage was set just like a formal entrance to an Egyptian home with horses and chariots on (*unintelligible word*), palm trees. It's so many things, it's so many things, and today it makes it hard because of that, you know. I can't seem to cut myself from this or that, I can't throw away stuff because of the fact that I had been so involved in it and worked so hard in it.

AL: I'm thinking about, in terms of having been bilingual, how has that been (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RG: During the wake when my father died, I got a letter from Roger (*name*) in New York, I had been hired, I was offered a job at Roger (*name*) in New York, I couldn't go. I had to decline, I couldn't go. Because I was bilingual, and when I was doing the interviews in New York, different shops, you know, my idea was to go work in New York and then to go to school to learn decorating and do the decorations in stores. You know, you have people like that, that do decorations seasonally for the store, and this is what my idea was. And so I couldn't.

So this is how come I joined Little Theater, as an outlet, as an outlet, because you know, being the oldest I had to (*unintelligible word*) the house, and all my brothers that got married, I was the one, a witness for them because my father was already dead. And so we moved, we moved here in Lewiston, when we moved here we were still seven, there was two of them married but there was still seven living here.

And then I finally moved and, you know, because I was the father image, whenever they got married I gave them big prizes. Like one of them wanted a bedroom set, so I bought them a bedroom set for a wedding gift. Another was another thing and so on and so forth, and I was the one, you know, you can get the party for before the wedding. So I've been a father image to them, too, but it hasn't kept me from doing what I wanted to do, and to do all the things I was involved in.

I used, every year I used to take a week and go to the plays in New York, I used to go see three, four plays, I used to go to the opera, see one or two opera. And that was like an offset for me, to do that. And a lot of this was done alone. I used to travel alone, I used to go alone and come back.

AL: I have a question about you being a reporter at the Bates Mill. What sort of people did you interview, what sort of things were reported?

RG: Well, a reporter, it was, that was for the mill, you know, so it was people working in my department. Let's say when one of the ladies had, were going to Florida for the, for two weeks, she'd come back and she'd say well we saw this, we saw that. And that's how I come, and of course I traveled, too, and when I traveled I used to come back and say where I've been and what I've done.

And if somebody bought a new home, they'd talk about it so I'd write about the new home, you know. They'd say, well I worked hard enough, I made, I got the money, I'm buying myself a home. They used to live on rent on Lincoln Street, on Knox Street, on Bates Street, and now they were buying homes out of town, you know, on the outskirts, not out of town, on the outskirts of town and I used to write about that.

If they, if there was a wedding and they wanted to talk about it, I'd write it down. I'd say, (*rustle of paper*), I'm taking a few things out, you know. That's the (*unintelligible phrase*). One of the highlights, when Maurice Chevalier came to Lewiston, I was working for theater so they asked me to work, so I was the head man at the Armory for the set up and the lights for Maurice Chevalier. And I, of course I talked to Maurice Chevalier and he -

AL: Oh, an autograph.

RG: He gave me his autograph. And Bates had given him a floral to-do, they had put it in his room, the backstage room where he was, and he gave it to me to bring it to my mother. See, this is a letter, the instruction they had given me for Maurice Chevalier, what was to be done and the directions of the lights and -

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

RG: Okay, he was, they were saying how they wanted it and all that. So he, I (*unintelligible phrase*) Maurice Chevalier, and of course when I said, I talked to him, How come you speak French? I said, eh, I'm bilingual and I've tried to be all my life, you know, to try both language. And he said, you come from France? No. You come from Canada? No, I says, I was born in Lewiston, I was born in Augusta but, I says, I speak French and I've always been favoring French. And so before I left he said, well, bring that to your mother, *amen soit a ta mere*, and I still have the dish that had presentiment floral arrangement that they had given him as a welcome in the office, you know.

And this is Maurice Chevalier, and there's an article about me for the news, and I was honored as a newspaper, as a reporter for Bates, I was awarded an award for that for Bates.

AL: And so it was called *The Bates Spinner*?

RG: Yes, that's what it was called. And, you know, there was a report from each department, and we used to relate our department. And I remember saying about the Christmas party, remember I told you we were having Christmas party and I wrote it down, in the mill. About a hundred people came to see me and say, How come we don't have party in our, well I says, get organized and get your own party. I can't go and do parties for every department, I says, I have a hard time doing the parties for my own. Yeah, and you see, Bates news.

AL: When you were in your roll as a union person, do you recall some of the issues that came up between the workers and the company, at the company?

RG: Oh yeah, well first of all the wages. If it wouldn't have been for the union, we would never, never had increase in wages. We're the ones that were negotiating each contract, how much money we would put in towards wages and toward our insurance, and benefits like holidays. I remember when we first got started working for the union, we only had four holidays paid by the company. And by the end of their closing, we had eleven holidays paid, and we had a week's vacation paid. We never had that before the union came. Before the union came we didn't vacation pay, and after the union we had a one week vacation paid.

These are some of the things. And of course, I mean, different department jobs, involvement in different, they were always increasing, they were always feeding the machines, and we had to fight for, to keep them at a certain level so that people could get along, could do their work. Because if they were, it's feeding too much, they couldn't do their work. They couldn't be able to -

AL: Did you have any, would you be somebody that workers might go to if they were injured on the job?

RG: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

AL: Were there some injuries that were more common than others?

RG: We were, we had a nurse, we had a first aid at Bates. But there's been problems, you know. After maybe a couple times being hurt on the job, the union, the health plan wouldn't pay for it so we would have to fight for it, we would have to negotiate, to fight for it. And we have to negotiate for contract, each contract, and then when I went to the office, the office, you know where Dube Travel Agency is? We had the offices upstairs on the second floor, that's where I had an office for five years over there.

And of course when the Wyandotte Mill in Waterville closed, we lost these people, and then when the Augusta mill started dwindling, dwindling. So then they really didn't need my services, so this is when I went back, I went back to Bates. And like I say, I went back to my job on the first shift, I didn't have to fight to get my job back.

AL: Did you work with Denny Blais at all?

RG: Of course, he was my boss.

AL: He was your boss? What was he like?

RG: Well, no comment.

AL: Okay. And as part of the union, did you, well, my question really is, do you know when the unions formed? When did the union form at the mill, do you know like the decade?

RG: In the forties.

AL: In the forties.

RG: In the forties, in the forties. And I think the first strike that we had was in 1951, '52, we had a strike.

AL: And you were there at that time.

RG: I was there at that time.

AL: Do you remember what it was about?

RG: Well, they didn't want to give us more wages. One of the primary things was wages and vacation pay. That was, they didn't want to, and so.

AL: How did it get resolved? Did they -?

RG: They gave us some wages. Not much, but they, I think it was three percent, and three percent is eight cents an hour, that's not that much, but.

AL: Did it last a long time, the strike? Or a short time?

RG: I think it was over three weeks, over three weeks. And, you know, this is when I started getting involved. I mean, maybe I shouldn't but I wanted to get involved in that, and that's how come I got involved. I was young at one time.

AL: Weren't we all?

RG: This is twenty-five years, this Al Gosselin, and that was a banquet at Stekino's remember Stekino?

AL: Oh, that's Hal Gosselin?

RG: Hall Gosselin, yes.

AL: Oh, okay. I know his son.

RG: Oh yeah, the attorney?

AL: Yup, and I've interviewed his wife. Very nice.

RG: This was the manager there, Fred Lebel.

AL: Yes, and I hope to interview him soon.

RG: He was, for me he was a godsend. He was willing -

AL: Oh, these are wonderful pictures, wonderful.

RG: This is a school, I don't what else you can have an idea, this is the Knights of Columbus.

AL: Oh, you know, these are wonderful. I wondered -

RG: See? This is the loom.

AL: Oh, wow.

RG: This is a float we won prizes for, for the Richelieu Club, won first prize. And I won first prize, but this is all stuff from Bates Fred had lent me. We won first prize for that, too. See what I was telling you? This is my grandparents, my father and mother, when my father and mother celebrated twenty-fifth years, this is my grandparents. The four of them were all awardees from Bates Mill.

AL: And this picture was taken in 1950. Oh, my gosh, that's a great picture.

RG: That's the original, this is my grandparents when they were working at the Augusta mill.

AL: Oh, wow, these are fabulous pictures. What year do you think this was?

RG: Oh, gee, in the thirties, '32 or '33 I guess. My grandmother was a drawing in, you know what that is? No? You know these big rolls there, it takes all the threads, eh? Okay, well they used to have harness for the loom, that harness, and they had to make a, they had a pattern, they had to follow it, they had a hook and they had to hook each thread in the harness to make it like, to be able to be, to weave.

AL: And that was called drawing in?

RG: Drawing in, and my grandfather was a slasher man, he was making, they were taking the spool one at a time, there were large racks of spools that they put, and all the threads were pulled, and then they were pulled and they were combed, they were combed, and then they would bring in, they would bring it and they would comb it and put them on these rolls. These were the slasher rolls, and this was brought into the weave room and then the harness ladies used to draw the patterns. So its, I just brought you a few of the things to give you an idea.

So they all worked fifty years, all had gold watch and bedspread, my grandmother, grandfather, my father had all worked at the Edwards mill in Augusta through the years.

How I worked, okay, this is called Masquerade, the May Ball at the Knights of Columbus. Gives you an idea. See, there's a, I'm not going to bring everything out, it's just going to give you an idea.

AL: Oh, yes, and this is, wow.

RG: It's all in (*unintelligible phrase*), all this. These were masks for the wall, masks for everybody coming to the May Ball.

AL: Yes. You know, I can image these, but when I try to create something like this it comes out much smaller than it's supposed to be for the effect it should have. Oh, gorgeous. So the community theaters, I mean in high schools and the public theaters, really have benefited for years from -

RG: See, I made these, this is all made with feathers. Each table had a centerpiece like that, and I made all the centerpieces with feathers and little flowers. See how the hall looked? It was called Masquerade.

AL: It's beautiful.

RG: Just gives you an idea how I worked. See, there was a center area where everybody would take pictures.

AL: Oh, that's just, I love the gold masks. Was that the back of them, or a different color?

RG: No, no, no, there was some gold, some purple and some green ones. See, I got an award for that.

AL: Oh, that's wonderful. Is there anything that I haven't asked you about your time at the mills that you feel is important to add, maybe something I missed?

RG: I don't know. I was so involved, yeah.

AL: Well, thank you very much.

RG: Gives you an idea.

AL: Yes.

End of Interview
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