

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

**Emma Pelletier**

*(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu, with Rachel Desgrosseilliers)*

**BCOH# 013**

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**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview for the Mill Workers Oral History Project. The date is December 19th, the year 2005. We are at the room of Emma Pelletier at Maison Marcotte in Lewiston, Maine. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu, and also today with us is Rachel Desgrosseilliers. If you could just start by giving me your full name?

**Emma Pelletier:** Emma Pelletier.

**AL:** And how do you spell Pelletier?

**EP:** P-E-L-L-E-T-I-E-R.

**AL:** And where and when were you born?

**EP:** St. Ludger, S-T, and L-U-D-G-E-R.

**Rachel Desgrosseilliers:** Canada.

**EP:** Canada, yeah.

**AL:** And your date of birth?

**EP:** March 9th.

**AL:** Nineteen-?

**RD:** How old are you?

**EP:** I'm going to turn 84.

**AL:** And so did you grow up in Canada, or did you -?

**EP:** I grew up in Canada, I have eleven years. After that we all, just like a, a (*unintelligible word*).

**AL:** And you came to Lewiston?

**EP:** Yeah, we always stay in Lewiston, all the people, yeah.

**AL:** And how many were you in your family?

**EP:** Eleven, eleven.

**AL:** What was it like growing up in Lewiston at that time?

**EP:** Oh, we have a hard time when we come in, but it doesn't take you too long. We make our own way, yeah, so. We start going to school right away.

**RD:** Why did you come to Lewiston? Did you come the whole family together?

**EP:** The whole, well, one of my two brother, Jerome and Henry, they came up. And after that, and my dad, and after that, well, they stay here for a couple of month and they found (*unintelligible word*) their way to come back, take the, all whole family and move here. So we all move here. The first time we go up the (*unintelligible word*), on the fourth floor, (*unintelligible phrase*).

**RD:** Is that where you lived, when you moved here?

**EP:** Yes.

**RD:** Where did you move to?

**EP:** Corner, it was in a -

**RD:** An apartment building?

**EP:** Yes, yeah.

**RD:** And you were on the fourth floor?

**EP:** Fourth floor, yeah, corner of Park and the other one.

**RD:** And Ash? Chestnut?

**EP:** It's -

**RD:** Birch?

**EP:** Birch, yeah.

**RD:** Corner of Park and Birch. Did you live, you moved down, were you all eleven kids in that apartment?

**EP:** Yup.

**RD:** Eleven kids and the mom and dad on the fourth floor in an apartment.

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** Wow. How long did you live at the apartment?

**EP:** Oh, we didn't too long because the woman downstairs, she was always banging, you know, too much noise upstairs.

**RD:** I wonder why. So where did you move to when you left Park Street?

**EP:** We moved on (*unintelligible word*).

**RD:** Androscoggin Blocks?

**EP:** Androscoggin Blocks, on the second floor.

**RD:** Where were they?

**EP:** Not too, too far from the last.

**RD:** We can find out.

**AL:** But close to the mills, so you could walk to the mills?

**EP:** Oh yes, oh yes, we can walk to the mill.

**AL:** And did you walk to downtown, Lisbon Street?

**EP:** Yes, oh yeah, yeah.

**RD:** So you started by going to school when you came down, you went to school?

**EP:** Oh yes, oh yes, yeah.

**RD:** How long did you stay in, did you finish the eighth grade?

**EP:** (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**RD:** No?

**EP:** No. As, well as soon as I was big enough to go and work.

**RD:** So where did you first start working?

**EP:** Bates Mill, and I was there and stayed, I stayed there until the end.

**RD:** How old were you when you started at Bates?

**EP:** Seventeen years.

**AL:** And what did you do when you started? What job?

**EP:** I start the, je faisais ...

**RD:** Battery hand.

**EP:** Battery hand, yeah. And after that, well, I go for weaving, and after that I go back for another thing that I liked, the last one that I -

**RD:** Room girl, were you a room girl once?

**EP:** Oh yes, yes, yup. This one that I (*unintelligible word*).

**RD:** Room girl.

**EP:** Room girl, yeah.

**AL:** Can you talk a little bit about what those jobs were, like the battery hand, what was that?

**EP:** Battery hand, well I had to put the battery, you know, in this thing.

**AL:** And then you were -

**EP:** Oh, no, no, wait a minute, we have, I have two, fill them up, the things, you know, it's all, and it goes down and it goes, you know, after this it goes, you know, ah, gee whiz, how do you call that? I should ask somebody.

**RD:** Say it in French if it's easier. Say it in French if you can explain it easier.

**EP:** *Explains in French*

**RD:** She would fill the circular, and they would put in all the -

**EP:** The weaver, the weaver, it goes to the weaver.

**RD:** It was all, spool, it was called a spool, and they would fill each hole of the battery. They called it a battery, it was a round, like a round drum.

**AL:** And then you went into the weave room, later?

**EP:** I stayed in the same room, but another, different type.

**RD:** What room was that in, do you remember, was it called the weave room one, two?

**EP:** Weave room.

**RD:** Don't remember?

**EP:** I stay always in the same one. And I was a battery hand, and I was a weaver after that, and after that I was a room girl.

**RD:** What does that mean, you were a room girl? What did the room girl have to do?

**EP:** Room girl, it's big, I should show you how I put myself. I show you, I show everybody.

**RD:** Okay, that's what you were showing me at the, when we, you had, at the conference there. What you used to have to do then, you had to climb, if the loom would stop and, from what I understand, and the threads got mixed up, you had to climb over -

**EP:** On the bottom.

**RD:** You had to go under the bottom and over the top.

**EP:** Over the top, and like that.

**RD:** And hang over to be able to reach where the threads were all mixed up. And you had, so that loom was not working.

**EP:** No, no, no.

**RD:** While you were working on that, so it was very important then that the weavers had a good room girl, right? Because if they were fast, that meant the weavers could go back to work faster and not lose time?

But she was showing me how sometimes she had to hang over some of the equipment to get down to where she had to, and sometimes she worked three to four hours at a time hanging over like that. I tried it, and it was really hard, you know, because it must have been very tiring for the arms and everything else.

**EP:** But I was never tired.

**RD:** You were never tired.

**EP:** No, no.

**RD:** So that's basically, that's what the room girl did, that's all she did?

**EP:** Yeah, that's all, yeah.

**RD:** So as soon as one loom stopped, got stuck, you fixed it and then you went to the next one that was -?

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** Was there only one room girl in each room?

**EP:** We had to be two.

**RD:** You had to be two. Okay, that's interesting.

**EP:** Yeah, because me, I was in back and the other one she was in front, and I mixed it like that and I give it to her after that.

**RD:** Oh, so actually the two girls worked on the same weaving machine, the same loom.

**EP:** Yes.

**RD:** Oh, I see, that's, oh, okay that's right, because once you got them all untied, then you passed it to her and she's the one that put it back together for the weavers to go.

**EP:** Yup.

**AL:** Now, what was it about being a room girl that you liked better than the other jobs?

**EP:** It was, it pay more.

**AL:** It paid more, okay.

**RD:** That's a good reason.

**AL:** That's a good reason.

**RD:** Can you talk to me about how you used to go to lunch together and, talk to me about lunch breaks.

**EP:** Lunch break, well, we all go always the same, you know. If a room is, we have to do something, you know, we can stay, that's how long, you know, we can stay there fifteen minutes, and after that, well, we had to go eat, well we go, just me and her because we are just two.

**RD:** Did you sometimes get together and bring food and share food and stuff?

**EP:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, some of them they always bring something, especially Cora (*name*), (*unintelligible phrase*), she died right in front of me, Cora.

**RD:** So she used to bring all kinds of special things for the girls?

**EP:** Yeah, and me too.

**RD:** You too? Yeah, knowing you, you would. Can you tell me about the day that you were in that, in the lunch room and it was really hot?

**EP:** Oh, gee, it was so hot. I told my partner, I say, I really have to do something. So I go and get, you know, a big (*French*).

**RD:** A little hatchet.

**EP:** Hatchet, yeah, and I asked the man who got it, I said, don't say nothing. So I go in and I said to my partner, I said, put some clothes, you know, in front, because it's (*French*).

**RD:** So you broke one of the, you broke the window to get a little bit of air?

**EP:** Yes, yes.

**RD:** Okay.

**AL:** What did the boss do?

**EP:** They didn't know, they didn't know for a long time. By the time they know, they didn't know who was, who did it.

**RD:** Okay, can you talk to us about the time that you almost caused a strike?

**EP:** Ah, mon Dieu, oh gee whiz. Well, the boss, the big boss, he make us a thing, it was all iron, about that long. And he wants us to pull, you know, the things, you know, like that, you know? (*French*).

**RD:** The shuttle?

**EP:** Shuttle, yeah, she was going like that. And if we can do that, it was coming, you know, in our, in my face (*unintelligible phrase*).

**RD:** So he was asking you to do something under the looms that got your face close to that shuttle that was going by so fast, it was very dangerous.

**EP:** Yeah, so we refused, we refused to do it. So, well he said, go out, he said, go out, I don't want you any more. (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**RD:** So he fired you.

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** So did you leave?

**EP:** Oh, yes. No, no, we stay with them.

**RD:** You stayed with the people.

**EP:** The people, and when it was ready to go home we go to go home with them, and the next morning there is a man, he called everybody, everybody to replace, you know, us, that nobody wants to go, nobody wants to go back to work.

**RD:** So the two people, the two room, (*unintelligible phrase*), so the two room girls, you and another one were told that you were fired, so they tried to find somebody, they called everybody to replace you?

**EP:** To replace, no, no, not to go.

**AL:** Not to go to work.

**EP:** They call everybody not to go until they -

**RD:** Oh, okay, so the workers called everybody and told -

**EP:** Just one.

**RD:** One worker called the others and they said, don't accept to come and take their jobs.

**EP:** Yeah, yeah.

**RD:** Okay, so did -

**EP:** So nobody, nobody come in.

**RD:** So nobody came.

**EP:** Came, no.

**RD:** Okay, so then what happened?

**EP:** What happened, they had to go back, you know, everybody they lost their pay just for us. It was nice for them, you know.

**RD:** That's right, because without the room girls the looms are, go down and nobody-

**EP:** Oh no, nobody, they were all there in the morning, on Monday morning, it was on Friday when it happened. So Friday, on Monday, well we go, they told me that we can go, you know, try to go in. So we go, but everybody was on the bridge, you know, and some of them they are inside and they were like that and they were waiting if they going to take us back, yeah? So nobody moved, nobody moved, everybody

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**RD:** So all the workers stayed together and said we're not going in unless they get hired back.

**EP:** Yeah, yeah.

**RD:** So did you go ask for your job?

**EP:** Oh no, oh no.

**RD:** You didn't go in to see if they would take you back?

**EP:** Well, that's him, that's him, he said, come back, because, he said, the mill is going to be down.

**RD:** And what is it that you said that, they were all, the workers were all ready, that if they didn't take you back they were going to blow a whistle or something?

**EP:** Oh yeah, because it's going to be in the other mill.

**RD:** In the other mills, too.

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** So if they didn't take you back, everybody knew and was ready so that if they didn't take you back they'd blow that whistle and then that was telling the other workers that they didn't take you back, so they were all going to stop working.

**EP:** Yeah, yeah, just for two people. Gee.

**RD:** So that shows that, so the workers really seemed to support each other, right?

**EP:** Yeah, yeah.

**RD:** It sure is big support. She had told me that story, so I wanted that, it was in the newspaper but she can't remember, you don't remember what year that was, about? Was it in the 1950s, 19-?

**EP:** I used to keep a lot of things like that. I don't know, I throw it away.

**RD:** Can't remember where it is, yeah, but we can research that.

**AL:** What other social things, did you get together with the girls you worked with at the mill on the weekends?

**EP:** Not too, too much, no, no. Well, we all had, you know, not too, too much money, and we don't go out, you know, so when we go out it's just for a, I don't know, we never (*unintelligible phrase*). But I like to have the, I don't know where I can take some, when we have, they make us a, (*French*).

**RD:** When you go eat?

**EP:** (*French*)

**RD:** The mill would pay for everything?

**EP:** Yeah, yeah.



**RD:** When you had picnics and stuff, you mean?

**EP:** No, it's not a picnic, it's a, it was in a, just like a -

**AL:** Holiday?

**EP:** No, it's not a holiday.

**RD:** When you used to go to a restaurant?

**EP:** Once a year.

**RD:** Once a year, oh, you'd go to a restaurant, like a banquet.

**EP:** Yeah, like a banquet, and they pay everything.

**RD:** Was that everybody, or was it when they reached they ten year or twenty five year, of?

**EP:** Everybody.

**RD:** So it was all the employees?

**EP:** All the employees.

**RD:** Once a year would get, go to a restaurant together?

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** And the mills would pay.

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** Okay, that's interesting. I knew they had picnics in the old, old days.

**AL:** Do you remember any picnics during those years?

**EP:** No, I like to have Simone here, Simone, she worked there, too.

**RD:** Well, we can do her later.

**EP:** She remembers more than me.

**RD:** That's okay.

**AL:** Can you remember some of the pranks that you did? Some of the tricks?

**RD:** You played on the others. Did you play, did you play jokes on each other?

**EP:** Oh yeah, sometimes, sometimes, but not too, too much. We are there to work and we work.

**RD:** What about the time that at lunch break you mentioned that you had gone and you sat in a slubber, you know, those tall cans, there, that are round?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**AL:** Tell me that one.

**RD:** What had happened there? You had told me about that when you came to the museum. You said -

**EP:** Yeah, well, I was waiting for somebody, I was waiting, I know I was waiting for somebody.

**RD:** And so what did you do while waiting? You figured you'd sit in one of the slubbers, one of the big cans there?

**AL:** And what happened?

**EP:** I don't think the -

**RD:** She said she couldn't get her butt back out. Remember, you couldn't get out?

**EP:** Oh yeah, that's right, yeah.

**RD:** She said, I couldn't get, she says, I sat in one. Because I asked her, I says, I was, I says maybe you guys can tell me more about that. And, oh, she says, I know about those. And I said, well how come, you worked with them? Oh, no, she says, I sat in one once and I couldn't get my butt back out. It was fun.

**EP:** Oh, gee whiz.

**AL:** Do you remember what the Lewiston community was like when you were growing up here, and when you were working in the mills? Did a lot of people live close to the mills and walk?

**EP:** Oh, oh, everybody was walking. Just like us, we were living on, and a lot of time we go by the big hill, you know? We walk. The same with Marguerite, Marguerite she was working at the other one, this one.

**RD:** The Hill?

**EP:** No.

**RD:** Androscoggin?

**EP:** Androscoggin, yeah. Marguerite, she was -

**RD:** How old were you when you left downtown? Like, when did you move on Pearl Street? Were you still living at home when -?

**EP:** Oh yeah.

**RD:** You were.

**EP:** Yeah.

**RD:** So how old were you about when you moved to Pearl Street? Pepere bought the house there, right? You don't remember how old you were? Were you married?

**EP:** No, oh no, I didn't know my husband at that time.

**RD:** No, so okay, how old were you when you got married?

**EP:** Oh, my gosh, I was twenty-two, twenty-three?

**RD:** Twenty-two? So it was before that, then, that you moved over. So, well that isn't long, it was just a, you started working at the mills at seventeen, so it must have been just a couple years after that you moved to Pearl Street. So did you walk to the mills from Pearl Street, too?

**EP:** No, no, we take the bus.

**RD:** Okay, then you took the bus, just like Dad.

**EP:** But, yeah, Marguerite and (*name*) and Lucy and Simone, I have to call them, get up, get up, you're going to miss the bus, get up, you're going to miss the bus. But, you know, on Pearl Street, well, they have a (*French*).

**RD:** The bus went up on Webster Street and she was always the first one to go.

**EP:** And the other ones, sometimes they miss the bus, you know, and they have to go and take it on the other end, you know, they have to hurry.

**RD:** They had to run to get to the other end of the line to get to it.

**EP:** All of them, yeah. And me, I never miss my bus, no.

**RD:** Okay, so all five girls worked in the mills then?

**EP:** Lucy I'm not too, too, (*French*).

**RD:** She was younger, she wasn't there yet, so she came later. Okay. Talk about the, I know the family was very important together?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**RD:** And can you talk about when your mother and father lived, what happened on Sundays? On Pearl Street? I remember when every Sunday we'd leave Warren Avenue and we'd walk with all our picnic stuff, the five children and Mom and Dad, and we'd go to Memere and Pepere's, and all the aunts, all of you, all the aunts and uncles and all their families came, too, and every Sunday, remember, we'd get together and we'd play games and we all brought food to share. And it was understood that Sunday was family day, and he had a big lawn so, there were a lot of children, a lot of children, grandchildren. I mean, when you talk about eleven, you know. And that, I remember doing that for a long time. Because family values were, family was very important.

**AL:** It sounds like it was a big part of the social circle, all the families, within the family.

**RD:** Yes, yeah, I think that's another, well, they didn't have a lot of money and so we all, we didn't have cars, so we all got together and that, that was more the social life, families, than going out like we do today, you know, with friends and, you know.

**EP:** Oh yeah, I remember every Sunday everybody was all together. This I remember.

**RD:** And what did you, a lot of times what did, what was part of the picnic was playing Flinch. It was, our grandmother, her mother, and in those days Flinch, a card game, was very, that and then later on it was Pokeno, so that became part and parcel of the family gatherings, you know.

**AL:** Were there any special foods, or dishes that your mother made that everyone looked forward to?

**EP:** Oh, it was so good, she was, well yeah, we never have (*unintelligible word*) a big family like that, we never have the same thing to eat every day. No, it was always something, you know, one day after another. We, she never, I don't remember that she put something, you know, to (*French*).

**RD:** She says she never remembers that they ever had to eat leftovers.

**AL:** Are there others that you worked with at the mill that you remember, that stick out in your memory as someone you worked with closely?

**EP:** Well, I, what is her name? They are dead, both. I worked with one and the other one, I work another one. (*French*). And one of them, she, as soon as she finish here she went to, she was living in Canada, and she go back to Canada.

**RD:** When she finished working here she went back to Canada, one of your friends?

**EP:** Yeah, and she died not too, too long after that. Because it was not too, too far from Sherbrook, and I collect for her and I bring her something, she was in the hospital and she was dying in Sherbrook. And it was my partner, my first partner, yeah, (*unintelligible phrase*). I (*unintelligible phrase*), I see her in her bed and when she saw me and giving, give her something, you know, and she start crying and I cry with her. You know, when you work with somebody a long time, you know.

**RD:** What parish did you go to, like when you were little and you lived on Pearl Street? Or when you lived downtown, where did you go to church?

**EP:** (*French*).

**RD:** St. Peter's?

**EP:** St. Peter, yeah.

**RD:** Okay, and then when you moved on Pearl Street?

**EP:** On Pearl Street, well.

**RD:** Did you continue going to St. Peter's, or did you go to -?

**EP:** Yeah, I think so.

**RD:** Yeah, I think, come to think of it, yes, I don't think -

**EP:** But after that we change for Holy Cross.

**RD:** Yeah, because in the early days I don't think Holy Cross was built (*unintelligible phrase*).

**EP:** Yeah, and I know Holy Cross because we pass right through the, you know, that, we don't take the big, where there is a lot of (*French*).

**RD:** Lots of woods. You'd go through the woods to go to church.

**EP:** To go to church, Holy Cross.

**RD:** Now, I remember that, like Mom and Dad and you and a lot of the matantes there, a lot of the aunts, you did a lot of volunteering. That was a big part of the social life, too, come to think of it. Can you tell us, like some of the things that you volunteered for?

**EP:** I volunteer at the Russell Park Manor, I was there for almost fifteen years.

**RD:** As a volunteer.

**EP:** I was looking, you know, to have the wine and I had to go and get everything, you know.

**RD:** Ready for the Mass for the patients, okay.

**EP:** Ready for the Mass, and Roger was always with me and we put all the, you know, and I have to (*French*).

**RD:** Get everything ready for the priest.

**EP:** Get everything for the priest.

**RD:** What about what you did with Marchands, Marchands de Bonheure?

**EP:** Oh, gee whiz, oh, I work hard over there.

**RD:** What are some of the things that you used to do. The Marchands de Bonheure was a social group that worked at Marcotte Home to do things to make the patients here happier, and a lot of them didn't have anybody and so -

**AL:** Like activities?

**RD:** Well, what did you used to do to volunteer here? You did, remember Matante (*name*) and you, you did all those, used to come and do the crepes?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah, des crepes, yeah, oh gee whiz.

**RD:** You did the crepe breakfast for them? Oh, and the patients looked forward to that, because they made them so good, you know.

**EP:** Oh yeah, me and (*name*), oh gee whiz.

**RD:** You always helped on the Christmas parties. As a matter of fact, one of her brother-in-laws was the Santa Claus for a long time.

**EP:** Santa Claus, yeah.

**RD:** Well, I think most of the family, a lot of the family worked on the Christmas party and helped out.

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**RD:** It was almost like a family thing. And you, what about the fairs at the churches?

**EP:** Oh, the fair, I was always there.

**RD:** Yeah, you worked years and years.

**EP:** Yeah, years and years, yeah.

**RD:** That was kind of a big thing, the volunteer, it was almost like part of their lives that they volunteered to help others with, you know.

**EP:** And after that, well, I started giving Communion, you know, in the house.

**RD:** In the homes.

**EP:** The homes. Some they can't go out, so I give them, you know.

**RD:** The shut-ins.

**EP:** Once a week.

**RD:** That was kind of almost like an instilled value in them and, because I think we saw the whole family participate in (*unintelligible word*).

**AL:** Was it more of your family, or the Franco American community? Do you have a sense of that?

**RD:** I think it was the Franco American, because a lot of the people that helped volunteer were Franco American, right, we French Canadian?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yes.

**RD:** Yeah, it was, I think it was kind of like an over all Franco Canadian thing.

**EP:** It's so nice, you know, Franco American.

**RD:** Oh, the Heritage Center? Yeah.

**EP:** Oh, it's nice.

**RD:** Yeah, they did a good job. She's talking about the Franco American Heritage Center.

**AL:** Is there anything that I haven't asked you about your time working in the mills that you think is important to talk about?

**RD:** Were the bosses easy to work with?

**EP:** No.

**RD:** No?

**EP:** No, just the one that we'd go out, you know, everybody go out, just this one.

**RD:** Just that one was hard to work with? The others were nice?

**EP:** Yes, yes, yes. He's dead, too.

**RD:** So you didn't mind working for the bosses, most, you know, except for maybe one or two, but most of the bosses you worked with were good?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah. The other one was mean.

**RD:** Was it easy to get a job in the mills?

**EP:** No, no. Me, I just go once, and while (*name*), your father, was working there, but not in the same room, you know, and Jerome work in the other room. I go and ask Jerome to go and ask the boss if I can, he can take me. So, he said okay, he go and he ask the boss, and he said sure, we miss, there is one missing so she can replace this one.

**RD:** So then it helped to know that somebody was working in the mills, it helped to know them to get in.

**EP:** Yeah, yeah.

**RD:** Okay, did you get any training, or did they just -?

**EP:** Oh no, we don't need any training for that.

**RD:** You go in and they said, you're going to do this and you did it.

**EP:** Yeah, yup. But then you go faster, you know?

**RD:** You had to learn to go faster.

**EP:** Yes.

**AL:** Did you get paid by how fast you could go?

**EP:** No, it was always the same one. When I start over there my pay was nine dollars.

**RD:** Nine dollars a week?

**EP:** Yeah, a week. It goes up and goes up, and when I change it goes up more, you know, so.

**RD:** What about, do you remember anything about the unions? Were you part of the union?

**EP:** Oh yes, oh yes, that's where, in the union was all, they were all together for us, you know, when they put us outside.

**RD:** Oh, so it was the union that helped to organize.

**EP:** Oh yes, oh yes.

**AL:** Was it Denny Blais?

**EP:** Yes, yes, and that day he was in, he was on the, not the crew, he was going for his job, Denny Blais, they call him where he was. He was in (*French*).

**RD:** Oh, Troy, in Connecticut, he was in Connecticut.

**AL:** Yes, because he was New England.

**RD:** So he was at a meeting in Connecticut and they called him down there is what you're saying.

**EP:** Yeah, yeah, and he told them, he said, I'm going to go tomorrow and, he said, I'm going to be there for them. And he was there.

**RD:** So what did you do with the union? Did you, you paid in dues or something?

**EP:** Yeah, dues, yeah.

**RD:** How did you pay that, did they take that out of your paycheck?

**EP:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**RD:** They took it out of your paycheck, okay. Did you, what else did you have, like did you have benefits, did they give you, did they have, did you have health insurance?

**EP:** No, we didn't have nothing.

**RD:** So you didn't have any vacation days, or? But what happened the Fourth of July? The mills all -?

**EP:** Well, it's closed I think.

**RD:** They closed for two weeks, right? Yeah, because I remember the, it was, it became like a ghost city because the mills closed down for two weeks.

**AL:** Like a shut down?

**RD:** A shut down for two weeks.

**AL:** (*Unintelligible phrase*) the paper mills?

**RD:** Yup, and every year during the, it was the first and second week of July, and a lot of the people took advantage of that go up to Canada, go take our vacations up to Canada. And some years we'd go up and help, it was at the right time, we'd go up and help do the haying. Remember, we used to go up and do the haying up there? And you didn't have a retirement plan?

**EP:** No, no.

**RD:** You didn't have, what about, did you have a life insurance policy?

**EP:** I must, I must had some.

**RD:** Dad has a paper, blue paper, but I think it's, I'm trying to find out if it's still good, because the plant shut down, I think they lost it.

**AL:** Did you get a pension when you retired? Did the mill pay you money after you retired, every month, or?

**EP:** I don't think so.



**AL:** Because your dad had a pension.

**RD:** Dad gets a pension every month.

**EP:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, I think so, yeah, oh yes.

**RD:** You get a pension, too, yeah, I think there was a pension because that was a federally guaranteed -

**EP:** Yeah, that's right. It goes up, it still goes up, you know?

**RD:** Yeah, a little bit. You said that you were, when you started you were earning nine dollars a week. When you, that's when you were seventeen?

**EP:** Around, around that age.

**RD:** Around that? And how old were you when you retired, when you left the mills?

**EP:** (*Unintelligible phrase*).

**RD:** About? Don't remember? But you worked how long? How many years were you at the mills?

**EP:** Well, I was seventeen, eighteen when I start. Fifty years, that I -

**AL:** So I think you probably started working around 1938? Does that sound right?

**EP:** Yeah, I think so.

**AL:** The late thirties, right before WWII started?

**RD:** Were you at the mills during the war? Were you working at the mills during the war? When Uncle Jack went to war, there, were you working at the mills then, do you remember? You must have been, because if you started at seventeen, and she's eighty four.

**AL:** That would be around 1938.

**RD:** That she was born?

**AL:** No, that she started working. She would have been born around 1921.

**RD:** Do you remember if they did different kinds of, did they do all just bedspreads, is that what you always worked on?

**EP:** Yeah, yeah, us, us. Just like Gert, she worked on, she didn't work where I worked, she worked in another place.

**RD:** In another department?

**EP:** Another department.

**RD:** And they worked on something different?

**AL:** The cutting room?

**EP:** Well, well, you know, she told us.

**RD:** Yeah, that's okay.

**AL:** You got married and had a family as well?

**EP:** I didn't have no kids.

**AL:** Did you husband work at the mill also?

**EP:** Not, he come in after me, after me, yeah.

**AL:** What did he do?

**EP:** Oh gee whiz, he was making, (*French*).

**RD:** He was working on something white, and it had to be, it was all mixed up and he had to take it apart and (*unintelligible phrase*). How long did he work at the mills? Did he work there long?

**EP:** No, not too, too long.

**RD:** Then he left and where did he go?

**EP:** Limoges Lumber.

**RD:** Limoges Lumber, and he worked there for a little while? Then where did he go?

**EP:** Because during the winter he have to go and put the heat over there.

**RD:** Then he, where did he go after that?

**EP:** We were living in Mrs. (*name*) block on those times.

**RD:** On Sabattus Street.

**EP:** Sabuttus, yeah.

**RD:** So where did he go work after Limoges Lumber? When did he, did he go someplace else before going to the City?

**EP:** That's where he go.

**RD:** From Limoges Lumber he went to work at the City Public Works, and he stayed there until he retired.

**EP:** That's where I had my pay, I think, from the City.

**RD:** Your pension.

*End of Side A*

*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on Side B.

**RD:** I remembered, I think I had asked you, when you started at nineteen, you were making nine dollars a week. When you retired, do you remember how much you were making, about? You don't remember? Okay.

Uncle Jerome worked there? Uncle Henry, did Uncle Henry ever work there?

**EP:** Oh no. No, no, no, Henry was working at the, with (*name*).

**RD:** Public Works.

**EP:** No, no.

**RD:** Limoges?

**EP:** Limoges Lumber.

**RD:** And Cyril worked there. Who's the other one? Uncle Jack.

**EP:** Uncle Jack, yeah, he -

**RD:** He never worked in the mills.

**EP:** No, no. He was working always with the nun.

**RD:** Yeah, he worked for the Sisters of Charity. And out of the girls, Leah was up in Canada, (*name*), did she work in the mills?

**EP:** Yes, yes, not too, too long though.

**RD:** Not too long.

**EP:** Not too long.

**RD:** (*Name*). Noelle, she worked there.

**EP:** Noelle, no, she work at (*French*).

**RD:** No? Lucy didn't work there. Marguerite did.

**EP:** (*French*).

**RD:** Yeah, Androscoggin. And Simone, Simone worked there for a little while.

**EP:** Yeah, just for a little while, yup.

**RD:** Okay, so almost half, almost basically half of the family worked in the mills.

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**RD:** That kind of shows the importance of the mills in the survival of families. Do you remember

anything, Matante, about the, there used to be the big tenements there, the blocks, the brick blocks on Canal Street?

**EP:** On Canal and on Park. There was a lot on the Park Street, and they are, it's not (*unintelligible phrase*), (*French*).

**RD:** Yeah, but they talk about, that's probably early, early days, though. Tenements that were on the, on Canal Street. Earlier than her. Can you talk about, now there's a bell that we have, there was a bell that used to ring, or there was a light, when it was time to leave? Was it, you had to wait 'til the red light, do you remember?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

**RD:** So what happened? Everybody would just get ready and change. So when you come in the morning, you had to change in different clothes, or did you just use your own clothes?

**EP:** Oh no, no, no, the same clothes.

**RD:** Same clothes? So when it came time to leave, you couldn't leave until that light turned red?

**EP:** That's right.

**RD:** Then everybody -

**EP:** Yup.

**AL:** Everybody left. Was there another whole group going in as you were leaving?

**EP:** Oh yeah, yeah, oh yeah.

**AL:** Shift change?

**EP:** Change shift, three shift.

**RD:** So nobody could go in and nobody could go out until that light went on?

**EP:** We can go in, but we can't go out. We have to stay there until the -

**RD:** Did you guys often go to, did you sometimes have lunch breaks or something where you went, how come Simone's Hotdogs got to be so well known with the mill workers? Did the mill workers stop there often?

**EP:** No, I don't think so, no.

**RD:** Not when you were, not that you remember?

**EP:** Not that I remember, yeah.

**AL:** I think we've asked all the questions we had. Is there anything else you want to add before we, no? Okay. Thank you very much.

**EP:** Okay, you're welcome.

*End of Interview*  
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