

Argonaut High School
Oral History Interview
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: Dominick John Fregulia

Address: 18551 Clinton Rd.

Telephone: Home: 223-0423 Work: _____

Date of birth: Mar 25, 1908 Place of birth: Jackson

Date of marriage: 1966 Place of marriage: _____

Name of spouse: 1st wife Patricia 2nd wife Anna

date of birth: 1st July 15, 1917 Place of birth: 1st Jamestown 2nd N.Y. City

2nd Apr 8, 1916

Subject occupation: retired

Spouse occupation: 1st was in office work 2nd Ran a restaurant

Name of mother: Maria Cascia

Date of birth: Mar 27, 1886 Place of birth: Jackson

Occupation: House wife

Name of father: Joseph Frank Fregulia

Date of birth: Oct, 6, 1875 Place of birth: Jackson

Occupation: Miner, work with water company

Subject's children and dates of birth: None

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: _____

Henry James - 1911, Feb 14 James Peter - Dec 28, 1912

Maine - May 11, 1920 Maine - 11 mo. younger than subject - only lived 3 mo

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) 1-10 grades Jackson High

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees) None

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where) County worker - roads Maintenance helper in a Sawmill
carpenter assistant.

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service) None

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.) None

Miscellaneous information: _____

Prepared by: Patrick Keene and Jeff Parle

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Project: Honors History Kennedy Mine Project

Dominick Fregulia

What was the lifestyle like around the mine?

Well, the mine was the principle part of the county and when I grew up, the mines were going at full blast and they kept going until 1942, I guess that's when it got torn down. And the mother lode was the life of Amador County.

Did you have any interaction with the mines?

I didn't work one single minute at the mine. I did apply for a job at the Kennedy when they were putting in the cyanide plant behind the Serbian church; now there all covered with dirt; and I went down there asking for a job and the foreman would come on out and he knew that people were looking for work, there must have been 25-30 of us and he just yelled out, "Nothing to do today!" And they turned us back and so about the third time they turned me away and I never went back. And I wasn't looking for no underground job because I think that the Lord put me here to watch for the sun so I stayed up on top.

Do you remember what other jobs there were above ground?

If there was a top job offered to me I would have taken a top job because there was all kinds of top work. They had to take the timber from all around, they had a saw mill there and at the Kennedy they had the crusher where they had it sorted and brought into the mill. Any of those top jobs, I would have been green on any of them but I was ready to take a job because I was looking for work. But they couldn't have paid me enough to go down into the mines underground because I wasn't cut out to go underground. I did have two brothers who both did mining and my dad started with that east shaft when they first started sinking it. That was around the 1900's and he stayed with it until about 1900 ft. and then he quit it and then he went to work for the Blue Lake water company and they put in Bear River. After that, he got married and went back home on the ranch. Then he was done with mining.

Tell us about your brothers working in the mine.

Henry worked in the Kennedy mill just as a young punk-

The saw mill?

No the Kennedy mining mill where they crushed and processed the rock and separated it from the gold. And he did that for a while. And Jim was working in the Argonaut. But they weren't down in the bottom, but then the strike went on and they went to work in the mines in Mariposa for a while over there, they come back here and when the strike settled a few days and went back to the

Argonaut.

Do you know exactly what year the strikes took place?

The strike was 1931 or 32, I'm not sure.

Can you remember any other events that took place during the strikes?

Well during the strike they had the vigilantes opposing the miners who were asking 50 cents a day more and the townspeople didn't support the miners. They didn't realize that the miners were gonna spend their money in town. Lets put it this way, the world was a lot smaller back then than it is today. In those days if you struck out from Jackson to Sacramento, if you had a good car, you might make it in an hour an hour and a half to two hours. Now you can go in fifty minutes and you're in Sacramento. In those days you would go from home to work and work to home and wouldn't venture out to far.

Do you have any stories about your brothers in the mines?

Well they started working I think around 6000 ft. or better and had \$3.75 a day. And when they just started they started with the old Mexican dragline and shoveling and pushing mine cars and stuff like that and learning to start the mining and how to break rock and shoot and stuff like that. They learned the mining game alright enough. They got out of it and after they got out of it, it wasn't too much later that Uncle Sam called them and taught them how to march and he gave them a gun and all kinds of ammuniton, especially Jim. He went out to north Africa and then way up to Italy and I guess he came in through Germany and then back to Italy. But Henry, he went to England and Germany and he was there all the time in Germany so they both had quite an experience and he (Henry) happened to make official and Jim made the fields. Jim was a communications guy he really had work up there on power equipment on the communications signal core. But his truck was blasted to heck and he was on one side of the truck and his partner was on the other side of the truck and that was the end of him. He survived and the other guy got mangled up.

Do you remember the Argonaut disaster?

Yes I was a young folk at the time of the disaster. I remember I got called in as a trial juror when they was trying those poor people for fighting on the picket line. And I got my wish anyway I didn't want to serve as juror and on the second day the Justice Attorney asked me, "Do you know one of the guys that's being tried there?" And I answered yes I knew Pete and so he asked the judge to dismiss me so they didn't want someone who knew anyone there and I just knew him you know. Just another guy that you know that's all. And I got the heck out of there I didn't want to be there to judge anybody to sentence a person or turn him loose. There were some of those guys that would've liked to stay and one of them, in fact, made kind of a wise remark when he was being questioned and the judge called him on it. He called him up to the bench and he told him "You see everyone here is innocent until proven guilty and the state is not gonna prove anybody guilty unless they have got sufficient evidence and for you, a wise cracker, if I knew for sure that you were desperate to get discharged I'd have you thrown aside and talk to you later." But he said, "Get off of the bench." The guy got off and he went to sit down in the audience and he (the judge) said "Out of the courtroom!"

He ordered him right out of the courtroom, and he was a local guy, I knew him and I knew him for years after that but he was a vigilante strictly against them (miners). I don't know, maybe he would've judged against those guys that got in a fight on the picket line. I got off of it anyway and I was sure glad and I didn't hear too much of it no more than that. I wasn't in the court to listen to it to decide. And I had quite a bit of doings around the Kennedy and I remember when they hauled logs and in fact they even hauled some here on the ranch and sold them, not to the Kennedy, but to the Argonaut and they cut logs sixteen feet long down to a certain size, I don't remember exactly what it was and we never had anything more than two feet on the stump out here on the ranch you know second growth stock and this has been over fifty years ago too so it wasn't just yesterday.

How did the mining really clear out the trees in this area?

Well I mean they used a lot of timber when they first started these mines before electricity became so available they run by steam and they run both fires in those boilers and they would clear out these hills around here especially oak timber so they keep those fires going all the time and everything was run by steam like the shop, the hoist, the mill were all run by steam, in fact the Kennedy after that railroad track came through in Martell they had a stir and they had got away from wood and put in oil. And I don't remember the date, but they had the fire up there and it destroyed the log pile and quite a bit of stuff used around there.

What was it like when the tailings behind the Serbian church would be caught by the wind and blow around?

Oh yes! It, it would get so covered with a heavy wind that you could hardly see. You see, it was filed over the hill, I guess the dam is still in there. Part of it, it was back where those big wheels are at and they hook it up and I remember that hill that they piled the sawdust on, it was really a nice hay field and they mow it every year and plant some of it, and on comes the company and they put the plant up on the hill there and pump that stuff up into those tanks and I really never went up to the thing while it was working. I went up and gathered up quite a few truck loads of that crushed rock and I was working for the county, where I put in nine years in plowing the roads and we had two at a time down there and I guess they used some of that crushed rock, must have used some of those tanks because it was up at where the tanks are at where they processed whatever and we used it for drain rocks. It, it was the same kind of rocks that we used in lines and stuff like that and we used quite a bit of that along the road because we didn't have all the equipment that we have today, the only equipment that we had was the Cat and the grader and they did the digging they had to do with the pick and shovel. It, it used to take long to dig ditches and drains here and there, but today they do it in nothing flat with a piece of equipment, where we used a pick and shovel.

Your job with the county was working in the roads?

I worked on the roads for about nine years, yes.

Did you interact with the mines at all in your work?

Well the only thing that we had to do with the mines was they sharpened our drill steel. And we go

in when where doing some drilling and stuff, and okay and leave and whatever came on up and we gave up a bunch of steel to have sharpened and we come back and gather it back up. We brought it to both mines. Sometimes we had fifteen or twenty pieces of steel, sometimes more, we bring it in and have it sharpened, jack-hammer steel and picks and stuff like that and we sharpened them at the mine because they had machinery that would sharpen them. And the blacksmiths, they had the blacksmith shop in town, to fix the things we bring into them. **the jackhammer steel.....when we crush the head in**they would hammer it down with the hammer they had the special machines for that.

Do you remember what your brothers jobs were in the mines?

Well they did regular mining, they started out on pick and shovel there and then went to cars and then they did regular mining, drilling and whatever. It, it seems to me the way I understand is they followed the strain and cut out a chunk and leave a chunk so it would leave support and so they wouldn't take it all out you have to leave support so they were doing what they called mining.

Well, we know that the mines kept the community together but what kinds of entertainment was there?

Well there wasn't too much around at the time of the mine the town was pretty much open and the town was a little bit wild and starting there was the Bank of America and then on the other side of town was General Levin's Saloon where you could get a few snorts and do a little gambling and they had other types of entertainment. The town was pretty well off.

Do remember any kinds of events or holidays you had?

Well we had The Fourth of July and the Italian Picnic and oh they had family organizations but that was the biggest celebration the Fourth of July all the big parades and that kind of doing. They had the miners out there building contests and stuff like that and your prize for who accomplished more and the older were demonstrating to the beginners they was all hand drilling and putting stuff on like they do every now and then when they put on the celebration. I think a lot of folks relied on those demonstrating sawing the log and the throwing axe and all that kind of stuff. They had their celebrations, yes. Christmas and New Years was always a big doing. Around holidays there's always something taking place.

Were those contests frequent?

No those contests were only generally Fourth of July deals.

You mentioned the Italian Picnic, do you remember a lot of different ethnic groups around that time?

Well there was a lot of Italians around Jackson. In fact this whole community through here... well, then there was the French layout in the town of Clinton. I remember when the town was gone two men lived up there. One of them was living in the old Arata place and one was living in the saloon

and he owned the town. One of them was just a wood chopper and that was the only two people who were in that part of the country. But at one time, they had quite a to do. There were stables a store and a saloon and everything else in Clinton. But the ranches started with Norman Dal Porto and went all the way up to Clinton. They were all Italians.

Was there much interaction between the different ethnic groups, or were they divided?

Well, that I don't remember too much of it but I mean they settled this district and in fact they settled that middle part. When they left mining a bunch of those people who come from was Geneva, including my grandparents, were farmers. And most of those guys come from that surrounding.

Do you remember any specific businesses that were in Jackson at the time of the mines and closed down as a result of the mine shutting down?

Well the town was all run by anybody who come in here and started in kind of running competition to the locals, you know, Ma and Dad, like Safeway, when Safeway came in. Other than that as far as anything that I can just barely remember, they had a macaroni factory and that burned down in I guess 1910 or 11 but one individual came up and bought the place over here from Lanarack and he was one of the brothers who owned the macaroni factory. And the other Oakdale or Stockton and he became mortician. Charley, I don't know what he done, but he moved out to. He shut down macaroni factory and the baker shop. Other than that I think the bakery shop is still in the same place it was then, where it is today. Gevanolis was there in the lot down next to that store where they had the macaroni factory. Other than that was no factories that I know of that were beyond the farming and cattle raising and mining. Mining was the livelihood of the town and PG&E was developing.

Did the mines increase population?

Well I mean, it looks like to me from what I understand, when my brothers worked in the mines, they went in during the rough times and they'd stick together to get anything. Most of the miners were Mexicans, because the mines were getting so deep and hot that the white men couldn't take the heat. Underground was running heavy on the Mexicans in the Argonaut and the Kennedy.

Earlier you mentioned all the heavy ranching and farming...?

They were all for farming; they all raised something and had To go town to sell it , peddle it off or trade it off at the store. The Cunio's ran their peddling wagon to town all year round. They sold vegetables and fruit and stuff like that.

Do you remember who the biggest farmers and ranchers were?

Well, I mean, up here was all small stuff I think, locally was all small stuff. The largest section maybe was a big ranch, like where Busi property is today and everything south of Hoffman Street, was Matley's hay field, and Matley headquarters was right in there where they had their house and their barns, where Mel's is today. I remember the old water trough in there yet, and one of the Matley houses is still there, that one of the boys, when he got married, he built that house. What do they have

in there now, some sign layout. That was the Albert Matley's home. He was one of the sons of the old original Matley ranch. From Matley it went to McGee and from McGee it went to Busi. But McGee reserved that hill and built his home. There were no homes that I personally remember, there was a mine up there called the Alamo Mine but it wasn't running. I don't remember the names of these streets, but as you go on up the hill from the highway the only street that was in there was that first street where Anne Hogerty lives right on the corners and that was the only street, and there was a line of houses that went as far back as the brewery. The Brewers were in there where Galli's service station is. As far as the big businesses in town, that's right the brewery was higher and they had the distribution with the wagons running, and I remember when they started in having trucks with ice and beer. And Strohm, maybe is he some relation to Jake Strohm. He is the guy started building a motel there across from Lucky's and still they didn't participate in building and stuff like that except in Buena Vista, where the two brothers, Jake and Josh, and they are descendants from the old Strohm.

Going back to you brothers who worked in the mines, do you remember how many hours a day they actually worked in the mines?

They would work 8 hours.

Did they work every day of the week?

They worked every day of the week, and then had a day or two off on the day the shift changed. They were working three shifts then. They would work two weeks day, two weeks night, and two weeks graveyard shift. I heard when I went down to that meeting when they were talking about the mines. Carolyn wanted me to go on down there, but I didn't want to go down there because I didn't know anything about it because I never worked around the mines. But she wanted me to go down there anyway. Some guy asked me who the came calling the 11-7 shift graveyard shift. Nobody could give any answer, they all just said that's all they ever called it. Other than that you worked 7 days a week.

Do you remember any interesting or amusing stories about your brothers in the mines?

No, not exactly, no. They come out of there and you didn't know if they were human beings or gophers. Just a mess. I went up there and seen them time and time again when they come off their shift of some of those guys working in there. In the area of the drilling the drilling was wet when my brothers were in there. You can go to the graveyard and see the old graves and you won't see too many of them who were over fifty years old because they were miners. People came out and they said "What did Pete die from?" and they'd say, "Oh a rock in the box." They were drilling dry and sucking in that fine rock it got in their lungs and settled down there and soon they said he's got "rock in the box". There was too much mining and they called it consumption so their lungs went to hell.

So how bad were the conditions in the mines?

The conditions were there was no provision. If something happened to you in the mines they would haul you out of the hole and turn you over to your family or the doctor or the undertaker and hire another guy in your place. And they say, well, he's gone and we got to have another guy in his place,

and there was no compensation whatsoever. If he wasn't working he was dead and well they paid off his heirs, I guess they paid once a month. And that's the end of that story. Today maybe they'd do something about it. Back then there was nothing done about it. They hauled them out of there and just hauled them away. Once in a while I heard that some of them maybe tried to kick up a little storm and then maybe the superintendent or someone of the mines go to the family that lost a husband to a woman who wasn't capable of working if she had an extra room or two and they tell you if you were a single miner to go and board at that place. And if you say well I'm not gonna go over there well you go down to the office and get your things and that's how it is. As much as you have to say, they tell you what to do if you want to work there.

Did you know anyone personally who was injured in the mine?

Well you see that there were guys that were injured every day in the mine. I knew a couple of guys, in fact one of them was my first cousin and one of them had married my first cousin too. He was related through marriage and one of them was just a friend. Well the two of them got blasted. One of them was in the Moore mine and he came to a missed hole and the charge went off. He was picking it through a blast hole like that and a whole charge of dynamite come right at you. He had just come home from service for a couple years from World War I. The other one, he was in the Zeile, that's the mine that's just going on Broadway where that rock building is at where you go up to the mission, the Zeile mine was right down the hill, some of the offices are still in there, I don't know who lived in it, I see someone's got a logging trucking yard there. That was the old Zeile office. After two days he died. He got tangled up somehow with the skip. Those were people that I knew but there was always somebody coming up with a broken arm or a broken leg or a crushed hand or a bump on the head or this-that or the other. Somebody gets skinned up all the time working in the mines.

Did your brothers ever come back with minor injuries?

One of them got hurt a little bit he got a rock fall on his leg and he was out for about a week. But there was no compensation or nothing there, no doctor or anything. To get a doctor, you shelled that out of your pocket.

Do you remember where you went to buy groceries or gasoline? Was there a general store in town?

Well they were all independent stores. Of the grocery stores I remember, there was Cassannellis right in there where El Dorado Savings is, going up the street. El Dorado Savings is where the livery stables used to be. That building was in there where they had a Chevrolet garage. Then right next to it and across the street where that little store is at is the one little store that is left on Main Street. I think you call the Mother Lode. You could go in there and buy groceries and sandwiches. Spinettis, now they call it Spinco, is up by where the cleaners was at, and they had a grocery store. They had a delivery wagon. Wells Fargo, where Dan had his place, the brick building on Water Street where the Wells Fargo Saloon was at. That was a general hardware and he had a delivery man with a two horse wagon. They did deliver. The bread man delivered and the butcher delivered. They delivered in the morning and made their rounds and the breadman would make their rounds. They had two

bakery shops. One of them had a bakery shop on Pitt, where you go in from this side from Broadway, just as you get on top of the hill. About four, five houses on up to the right, the alley turned to the right and that was the general market. They had a bakery shop there. They made their bread there, and they had a station there where the water works. They run the delivery wagon every morning to the boarding houses. Like where Buscaglia's and Teresa's are at, they were both boarding houses. They had places to sleep and they'd maybe have ten or fifteen miners boarding there, and then the bread man and the meat man and people like that, who ran the boarding houses, they didn't have the luxury of refrigerating anything like we have today. The meat man come and order the meat and he'd do it two times a week. And over there, Chichizola's, that store over on Jackson Gate, I don't know what in the world it is now. I think there is nothing in there now. They had a grocery store. They had a delivery wagon. And right in there where the Civic Center is at, there was a lumber yard and a grocery store, now I don't think they did any deliveries. Copercich and Beldovich ran it. Then Zeldvich died and Joe Dalo bought it with him with Copercich and then they started into deliveries. And then Joe bought Copercich out and he moved over in Ginocchio's (currently Wells Fargo restaurant) and then I guess he was just too damned old and he couldn't cut the buck anymore. Then he rented out to his son-in-law, who was pretty old too. Eudey's was right where the hospital was at, they had their house just above where they put up that landing for the helicopter. There was an old two story brick building, that was the old Eudey property. He married one of the Ginocchio girls and they were both old when I remember. At one time at Ginocchios you could go there and buy anything you wanted to buy. If you wanted to buy a pair of socks, a ton of steel, or enough lumber to build a house, he sold just everything in general. He furnished the blacksmith shops with steel and they had their lumber yard out there on Pitt, and they had a grocery and a dry goods store and the dry goods store was in there where the saloon was at, where Wells Fargo had a saloon. They had the town, see, and the people generally, especially the farmers, would be dealing with one store and they'd take their own assignment. A lot of stuff they did trading you brought in whatever you had and could buy what you needed. And they sold in the store in the line of vegetables and stuff like that and fruit. They did the business that way. They were all independent stores. There was one store came in for a little while just about across from the bakery shop and they come in there and they were in there during the war. It was kind of a chain layout, but they didn't last no time at all. And I can remember old Pete Cassinelli and there was some Chinamen come in started a store and when Safeway came in Pete said, "They won't be here very long. We ran those other guys on out." That was the old original Pete, there was Pete Sr. and Pete Jr. but this was old Pete, the guy that started the store there. He said, "They won't be in there too long," because Safeway come in to where Sammy's restaurant was at. That's where Safeway started in Jackson. The people across the street said, "They won't last long," because they came in here and insisted on making show now. But Safeway moved since they left there they went down where the real estate outfit was at, Coldwell, I guess. They were there and then they went on up there where Coast-to-Coast was at. And then they came back and built over there where Tommy Jones' barn and house were at. Anyone you talked around town said, "They're moving off the main roads. They're not going to make out." You go in there you can't find anything and you have to wait a half an hour for them to check your damn basket out, there was so many guys ahead of you. If you just bought loaf of bread you had to wait a half an hour to pay for it. I heard the same story about when they built that mall up on 88 up on the hill. What in the world were they grading out and making such a big parking lot. If they were lucky there would be a dozen cars pull in there in the whole day. And now and then I go up there to Perko's for lunch, and you drive around the place and you can't find a place to park just to get your hamburger.

What do you remember about the sawmills?

They took the wood over to the old water mill that was over in Clements that cut three inch stuff and big stuff twelve by twelve and twelve by sixteen. Stuff like that they cut the Argonaut used to buy a lot of square timber during the last years when they had trucks coming on in and stuff like that and there was a little mill over there around Clements that used to cut up timber for the mines. Other than that, the Kennedy always did their own. That was the last that did their own. They bought a variety of round logs.

Did they use the wood just for timbers in the mines or for other purposes?

The mine, I guess, is all supported. They support the shaft and the compartments they had two skips going in different compartments. It made no difference how hard the rock was, in those drifts and stuff like those I hear they boys talking about how the ground was shaky. They posted it and lumbered it. They drilled and went ahead and the timber man came behind and supported the tunnels or whatever you want to call them. And then they back filled when they mined in those slopes and stuff like that They back filled a lot with some of the scraps, the rock they had to go through that wasn't gold bearing ore. Whenever they had a chance, instead of hoisting it all the way out, they back filled.

Do you know if they used all the different trees around here?

Well, the digger pines may have been used for wood, but you couldn't cut a log off of those diggers. They usually used a Ponderosa or a Sugar Pine down in the lower the lower country. Then when they got up above Pioneer they used the Blue Spruce. That was the strongest timber. The Red Fir, they called it spruce, either name is the right name for it, because I know we always called it Red Fir at the plant. That is what most people that mentioned lumber and stuff called it. I cut it into two by fours and two by sixes and stuff, like construction and building lumber. The sawmill always used white and red fir. The lumber then made school buildings and stuff like that. They contract, they would testify for the local lumber, the red fir. If you were building a house it was cheaper to buy white fir, it made no difference. The Vincen lumber was always in the fir part of the lumber. They had fine stuff that made it easier to make the different cuts. They had their problems but then they had a good grade of lumber and the stock factory used to make door frames and window frames and all that stuff. Then it went to the Vogan plant, that's where Henry worked. He was on one of those cut out saws where they cut out the lumber for your windows or for your doors or whatever your order was. And then they cut the knots off of the short pieces and they went to the other side and went to the joiner where they joined the lumber together. They make a piece of wood there a mile long. They would feed the lumber through the machine and they can stick one out so many feet and then cut it off and keep it pushing through. If the guys that were pushing kept going they could make a piece as long as they want to. I had a cousin, he run it for quite a while.

I remember one time when we was sacking mohair over in the barn, and everyone brought their mohair, and I built a platform so we could fill eight foot sacks. And then we tried to get in to the sacks and push it down. We put 400 lbs. of mohair in one of those sacks. Louie (Dondero) my cousin, he had got crushed bad when the hooks turned loose on the rammer and it caught him in

between two logs. When they first started hauling the logs to the mill, they loaded them with a shovel and they had two men. One had this cable and then had these two leads coming on out and they hook on each end of the leads. And this guy has a rope and run it through with his hook over there and the hoist man would pull it and hoist the log and take it on up and one of the hooks pulled off and the timber came down and caught Louie in between the log and the structure. And he was over there and there were five or six different farmers from Dal Porto's and Cuneo's and Dondero's right here and from the other side of Oneto's they come on over and a couple of guys from Calaveras County to sacked the wool at one central point. Louie was weighing and he weighed all the kids and he weighted everybody that was down on his lawn. Jerome was in the sack because he weighed a good 20 to 30 lbs more than I did. I would feed it to him, and then he would do the sewing.. And we came on down and we asked Louie if we should weigh everybody and he said I want you to get on the scale and see how much you weigh. And I said I don't need anybody to weigh me because I know how much I weigh and he said well how much do you weigh. And I said "Oh about one hundred and ninety." He thought he was a little bit heavier than I was, he was a little bit broader at the shoulder. So I said well yeah I guess that's about right so put me down at about a hundred and ninety five pounds, and see if I weigh that much. So he put it on there and he had to move it up a little bit, a couple of pounds up. And he looked at me and he said well he weighs a hundred and eighty six pounds. Well I said to Louie, you gotta work for a living and said he's stealing! I says he can go up to the lake and he'd be a good man at blackjack because he doesn't get out there and roll logs. You give us a piece of lumber and it takes four or five of us just to roll the sun-of-a-gun, let alone lift it. I said no wonder, he's just a bunch of flab, there ain't no muscle to him at all. Louie didn't like it a bit and he thought he had me beat in weight and I told him I weighed 195,96 pounds and if I would have told him I weighed 176, he would have thought I was telling the truth. Yeah I worked around there for nineteen years in maintenance. I did anything, makes no difference. Today I'll be working on top of the roof of I'll be building forms or pouring cement or whatever or putting tiles on the buildings.

What mill did you work at?

I only worked at one mill, Winton Lumber Company. Then it went to American Forest and to Bendix and back to American Forest and then I left, the last day of 1970. After twenty seven years I retired. They didn't have particle board when I went in there. Then they put that generator in. I didn't have anything to do with the generator but I did go into particle board and look it over. They tore down the planing mill and put in the new planing mill in there. The last time I went up there I met Vern Parker and I asked Vern how much longer and he said about another month to go. Vern said why don't you come over and have a look at it (the lumber plant). They called him up to let me go on in because they had a watchman in there and he said the heck with that old man, you come in the back way. Just tell him you're going up to see Vern, they won't stop you. And when I went in there, there wasn't a damn thing left in that building other than the two steam dryers that were in the far end, even that big gas dryer that I helped put in, they even tore that out, everything. I went in there and there was nothing. It was just an open barn. They'd even taken the lathes out. Everything where they did their grading and their pressing, everything out. Everything was gone. Just the two steam dryers out on the end. That's the last trip I made in there. Vern said "well, maybe thirty days and I'm gonna clean out this place."

Interviewed by
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