

LAYMON GOSSETT
Interview 53b
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Wendy Gossett, Interviewer
Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Wendy Gossett, Laymon Gossett reminisces about his time as a logger and tree cutter for various East Texas lumber companies. He learned early how to handle and cut trees, and was known throughout the region as a knowledgeable and honest worker. Henry and Arthur Temple, Jr. depended on him to work in their crews. Mr. Gossett also won many logging contests and was eventually prevented from entering because he always won. Mrs. Gossett is also present in the interview.

Laymon Gossett (hereafter LG): If you make soap you gotta start out, you gotta get you an open pot, a wash pot. An old timey wash pot is what you need, about a 30 gallon. You put in 2 gallons of water to start with, get you about 4 or 5 cans of lye. You don't know what lye is, do you?

Wendy Gossett (hereafter WG): No.

LG: It is real poison, it is strictly poison. You can't get it on your hands, you can't breathe it ,you can't do nothing. But you dissolve that in the water.

WG: How did you do it without getting it...?

LG: Well you get you a stick and stand back away from it, a long stick, and stir that into the water until you get it all dissolved, just a white, looks like salt. But don't get none of it on you because it's poison. It will go right through your skin or anything. And when you get it dissolved in that 2 gallons of water, take your red meat, either beef or pork or something like that, and cut it up in little chunks about 2 inches square. And just put it in there, keep stirring, just put it in there and when you put it in there that lye will dissolve it. Directly you've got nothing but just boiling hot water and that lye and meat is all, it's done made a soup. It's boiling. But you cook it about 30 minutes to an hour like that. And move it forward, your pot and let it cool down and get your butcher knife and cut your soap out when it gets cold over night. You'll have a wash pot full of lye soap. That is all there are to it.

WG: Tell me about your school, when you went to school.

LG: Oh when we went to school?

WG: Uh-huh.

LG: Well, we started out, we was walking about 7 miles. That is when I was 7 years old. We walked about 7 miles evening and morning, morning and evening. Rain or shine we made it every day just about it. And you may not think you get tired but you do and it takes a long time. Just an old county road is all we had to walk, didn't have a highway to walk on, just an old dirt sandy road. And you walked in that. You'd get, after your first year, you got two or three extra books, and then you had to bring all your books home at night. You didn't leave none at school, you had a regular satchel, a regular book carrier, a thing to put them in. You put them books in that and hooked them over your shoulder. And you carried your books in and when you got home you studied your lesson for the next day. You didn't play, you got busy and studied on your lesson until you got it and then you could go play if it wasn't dark. Most of the time it was dark. This time of year it was dark. You didn't have time to play; there wasn't no play. You'd get all your lessons and everything and then you would go to bed and sleep and get up early the next morning. They taken up school at 9 o'clock sharp. School bell rang at nine and you was supposed to be in line. If you wasn't you were tardy, if you didn't make it in time.

WG: What did they do when you were tardy?

LG: Well they didn't do anything but just maybe dock your grade a little bit or fuss at you a little. But whenever you leave out in the morning you had 2 hours to make the 7 miles. You had to skip along pretty good. You could play along here and there and stop and look at things, but you had to keep pretty well moving on to make it in 2 hours. You couldn't stop somewhere for 2 or 3 hours because you'd be late for school. And whenever you were late for school they would write a little note and send it home that evening. Momma would read that note, and ask "how come you didn't make it, you left the same time you always did?" Well, you had to tell her every minute of the time you spent going from home to school, what you had done. You didn't have no excuses, it was just that. And it better be pretty good ones, 'cause after the second time you liable to get a paddling. Get a switch on you. If you got mean in school and got a good paddling in school when you got home you got another one. Just as soon as you got home you got another one. Just as soon as she found it out, she'd find it out too, 'cause the teacher generally sent a note by you. You'd have to carry that note and give it to her and if you had done something mean enough to get a whipping, well whenever she found out the teacher whipped you, she would give you about twice as big a whipping. Right there on the spot, you didn't wait until the next day, it was right then. It wasn't unusual to get a whooping and see a few bloody spots on your leg, 'cause you had to roll your britches leg up. They whooped the fire out of you. They just didn't have none of this running around here and not going to school. Whenever you go to school, you went to school.

We finally moved down there about a mile, little over a mile from the school house. We could make it easy then. We'd get up and leave at 8 o'clock. We had an hour to make that mile. It was about as far as from here to down yonder to Monk Warner's station. And we could make that plum easy. A lot of times I would stay right there until 15 'til nine and then run all the way to the school house. It wasn't no excuse for being tardy because the teacher would come see about us. She would tell your parents about it. They didn't take no for an answer, you just should have been there and you should have made it in time.

WG: Well, what were your teachers like?

LG: She was a real good teacher, Mrs. Lawrence Walters. Nearly all the schooling I got I went through her. I started going to her until I went to the sixth grade and then her husband was from the sixth to the twelfth and we moved in there and finished out. And then, after I stayed in there a year or two, Mrs. Florence taken over the twelfth grade and somebody else taken the sixth grade down. And she was in there and I finished all the schooling I made under her, except one or two years. She was a good teacher and she treated you fair. She would give you a good chance to learn something. If you wanted to do something she would sit down and tell you how to get your lessons. I didn't think there was anybody like her. But now if you was talking during time that school was taken up, and the school period, if you was in there tossing paper balls, and talking, wouldn't be still where the other kids could study, she would lead you right over in the corner and draw a ring and let you stand there with your nose in the ring until recess and then you'd stay in and she'd have your lessons. When they come back in, you stand over there that day with your nose in the ring. You stood there right there by the wall, you didn't move around, you stood right there.

There was a bunch of mean ones. There was a bunch of them always a getting into it every day. But I found out that it wouldn't do. She was real good, and they just better not play no tricks on her, you know. Something or other that would cause trouble 'cause she would sure get them. Them old boys would chew up a big wad of paper about three pages like that, get it in their hand, somebody sitting across the room, he'd catch him looking the other way and he'd whop him up side the head with it, knock him clean out of the seat. (laughter) She was up there, you may not think she was looking but she could see them. She would point right at us, "Come up here." Put him up there, she would give him a thrashing and make him stand there the rest of that day with his nose in the ring. She'd draw a little ring about that big, and he stood with his nose in that ring now against the wall. He didn't back up and stomp around and look around, he stood right there. He didn't look nowhere but right there, all day. When they would get recess the rest of us would go outside for recess, well he would go have his lessons. That is when he would have his lessons. She would have him in there letting him get his book learning. And it wasn't no kidding, it was that every day as long as you didn't mind. She didn't have too much trouble, it was some of them that was pretty rough and rowdy. But they wasn't too bad.

WG: How do you witch for water?

LG: How do you witch...

WG: Witch for water?

LG: Well you cut you a willow limb, a forked willow limb, with the forks about that long on it. It goes together like that, you know, comes together you got a handle on it down here. Well turn that handle around, that part that is sticking out, the wand part and you have the prongs. Take them and catch them like that and hold them straight out in

front of you and walk with them, and when you cross water that stick will turn down. You can't hold it because it will break it or go down when there is water there, if you cross a vein of water under the ground. Peach tree limb will do the same thing. But you take a forked limb and hold it, and when you go out through there and you cross that water it will point down. And that is where the water is at. That is the way they used to dig these wells in the country. I dug a lot of wells when I was growing up, going to school. It paid a dollar a foot for it, and I'd dig them a 30 foot well. I could dig one in 3 days. I'd make a lot of money at it. It was dangerous work, it liable to cave in on you. But, I dug lots of wells. I could dig 10 or 12 foot in a day easy. I'd dig them on the week-ends when I'd get time, you know. It'd be holidays and stuff. I made enough like that to pretty well go to school. When they want a well dug, I'd dig an hour or two a day if I could get time in the evenings, I'd dig an hour or two and, you know, I'd get time. But I made good money at it. Up there in that country you could get water around 20 to 30 feet nearly anywhere. I always found good water just 20 or 30 feet most of the time about 25 to 30 feet. I'd grab me a willow limb and take off with it. I'd go out yonder and come back across there and it would point down. I'd go back over yonder and when I'd get there it crossed that vein of water, well I'd draw me a circle and I'd start digging. I dug all day every day for about 3 or 4 days, well I'd have that boy water, he could draw him a drank of water. He'd get down there and base it out. Then I dug one, one time for a shingle mill. We had a shingle mill and I dug it 38 foot, and it got to quitting. It's what they called a damp in them. It would make you have the awfulest headache you ever seen. It would just nearly kill you, and did kill lots of people. That was real bad after about 40 feet, and I had dug it about 47 feet. Well my head hurt so bad when they drew me out of it, I left my shovel and pick down there. I didn't bring them up with me, I just rode the bucket and come up and just nearly fainted when I hit the fresh air. I was just about gone. But the next morning you could dip water out of the well with a bucket, it was coming right to the top the next morning. It broke in that night. I took me some hooks and made me some hooks to catch my shovel and pick handle and I let them down there to the bottom of the well, I led them up against it and I reached down there and pulled them up and got them out. I didn't go down in that well no more. But that is how much water was in that well. It come up where you could stand there and dip it out with a bucket.

WG: What kind of signs do you look for when you plant?

LG: Plant, well now then go in yonder and look in that little table and get that little yellow book on that end there, that planting guide and you can see where the signs are at. It is the moon sign is what it is. I use a planting guide. Gipson's puts out a planting guide that I use now. I used to look at the moon. I think now, it's on the first quarter, tomorrow is a good time to plant a lot of stuff tomorrow, tomorrow and the next day. But you go by that growing of the moon or the full moon or something or another you know. And she can't find that little book and it's sticking right in the end of that little table there. It's already...huh?

Mrs. Gossett: I like to have never found it.

LG: I told you right where it was at. But this takes all the guess work out of this planting.

Well, here it is. Now there is the day, see look at the month there, and see what days is good planting days. Look at February, the 18th, 19th and 20th are good planting days. Good days to plant flowers and days to plant taters and under ground stuff, turnips and taters and stuff like that, corn, peas and stuff, days to plant them. But if you want to go by the moon signs, when you do that, you go back over here and find the zodiac table, you see right here. Now you can see that and these signs right here, and you can look and see what days they're in. Show on the calendar you know, what days it is, see in January, now you start in January and it will tell where these signs is, right here on this. It is a little, here is your moon sign right here, you see. But you can tell where it is at them days, and then you can tell you have to trace it down to tell where it is at. And if you want to go fishing, you got a fishing guide here, tells you what days to go fishing. See you don't have to guess about anything. It works it all out for you. But if you are going to plant by the moon, you can take a birthday almanac, it's better than this one for giving the moon signs 'cause it shows the lines and the twins and the bull and the crab, the goats, the ram they call him. Waterman, fishes, that is in the feet, when the signs are in the feet that is the fish sign. And it gives all that you see and you can look at this sign here and then see where the sign is here and in your February issue and turn over here in your planting guide and you can tell where about it. I don't ever fool with it because this has got it already figured out. See it makes it easy. We used to didn't have that. We didn't have nothing but the moon sign to go by and you had to figure it out by this right here. See that is the zodiac sign right there. Read these little things right here and it will tell you what each one of those things is. Whether the signs are in the head, or the heart, the breast, and the feet, the thighs, the knees, wherever the sign is at. The kidneys, the heart, it tells you where the sign is at, at that time of the month. On the birthday almanac on the calendar part it shows these on each day. Whatever it is, whichever one of these signs is, you can just look at the calendar on the birthday calendar and almanac that is like we used to get all the time. These calendars some of them do and some don't. That is the way we always planted stuff. Found out when to plant stuff. It gives you something to go by there. Signs of the Zodiac, the moon signs is what it is. So you see, to save all of this looking it up and fooling with it, somebody that didn't know what he was doing, you just go up there and get you one of these little books like this or get you an almanac. And it gives most of it in the almanac and you got your signs already figured out for you. They are already dated and everything. It tells you what days to plant that stuff. Now in December, you see down here in the bottom, it shows you a whole row of figures down there, of when to plant and when not to plant. You see that?

WG: Uh-huh.

LG: It is on each month. You just got all kind of references to go by as a plant guide. Right now in February you can tell what days to plant. If you will look right down there at the bottom, it will tell you the days to plant stuff and days not to plant. You see it?

WG: Uh-huh.

LG: So that makes it easy. You don't have no trouble you can just read it right off of there and you can plant it them days. And if you want to go fishing you can look at this right here and, on this one right here, they start on February the 18th, it's poor, the fishing is poor, 16th, 17th and 18th fishing is poor. But on February the 19th it's the very best. The 20th it's the best, 21 it's the best, then it's fair for two days then it's good for two days and then it's good till the end of the month. See, so if you want to go fishing now is the time to go, from now until the last of the month. Then you skip over into March. You start the first of March it's good for the first two days, then it's poor for two days, then it's fair for two days, then it's good for one day, then it's fair for a day, and it's good for two days, then it's poor for three days. Right on down, you see. And if you go on them days that it's poor well you may not catch none. And it tells you here to whether to fish in the morning or evenings, says in the morning or evening. Right now, on the 19th, 20th, and 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 23rd you fish in the morning, and the 24th you change over to the evening the rest of the month. That pretty well pans it down for you see. You know when to go fishing. So you see it ain't no big trouble to follow the moon signs when you're planting if you have one of these. Most all of them have them. This is Gipson Funeral Homes, Gipson Insurance Company, Gipson Memorial and Gipson's Garden of Memories. Gipson's puts them out, that is the way they advertise their business. But that makes awful good and they got enough for everybody to get one you know that lives around close. A lot of them are way off.

WG: You cut logs by the time, where was your first log cutting job?

LG: 1927, I was going to school, in the tenth grade. I just about knew everything.

Mrs. Gossett: (unintelligible)

LG: Watts schoolhouse.

Mrs. Gossett: I meant the first log cutting.

LG: Right there where we lived. You know where we lived the first year we were married? We were cutting right outside the yard fence there. Started right there between there and the road. The pine timber right up to the...

Mrs. Gossett: Well, it was in Anderson County.

LG: Yes, it was up in Anderson County. Up there in Jarvis, what they call Jarvis, Antioch, North Fields Chapel. But anyhow, Daddy got down and he couldn't help the fellow. They was cutting logs for a mill set up there right close, just a little piece out there to the mill. Well, I come in, in the evening and I'd help him cut logs in the evening time. But he wanted to cut in the morning well, I just brought all my books home and told Mrs. Florence that I would come in one day a week and take an examination for the whole week. I said, "we'll just go through..." She said well you can come to the house on Saturday, I'll be at home Saturday and I'll just give you a test, you know, the weekly test

on everything. Now that was all the books, geography and English, reading and arithmetic, everything. And we'd take a long time, it will take you 4 or 5 hours.

Mrs. Gossett: You were log cutting then.

LG: Yes, but that is what I'm telling you. That is the reason I quit school so I could cut logs. I thought I'd be rich right away. We would make five and six, seven dollars a day by 11:00 or 12:00 o'clock. I figured I'd be rich right away, and I'd just have plenty of money, but I didn't. I had to take care of the bunch. There was eleven of us in the family and I had to help feed them. And we just used the money right along. I cut logs there and I was 14 years old. I was in the 10th grade at fourteen years old. But I had made 2 grades a year for several years. When I was in the 5th grade, well they had the 6th grade up there working arithmetic and I could work the problems while they was trying to get them on the board. I'd get over at a board to the side, you know, they'd let me over there, and I'd get over there and get me a piece of chalk, well she would give out a problem. If she didn't watch them, they would all copy off of mine, 'cause I'd have it just as soon as I'd write it out there, well I'd add it up and I'd have it. Well on geography they didn't know their geography, they just couldn't learn it, they just couldn't go on it. Well I could go ahead two grades ahead of me and I could give her more on geography. And if I was in the 6th grade, the 9th grade I could take care of their geography way better than they could.

And they got to algebra; well I could work that faster than any of them. I could go with that algebra, what we called then fractions. But I could go with that better than any of them. Boy I just picked that up just like that. I could work that just in a minute. But, I'd start up in the fall of the year, when we'd start, I'd start in the 5th grade, when I quit I was promoted to the 7th because the next spring I started in the 7th grade and that year when I was promoted I was going into the 8th grade. I was moving, joining the classes ahead of me. The classes above, every way I'd get a chance I'd join in with them. I didn't have any books, I'd go and use some of their books, but I would just....for the reading I could read faster than any of them. I could go as fast as anybody. Reading wasn't no problem for me. I could always read. I would make 2 grades a year for 3 years. Well that put me real young. I was fixing to finish out when I was 16 years old; I was going to finish the 12th grade when I was 16. It would have made it easy. I finished to the 11th and Mrs. Florence moved off from the schoolhouse that year. I didn't have nobody, no teacher at that time and I just quit school and went to cutting logs all together. Just made it to the 11th, but I was pretty well in the 12th. I could do anything in the 12th that they done. I could work any of the problems, any of their arithmetic, geography, English or anything. I could do any of it just as good as the ones ahead of me could. That is the way I got my education.

But I didn't quit schooling whenever I was cutting logs; I went on with my book learning. Everything that I could find out that I could learn that I didn't know I studied for several years there, until I was 20 years old. Everything that I could find out that I could, you know, I was just, you know, I wasn't slack, I stayed with it and enjoyed it, just had a good time. I might sit down and take that book right there and sit there and write everything in that book. Just start here and write everything, just copy it off that book just

to be writing. Just anything, just pick up anything, and just copy it off there and just write everything that is on there, write it on a piece of paper, just to be writing. I just liked it; I could do anything like that. And the rest of them, heck they couldn't lose me. I didn't care what they did. There just wasn't any problem in arithmetic that I couldn't work. It didn't make any difference about the fractions or anything. I could just, well she put me down with a gallon jug and we figured how thick it was. And I figured how big around it was and I figured how much cubic inches was inside that jug. And it didn't take me all day to figure it. I could just, I was real good in arithmetic; they just couldn't lose me in arithmetic any way they tried. And they could give me any of the multiplication tables, after I learned them. I don't care which one it is, any of them, I can tell you just that quick. Just as soon as you tell it I know what it is, I know the answer to it. Seven twelve is eighty-four. Six nine is fifty-four, six seven is forty-two, just as quick as you say it I know what the answer is. And I won't never forget it. If you learn your math, you've got it all whooped.

Mrs. Gossett: Well tell her more about your log cutting.

WG: Were you ever in any contest when you cut logs?

LG: Oh yes, we got here to Diboll and they had them camp, them Negroes out there cutting. Them colored people. They didn't think anybody could beat them. Well they wouldn't even let us enter it the first year. We weren't even eligible to get in it. I went to talk to Mr. Thompson I said, "now listen." I said "they give pretty good prize money up there and I can whoop any of them out there on that log cutting." I said, "there is not a man out there that I doubt I can't double them any day. I don't mean cut as many as he cuts, I mean cut twice as many." Well Mr. Temple got a hold of Jess and Ritchie and them and he told them, said, "Now you fix it where them boys, any of them, white or black, can enter that contest." So they done the wrong thing. After the first year there wasn't nobody enter it if we entered it. There wasn't nobody else come in. They said, "well they will win it so there is not any use of entering." We just whipped their ears down. They couldn't stand it. They just couldn't do it. And we was cutting logs they sent the company gang when we come to Diboll. It was real good money then if they made two and a half a day. But we didn't have a bit of trouble making four or five dollars every day. We'd make just about as much as two of them any time. Oh, they done lots of talking, they figured they was giving it to us you know or something, but they wasn't.

WG: Tell us about Southern Pine when you went to cut wood.

LG: Well, I don't know, I cut 50 years and 2 months solid, pretty well after I started at 14. I just went on about 50 years worth.

Mrs. Gossett: Tell about cutting wood.

LG: Well, cutting heater wood?

WG: Any kind.

LG: Well, I moved out here and they deadened all this old timber in here and I went to see them about cutting some of it. And they said yes, cut all of it you want. Well, I got to cutting wood for just first one and another. They liked it and word from one to the other, you know, directly I had all the woodcutting I could do. I couldn't...

END OF SIDE ONE

LG: So that is the way I got in the wood business. In the fall of the year they would start coming to see me or calling me or see me on the road or somewhere. And everybody wanted me to bring them a cord of wood. I'd cut wood and haul it from here to Lufkin for \$6.00 a cord. But the trouble I could cut 2 and 3 cords a day. I'd cut five or six loads a day and haul it to Lufkin.

Mrs. Gossett: Tell them what the price is now.

LG: Well I stayed with it until it got to \$65 and I quite. And in 1980 I cut it for \$65 a cord and I still had all the wood I could cut. Now its \$80 a cord and I could still be cutting wood if I wanted to cut wood. They would still call me in preference to somebody else, 'cause I always give them good measure. I cut the wood just like they wanted it. If they wanted 2-foot wood, I cut them 2-foot wood. If they wanted longer wood, I cut them longer wood, 30 inches. Now you get 16 that is all they will cut. They don't cut but just one length, just 16-inch wood. And I give them a hundred and twenty eight cubic feet for a cord. Now they don't get that much. They get ninety-six cubic feet for a cord when they get 16-inch wood. They give them 2 eight-foot ricks, and it is supposed to be 3 eight-foot ricks, if they are going to cut 16-inch wood. But they won't do that, they give 2 eight-foot ricks, one rick 4-feet high, 16-feet long gives them 96 cubic feet. And whenever they bought it from me I give him a hundred and twenty eight feet for a cord. You see why I got all the wood to cut?

WG: Why?

LG: Because I give them more wood. They get more wood when they buy from me. But that made the difference. But these young people, now people that cuts it they can't see it that a way. And right now they are charging too much for it. \$80 a cord that is too much. That is \$15 too much.

Mrs. Gossett: (unintelligible)

LG: Well I don't care. It ain't worth it. I'm telling the truth about it. And that is why everybody can't cut wood 'cause nobody wants, they don't want to be short changed. And they don't want just anybody to cut their wood. And that is why I can still cut all the wood if I was able to cut. I could get all the woodcutting I wanted. But I was fair about it.

And that is the reason I always cut logs. I was a log cutter and I cut the logs to where they could mill the logs and make money out of the timber, the lumber. I grade cut them all the way. Of course you don't know one thing about grade cutting or anything. When you

cut a tree that has got limbs on it 30 feet and it's clear down here, well you cut it off at 30 feet. Then you cut the next logs with knots on the freckles, that makes a lower grade of lumber. That is what you call grade-cutting lumber. Well the, most of people, if they were cutting they didn't pay it any attention. They might run a 20 foot log in and about 6 foot they would have 3 or 4 big knots, well that would throw all that lumber back #2, the end of that log would be #2, if they didn't cut it off and throw it away. But you see the difference. It's a difference. They would get #1 lumber; they would get back then 90 and 100 dollars a thousand for it. And #2 lumber you'd get 50 dollars. You'd get about half the price. That is the reason I could always get a job cutting logs for any mill. Because I would grade cut it. That made the difference. You have to know your trees to do that, you got to know what a tree looks like when you go inside of it. When you're cutting them boards off you got to know how to grade it and you got to know how to grade lumber. It's a lot of things to log cutting besides just going out there and cutting a tree down and going out there and cutting the top out. Of course that is all there is to it now because they do all the grade cutting at the mill. Whenever we was cutting the real lengths for the logs to make the lumber, if you could get a 16 foot log to make #1 stuff, well why cut a 20 and make #2 out of all of that. See what I'm talking about?

WG: Uh-huh.

LG: Well, it didn't take that long to get to the headman at the mill and he could see what was happening. They wanted me to cut all the logs. I could cut all the logs I wanted to cut. I cut all the time, where a lot of them couldn't hardly get a job cutting. Well I could just go see them and go to work the next day. I didn't have no trouble getting a job. It makes the difference, right there. I cut logs for 40 cents a thousand one whole summer and winter until the mill cut out there at Alder Branch up there in Anderson County. Prince Lumber Company, I cut for 40 cents a thousand. Most of the fellows, well there was 4 saws cutting out there and I went down to see the old man about cutting him some logs. I had cut a few logs before that – I was 16 then. I hadn't been cutting logs but 2 or 3 years, scattered along, you know. Went down one Sunday morning to see him, I never will forget, he was sitting down under a tree filing his saw out in his yard. I ask him about a job, I knew they needed some men. I was about the color of that right there, I had been having chills and fever, been on starvation. He looks at me and he said, "son you can't cut no logs." I weighed 160 pounds. He said, "you can't cut no logs," said, "you ain't...you just don't know how." I said "well I tell you what," I'd been out there where they was logging, cutting logs, you know and I knew what they were doing out there. I knew the fellow that was cutting for him. And I said, "if I don't cut as many as some of them fellows, you don't owe me nothing. I'll just cut for free." So I got me a big old double jointed fellow to help me, he was a good fellow. We went down and the very first day, the first day we cut, we cut 20 feet more log scale than all the other 4 saws put together. Well he thought that was the awfulest something he had ever seen. He said, "I've never seen nobody could cut logs like that." I said "well, you can't judge anybody by looking at him." He said, "well you've cut 20 feet more scale than 4 other, 8 other men. Two of you has cut more than 8 men." I said, "well that don't make any difference." I said, "if you're not satisfied, you don't owe..." He said, "oh no, I want you back everyday." And I went right on to work for him. I hadn't never seen him before but I

worked for him till they cut out, moved. They wanted me to go with them, but I didn't. But, that is the way it went you see. If I ever worked for a fellow one time, I didn't have to ever go back anymore without, I could go right on to work. It didn't make any difference how many he had, he'd get shed of some of them and let me have it, move right on in and take over. But the reason for that, I cut so many I cut the volume till they couldn't accept any other thing. Now that was just, I cut them so right and so many of them till they just couldn't get over it. They just didn't believe it; they just didn't believe it.

Old man Henry Temple sent a man right out yonder, right out on Buttermilk, we was cutting out there. Them we wrote the scaling for and it was real good timber. Now it was good timber. Me and Norris was cutting 20 and 25 thousand every day. Well it would just crowd them saws to death to get 10,000 from any of them. The best saws could barely get to 10,000. Well they went in there and a bunch of them, and they told Mr. Temple that (unintelligible) He said, "Now they just ain't cutting that much, we know they're not." Well he said, "it's on this sheet, the log count and the scale is on the sheet." Yes, but he said, "There is something fishy about it." Said, "we cut logs just as hard as they do, but we don't get half as much as they do." Well he got a little old fellow and sent him out there. We didn't know what he was even out there for. He come over to where me and Norris was cutting and he stood around. I noticed him every little bit, he'd pull out, every time we'd start on a big tree, he would look at a stopwatch. He had a stopwatch and he'd turn that watch on and stand around there and hold that watch. When that tree would fall he'd look at that watch and when we cut the tree up he'd still look at that watch and he'd turn around and write something. I don't know what he was writing down, but he would write something down. We didn't even know what he was doing out there. But he stayed out there 5 days with us and we cut above 20 thousand every day. And the, Roach would knock us off first. We were the first ones to be knocked off. He would get us about 12 and the rest of them, just as he'd get to them, the other 5 or 6 off.

Henry Temple called me and told me, he come out on the porch there one day. He seen me out there and he said, "Come in the office a minute, I want to talk to you." Well alright, I went in there. He said "I got a good report on y'all out there cutting" said, "I been hearing a lot of going on about y'all getting something give to you." He said, "I don't believe a word of it." I said, "well, Mr. Temple, we are not asking for anything, we are fair about it, we want to do what is right about it." But I said, "you got a man out there now, that if we cut it we get it." I said "he gives us, he treats everybody alike." I said, "You don't have any gripe." Well he said, "I know it. I asked that fellow that I sent out there last week, he checked on you every day for 5 days, and he told me that you would cut a full 6 hours like you cut maybe 30 or 40 minutes at a time, when you first file your saw and get started there, that if he cuts a full 6 hours like that, you could half way log the mill. He said you would go way up there around 70 or 80, 90 a thousand." He said, "I don't see how you turn it on like that." I said, "well we take every advantage and we know how and we keep our tools in good shape, we keep good tools to work with." I said, "We just know how to do it." Well, he said, "I believe it."

Boy from then on we had it in our favor, from then on. If something went wrong, all I had to do was call Mr. Temple. He would handle it. He'd change it in a hurry. Same way with Mr. Arthur Temple, anytime something goes wrong, he'd say "I'm still the boss, now if something goes wrong, come tell me." I said, "Well if you want to know something about it, what is going on out there, just call me." I said, "I'll keep up with. I'm not no stranger out in the woods. I know what I done and I know how to do it." And I said, "if I work for you I'll do it like you want it done to where you can make money at it." I said, "You're paying me to do it right." And he will tell you now, if you go see Mr. Temple tomorrow, if you ask him if I can cut logs, he'd say, "well I trust him further than any body that I know. If he can't do it right, there ain't nobody that can." So you see and I made a believer out of them. And they know that I will do it right if I'm gonna do it at all. And these fellows jump up over night and thinks they can cut logs, well they ain't no log cutter. They don't know what they are doing. They just going out there and cutting some trees down. They'll cut them up in pieces and they get it all mixed up. They don't look at what they are doing. So you see there is more to log cutting than just cutting logs. You're supposed to make the man some money out of it if you are going to cut logs. You can make him or break him. The lumber he is getting \$150 a thousand for it, if you cut it in such a shape that he gets about \$80 or \$90 for it, see how much he is losing on that same lumber? That is the same tree. That is by not knowing what you are looking at, what you are doing. But that is the reason I never had any trouble, ever since I was 10 years old, I knew about pine timber. I knew about it and I studied it and I know all about pine timber in East Texas. I know everything there are to know about it. I know what to look for. And I know when I walk up to a tree to cut it, I know exactly what it looks like when it's going to hit the ground. Nine of them out of ten I know just how it is going to hit the ground. I know what it is going to do. And I don't have to guess, I don't have to wait and see where it is going to fall. I know where it is going to fall. I never did practice much till the last 15 – 20 years, got to cutting all these shade trees and things, Maybe I'd just have a small place for a tree to fall, maybe it would touch on each side and the top of it would hit something. You had to see how long it was to see if you had enough room. May have to cut the stump up 4 or 5 foot high to make it short enough to come inside of your target that you were cutting to maybe another house to keep from hitting that house. And it would be hitting a fence over here and a fence over there. Now you couldn't let it go this way and you couldn't let it go that way, and it couldn't be too long. You had to know how long it was. So you see there is more to cutting a tree than just looking at it. They seen that fellow cut a tree on TV and he went out there and had a fellow set up two posts way out there ten feet apart. Well that fellow threw the tree between them. I said I wonder what was the use of all that. Why didn't he just walk out there and stick up his walking stick and go back and throw it on that walking stick. I said that wouldn't have been any work. I said why didn't he just stick up a little stick there or just lay down something there a foot or two longer and just throw it on that.

I've been cutting wood trees, pick up a 2-foot block and walk out yonder 30 feet in front of another tree and lay it down and throw it right on top of it, so it would be up off the ground. When you can do that, you pretty well know what the tree is going to do. We cut some, they set up some posts at the fair in Livingston, and cut them down and they stuck up stakes for you to throw them on. Who could throw them the closest would get the \$50.

Well they put mine out there, they put these stakes 30 feet high and they put the stake 29 foot, it was just a foot from the top of it. Well if you went just there a little bit, either way well you would miss that stake. It was just a small 6-inch tree, a pole you know. Well if you threw it just a hair bit either way, it would miss that stake. If you were going to hit the stake you had to hang it right. Well, they put them up there, and everybody cut his tree. Some of them missed them that far and some of them that far. Mine hit it right on top of it, drove it in the ground. I got the \$50. See I beat them out of that. That is the last time they let me do that.

Chopping, they would be three and four and five minutes chopping a 10 or 11 inch log, two of them could last, I cut it in Livingston 11 inches or 13 inches is big and I cut it in two in 11 seconds with an ax. The next fellow to me was 5 minutes and 20 seconds and I cut the whole thing in two in 13 seconds. I didn't get no money, he got all the money 'cause they wouldn't let me enter the contest. 'Cause they knew I was going to walk off with the \$50. And there wouldn't be nobody else try it. That is the way it come out, but I knew what I was doing. I didn't guess at anything. I still don't. When I go to cut a tree, I don't guess it's going to do this, or guess it's going to do that. I know what it's going to do. I don't guess about these trees. I know about them. Anybody that I've ever cut a tree for, they want me to come back and cut some more if they got any.

WG: Okay, that is enough.

END OF INTERVIEW