

EDDIE FARLEY

Interview 104a

August 10, 1954, Mr. Farley's home Diboll, Texas

Clyde Thompson, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In a 1954 interview with Clyde Thompson, longtime Temple employee Eddie Farley reminisces about working for Southern Pine Lumber Company and the Temple family in Diboll, Pineland, and Hemphill. Mr. Farley was a shipping clerk and later a shipping superintendent in each of the Temple operations. He speaks about T.L.L. Temple, Arthur Temple, Sr., Henry Temple and Katherine Sage Temple.

Conversations with Old-Time Employees
Of Southern Pine Lumber Company,
Diboll, Texas

Eddie Farley (hereafter EF): I had a friend that was a barber in Pineland, and he asked me to come up there. The shipping clerk kept asking me to go to work for him, so finally the third night I was there his night shipping clerk quit. He came over and just insisted that I help him out, so I told him that I would help him out till he got a man. That was September 15, 1915, and I am still with them.

Clyde Thompson (hereafter CT): You are still with the Company?

EF: Still with the Company. I shipped at night for two years till they cut out and the night run. I went to work that fall as foreman and checker in the daytime for several years. Then when Mr. Adams died (he was the manager) and Mr. Henry Temple came there in 1918, the shipping clerk quit; and he gave me the job. I started shipping sometime the first part of 1918 or the latter part of 1917, I've forgotten which. I shipped for them for seven years.

Then they bought the Knox Plant at Hemphill, the Knox Lumber Company. They had trouble getting it organized, getting shipping clerks, etc. So the second year they transferred me to Hemphill, and I shipped at Hemphill until 1923[?]. On July 1, 1923[?], they transferred me to Diboll as shipping clerk. I shipped for them here until 1946, I believe it was; and Mr. O'Hara died, and they made me superintendent. I shipped and was superintendent for about a year or a year and a half; and then they made me just a full time superintendent, which I was until on account of ill health I retired the first of this year. I stayed retired six months, and the first of last month, July I went back on a part-time basis. I figured it would help me to give me something about the type of my job, which it has, and I have gotten along a hundred per cent better.

CT: Thank you. In just a short while you will be back on a full-time basis, I'm sure.

Mr. Farley, your initials are E. A. Farley? And you have been with them since 1915?

EF: That's right.

CT: Who hired you?

EF: Joe Rice hired me. He was a shipping clerk at the time, and Mr. John Adams was manager.

CT: John Adams was manager. And you were the night shipping clerk, and later on became the shipping clerk and went over to Hemphill as shipping clerk.

EF: That's right.

CT: Until you came here first as shipping clerk, then as superintendent.

EF: That's right.

CT: Were you personally acquainted with Mr. Tom Temple?

EF: Very much so. I always was very close to all the Temples.

CT: You knew Mr. Gilbert, too, of course.

EF: I worked for Mr. Gilbert.

CT: Could you say something about Mr. Tom Temple? What kind of man would you say he was as far as handling his men in the sense of how he carried on? Very efficient?

EF: Very efficient. He was one of the most fairest men that I ever worked for. He had that reputation. That is what built up this organization, the attitude Mr. Temple had toward his employees. In other words, his employees always came first with him.

CT: His employees always came first. Would you say that the present administration is carrying on that same policy?

EF: They are all carrying on the same policy. It has been handed down. They are all carrying it on.

CT: Now then, you have worked not only for Mr. Tom, and Mr. Gilbert, but you worked for Mr. Arthur Temple?

EF: I worked for Mr. Arthur Temple [Sr.] I am working for Mr. Arthur Temple, Jr. now.

CT: And you worked here in Diboll under Mr. Henry Temple?

EF: That's right.

John Hence was sales manager at Texarkana when I went to work for them. Since then, he went to the war, the First World War, and Mr. Arthur Temple, Sr., was sales manager. Then after him was Lester Pruden, and then Mr. Temple Weber, and now Mr. Latane Temple. I have worked with all of them.

CT: What job would you say you liked the best over all the jobs you have held in the organization?

EF: Shipping.

CT: You liked the shipping clerk best. Could you tell us any stories of any time you ever saw Mr. Tom Temple or Mr. Gilbert, anything that happened, kind of human interest stories?

EF: Well, right after I had taken shipping at Pineland, one of my first errors was I billed a car wrong. I billed it to Hamilton, Indiana, and it was supposed to have gone to Hamilton, Kansas; and the back-haul on it was two hundred fifty-odd dollars. So Mr. Gilbert was down at the mill, and he and Mr. Henry Temple and I were walking around the plant looking at the stock, etc. Mr. Gilbert said, "Well, Henry, the only thing I know, the back-haul on that a car that Eddie billed wrong, we'll just have to charge it to him and just deduct so much a month." I was already in debt, just married and raising a family, etc. and my spirit just commenced to going through the doorway. He saw it was hitting me so hard; and he reached over and put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Son, I was kidding. That's the best thing that could happen. Maybe you will never bill another one wrong." And I have never billed another one wrong since then.

CT: Never have billed another one wrong since.

EF: Here's this about Mr. Tom Temple. One time he came down to the planer at Pineland. One thing about him, he was awfully conservative. He did not tolerate any waste. If he went along on the dollyway and saw a piece of lumber, just a short piece of lumber, falling off the truck and was laying on the dollyway, he would pick it up and figure out what this piece of lumber was worth, if it was worth eight cents, ten cents, or what not. He would write it on it with a pencil and lay it on my desk. So when he was down in the mill any time, I was always looking out for those pieces of lumber laying on my desk. One time he was down there, and he went behind a trawling machine. Of course, running a trawl you have a lot of cut-offs, raising the grade, etc. It was one of the few times I ever saw him lose his temper. Mr. Henry Temple was working, but he was in the shipping office with me. We knew Mr. Temple was out behind the trawling machine, but we didn't want to go out there. Well, he kept sending for us, but we would make excuses. Finally he didn't send for us; he came in there. He brought a bunch of trawl cut-offs with him. He commenced to throwing them down on my desk and asking both of us,

“What did you cut this one off for; what did you cut this one off for?” He got Mr. Henry Temple and myself in such a shape we didn’t know what to say; we couldn’t answer him. About that time, we had just installed the first motor jitneys to haul lumber at the planer and one of those stopped in the shipping office to pick up a bill; so Mr. Temple just walked out and got on the jitney and told the boy to take him to his office. We didn’t see him any more that day.

CT: Mr. Farley, what about those jitneys? How much labor do you figure that they saved when they started those jitneys up?

EF: Well, we had five machines in the old planer when we put on the first two, and each machine had five mules logging it. We put on two jitneys, and they logged all five machines and did a lot of other extra work and eliminated the five mules. We figured it cut the cost just about fifty per cent at that time.

CT: Cut the cost by using the motor jitneys fifty per cent?

EF: To start in with. Since then, of course, we have been more efficient in the way it is made, and there has just been a general reduction all the way down the line since the first installation.

CT: These were just cut-down T-Models, weren’t they? These were T-Model Fords that had been cut down and adapted to it?

EF: That’s right.

CT: Can you think of any other instances whereby they cut labor costs and were progressive in their operations while you were either at Pineland, Hemphill, or Diboll? I’m talking now about the start of any of these things.

EF: Well, we built a new planer in Pineland sometime in the 1920’s and we put in some new machines and new equipment – was the first move they made to make improvements and reduce the costs of labor. It was the first of May since they bought the planer out. It was very much more efficient than the old planer. The Temple people have always been very aggressive and progressive. They have always been one of the first to try to take advantage of new ideas that came along that would reduce the cost of labor and create efficiency. We did little things off and on all over the plant, sawmills, and different operations. The biggest thing, of course, was last year at Diboll after Arthur, Jr. came down and we started remodeling the plant. In other words, we put in new dry kiln and new edge solder and everything. We started remodeling the plant from the sawmill on out. One of the first steps, from the mill and the planer we eliminated about one hundred men with the installation of this new equipment, machinery, etc. Since then, there has been no let-up. We have been just continuing it and going on. We are working on several other things now, new planer, new dress sheds. In another two years--it’s already the most modern plant, we think, in the South if not the country--and in another two years we know it will be the most modern. No question about it.

One of the things, when Mr. Tom Temple used to come to the mill, he would always walk around over the entire plant. One thing that he never failed to do, he always shook hands with all the old darkies. They would get off the job, when they saw him, they would get out of the trimmer cage and come down and shake hands with Mr. Temple. They looked on him as their god almost.

Another things is, after Arthur, Sr. finished college and got to where he would take active part in the organization, he would bring--in fact, he spent his honeymoon in Pineland. When he married his wife, they came to Pineland and spent their honeymoon. After I came to Diboll there were two families in Diboll that had large families and they all had T. B. The whole family had T.B. Mrs. Arthur Temple [Sr.] came down and found out about it and she went up there herself, went to the house, and she cleaned the house up and came down and talked to Mr. Henry Temple and had him send new mattresses and things up there. And for years every time Mrs. Temple came down, she would go up and see about those families. She didn't stop at that. About once every month she would write Mr. Henry Temple to find out if he was living up to what she had recommended that he do. In fact, all the children got well. In one family I think there was six children. They were poor and scrawny and looked like they were right on the verge of stepping in the grave. Every one of those children got well. Today they are normal people; they've got jobs. There are none of them here anymore; they have all left and all doing fine. In fact, I had not seen the oldest one in about ten or twelve years, and he came through here about three months ago and came by to see me. He was such a robust, healthy-looking guy I didn't recognize him. But he remembered all that, and he was talking about it. That is the reason we have got the organization we have.

CT: I sure appreciate this, Mr. Farley.

This has been an interview with Mr. E. A. Farley on August 10, 1954, in Mr. Farley's home in Diboll, Texas.

END OF INTERVIEW