

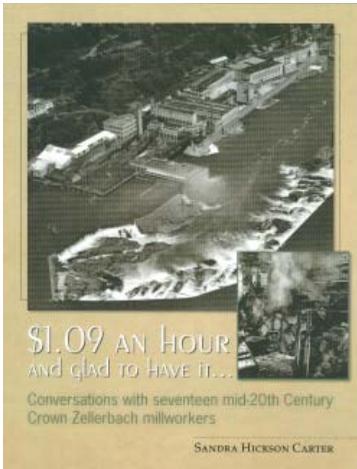
Pioneers of Technology

Fred L. Nelson
Coos Bay Mechanic and Inventor
of the "Nelson Log Bronc"

Sandra Hickson Carter (2011). *\$1.09 an Hour and Glad to Have it: Conversations with Seventeen Mid-20th Century Crown Zellerbach Millworkers.*

Were you ever hurt at the mill? (SHC). "I got banged up a little bit. Of course, when you've got three kids, you know, and you would sit down at the breakfast table, you might not have felt good that morning, but you'd see them groceries disappear, you'd reach back and get your lunch bucket and pick it up and go out the door, you know." ---Ed Witherspoon

Ed Witherspoon was 79 years old when he was interviewed in 2006 for this book. He worked for 35 years for the Crown Zellerbach paper mill in West Linn, Oregon. There has been a paper and pulp mill at this location on the west side of Willamette Falls since 1889. From 1928 to 1986 it was owned and operated by Crown-Zellerbach. These are the stories of 17 workers at that mill, many of them beginning their careers in the late 40's after WWII, often logging 40 years on the job.



Sandra Carter spend hundreds of hours videotaping interviews with these men (and two women). Oral narratives from working class people are rare, priceless transcripts that would be lost in the grave if not for people like Sandra Carter and the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation.

This 400-page book is only being printed in sets of 100 as demand requires. To get your copy of this important documentation of industrial history, see their website www.Willamettefalls.org. This is history, as the saying goes, "straight from the horse's mouth." It is uncensored, down to earth, and not jazzed up with any political or commercial slant.

Beside talking about the floods and strikes and new technology affecting the paper industry, many of the workers commented on the changing nature of the workforce as safety and regulations became an issue in the 50's and 60's. The old fun of squirting each other with fire hoses, dumping sawdust down between a guy's sweaty back and his shirt or welding a lunch bucket to the table was stopped. Darn, those new-fangled regulations ruined all the fun.

On July 22, 1958, Fred L. Nelson of Coos Bay filed patent 2,844,120 for a new type of boom boat. One of his stated objectives was to be "so constructed whereby it may be moved not only forward and rearwardly, but also sideways ...so as to move logs into desired position." The key to this unique design was an outboard motor installed in the middle of the boat and made so it could swivel 360 degrees.

For the first half of the 20th century, logs heading for the mills were sorted and managed on the rivers and bays by men wielding pike poles and peavies while standing on the logs. As boom boats began to replace the "pond monkeys," men like Fred Nelson always came up with better mousetraps.

When Daryl Reavis (*see below*) was running a Nelson Log bronc, one of his jobs was to clear the log dumps. A log dump is where a log truck drops its load in the water ... depending on the tide in Coos Bay that could be a 10 to 20-foot drop. Daryl would take his Nelson and push the logs clear to make room for the next unload. One day his 40-hp Mercury outboard stalled while under the dump. No amount of yelling would reach the driver who couldn't see him and assumed Daryl was clear. At the last minute the engine started, and seconds later a whole truck load of logs came crashing down.

Fifty years later he remembers those few seconds with vivid clarity, as he lost his virgin sense of mortality when seemingly certain death was granted a postponement.



Daryl Reavis in 2011 at the controls of a Nelson Log Bronc now owned by the Coos Bay Train Museum. He put in over 1000 hours on Broncs working summers for Knutson Towboat from 1961-1968 while in college.

Quarter Inch Drive

A quarterly newsletter for friends and graduates of Tom Hull's shop programs

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Resting in retirement in the window of the late Jack Jacobson's Coos Bay Iron Works, this 1912 Excelsior engine powered the family motorcycle to their logging camp up Larson Creek. Later pulled from the bike to run a water pump for a steam donkey, the engine was snagged from the boneyard.

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