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Oral History Number: 119-001

Interviewee: Ernie B. Corrick

Interviewer: Orlan J. Svingen

Date of Interview: May 4, 1984

Project: Champion International Corporation Centennial Oral History Project

Orland J. Svingen: Okay, first thing I'd like you to do is, let me, just for myself here, explain that my name is Orlan J. Svingen. That's spelled O-R-L-A-N, middle initial J, Svingen is S, as in Sam, V as in Victor, I-N-G-E-N. I'm program manager for Historical Research Associates, located here in Missoula. It's private, small research corporation in Missoula, and we are contracted with Champion to conduct research in the past 50 years of the Bonner mill facility in Bonner. Today is May 4, 1984, and I'm interviewing Mr. Corrick. At this point, I'll ask Mr. Corrick to give his name and association with Champion and so on.

Ernie B. Corrick: My name is Ernie Corrick. I'm the general manager of the Rocky Mountain Timberlands for Champion International Corporation, and our headquarters are in Milltown, Montana. I've been with Champion since 1972, when they purchased the Anaconda Forest Products Division from the Anaconda Company. I went to work, originally, for Anaconda in 1950, as a timber cruiser and worked for them until Champion purchased that operation and I've continued with Champion ever since that date.

OS: Ok and you mentioned that we're at the headquarters in Milltown. I can see the plant from here, but the headquarters is actually Milltown and the plant is located in Bonner. That's the proper—

EC: Right, there is two divisions here. There's the timberland divisions, which is this operation here. We're in charge of managing 680,000 acres of timberland, supplying all the building products' mills with their raw materials, logs, and then we are also in charge of purchasing and supplying the pulp mill with their materials, which is mainly chips [unintelligible], all that stuff. And then Bonner is the main facility as far as building products goes; that's the largest one they have.

OS: When you say timber cruiser, just for my curiosity, can you describe a timber cruiser?

EC: Well that was a name they formally applied, mainly the foresters, and your job was about inventory and timber, lining up logging contracts and locating and surveying roads, surveying property lines, general forestry work. But in those days they designated it as a timber cruiser.

OS: Could you discuss or describe your special areas of knowledge about Champion over the years? I guess in the sense it's sort of a quick bio of yourself.

EC: Pretty much a parochial view, outside of two years after I graduated from college, where I worked in Libby, I've worked here ever since 1950. So my viewpoint is free local, (?) as far as Anaconda Company. Of course, Anaconda Company then was a large mining company, which is

later purchased by Arco, but I spent 22 years with them and then the succeeding 14 years, or 12 years with Champion.

OS: Have you always been located in the Missoula area?

EC: I've always been in Bonner and here; that's the only two places.

OS: That's it.

EC: That's it. Yes.

OS: And your employment has been associated with just these two places then?

EC: Right. Of course, I've worked all over western Montana, where our timberlands are in, anywhere west of the divide where our timber is. So yes, two out in that area.

OS: And now your title again?

EC: Is general manager of the Rocky Mountain Operation Timberlands.

OS: Have you worked through the ranks? Is that is that the term?

EC: Well, I started out at a timber cruiser and then became assistant land manager and then land manager under Anaconda, and then when Champion took over from him, I think they called it the forest and logging manager, and then they formed the timberlands division in 1976. Before that we worked under the building products. They formed the timberland division in 1976, and at that time, they gave [me] the title of general manager of the Rocky Mountain operation.

OS: And you've held that since then?

EC: Since then, when we merged with Hoerner-Waldorf, and we got the pulp mill at that time. Our duties then became to supply the pulp mill with their raw material, and at that time, they made this particular job of vice president.

OS: The job that you're holding right now?

EC: Right.

OS: Okay, now let's go back to the Hoerner-Waldorf thing for a second, now that took place in '76?

EC: Took place in '77, is when it actually—they started negotiating in '76 and it was in February of '77.

OS: Okay now, before this, Hoerner-Waldorf was a private firm?

EC: Privately owned firm in Minneapolis.

OS: Privately owned firm out of Minneapolis.

EC: They had merged with an outfit in Missoula called Intermountain Lumber Company.

OS: When did they do this?

EC: Oh. I'm not sure of that. Probably '74-'75. We have people here that were working for Intermountain at that time, so that'll tell you.

OS: Okay, but then you said in February of 1977—

EC: '77 is when the merger actually took place. Yes.

OS: Since '77, have they just, can you describe the Hoerner-Waldorf [operation] just in a very brief fashion?

EC: Yes. Well, Hoerner-Waldorf was a company that was in the packaging business. They don't have any white paper mills. They don't make, in other words, writing paper or envelopes or things like this. This mill out here makes what's called linerboard.

OS: Linerboard?

EC: That goes on the outside of, you know, what a cardboard box has, a corrugated kind of ripple inside, that's called a corrugated, and then the linerboard is what goes on outside of the corrugated medium. So they make the linerboard here. They have almost 50 plants around the United States, where they ship the paper to these plants to make, to make the boxes. They don't only make cardboard boxes. This could even be the Waldorf cereal boxes, any type of packaging.

OS: What do you call that plant now? I mean everyone refers to it, and I know it's one of Waldorf's—

EC: We call it Champion, and it's actually in the pulp and paper operations. You just call it Champion Frenchtown's Mill, or whatever it is. The Hoerner-Waldorf, that title has been removed. There isn't [that company] anymore.

OS: Yeah, people just refer to that, right? They've, because they've gotten accustomed over the years to calling it that. I think anyone who says it realizes that they've sold it, but they don't know the term.

EC: We called this the Anaconda Mill, from 10 years after was purchased.

OS: This might be a fairly long question, but let me ask you to describe the major events that you—major can mean different things to different people—but can you sort of describe major events that you've experienced since you've been here? Let's begin with 1950, as part of ACM, and then if you'd describe anything that stands out. If you want to take it by decades, by year, if you want to wander, that's fine. Just describe how things have progressed or expanded since you got here 1950. Of course, I'm not real sure what happened, there's something, maybe additions to the operation plant, something at '56 that I can't recall, offhand. Then the expansion in the early '60s, the purchase in '72. '72, okay, we have to nail that down real carefully. If you could just kind of highlight things: how about how the plant has changed since 1950, as close as you can to the present. This is a long-range question here, so just go ahead and begin and when we finish with this question I'll make it clear I'm at the tape. Go ahead and just begin talking about things from 1950 until, and I'm exaggerating a bit, but until yesterday.

EC: I came to work in April 1950. I'd been working at the Daniels Lumber Company in Libby. The reason that I was hired is because the Anaconda Company decided they were going to manage their timber on a sustained basis.

OS: Sustained yield?

EC: On a sustained yield basis, and they needed foresters for marking. At that time it just—they just put loggers in an area and they logged it. George Neff was a land manager and he convinced the corporation they should have the forestry program, and I was the first person he hired under that new program to work. That summer, that spring—

OS: That program you mean is sustained yield.

EC: Yes. A forestry program.

OS: That's what they would call it.

EC: Yes. Forestry program. They hired another forester, about the same time. He didn't come to work until school was out. Named Alan Dawson. Alan and I, first year, pretty much made up the forestry department.

OS: Al Dawson?

EC: Dawson. Al Dawson. D-A-W-S-O-N. He's retired now. Alan I pretty much made up the forestry staff, and we marked the trees for cutting and we started managing the loggers a little more. Requiring a little more that they take the trees that were marked and do a better job of going down smaller tops, this type of thing. It's a graduate program, and over the years we've built this program up until we finally had the total timberlands broken up into three large districts, with a land manager over each district, a forester over each district.

OS: What were those three districts?

EC: One of them was the Blackfoot, the Clarks Fork, and the Thompson River. One of our jobs in the early '50s, and had been the job of the land department for a long time, was to buy timbers for the framing plant. It was Rocker—Rocker's right outside of Butte—so we did a lot of work. Particularly in lodgepole pine stands, and around Phillipsburg, in that area. Buying timber was sent to Rocker. That plant, that framing tent where they frame timbers for the mines, was moved to Bonner in 1955 and '56.

OS: Okay. That's the date I was thinking of, I think.

EC: I'd have to check that date. I think they started to plant in '50, and they built a plant here to make the frame timbers you have to use in the mine. The timbers had to be a certain size and they put what's called a horn on top so that they fit together, when they put it in on the mine, they can lay one right on the other and it fits. All they had to do in the mine was lay them up, and lay them down.

OS: I've heard a lot of talk about this framing operation, that's in [the] shaft then.

EC: Down inside the mine, right.

OS: It's the timber that, in a sense, bolsters the shafts.

EC: Right.

OS: Prevents cave-ins, you know, and so on. Is there a standard measurement for these pieces of timber?

EC: They're all different sizes, depending on what they're going to be used for. Some of them are 12 x 12, some of them are 8 x 8s, there's several different sizes of them.

OS: Okay, so when they talk about mining production, or timber for mining production, they are referring to the framing operation out here?

EC: Yes.

OS: I've heard that.

EC: The sawmill actually made things for the mine, too. It's called lagging, which laid on the top, made the roofs, of the framed timbers. That was cut in the mill; it wasn't the framing plant. That plant was started here in '56, I think, and at that time they closed the plant in Rucker. The general manager, in 1950, when I came to work, was a man by the name of Jack Root. He was the general manager from 1950 until I think about 1956 or '57, when he retired. He and his wife were both killed in a car wreck at Trout Creek, Montana, I think just about a year after he retired. The man who replaced Mr. Root, was [Howard] Ron Dix, D-I-X. He was the general manager from then up until sometime in the early '60s. He later became the mayor of Missoula. Ron was a sales manager under Mr. Root.

OS: And you say he actually replaced Root?

EC: Yes, he replaced Root.

OS: And he stayed on until the early 1960s?

EC: Early '60s, when we remodeled the plant, and then Bob Sheraton came over as general manager, and Ron Dix worked another year. I think he was maybe assistant general manager and sales manager and then he retired, somewhere in early '60s. I'm not sure. '62 or '63.

OS: Was there a connection between the change between Dix and Sheraton at the time of the expansion? Did one succeed the other, or was there some reason for—

EC: Well, what they did, they created the forest products department before it was the lumber department. So they had their lumber department, it was under a man in Butte, with the name of Dickie. Anaconda building materials was a wholesale outfit. They had a plant, had a sales, it was a lumber yard [unintelligible]. They had a yard here, [one in] Hamilton, Butte, one in Whitehall, had one other but then that was called, that was under the fellow in Butte too. This was under him, and the wholesale lumber outfit was under him. It was a wholesale and retail both. So they put those all under one. Jim Dickie retired in Butte, so Bob Sheridan took over the whole thing.

OS: I see, okay. That brings us to the whole expansion period then.

EC: Right, that was early 1960s.

OS: Who was the prime mover behind this? Was there a single individual or was there— what caused them to say, 'Let's expand now,' in the early 1960s?

EC: I think the prime mover of it was probably Mr. Dix. He was probably one of the prime movers. And then they had a research department in Butte, they had a fellow that lives in

Missoula now, a fellow by the name of Tony Veazey, and that might be somebody you want to talk to.

OS: Why don't you give me his name? Tony...

EC: Tony Veazey. V-E-A, yes, let me look it up. Z-E-Y. He works for Lambros Realty. He was raised in Anaconda, or in Butte, and would know a lot of the history, in particular, of a lot of things about much of the planning of the expansion. V-E-A-Z-E-Y.

OS: Okay. Lambros Realty?

EC: Yes, then his home phone is 543-3330.

OS: Okay, thanks. So anyway, it's Ron Dix and Tony Veazey?

EC: Yes, I think the other people, Johnny Ailport was the plant manager—

OS: Who was this? Johnny—

EC: Johnny Ailport, A-I-L-P-O-R-T, and John was the plant manager, and I think he and Dix and Veazey, and they had at this time, an outside consulting firm that they brought in, that made a lot of the plans too. Or took their ideas and put them into plans. I think most of the plans were originated within Anaconda, but the consulting firm was an engineering-type consulting firm.

OS: Was there just one firm involved there?

EC: I think it was one firm, and they were from Seattle. I can get that name for you, I don't have it right now but I can get it for you. They came up with some suggestions and improvements on their ideas and it was mainly the ideas of the actual expansion rose within this group in Anaconda, and then the other outfit just took those ideas and put them in a better form.

OS: Do you know anything that prompted that? The expansion may have come about just because of general interest in progress?

EC: No, I think one of the things that was happening, and they could see it happening, was that they were thinking more and more about the old one in Butte, and up until the late '50s, a large portion of this plant's production went into either Anaconda yards or into Butte. In the underground. And the mines. So when they started thinking and working towards the open pit, I think they could see the day was coming when they wouldn't need nearly as much material for the mines. They were thinking about, and making improvements so that they would have a modern, up-to-date facility.

OS: In a sense, you're saying that one of the reasons for expansion was that they could no longer depend on this large amount of sale for the Berkeley Pit, in Butte, that would gradually come to a halt. So they were going to expand and improve technology so that they could, what, diversify products, that's what you're saying? For domestic production?

EC: Well, here we didn't change production a whole lot, if at all. All we did was change our product, what our final product was out of the plant. See, at this time, they put in, they built the new planing mill and storage sheds. They did some modernization of the main plant. They put in a small log mill, they put in a beam plant, to make laminated beams, they put in a house plant, to make houses, and then they put in a panel plant, to make pre-stressed panels. Which they used for roofs and floors and things like this. Some of those plants were built in '62, but that was part of the plan; they were built through the '60s.

OS: Again, the expansion was aimed at looking for a different market.

EC: Different market and different products.

OS: Gradual. Different market, different product, because they recognize that the Berkeley Pit and Butte mining interests would gradually burn out—

EC: Right.

OS: —or, I shouldn't say burn out, what's a better term? Exhaust themselves? Or would become exhausted?

EC: Yeah, unsurprising, the people in the Anaconda Company, in Butte, and even the ones in New York, the chairman of the board, all the officials in Anaconda were all mining people or connected with mines, one way or the other. Very little background in forestry, or lumbering, or anything else, but strange enough, they really took a great interest in this plant. They were very proud of it. They'd come to Montana, they'd always come and tour the plant, and want to go out in the woods. And it was kind of a toy, compared to some of the things they had in mining, but they really were proud of it.

OS: You were saying, in a sense, it's unusual that there would've been that much interest from people committed to mining, in forest products.

EC: Therefore, they were, when you consider the amount of money they spent here was not nearly as much as they were spending on new mining ventures and smelters and whatnot. Nevertheless, they did a pretty good job of supplying necessary capital to make our improvements here.

OS: That rather strikes me as forward-looking.

EC: Yes, they really were.

OS: I suppose being committed to mining, they recognized that, if anyone recognized that the Berkeley Pit would come to a halt, it would be the people [unintelligible]. Yes, that makes sense that makes sense.

EC: We had studies all through the latter part of the '60s with [unintelligible], IP, International Paper Company, problems on our back, Georgia-Pacific. In the early '70s with Weyerhaeuser, all these companies. Anaconda was interested in some type of merger. One time we even had discussions with our Hoerner-Waldorf about a possible merger between the lumber departments, or the forest products division.

OS: In the late '60s?

EC: In the late '60s, early '70s. Before it actually took place in '77. That was another situation entirely, when they finally sold to U.S. Plywood Champion.

OS: Oh, that's right, sure.

EC: It was back at this time, when Anaconda was in desperate shape, they really needed cash bad, and that was one of the reasons they sold. When they were originally talking to those other plants, it was actually with the idea of merging, and coming up with probably a pulp mill. Then Mr. Sheridan came over, and I think he came—I'm sure it was in '61 or '62, I'm not sure of the certain date. That's when Jack Larry came over, too.

OS: Now when you say Sheridan came over, from—?

EC: From Butte. He was from Butte.

OS: Okay, in '60 or '61 or...

EC: About '61, either '61 or '62. Jack Larry came over at the same time. He had audited here at Bonner since the late '40s, so he knew [unintelligible] pretty well.

OS: What did Sheridan bring with him in terms of a style? Or an approach?

EC: Jack Root was kind of an older-type of a person, he was a good manager, kind of aloof, didn't mix very much. Several friends was McLeod's up from Missoula, that type of thing. Well respected, well-like in Missoula. Not particularly close to his people, but that doesn't make a difference here because he was a good manager. Ron Dix was much closer to the people, in fact he got a little too close. He was—

OS: Almost a buddy or?

EC: No, he could be very daggone tough at times, which is good. We made good progress under Ron, and he later became mayor of Missoula. He did a pretty good job being mayor. Bob Sheridan was a very low-keyed, very personable, but much tougher individual than most people thought he was. People in town just kind of thought he wasn't very tough, but when he thought he was right, he didn't make a fool of the Anaconda Company; [if] he had to tell [someone] off he would. He was the type of person who was very strong, individually, but didn't give that appearance from the outside. Very, very, very good manager. Became very knowledgeable about lumber operations and a lot of the innovations were put in when he was here.

OS: Was he the last?

EC: He was the last. He was here when they purchased and they sold.

OS: Did he retire then?

EC: No, he stayed on for the Anaconda Building Materials.

OS: Oh, I see, I see.

EC: And ran that till the UBC put out that whole thing. Then he retired, and he died three years ago.

OS: 1981?

EC: Yes. His son, Bob Sheridan Jr. is an attorney with Robinson Law. [Garlington, Lohn and Robinson]

OS: So Sheridan, in a sense, oversaw much of the expansion.

EC: He was here, yes, he was responsible.

OS: Now, as far as expansion, is it possible to give an A to Z discussion of what was added in the expansion and what was taken away? I know there was the electricity aspect [unintelligible].

EC: One of the things that we did lose, for some reason or other, they decided that we wouldn't have to generate electricity anymore, and up until that time, they had. Unfortunately, in the early '60s, electricity was practically nothing, so they tore out the generating plant, and electrified the mill. With commercial electricity, not generate-your-own. Of course, later on, after about 1974, after Champion got here, they found that that was a bad mistake, but then of course, that cost 10 times more to—

OS: You said they took out—?

EC: The generating capacity at that time.

OS: During the expansion period? They took out the generating and just bought electricity elsewhere.

EC: Yeah. They just bought, instead of generating their own, they—

OS: When I read about the expansion, I heard that they electrified things, they can't [unintelligible] before that.

[at this point audio becomes difficult to understand; voices are warped for about 5 minutes]

OS: From this point on, and probably from the last five minutes perhaps, we've been experiencing technical difficulties. Mr. Corrick and I recognized the problems, so we backtracked and tried to discuss the last few things that we've talked about in the portion of the time wherein the tape was not good, so ignore the static and poor quality, knowing that on side B, we picked up much of this discussion. This is the end of part 1.

Okay, we're on side B and we just finished talking about expansion, and electrification, and generation. I think that we had some tape recorder problems, so we might repeat a little bit of it, but I think we have a fairly good idea as to where we're at. I think we were talking about electrification and the generating plant. Do you want to maybe back up a bit and discuss some of these things a bit more?

EC: Yes. When they modernized the plant in the early '60s, they took out the capacity to generate electricity. At the same time, they electrified the plant and the planers, they were all electrified, the carriages were electrified. This was all done with power furnished by the Montana Power Company, because power was very cheap and it did cost something to generate their own power. It was felt at this time that it was more economical to purchase it.

OS: We may have had this on the other side, I'm not sure, but a discussion of expansion. Can you describe the various processes or the various new additions that were incorporated into the expansion?

EC: Either in the early '60s or going on into the '60s, they built a new planer, and automated planer, had the storage shed where all the lumber could be stored inside rather than out in the yard, like it had been formerly. They built a laminated beam plant, house plant, and laminated panel plant. Those were all done right in the time of expansion, but the plans were there and they were bought online during the '60s.

OS: It was a gradual process then? There was various items you mentioned: planer, storage shed—

EC: Planer and storage shed were completed by the initial part of the—

OS: The planer and the storage shed, that was maybe the early '60s expansion?

EC: Right, right.

OS: These other items, like you mentioned, the laminated beam plant, the house plant—

EC: The laminated beam plant was next, then the house plant, then the pre-fab panels. Pre-stressed panels, I think is what they called them.

OS: Pre-stressed panels? And these were used in—

EC: Construction. Roof sections or floor sections.

OS: Okay, okay. Were all of these things completed in the '60s?

EC: Yes.

OS: Laminated beam plant, do you have a date on that? Or would it be kind of guesswork?

EC: It would be guesswork. I think George Neff can give you that; he was the manager at that time of the plants, so he could give you the dates.

OS: Okay, that gets us through the 1960s then, by and large, so then we get to the discussion of the early '70s and the sale by Anaconda to Champion. Can you give us a bird's eye discussion of that? If you could be as specific as you can, I know this is—

EC: During the 1970 to 1972 [period], the Anaconda Company [unintelligible] plus the fact of the Chilean government taking away their copper operations, nationalizing their copper operations in Chile, they were really in a difficult financial—that was about the only thing that they felt they had worth actual cash. At that time, [we had] what we called our forest products division here, so several companies had looked into the idea of purchasing this operation, then finally in 1972, in May of '72, the U.S. Plywood Champion Paper, at that time, and then later that year they changed the name to Champion International Corporation.

OS: You said U.S. Plywood Champion, that was the name in '72?

EC: In '72, and later that year, or early the next year, they changed the name to Champion International Corporation.

OS: Champion International Corporation. Okay. And that was in the same year, in '72?

EC: I think it was in the same year, pretty much, one way or the other.

OS: Champion International Corporation, okay.

EC: They purchased it, announcements were made in early May, then they actually took over the operation in, I think it was June 27, 1972. That date, I could be wrong. Anyway, it was June of 1972 when they took over. They closed down the operation for approximately three months; it was about the first of October before we opened up again.

OS: Who closed it? The Anaconda ACM?

EC: No, Champion did.

OS: The sale took place in May of '72—

EC: The purchase was actually in June. But the agreement was in May.

OS: The agreement was struck up in May.

EC: The agreement was struck up in May, and they actually took over the operation in June 1972.

OS: There was a three-month lag period in which operations were halted?

EC: Right. They started the plant again on the first of October.

OS: Oh I see, okay.

EC: Around the first of October, 1972.

OS: Between June and October what happened in that time period?

EC: Well, they started, of course the engineering work started in the plywood plant, because they were primarily interested in plywood. That's what the name would indicate, is plywood. So they wanted to build a plywood plant here, so they, of course, were doing all the engineering work for that. They also had to prepare a site and get some things out of the way at the plant, they had to tear down some buildings to make room. Also, [that's] when the timberland, our group, the whole works, were hired intact by Champion. We didn't lose any time at all, one day we were working for Anaconda, the next we were working for Champion. We started inventorying the lands. They wanted to make inventory of the volume, species and size of the timber that they had purchased, and actually Anaconda made a cruise in 1970, '71, but they wanted to make sure that they were prepared—

OS: Did you say they made a cruise?

EC: Anaconda, they had made a cruise previously, in 1970.

OS: Now when you say they made a cruise, that means what?

EC: Inventoried all the timber on the land.

OS: I thought that's what you meant.

EC: Then Champion wanted another inventory, because they wanted to make sure everything was all right. They had two crews checked [unintelligible]. That was the purpose. So we started up our operations in the fall of '72, and the only changes at that time was Champion also owned the mill in Silver City and the mill in Browning.

OS: And Silver City...?

EC: Is right over by Helena.

OS: Okay, near Helena.

EC: And Browning.

OS: Browning, Montana.

EC: Yes.

OS: Near the Blackfoot Reservation?

EC: Right. And they were under the Wyoming division; they had a couple of mills in Wyoming, but they took those two mills out of their Wyoming division and put those under the Montana division. We had to start furnishing logs for those two plants. They were under the manager here.

OS: Let me back up again, just one second here to make sure I understand this: between June '72 and October '72, the cruise was made. That took essentially between June and October.

EC: Well, no it took us longer than that to do it. We didn't have figures on that till the next spring. It took us that long to [unintelligible] completely.

OS: Okay, but as far as the physical work—

EC: Physical work was mostly done, yes.

OS: —that was between June and October.

EC: Yes, it went on into the fall.

OS: Okay, I understand. I thought that's what you meant, but for the record I wanted to make sure that that's what you meant. Okay, so go ahead, you were mentioning talking about Silver City and Browning, had those been closed down then?

EC: Browning was sold to the Louisiana Pacific [unintelligible]. We still have Silver City though. Very good, very good mill.

OS: What does Silver City do?

EC: It makes studs.

OS: Studs.

EC: Two by four inches long, and some ties, some railroad ties. The manager, the first manager to come in here, was Bill Butler.

OS: This was the first manager under Champion?

EC: Under Champion, yes.

OS: Bill Butler?

EC: Bill Butler. B-U-T-L-E-R. And Bill had had extensive experience, he worked all his working life, 27 years, with U.S. Plywood, on the coast. He had been in California, he had been in Oregon, and he was a graduate of Oregon State. The forestry school. He was an excellent choice for manager here. Very people-oriented, and it was a difficult time because we were [unintelligible] and people were terminated, you know how it is [unintelligible]. U.S. Plywood kept almost everybody that wanted to stay. It was, you know, a very traumatic thing when that happens.

OS: Were people concerned at the time?

EC: Oh, sure.

OS: They were all concerned about what?

EC: Everyone in the middle was terminated.

OS: Everyone was terminated.

EC: We all were hard-backed, and we didn't just carry on. We were terminated. We were told it was up to U.S. Plywood to hire back.

OS: Now at the time of the termination, did you have any indication, did Anaconda people have any indication that they would be carried on by U.S. Plywood?

EC: I think the only people that definitely were told would be the people in the timber department, in the lands department. They weren't sure, at that time, just what [unintelligible] was going to run the sawmill or not, or reduce the size of the sawmill, or what size of plywood plant they were going to have or anything. There were a couple of months there [unintelligible] people, and then of course, [unintelligible] they announced what they were going to do, and they announced when they were going to reopen. Anaconda people were given first preference [unintelligible].

OS: So then paychecks and everything were disrupted then, when they were terminated, they no longer—

EC: Right. According to your salary people, according to your years of service, it depends on how much termination pay you got from Anaconda.

OS: I see.

EC: There was all kind of different—

OS: Scales.

EC: Yes.

OS: How long did people go without a paycheck then? I'm sure it varied from case to case.

EC: It varied, some people went right out and got a job the next day.

OS: They just left and got a job elsewhere.

EC: Right. And some of those people never came back. Some of those people were on unemployment all summer, and then came back; other people were part-time.

OS: How long, do you suppose, did it take to reconstruct or incorporate the Anaconda people back into Champion? Did it take a year perhaps, between termination?

EC: No, when they opened up the mill, in October—

OS: Oh, the mill was open in October '72.

EC: October, yes. Bill Weiland is the guy that you can get the information from.

OS: Bill Weiland?

EC: Bill Weiland was the plant manager here, under Bill Butler.

OS: How do you spell that?

EC: W-E-I-L-A-N-D. He'll come into the picture a bit more later too, because he was the general manager here for a while. He can give you all the specifics on actual dates, but I bet you that there must've, the mill must've had at least 85 percent previous employees.

OS: People returned. When were they terminated from Anaconda?

EC: The 27th of June, I think.

OS: June 27th, thereabout, that was termination.

EC: Then about October, the first week of October.

OS: Around October '72, so they faced June to October when they were, in a sense, without a job. I mean, I'm sure there are varying degrees of this.

EC: As I recall now, the woods [employees] went back to work. A couple, three weeks before. Because we had to have a log supply.

OS: Sure. Okay. That was an important question to me, because it's so easy to listen to someone say, well Anaconda sold to Champion, and now Champion is doing what Anaconda used to do for a while, but I suspect that there's more involved. I didn't know the termination process, but that's got to be a real nightmare for people working, because you don't know what's going to happen, you don't know if they're going to ship in their own people from someplace else.

EC: And that was the great thing about Bill Butler. He was very, right from the start, when he first got here, he said when we first open the sawmill, we're going to call those folks back [unintelligible], and he was dedicated towards looking out for the Anaconda people. It was a really excellent choice.

OS: That's real important, to try to track this down, because when there was a sale like this, and the company and ownership changes hands, there's just a lot of dislocation. It looks as though, from what you're saying, I think you used an 85 percent figure, that you're not pulling it out of the air. But what you're saying is that a very large majority of people stayed on with Champion.

EC: Yes, you can go back to the mill, when they opened it up, you can go back to the mill, and it's kind of hard to tell that it ever got shut down. It's a lot of the same guys in the same job.

OS: Yes. Okay, let's go on then, and cover, perhaps, the period between, I'm not sure if I can chop this up, but beyond '72 till today.

EC: Okay, and then, like I say, when you talk to Bill Weiland, he can give you the dates.

OS: Bill Weiland?

EC: He lives in Missoula. Grant Creek.

OS: Now is he retired?

EC: Yes, he's retired.

OS: Retired, and his former position?

EC: He was general manager of the Rocky Mountain operation for wood products. That includes the mill here, the one at Browning—the one at Browning before we sold it— the one at Silver City, Darby, Bonner, North Fork, and Salmon, Idaho.

OS: So much more than just here?

EC: Right. Then they decided to build a plywood plant, and they started construction on that thing right in the fall of '72.

OS: Okay, plywood plant construction began in '72.

EC: Right.

OS: And when did it, do you say, it went online?

EC: It was the first plywood in December of 1973. I have a piece here, December of '73. They didn't produce very much but they got some out.

OS: December of 1973.

EC: They started producing plywood in 1973, and you can't say the mill was in full production, but they produced plywood in '73. [interviewer and interviewee laugh]

OS: Okay, now that out's here?

EC: Yes. [unintelligible]

OS: Okay. Good enough. First plywood in December '73. So that was a major addition then, and that came about because of U.S. Plywood Champion, okay.

EC: Bill Butler was the general manager, vice president. He was in charge of all the timberland operations; I reported to him. He was in charge of the west coast operations of Champion, and also about this time, was in charge of the operations of Texas. So he as a western vice president, in charge of western operations.

Bill Weiland was the Rocky Mountain, he was the general manager of the Rock Mountain division. So that was just in the northern Rocky Mountain basin. Of course, in '73, we were busy wooding this mill here. This mill, and Silver and Browning, the only three mills we had [unintelligible]. We went right to work in the woods, and started bringing logs to these three operations. This pretty much continued to '73, then of course, in '74 then [unintelligible] went in and required more logs for Bonner, because it greatly increased their log requirements. In '74, there was a reorganization in Champion, the fall of 1974.

OS: Okay, this sounds important here, fall of 1974. Reorganization?

EC: Right.

OS: Can you talk about that?

EC: Yes, the present chairman of the board, Mr. Andy Sigler, S-I-G-L-E-R—

OS: S-I-G-L-E-R. Andy Sigler?

EC: Yes. S-I-G-L-E-R. And he is the chairman of the board now. He was made the president and the chief operating officer of the company.

OS: In '74.

EC: In '74. Fall of '74.

OS: Okay, run that by me again. President and—

EC; Chief executive officer.

OS: Chief executive officer. Okay. And currently is chairman of the board.

EC: Currently chairman of the board. Bill Butler was moved to the west coast. He moved to Eugene, Oregon. We were still under him here. Bill Weiland continued as general manager of the Northern Rocky Mountain operations, and I reported to him. The timberlands, this time, we were under the wooded products manager. Bill Weiland was a long-term employee of U.S. Plywood also. He was a very good manager, very people-oriented, very dedicated and hardworking. Great guy, and along with everything else he was a mountain climber, lost all his toes on Mount McKinley, froze. He still climbs mountains.

OS: I think I've seen the name.

EC: There was a good article in the *Missoulian* about him. He can give you a lot of the information, you know, actual dates and things like that that I can't give you. This continued pretty much on this way, until January 1, 1976. The corporation formed the timberlands division, where they made a separate division of all the timberlands. They made them a division, for the projected vice president [unintelligible] to be president of the company. So at that time, I reported to a man in Stamford, Connecticut, by the name of Whitey Heist. H-E-I-S-T.

OS: Whitey?

EC: Whitey Heist. H-E-I-S-T.

OS: H-E-I-S-T. And you said Stanford? Is it Stanford or Stamford?

EC: Stamford. S-T-A-M-F-O-R-D.

OS: Stamford.

EC: Right. So the only change being is that our responsibility then was to direct to our division headquarters in Stamford, instead of local. So the way it works is that Bill Weiland answered to somebody in Stamford, and I answered to somebody in Stamford, and then later, when Hoerner-Waldorf would come in, their manager out there answers to somebody back there. We, all three were separate divisions here.

OS: When you mentioned the executive vice president, that is you?

EC: No, that's my boss.

OS: And that is?

EC: Well, now we have Bill Burchfield; Whitey Heist had moved to another job.

OS: Bill?

EC: Burchfield. I'll come to that later, when that happens.

OS: Now, just briefly, what was the purpose of the reorganization that began in fall of '74? What was the reason behind it?

EC: Well, I think that they wanted to do was to make certain that the timberland was being operated separately as a separate business, to try and maximize the profits. There was always a possibility that the timber was under an operating officer, [unintelligible] somebody operating a wood plant or a sawmill.

OS: It might not get the attention that it should.

EC: Yes, it might not get attention or they might be able to use the profits the timberlands are generating to make it look like the mill. [unintelligible] Both of these two areas had separate divisions where they had to match certain standards [unintelligible] has to match certain standards, [unintelligible] on our performance. It's a way of judging the performance of the people and the [unintelligible].

OS: The figures become far more specific, rather than one large figure representing three divisions. It's difficult to judge each division when you'd have one large pot, but when each one is held accountable for its own budget, then you can kind of recognize the progress, or the lack of it.

EC: At other companies, it works the other way, so it depends on the circumstances. This worked fine.

OS: Okay, now we've gotten up to January 1, '76.

EC: Now in the fall of '76, possibly the latter part of October, early November, the board of directors of both Hoerner-Waldorf Corporation and Champion Corporation decided on an approved merger, the heads of both corporations did. Pending the vote by the boards of directors, and pending the results in due diligence, each company were required to make a study, and give their reports to the board of directors. So that study was started in November of '76, and, for instance, several people in the corporation were picked to go. I was picked to go to the other Horner locations, one in Ontonagon, Michigan, and St. Paul, Minnesota, [unintelligible] Rapids, to look at their timber supply. Not the mills, just to see what kind of timber supply, and then bring back any information we could on their area. So this study was completed, and in February the 23rd of 1977, the merger was approved by both boards of directors and the merger was officially [unintelligible].

OS: It went out when?

EC: February of '77.

OS: That's right, you told me that. February of 1977.

EC: Nationally, the corporation acquired the pulp mills in Ontonagon, St. Paul, Missoula, [unintelligible] Rapids, and at the same time, they acquired all their container plants and all their packaging plants, which was a considerable [unintelligible]. One of the leading manufacturers of paper boxes, that type of material, containers, in the country. So after this happened, then locally, as far as the [unintelligible] timberlands department, we were given charge of delivering, getting and buying all the chips, all the [unintelligible], all this [unintelligible] Frenchtown plant, and also wooding, delivering logs to all [the sawmills]. They had a sawmill in Missoula, Bonner, [unintelligible] at Darby, and a sawmill in North Fork, and Salmon, Idaho, so that was added responsibility on this department. Of course, we acquired their forest products division and their timber division too, so timber folks and their timber department, so we just brought them in to our department and some of them wanted to stay and some of them didn't. They had other jobs, and for various reasons, over the years, some of them left and some of them are still with us. Shortly after that, I would say about within the last three years, the main changes, the first main change was the Hoerner-Waldorf and Champion packaging [unintelligible].

OS: Champion packaging.

EC: Packaging. U.S. Plywood Division was changed to Champion Building Products. Champion Building Products, that name change was made before the Hoerner's [unintelligible]. The next change was the U.S. Plywood to Champion Building Products, which was the first change, then the next one was Hoerner Waldorf to Champion Packaging. In 1982, I suppose it was around September in 1982, they made some further changes. Whitey Heist became the manager of what had been the Hoerner Waldorf, which was now Champion Packaging. Then Bill Burchfield became the executive vice president over timberlands.

OS: How do you spell Burchfield?

EC: B-U-R-C-H-F-I-E-L-D.

OS: B-U-R-C-H-

EC: F-I-E-L-D.

OS: And this was in?

EC: '82. Last year, in 1983, there was a further change to corporate [unintelligible]. The timberlands, there was no change there. There wasn't any change in the Champion Building Products. The paper, Champions Papers, had been the white paper division, Hoerner Waldorf had been the dark paper. So what they did, they merged all the pulp mills, whether they were white or dark paper producers and put them in what they called pulp and paper operations. Mr. Heist, Whitey Heist, was made executive vice president of that division. They took all these, all these [unintelligible] who had produced pulp and paper, all the sales of those were put in another division under a man by the name of Mark Fuller, and they sell all the products all these mills make, whether it's milk cartons, envelopes, containers, there's no difference now between them. They sell everything; it doesn't make any difference whether it's white paper or what. It's kind of a natural reorganization because it puts all the producers under one head, all the sales under the other.

[unintelligible; Corrick shuffles papers]

Sales and converting.

OS: Sales and converting?

EC: Sales and converting. They take the paper rolls and convert them into whatever final products, and then they sell them. So that has been the last major change, and the one other change that happened in years, was when Bill Weiland retired, retired in December of '82, and Rod Bradley is now the manager of the Rocky Mountain operations.

OS: In terms of the Bonner plant, the Bonner plant more or less shifted with these changes. Since the expansion, have there been other sorts of things at the Bonner plant that have been altered?

EC: [unintelligible]

OS: [unintelligible]—

[End of Interview]