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S.D. Warren Company

Stories of Maine's Paper Plantation

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## Interview with Curtis Pease

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## **Curtis Pease**

**Track 4** Describes personal philosophy. Honesty, five Ws. First jobs. Worked at Saunders Brothers – dowel plant in Westbrook in 1940s. Blew off the job when he couldn't get reassigned to a better job.

### **Track 5 Getting his job at Westbrook**

Went everyday for a month to the Personnel office.

“Of course, knowing S.D. Warren back in them days, it was a family mill. You grow up in the shadow of the stack; you can almost expect to work there. Why would you work there? It was the highest paying place there was in the area. ... So that's how I wound up at S.D. Warren. It was October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1950.” Left mill/retired in 9/1/92. But actually stopped working in 1991.

1:40. Worked in Finishing Department. Good description of what was done there. Went to Security in 1957. Describes that job; transferred to pipefitting in 1966.

2:45 Never voted for the union, but wound up union president. 1967 Strike. 1973 first negotiations. In 1974 becomes President of Local 2287 if IAM. He was president until 1980. A four-day strike in 1979. 5:00 Describes wage demands – got a good offer from company that was turned down by members. He decided not to run again. December 31 1981 – asked to come up and speak to HR director Peter Malia. Offered labor relations supervisor job – Nelson Wayman from Boston (HR VP for SD Warren out of Boston and “a good friend”). 8:24 “Fair-haired boys” – he was not one of them. 8:50 Upper management, including Howard Reiche, liked him. Reiche said about him – “he'll never lie, but he'd like nailing Jello to a tree”. 10:30 Worked for two others; “unions don't have to be credible, but management has to be.”

11-12:00 – prior HR directors would protect/defend department supervisors or supervisors without knowing whether they were worth defending. “They'd protect without knowing, OK. Bad thing to do.” I say “so that would reduce their credibility” – “Exactly.” They moved one back to Tennessee and the other was moved to safety director.

12:30 So in 1984, he moved to Main Office from the bowels of the mills. “How I got there? God got me there.” Left in 1991 with a “golden parachute that I had to fight for.”

13:31 “Charlie Rose was not one of my friends. Howard Reiche was one of my friends. Hank Rona was exceptionally good.” Henry Rona had been Muskegon.

15:40 Used the five Ws to deal with problems.

16:00-18:15 Discusses when he testified for the union in an arbitration case after retiring. Also alludes to the AAA casebook; he said he was in a number of cases in period from 1981-1991. 17:50 “They call me the farmer. Just a farmer.”

19:10 Don’t boast.

## **Track 6**

It was a family mill. His father had worked at the mill in Finishing. Retired in 1959. Older brother worked there. His younger brother worked there as a foreman; his sister sorted paper.

1:10 “But my Dad got me in the mill. That’s how it happened there.”

Went back everyday for a month. “Evidently, my father had talked to Roy Gory. Roy Gory was Superintendent of Finishing. And he had worked there quite some time.”

He got a call one afternoon from John Millikin (Personnel Head) who said that he had “overlooked a note” and asking Pease to come down. “Roy Gory wanted me through the words of the Dad... And so he hired me.”

2:22 “I was getting something like 98 cents an hour, in those days – it was 1950.”

Went up to \$1:15 hour after two weeks. 2:35 - **Annual raises** - some years you would “get lucky” and get 8 cents more an hour, but most years it was 3 or 4 cents more an hour.

2:52 “And there benefits were a little better – not much but a little better.”

3:20 Was sworn in by City of Westbrook in 1957 as a Constable of the city when he went into security in 1957.

4:00 Training by watching with a little OTJ instruction from another work.

In 1950 when he started he worked “short-time” – three or four six-hour shifts per week because sales were slow.

4:50 \*\*\* **Depression memory** - “Of course being born in 1930, you’ve got to realize what I came up through, eating steamed bread and molasses, for supper, in the 1930s. And up, even into the 40s until World War II ... Then after the war things went all to hell; things were worse than before the war. I say that because my mother worked...”

## **Track 7** How did the owners treat the workers.

“Yes, they were Warren family days. ... What they did with their profits was that they would make a ball field ....

Before my time – they owned just many streets and buildings.

He couldn't complain because he had worked in a "sweatshop" at Saunders brothers.

3:10 "No one cares about anyone any more..."

4:00 When did things change?

When Scott was posturing to sell itself. Brings up Dunlap. Goes on about Dunlap. Criticizes SAPPI. Was posturing that they move Ultracast – he felt .

## Track 8

Relations with foreman?

"You knew where you were. They were kind of like – 'you fill your jacket, or you fill your hands' – they were somewhat like that." "Either put your jacket on and get out of here, or fill your hands and do some work."

0:49 Smoking restrictions. But they weren't brutal.

Were foreman fair about job assignments?

1:30 "That happened ... In finishing, **the fair-haired boy get any extra, you know...** And, yeah, there was a lot of inequity, if you will for a young guy coming in there. But in fact, in 1973 I submitted language for what you might call overtime procedures - that we would use rosters so that everyone could get their fair share."

2:53 Being called in got well..

### Good stuff on favoritism:

3:13 "In the older days when I first went into maintenance ... I called it conniving, I don't like it, but they used to do it. They'd take the lead man a Fifth and put it in his car, and say I've got something in the car for you. And [you] got called. So we'd say, there's had to be done [about it]. And yeah, there is a lot of that when you don't have a procedure. A lot of it. A lot of the grievance, even many years later, that came on to my desk and I had to sit in the third step, were procedure violations. It was a hard job for a foreman to get away from that, even that many years. The fair-haired boy was the guy ... Yeah, those things did happen. But what were you going to do, YK, there was no union. You could complain that you're not very fair with your overtime.

In fact they had a bonus system. " Describes bonus system in finishing. He wasn't getting bonus – a guy ripped him off by taking credit for his output –

5:40 "But the guy's dead now, and he's in hell I hope. But here I am a kid, trying to get a little extra for my family, and he's stealing from me, OK. But, I mean, them things

happened, and know really checked it. They called me in and wanted to know why I'm not making it, and I say, well I am... YK, but the world is awful cruel anyway. ..."

6:30. BONUS.

Were some jobs better than others.

6:45 describes guillotine/cutter presses how they worked. Good bonus on that job.

7:00 They got rid of this job because "it was a killer" 8:00 And I've got carpal tunnel now.

### **Track 9 Bonus and injuries/restriction of output.**

Bonus system was terrible. Describes his job strapping pallets of paper.

Produced poor quality. A good thing it was gone.

1:45 Shift/tour work.

3:00 Security Job in Woodlot. Describes how they weighed wood that came into the wood lot.

### **Track 10**

"The midnight one [shift] was a bad one, that son of a gun."

### **Track 11**

Describes pipefitting, working on sprinkler systems, other piping jobs. 2:00 Describes a dirty trick done on him causing a burn.

3:00 **Practical jokes, some dangerous.** A guy through a bucket of water – I guy got hit on the head by the bucket. Put a piece a wood in someone's sandwich. 4:00 A guy was stealing Christmas cards. He was stealing thousands. 5:10 Cut up his Christmas cards that he was stealing.

### **Track 12 "People getting killed with rolls" – accidents.**

Severed fingers. "In security, I was in the first aid team... But I missed some bad ones."

1:00 Yeah, one guy opened a valve to quick –a 150 pound steam valve – I believe it was six inch line ... It scalded one guy right there, it cooked him. Two other guys got burned bad.

1:30 **Good description of a guy getting killed in debarker worms.**

**2-3:00 Guy killed on 70 coater; grisly description of man killed in a “dead man elevator” – “body over here, head over there”**

**3:25** Most of it was on new installations.

**Track 13 Early attempts at organizing.**

Two votes between 1950-1957. There had been other votes before he came in 1950. Didn't vote for the union because he was looking back at Saunders and felt he was in better circumstances.

**Track 15**

Describes how the craft worker unions got together in 1963 and got in. Describes court's intervention, production workers union coming in in 1968; strike in 1967. “That's what made me change my mind about unions. Why are we out here for? Well in my mind, you don't stand out for that.

**National Labor Relations Board vs. S.D. Warren** court case. Explains court case issues very clearly. Especially the company's dispute over who would be in the vote for the union.

**Track 17 Why the vote finally won for the union – the strategy of getting a toehold with the maintenance/craft workers. Gives a list of the various trades.**

**2:22** Why he got involved in the union. Didn't like the union president for taking a vacation that everyone was going to lose in the next contract. He then wound up becoming president of IAM in 1974. Vowed to never take workers out on a strike unless they knew why and had a good reason.