

Valsetz: 1919-1984

The Sunday Oregonian

Special Section



*A
company
town
along
the
way*

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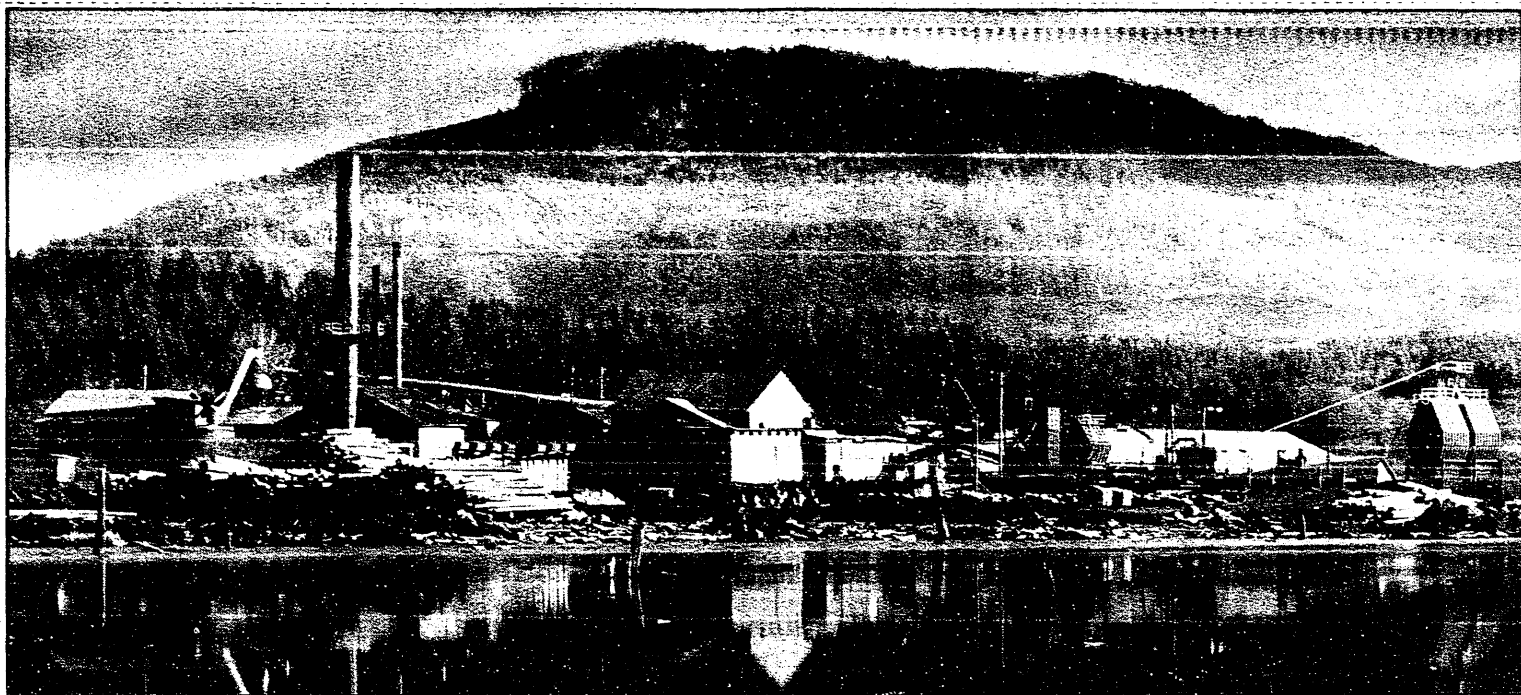
Steam from the mill and early morning fog settle into the Valsetz basin, sometimes heightening the town's sense of isolation from the outside world.



On the night of July 2, 1894, U.S. Deputy Surveyor Andrew L. Porter used bright stars as a geodetic guide to plot his position in a dark, dense section of the forest that stretched along the Oregon Coast Range.

Before turning in for the night, Porter confirmed and noted in his logbook that he was camped on the corner of Township 8 South, Range 8 West of the Willamette Meridian, a 23,040-acre area of the forest, where few people lived, and where, in the coming century, the only population center would be a company town named Valsetz.

COVER PHOTO: The Thiel family stands in front of what once was 708 Brownjohn Ave., their home in Valsetz. The home was torn down less than a month ago, and Richard, 30, Marlaina, 21, and Aaron, 10 months, now live in Falls City. Richard, who worked cleanup relief in the mill, is looking for another job. Richard had lived in Valsetz for 27 years. Marlaina moved to his town four years ago when the couple was married.



The Fire

On the night of Jan. 16, 1984, men, women and teen-agers left their warm homes and gathered in the moonlight on the edge of Valsetz. Ignoring the biting, cold winter wind, they stood together in a loose semicircle on the rough dirt road to watch the house burn.

Arlene Jeske, in the darkness looking older than her 47 years, slid through the group, photographed the flaming structure with an inexpensive camera and then slipped away.

Intense heat from the inferno drove the spectators back a few yards. A flickering orange aura highlighted the fear in some eyes, while the clear mountain air carried the anger in other's souls.

"Let the bastard burn," shouted 35-year-old Marvin Wamboldt.

At 7 a.m. July 3, 1894, Porter and his three-man crew broke camp. Four days later, surveying the mile-square sections of the township, they reached the high mountain basin where Valsetz would be born.

"Heavily timbered with fir and hemlock," Porter reported. "Undergrowth of salmon brush, crabapple and vine maple." Porter and his crew used the standard surveying tool of the time, a 100-link chain that measured 66 feet.

A ragtag group of volunteer firemen, performing for their friends and neighbors, began to unfurl long, gray hoses and attached them to bright red water pumps caked with silver ice.

The water hissed into the flames on the roof of the old, three-room wooden home. Steam rolled back into the crowd, and for a moment, the people were hidden.

"Someone sure saved Boise some money tonight," said the town jester, 55-year-old Bob Endecott.

The people laughed.

A young man in his late 20s said his friends had set the blaze. The company was not going to get this home, he added.

The unusually cohesive assembly of



Veneer mill in Valsetz, top, is reflected in Valsetz Lake with Fanno Ridge in background. Above, Main Street, one of two paved streets in town, ends in front of the Rec Hall, cafe and store, town focal points.

teen-agers and adults nodded in agreement.

Ivy Van Eps, who had spent most of her 51 years in this town, stood silently off to one side. Staring straight into the hypnotic flames, she recalled that Bill and Glenda Hamblins had lived in that home with their children, John, Mitch and Lynell. Since Hamblins, a millwright, took his family away to Dallas eight years ago, the home had served as transient shelter for various workers here.

"You know," 54-year-old Vernon Gore said to no one in particular, "that's going to happen to all of us. Damn it."

On July 14, 1894, Porter and his crew were near the north boundary of Section 34 of the township when they ran across a small cabin built near a creek that flowed

into the South Fork of the Siletz River.

"O.A. Fanno house," Porter wrote in his notebook. He had found the home of Oscar A. Fanno, who had settled in the valley and who would be granted the land by President McKinley in six years.

Porter examined the terrain around the cabin and noted in his logbook, "Rolling mountains break into level ground with first-rate soil."

The burning home, which was a chain's length from where Fanno's home once stood, succumbed to the flames. The firemen moved aside to let the bulldozer finish the burial. Big John Jeske, who at 47 still moved as quickly as a teen-ager, looked grim as he started the giant yellow machine. Just as the engine roared to life,

the crowd parted. The ground shook as the bulldozer rumbled toward the inferno.

The first blow hit the west wall. Sparks shot skyward, and the home shivered but remained intact as it slid off its foundation. The bulldozer pushed deeper into the flames. A wall shattered, the roof toppled, and the doors and windows tumbled into debris.

In minutes, the home was gone.

Although a few of the townspeople spoke quietly, most had silently watched the end of the Hamblins' home. Then, in groups, they wandered away to their own homes.

They knew that in the months to come, their homes, too, would be crushed and burned.

By 11 p.m., the town was quiet,



Bob Hughes sits in the mill lunchroom and ponders his future.

although lights from television sets danced on the living room walls in a few homes. But the streets were empty. The bulldozer was parked; the fire hoses put away.

Embers from the home continued to burn and pulsate. By 4 a.m., a viewer on Fanno Ridge above the town saw the embers flicker gently until a powerful gust of winter wind fanned them, and for a moment they glowed in that gray darkness that covers the sky before dawn.

A shift in the wind sent the faint rhythmic sounds of machinery and men at work up into the hills. The sounds floated from the veneer mill, a long, tall building about 100 yards southwest of what used to be the Hamblins' house.

The mill is the heart of Valsetz. It is where the wage earners work. But the mill is closing. The town is dying.

The engine on the Cat 950, a large machine used to haul logs, was idling loudly, so Ron Edwards missed the first part of a message coming over a CB radio inside the cab.

"Meeting. Mill. Bosses," was all he heard.

The 38-year-old Edwards wasn't sure what was happening, but he knew something was up this 12th day of December 1983. All day long, he had seen white trucks driving to and from the mill

office, and he knew that Boise Cascade Corp. officials drove the trucks.

Gil Fenimore, 51, knocked on the cab door and interrupted Edwards' thoughts. "Meeting at 2:45 in the lunchroom," Fenimore said.

Edwards parked his machine near the mill and walked back to the lunchroom about 70 feet away.

Inside the mill, Superintendent Les Kemmling, 54, was telling workers to quit work and meet in the lunchroom, located in a building about 30 feet north of the mill.

The 30 or so workers filed into the room and sat at tables along one wall. There was some nervous chatter. Shift meetings were not uncommon, but there was something different about this one, Edwards thought to himself.

The door opened, and Kemmling and three Boise Cascade officials walked in. Joining Kemmling were 45-year-old Dee Bridges, the Valsetz townsite manager; 34-year-old Lindsey Crawford, Boise Cascade production manager; and 37-year-old Robert Smith, the company's regional personnel manager.

Kemmling introduced the three men, and then Crawford, holding a letter typed on Boise Cascade stationery, stepped forward and began to read out loud.

"We have recently completed an

"We didn't work with Boise like they were a company. They were like our father and everything we got, we got from them. Everything we did, we did for them. I think they should have treated us with as much respect as we tried to give them. They didn't."

—Arlene Jeske

evaluation of the projected market for plywood and veneer and the Valsetz operation in particular," he said. "I am sorry to report that the short- and long-term market projections for the Valsetz operation are not favorable. . . .

"As a result, the company plans to permanently close all operations at Valsetz on Feb. 24, 1984. In addition, the townsite will be permanently closed following the end of the current school year."

Edwards, who had worked in the mill for 20 years, looked closely at Crawford. He thought Crawford looked choked up, and the three bosses surrounding Crawford reminded Edwards of bodyguards.

The Valsetz mill was not alone, the workers learned. Crawford said two other company mills were closing. On Dec. 12, the Valsetz mill employed 96 persons, five of them women.

"I am sorry that the results of our evaluation do not warrant continued operation of the Valsetz operation," Crawford read. "However, I want you to know that your efforts over the years have been genuinely appreciated."

Crawford asked if there were any questions. There were a couple, but the workers were quiet, not really knowing what to ask. Kemmling told his men they could go home early.

The swing- and graveyard-shift crews would be told of the closure when they came on duty.

News of the closure spread quickly through town, and people gathered to discuss what it all meant. One thing was clear. Valsetz, which is isolated in the Oregon Coast Range about 30 miles west of Salem, was going to die. As a company-owned town, when the mill closed, the town would close.

The people, many of whom had lived in Valsetz for 15 or more years, would be given severance pay that averaged \$100 for each year worked.

School Librarian Arlene Jeske was on a coffee break when she heard that her home of 25 years was going to be destroyed.

In a town where youngsters often call adults by their first name, all the children

still call Arlene "Mrs. Jeske." Standing almost 6 feet tall, she has a quick smile and an even temperament. But the color rushes to her cheeks when she discusses Valsetz, Boise Cascade and the impending closure.

When she heard what the company had planned, Arlene immediately called Dee Bridges on the telephone. Why, she wanted to know, did the town have to be destroyed?

She recalls that Bridges told her, "Sorry, that's the way it has to be."

While Arlene complained, made telephone calls and wrote letters, her husband said little, keeping his emotions and thoughts to himself.

Everyone calls him "John." He stands 6 feet 4 and weighs more than 200 pounds. He looks like a man who will not be intimidated. He is thick through the legs, arms and shoulders, but there is a steady gentleness about him.

He moves with a slow, yet powerful stride and wears multicolored suspenders that on a different man in a different place would be fashionable. To John, they simply hold up his pants.

Arlene is the talkative one in the Jeske family. While she gestures and blushes, John's face usually remains impassive and as neutral as a blank sheet of paper. Few people know what he is really thinking about.

Most of the time, John's dark brown eyes have the quiet, wise look of a man who is at peace with himself and the world. But when someone mentions Valsetz or Boise Cascade, John's eyes become tense and tight. His face hardens.

As a member of the Valsetz town crew, one of John's jobs has been to help destroy the homes as they are vacated by departing workers. Whenever a resident leaves, John, driving a green bulldozer, destroys the home with the help of fellow crew members Gary Richards, 42, and Emil Yaroma, 64.

For his efforts, he has been nicknamed "Captain Crunch."

The Jeskes, ordinarily one of the most peaceful families in Valsetz, have become bitter toward Boise Cascade because in early 1983, the company moved the Jeskes and others from their homes in an area



Bob Endecott, driving No. 23, leads convoy out of Valsetz on gravel road to Falls City, 13 miles over The Hill.

called "Western," less than a mile from town.

Neither the Jeskes nor anyone else knew that the move would be a prelude to the demolition of Valsetz.

For 15 years, the Jeskes and about 12 other families had lived in nice, older homes on a cul-de-sac in the woods west of town. It was an isolated community within an isolated town.

On Feb. 14, 1983, the families in Western received an unpleasant Valentine's Day surprise from Boise Cascade. In a letter to the renters, company officials said a section of the forest above Western was going to be logged. For their own safety, the renters were going to have to move into town.

By June, the people had moved and the 13 homes of Western stood empty. By late August, John and the town crew began destroying the vacant homes. John decided that his home would be one of the last to fall. In September, he could stall the destruction no longer.

It was a beautiful, warm fall day when John drove his D-7 Caterpillar bulldozer from the shop in Valsetz toward what remained of Western. Richards and Yaroma were working on other jobs, so John would do this job by himself.

The Jeske home was in the middle of Western, and John drove the bulldozer over the debris from the other buildings to the front of his own home.

He lowered the huge steel blade to the ground and moved the bulldozer closer until the blade was barely touching the house. From his seat on the machine, he could look into what had been his living room.

He revved the motor and was ready to get on with the destruction. Then he stopped. He couldn't do it. He let the engine idle while he just sat in his seat and thought.

He thought of the four children he had raised in this home, of the birthdays they had celebrated. He thought of the good times and the bad, and the life they had known.

Finally, he closed his eyes and drove the 70,000-pound machine forward.

In 15 minutes, his home was gone.

Arlene Jeske refused to watch the home be destroyed. Months later, however, she returned, alone, to Western to see what the area looked like. As she rounded the corner, she spotted the debris.

She began to cry. She turned her car around and drove back to town. She never went back.

Four months after Western was destroyed, the people of Valsetz learned that Boise Cascade was planning to close the mill and dismantle the entire town.

"We didn't work with Boise like they were a company," Arlene said. "They were like our father and everything we got, we got from them. Everything we did, we did for them."

"I think they should have treated us with as much respect as we tried to give them," she said. "They didn't."

John's job takes him up to Western occasionally. He sees his old home, and it makes him sad, but he does not want to dwell on the past. He has his memories.

In eight months, only memories would be left of Valsetz. As people move away, their vacant homes would be destroyed, as would all the buildings in town.

The veneer mill would be burned, and the workers would have to find new jobs and new lives in new communities. They would never recapture the community that was Valsetz.

The paved streets would be plowed under. Landmarks would disappear. The townsites would be replanted with Douglas

fir trees, and the area would become a part of Boise Cascade's tree farm.

Once again, Valsetz would become a forest. Decades from now, an archaeologist might inspect the high mountain basin and come across the remains of what was a vibrant community until the middle of 1984.

In geologic time, man's 90-year habitation of the Valsetz basin would be viewed as only a momentary disruption in the natural life of the forest. It would be a town that existed in the brief time between the destruction of one forest and the birth of another.

It would be a company town along time's way from one forest to another forest.

The Town

Valsetz's isolation is heightened by the tortuous, 13-mile road over "The Hill" standing between it and Falls City. The gravel road became the only way in and out of the town after the Valley & Siletz Railroad was dismantled in 1978.

Official maps identify it as Polk County Road 8610, although most people simply call it the Valsetz Road because that's the only place it goes.

The town's residents say they have gone over "The Hill" when they travel away on County Road 8610.

Few drivers can travel the road's 130 turns in less than 25 minutes. In the winter, mud and snow make the road nearly impassable, and dust in the summer hampers visibility.

Valsetz sits in a basin at the 1,100-foot elevation in the Coast Range, and Fanno Ridge sweeps around the northern and northeastern rim. "The Hill" forms both a tangible and symbolic barricade between Valsetz and the outside world that many in Valsetz distrust and dislike. That is a world inhabited by flatlanders, a derogatory term townspeople apply to people who live elsewhere.

The journey to Valsetz begins in Falls City in the Coast Range foothills, about 25 miles southwest of Salem.

On the way to Valsetz, the traveler can view the various stages of logging, from the recent clear cuts to the land that was logged decades ago and is covered with young trees among the hundreds of dead stumps. In 50 years, the young trees will be tall, and the loggers will return to cut them down.

The trip takes the traveler winding up to the summit of Fanno Ridge and then winding down into the basin. The trip ends on a half-mile flat dirt road that abruptly turns into the pavement of Cadillac Avenue at the east end of town.

The visitor is greeted by a 6-foot diameter log slice that has been fashioned into a sign. "Welcome to Valsetz," curves around the sign's top, while the words "Boise Cascade" hug the bottom.

In the middle of the log is the Boise Cascade insignia, a green Douglas fir tree. Many of the townspeople call the insignia the "Barbed Shaft" or "Russian Cactus."

Valsetz is laid out east to west. In most places it is less than 100 yards wide. To the north, the town is hemmed in by the trees and mountain ridges. A log pond, Valsetz Lake, runs the length of the town's southern side. From end to end, the town stretches a little more than 1 1/2 miles. A person can walk from one end of town to the other in less than 15 minutes.

The main thoroughfare is Cadillac Avenue, named for the Michigan city from which the first lumbermen came. The paved street is almost a mile long and runs from the Van Eps' place, at its most

eastern point, to the Carter home, at the western end.

Along Cadillac Avenue there are 25 homes, a small white church that sits on a knoll on the north side, and a building that a doctor from Falls City uses each week when he visits his Valsetz patients. Unlike many towns, Valsetz lacks a cemetery of its own.

About three-fourths of the way down Cadillac Avenue, Main Street intersects from the south. Main Street, the only other paved street in town, heads south for about 100 feet before it blends into a partially paved parking lot.

The lot, which is about as big as half a city block, is the center of Valsetz. On the east side of the lot, a long, wooden building houses the town store and cafe. Around the corner, about 20 feet east of the store, is the Post Office, ZIP code 97393.

On the south end of the lot, and across the flats where the railroads once ran, there are three homes.

Valsetz homes are not fancy, but most are in good condition. Boise Cascade rents the homes to its employees for about \$175 a month. Homes are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. If two families want the same home, the person who has worked in Valsetz the longest gets the home.

The renters pay for their own electricity and heat. Since most homes are heated with wood stoves, a layer of smoke hovers over the Valsetz basin on cold days.

The dirt and gravel roads off the two paved streets have been named in honor of persons or events that have long been forgotten. There are "Winkler," "Rocca," "Brownjohn" and "Tin Can Alley," among others.

One of the loops off Cadillac Avenue has two names. At the eastern entrance it is called "Shanghai," while at the western entrance it is named "Fanno." No one knows exactly where one ends and the other begins.

It doesn't really matter, though, because no one uses street names or addresses. Since everyone knows where everyone else lives, there's no need for them.

The most prominent landmark on Cadillac Avenue is the Valsetz School. Valsetz's first school was built in 1929. Three years ago, the town built a modern school that is one of the best in Oregon.

For most of the spring term, the large, modern classrooms have been nearly empty. The layoffs and impending mill and townsite closure have reduced the Valsetz population.

There are only 50 students in school. The senior class comprises nine students. There are only six in the junior class.

The other public places in Valsetz are the Rec Hall, which includes the cafe and a no-longer-used bowling alley; the store; and the Post Office.

Shoppers in the store frequently dawdle at the cash register and talk about the weather or politics.

The store's floors are wooden and well worn. Three aisles are stacked with sensible items. Shoppers will not find gourmet mixes or foreign foods or fancy wines. What wine there is comes in bottles with screw tops. Valsetz people drink beer, anyway, and the beverage is housed in a cooler that takes up a section of one wall.

At the end of one aisle is a magazine and newspaper display rack. There are no daily newspapers for sale, however, just the National Examiner, National Enquirer and the Globe.

The only non-functional items stocked in the store are colognes, which are stacked on a shelf near the cash register. There are 16 boxes of "Old Spice," five

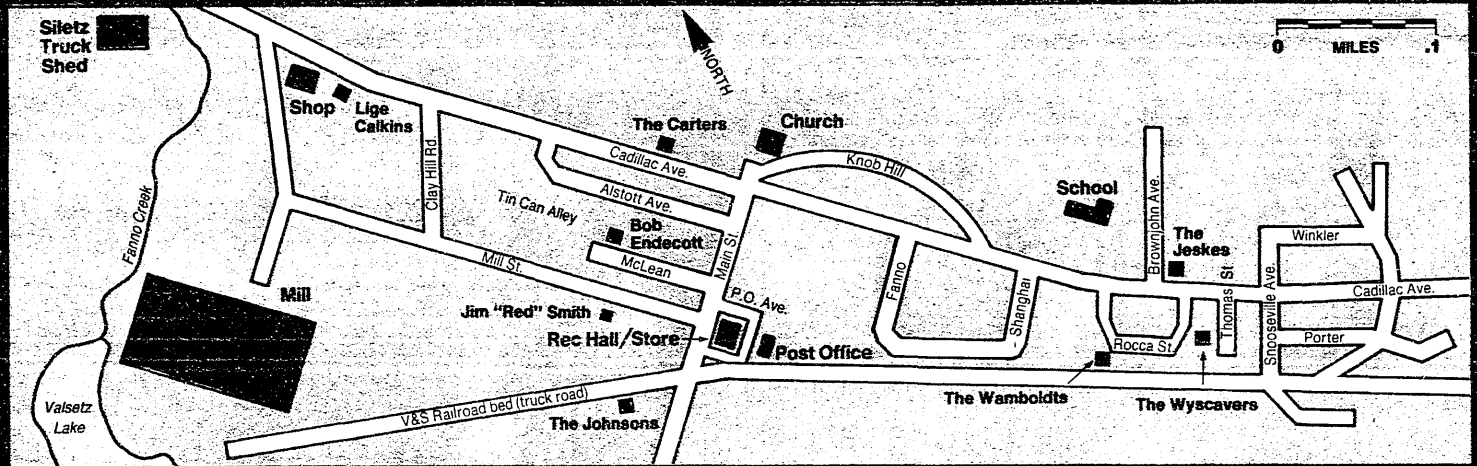


Amy Parkin walks home from school along Cadillac Avenue in Valsetz, the wettest spot in Oregon with 140 inches of rain a year.



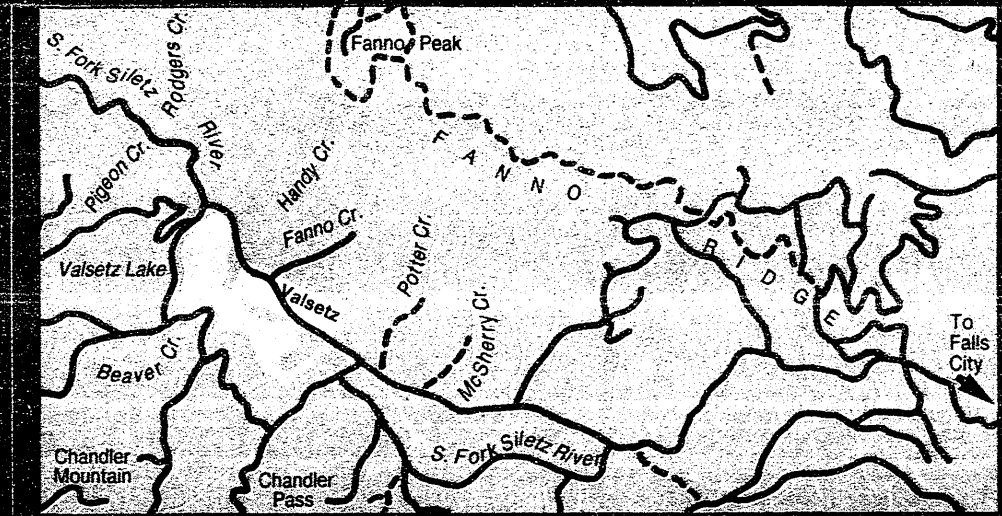
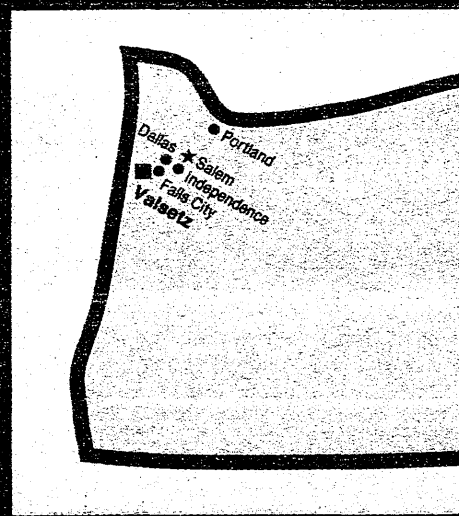
The Valley & Siletz Railroad bed runs to the right of the Rec Hall, cafe and store in view looking toward the southeast.

The company town



Oregon

Valsetz and environs



The Oregonian/RENE EISENBART

boxes of "Millionaire" and one box of "Pierre Cardin."

Connie Campos, the store clerk, cannot remember ever selling any cologne.

Tourists, like all strangers in town, are usually spotted as soon as they come over The Hill. Strangers rarely appear in Valsetz, and when they do, they are either the law, the boss or a tourist.

One Saturday, two tourists sat in the Rec Hall, drinking coffee and eating lunch. Obviously uncomfortable, they were trying to be inconspicuous when 15-year-old Robin Franklin pointed them out.

"Not too often we see those up here," she said with a hint of contempt in her voice as she pointed at the couple's clothes.

The woman was wearing a sea-green Calvin Klein pants suit while her husband was decked out in casual slacks and light brown dress shoes.

Valsetz clothes, like clothes in any working town, are functional, not fashionable.

Adults and youngsters dress alike. Heavy boots, jeans and flannel shirts are worn by most men while polyester pants and tennis shoes are favored by most women. No man wears a tie, and the only jewelry on a woman is usually a ring and a watch.

Like Franklin, many of those who live in Valsetz are curious about and somewhat

suspicious of strangers, because no one passes through town on the way to somewhere else.

People are friendly in Valsetz. But acceptance takes time, and most outsiders don't spend enough time in town.

To the visitor, the first evidence of Valsetz is a weathered metal speed limit sign on the side of the dirt road about 20 feet before the beginning of Cadillac Avenue. The 15 mph sign has been punctured by seven bullet holes.

Guns are commonplace in Valsetz. Most of the men and boys, and some of the women and girls, hunt. But many families keep guns in their home for protection, although they don't know who they are protecting themselves from.

The closest law enforcement agency is the Polk County sheriff's department in Dallas, nearly 30 miles away, but there is no crime in Valsetz anyway. The only major criminal problem occurred more than five years ago when someone peeked into bedroom windows.

But still, many of the people feel comfortable owning a gun for protection. Jack Partain, 43, insists on wearing his .45-caliber semi-automatic handgun all the time. Bob Endecott has a .44-caliber Magnum revolver hidden in his house. Sometimes he hides it under his bed, or under a seat cushion in the living room. Sometimes it's hidden so well he can't find it, but Bob says he feels better knowing

the gun's in the house.

The bullet-hole-ridden speed sign is the only traffic sign on Cadillac Avenue. There are no stop signs, red lights or crosswalks, just three speed bumps on Cadillac Avenue. They are unnecessary because in Valsetz, no one hurries.

The Past

In the summer of 1894, Andrew L. Porter, U.S. deputy surveyor, and his three-man crew hiked in the Coast Range around Oscar A. Fanno's cabin in the 1,100-foot elevation basin that would become Valsetz.

Porter directed his two chainmen, Herman Pament and John P. Allen, and his axman, Layrens H. Young, in the survey of Township 8 South, Range 8 West of the Willamette Meridian. The men would complete their survey by Aug. 11, 1894.

Thirty miles to the east of Porter and his crew lay Salem, which had been designated the state capital 30 years earlier and where more than 4,000 people lived.

Fanno, one of the earliest settlers of the 5-mile-wide elliptical valley that runs from the southeast to northwest, lent his family name to Fanno Peak, a 3,333-foot promontory on Fanno Ridge that embraces the north and east rim of the basin, and to

Fanno Creek that flowed past his cabin. Fanno Creek, like all the creeks in the basin, fed a small river that left the valley's north west end on its journey toward the coast, 17 miles to the west.

Decades earlier, the river had been named by the Siletz Indians who lived along its banks. James W. Nesmith, who visited the river in September 1849, wrote in *The Morning Oregonian* 28 years later that the name, "Siletz," originated from the native word for the tall and dense ferns that grew along the riverbank. Nesmith wrote that a native had told him the river was called "Siletz Chuck" or "Fern River."

It would be decades to come before the basin would be named Valsetz by the timbermen who built the Valley & Siletz Railroad into the mountains to gather the great trees for lumber.

As a settler in the mountains, Fanno was granted a 160-acre quarter-section on July 30, 1900, by President McKinley under the Homestead Act of 1866. He was among numerous homesteaders who laid claim to the rich forest land.

Between 1896 and 1907, the land that would become Valsetz was granted by Presidents Cleveland, McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt to Fanno and other Polk County men, such as Eugene B. Fanno, Zimri Hinsham and Montgomery Syron, as well as the heirs of Arden R. Handy, whose name was applied to



Butch Stamps and Joe Fenimore pose, at left, with hunting trophies in front of Stamps' home on Cadillac Avenue. Elk roam close to Valsetz.



another creek. The parcels were generally 160 acres each, and they changed hands quickly.

For example, Montgomery Syron, whose parcel included what would become the Valsetz School grounds, received his grant May 8, 1901. Nine days later, he sold it for \$100 to Mary Syron, who sold it the same day for \$1,100 to George W. Greenman. On May 20, 1902, Greenman sold the 160 acres for \$2,200 to Fred S. Champen.

Within a few years, a timberman in Cadillac, Mich., would buy 36,000 acres of the forest in and around the mountain basin from two lumber brokers who had purchased it from the speculators.

The timberman, William Mitchell, and his partner, Jonathan Cobbs, were the founders of Cobbs & Mitchell Lumber Co., which owned timber in Michigan as well as in other Midwestern states.

The two men planned to concentrate on logging their Midwest holdings and then harvest the Oregon timber in the 1940s.

Those plans changed in 1910, however, when a forest fire broke out in the Siletz Basin. The blaze spread quickly and burned about 4,000 acres of the timber Cobbs & Mitchell had purchased.

They realized the timber would rot and be worthless if it was not logged. To protect their investment, they decided to salvage the timber as soon as possible.

In 1912, two years after the fire, the Cobbs & Mitchell Lumber Co. moved some of its operation to Oregon to lay the groundwork for the salvage.

That same year, company officials began construction of the Valley & Siletz Railroad to haul the burned timber out of the forest. The railroad began in

Independence, headed southwest about 20 miles to Hoskins, turned northwest and then climbed the 15 miles to the center of the burn.

Company officials decided to mill the timber at two sawmills they had purchased in Falls City and in Hoskins.

Five years after the first section of track was laid, the line reached the edge of the burn, about four miles east of what would become Valsetz.

The company set up a small logging operation at the site and called it Camp 1. The burned timber was made into lumber at the Hoskins mill and sent back to Camp 1 to build bunkhouses for the loggers and the four families who lived there.

Once the camp was established, the railroad was pushed deeper into the burn. When the line reached what the company bosses thought was the center, they formed a clearing. Already, no trace existed of the original Fanno cabin.

At the same time, 1919, the company closed its Falls City mill and started to build a mill at the clearing. The site was named Valsetz, derived from Valley & Siletz Railroad.

Within weeks, Valsetz began bustling with workers. Railroad spurs snaked out into the woods from the main line between Camp 1 and Valsetz. Heavy mill equipment was carried by rail from Falls City to Independence, switched onto the Valley & Siletz Railroad and then on to Hoskins and up the main line into Valsetz. The sawmill building began to take shape from the lumber fashioned out of the Valsetz trees. Bunkhouses and small homes, renting for \$7 a month, were built for the loggers.

The company dammed the South Fork of the Siletz River to form a large pond

adjacent to the mill site so the fallen timber could be floated from the railroad line to the mill.

In 1922, 12 years after the forest fire, the sawmill opened, and by the next year, nearly 200 persons called Valsetz home. The railroad made it possible for workers, especially loggers, to travel from other Oregon cities deep into the forest.

Because the line connected with the Southern Pacific Railroad in Independence, loggers who congregated on Portland's Skid Road nearly 70 miles away were able to hop the Southern Pacific in Portland and be in Valsetz the next day.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, the loggers dominated the scene in Valsetz, and they were a tough breed.

They earned \$5 for working a typical 12-hour shift in the cold, rain and snow. Valsetz's average of 140 inches of rain a year would make it known as the wettest spot in Oregon. The rain plagued the loggers, who coated their clothes with paraffin the night before they went in the woods. It helped some, but by midday the clothes were wet and heavy.

Almost all of the work in the woods was by hand, and it was rare to find a Valsetz logger whose shoulders and arms were not thick and strong. Each man carried a heavy, leather belt loaded down with almost 40 pounds of tools and equipment.

Using two-man saws known as "misery whips," the loggers worked in pairs to tackle the giant trees, whose trunks were 12 feet in diameter. If two men could fell four trees a day, they were doing a good job.

In this period, no one thought it was possible to run out of trees, so loggers took

only the best of each. The tops, which were sometimes 100 feet long, were left behind to rot.

Steam-powered machines, which were called "donkeys" and which operated like giant winches, pulled the trees from the woods to the railroad where they were loaded onto rail cars for the trip to the mill.

After their long hours in the woods, Valsetz loggers occupied themselves in a pool hall in town. Some loggers came in from their camps to drink and play cards, but many nights were spent resting sore muscles and drying out clothes and boots.

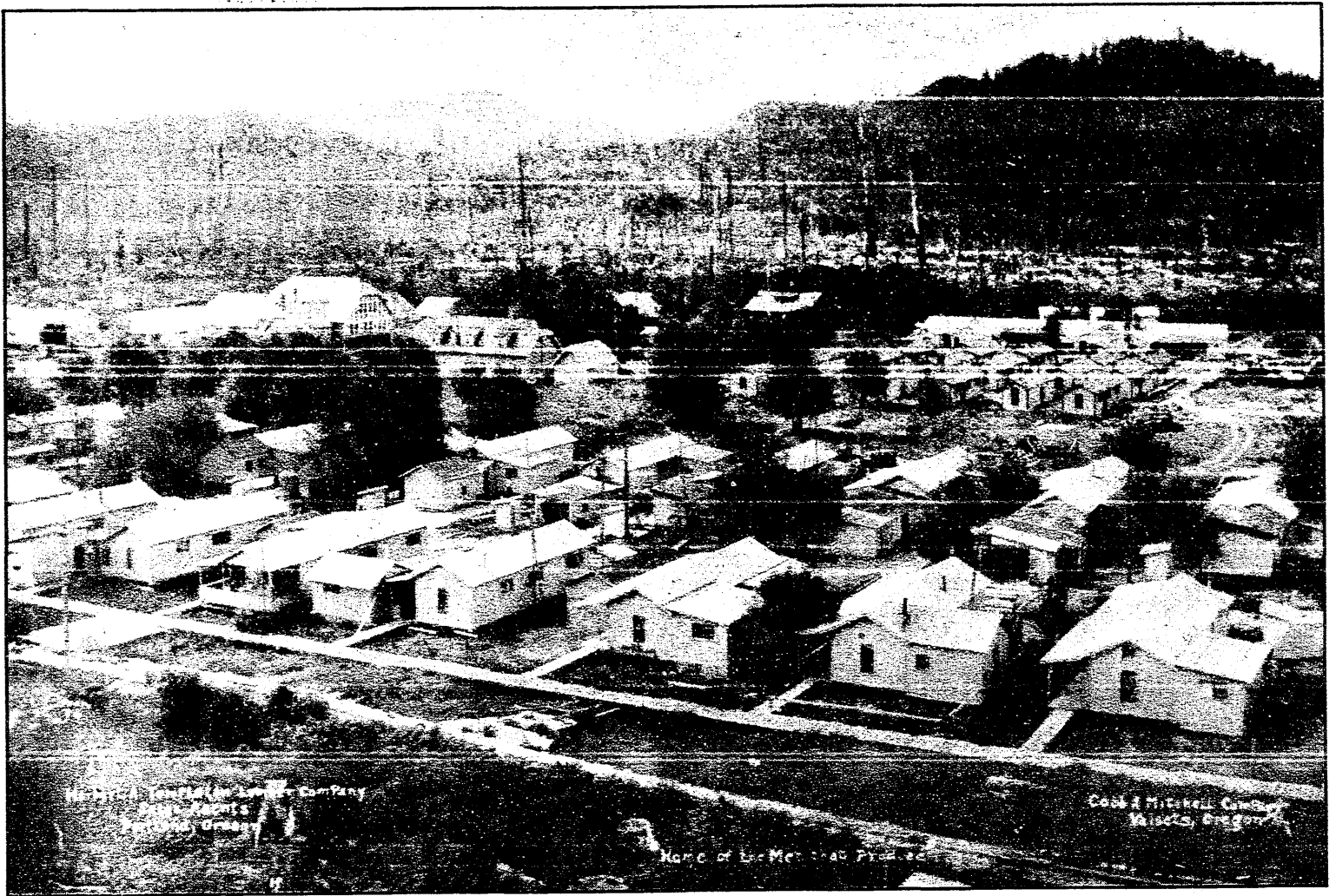
For a break from life in Valsetz, a logger could catch the train down to Independence and then to Portland where he could spend the money he had earned. Afterward, broke and perhaps nursing a hangover, he headed back to Valsetz, knowing that the \$2 train ticket would be taken out of his wages.

Loggers and the millworkers in Valsetz eyed each other warily. Men in each group lived in separate areas and stuck to themselves. When they did meet, man to man, they usually got along.

But being fiercely competitive, they tangled frequently when they faced each other in groups. Fights broke out with some regularity, and bystanders were surprised that more men were not hurt more seriously.

The loggers were fond of "calking." During a fight, a logger wearing spiked, or calked, boots would stomp on his opponent's arms or legs. Millworkers, on the other hand, fought with their hands and feet and an occasional tool if need be.

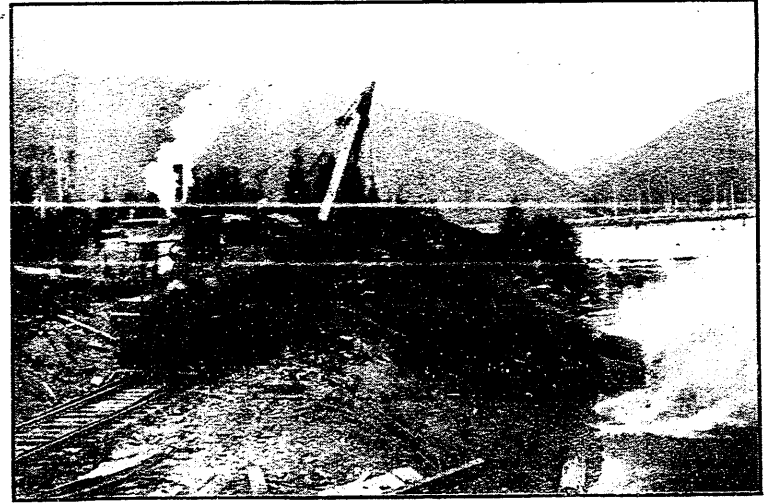
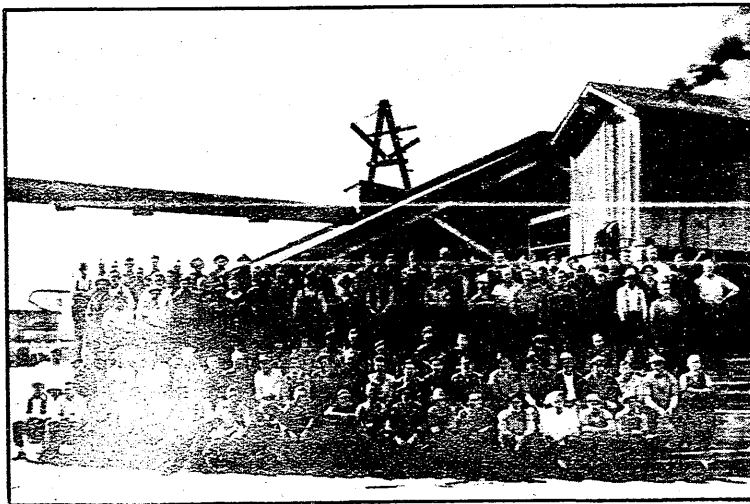
The isolated life in Valsetz created a spirit that forged even the rivals into a tight community. While the men fought



WALSETZ, OREGON, 1930s
 C. J. Lamb's Company
 1000 1/2 Main Street
 Portland, Oregon

Cobb & Mitchell, Co.
 Valsetz, Oregon

Home of the Mill - 1930s



Valsetz began to boom after the Depression, and 1930s photographs show slices of community life. At top are homes built for millworkers and their families. The mill building at left, which housed the first company store, burned, and in 1948, a building the townspeople now call the Rec Hall replaced it. Above left, workers pose in front of the mill. Above right, a Valley & Siletz Railroad steam engine dumps trees into Valsetz Lake.

among themselves, they banded together if an outsider challenged anyone from Valsetz.

In the early 1920s, life in Valsetz revolved around the simple things. Waiting for the mail to come in was the highlight of the day for many people.

At 4 p.m. each day, the train from Independence arrived with mail and supplies for the town store. Every day, 15 to 20 townspeople gathered at the post

office in the train station to wait for the train, talking over the day, and if the weather was good, playing cards on the benches.

Before the mill opened in 1922, there were only two children living in town. School for them was the home of a woman, who is remembered only as Mrs. Lamb, who helped them read and write.

But families continued to move to Valsetz, and by 1929, Cobbs & Mitchell

Lumber Co. had built a school and dormitory for the town.

Life had developed a momentum in Valsetz when the Great Depression reached into the hills and choked the town. In 1931, the mill shut down. The town store closed, and many of the townspeople moved away. By the next year, only about 30 people lived in Valsetz. The once-bustling community had been drained of its life.

For several days a month, the mill was started to process an order, and some of the men still living in town were able to earn a few dollars.

The mill meant more to the town than just jobs. It generated the electricity for the homes, and when it was down, the residents turned to oil lamps for their light.

By 1936, the economy had begun to improve, and the sawmill reopened.

Loggers and millworkers returned to the woods to pump some life into Valsetz.

The steady growth continued, and in the early years of World War II, a housing shortage developed that lasted for most of the decade.

Workers moving to Valsetz slept in trailers or doubled up in homes. To provide housing for the families, company officials moved abandoned bunkhouses into town from the old logging camps.

Many of the homes that would be demolished in Valsetz 40 years later were bunkhouses that were remodeled over the years.

After Camp 1 had been cleared, the logging operations pushed farther into the woods, and the loggers rode the train between their camps and the town.

In 1947, Cobbs & Mitchell Lumber Co. sold Valsetz to Herbert A. Templeton, a lumberman in Portland. Templeton named the Valsetz operation the Valsetz Lumber Co.

As a new breed of person moved into town, Valsetz became less of a big logging camp and more of a logging community.

Loggers, who used to be mainly single and transitory, were bringing families with them to the woods. Millworkers, like the loggers, were interested in settling in the forest town.

Some of the men — both loggers and millworkers — came from the Plains states, driven west by a drought that turned farms into dust bowls and dreams into nightmares.

Others were immigrants who saw Valsetz as a place to plant roots. A group of Italians built and operated the railroad. The Swedes and the Norwegians preferred to toil in the woods. Each group lived in its own camp.

Family camps, where men, women and children could live, began to spring up in Valsetz. In time, the town began to take on a personality.

One section of town was named "Mud Alley" because of the thick goo underfoot. Many of the Swedes lived in "Snooseville," named because the Swedes used snuff. The section of town where the bosses lived was called "Snob Hill."

The main street in town, a road constructed of wooden planks, was named Cadillac Avenue, after the Michigan hometown of Cobbs and Mitchell.

In 1948, a long building was constructed to house a store, cafe, dance and movie hall, and a bowling alley. The original store had burned eight years earlier. The new building became a focal point for the growing community, and it brought pride to the townspeople.

Social life among the 1,100 residents revolved around the school and the family. As would become the custom for the next several decades, women of the town met to pick up their mail and drink coffee and talk in the town cafe.

The two-lane bowling alley was extremely popular. Even though players had to reset the pins by hand, the lanes were always crowded. The Valsetz Bowling Association was formed, as were several leagues, including the "Grandmas and Grandpas" for the older set.

Templeton objected to men's lesser temptations, and consequently, no liquor was allowed to be sold in Valsetz. However, that didn't prevent the loggers and millworkers from going to Falls City to buy dozens of cases of beer and hard liquor.

When Templeton came to Valsetz to make one of his inspections, the clerks in the store hid the racy magazines underneath the counter until he left.

Movies were brought to Valsetz on the train and were shown in the community hall on the weekends. Admission was 15

cents for adults, a nickel for children.

Square dancing came to Valsetz in the 1950s when Gladys Hibbs and her husband, John, started inviting their neighbors into their home to teach them the dance steps using a wind-up phonograph.

Only two couples came to the first lesson, but word spread, and within months, there were enough couples to move the dances into the community hall.

Gladys and John Hibbs spent 36 years in Valsetz before moving to Dallas. Now a widow, Hibbs fondly remembers her time in Valsetz and the dances. She recalled one shy logger who came to each gathering but would not dance. He just sat in the corner and watched.

When the logger stood up for refreshments one night, Hibbs grabbed his burly arm and dragged him out onto the dance floor. He loved it.

Even though the rivalry between the millworkers and the loggers was fading,

dance, entertainment revolved around the family and the radio.

One resident, John Purdy, worked at the mill but also was an electronics buff who built his own low-powered radio station in the early 1940s. Each night, sometime after dinner, he'd turn it on and broadcast to the people of Valsetz.

Families would tune in their big, tube-powered radios and listen for Purdy to play "Remember Me," which was his theme song. For the next several hours, he would play requests and read the news of Valsetz.

Purdy would announce, for example, that someone in town had bought a car, or that the mill was going to run an extra shift. His weather reports were something along the lines of "it's raining outside." Then he'd play more records.

Purdy would play whatever he felt like, or whatever record he had handy. If someone had a request, they could tell him at the mill or store, or even drop in when

*"Your man is in the woods,
but he cannot make a living if my
man does not work in the mill
and take care of that wood he is
cutting down. And my man
cannot make a living unless your
man goes out in the woods and
cuts down the trees. We have to
help each other."*

—Gladys Hibbs

the two groups tended to live in separate areas of town. Fights became rare.

"We made a good living up here, but we had to work together," Hibbs recalled. "I would tell people that 'Your man is in the woods, but he cannot make a living if my man does not work in the mill and take care of that wood he is cutting down."

"And my man cannot make a living unless your man goes out in the woods and cuts down the trees. We have to help each other."

During the 1950s, the cooperation, even between rivals, generated a special Valsetz spirit, a fierce independence that would later become an almost "we against them" attitude.

When the townspeople left Valsetz and went to another town, they knew that they were regarded as hillbillies. But those who lived in Valsetz didn't care. They loved their community.

When World War II ended, many of the men who had left Valsetz to fight returned home to jobs in the mill. Openings were always given first to people from Valsetz.

Some of the men who would work the last shift in the mill in 1984 got their start as schoolchildren who swept the mill floor.

There were only about four telephones in Valsetz in the early 1950s. One line went to the railroad station in Hoskins, and calls had to be patched into Independence. The other line was a forest fire line.

At night, if there wasn't a movie or

he was broadcasting.

Purdy usually signed off by saying something like, "I'm getting tired now and I'm going to bed. This is the last song."

The station had such limited power that only those in Valsetz could hear it. That, plus the lack of telephones, added to the people's sense of oneness and isolation from the outside world.

One touch from the outside world was groceries. Many of the women felt the town store was too expensive. They preferred to have groceries delivered from Criders, a grocery store in Dallas.

Twice a week, Bob LeFors, who worked at Criders, drove his truck up the narrow road between Falls City and Valsetz to deliver groceries and take orders. The youngsters, who knew they could expect to get suckers from LeFors, heard his truck rumbling down the street, and they chased after him as he went from home to home.

The children of Valsetz found entertainment where they could, whether it be following LeFors or sitting on the lawn and talking.

One 9-year-old girl started publishing a monthly newspaper and wound up a national celebrity. The Valsetz Star, which told about the doings in town in a witty way, was read by Eleanor Roosevelt at one of her press conferences.

"I was raised a Republican, and the paper was a Republican paper," recalled Dorothy Anne Hobson. "Someone showed the paper to Mrs. Roosevelt, and she

laughed about it."

The publicity brought subscriptions from around the country, and Hobson was featured in stories in Eastern newspapers. The Valsetz Star, which was published from 1937 to 1941, folded when Hobson moved to Salem.

For most children, however, life was not so glamorous. Fun revolved around school and the woods, where kids hunted, fished and played.

No matter his ability or size, any boy interested in sports was allowed on the team. There were also Boy Scout and Cub Scout groups, and the parents, especially the mothers, took an active role in the schools.

As the 1950s progressed, life began to change in Valsetz. The town would never be the same.

In 1952, Keith Purdy, John's son, said he could bring the mail in cheaper than it cost to haul it on the train. He bid, and won the job. The mail deliveries shifted from the evenings to the mornings. Since many of the workers were in the mill when the mail arrived, they no longer gathered for small talk in the train station.

The new electronic marvel, television, was sweeping the country, but everyone thought remote Valsetz was unable to receive television broadcasts.

But in 1953, Mel Rose, an electrician in town, went to Dallas and bought a television set. He set it up in his house, and the gray screen flickered to life with pictures on the KOIN broadcast from Portland, 67 miles to the northeast.

Within the next two weeks, many of the people in town bought television sets for themselves.

Attendance at the dances fell off, because people stayed home to watch television. The movies, which people had eagerly anticipated, were largely forsaken. They were not as exciting anymore. Not compared to television.

Valsetz, in small ways, began to be torn apart.

By 1956, telephone lines were being strung to the homes. People had phones installed in their homes, and they found they were not so isolated.

In 1955, Templeton's Valsetz Lumber Co. began to make plans to get rid of the sawmill and build a plywood mill instead. By 1957, the change was complete. Two years later, Templeton sold his lumber company to Boise Cascade Corp. of Boise, Idaho.

Life began to change, though not immediately.

In time, however, some of the people began to feel that the new owner did not care about the people the way Templeton and Cobbs and Mitchell used to care.

By the mid-1960s, many of the old sawmill workers and the old loggers retired and moved away, taking a little chunk of history with them when they left.

A dirt and gravel road from Valsetz to Falls City, which had always been a narrow and often impassable track, was widened and improved in 1968. Many townspeople, instead of staying in town, drove to cities in the Willamette Valley for evenings or weekends.

At about the same time, cement sidewalks were built in Valsetz, and five years later, Cadillac Avenue and Main Street were paved.

Some of the millworkers decided they really didn't want to live in Valsetz, and they chose to commute each day from Dallas, Falls City or Salem.

The company decided that mill supervisors, who had governed the town as well, no longer had to live in Valsetz, and many moved out. Their control of the town passed to the Boise Cascade office in Monmouth.



Ken Jeske stands next to one of the old-growth Douglas fir trees in Valley of the Giants near Valsetz. Clear cut, at right, marks valley southwest of town. Below, a yarder loads a tree onto an off-highway logging truck.



The Product

The entire 65-year existence of Valsetz has depended on the products made from the Douglas fir trees that cover the rugged mountains around the town.

At first, the trees were fashioned into lumber to build the homes and buildings of Valsetz and other towns. Later, the trees were made into plywood, and still later, the Valsetz mill produced only the raw material, the veneer, that would be fashioned into plywood in other mills in other towns.

About 25 to 30 men work a typical shift in the Valsetz mill, many of them working on the process that turns the log into veneer. The rest of the men work with the handling of the veneer after it is peeled from the logs.

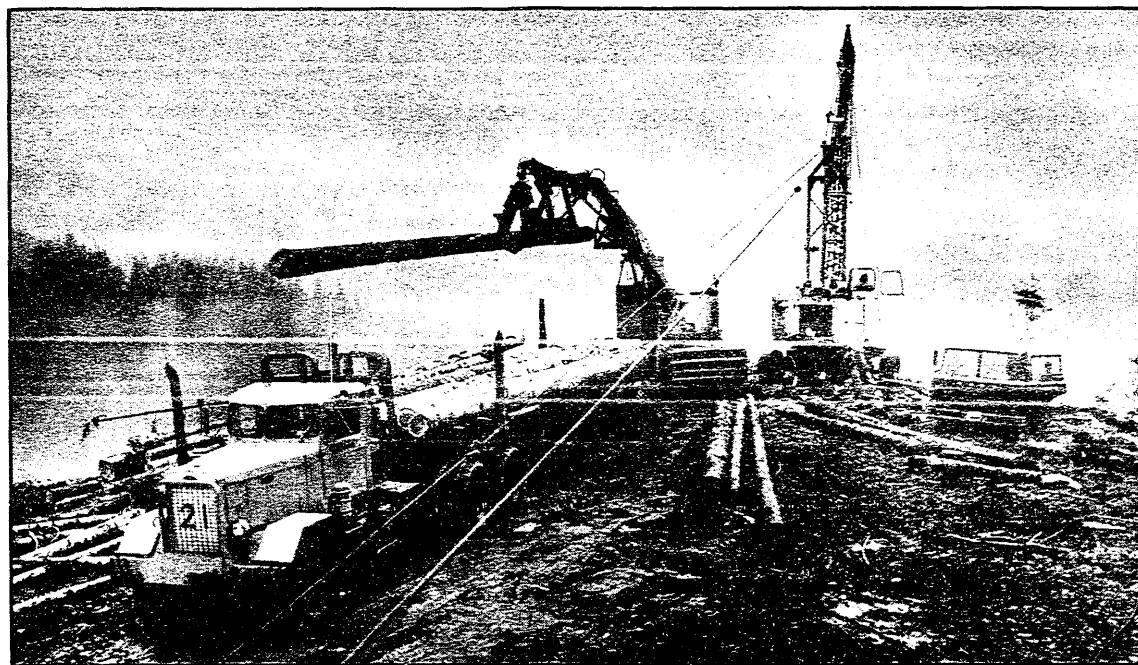
It can take less than five minutes for a 30-year-old tree to be converted to veneer.

In the Valsetz basin, foresters with Boise Cascade Corp. tend to the company's trees with computers and fertilizers in a way that outruns nature.

"Although Mother Nature does a very nice job, given the time," said Ralph G. Peinecke, Boise Cascade's vice president of timber land resources, "we use computers that will show us how trees will grow in the future. We can program in various conditions like thinning, fertilization and genetic breeding, and the computer simulates growth patterns."

About 400 seedlings are planted per acre. After three years, about 15 percent of the trees have died, and the areas are replanted, Peinecke said.

If a tree remains healthy, it can survive 400 to 500 years. But Boise Cascade and most timber companies begin harvests after trees are 30 years old, using a



method called clear cutting in which loggers cut down every tree in an area.

The hills look naked and dead, but Peinecke said any other method of logging would be uneconomical and impractical.

The faller, the man who cuts the trees, embodies the brute strength of an athlete and the canny mind of a mathematician.

As he wields a heavy chain saw, the faller must cut hundreds of trees at the precise angle so they will fall in patterns that make it easy to haul them out of the forest.

When the faller is finished, the logging

operation moves in with a "yarder," a tower with cables stretched out over the clear-cut slopes.

Other cable lines called "chokers" hang from the rigging, and men called "choker setters" attach the chokers to the fallen trees. The yarder pulls the logs to the landing where they are unhooked and loaded onto off-highway trucks that carry the logs to the mill.

The trees are "peeled" to make veneer, sheets of thin wood that are glued together to make plywood. Trees are cut to either 8- or 4-foot lengths to fit on two

lathes in the mill.

When the trees arrive at the mill, the bark is removed and the resultant "block" is stored in a steam room for 24 hours. The steam makes the wood pliable so that it will not split or break when it is peeled.

Nothing from a tree is wasted in the mill. Any scrap wood is ground into chips that will be used to make paper. The bark is burned in a furnace that heats a veneer dryer and creates the steam for the steam room.

After a cylindrical block has soaked in the steam, it is placed on the lathe that



Les Kemmling, above, sprays legend on last peeled log while Tim Hagen, lathe operator, watches. Bob McGlaughlin, below left, pulls sheets of veneer out of the dryer and stacks them while Jim Martin works behind.



turns it against a blade. The blade shears off a sheet of wood, the veneer, about a tenth of an inch thick. The veneer, which comes off the log like paper off a roll, goes onto conveyor belts.

Any defects are removed from the 15-foot sheets, and they are cut into workable widths. From the Valsetz mill, the veneer sheets are shipped to other wood products companies where they are made into finished plywood. The plywood is a sandwich of veneer sheets that are glued together with the wood grain on each sheet perpendicular to the grain of adjacent sheets.

The Life

Valsetz mornings are quiet and uneventful. Like cold syrup oozing from a pitcher, they proceed at their own slow and predictable pace. Mornings here, like the afternoons and evenings that follow, have a peaceful tempo.

People like it that way because they know what to expect and when to expect it, finding comfort and reassurance in the ordinary.

Everyone in town has a role to play, and, good or bad, they depend on each other to act out those roles. In a world where there's little to count on, the people of Valsetz count on each other.

Weekdays begin at roughly 5:50 a.m., when the headlights on Carol Wyscaver's car bounce westward down Cadillac Avenue.

Carol and her family live across from the school, and she is on her way to open the doors to the "Rec Hall," a small cafe at the end of Main Street in the heart of town.

Townpeople call the cafe the "Rec

Hall" because it is in the middle of a 60-foot long wooden building that houses the town store, a meeting hall and a two-lane bowling alley. But no one holds town meetings anymore, and no one bowls anymore, so the rooms stand empty.

At the Rec Hall, Carol Wyscaver and Alma Fitzgerald serve such fare as "home-fried" chicken, hamburgers and bacon and eggs, but the cafe is much more than a place to eat.

In a town with no newspaper, the Rec Hall, with its faded white walls and scent of stale cigarette smoke, serves as Valsetz's front page, sports section and gossip column. In the Rec Hall, a good listener can learn what's happening at the mill, hear that senior Dale Howe was the high scorer in last night's basketball game, and listen to an explanation of why junior Jesse Wamboldt failed his driver's test.

There is a subtle, but understood, protocol in the Rec Hall. The L-shaped room has two sections. One is for non-smokers, but only visitors and Boise Cascade Co. officials sit there.

The main section is for the townspeople. There's a four-chair counter near the cash register, and seven tables fill the middle of the room. Each table has four chairs, but more are added as friends and family members arrive.

When the Rec Hall opens at 6 a.m., it is as if someone has gently shaken Valsetz awake. During the day, the personalities of Valsetz populate the stage that the Rec Hall is. When the doors close at 8 p.m., the town's day is done.

Carol Wyscaver works the early shift at the Rec Hall. She serves as cook, waitress and busboy until Alma Fitzgerald comes on duty at about 8:30 a.m.

Carol is a sturdy, athletic-looking woman who stands about 5 feet 6. She has a friendly but distinctly no-nonsense air about her. Her brown eyes, which are

framed by light-brown hair, change from soft to hard and back again with her changes in mood.

She laughs quickly and is not easily embarrassed, traits inherited by her 16-year-old daughter, Veronica. Like most of the girls and women in Valsetz, Carol is as much at ease with men as she is with women.

Carol is 36 but looks to be in her late 20s. She is the mother of six children. She moved to Valsetz with her parents in 1960 and was married nine years later to Dick Wycaver, whom she met in high school in Valsetz.

They moved to Georgia but returned to Valsetz in 1973 when Dick was hired to run a lathe in the mill.

With the impending mill closure, Carol's personality has changed. She laughs less frequently and cries more often. She is worried about Dick and their children.

"Valsetz is my home," she said one morning as she unlocked the door for her first customer. "There's a lot of pressure; it's really scary. For so long there was security here. You knew day to day what each day would bring. That's all wiped out. Everything's changed."

The glass-paned wooden door creaked open, and 58-year-old Jim Smith shuffled inside.

"Mornin'," he mumbled to Carol, who knows Smith will usually be her first customer.

Smith illustrates the easygoing side of Valsetz that tolerates the off-beat character. Most of the workers earn the same wage — about \$11 an hour — and the Boise Cascade-owned homes rent for an average of \$175 a month.

A homogenized, predominantly white community, Valsetz judges its men and women solely on how well they do their jobs. Hard and honest work is respected; eccentric behavior is tolerated.

The only minority is represented by a few Mexican-Americans who work in the mill and by Tony Vasquez, a 16-year-old junior in high school. Tony had lived with his grandmother, but a year ago she became ill and had to leave Valsetz. Tony moved in with the Perrine family, whose son, Terry, is the same age as Tony. Louis Perrine, 39, is the townsite foreman.

A subtle, underlying hint of racism flourishes in Valsetz, although some people would be offended if they were called racists because they judge each person on an individual basis. That allows them to speak disparagingly about blacks, for example, and at the same time make friends with a black man.

Because of the homogeneity, it is easy to spot the subtle differences: The student who aspires to attend college, the lonely older man and the shy, talented child stand out like gold nuggets in a muddy stream.

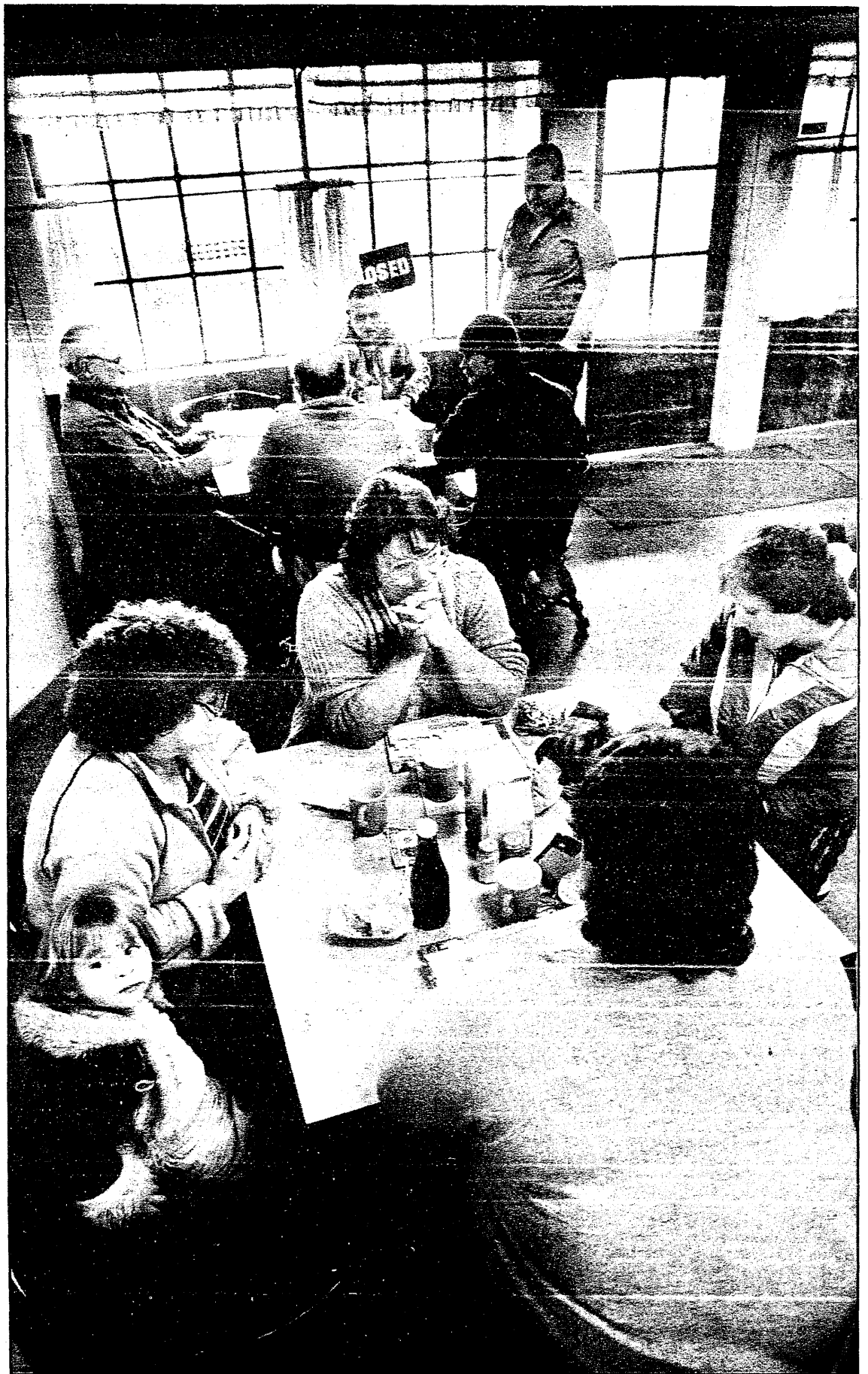
Smith is something of an enigma to Valsetz. For the past four years, he has lived during the week in his four-wheel-drive car parked about 50 feet west of the Rec Hall. On weekends, he drives to his Salem home and wife.

Most people call Smith "Red" for a shock of hair that long ago turned gray. He gets on their nerves because he always seems to be hanging around.

In a close town like Valsetz, where people live, work and play together, it's important that everyone, friends as well as enemies, get away from each other now and then.

But during the week, Red has no place to go. If Red's not working, chances are that he's sitting near the steaming coffee pots in the Rec Hall, sipping coffee, slightly eavesdropping and thumbing through one of his paperback Western novels.

Some patrons feel that they can't



Men (background) sit in one section of the Rec Hall while women sit in another. Women (clockwise from top) are Elaine Wheeler, Tony Weaver, Eileen Hagen, Donna Howe, granddaughter of Donna Howe (left). At the men's table (clockwise from left) are Chet Fisher, Vernon Gore, Archie Gore, and Bob Presnell. Standing is Clay Freeman.



Carol Wyscaver closes the Rec Hall on May 31. It would never open again, and the building would be torn down.

“They were always there if we needed a shoulder to cry on. There’s a feeling in Valsetz like we’re a big family.”

—Eileen Hagen

speaking freely with Red sitting 5 feet away.

When the Rec Hall closes at 8 p.m., Red’s usually the last to leave. Book in hand, he shuffles alone out the door and toward his four-wheel drive and extra-long sleeping bag.

Red came over The Hill 20 years ago. He’s held most of the jobs in the mill and now works as a dryer-tender, tending the furnace that dries the sheets of veneer.

Standing 6-foot-2 but looking taller with his plastic hardhat, Red started work at 5 years old picking cotton in Arkansas and has not stopped working since then.

His eyes are hidden behind thick, tinted glasses, and when he speaks, he often looks at the ground or around the room. He has a quiet voice that doesn’t quite fit such a big man, and it is often difficult to understand what he is saying.

As with many of the working men in Valsetz, Red’s hands are his most striking feature. His thick palms and fingertips are calloused, nicked and scarred. His hands are accustomed to grasping a heavy hammer or swinging an ax, but they are surprisingly limber, especially when he delicately turns the pages in his book.

Although the men of Valsetz appear hardened by the rough jobs in the mill or in the woods, they are fiercely patriotic and unabashedly sentimental about their families, their friends and their town.

No man in Valsetz looks tougher than 51-year-old Bill Fitzgerald. His solid chest is the size of a small beer keg and his shoulders as big as hams. He was a boxer in his youth, and his friends revel in telling and retelling stories of the times some poor saps failed to listen when Fitzgerald said his patience was wearing thin.

Fitzgerald has lived and worked in Valsetz for 34 years, most recently

grinding the blade used on the lathe. On his 25th anniversary, Boise Cascade officials wanted to honor him by giving him a fancy watch.

He told them to make it a woman’s watch. He wanted to give it to his 49-year-old wife, Alma. Together they had raised four children. Without her, he said, his life would never have been complete.

The Fitzgeralds live in one of the first homes on Cadillac Avenue, just west from the Van Eps. Their light green home is clean, and it is obvious they take pride in what they have accumulated and accomplished over the years.

With the mill closing, Fitzgerald jokes, with a trace of sadness in his voice, that he is too young to retire and too old to be rehired. All he knows, he says as he reaches across the table and pats Alma’s arm, is that he will take care of his “Baby.”

Until Alma comes to work, Carol runs the Rec Hall by herself. Her work keeps her busy and stops her from dwelling on what is happening to her town.

She is angry that she will have to uproot her six children, all of whom will have to finish their school years elsewhere in a strange community. Veronica, or “Ronnie,” is a junior; Michelle is a sophomore; John, a freshman; Brad, an eighth-grader; Jody, a seventh-grader; and Rod is in the fourth grade.

But she tries to keep her fears to herself. Her children have enough to worry about.

From 6 a.m. until about 7 a.m., her only customers are a millworker or two and the off-highway truck drivers.

For the most part, truckers associate

with truckers, loggers with loggers and millworkers with millworkers. Millworkers jokingly refer to loggers and men who work in the woods as “bush rats.” The men of the woods return the compliment by calling millworkers “sliver pickers.”

Two of Valsetz’s men cut across all lines.

Bob Endecott and Lige Calkins usually get to the Rec Hall within minutes after Red. They banter back and forth and joke with Carol, occasionally nodding to Red, to make sure he’s listening. He nods back.

Bob has lived in town for six years and drives a log truck on the dirt logging roads around Valsetz. Lige has lived in Valsetz for 2½ years and does a variety of jobs using heavy machinery in the mill’s log yard.

The two men are inseparable and have a youthful, vibrant friendship. The names “Bob and Lige” roll off the townspeople’s tongues as easily as “Laurel and Hardy” or “Abbott and Costello.” They tease each other like standup comics. In a standard format, Lige threatens to unplug Bob’s electric blanket, and Bob threatens to shoot Lige with his .44-caliber Magnum revolver.

Bob lost his driver’s license on a drunken-driving conviction, but Valsetz offered him a haven. Because he drives his log truck on Boise Cascade’s private roads, he does not need a license.

He is regarded as the best truck driver in Valsetz and is meticulous about safety. Although he plays the role of jester outside his work, he is all business behind his truck’s wheel.

During his off hours when Bob enjoys a beer, or two or 10, he does not have to worry about the police or crowded streets

in Valsetz. About the farthest he ever drives is from his home to the Rec Hall, 75 yards to the east, or to Lige’s place about 300 yards to the west.

Valsetz’s isolation from more complex societies allows Bob to live the life of a free spirit. As long as he shows up for work, and he always does, no one cares what he does on his own time.

Carol can tell Bob’s mood by looking at the orange baseball cap he wears. If the bill is pointing straight up, he’s happy. Straight ahead means he is just waking up. The cap is rarely off Bob’s bald head, and when it is, Bob seems to age 10 years.

When he wants to make a point, or jump into the middle of a conversation, Bob pushes the bill of his cap back like an experienced politician adjusting his tie before turning to the cameras.

Bob lives in a dark green, three-bedroom home near the end of “Tin Can Alley,” about 100 yards from the Rec Hall. The kitchen is used primarily as a place to wait for the TV dinners to heat up. The refrigerator is nearly empty except for a case of beer, a box of baking soda and a package of aging hamburger.

The center of Bob’s home is his living room. The room also represents the center of Bob’s life. Paintings and photographs of logging operations and photographs of his family are pinned on the four faded walls.

The family photographs are not lavishly framed. Some are just pinned to the wall with thumbtacks and hang at cockeyed angles.

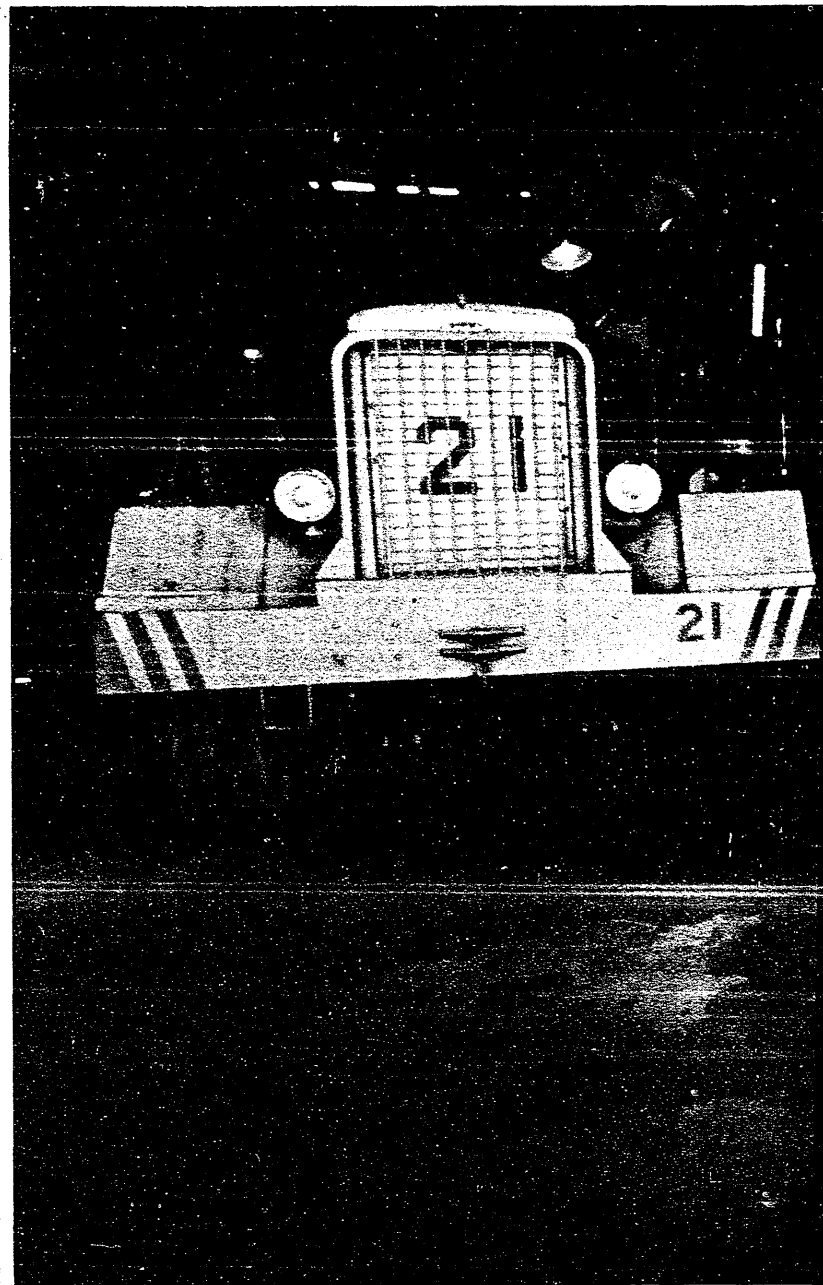
One photograph shows a young Bob Endecott, surrounded by his two daughters and a son. His twinkling eyes and love for his family are apparent even in the faded black-and-white picture. A Father’s Day card is pinned in the center

“I’ve got friends of mine that say why the hell do you live in a place like that for. . . . But to me, it’s different. It’s home. Actually it bothers me to go to town.”

— Bob Endecott



Bob Endecott is the town jester. When he is happy, above, the brim of his cap is pushed skyward. At right, Bob leaves shop after hauling his last load of logs to the mill. His dog, Rusty, is in background.



of the collage.

His bedroom is as spare as his kitchen. There are three books on logging and more memories. His grandson’s first shirt is pinned to a wall near his bed and a bib near his dresser.

Family is important to Bob, but it has been like trying to grab a handful of fog. As he tells it, he’s always had “woman trouble,” dating back to his first wife when they lived in Washington.

“Wife took off with the kids,” he said. “Back to Oregon she went, and I couldn’t live without the kids, so I took out after her.”

Bob and marriage don’t mix, although he attracts women with a potent mix of macho man and impish child.

“No, I don’t give a damn about no women,” he said. “Been married three times, and I just never made them work. Now, I’m strictly a one-guy man and I’ve been by myself too long.”

Other than his family, Bob is sentimental about his truck and his town.

He drives No. 23, a faded yellow beast that he treats like a second home. A “Welcome” mat sits on the floor, and four

faded air fresheners hang from one of the 13 knobs and switches that line the dashboard.

With the mill closing, Bob says he will miss Valsetz.

“I’ve got friends of mine that say why the hell do you live in a place like that for,” he said. “To them, it’s just a little hell-hole, or a little-name place or something. But to me, it’s different. It’s home. Actually it bothers me to go to town.”

“I don’t like the people,” he says about larger cities. “You know, a little place like this, everybody knows everybody. You break down along the side of the road, they’ll up and help you. Most of them mavericks in the city would just drive by. The city’s OK for the weekend, but then I want to come back.”

By 8 a.m., Bob has headed off to haul logs from the forest to the mill, and the complexion of the Rec Hall changes. The men are at work, and the women take over.

When Alma comes on duty, Carol takes a break and pours herself a cup of

coffee and sits for a minute.

“We all think that Boise is stupid for what they are doing here,” she said.

Alma only shakes her head when she thinks of Boise Cascade. She gets angry and frustrated, and tears come to her eyes with the knowledge that her husband will lose his job, and she will lose a home and a way of life.

The Rec Hall door opens and breaks the tension. Carol waves to 67-year-old Chet Fisher.

“Much mail today?” she asks, as Fisher pours himself a cup of coffee and sits at a window table in the corner.

“Not much,” Fisher replies.

Since 1973, the retired Monmouth farmer has been paid by the U.S. Postal Service to drive the mail from Dallas to Valsetz. After dropping off the mail sacks with Valsetz Postmaster Amy Norton, Fisher heads to the Rec Hall where he drinks coffee for a couple of hours. Then he picks up the outgoing mail and heads over The Hill.

Many of the women in town come to the post office just after 8:30 a.m. to get their mail. Then they meet in the Rec Hall

to talk and drink coffee while looking over the bills, letters and magazines.

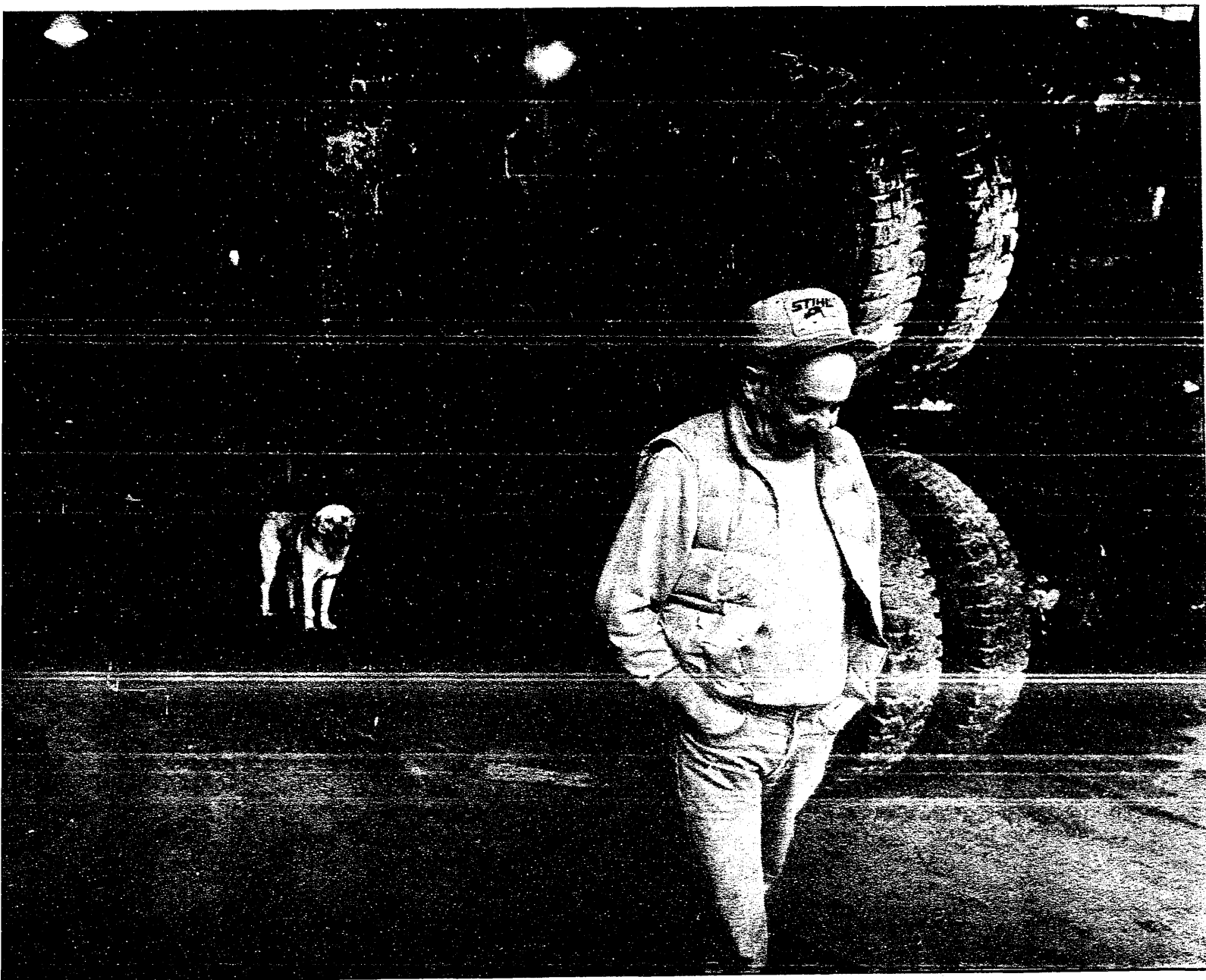
At that time of the day, only a few men are in the Rec Hall, mainly swing-shift workers and retirees. They join Fisher to talk about sports, politics and the weather. The women gather at another table and discuss the school and their families.

One of the first women to arrive and one of the long-standing members of the morning group is 38-year-old Eileen Hagen. Eileen and her 42-year-old husband, Tim, have two children, Bert, 17, and Matt, 10.

The Hagens’ middle-American values and way of life are found in other Valsetz families like the Howes, the Wheelers, the Weavers and the Pasieys.

The Hagens live at the east end of town, on the dirt and gravel Valsetz Road, about 25 feet before Cadillac Avenue begins.

The Hagens have lived in Valsetz for 15 years, but Eileen said it wasn’t until Bert was struck by cancer two years ago that she realized just what Valsetz was all about.



"Bert's cancer was a shock, and we were devastated," she said. "We didn't know where to turn. The town turned to us. They didn't pry, but they were always there if we needed a shoulder to cry on. There's a feeling in Valseltz like we're a big family."

For Eileen, meeting in the Rec Hall each day is like "getting up and telling everyone good morning."

"I know it sounds strange, but that's the only way to describe it," she said with a laugh. "If something happened in the family the night before that's really upsetting you, the Rec Hall is where you let your friends know about it."

"I'm a laugher and people know that. If I'm not laughing, something's wrong," she said. "Now, Tony Weaver, she's a chatterer. I usually drop Tony off on the way home. If she's exceptionally quiet one morning, I'll say, 'Something's bothering you, right?' She'll say, 'Yes.' Maybe it's not something she's ready for everybody in town to know about. So maybe I'll go in for an extra cup of coffee and she'll unload. Next time it could be me."

Eileen is overweight, yet she feels

comfortable enough to wear short pants to the Rec Hall. There is no pressure for the women to outdress each other, and it appears to be more acceptable to be underdressed than overdressed.

"I'm very definitely the biggest of the girls, but it doesn't matter if you're big or thin. Your personality is what counts," she said. "People are open with their feelings up here, and they know you very well."

Even so, Eileen said it was possible to maintain family privacy. Some days, she spends most of her time in her garden and sees no one in town but her family.

"You can't pry here," she said. "People are supportive, but they don't stifle you. I think people look at us up here and think 'My God, they're always seeing each other. They must get sick of each other.'"

"We have our own lives and different interests, and we don't see each other all the time," she said. "The only time I can remember any real problems was when the school issue came up a few years 'back.'"

In 1975, a major argument arose over building a new school, and the controversy illustrates how the close community in

Valseltz was able to separate its disputes from its day-to-day life.

Valseltz School Superintendent Robert Hanson and some members of the school board had proposed tearing down the school building and replacing it with a modern building. The town split severely on the issue.

Hanson says he never would have favored the project if he had been given any inkling that Boise Cascade was even considering closing Valseltz.

"We were not opposed to the school, but we were opposed to the way it was being decided," Tim Hagen said. "Some people in town tried recalling some of the board members, and the town became real divided."

"Some of us had signs either for or against the recall, and some kids whose parents supported one side of the issue would tear down the opposition's signs," he said. "It was tense for a while."

The matter was finally settled when the recall effort failed. The youngsters who ripped down the signs were forced by their parents to apologize. The new school was built. Everyone was pleased with the

building. And the town learned a lesson in close-quarter disputing.

"From then on, all opinions were discussed and left at school board meetings," Eileen said. "The school is something everyone has an opinion on. The Rec Hall is a place where you behave yourself. If someone came in whose stand you opposed, you didn't scream at them, you just ignored them. We all had to remember we were adults."

The Hagens said they occasionally felt different from some Valseltz parents because they expected both of their sons to attend college. Schoolwork is important, and their sons are not allowed to watch television or hunt until all the homework is done.

As the mill closes, the Hagens worry about a good school for Bert and whether his college money will be jeopardized by a diminished family income.

The growl of a motor sounds loudly outside the Rec Hall, and Eileen and the other women glance out the windows. Norma Carter is pulling into the parking lot on her daughter's red,

three-wheeled, all-terrain motorcycle.

Norma is one of the more independent and outspoken women in town. She accomplishes the requisite domestic tasks, such as making wonderful blackberry pies and doughnuts and keeping a spotless home, and equally enjoys the outdoors, knows how to hunt and loves to ride the motorcycle.

Norma, 44; her husband, Robert, 44; and their daughter, Kim, 17; live in the last house on Cadillac Avenue, about 50 feet west of Main Street. The Carters have lived in Valsetz for 15 years, with all but one year spent living in Western, the enclave 1½ miles northwest of the town that was the first area of homes destroyed.

Robert works on the swing shift as a barker in the mill. Few people in town see much of him because when he isn't working, he's hunting. The Carter home is filled with pelts from animals he has bagged in and around Valsetz.

When people in town speak of the Carters, they usually mean Norma and Kim, who is as frank as her mother.

The family moved to Valsetz from the Los Angeles area before 1970, and Norma said she at first thought she would never get used to the forest community.

"I felt like an outsider at first," she said. "You don't mix socially at first. It takes awhile to get a group. But you eventually break in and meet the people. Valsetz has been a good place because of the people."

A few years after they settled in town, a fire gutted their home and destroyed most of their belongings. Although the Carters knew only a few people in Valsetz, the townspeople donated clothes and food and held a dance to raise money for them.

The Carters raised three daughters and a son in Valsetz. Kim is the last to leave home.

A self-described tomboy, she is the only girl in the senior class of eight students. As such, she was the school's 1984 homecoming queen. She enjoys the company of the boys and jokes and teases with them.

"In Valsetz you can be friends with a guy without him being your boyfriend," she said. "There are more girls than guys up here. Most of the girls are friends with the guys because we've grown up around them, and we feel comfortable around them. It's like being a brother or sister."

"I don't have to watch what I say or have to be worried about whether my hair is combed," she said. "Everyone accepts who I am, cause I'm not about to change for nobody."

While growing up, Kim often thought Valsetz was boring. There are no record stores, movie theaters or restaurant hangouts. The young people have to turn to nature for entertainment, swimming in the South Fork of the Siletz River or hunting and camping in the forest.

But they are not totally isolated from the outside world. They listen to heavy-metal rock 'n' roll radio stations in Portland and Eugene, and their school lockers are plastered with stickers bearing the names of music groups.

And even though parents speak with pride when they say that their children, unlike city youngsters, are not exposed to drugs, a marijuana crop was found growing about 10 miles west of town, and some of the teen-agers admit to having tried the drug.

"The only disadvantage of living up here, I think, is we don't know any other life," Kim said. "When they move to the city, most of them don't know how to cope."

"Up here, you can do and say a lot of things to people. You grow up different here.

"I'm really nervous when I go to Salem," Kim said. "When I walk around the mall, I see different people. I'm used to seeing the same people day after day. You're not a stranger here. Out of town, you're a nobody, and they don't know your name until you do something stupid. When you live up here all your life and then have to go somewhere else and meet new friends, they're not going to know you like these people."

Driving over The Hill is a special occasion. The highlight of the 1983 junior-senior prom, for example, was when groups of students drove to Dallas for pizza.

"I think people out of town look at us differently," Kim said. "We had this one graduate who went over The Hill and got a job. She met a guy and brought him back up here.

no feelings for you, and they're like a bunch of vultures."

By lunchtime, when townspeople and youngsters drop in the Rec Hall, Carol Wycaver and Alma Fitzgerald divide up the jobs, with Carol cooking and Alma waiting on tables.

Heather Johnson is on her way home for lunch when she stops to buy a soft drink. Heather is an eighth-grader who lives with her family in a white home south of the Rec Hall.

The home is set back among the trees, with a large lawn and gravel driveway. The gently sloping roof and spindle railing on the front porch give the Johnson home an air of stability, comfort and grace.

The home had been reserved for the mill superintendent, but since he lives in Albany, it was assigned to Wayne

player, but he has to speak quietly. Not only are the poor player's parents sitting nearby, but the disgruntled fan will see them at work, in the store and in the Rec Hall.

Johnson coached the school baseball team in 1981, and he saw how the youngsters maintained their spirit.

"Being in a small town like this, everybody pulls together quite a bit," he said. "The kids, all of them, are involved." "When I was coaching the team, we lost our first game 42 to 2," Johnson said. "But we came back as a team, and we only lost one more game after that."

Although Tony is an excellent athlete, his parents try to keep sports in perspective. Wayne and his 35-year-old wife, DyAnne, have always planned on Tony attending college, which sets them apart from much of the town.

Tony received a four-year Reserve Officers Training Corps college scholarship from the U.S. Air Force and will attend Oregon State University.

While the Johnsons want their children to be active, they choose to remain isolated.

"For us it was different because of his position," DyAnne said of Wayne's job. "In a small town like this, you don't have the normal cross-section of society as such. You have the management people and you have the workers."

DyAnne said after they moved to town she was invited to join the women who gather in the Rec Hall. But because of her husband's job, she felt she had to decline.

"The way the mill used to run years ago was if you were buddy pals with the superintendent or the assistant or the foreman, you got special favors," Wayne said. "The workers here don't operate that way now, but we thought it would be better not to socialize with the workers. We've been pretty much a family unit to begin with, so it didn't make any difference to us."

After lunch, at 1 p.m., the Rec Hall closes until early evening when it reopens for three hours at 5 p.m. Carol and Alma go off duty, and Jody Hutchison takes over.

There's a different gathering at night. The Jeskes may drop by, as may Norma and Kim Carter. Jim Smith is there, of course. A few people want to eat dinner, but most just want to drink coffee and talk. The Rec Hall becomes a nightcap of sorts for the people.

The Wamboldts enjoy coming to the Rec Hall during the evening, rattling down Main Street in their beat-up pickup truck.

As always, Roberta, 39, is driving. Her husband, Marvin, also 39, refuses to get behind the wheel any more. A couple of minor accidents have convinced him that he and motorized vehicles are not meant to tangle.

Roberta loves to drive and maneuvers the truck like a city cab driver. While twisting the wheel to avoid the potholes, she talks continually, expressing firm opinions on the school, the town, the company and her neighbors.

Like her husband, Roberta doesn't give a hoot what people think.

The Wamboldts, who have lived in Valsetz for 15 years, have no pretense about themselves. Marvin wears an old, leather cowboy-style hat and faded jeans with either boots or old, black dress shoes. He prides himself on being a non-conformist and wistfully says he wishes he was a pioneer living 100 years earlier. He is an avid black powder shooter and collects the old-style rifles and handguns that shoot lead balls.

Roberta, who often is called "Bert," favors a U.S. Army fatigue jacket and polyester pants. She loves to show visitors



Kim Carter steers all-terrain motorcycle through Valsetz with (from left) Rene Gwynn, Sherri Richards and Michelle Wycaver.

"He called us hicks. We're not hillbillies. That makes us seem like we are dumb. But we're different from people over The Hill. There's no Valley Girl talk up here.

"We all look about the same and dress the same," she said. "At other schools there are cliques, but not here."

For girls, the "uniform" is usually jeans, tennis shoes and a casual shirt. On the rare occasion that a girl does wear a dress to school, she can expect to be asked if she's "going to a funeral."

Norma and Kim say they were irritated by the intrusion of reporters who came to do stories on Valsetz. The reporters stayed for a day, butting into conversations in the Rec Hall, and then left.

A reporter and photographer from the Salem Statesman-Journal came to Valsetz one morning to do a story. They arrived in a bright red Porsche that cost more than most families in town earned in a year.

The news team stopped Norma as she was walking to the Rec Hall.

"They were telling me to stand this way and that way and posing me by a burned-out home, and that made it seem like it was my home. It wasn't," she said.

"When the reporters started coming up here after the closure was announced, I thought at first, 'We're making the news.' But they turned the place into a zoo.

"They didn't want to know who we were. They just wanted a story," she said. "They would come in here for a day and we'd feel like monkeys in a zoo. They have

Johnson, 36, who was an assistant superintendent until he was laid off in 1983.

The Johnsons, who moved to Valsetz in 1980 from Klamath Falls, come closest to being the town's upper-class. They are Republicans in a Democratic community, and until he lost his job when the plywood side of the mill closed, Johnson had been a boss in a town of workers, and as such, he keeps a distance between himself and the townspeople.

His 17-year-old son, Tony, said he believed Valsetz was "different," but he and his 13-year-old sister, Heather, quickly fit in at school and in the community. Both were good students and easily made friends.

Tony was the quarterback on the school's Class B football team that finished second in state tournament play.

Athletics are extremely important in Valsetz. Participants play not only for themselves, but for their town, their parents and the even their friends who have moved away.

When a team is winning, the town swells with pride. Even months after the football season, at least one team member wore his football jersey to school every day. Younger boys look up to the athletes and revere the blue and gold lettermen's jackets.

When a team does poorly, like 1984's basketball team, everyone in town has an opinion on what should change and who should play. Feelings run high during the games. A fan may grumble about a poor



Marvin and Roberta Wamboldt, in pioneer garb, stand in front of tepee they use at gun collectors' gatherings.



Jake Newfeld, sitting atop the final peeled log, reflects on his 42 years at the Valsetz mill, the ruins of which lie scattered behind him.



Robin Franklin, walking in the rain.

the family's 18-foot-tall tepee that becomes their shelter at gatherings of black powder enthusiasts.

The Wamboldts live with their sons, Jesse, 18, and Marvin Jr., 16, in a home at the end of an alley off Cadillac Avenue. Everyone in town knows the home. If someone wants an old magazine, newspaper or car part, he often checks first with Roberta or Marvin.

Their home is cluttered with things Roberta admits are "junk." But she adds that she can't bring herself to throw anything away.

The Wamboldts are perhaps the most misunderstood family in Valsetz, and that points up one of the problems about the town. Because people's lives are so intertwined, they believe they know each other very well.

Often they don't.

Although a few students in school know Jesse owns a guitar, none knows how well he can play. He is self-taught and uses the plastic closure device from a bread package for a guitar pick. He creates beautiful songs about the outdoors and the people who live in the woods.

Roberta plays the accordion and, when she cleans off all the junk, the piano. In the evenings, sometimes after dinner, Roberta and Jesse find space in the living room to sit and play duets that range from a jazz standard to a down-home country tune.

Marvin Jr., who often moves through life at a sometimes frantic, helter-skelter pace, can be reflective and insightful on occasion.

To most people in Valsetz, their father is something of a hermit who has never quite fit in. His nickname is "Mouse." He says it's a CB radio handle, but others say it is because he is such a pack rat.

Privately, Marvin talks sensitively and perceptively about his town.

"You want to know what Valsetz is?" he asked one night. "It's a community of human beings. It's not people, but human beings. People's what you get out over The Hill.

"In a city, you move into your house and you drive 20 miles to see the best friends you got. Then you don't even know the guy that lives next door to you.

"I love this town and I hate to see it go," he said. "It's a way of life up here. None of us up here, even if we move into smaller communities and get into the right area, will ever find the same way of life again. Never.

"In a community like this, people gotta exist together to keep the community and the mill going," he said. "There's men I don't see eye to eye with. But if my most-hated enemy's house burned down, I would be there to help. I would see if he needs anything."

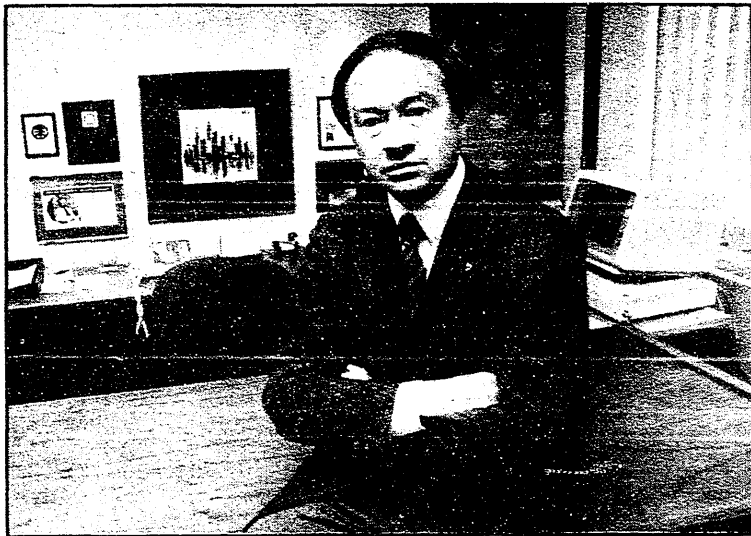
He is disappointed that the mill will close and the town will cease to exist. When a vacant home is destroyed, he feels sad. Nevertheless, he sees what is happening as the way the world now does business.

"I don't resent anything," he said. "I'm not a company man, but I can't see a company trying to keep a handful of people alive and working and losing money at it. They're a big corporation, and that's the way they work.

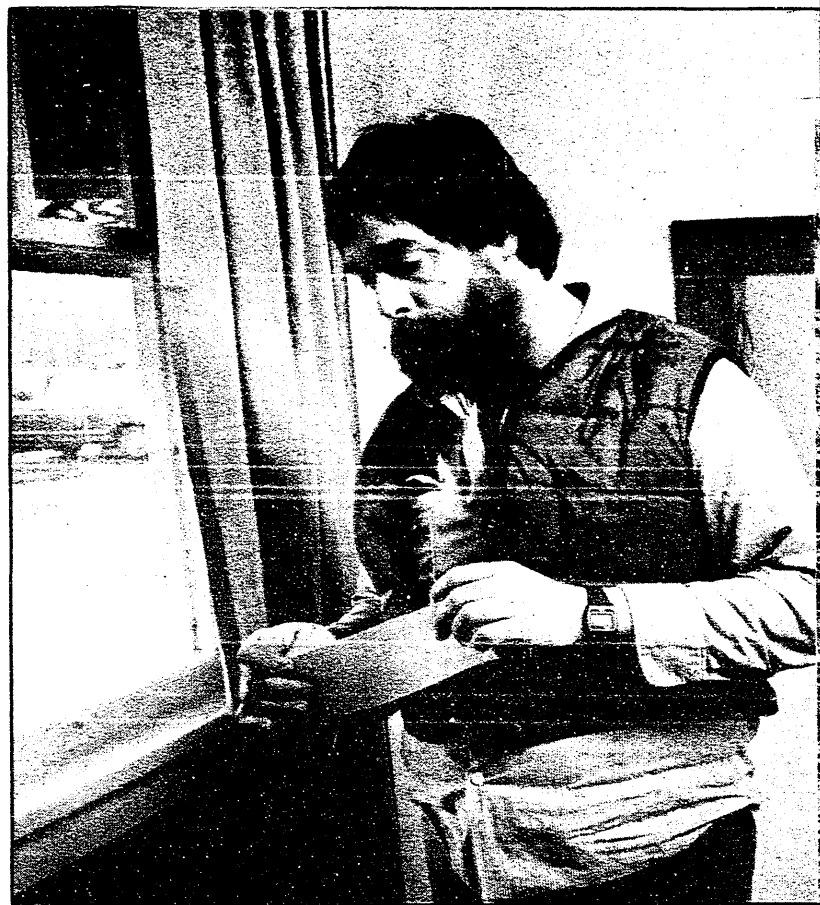
"It's kinda like a trap," he said. "But what the hell am I going to do? I haven't even went through high school, and what the hell am I going to do with a freshman education. I hope to hell Marvin and Jesse finish high school and get college, too, if they can."

The Rec Hall is closing. Jody Hutchison has turned off the coffee pots and cleaned up the kitchen, so it will be ready for Carol in the morning.

Red has gathered his book and his



Richard B. Parish, above, a Boise Cascade Corp. vice president who was involved in decision to close Valsetz, poses in his office. Ron Edwards, right, collects his last paycheck issued from the Valsetz mill.



cigarettes and is slowly walking to his four-wheel drive. Jody locks the door and drives away up Main Street. Roberta drove the pickup truck home, and Marvin is alone on the boardwalk outside the Rec Hall.

Valsetz is quiet. Families are in their homes, preparing for another day. One of the last days. Marvin wants to walk home tonight and enjoy the clear skies.

He steps out into the parking lot, begins to walk away, but then stops. He has something more to say.

"You know, I feel sad about this town disappearing, because I owe this town, and I mean the whole town, a hell of a lot," he said. His voice was the only sound in Valsetz.

"This town educated me," he said. "It showed me there's a difference between people and human beings. Human beings live here and they got a heart. And that heart is as big as this town is. I'm going to miss 'em."

Marvin turned away and walked up Main Street.

The Decision

A key figure in the decision to close Valsetz was Richard B. Parish, Boise Cascade vice president of operations, Timber and Wood Products Division. His third-floor office bears the mark of an executive: Several paintings and college degrees hang on the walls that are painted with muted colors; a secretary sits at a desk outside.

On this early February day, Parish wears a gray business suit with an understated, yet elegant, blue tie.

"There were a lot of things weighing against Valsetz," Parish said. "Valsetz is in a very remote location with a very small

facility. It is in a geographic area where the demand for the product is about half the capacity to produce it."

Parish said plywood mills in the southern part of the United States operated with lower wages and freight advantages, and the Valsetz mill could not compete.

"It had been unprofitable for three years in a row, and our financial projections for the next five years showed it would continue to lose money every single year," he said. He would not say how much was lost, only that it was significant. "We've been working pretty hard to try to figure out a way to keep Valsetz, is my point, and we just finally ran out of ideas."

Parish said an in-depth analysis of the operation began in August 1983 after he combined the company's northern and southern Oregon wood products operations. Parish said he asked that the Valsetz mill be studied to see if it could be turned around to "be a keeper." He said the four-month study showed that the situation was hopeless.

Some Valsetz residents, many of them embittered by the disruptions in their lives, dispute Boise Cascade's decision to close the mill.

Boise Cascade's reasons were confirmed and the decision supported by a forest products analyst for a Portland brokerage firm and by an Oregon State University associate professor of forest economics.

In Valsetz, Wayne Johnson, assistant superintendent of the mill until he was laid off in 1983, contended that poor management was to blame for Valsetz's problems.

Johnson, who holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with a minor in economics from Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, said that during

the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Boise Cascade overcut the timber that it owned rather than buy the expensive timber on government land. He said that as a bookkeeping matter, the mill was charged the market rate for timber even though the trees it milled actually cost a great deal less.

Parish said that not only was the Valsetz mill operation studied, but the area's timber supply was evaluated, and that may have been the fatal blow.

At the time of the study, Parish said, three company mills operated with northwestern Oregon timber. Those mills were in Valsetz, Independence and Willamina. The Willamina mill is about 25 miles from Independence, which is about 20 miles from Valsetz.

Parish said the study showed there was only enough company-owned timber to run two mills at a profit.

If a third mill were to operate, Parish said the company would have to bid for a greater share of expensive timber on federal and state land.

"So then the question was, which is the one that probably should go?" Parish said. "Our feeling was that it had to be Valsetz because of its remote location. It wasn't a snap decision."

"The log cost at Valsetz was going to be considerably higher than either Independence or Willamina," Parish said. "It seemed to us that if we were going to spend money to modernize we ought to put it on plants that were better located to the timber. That's what we are doing. We're spending some money at Willamina."

Parish said the company executives believed it would be cheaper to haul a tree from the woods to mills in either Independence or Willamina as compared with taking that same tree to the Valsetz mill.

He said the company was doing most of its timber harvesting on land about 15 miles east of Valsetz.

To use the Valsetz mill, Parish said the trees would have to be hauled back to Valsetz and then back out to the Willamette Valley, in effect doubling the number of miles needed to get a tree from the forest to the marketplace.

Hal Mayhew, vice president and forest products analyst with Boettcher and Co., a Portland brokerage firm, said it would have been financially impossible for the Valsetz mill to survive if Boise Cascade had used more government timber.

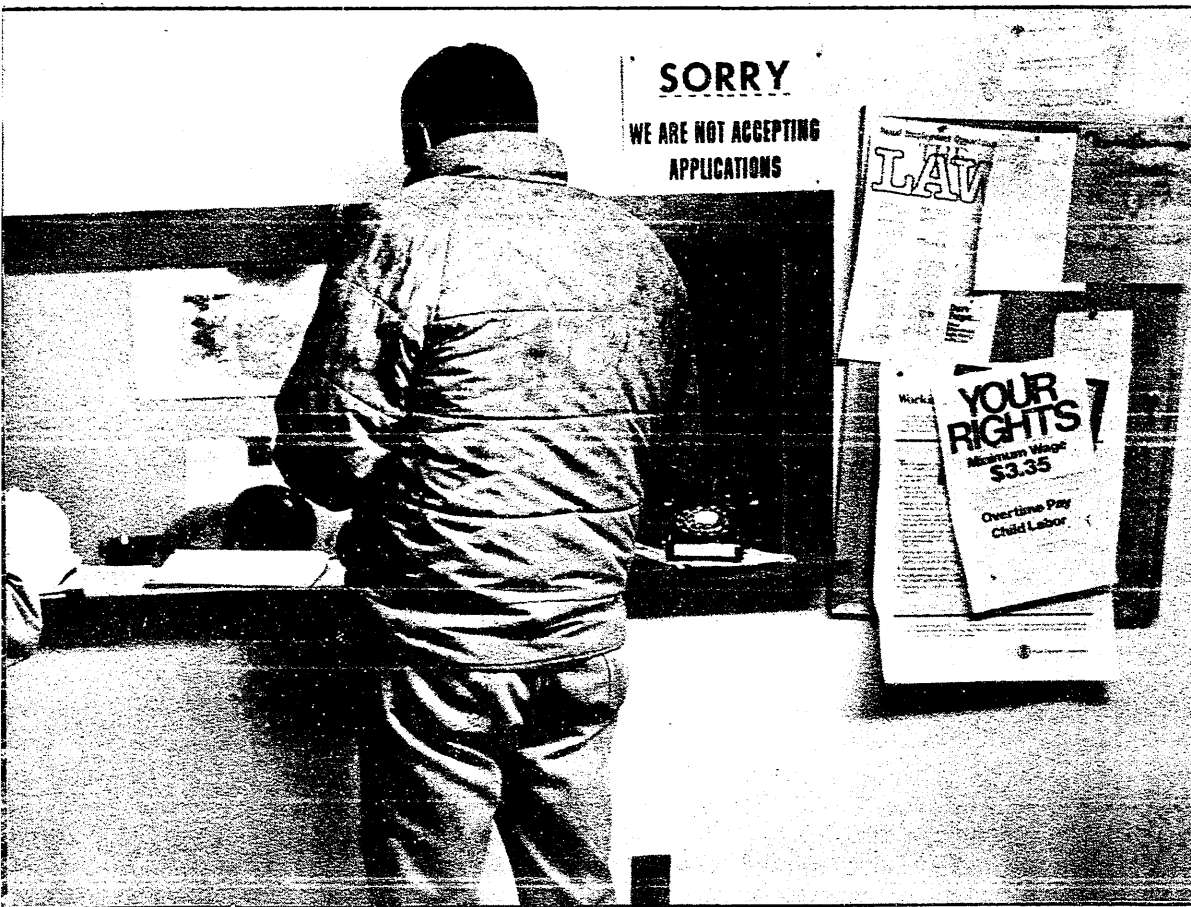
"The mill would have lost millions," he said. "It just would have lost its shirt and closed earlier."

Because timber companies started a bidding war for the rights to harvest timber on government land, the price of that timber was pushed to unrealistically high levels, Mayhew said.

In the depth of the recession, when few people were buying plywood, companies could not afford to pay more than about \$100 per thousand board feet of timber, Mayhew said. Yet the price of government timber had been pushed to two or three times that.

"When companies get into trouble like that, they go to their hole card," Mayhew said. "Boise's card was their own timber. They bought that timber 60 years ago for let's say \$5 a thousand. Their stumpage cost now is next to nothing. The only cost they have is to log it. Remember, the company is under tremendous pressure to perform by the financial community."

"For a number of years, similar companies were returning about 18 to 20 percent on their equity. Boise was down around 10 or 11 percent," Mayhew said. "For them to sell their stock at a premium they had to improve those figures. They had to go down the line and see where the



“Now I know what a woman feels like after she has given 20 of her best years to her husband who comes home one night and says he wants a divorce.”

—Daniel Eddy



The last millworkers: In front, from left: Ralph Thompson, Bill Fitzgerald, Tony Campos, Gil Fenimore, Tim Hagen, Les Kemmling and John Hibbs. In back, from left: Art Seleen, Earl Dickman, Rod Lent, Ray Garcia, Ameilia Deianey, Bill Teter, Gerald Miller, Bob Simcoe, William Gilbert, Susano Rincon, Don Dankenbring, Milo Yost, Ron Edwards, Bob Thom, Larry Pasley, Leon Kitchen, Marvin Wamboldt and Bob Yost.

marginal facilities were. Valsetz was one of them."

He said the company's method of charging its own mill the price of timber on the open market was common. Aside from tax benefits, it lets the company know if the mill would be able to economically survive in the marketplace or if it is being subsidized.

Douglas Brodie, an associate professor of forest economics at Oregon State University, said the Valsetz mill was an inefficient mill that was outdated and designed to operate on large trees.

"They no longer have the right timber in the area," he said. "All they have now is young growth, 40 to 100 years old instead of 100 to 200 years old. Mills in the southern region of the country are designed to make plywood out of the smaller timber.

"Twenty years ago, 90 percent of the plywood produced in America came from the Pacific Northwest. Today it's about half of that," Brodie said. "Valsetz was a high-cost mill. In the plywood industry, it is difficult to make money, and Valsetz, like many of the mills in the Northwest, was at a disadvantage."

Parish said closing the mill was one of the toughest decisions he had had to make.

"Obviously, a person who has been working in the Valsetz mill is probably going to think we closed the wrong mill. I mean, you've got to give them that," Parish said. "I think we told them as soon as we had a decision, and it was a bad time of year. Christmas was coming, and we had a lot of conversations around here about 'Should you tell them now or should you wait until after Christmas?'"

"There was a point of view that why spoil Christmas, and there was another point of view that if you were going to lose your job, wouldn't you rather know as soon as you could before you spent money on presents?" Parish said. "We said 'Let's tell them.'"

He said Boise Cascade decided to run the mill for two months after the closure was announced.

"I think we're doing something for the employees," Parish said. "We ran the plant for three years losing money. If you wanted to be hard-hearted about it, we could have quit after the first year. We didn't do that."

The Death

The end came slowly to Valsetz, piece by piece and memory by memory as one home after another vanished. The homes take on their own histories, and the townspeople can name the families who have lived in the homes over the years.

The first home to go was Danny Main's place on Cadillac Avenue just west of the school.

Main had been laid off from the mill, but he stayed in Valsetz so his son could finish the school year. When the closure was announced, however, Main knew it was time to leave. He pulled his son, Danny, out of school, and in late December, they moved to Oklahoma to look for work.

Boise Cascade wasted no time in destroying the chocolate-colored home. After the plumbing and electrical fixtures were salvaged, the town crew — John Jeske, Gary Richards and Emil Yaroma — was ordered to burn Main's home.

Many of the people in town gathered along Cadillac Avenue or stood in the school playground to watch the Dec. 19 burn.

Jeske flattened Main's home with a bulldozer. Then Richards stuffed some



Wenette Richards watches destruction of Jody Hutchison's house.

gasoline-soaked newspapers in among the debris. A match was lit, and thick, black smoke poured into the sky as the wooden home went up in flames.

Some of the kids had planned to roast hot dogs over the flames, but the heat was so intense and the fumes so noxious, they called off the party.

Within a month after Main's place was destroyed, Jody Chitwood's place about seven houses to the east was burned. Then Connie Campos' house east of Bob Endecott's home went up in flames.

Complaints from townspeople brought officials of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality into the hills. On Jan. 18, Jeffrey L. Dresser, an environmental consultant with DEQ, met with three Boise Cascade officials.

Jim Jackson, an environmental engineer with Boise Cascade, and Bert Vaughn and Jim Cash from the company's timber and wood products group met with Dresser for three hours.

"When we all sat down to talk about the demolition of the town, we wanted them to wait until everyone was out of town," Dresser recalled. "They wanted to proceed right away. As a compromise, we suggested they not burn the homes where they stood.

"It was an emotional issue for the people of Valsetz," Dresser said. "In observance of the people living there, we suggested Boise not burn the homes in front of the people. We didn't realize until we got complaints that people would walk out of their homes and see a home up the street burning."

Boise Cascade continued dismantling the town, but the homes were ripped apart by a huge log-loading machine called a "shovel" and then carted to the town's wood-waste pile to be burned.

Another worker was added to the wrecking crew: Fifty-three-year-old Lige Calkins, who usually operated the shovel and other heavy equipment in the log yard, joined Jeske, Richards and Yaroma.

It was a small irony that Lige's loader, which ordinarily would be used as a machine of Valsetz's livelihood, became the machine of its destruction.

Of anyone in Valsetz, Lige was perhaps the best choice to be symbolic undertaker. He had lived in town for only 2½ years and felt no strong emotional bond to either the town or the homes. Even more important, he was accepted by the townspeople.

Although they teasingly called him "The Claw," or "Home Wrecker," they feel no bitterness towards Lige because they knew he was not a company man. He was only doing his job. People found it impossible to dislike the man.

When he walks into the room, Lige looks, at first glance, frightening. He is a hunchback and stands no taller than 5 feet. One of the fingers on his left hand is partially missing from a logging accident five years ago.

The years of hard work have taken their toll on his body. His stomach muscles are gone. His legs are wobbly and skinny. When he walks, his upper body is carried at a 45-degree angle to the ground.

Although he cares little about his appearance, Lige's weathered face, wavy gray hair and piercing blue eyes make him a classically handsome man. When he reads, he wears a pair of black-framed glasses that look highly fashionable. A blue-and-white work shirt seems preppy.

He speaks with a hypnotic cadence, his voice a low rumble that sounds like it is coming through a megaphone. His salty conversation is often profane. Yet he is a gentleman who will change "God damn" to "Gol' darn" when a woman is in the room.

When he laughs, which is often, the sound comes from deep inside his body and the joy is infectious.

Lige does not hide behind his handicap. Although he is in constant pain, he never complains. And in a town where men are judged by their work, no one works harder than Lige Calkins.

He was born in Seattle, but he was brought to Oregon as an infant when his father found a job driving a truck in Harlan. When he was 9, he contracted polio. A small-town doctor misdiagnosed his illness as lumbago and told Lige to rest. Three weeks later, he was sent to a Portland hospital, but the damage had been done.

His legs and back curled into a fetal position. Doctors fused his spine, and he was given a brace to wear. But he found the contraption cumbersome and uncomfortable. He took it off and "left it hanging in my parents' garage. As far as I know, it's still there."

He left high school after his junior year when school administrators told him that, because of his handicap, he would be better off in trade school.

He went to trade school but quit a year later to work in the woods, where he cut timber, drove trucks and ran heavy machinery.

"I was young enough that the polio never slowed me down," he said. "I figured I could do anything anybody else could do, and if there was something I couldn't do, I wouldn't let anybody know about it."

He moved from job to job until he arrived in Valsetz in 1982. Lige was one of the last people to move to Valsetz. He would be one of the last to leave.

A pall settled over the people as they waited for the end of Valsetz. They knew what was going to happen, but it still seemed so far off. Life, for the time being, appeared to go on as usual.

The people were resigned to the fate of Valsetz. They jokingly warned each other not to leave town on the weekend because the town crew might destroy their homes.

Souvenir hunters and tourists began visiting the town. Someone took a wooden sign at the post office, and the townspeople, grumbling about the outsiders, started locking their doors.

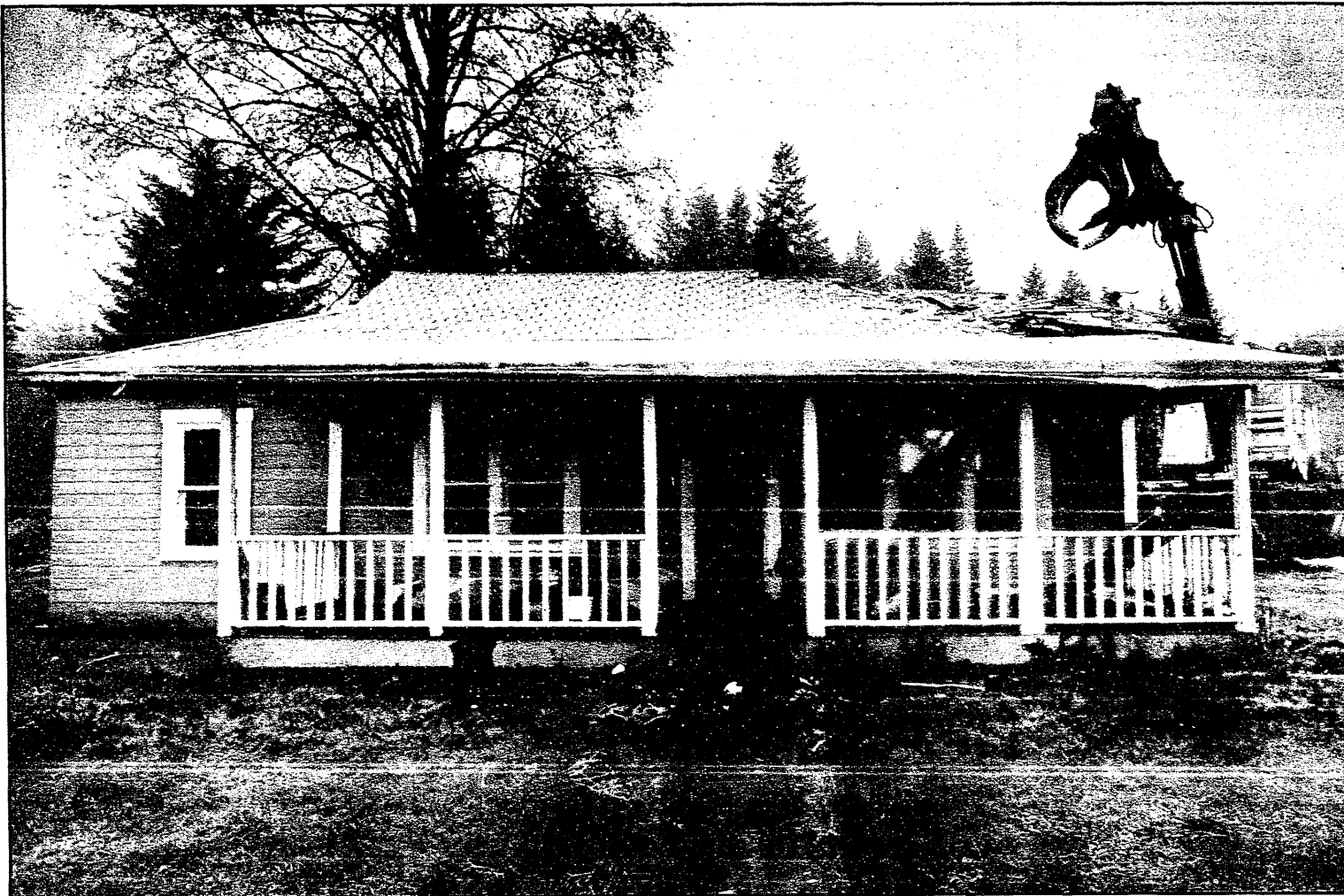
The sudden notoriety of Valsetz brought a minor economic boom. The Rec Hall usually brought in \$60 during a typical Saturday, but now it was not unusual to make \$150.

But there were problems.

Donna Howe, who lives with her husband and son and daughter on Main Street near Cadillac Avenue, was in the kitchen one morning when she noticed a stranger looking at her through her window. Other families complained that the tourists, armed with cameras, were traipsing through their yards.

Ken Jeske, a 17-year-old high school senior, painted a sign that read "Valsetz Zoo. Please don't feed the animals." He planted the sign in his front yard for all the tourists driving down Cadillac Avenue. His parents made him remove it.

Notices from antique dealers, offering



The shovel, formerly the machine of Valsetz's livelihood, demolishes Jody Hutchison's home on Cadillac Avenue.

to buy used furniture and collectibles, were posted on a bulletin board outside the town store. They had to share space with notices from real estate agents and moving companies.

Some of the townspeople also saw a way to make a buck.

Norma Carter started working with a woman over The Hill who printed up sweat shirts and T-shirts commemorating Valsetz. They sold for as much as \$20.

Dale Reckard, a 49-year-old millwright, took pictures of Valsetz, embedded the photographs on blocks of wood and sealed them with acrylic. The pictures were displayed in the Rec Hall and sold for between \$10 and \$20.

Duane Frank, 57, who ran the store, began selling lighters, bumper stickers and hats with the name Valsetz on them.

Before the closure was announced, the hats sold for about \$5. When they were gone, Frank ordered a new supply. But this time they sold for about \$15.

For many of the townspeople, the final months were a time to reflect on what life in Valsetz meant.

Doug Johnson, who has lived in town for 36 years, began to take strolls through town after dinner each evening. He quit working after heart surgery three years ago and had planned on living in Valsetz until he died.

As he smoked a cigarette, Johnson walked from his home on the east end of Cadillac Avenue to Main Street. Then he'd head south to the Rec Hall and loop back home again.

"I just go out and think," he said one evening after one of his jaunts. "You know, we're not only losing jobs, but we are losing our homes, our town and our identity. I stop along the way and just look at a certain spot. Then I wonder what it will look like in a year. There will be trees but no homes.

"It's a sad, sad time," he said as he headed into his home. "In some ways, it's hard to grasp what this place will be like in a year. It hurts because I know we can't come back. There won't be any Valsetz."

Like Johnson, Ivy Van Eps is proud to be called an old-timer. She and her husband, Raymond, who drove a jitney in the mill, have lived in Valsetz for 33 years.

"This town represents my life and my children's lives," she said one morning over a cup of coffee. "It represents my friends, my children and my memories. This town represents everything that's happened to me from the day I got married. And now it's going to be like that part of my life isn't supposed to exist anymore.

"A town like Valsetz is not supposed to be torn down. It is supposed to be abandoned, be vandalized, decay and die a natural death," she said. "Now there won't be anything left."

Many of the older residents felt displaced because Valsetz was all they had known most of their lives.

"How do you think you would feel if you lived in a town for 47 years?" Julie Yaroma asked. "I came up to Valsetz as a child and left long enough to get married and bring my man back up here.



Lige Calkins, who destroys houses with a log loader, rests in Bob Endecott's living room. Lige is the town's symbolic undertaker.

"Moving away is like tearing a part of me away," she said.

During the last months, many people who had lived in Valsetz returned for a final visit.

One weekday in January, 80-year-old Gladys Hibbs, who had lived in Valsetz from 1947 until 1967, was driven over The Hill from Dallas by family friends. Her husband died years ago, and the only surviving link with Valsetz was her son, John, who worked in the mill but did not live in town.

As she rode through town, Hibbs was shocked to see the number of homes that were gone. More than once she commented that her husband must be "rolling over in his grave."

Three-quarters of the way west on Cadillac Avenue, Hibbs directed her driver down Shanghai alley. She wanted to see where her home, which had been ripped down months ago, once stood. Hobbled by a bad leg, she used a cane to walk over the choppy ground that had been her home. She pointed to where the living room, kitchen and bedroom once had been.

As she headed back to the car, she stopped. With some effort, she bent down and picked up two pieces of wood from the debris.

"These are my souvenirs from Valsetz," she said, holding on tightly to the foot-long, faded pieces. "One is for my son and one is for me. I'm taking these and my memories."

There is an art to destroying a home, and Lige Calkins has developed his own approach to the form. Little debris is left behind, and he says he can tear down most homes in a day.

His weapon, the "shovel," stands 15 feet tall and is painted green and white, Boise Cascade's official colors. The shovel looks like a dinosaur because of a set of 6-foot-long steel jaws attached to a mechanical arm that looks like a long neck.

In Lige's hands, the shovel's claws can be delicate when he uses them to pick up logs one at a time. Or they can be devastatingly powerful as they smash through the roof of a home.

The roof is a home's Achilles' heel.

"I usually try to get the roofs first," Lige said of his technique. "The bigger the sections I grab, the quicker I can get the house down and the less mess there is. If I can get the roof off, then I can get the grappling hooks around the section of the wall, and, maybe I can take a whole wall off, you know, clear off the side of the house in one shot."

The home of Bobby O'Donnell and his family came down in February. His father had lost his job in August, and when he found work over The Hill, the family moved from Valsetz in December.

The 17-year-old high school senior wanted to finish school in Valsetz, so he lived with Frank and Elaine Wheeler and their son for a couple of months. When they finally left, Bobby moved in with the Johnsons, and 17-year-old Jeff Wheeler moved in with the Howes.

Bobby and his family had lived on Cadillac Avenue about 50 feet east of Danny Main's place and directly across from the school playground.

Lige started on Bobby's home early in the morning. No crowd gathered because the destruction of homes had ceased to be an attraction in Valsetz. To most, the roar of the shovel was only a bitter reminder of what was to come.

Only Roberta Wamboldt, who lives 60 feet east of the O'Donnell home, ventured out into the rain to watch the demolition. She had a camera with her to take pictures of the home being torn apart.



Lige Calkins loads debris from home into dump truck.

Lige raced the shovel's engine and dropped the jaws through the roof. Doors cracked, a window broke and the walls began to splinter. Roberta stood 30 feet away, mesmerized.

From a window in the school library across the street, Bobby watched Lige at work.

Bobby had lived in three different homes during his seven years in Valsetz. He had known his last home would fall, and he had prepared himself for the day. But as he stood alone in the window, watching between classes, Bobby was struck by the finality of the destruction and how memories were being wiped away.

The home was stubborn, however, and the shovel was disabled by a severed hose. It was driven to the shop, where it spent a week being repaired.

Each day, Bobby walked past his old home on the way to and from school. Occasionally, he stopped in the street and stared at the home's innards hanging in the rain.

The exposed remnants of people's lives became a familiar sight in Valsetz. At Doris and Bud Widerstrom's lot, a cement stoop leads from the street to nowhere, and the freshly turned earth contains scraps of a medicine chest, a drinking glass and a child's toy.

Next door is a neat blue home with a lush and healthy garden.

Hank Buce, 63, draws aside the curtain

from a living room window and watches a visitor poke through the dirt at the Widerstrom place. Hank and his wife, Wanda, have raised two sons in the 27 years that they have lived in Valsetz.

He was the Valsetz townsite foreman but lost his job in March 1983 when Boise Cascade started cutting back at the Valsetz operation.

He stands in the window for well over a minute, just watching the stranger. Then the curtain closes, and he goes back to packing his family's memories.

His home will fall in three months.

Lige's day begins at about 7 a.m. when an alarm clock rings inside his 14-foot trailer parked near the shop where the shovel is stored. He sleeps in the trailer during the week. On the weekends he travels to Eddyville, where his wife of 31 years lives in the family home.

By 7:30 a.m., he has checked the shovel's engine in the big shop about a half-mile west of the Rec Hall, and he is ready to work. John Jeske, who had begun driving a dump truck when the method of destroying homes was changed, shows up a little later. The two of them talk awhile before heading to the next home.

Lige drives the shovel through the center of town. A few people walking along Main Street toward the Rec Hall look up when they see Lige coming. They wave, and he waves back and flashes his smile.

Lige is a perceptive man, who has an abundance of common sense when it comes to dealing with people. He mixes as well with the bosses as with the workers, although he himself is a worker. He is not embarrassed about having to tear down the homes, but he realizes that people may hate to see him coming.

"Everybody has been real friendly to me, and of course, I'm always friendly to them," he said one night after work. "But I figured that being here only 2½ years there'd be a lot of bitter people. You know, especially the guys that've worked up here for 25 years.

"But like one guy says, 'Lige, you're up here and you've become one of us and that's the way it is.' People have been good to me. I probably should feel bad about ripping these places down, but I don't. Someone has to do it."

He looked over at the dark green home where his friend Bob Endecott lives and said, "This one will bother me. I don't know. It might not, though. I might just dream all the time I'm doing it."

Lige's first job this overcast day in February is to tear down Jack Partain's home on Shanghai alley, just west of Gladys Hibbs's old home.

Partain's yellow home is nestled behind a tall Douglas fir tree. Lige has to use the shovel's jaws to clip several limbs from the tree before he can maneuver the machine into what used to be a driveway. As he backs up, the shovel plows through Partain's garden and rips through a patch of flowers.

Fifteen feet from the home, Lige stops the shovel and anchors it to the ground by letting four heavy, metal pads drop into the mud. He drives the jaws through the roof and the ground shakes slightly.

The jaws snap to pull apart the roof. The dry wood, which was harvested from the forest surrounding Valsetz, cracks and yields to the powerful machine.

On Cadillac Avenue, Carol Wyscaver stopped her car to let Jeske pull onto the street. But after he drove away, Carol lingered and watched Lige at work, letting her mind drift back to when she was in high school.

Before Partain, the LaGourgue family had lived in the home. Their daughter, Terry, was a couple of years younger than Carol and had taken a shine to Carol's brother, Jim Stamps, whom she eventually married.

As Lige ripped apart the home, Carol remembered the dances Terry used to hold in the home and how all the teen-agers in town would gather there on a Friday night.

A wall on the LaGourgue-Partain home caved in as Lige swung the jaws back and forth.

That was enough for Carol. She drove down the street.

"What a waste," she thought, "What a God-damned waste."

In February, two days before the mill closed, a group of outsiders came to meet the workers during their break in the lunchroom. For Valsetz, the visitors were an unlikely group because there was a black woman, a Mexican-American woman and a white woman and two white men, one of whom had a beard and long black hair. As the mill hands filed into the room, they stared at the social agency people who stood along one wall.

Janell Wilborn talked to Selaina Miller, Janice Brandenberg stood next to Frank Granger, and Joe Nilson, with the long hair, stood by himself.

When the workers were seated, it was hard to tell who was more uncomfortable, the men or the visitors.

Finally, Marianne Reed, a Boise Cascade employee-relations coordinator,

took the floor and introduced the group behind her as counselors with the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council, an organization that helps displaced workers refine their job-hunting skills.

She said they would speak with the men, but first she had some things to do. Reed resembled a schoolteacher speaking to an eighth-grade class as she told the men their vacation benefits would be paid as soon as the mill closed.

Then she took a stack of unemployment forms and walked to the first table.

"Take one and pass the rest around," she instructed Marvin Wamboldt before she moved to the next table of silent men, whose darting eyes and taut, closed mouths gave away their fears.

The clean, white forms contrasted with the dirty, callused millworkers' hands. The forms were tangible evidence of the mill closure. It was now a fact. It would happen. The men's pride, security and sense of self-worth were slipping away in front of a group of strangers who had gathered in a cold, cement lunchroom.

Wamboldt just looked at his form. Jim Smith quietly read his out loud while Dennis Weaver, Larry Pasley and Tim Hagen discussed the instructions on the forms. Bill Fitzgerald set his to one side and watched Reed.

Don Dankenbring, a strapping man well over 6 feet 4, just opened his gray, scuffed lunch pail, carefully bent the unemployment form and placed it next to a beat-up Thermos and a thick homemade sandwich. Then he tilted his cap back on his head, cradled his chin in his hands and stared at a far wall.

The room hummed with nervous chatter until Joe Nilson stepped forward. Some of the men would describe Nilson as a "hippie." But he was animated and confident as he paced back and forth in front of the men.

"Now, let's say I find a job in a month for \$3 a hour," Don Eddy said. My family and I can't live on that. If I turn that job down, will you guys turn me in to the unemployment office?"

"No, we won't" Nilson said. "We don't get involved in that in any way. We're not monitoring you."

Earl Dickman raised his hand.

"Do I have to list all the jobs I've ever worked?" he asked.

"If you put down that you were a soda jerk five years ago, you have to take a job like that if one is available," Nilson said. "What you put down on that form is very important. Be careful."

The men listened to Nilson, hanging on his words. The men were not afraid of many things, but the talk about job applications, resumes and interviews had them worried.

When Nilson finished speaking, several workers gathered around him to ask additional questions, and Leon Kitchen and John Hibbs shook his hand and thanked him for coming.

One night before the mill closed, Bob Endecott and Lige Calkins decided to go over The Hill and into Dallas for a drink. There were only four people in Corby's Tavern. Bob knew two of them and started a conversation.

About 11 p.m., about an hour after Bob and Lige had downed their first beer, the door opened and a stocky man in his 40s walked in. He ordered a beer and sat near Bob. One of Bob's friends asked about Valsetz, but before Bob could reply, the stranger butted into the conversation.

"I'm sick of hearing about Valsetz," he said, pounding his fist on the bar top. "I don't feel sorry for them. They pay low rent up there and suck up the county tax revenue. Everyone is feeling sorry for



Amid their belongings, the Jeske family prays before eating. From left: John, Arlene, Diana, Ken and Steven.

them, but not me."

Bob turned to face the man, who outweighed him by at least 60 pounds. He stared the man in the face and pushed back the brim of his orange cap.

"You don't live in Valsetz," Bob shouted. "What the hell do you know about it? Why don't you just shut up."

The stranger stood up to fight. Bob was there to meet him.

"I'll fight, but I don't want to," Bob said as he faced the other man in the middle of the room. "Damn sucker, you don't mess with Valsetz. I've only lived there six years, but it's my home. You pick on Valsetz and you pick on me."

One of Bob's friends stepped between the two men, and Bob and Lige were led out of the bar.

"People out there don't know us," Bob said on the trip back over the hill. "Don't you see, I can't live their lifestyle. Things are windin' down up here. They'll never be the same again."

As the impending doom became reality, life in Valsetz became a series of "lasts."

One of the last big public events was the final basketball game between Valsetz and Falls City on Feb. 2.

Almost everyone in town went to the gym to watch. Basketball in Valsetz is an expedient affair. There are not enough girls to stock a girls' team, so Veronica "Ronnie" Wycaver, 16, and Teresa Howe, 16, play on the boys' junior varsity team. When the game is over, they change into cheerleading outfits to join Robin Franklin, 15, and Michelle Wycaver, 15, to cheer on the varsity team.

But on this night, the junior varsity and varsity teams would be combined so all the players would have a chance to participate in the last game.

In an opening ceremony, 17-year-old Kim Carter, the only girl in the senior class, stepped to a microphone and introduced the players, who ran to center court where they stood shyly while their supporters cheered.

Valsetz scored the first eight points, and it looked as if the team might win. Falls City was a much better team and had won both times the teams had met before.

But there was fire in the Valsetz players' eyes. Dale Howe, 17, was canning outside jump shots, and Jeff Wheeler, 17, was pulling down rebound after rebound. Even 16-year-old Bert Hagen, who usually played a passive and somewhat unemotional game, looked tough. Several times he soared over Falls City players to grab a rebound or make a basket.

By halftime, the score was still close. As the Valsetz players trudged into the boys' locker room, many of their fans thought an upset was possible. What a way to end the year and town, they said to each other.

By late in the third quarter, however, Falls City began to pull away. Not by much, but the Valsetz fans were cheering less often. Fewer than 10 points separated the two teams in the fourth quarter when Valsetz Coach Alan Riddell sent Ronnie into the game. She replaced her 17-year-old boyfriend, Dale Howe. Minutes later, Howe's sister, Teresa, replaced Bobby O'Donnell, 17.

The boys were not embarrassed by the substitutions, and they patted the girls on the shoulders as they walked to the bench.

The game was down to less than two minutes to play, and only Marvin Jr. and Jesse Wamboldt, who sat dejectedly on the bench, had not seen action.

The brothers were not considered good players, and few in the crowd would be surprised if they did not play. The young boys were awkward at athletics, and when pickup games were played, they

were the last chosen.

The boys' parents, Marvin and Roberta, sat in the stands and said nothing. Marvin fingered the lens on the camera he had brought to the game, hoping to get a picture of his sons in action.

The seconds ticked by. The young Wamboldts sat.

Then, with one minute and 16 seconds left, Riddell called a timeout and motioned the Wamboldts into the game. As the brothers walked onto the floor, the Valsetz crowd began to cheer, yelling out encouragement and calling the boys by their first names.

The first time he touched the ball, 16-year-old Marvin Jr. threw it away, and Jesse, 18, put up an air ball that missed the basket by 3 feet. But the crowd cheered for the Wamboldts as if they were star players.

The town had found the focal point of its pride in these two ungainly boys.

although they knew they would not eat in the lunchroom that day or any other day. They wore their heavy boots, gloves and flannel shirts even though they knew they would work only a few hours.

Before work they all met in the lunchroom, and Mill Superintendent Les Kemmling took the floor to speak. Les did not live in Valsetz and had worked at the mill only 2½ years. Yet his easygoing style fit the workers, and he was viewed as one of them.

Les was not an emotional man, but as he spoke his voice became quieter and lower. His easy bounce and quick smile were gone.

"I want to tell you all thanks for the good work, and that comes from the bottom of my heart," he said. "You've been a great bunch of guys and gals. Good luck in the future."

As the crew moved toward the door, Les was there to greet them.

"Nice work, Bill," he said as he patted

By 7:15 a.m., the workers were at their stations. The conveyor belt began to move, and the noise built to a familiar and reassuring crescendo. The faintly sour smell of wet wood cut through a thick layer of steam that hung in the mill. The steam made it impossible to see any farther than 25 feet.

Logs that are brought to the mill to be peeled are called "blocks." When there were only three blocks left to be peeled, Les Kemmling walked through the mill and told the workers to come to the lathe and watch. They stopped their work in the other parts of the mill and came toward the lathe. Many carried cameras. Though they talked with each other, the mood was somber as they scrambled down metal steps to be near the blocks.

Tim Hagen, who was running the lathe, quickly peeled two of the blocks. At 9:35 a.m., the last block was positioned on the lathe. Hagen pulled a handle that controlled the lathe, and the block began to spin. He pulled another handle and the blade was pushed ever so slightly into the spinning block. A thin layer of wood was removed, and Hagen turned the lathe off. Friction from the blade caused steam to rise from the block, which now looked like a partially peeled potato.

No one knew from what section of the forest the block had come. No one knew when it had been cut. All anyone could determine for sure was that the block was between 35 and 45 years old. About the same age as the workers in the mill.

A can of black spray paint was thrust into Les Kemmling's hands. He walked over to the block and sprayed "Last Block 84 Valsetz" across the middle. Then he signed his name with a felt pen.

He turned and gave the pen to Marvin Wamboldt, who signed the block and then gave the pen to Milo Yost. Soon all the workers were lined up to sign the block, which remained on the lathe.

In 15 minutes, they were done. They didn't know what to do, but they didn't want the ceremonies to end. A newspaper photographer asked the workers to pose in front of the block. They quickly agreed. Twenty-five of them stood, some shyly, others formal and a few smiling. History was being made.

Years from now, that picture might be found in a file in a historical society or be passed down from one generation to another. Researchers and family members will study the faded black-and-white photograph, trying to make out the faces of the people who worked in a town that no longer exists.

The names on the last block also will fade with time. They will make no sense to the people who try to read them. The workers will be relegated to memories and stories. The last of Valsetz.

The picture taking was done, and the last block looked small on the lathe. Several workers moved it to a front-end loader that is used to carry as many as 60 blocks at a time.

Ron Edwards, who had worked in the mill for 20 years, sat in the cab and opened a set of huge jaws that clamped down on the foot-diameter by 8-foot-long block. He felt honored.

When the block was secured, Edwards backed the machine away from the end of the mill. As the loader made its way through the muddy log yard, drops of rain soaked the block and smeared some of the workers' names.

Edwards and his machine carried the block past a group of workers who offered advice.

"Ship it back to the re-elect Reagan headquarters," Ray Garcia shouted.

"No, drop it on Boise," Marvin Wamboldt yelled.

Edwards drove to a section of the mill



Mill Superintendent Les Kemmling (center) shakes hands with Ted Bechtold as Ted leaves mill for the last time. Bill Maier watches.

With 20 seconds to go, Ronnie Wycaver scored the last basket of the last game. Valsetz lost 60-47.

The Valsetz players stood in the center of the court and hugged each other. Valsetz cheerleaders Robin Franklin and Michelle Wycaver led the crowd as it sang the school song:

*We will fight, fight, fight for old
Valsetz High, the pride of all the
west.*

*We will shout out the story, we will
shout out the glory of the school
we love the best.*

*So fight, fight, fight for victory, send
our colors high.*

*We will always fight, we will
always fight for the honor of old
Valsetz High.*

Nothing was anticipated as much as the last day at the mill. The weather turned bad, and the mixture of fog, rain and snow increased the town's sense of isolation.

The graveyard-shift workers were the first to lose their jobs. After they were finished, they gathered in the lunchroom or wandered outside the mill, looking like lost children waiting to be shown the way home.

At the same time, the day-shift crew arrived. They looked like ghosts as they emerged from the fog. Uncertain about how to act, scared, nonchalant or emotional, they clung to their habits, nervous jokes and nonsensical bantering.

As though clutching to security symbols, most of them carried lunch pails,

Bill Fitzgerald on the shoulder.

"Glad to know you, Ralph," he told Ralph Thompson before he turned to Bob Simcoe to say "Good luck."

Kemmling reached out to shake Amelia Delaney's hand, but she told her boss that he could do better than that. Kemmling hugged her.

Then he hugged her again at the request of a television crew.

More reporters waited outside the lunchroom.

Rod Lent said he and a co-worker had jokingly devised a plan they thought would foil the reporters.

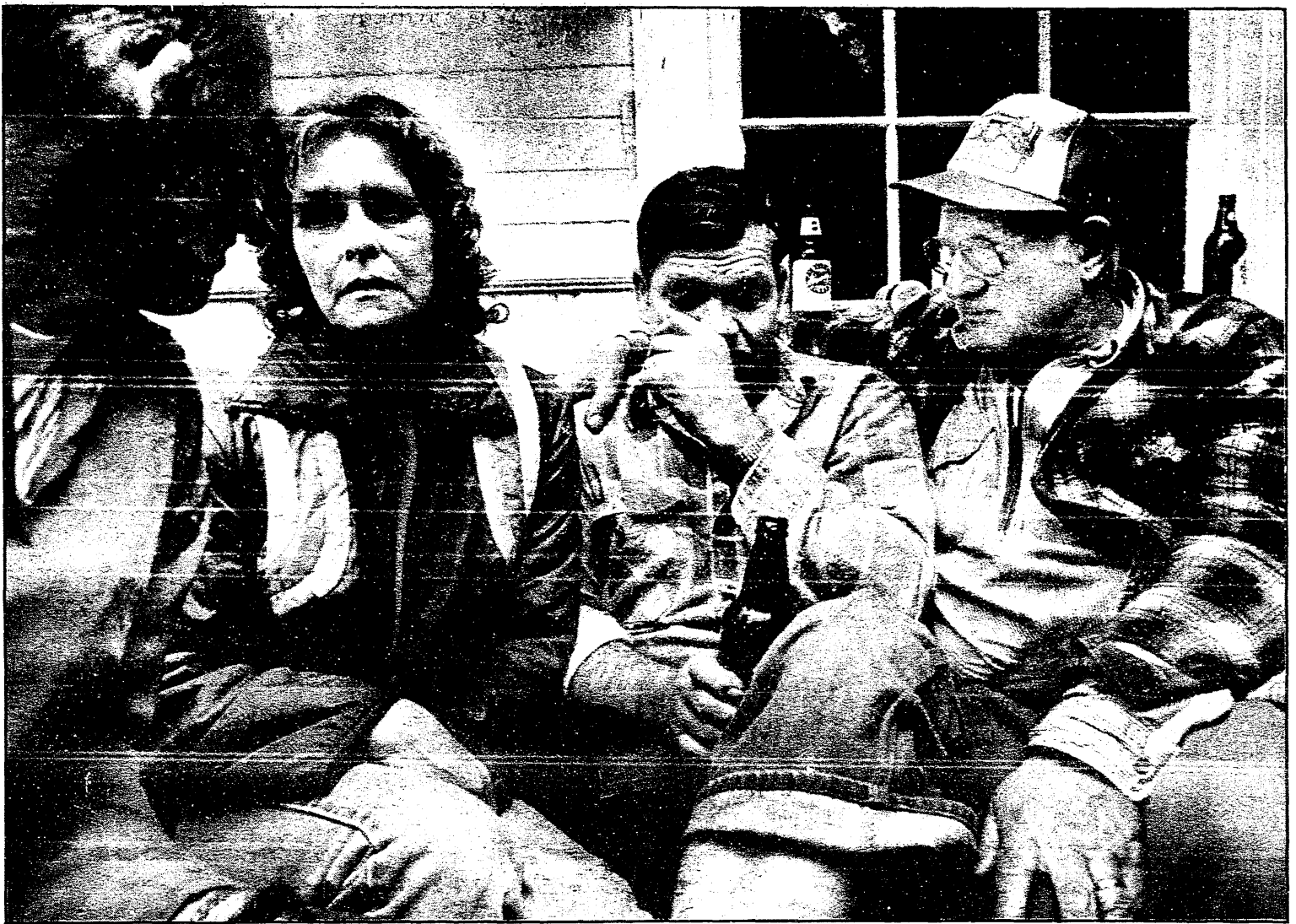
"We were going to put up a sign that said \$5 a picture, \$10 an autograph and \$50 an interview," he said. "We've got to make a living out of this somehow."

Dennis Weaver, who had been asked hundreds of times, "What are you going to do?" told a reporter he was going to become a brain surgeon. Larry Pasley, 42, told a reporter that he was going to become a bank president.

Forty-eight-year-old Garold Howe was one of the last to leave the lunchroom. As he hung back, Howe looked around at the dirty cement walls.

"The Boise bigwigs used to come into this same room during the shift meetings and tell us how good we were doing. We believed them," Howe said. "Two months later they come in and tell us we lost a million dollars and the mill is going to be closed."

Howe shrugged his shoulders, adjusted the collar on his jacket and walked out of the lunchroom, into the fog and toward the mill about 30 feet to the south.



Bill Fitzgerald wipes away a tear while LeRoy Pasley comforts him during emotional party on day the mill closed. Bill's wife, Alma, talks with Lige Calkins.

where finished veneer is stored and lowered the block onto the cement floor. In the background, some men were already at work tearing down the mill.

The conveyor belts had been turned off, as had the lathe. Only the sound of pounding hammers and breaking wood echoed in the mill.

Daniel Eddy, 41, was sweeping the mill floor when he stopped for a moment to reflect on what was happening.

"Now I know what a woman feels like after she has given 20 of her best years to her husband who comes home one night and says he wants a divorce," he said. Then he started to push the broom again.

Across town, the graveyard shift was holding a party in a room in the building that houses the Valsetz post office. There was plenty of beer, liquor and elk sausage.

By noon, the day-shift workers had joined the party, as had some of the men in town, followed by the swing shift, who no longer had a mill to run. For the first time in almost two months, the people seemed to relax. It was mainly a man's party, although Alma Fitzgerald was there, and Carol Wyscaver showed up for a while. Some of the young people in town hung around the door outside, trying to grab a beer, but they were shooed away.

As members of the Valsetz community walked into the room, they were greeted with hugs by the workers. The party was their haven. No Boise Cascade official or

news reporter was allowed to enter the room.

"If you can lick just one man in this room, I'll let you in," a burly logger told a startled, 5-foot-6 newspaper reporter who declined the challenge and ended up trying to peer through steamed windows.

Ken Boddie, a 25-year-old television reporter from Portland station KPTV, was dressed in a suit, tie and dress raincoat. The tension in the room rose when the workers saw Boddie start to enter. Fear spread over Boddie's face.

Dennis Weaver and Larry Pasley, sensing Boddie's discomfort, walked across the room. Beers in hand, they led him outside, and Weaver granted Boddie an interview.

The party was a catharsis for the people. Alcohol fueled some of the underlying anger, and a couple of fights almost broke out. But overall, there was a lingering sense of sadness. Alma Fitzgerald and her husband, Bill, cried quietly and consoled each other.

By early evening, the millworkers, many of whom lived over The Hill, headed home. Hanging out the windows of their trucks and cars, they shouted goodbye to their friends. The car lights slid into the fog and they were gone.

By late evening, the six persons remaining in the party had moved to Bob Endecott's place. A melancholy feeling settled over the gathering.

"I'm done" Bob said as he stood in his kitchen. "I'm good at what I do, but I'm done. I can't lead the city life. What am I going to do?"

Alma Fitzgerald, who was standing next to Bob, silently patted his shoulder. Someone in the living room said if he had a guitar, he would compose a song about Valsetz.

"No, no songs about Valsetz because I'll cry," Alma said, clutching a crumpled piece of tissue paper.

Bob looked at Alma and then at the floor.

"You know," he said softly, "truck drivers cry, too."

By 1 a.m., Valsetz was quiet. Except for a heavy rain, there were no sounds in town. The mill, usually noisy at even this hour, stood dark and silent.

A security guard had been posted outside the main gate.

"Nothing here," he said to a visitor who drove up to see what was going on. "They closed her down today. Didn't you hear?"

The guard went back inside his trailer. The rain continued to fall.

In preparation for the Feb. 24 mill closure, all but one of the off-highway log trucks were driven over The Hill because there was no need for them in Valsetz.

Bob Endecott's truck, No. 23, was left

behind, however, in case any heavy equipment had to be moved. When the trucks stopped running, Bob became listless and depressed.

He was waiting for his driver's license to be reinstated, but until that happened, he could not drive on public roads. The days passed slowly for Bob.

One morning, however, he got a call while drinking coffee in the Rec Hall. They wanted Bob to use his truck to help guide three trucks pulling heavy equipment over The Hill and out of Valsetz.

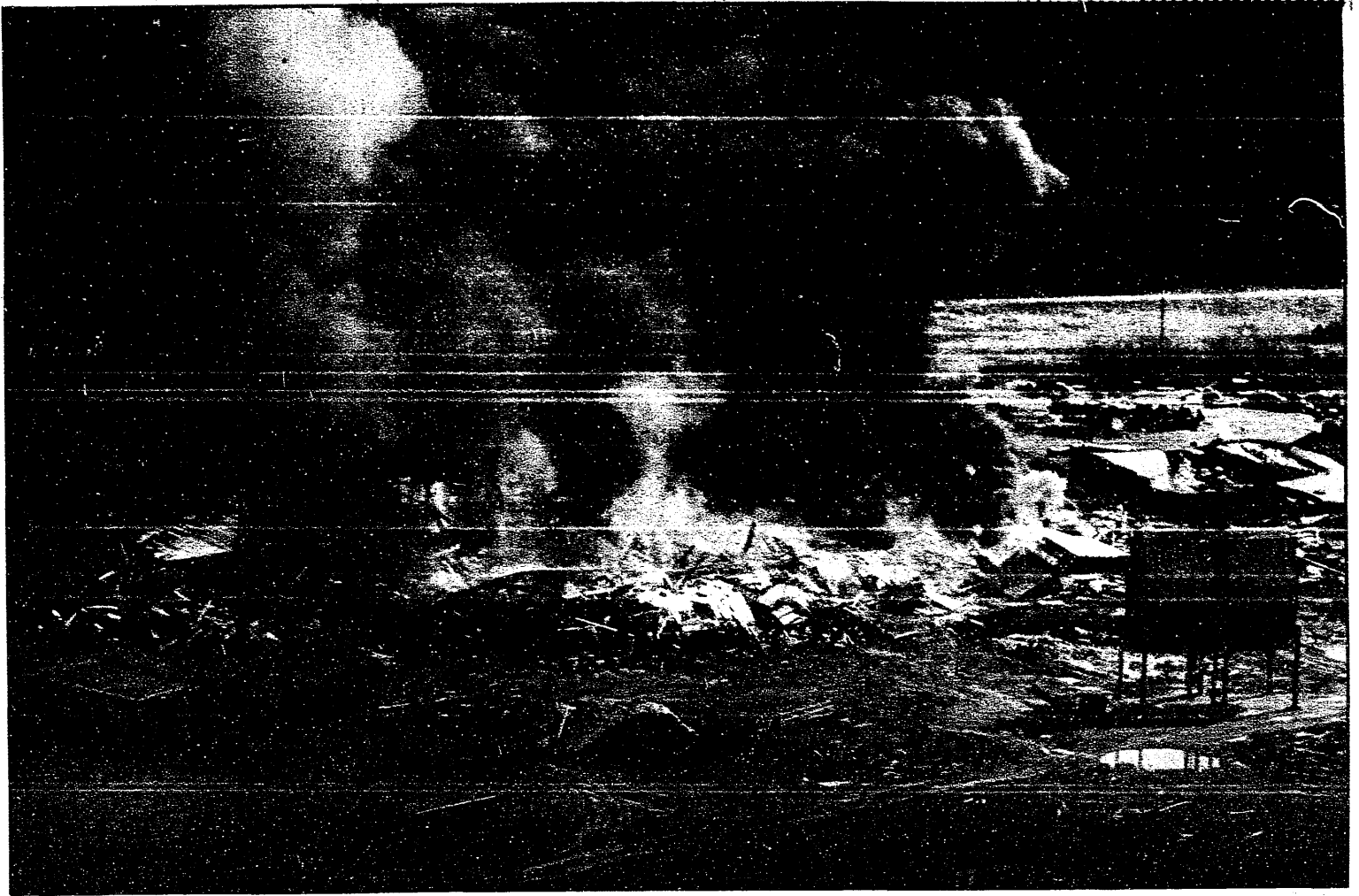
Bob hurried home, grabbed his CB radio and called to his dog, Rusty. Jumping in his pickup truck, he hurried over to the truck shop to fire up No. 23.

The trip to the top of The Hill, about six miles east of town, took about 30 minutes. Bob loved every minute of it. When the line of equipment reached the top of The Hill, he pulled his truck off the road and turned off the engine. He waved as the other trucks passed by.

"Well, it's all over," he said with a sigh. "At least I got the last run out of Valsetz."

He turned to look out the window. The only sounds came from the forest. Bob looked at the road back to Valsetz, and it seemed as if he was ready to cry.

But then an impish look came over his face. His eyes twinkled, and the man whose nickname was "Puss" pushed back



Thick smoke rolls into sky from Valsetz veneer mill, which was burned by Boise Cascade Corp. on March 26, 1984.

the brim of his orange cap.

"Pusser's going back and terrorize that ol' town," he said, as he started the huge truck's engine. He eased off the brakes, and the truck roared off downhill, into the basin that contained Valsetz.

As the truck bounced from the dirt road onto the hard pavement that is the beginning of Cadillac Avenue, Bob reached up and grabbed the leather strap of his truck's air horn.

"They'll know old Pusser did 'er up right," he said.

Then he pulled hard.

The raucous, bellowing blast echoed off the hills and descended on Valsetz. It rolled forward like a tangible wave, reverberating from the walls of the buildings and slicing through the trees.

Ivy Van Eps looked up from her garden and held her hands over her ears. Two houses down Cadillac Avenue, Terry Perrine, 16, and Tony Vasquez, 16, stopped playing basketball. They stared as the big truck rumbled by.

The horn's mournful wail intensified as the roaring truck passed among the houses still standing, and then it diffused as the truck broke into the open spaces where the homes had been torn down.

Butch Stamps heard the sound inside his home and yanked open the front door to see what was happening. Holding his daughter in his hands, he stood in the doorway and laughed.

When Bob reached the school, the 15 or so children on the playground lined up near the fence and waved. Bob let go of the strap for only a moment, waved, and

then tugged again.

Across the street from the school, Roberta Wamboldt ran up the driveway and, together with her neighbor Julie Yaroma, waved and yelled at Bob.

John Jeske and Lige Calkins were tearing down a home on Cadillac Avenue when they heard Bob coming. They stopped working and waved. Lige sounded the horn on his machine.

At the far end of Main Street, everyone inside the Rec Hall and the store ran outside.

The end of Cadillac Avenue and the end of Bob's thundering trip came quickly. Bob maneuvered the big truck into the shop where his dog, Rusty, was waiting. Bob climbed from the cab, holding his CB radio in one hand. He affectionately patted a dirty fender on No. 23.

"You've been a faithful old sucker," he said quietly. "If I could, I'd buy you, put you in my yard and make a big ol' flower pot out of you."

Bob walked across the cement floor toward a wall telephone. Rusty followed. His steps echoed off the metal walls.

"Darling, it's all over," he said into the telephone to his daughter. She tried to talk her father into living in a home near her place.

"OK, sweetheart," he said after a minute of silence. "I'll think about it. Ain't much more to do up here anymore."

He hung up the phone.

"Come on Rusty, we're going home."

On March 26, 1984, the Valsetz mill was burned. Even though four newspapers

and several television stations covered the event, it was anti-climactic for the people in town.

No more than 20 persons gathered to watch the blaze, and many of those were more interested in a television station's helicopter.

Once the mill was burning, Dee Bridges, the company's townsite manager, ordered that all spectators move back about 300 feet. There was some grumbling, but everyone complied. Except Garold Howe.

Howe, who had worked in the log yard at the mill for 18 years, swore at Bridges. Bridges, surprised by the outburst, argued with Howe, telling him to remove himself from Boise Cascade property. He later called the Polk County sheriff's department. Deputies drove up to Valsetz, took a report, but did not arrest Howe.

"I gave most of my life to this mill," Howe said, adding that Bridges represented all that was bad about Boise Cascade. "I worked day in and day out, and then they tell me I can't watch it burn. Screw them."

About 20 feet from where Bridges paced back and forth lay the last block from the mill. The block had been moved from the mill, but no one had taken responsibility for it.

On May 26, Valsetz sent its young over The Hill and into the world. They could never return.

The 8 p.m. graduation was a major event. Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., would be the guest speaker. Tony Johnson

was the class valedictorian, and he hoped his farewell speech would be good. He had worked on it for more than a week. His rough draft was written on a piece of notebook paper that he folded and carried in his wallet. He asked his father and civics teacher for advice, but in the end he wrote the speech himself.

An hour before the graduation, the 17-year-old was still finishing the speech. He cleared space on a card table in his family's kitchen and moved aside a stack of boxes and suitcases. The day after the graduation, his family was moving to Alaska.

"It's hard to explain my feelings," he said. "I'm proud to be the last class to graduate, but I'm sad about it still the same."

By 7:30 he finished his speech. It was a short drive to the high school where he posed for pictures with his classmates — eight boys and one girl. After the pictures were taken, Tony and his classmates were hustled around the gym to a side door where they would make their entrance.

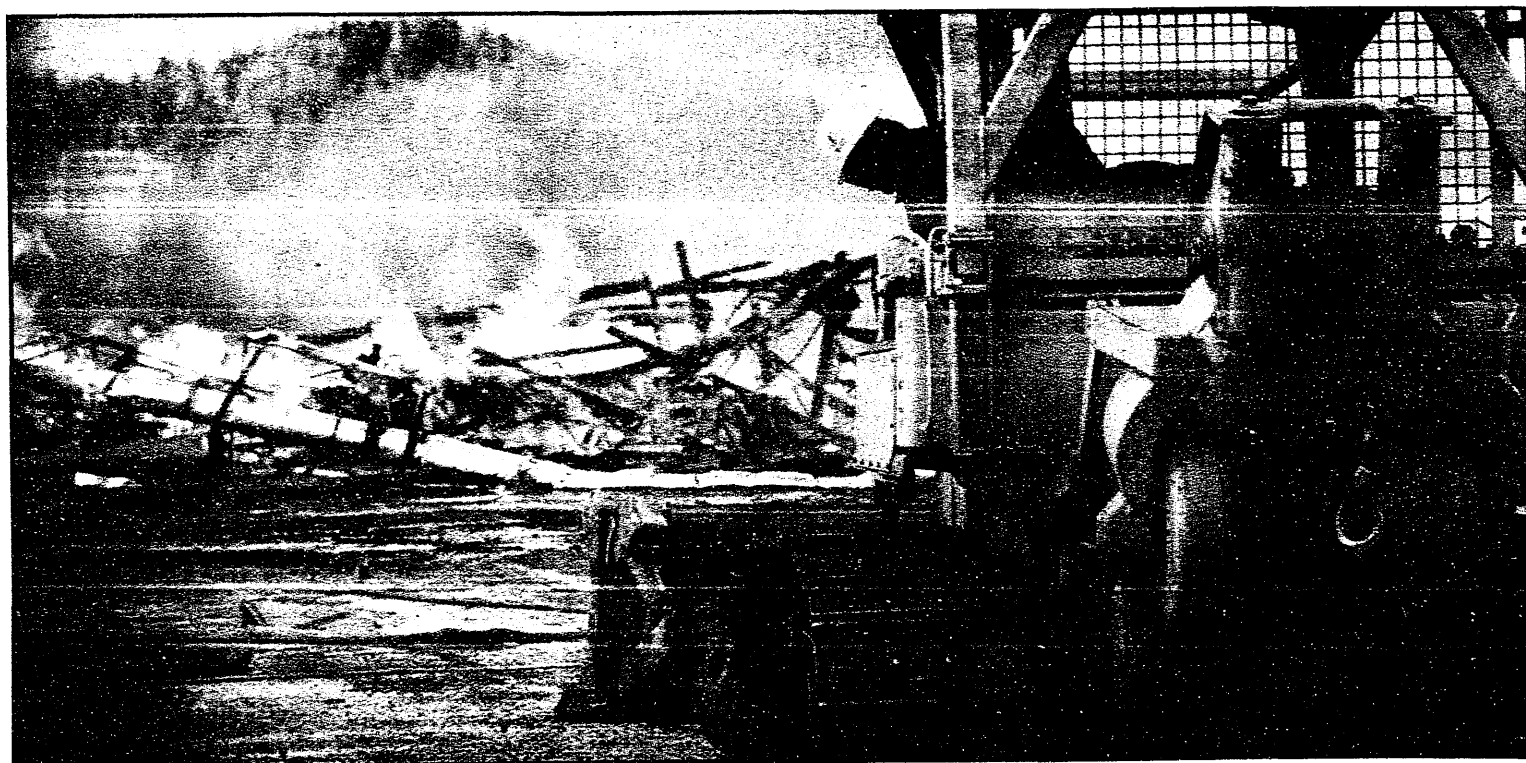
The gym had been decorated by the students. On one wall was the 1984 class motto:

*Only as high as I reach can I grow.
Only as far as I search can I go.
Only as deep as I look can I see.
Only as much as I dream can I be.*

Two tables were set up against another wall. A spread of cakes, punch and mints was laid out. On one of the



While mill burns, left, Valsetz high school seniors gather to watch. The young men are (from left) Jeff Wheeler, Rich Gwynn, Dale Howe, Ken Jeske and Dean Reckard. Below, Dick Klug pushes debris toward the inferno with his Caterpillar tractor.



cakes, "Valsetz, the Last Hurrah" was printed. The other cake listed the names of the graduating seniors.

More than 300 spectators filled the gym's bleachers and the rows in front of the makeshift stage.

Some men wore overalls and work boots. Others, like John Jeske, wore suits and ties and looked slightly uncomfortable. Jeske, a powerful man built for the rigors of heavy labor, wore a suit with large checks composed of blue lines on a white background.

When the seniors filed out at 8 p.m., they looked shocked when they saw how big the crowd was. A group of reporters and photographers was lined up off to the side of the stage.

Like all graduations, there was the reading of the class history, prophecy and

will. Then Hatfield spoke.

The senator told the audience that life was full of change. Humans throughout history were able to adapt to change. It was an upbeat speech, and Hatfield received a solid round of applause.

When Tony began to read his speech, his voice quavered. But by the end of the first paragraph, he was doing fine.

"The seniors as well as the townspeople will be starting new lives, striving to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world," he said. "For many of us, this has been our only home, our security, and now it has been torn out from under us."

He told the audience that the memories of Valsetz could not be taken away and that they could not allow hatred to control their feelings.

"We are putting our energies forward and our past behind us so that we can contribute in our new communities and to this great nation," he said.

The audience applauded. Tony sat down and looked at the floor.

Dale Reckard gave the prayer, and the graduation was over.

A raspy tape played the class song, "Everyone knows your name," the theme from the television show, "Cheers," as Kim Carter stood up, walked to the podium and took a single white rose.

She walked down the aisle to meet her parents, who were standing waiting for her. Norma was crying and Robert hugged his daughter.

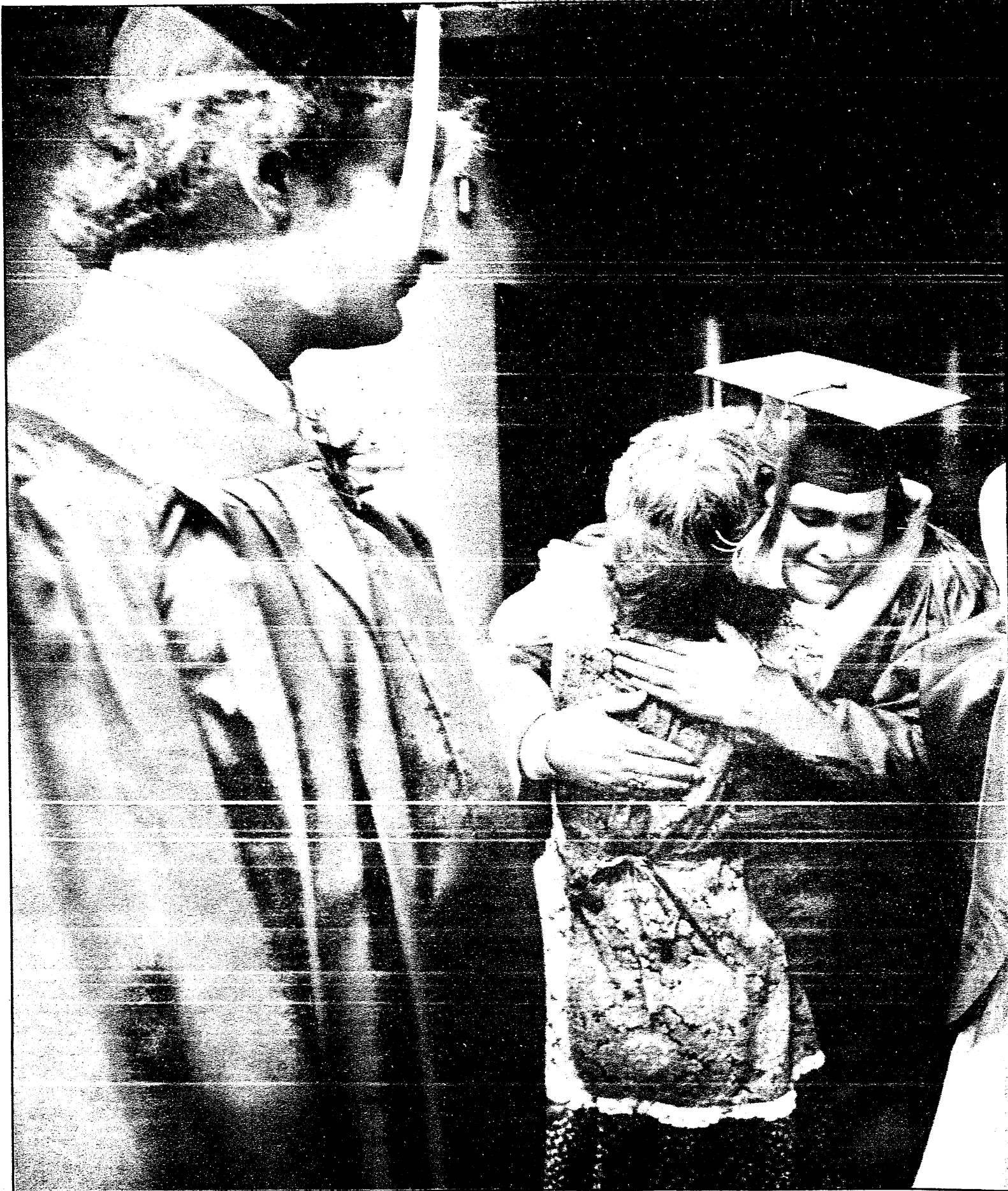
Each senior gave his mother a rose as he walked down the aisle. Then the seniors lined up against a gym wall and

formed a receiving line.

Everyone in the audience lined up to walk through the line. The parents were first. The mothers, all of whom had tears in their eyes, hugged each student. The fathers shook hands with the boys and hugged Kim Carter.

The last parent to walk through the line was John Jeske. The first student he greeted was his son, Ken, who had just wiped a tear from his eyes.

Father and son each stand 6 feet 4 and were two of the biggest men in the gym. Ken held out his hand as his father walked up to offer congratulations. John stopped for a moment and hesitated. Then, stepping forward, he grasped his son in a tremendous bear hug and held him tightly. The father stepped back and went through the line, hugging every student.



Ken Jeske (left) watches as Connie Campos hugs graduating senior Roy Hutchison (center), and Teresa Howe hugs Dean Reckard. Nine seniors graduated.

The Future

As the warmth of summer began to press into the mountain valley, the families loaded their belongings and their memories into cars and trucks and headed over The Hill for the last time.

During the months since the decision was announced Dec. 12, 1983, they had prepared themselves for their futures. In some cases, the future holds better jobs at better pay, in others, the future holds compromises: lesser jobs at lesser pay. In still others, the future is uncertain, but the people of Valsetz will survive.

In the town, a metamorphosis occurs as each departure sends the town crew to destroy a home and return a little more of Valsetz to the forest. A forest community has broken camp. Now it is hard to remember exactly where a home once stood or to recall the sounds of voices that once filled the air here. The school and the Rec Hall would be the last reminders of the community.

Ninety years after Andrew L. Porter, the government surveyor, and his crewmen, Herman Pament, John P. Allen and Layrens H. Young, trod the earth here, the life they found is returning to the town. Each day, the elk and the deer roam closer to what once was only the province of humans.

The small bit of forest that was cleared by Oscar A. Fanno for his cabin beside the creek is returning.

Although many townspeople had hoped to live near what once was Valsetz, they were forced to scatter to wherever they could find work.

They became the distrusted flatlanders, living with more traffic, more rules and more people.

Carol and Dick Wycaver moved to Roseburg. Dick makes \$11 an hour working for Roseburg Lumber Co., about 80 cents an hour more than he made in Valsetz.

Veronica "Ronnie" Wycaver, their 16-year-old daughter, will attend the city's 1,500-student high school, and she plans to play on the girl's basketball team.

No matter what had happened to Valsetz, Ronnie had known that she would

leave Valsetz one day. For her, opportunity had always lain over The Hill. When she contemplates her future, she sees college, and she hopes to run her own business.

Although at times she feels like a visitor in Roseburg, she does not mind living there. She is lonely. Her mother insists that she get out each day and walk through the new neighborhood.

Throughout the summer, the Ferguson Logging Co. will prepare the earth that was compressed by the habitation of Valsetz.

Hired by the Boise Cascade Corp., the company will bring a 98,000 pound D-8L Caterpillar single-shank ripper over The Hill. Derry Welch, 44, will maneuver the 22-foot long machine through Valsetz and churn the ground and expose fresh soil.

Cadillac Avenue and Main Street will be broken up and the asphalt will be carted away and buried in a freshly dug grave somewhere in the woods.

In the winter, before the first snow, foresters will come over The Hill to plant baby Douglas fir trees in what, by then, will be called the old Valsetz townsite.

In time, the saplings' roots will begin spreading into the soil throughout the town. The young trees will grow where Ivy Van Eps stood in her garden and covered her ears as Bob Endecott drove the blaring truck down Cadillac Avenue; they will take hold where Gladys Hibbs picked up the debris mementoes; they will draw nourishment from the earth where the homes of the Wamboldts, the Hagens and the Jeskes once stood.

The trees' tops will reach toward the sky, and their trunks will fill in the section of the forest that decades ago was cleared away to make room for the town.

Ronnie thinks about Valsetz every day. In her bedroom, she has a milepost marker from one of the logging roads — 11 — the same number she wore for the basketball team.

She is not scared of life over The Hill. She knows that living in Valsetz has given her qualities that will make her life elsewhere different and challenging.

Throughout her life, Ronnie will carry memories of Valsetz. For her and for the others who once lived in the mountain valley, Valsetz will stay alive in their minds and hearts.



Fawn stands near Valsetz, a place the forest is reclaiming.



Residents and former residents of Valsetz gather on the school's front lawn during the town's final reunion May 27, 1984.

Epilogue

Valsetz's residents scattered to widely separated cities and towns throughout the West. Here is what happened to the principal figures in this narrative:

— Jim "Red" Smith moved to Salem. He is looking for work and lives on unemployment.

— Ivy and Raymond Van Eps moved to Sheridan, where Raymond looks for a job and collects unemployment.

— Doug Johnson and his wife, Joan,

have retired in Waldport.

— Bob Endecott lives in Willamina with his daughter and her husband. His driver's license was reinstated, and he drives a log truck for a small trucking outfit.

— Eileen and Tim Hagen live in Gates. Tim works for Green Veneer Inc. in Idanha, 25 miles away. He makes \$6 an hour, \$5 less than he made in the Valsetz mill. Their sons, Bert and Matt, will attend school in Mill City.

— Wayne and DyAnne Johnson live in Wasilla, Alaska, near his parents. DyAnne is an office manager in Anchorage. Wayne is looking for work. Their daughter,

Heather, will attend high school in Anchorage. Their son, Tony, will attend Oregon State University.

— Robert and Norma Carter live in Lyons. Robert earns about the same wage working for Young and Morgan Co. as he did in Valsetz. Kim is visiting her brother in Fresno, Calif.

— Bobby O'Donnell is working in Boston, Mass., for the summer and living with relatives. He begins serving a stint in the U.S. Army in September.

— Marvin and Roberta Wamboldt live in Sandy. Marvin is looking for work and lives on unemployment. Jesse and Marvin Jr. will attend Sandy High School.

— Lige Calkins lives in a trailer in Valsetz while he and others continue to destroy Valsetz. He has had several job offers.

— John and Arlene Jeske live in Dallas. Their son, Ken, has applied to Oregon State University. Arlene is looking for a job. Each weekday, John drives over The Hill to Valsetz where he helps complete the town's destruction. When he is done, he will go looking for another job.

— The last block placed in the mill's lathe has been taken to the Western Forestry Center in Portland. The partially peeled log, with the worker's signatures on it, will be put on display.



RANDY WOOD

To prepare this special report, Oregonian photographer Randy Wood and staff writer Tom Hallman Jr. lived in Valsetz for more than 80 days spread over the six final months of the town's existence.

Wood, 31, and Hallman, 28, started taking pictures and gathering information last Christmas season. They finished last month.

During that time, they spent countless hours talking to the townspeople and listening to them. They shared Valsetz's joys and sadnesses, and they became accepted as a part of the community by its people, who were candid and forthright with them.

Wood shot about 200 rolls of black and white and color film and printed about 500 working photographs from which the final selection was made. Hallman interviewed more than 150 persons, some of them repeatedly.

Wood was born July 25, 1952, in Creston, Iowa, and was raised in Dallas, Ore. He re-

ceived a bachelor of arts degree in technical journalism from Oregon State University in 1975. After two years working as a photographer and reporter at the Albany Democrat-Herald, Wood joined The Oregonian's photography staff in 1977.

Hallman was born Aug. 16, 1955, in Portland and raised in the city. He received a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1977. He worked as a copy editor for Hearst Magazines, special publications, in New York, and as a reporter for the Hermiston Herald, before becoming a reporter for the Tri-City Herald in Pasco, Wash., in 1978. In 1980, Hallman joined the reporting staff of The Oregonian.

The project was directed and the story edited by Metropolitan Editor Judson Randall; picture editing and design were by Tim Jewett, assistant graphics editor; copy editing was by Annette Conard.



TOM HALLMAN JR.