



*SKEET LANGLEY: "It was really nice back then. It was nowhere to go and nobody to bother you." (Photo courtesy Skeet Langley.)*

## Lester "Skeet" Langley

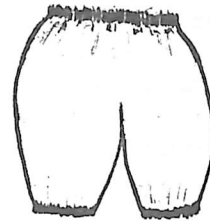
I was 11 years old when I got to Lando and I'll be 74 in July. So that makes 63 years I been here. I come from down on the farm in Kershaw Co. My daddy was Jim Langley and he had people already here workin' and so he come up and went to work. But he didn't live too long after he went to work in the mill. After he died here, none of us never did try to leave. We just stayed around. He had a brother named Reese Langley and another one Erne Langley, and a brother named Bart Langley here. My Mama was Mattie Wilson and she was from over around Lancaster. Daddy's brothers had got him a job and he brung us all up here to work. After Daddy died, my Mama married Reese Langley and we moved in that little shot-gun house right 'cross from the old mill - they got a waste house made out of it now. That was a nice house. My step-daddy done a lot of "watching" down there at night and that's why we lived in that house so close to the mill. He died himself with the flu when it was so bad - 'long 'bout 1918 I think.

I was about 12 years old when I went to work up there in the spinnin' room. The inspectors wasn't after us so bad when we first went to work, but when they passed that 16 age law they had me and Eva Aldridge, Dora Hefner and them and we wasn't supposed to work but so many hours. They had us workin' overtime, and we'd have to hide then when them inspectors come through. We had more then off of 'bout 10

or 15 cents a hour than we have now off of nearly \$3.00. It's the truth. I wouldn't even have to go down there to work now, but I just love to be workin'. I don't like to be sitting around. I work 3 days a week now Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and when I'm around here I'm piddlin' with somethin' all the time less I sit down and watch a hour and a half of T. V. in the morning.

It was really nice back then - It was nowhere to go and nobody to bother you. We'd have sometime 25c on the weekend and have as big a time as we would now with \$25.00.

We played ball a lot. And Eva Aldridge and them played basketball - called 'em the "Bloomer Girls" cause they wore black bloomers. We all got together and helped 'em dig off a



place over in the old pasture for a basketball court. We cleaned it off real good for 'em. Fixed 'em up just right. Any girls from other places wanted to play, they'd play 'em. But they mostly just picked up and played. Finally they quit and we took it over for baseball and somebody tore it up - busted glass all in it. What ball we played then, we come out to the Big Diamond right behind where Benton's house sets now. The only time we could play there was when the big fellers didn't have a game. Back then they had some good players in Lando - them Miller boys and Luke Long. I played some ball 'til 1928 when I hurt my knee. I had on spikes and went to stoop over to pick up a ball and my knee didn't turn - the spikes held it - my body turned and I wrenched my knee. I never did fool with it no more.

I married while I still couldn't walk - didn't have no job neither. Came on back down here after my knee healed and me and the old lady both went to work in the spinnin' room. She was Inez Brooks. We didn't have nothing, but we got us a little house and went to keepin' house. We've been together ever since. That was July 30, 1928. That's a pretty good time to stay with one woman.

I reckon I went to school 3 days in my whole life - but I've managed to get by. Don't know much, but what little I know I just pick it up - trying to learn.

I used to doff down there with Dora Hefner, and a girl named Clyde McKenzie, and one named Dora Carter. We all used to work together down there. We had a good time back then and that's the truth - a good time. Back then, it was just naturally good places all over the country.

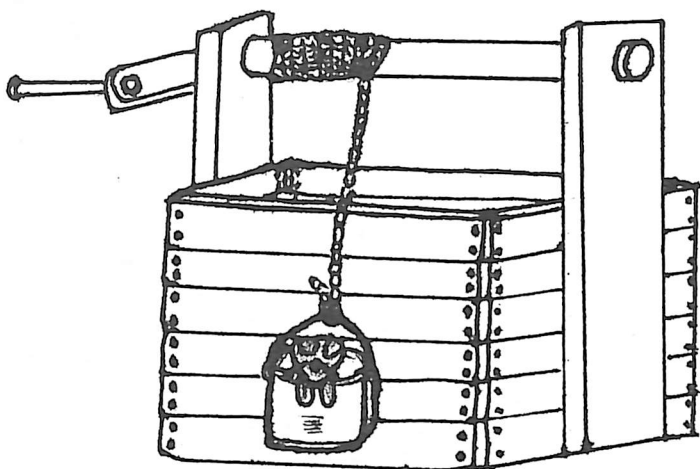
We got these draw frames down at the mill now. I hang around them a lot trying to learn 'em. Sometimes I can go down there and twist that end and put it up there and it'll go just as smooth and sometimes I'll worry with 'em half a hour and I just walk off and leave it. I can't even get it to go. I reckon just trying too hard.

I wasn't supposed to go to work 'til Thursday, but I had to

work 2 ten hour days this week helpin' em get ready for another pile of junk to come in down there. It'll be in Saturday or Sunday one - that ole' twister. That'll cut out about fourteen hands when they get it started up. That's what's ruinin' the country now. They buyin' this new machinery - they cut out about 30 or 40 hands when they put them two machines in down there. It's all together a pile of junk - just to cut people out of work. They claim they goin' on three shifts when they get this new twister in. I told 'em down there, if they gonna run it like that I'd rather have 8 hours 7 days a week than to fool with 12 hours a day, 3 days a week. You would have time to come home and set down and rest your feet a little bit in the evenin'. I reckon if it comes in next week, it'll be a couple of weeks before they get it runnin'. It's nice machinery all right, but I'm gone tell you, when the guarantees up on it, that's when somebody's gone fix it. When you buying that German stuff and parts, you gettin' up in the money. Heath ain't gone like that. And they wearin' it out fast as they can. They got little ole belts down there I 'magine cost you 40 or 50 cent apiece and they ain't six inches long and they put on 8 to 10 a night - ever night and 'bout that many in daytime. But he ain't gone like that bill comin' in. They little ole' thin belts and they pull a head a turnin' roller, and if that roller chokes up, that belt don't stop. It just keeps on sliding. It burns it right off - right now.

I've shore seen a heap a change. Used to be you had to tote water from a spring or a well and that ain't been too many years back. Then they put the water in and later on they commenced to puttin' in the bathrooms.

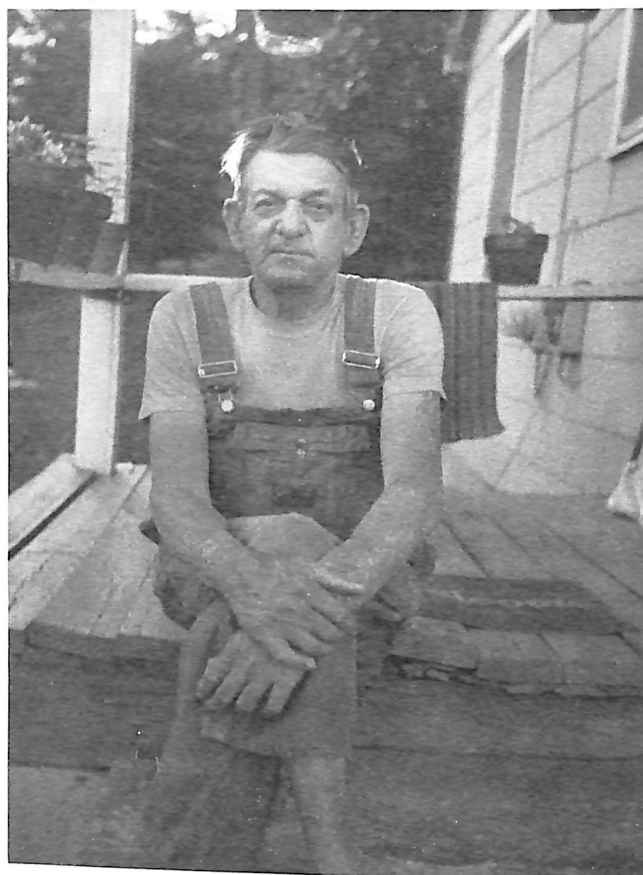
Boys used to do things just for meanness. You take, you go to draw your bucket of water out of the well and draw in a dead cat or somethin' somebody had throwed in. Well, then, you got to wait 3 or 4 weeks before you can use that well after you get the cat out. You never heard nobody grumblin' 'bout nothin' though. They thought they had it good.



People stayed right around in here most all the time. They done the most of their buying right here at the company store. Before they had an ole' T-model truck, they had two mules and a wagon. People'd go down and buy their groceries and they'd haul it out to their house on that wagon. You could take \$5.00 down there and then get you enough stuff to last

you two weeks right down there. Why, \$5.00 wouldn't even put one meal on the table now. Not with a good eatin' bunch. They put out loonies down here twice a week, on Wednesday and you could go back on Saturday and get more. I went to the store down there many a time - me and the old lady, and got \$3.00 worth of loonies and we'd get as much groceries as we could tote home for three dollars worth of loonies. And we had a plenty. Now if you go to cook chicken or steak or pork chops for dinner, it's over \$3.00.

In Hoover days, I worked over there to the second dickey branch and dug ditches for 10¢ a hour and was gettin' 8 hours a day, 2 days a week. The mill was stopped off then, but it didn't stay closed down too long - maybe a couple of months. They never did say nothin' to the people on the hill about rent then - never did. They don't bother you now. If you get in a house down on the hill and take care of it, that's better to them than the rent situation, cause the rent ain't but 50¢ a room. But if you livin' in one of them houses like say this week and you move out, then you go back in there next week and there ain't nothin' in it. Everything in there is tore out - the lights, bathroom outfit, everything. You can't have nothin' - other people tear it up - don't take care of things. They used to keep the village up good, then the people got to where they didn't try to help none and it commenced to goin' down then. People just got to where they didn't care - thought the mill company wouldn't do nothin' about 'em. Then after the people quit tryin' to help, the mill just quit too. If a house comes empty now, they'd rather tear down a house as put somebody in it. But they all in such bad shape now 'til they ain't gonna fix nothin' up.



SKEET LANGLEY: "I've shore seen a heap 'a change."