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Wally Chandler: Catching Steel Wally Chandler: I went into the steel plant in May, 1925. My father was in the mill before me. He started in 1905. He was a sailor man before that. And a farmer in Prince Edward Island. In 1946 he was pensioned off at 74 years of age. Oh, he was a powerful man--6 foot 1, 210 pounds, and his wrists were half again as big as mine. No fat of any kind. In the steel plant he was catching steel. My father worked from the meager jobs in the rod mill up to finishing, which was next to top man. But then he left that mill and came over into the bar mill, catching steel. Catching it with tongs. The bar would come out, you'd grab it, swing it around with those big long steel tongs in your hands. (Would the bar be hot?) I should say. And this was what our type of work was, catching all the time, day in and day out, hour after hour, coming as fast as ever it could spew it out--this was our job. (And do they do catching today?) Oh yes. But in those days we rolled all sizes from 1/2-inch round and 1/2-inch square to all sizes of round and square. All sizes of round up to 2-inch round. Now you can imagine a 32nd and a 64th--these were sizes. We rolled 500 different sizes in my day in the mill, different sizes in rounds, flats, squares, truss bars, angles--and now they only roll high bond, for concrete, with the knobs on it. They only roll nine sections. And we rolled 500. All the commercial bars are gone. When I first went to work, I went with my father. If I had been in the bar mill 3 more months, I would have had 48 years in the bar mill alone. I was almost 17 when I went on, I went into the general yard for 3 months, part-time work--just anything that came up, that they'd need men. We didn't get brass checks at that time, we got cardboard, because we were only temporary. And there were 3 men on the mill all the time, catching. They'd work 15 minutes and they'd come off, 3 more men would go on. Half-time job. You only spent half time. Sometimes you could stay half an hour. Then the other man had a half hour off. It was that strenuous you'd usually work 15 minutes, if it got a little smaller and not so hot, you could work half an hour. All the time I was working on the lesser jobs, I was going up there, catching, breaking in. I'd get the last one at dinner time. If I missed it, well, go down and wind it up. If the regular catcher missed it, it went to the scrap machine and you had to bail it up--they had a man there to

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