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and helped you up the ladder a little quicker than a person could go today?) Yes, Number one, I was a graduate metallurgist. Number two, I was taller than he was--he was short. That's important to some people's thinking. If you're short, sometimes you've got a thing about life, you know? He had a graduate metallurgist already here. A local boy. Shorter than he was. And then I think what really started him, I talked back to him. Kelly was a good manager, trained in the rolling mill end of the business in Lackawanna. He hadn't been to college. He'd come up through the ranks. But got to be boss of the rolling mills in Lackawanna, superintendent of all their rolling mills. And the people in Sydney, looking for somebody who knew something about steel to take over, hired him to come down here and made him general manager, Kelly was a steelmaker. But he knew very little about blast furnaces. But he was a good operator--and a good millman. I doubt that you'd find even today a steel mill where the general manager had had any experience in every department. I was kind of lucky that way. (The people who actually owned the plant, were they steelmakers themselves?) Oh, no. One owned big clothing stores in Montreal. (So what were they if they weren't steelmakers?) Well, what would you call them? Entrepreneurs? Or something of that nature. A fellow called Roy Wolvin. When I came here he was president of the company that owned this place and a few others--British Empire Steel Corporation, (And what did he know about how to make steel?) Not a bloody thing. Not one thing. That's why he got a man like Kelly to come here, somebody who did know something, (So their skill is in finding men who can make steel.) Right, And finding how best to operate. They saw an opportunity here. In the old days it was the raw material--the proximity of coal and iron ore within 350 miles, (And the harbour?) Well, yes, a good harbour. But iron and coal are the two main ingredients of steel. If you haven't got them, you can't make steel. (What did you find here in the way of a steel plant when you came?) An old plant, 25 years old. It wasn't a good plant. The open hearth was a very poor arrangement, As far as I know, it was the only open hearth ever built that way. It had ten 50-ton furnaces. And the working platform, the charging platform, as it's called, of the open hearth, was at ground level, you won't find that anywhere. You will never see that again. (Why?) It's always up in the air so that the underside of the furnace--the checker chambers and all that-- so they can be above ground. Here in Sydney the checkers were underground. Consequently, when you had to change the checkers, which you did every few months, you had to take the floor up, and then take the top off the checker chamber--and then go down and throw out the old bricks and lay new bricks in their place. And there were four of these to every furnace. Consequently, it interfered with the charging machine's going back and forth. That's the way the plant was built in the first place. I don't know what crazy idea the guy had. It was the worst idea ever promulgated for a steel plant, for an open hearth.' (Some people have said that when Sydney Steel was built, it was the state of the art, that it was the finest at that time.) That's just not true. This open hearth plan, for instance--that's the worst thing they could have



done. Had to take it up every few months, from underground, for every furnace--and there were 10 furnaces in a line. Those checkers were an error. Costly in terms of money as well as time. And they operated on all through the Sec? ond World War. And that was just one of many things we needed to do to improve the plant. The only trouble that made it somewhat slow was that we didn't have the money. And in those days the government wouldn't give you any money. And nobody else would. You had to earn the money before you could spend it on improving the plant. In 1926, we were broke. We were in receivership-- i the courts put it there--it couldn't pay its bills. It hadn't been making money, I guess, not since the First World War. And whatever money they made in the First World War, they took out of it, they didn't put it back in the plant, (The own? ers did?) Yeah. (They didn't invest in re? building the plant after the war?) No. It would have been wise, but they didn't do it. (The plant made profit during the war.) Every steel plant made profits. (And when you came here, you saw no evidence that they had taken those profits and plowed it back into the business?) Just the opposite. You knew they hadn't. You could see that they hadn't. A lot of the equipment was getting out of date. But this man Kelly, he took ahold. We put a proposition up to the board of directors every year which added up to a few million dollars, very few. I think the highest proposition I ev- Before the situation was changed to im? prove the efficiency, the Charging Car moved through the Open Hearth area, pour? ing molten iron into a furnace. The fur--~ nace was at floor level and the checkers were under that floor. Photo about 1920, (45)