

BRISTOL, TENN.

THE BOSSES I HAVE HAD

This morning, a friend of mine called me on the telephone and said he had run into a friend of mine last week in Florida. His name was Pat Kirby, and I said, "Sure, I remember Pat - his father used to be my boss in the tying-in room in a Cotton Mill at Pacolet Mills, South Carolina." I said he was one of the best bosses I ever had, and then I started reminiscing in my mind and realized that I have had many good bosses in my lifetime.

I suppose the first boss, besides my father and mother and many brothers, was when I was about nine years old. I got a job delivering packages of meat for the market at Pacolet Mills. Oscar Horne and Furman Horne, two brothers, were both good bosses and tolerated me for several days, even though I was too young to realize the importance of getting the packages out before the meat spoiled. You see, I couldn't resist stopping once in a while to play a few innings of baseball on the way to make my deliveries.

Probably my next real boss was Lige Williams in the Weaving Room at Pacolet Mills. I was a sweeper at the age of fourteen during summer vacation, working fifty-five hours a week at 18¢ an hour. Mr. Williams was very firm, but fair and understanding. I always liked him. I worked there two successive summers.

My next boss was Mr. Calvin Bonner of Bonner Brothers Store and Garage. I worked in the garage, doing a little bit of everything, fixing flats, grinding valves, putting in new bearings, and putting in new brake bands on the old "T" model Fords. You know you had to put in a new set every month or two if the car was driven any at all. Mr. Bonner, as well as his two brothers, were all good and understanding men. They fussed at me two or three times, but believe me, I deserved it.

My next boss was Will Kirby. As mentioned above, he ran the tying-in machine at the lower mill. It was a very complicated machine, but Mr. Kirby could "make it sing." That was back in 1927 and '28, while I was at the age of seventeen. Mr. Kirby also had the ability to make you want to work fast and well. The boss above him was Mr. Wayne Williams, and he was very good too. A lot of the people thought he was hard, but he did not give anyone trouble if ~~one~~ did his work properly. He was very fair and considerate,

I left there, mostly, because my father died, and my mother needed someone to run the little Corn Mill and Furniture Shop at Pacolet, South Carolina.

For three years at Pacolet, running this Corn Mill, where I also made cedar chests and repaired furniture, sharpened saws and plows, I probably had the meanest boss of my life -- myself. I was never satisfied with the amount of work and the kind of work I was able to turn out, but with the assistance of my mother, she and I were able to "eke" out a living for our family, which at the time included an invalid sister at home, and another brother who was at home more than half the time between jobs. We milked two cows, always raised two hogs, and kept about 100 chickens. This ended in 1933 when I went to work for Harley Bag Company, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Judge Robinette

The corn mill and furniture shop was in what is now Central Pacolet. It was on Hwy 150 close to Claude Scales' Café.