FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

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SUBJECT: Bachelors retreating to live in the woods during the 1930 depression. The experience of working as a sawyer from the very early days of the crosscut saw right up through the present. Violating stories including "run-ins" with gamewardens and narrow escapes.

SOURCE: Arthur Mutkala

COMMENTS: This person is a lumberjack and he can tell stories which keep the listener spellbound. This tape is one of the best I have made. We sat down one summer afternoon and began drinking beer and talking. An excellent experiential history of the lumberjack profession.

I: Let's start talking about what it was like here in the depression...the big depression.

R: In the early thirties.

I: Starting around there...like we were saying in there that the young men would go to the woods. Why would they?

R: Well, there wasn't anything to do at home after the farmers were done in the fall and that was a good (???) They'd have a (???) go out in the woods and they'd haul a few potatoes to home, and they'd hunt rabbits, partridge and venison from the woods to eat.

I: Like at this camp where you were staying...where was it?

R: Well, there were several camps...most of them were built near a creek or a river for the sake of getting water...drinking water. One of the camps was six or seven miles west of here (???)...and there was about as many as eleven men there at one time.

I: Holy smokes...who was out there then?

R: Hunting season...well there's quite a few of those are dead by now and...

I: Who were some that you remember?

R: Wagner Pherkala (sp) was one...Abe Kinunen, he's an older guy - at that time...he's been dead a long time already...Albert Maki stayed there for awhile deer season...Iver Eilola...two or three Haataja boys and that was in deep of the depression in 1933, I believe...'32 or '33.

I: What was this camp like you were living in?

R: Oh, it was a great big well-built house out of logs. One of the best. Can't find builders like that today that built houses like them days.

I: What was it made of?

R: Made out of logs hand-hewed. And the type of corner they had on those
logs...I don't recall...it had a name for it that you don't need any spikes or anything like that for it.

I: ???)

R: No, it's more than that. (???) is that simpler type.

I: Dog's neck

R: Yeh, that the simpler type, but there's another one that it's...well there's a notch in there on two sides that you saw part way...knock that block out. But, the utmost end of that log is thicker than where you cut it.

I: So, it's locked in there then.

R: It's locked...it can't spread anyway out of it.

I: Frost won't move it?

R: Well, that doesn't prevent the frost from moving it, but it'd move the whole building...but they were really well built. And an acre of timber was a little bit bald. Well it was...they sawed part way into the lower portion of that timber because the weight that was put on there forced the timber down...close up the cracks. And those timbers were seasoned the year before they were built.

I: So you had quite a crew there, hmm?

R: Yes, there was quite a crew and nobody had a deer hunting license...and one of the fellows from Pelkie, Mattila - they live in L'Anse now...he worked parttime for the Conservation Department but right at that moment he wasn't working for them; but, he came and sent word that the Conservation Officer was going to be up there. We had a bunch of liver and hearts right on top of the hunting camp because we didn't have no refrigeration...there was nothing like that out there, but they kept in the snow, they kept pretty good. We didn't even remove them... nobody paid no attention that the Game Warden was coming there or not, because it was no...to spend a few days in jail to get something to eat.

I: It wouldn't have been the worst thing to have been tossed into jail you would have had a nice warm...

R: They knew that too. Yeh, dollar was hard to get to...we used to get a loaf or bread from home, some homemade butter, salt and coffee... that was it. Put it in a gunny sack and fold that into half and tie binder twine from one corner to the other you just throw it over on your shoulder. Couldn't even afford a pack sack.

I: Were you making your own clothes and that or...

R: No...used to buy clothes...little as we...no we're making clothes them days. Had clothes made for myself to go to school, but that
was long before that.

I: How would you divide up the work that had to be done out in camp?

R: Well, they all cooperated...there was no problems at all and, in fact, some of the time we spent in our own huntin' camp which was later on in the years...first day...day before deer season in fact, we used to get the wood ready and everthing cleaned up...sometimes we'd hang one on, but then after deer season started there was no liquor at the camp.

I: Liquor was kind of hard to come by in those days too.

R: Yes, and we didn't feel it was right to have liquor when there's guns around too. And, well, certain guys were designated to keep the camp clean...sweeping and so forth, cleaning the tables, taking care of the firewood, although we generally would gang up to make firewood most of the time. Some guys were designated to wash dishes, and some for cooking and anybody that squacked about cooking, he had to take over.

I: Did anyone squack?

R: Yeh, there was one fellow said that, "well this stew is really salty, but that's the way I like it". So, he didn't have to take over...he came back so quickly there.

I: He knew what the score was on that.

R: Right...just caught himself in time.

I: And, what would other guys do then?

R: You mean during the night then?

I: Yes.

R: Well, we had our supper as early as we could when all the guys came in and changed clothes as you're pretty wet from hiking in the woods, and we'd play pinochle...sometime 'til wee hours of the morning...'til your eyes close up. And we'd play some tricks once in awhile on one of the...

I: Can you remember any of the tricks that were played?

R: Yes...I remember one, it was 1943. Ammunition was hard to get because of the war. I didn't even want to go out there...I stayed here at home and then hunt around here a little bit...one of the buddies over there he coaxed me into comin out there. He said, "there's so many deer out there". Right before that they had setup a pair of eyes in a big tree out there.

I: How did they do that?
R: Well they got...they pried these off highway signs, these little glass things that look like eye and they put about five - six inches apart.

I: Shiny metallic things, huh?

R: It's glass and it couldn't get anything...in fact, this buddy of mine was saying, he said, "them guys couldn't hit anything". He asked me how's my supply of ammunition. I said, "I've got a full box which is plenty". So, I went out there. After I got to the camp, I...this is the following day I went there for a couple of nights...there was no snow on the ground but it was greatly damp and really dark; and there was Bill Hammer from Calumet, he's still out there...Calumet...he's gone ahead with the light and I was in the middle...we were going single file, and Walt Wilmers from Laurium he was bringing up the tailend. And he had a gun, but he knew the score...them two guys had it figured for me. So, Bill just swept the light around and I happened to look...notice what was shining out there...pair of eyes. He says "where?" So he brought the light back I could see him. Walt Wilmers raised his gun in the back just so I could see it...pointed in that direction. He didn't fire, but I fired once and the eyes disappeared and I took another shot and the other eye disappeared. I said, "well I think I got him". He was set up about a hundred fifty feet from the road so we started to walk in there and I came up to a big hemlock tree where those glass eyes were set. I had hit one of them, but the other shot went about an inch low but it jarred that far enough that it knocked that light off and these guys were trying to kid me, and at the camp after we got there a little bit later that I claimed that I could see the deers legs already when I was getting it. I didn't say anything like that. I was just looking around. I told them that it should be around here someplace. But, there was nothing there.

I: Did they give you the business on that?

R: Well, they got a good laugh out of it and naturally you have to go along with it.

I: What about...you told me once about another story that lumberjacks play a lot of tricks on each other and...

R: Well, I got a couple more concerning this hunting.

I: Oh good.

R: It's a...we built that camp in 1934, I think there was seven in that group at that time. This one fellow kind of new out there...he wasn't an ardent hunter but he was new to that area. The first night out there he got lost. Spent a miserable night. He made it...I don't know why but he made a bonfire under a fairly short hemlock tree and it snowed. And all that snow and rain dripped on him because he had the fire. And here he was right on the goddamn trail about a mile from the camp. And next morning daylight he recognized the area and came back to camp. He was all soaking wet and he didn't long underwear on...he hung 'em up on the
wire behind the big heater stove to dry 'em out...in the meantime...

the night before that we had chocolate pudding for dessert...some left over...one of the fellows took a couple spoonsfull of it and rubbed it on the seat of that long underwear when they were drying, and oh did that guy get mad. He finally got over it. Then, oh I think it was the same fall, we made a drive for deer out there. I think there was about four of us and they told me just about where to go watch...they expected some deer to come through there and Charlie Knuuttila nearby there...stationed not too far from where I was and Walt Wilmers was one of the fellows doggin...making that loop. And Walt came out just about where I was stationed at and he had one of these Havelin motor oil signs, just...oh it's about four feet high cut out just like a black bear and he told me what curve he's gonna put it on...set it up there with snow for background...he knew Charlie and I would be walking on that trail there to the camp, and he got left off the side a little bit breaking some sticks to attract our attention. I could see that at a distance. I told Charlie, I said, "there's a bear over there". "Where" Charlie says. "Right there" I said. So Charlie's ahead of me and he fired. He had a 35 Remington and as soon as he fired he said, "oooh I been taken again". He did hit it right through the neck I believe. Soon as he fired he knew that somebody was playing tricks on him. And here Walt was laughing to beat the band. And, then at the camp there that same fall we had to shoot to qualify for the best bunks...lower bunks. The higher weren't much. I was lucky enough to get one of the lower bunks. There was two lower bunks, two upper bunks and a little one...third...we used to call that nigger heaven...was room for a couple guys in there too. So, two of the guys on the lower bunks, Charlie Knuuttila and Ed Hammery from Calumet...they're both dead now...but somebody smeared some Limburger cheese on a pillow there. One guy was blaming the other guy on it. And they didn't know who...what was what and there was this old German fellow, Walt Wilmers' dad and his uncle that liked Limburger cheese. And, they had some there. And Ed Hammery was told what happened. He finally told Charlie, "hey Charlie, it wasn't you after all," he said, "I'm sorry I blamed you all this time."

I: That was years later?

R: No that was the first fall we had the camp there. Then we had a little light for...what they call a skylight on the roof of the shack just like living fresh air and lifted in or out.

I: Oh, window up there?

R: Yeh...it's a little peak roof with a window on the end. One of the guys put a rope through that window, tied a block of wood on the end of it and had it on the roof and in the wee hours of the morning he'd start jerking on that rope. Well, the other guys would run out with a gun...they'd think it was a porcupine up on the roof...and it was just a block of wood up there.

I: What would you guys eat out there?
R: Well a... most of us guys saved a little that we could... saved a few pennies to get enough well staples such as some flour and bread... we didn't never haul any meat out there because we took the meat from the woods.

I: What time of the year were you out there, generally?

R: Well, this was deer season from November 14th til the last day of November. That was a must every year them days.

I: But, I mean were there guys out there year around?

R: Well, occasionally, but that... our camp was a little bit too far out there to be a year around use. These year around used camps they were within a couple miles of these roads here. They used those camps for deer hunting too, but most of the winter there was somebody staying around there and playing cards and some trapped some weasels and things like that.

I: I heard that you could make some money trapping during those years.

R: Well a... they didn't have beaver season them days. But, there was mink and muskrat and weasel trapping. There's some years there that mink was valued pretty high... a small mink would pay about ten - twelve dollars.

I: That was real money then.

R: You bet. And, they varied anywhere from fifty cents to maybe two or three dollars a piece. Muskrats about a dollar and a quarter up to three dollars depending on the size.

I: So, that it how you guys would get your cash?

R: Yes, but we didn't need much cash them days. Like I said earlier that we used to get our bread from home... homemade bread and any vegetables we needed we got from home... butabagas, potatoes, cabbage, carrots.

I: How many guys would you have hunting? Or would everybody hunt.

R: Well, at deer season everybody hunted... some at least... some more than others. Those days no trouble to getting meat or deer either because a man was younger he could travel a lot more than he could today too. Although I'm sure there isn't the amount of deer today there was in the '30's. Around 1933 I hunted every day of the season and I only saw six deer. That was very unusual... I often used to see ten - twelve in one day. They were so scattered I didn't think they'd ever come back; but in two - three years there's all kinds of 'em.

I: How did the other people who didn't go out into the woods, how did they make it in the depression years?

R: Well, I don't know. It's pretty hard to explain all the details, but they...
I: Like the family farm, how was that operated in those days

R: Well, there was barely something to eat and it was real hard to pay taxes. And if you had any mortgage or Federal loans or anything like that you had dickens of a time to find enough money to pay for that.

I: That's when people were still paying on their loans

R: Yeh, there were a lot of these farms were mortgaged.

I: Either through the Hardy-Ryan Company or the Federal Land Bank

R: Federal Land Bank was mostly...this land company is farther back than them times.

I: Yeh, that was pretty rough for those people. I've heard since then by talking with other people that the interest rate was seven percent back then.

R: Well, they lowered their interest rate for two or three years during the depression...the Federal Land Bank, they lowered their interest rates.

I: The Federal Land Bank was a loan company, though. It did not have anything whatsoever to do with the United States government.

R: They had their own bank founder...Federal Land Bank.

I: Yes, private bank.

R: Yeh, well it's like a cooperative system.

I: Did they end up with the land of any of the farmers around here?

R: Well, I couldn't put my fingers on any farm here that was sold because of default in payments.

I: From what I've heard, that was a great source of worry then...getting the money to pay the taxes and the interest on the loan if not on the actual principal.

R: Yeh, well I think the biggest worry on loans because you could let your taxes ride for a couple years at least. But, on loans you had to have that...I think they paid every six months.

I: Can you remember your folks worrying about it?

R: Yeh, they used to worry about it once in awhile. We had a pretty good sized family too to take care of.

I: How was it for the dairy business in those years.

R: Well, wasn't too hot. Used to get about...well these small herds here...
it would take them about at least five days to collect a five gallon can of cream. They'd get a low as dollar and five cents for that five gallon can.

I: What other source of money was available to them at the time?

R: Well, my dad used to butcher...at home he butchered the cattle a few cattle every now and then and few chickens and we churned our own butter, had our own cream, used to bottle that and he'd sell that...peddle that...go at least one day a week sometimes more often. Went to Baraga, L'Anse, Pequaming which was pretty busy place them days sawing logs...lumbering town. And sometimes he'd buy cattle from the neighbors and he'd butcher them, cut 'em up and wrap them...chickens the same thing...he got a few bucks that way.

I: So, you'd make your own cream...had your own separating system.

R: Yes, we always had...

I: And butter and you'd sell all that stuff in town.

R:

I: Do you recall the kind of prices you used to get way back then in the depression.

R: Well, I don't recall the prices then...they were way down.

I: But, that's how they made a go of it, heh?

R: Yes...and if you kept everything clean then and nice, well you'd never lose your customers because they were assured that it's a fresh product.

I: Did you have kind of steady customers?

R: Oh yes...yup.

I: What about fish? Did they eat a lot of fish in those days?

R: Well, yeh I guess they did, but we didn't have any means to go down to Lake Superior...we didn't know anything about fishing in them days...at least us boys didn't and I don't think my dad was out too much either except these streams...we fished them in the summertime quite a lot.

I: And there was more fish then?

R: There was a lot of fish then...limit used to be twenty-five a day.

I: And you could get 'em?

R: Well, sometimes you'd catch over your limit, especially in these creeks with brook trout.
I: So, you could survive that way.

R: Yes, nevertheless, no matter how hard that depression hits, well if you had some farm you could have a garden and raise a few cattle and chicken you'd never starve.

I: What about the logging industry?

R: I know very.

I: When did that hardwood market develop around here?

R: It was very slow them days...it was...there was no lumber moving period when that depression. Finally started, oh I'd say...I did work in the woods in 1932 or '33...but the pay was...you had to work like heck to net two dollars a day and you stayed at the camps...was a time there when they used to charge a dollar and two...three cents a day for board and room in a shack there.

I: You would clear two dollars a day.

R: Yeh...had to work pretty good to get two dollars a day clear.

I: So, roughly what they were doing was paying you three dollars a day...little over and taking back a dollar five of that or so.

R: Yes...I'm sure that food didn't cost them more than twenty-five cents...no matter what...and they charged dollar and two cents. Mostly stew and potatoes.

I: Where were you working at the time?

Cut off in tape.

I: The Rouma's were logging at the time...Ollila was logging...where was...

R: Bill Rouma was logging way back in 1924 - 25 when I worked for him. Then back again in 1947 I worked for him. But, 1924 -25 them wages were very small...about forty-five dollars a month...you worked six days a week with board and room as it was...that's forty-five dollars a month. You had a work. Just about from dark 'til dark and those days, with the mechanization we had, it was mostly bull work.

I: When did you start working in the woods?

R: Believe it was 1923 in the fall.

I: How did the logging operation go then? How were they logging? What kind of equipment?

R: Well, they had nothing but horses them days..at least around this area. They had teams of horses all hauling to the railroad tracks.
R: Well, in Pelkie also. But, where I worked they worked from this area into Gidding...you know where Bovoak (sp) lives over here...at Giddings siding.

I: All horse work then, right?

R: Yeh, they had all that logging was done in the winter time. You had to have frozen roads to haul in the winter time. There was no wagons or things like that to haul with. You started in the woods, oh, about Labor Day or so...September some time...and cut in the woods from the more swampy areas first. They cut and then skidded 'em and decked 'em up in the woods for winter hauling. Then...

I: How were you cutting then?

R: Just a regular crosscut saws...hand saws.

I: What's it like sawing with that?

R: Well, in your prime it's not too bad...a young man you have your saw sharpened the way it's supposed to be, well it's not hard working when you get accustomed to it.

I: Does it depend a lot on the man you're working with?

R: Oh yes...and the main/ part to have that saw so it'll cut. And you had to have real sharp axes because you had to chop the notches on the tree with an ax...it wasn't power saw nothing in them days.

I: How much would a crosscut saw cost in those days? Very expensive?

R: About seven dollars.

I: Where would a man get one?

R: Most of these lumbercamps had 'em on hand...you could buy them in any one of these hardware stores...general stores too.

I: But, you had to buy your own...eh.

R: Yes

I: They didn't furnish it at all?

R: No

I: What about your axes?

R: Well, you had a buy them too...except if you were working in the camp on an hourly rate, then they would furnish.
I: What company made a pretty good crosscut saw then?
R: Simon Saw Company
I: Simon Saw Company...where was that located?
R: You got me...but I think it's in Ohio...I'm not sure.
I: Most of the sawyers were using them?
R: Yes...I've used some Atkins saws too, but Simons is an old established saw company.
I: How long was that crosscut?
R: Average size they used around here was six and a half feet...I used some seven and a half feet too, but that was special location...with a great big pine you use a longer. The sawmill here in Alston, we used to get paid fifteen cents an hour.
I: When was this?
R:
I: What sawmill was this? Who was operating the sawmill then?
R: Fellow by the name of Wendell...he bought this local sawmill
I: Was that the only one operating in Alston?
R:
I: Were there any other sawmills operating?
R: Not in the immediate area. And, you had to work hard too...loading hardwood railroad ties on...into boxcars...and lumber and some of them got less than fifteen cents an hour. I got fifteen cents. I was loading hardwood ties and lumber. I know one guy...he was working at the hot pond...that's where they dumped the logs before...they were washed there before they were sawed, and he claims he got ten cents an hour. He asked me, "how come you rate twenty cents an hour and I get only ten cents?" "Well, you're not doing too much here", I said. That was something to live on...ten cents an hour.
I: Unbelievable
R: And you sure had to work and then they try to gyp you like you're on piece work there. Oh, a couple of brothers that had a team of horses there, they had decked a quite a lot of hemlock logs they had hauled there in the winter...they wanted these logs peeled before they go in the sawmill, so these two brothers took a contract on 'em...I don't remember how much gotta...they got so much a thousand for stripping the
bark and they got so much per cord for the bark. And the yard foreman tried to gyp them on that scale besides. It was so low in paying. I don't know where they...one of the brothers got money enough to go get drunk...oh it was some local moonshiner...he went home and got a shotgun and tried to shoot this yard foreman; but he couldn't land him on his sights...he ducked in around the lumber pile 'til he finally ducked into the offices...company offices...which saved his neck that time.

I: Going back to the crosscut days, what was it like to saw in the winter with a crosscut? What kind of clothes would you wear back in those days?

R: Well you'd have heavy underwear, and most of the time a heavy shirt...woolen shirt, then another one on top of it with the sleeves cut out or at least shortened to at least high above the elbows because it gave you more freedom when you're sawing, chopping, wouldn't bind your arms up.

I: Wool pants?

R: Oh yes, you had to have woolen pants otherwise they wouldn't work...and swampers boots and when you get into the camp in the evening you'd take your swampers off and socks and pants and shirts and put 'em up on wires above...or near the stove to dry and generally had a pair of lighter clothes in the bunkhouse to put on for the evening.

I: Where did you buy your swampers from in those days?

R: Oh, most of these local stores...they had 'em.

I: What brand made a good swamper boot then?

R: I think Ballband (sp) was the most famous one...and those were all real rubber, there's nothing synthetic about 'em...had leather tops on 'em, and then these so called teamsters they used to haul logs on sleighs, well they had...they used felt boots with the rubber over 'em because was cold sitting on the top of a load of logs...you'd be on there for hours and hours. And they were never cold.

I: What were they called...these tough boots, did they have a Finnish name?

R: No they didn't, not to my knowledge...Ballband used to make them too.

I: Were you speaking Finn out there in the woods?

R: Not only speaking, but sometimes swore to beat the band in Finnish too...if something went wrong...well all depends...if there was a...some elderly Finns around well we'd talk Finn, but if there was younger fellows we'd talk English. I mean, if there was some that was another nationality, we didn't feel right talking Finn because we know he couldn't understand us.
I: What was it like working that crosscut on a cold morning?

R: It wasn't bad at all. It didn't take long...knock down a tree or two and you'd be warmed up.

I: How long could you go...would you saw straight through until...well how long?

R: Well, if...two and a half hours or so and have a little coffee and then go again 'til dinner time. Them days we used to work a good eight hours a day where today you put in about five - six hours and you think that's a long day.

I: But, you could keep that saw going for eight hours?

R: Oh yes...yes

I: You must have been in pretty good shape, eh.

R: Well you were when you worked all year round in the woods and, well I was in early twenties there well I was in pretty good shape and you could work, you know, right in the hottest part of the day in the sun there it wouldn't bother you...you'd be sweating but it never bothered you.

I: Can you remember any of your partners you used to work that crosscut with?

R: Yes, I remember most of 'em. Ruppert Maki was one of 'em.

I: Who was one of your better partners?

R: Well, I think Ruppert was one of the steadiest and he was a pretty good worker although he probably didn't have the experience that some of the guys had that sawed with me, but...

I: If you got a good partner, what kind of...how many pieces could you knock off in a day?

R: Well, that depends so much on the species and the size and then the timber, how dense it is and whether it's level country or rough country, hilly country you can't do too much.

I: Pretty rough using a crosscut in the hilly country?

R: Yeh...yeh because you got some high high cuts way above your head you got some high cuts to make...hard climbing up them steep hills in the wintertime; but, I have cut as high as a hundred and thirty seven logs in one day but lot of those were pine too. But on the average, I sawed 1933 with an elderly fellow...he was sixty years old then and I was...let's see how old would I be then...I was twenty-two then, and I figured that...see he was an old bachelor...I figured that when he
gets tired, you know, that at that age well he's gonna be crabby, you know; but, boy I never had a better partner get along with than he was. But, him being of that age, well, we averaged around fifty logs every day...but that was the average. I thought it was pretty good. He knew his business from one end to the other.

I: Are there some special tricks in using that crosscut?

R: Yes, there is and not only on the use of it but the way you fall your trees and safety features as many as we had to.

I: Tell me about some of those.

R: Well, you have a tree that leans heavier than normal or else most of the leaves...I mean limbs...are on one side and you can have a straight trunk on it, but the limbs are on one side in straight-grain wood, that will split up...they call it a barber shop...barber chair rather. But, for trees like that you have to...you saw part way in there, in fact, you saw pretty deep then you chop that block off, then you saw each edge of it a little bit and then chop that out too so there's no danger of splitting the sides on it. And those barber chairs they go up twenty-five - thirty feet up in the air and that heavy snod (sp) gets left on the notches side and you come down on either side of that stump and sometimes it'll shoot back twenty feet from the stump so you don't know really where to go. You gotta always try to get behind some tree to keep from being clobbered with it.

I: How does this happen again...it splits so it breaks higher up.

R: Well, your tree is like that and you fall this tree that way and it splits...it starts bending like that and then it splits from here and goes up maybe twenty - thirty feet. Then sometimes it gets hung up on that, you know.

I: When it breaks will that come snapping back ever?

R: Sometimes back and on either side, you know. And it comes so quick. I saw a fellow sawing with a two-man Mercury...two guys naturally, and is a nice tree and he didn't expect it to barber...he didn't make a notch deep enough or cut the corners on it and he tried to jerk that saw out when he saw it was splitting, but this little snipe held it, so he had to leave it there and run...and when that tree...went up twenty thirty feet in the air...broke and it fell on that unit side of the power saw, where the motor...he carried that out in a bushel basket. It was all in little splinters.

I: Have you ever seen anyone get hurt that way?

R: Well, no, but I've heard several cases...actually I've only seen one...two guys get hurt. One got killed, but that wasn't a barber. It was a tree hung up. There were sawing hands...hand saws them days, in fact they were sawing for Wendell Kommila (sp). One of the guys is still living. And this guy that's still living, he used to do the saw
sharpening. You'd always sharpen your saw at noon hour. And your partner would go out and notch the smaller trees already, and then check the trees which way they gonna put and which tree comes out first. They hung up a tree just before noon and it wasn't a very big tree had a hole in it...maybe four – five inches diameter...and this foreigner had told them don't bother with that tree at noon hour, it's not worth taking down. But it'd hung up on a birch about six inches in diameter and a little bit on the down grade side. They went and chopped that birch down...or he chopped...well he chopped almost all the way around it. And he must have evidently looked up because that tree had come down like a shot and hit him on the left side of the forehead and his head was bulged out on his right side. Meantime, my partner and I were sawing on a strip of timber next to them...I heard this feller holler at us when he found his partner out there. So, we had to carry him to the pickup truck there...we had to carry him maybe couple hundred yards. He was hard to carry too, because he weighed about two hundred ten – fifteen pounds and they're limp when they're unconscious like that and there was blood coming out of his ears and I know...I told the woods foreman, I said, "he don't have a chance". Foreman says, "oh he's a tough guy, he'll pull through". They got out maybe eight miles and he died on the way to the hospital.

I: It's dangerous business. Are there any other special tricks in falling a tree that you look for?

R: Well, there's...I've sawed almost thirty years in the woods and there's somethin new you learn every day while you're out there. You'll never know all the dangers and that of the woods work. Because there's so many things that can go wrong. Wintertime when there's snow on the trees, just like a cloud when the tree goes down...you don't see anything that's flying through that...dry limbs or...you always try and get behind a pretty good sized tree nearby. When you're falling a tree, that's the safest place to be.

I: Is there some danger from dry limbs?

R: Oh yes.

I: How is that dangerous?

R: Well, there may be some dry limbs on that tree you're falling and you're squeezing it through a couple other trees, smaller trees which you'll bend but they eventually give up when the tree goes down. Well that tree bends back towards the stump and it rips them limbs off of it...dry limbs...even green limbs...I've seen guys hurt with that. That's the way Bob Sarya got hurt here. Him and Ray Mleko were sawing by hand...they fell a big maple against a hillside and that's one of the worst things you can do too, because there's lot of those shorter heavier trees they...when you knock them against a hillside that butt end of the tree gets left on the stump and they slide backward on your feet. In this particular case, the spring pole...it's a hardwood maybe six – seven inches in diameter...they squeezed this big tree right by it when
they knocked it down and it ripped the limb of a...five inches in
diameter maybe ten feet long off that tree and it flew back and this
Bob Sarya held it...crosscut saw over his shoulder and that thing just
hit the top of his cap and broke his falseteeth in a million pieces
and that saw cut a gash in his arm too. We...my brother Toivo and I
were sawing nearby and they hollered at us so went up there. He was
out completely too and he was a pale as a sheet and he was gagging, so
put our fingers in his mouth and take those broken teeth out of his
mouth and throat so he could breath and then he got his color back.
Then he started really bleeding too; but he came to...well this was
maybe ten miles out of L'Anse, and he came to just before he got to
the doctors in L'Anse. But, he was disabled for a few years on it.
Had a hole right into his skull and he had bark and moss and whatnot
and dirt that they removed over a year after it...the accident...from
that hole in his head. He had a stay part of his stretch in Woods
Hospital in Wisconsin.

I: Well, you got hurt back years ago, huh?

R: Yeh...I got hurt.

I: When was that?

R: December 1958

I: How did that happen?

R: I really don't know what happened. I never did want to go back to
look at anything. I don't really know what happened.

Where were you sawing at the time?

R: I was sawing near 26 south of Winona for Finnigan (sp) Brothers. I
was falling a tree and I walked back maybe twenty - twenty-five feet
and the tree was going just where I intended to go and there was a
couple feet of snow in the trees so I just hunched my neck so I wouldn't
get too much snow in my neck...I think it was about fifteen below zero
at the time...and the next thing I knew I was on my knees in the snow
and I had my power saw in my...across my lap in my hands, of course the
power saw was shut off, and I fell over...head over heals over that saw
and next thing I woke up I was on a bulldozer taking (???) in the woods
then.

I: How did someone know you were hurt?

R: Well, one of the fellows...John Flint from Greenland...he was sawing not
too far from where I was and this was about ten o'clock in the morning
...time for coffee break and he walked by and he didn't see me and said
he heard noise...he said it was just a couple porcupine they make an odd
noise sometime way up in a tree...he went by but then he decided he was
gonna check anyway...he walked back and he's the one that found me then.
He reported to the other crew and they had a brand new pickup...they took
me to the office there...sawmill site...boy every little hump just hurt my back...and called the ambulance then to the mill...I couldn't lay down...they just grab hold of my feet and my neck and they forced me on my back in the ambulance...I couldn't bend. And then they called Emergency in the hospital and they put me in the Emergency room...they put a bunch of stitches in my head and changed my clothes and oh about a week after that they...after a series of x-rays they put a cast on my back from my armpits down to my crotch and I was in that cast for eight weeks. But, I was disabled for about three years from that...three fractured vertebrae and my left shoulder blade was fractured and one rib was broke right next to my spine and I had a gash on my head that took about sixteen - seventeen stitches right down to my skull. Then shock set in that...because that's caused either by the head...blow on the head or that extreme cold weather too.

I: Are there any other real dangerous things about doing that kind of work? You mentioned the limbs...dry limbs...

R: Dry limbs

I: What's this spring pole danger?

R: Well you have a...you knock a tree down...there's a smaller tree goes down with it and there's an awful bend on that. You whack it with an ax or touch it with a saw, you gotta be able to judge which way it's gonna spring when it breaks. It can hit you in the mouth so quick that you...

I: Oh, it's after the tree falls down it holds another tree down...

R: Right

I: ...and then when you start taking the limbs off that tree...

R: Or else even making a cut on that tree itself, you know, it's under the snow you can't see it sometimes.

I: Oh, it's hidden under the snow.

R: Yeh, but if you see it...a sawyer can...if he's careful he can reach way out either with a power saw little bit at a time or else with an ax. But you can judge which way it's gonna spring.

I: That must be pretty frightening then, if a tree is buried like that under the snow, you can't even see it and it can come up. Can it kill you?

R: Oh this falled tree...yeh if the...they can kill you too, but most of the time their not that vicious...they're smaller...you can lose your eye easy enough on that too and break your jaw and things like that.

I: Lot of power in a tree that's bent over like that. Which ones are the worst ones for it? What kind of tree?
R: Well, it doesn't make too much difference...it's got to be hardwood really, hemlock or cedar or things like that they generally break with the weight of it; but, maple or birch they got a good spring on 'em... they don't break too easy. But there's such a force on that...when a tree gets hung up, I mean if you're knocking down a tree, that you're sawing goes against another tree, there's such a pressure on that tree that's leaning against that...that's one of the most hazardous things to go out there and try and cut that off, too. We generally leave it there and let the skinners pull it our and then go back and cut that into logs. Although I've done that sometimes, if there's a safe place, you know, that you can jump behind a tree as soon as it cracks down, you can get away from the danger. And then in winter when there's a lot of snow you gotta be sure you make a trail from where you're falling a tree you made it far enough so you can get out of there because when you got snow up to your waistline, well you're not gonna move unless there's a trail.

I: Oh, you make your own escape trail before you fall a tree.

R: Oh yes.

I: For a green guy in the woods, is it dangerous?

R: It sure is...you bet. Yet sawing is considered...it's not considered a trade...considered a trade, it's just a common labor. My insurance authority told me that one time. Well, I said, "I would like to see a guy that has never worked in the woods and go out there with a power saw and make his living." I said, "how long do you think he'd last?" He said: yeh he knows it, but it's the way the law reads.

I: How does that work toward your disadvantage in terms of insurance?

R: No, well no, I wasn't referring to that, but when I was making a settlement on my accident, well, he says, "it's not considered a trade - it's called a laborer...if you have a trade you get a larger settlement".

I: A trade refers to some sort of occupation that has a very...you have to have special knowledge in order to do it.

R: Right

I: Well, according to that, being a sawyer is having about the most special knowledge there is.

R: As far as safety features, you bet. You got a trade like a pipe-fitter and electricians and those, they're all trades alright, but I don't think any of those are as hazardous as woods work. In fact, they pay the highest premiums for insurance for the woods workers.

I: Is that right?

R: You bet...it's somewhere very close if not thirty cents on every dollar paid out in wages...they put that much of a insurance premium. Then if you have a series of accidents, your rates go up too.
I: For a green guy is pretty dangerous out there?

R: Oh yes...yeh. And then there's some even fellows that have sawed years and years in the woods their...an accident (?) they're too money hungry. They work too fast, too much of a hurry. Sometimes they fall trees...they don't look if there's anybody nearby there and could be near a car somewhere and things like that. And then, the tree may lean where you wish to fall it...

I: So, because it's piecework, sawyers start working as fast as they can to make as much as they can, right?

R: Well, not necessarily, you still have to have that safety in mind at all times. You're working steady, but I think you're accomplishing more by not rushing because if you're rushing falling trees, there's too many trees that get hung up and you gotta...there's nothing you can do with 'em...you gotta leave them there and maybe a day or two or three days before the skidders get that far to pull that tree down. Then you have to back and cut that up.

I: How has it changed now? We were talking about the crosscut saw days... they skidded them with horses, right?

R: Right.

I: Generally with two horses working as a team?

R: Yes...then they switched to tractors, crawler tractors, well in the forties. Some of them didn't change 'til about...1948 I guess.

I: But, it was in the early forties that it started to come through?

R: Yes...yes...during World War II they got crawler tractors and they started skidding with tractors and, now in recent years, I couldn't say just how many years back, must be seven - eight years or so that they started using the rubber-mounted wheel skidders which got it all over the crawler tractor because they can travel faster at longer distance and I think they can go through just as bad places as the crawler tractor will with an experienced skidder...operator and these cables which are called chokers...use five and six chokers on one main cable which is wrapped around a winch and the operator does his own handling of the chokers... he sets the amount in each one where before during crawler tractor skidding, they had to have a special man in the woods to use tongs to skid 'em with.

I: Now, how did these tongs work?

R: On the same principle as a pair of scissors only they're hooks. They open up and the harder you pull on them the deeper them hooks go into the wood...into the log. But, those are heavy then too...they use about four...four pair of tongs on a tractor. They're heavy to handle and they had that rack behind the tractor on the skidway where they got the logs out, well there's one man over there that unhooks the tongs and throws them on the rack on the back of the tractor 'til he got back in the woods again.
I: Special job for him, eh.

R:

I: What did they call that job?

R: Well, the chainer…the guy in the woods out there that was hooking those tongs to the logs.

I: Okay, now let's try to get at the estimated costs of these different skidding technology. How much did horses cost back then a piece, roughly?

R: Well, a good team of horses would run anywhere from four hundred to six hundred, maybe over six hundred dollars. But they would last…some of these loggers the way they operate, they'd only last sometimes only one winter.

I: Why was that?

R: They just took too much out of the horses.

I: Can you remember seeing some of them?

R: Yes, they used to work the heck out of 'em and that is really heavy work for the horses.

End of Part I

I: You were saying how that's pretty rough on a horse.

R: It sure is…I'm glad to see no horses in the woods today. These machines…they can beat 'em all they want to.

I: Tell me about some really sad experiences where you've seen horses working.

R: Well, I seen one where…well he wasn't working but he was on a shopping trip to the store in Pelkie and he had a good sized team of horses and there was…them days they didn't plow the country roads, they were just more or less packed and evidently he met somebody a gave 'em a little road or something…one of the horses fell into the ditch. He was right on his back in there and he couldn't get up no matter what; and of course the owner he had a whip with him which had about a four - five foot wooden handle and a leather thong attached to it. He broke that whip all to pieces and still that horse couldn't get out of there. So, he unhooked the other horse and put a chain around the collar of the horse that was in the ditch and pulled him on the road. Well, there was no trouble then. And that was one of the reasons I liked to see the horses out of there. And I've seen some balkie horses that they…well the horses they would pull so far and they couldn't…well if it's a balkie kind of horse, he wouldn't even make another attempt to pull, even after rest period. So this other driver, naturally he couldn't get
up the hill either because he couldn't get by this guy. So, he unhitched his team to help this...this load that was stuck ahead of him...and had that balky horse on that load ahead of him. So the owner told him to put the chain around his neck and then they did. Team of horses pulling on that chain around that horses neck...he came out of there alright...I don't mean the head, the load came out of there alright. But, things like that. And some of these teamsters they used to haul logs on sleigh haul...they'd have a haywire whip...regular haywire added onto a stick...you know, they'd beat with that and why that can split the hide right off the horse.

I: Pretty rough on the horses. I remember hearing stories where horses were regarded as very very important and that they would take good care of them but they wouldn't take care of the men.

R: That all depends on the teamster...the fellow that draws the horses. Majority of them were good...they'd take darn good care of 'em; but there's always some real mean ones and then some of these...they used to pride their horses you know, that my team can pull more than yours, you know, like that. Some of them horses would go up to twenty-two hundred pounds a piece.

I: What kind were they?

R: They were most ???

I: Would the teamsters, back in the horse days, live at the camps too.

R: Yes, and they had to be the first ones up in the morning. They hadda get up at four o'clock in the morning and go and feed them horses and clean 'em up and then come back to camp...well sometimes take a little nap, but most of the time they didn't go back to bed anymore...they just washed up and waited for breakfast. Then you're the last one in bed at night. You had to take care of them late at night.

I: What did you have to do to the horses late at night?

R: Well, you scrub 'em...brush 'em every night...give an extra feeding of water and hay...bedding.

I: You'd wash 'em down?

R: No, you'd use curry brushes...well I don't know what you'd call it, but a...

I: It's a real thick brush, eh?

R: Well, that's a...to finish it off with, the there a steel that a four-five-six square with a handle on it...a little piece maybe half inch long on it...not real sharp, but if there's any horse manure or anything dried up, well that'll loosen that up and then you brush it with that brush.
I: They'd skid in the fall though, right?

R: Yeh, but they'd skid right through the winter too...but they took those logs in the fall from swampy areas where you couldn't get into in the wintertime and scattered areas. And, in the winter...they call that hot logging, they'd cut and skid them and haul the same day, I mean there was no storing of logs or anything like that.

I: It was a one-man operation...one man to a team, right?

R: Yes

I: But you had to have a lot of teamsters for a logging operation. How many sawyers could one teamster cover, generally?

R: Oh...one teamster can skid all the logs that one sawyer...

I: Oh for every sawyer you need a teamster just about?

R: Yeh...yeh

I: So, you had a lot of teamsters in those days.

R: But there's lot of these operations were small...small operations.

I: I mean but in the woods all over.

R: Oh yes...yes

I: And, from what I've heard, that also provided a market for some farmers to sell hay.

R: Yes, but a lot of these farmers that were actually skidding logs too...in the winter months.

I: ...winter months...

R: Yeh...

I: ...but they would generally stay at the camp too though.

R: Yes...yes...they'd come home maybe weekend and have somebody else take care of the horses while they're gone...sometimes once or twice a month.

I: When they got the crawler tractors in the forties, you mentioned that this was quite an improvement.

R: Oh yes

I: How many...it was a two-man operation, you said, a driver and a chainer.
R: How many sawyers could a driver and chainer take care of?

I: Well, I would say, one and a half...you know, about...each tractor, maybe two, but it'd be pretty...it depends so much on the terrain too. If you got real deep hills to skid from, naturally it's going to be slow sawing too, but it's going to be that much slower skidding too...when it's real steep...you ain't gonna go in there with a tractor cause you can't get out of there. You have to run a cable down there and hook and then pull it up with that. Sometimes they're down there over a hundred...over a hundred feet down there.

I: It depends a lot on the terrain.

R: It depends a lot on the terrain.

I: How was that such a big improvement then? Well, here you got a big expensive bulldozer and two men operating the skidding operation, and if one bulldozer can only handle one and a half sawyers...

R: That's a different thing...a bulldozer and a skidding tractor. Bulldozer was used...that's a big machine...that's used for making roads in the woods. They don't skid logs with that.

I: Oh...the early type crawling skidding tractor was a different thing.

R: Oh yes...still is today.

I: How many could that take care of...still one and a half

R: Yeh...I'm not referring to a bulldozer, I was referring to a skidding tractor. They take care of one and a half to two saws a day.

I: But, that didn't seem like much of an improvement over the horses, huh?

R: Well, it was so much easier anyway, you know. You didn't have to bother with horses and the crawler will go through where horses you had to stop them...so close to the ground, you know, so they won't hurt their hoofs in there. Where crawler can go right through trees like that...five-six inches in diameter...doesn't mean anything. And that depended so much on the driver too. Some of them guys seemed to get three times more logs than the other guys, you know. Someone that's really willing to work and knows his machine.

I: That's quite an art too, isn't it?

R: It is to some extent, yes. That's rough work too...that's real rough riding...it's hard on your back and you get wet in the wintertime. The first ones they didn't...skidding tractors didn't have no cabs over them...well neither did the first bulldozers, either...and now all those
bulldozers they have to have a protective cab over them.

I: Who made these skidding tractors?

R: Caterpillar Tractor Company and AC...Allis Chalmers...and going back to that protective cab on these bulldozers, the bulldozers first came out the insurance companies didn't allow to have cabs on it because they thought you couldn't see anything with a cab over it...any dangers, you know. But, they found out differently. You have to have a cab on there because there's many occasions where a tree fell on it...on the operator and if it wasn't for the cab he would have been killed. So, now it's a must...they have to have a cab on there.

I: What would these first caterpillar skidder-tractors cost, roughly?

R: I couldn't say...that M-l was the smallest one...that was a real good skidder...I couldn't say at all what they cost.

I: But the main advantage was that they could go where the horses couldn't go...it was much easier.

R: You bet...and they could skid more logs at one time than the horses could too.

I: Oh, how many logs could horses...

R: Horses only take one at a time.

I: And these first caterpillar skidding-tractors could take...

R: Three - four depending on the size of logs...if they were real big logs, could only take one at a time too.

Okay, you said that when the horses were used to do the skidding that one guy had to chop down the stumps. Was that someone's job?

R: Sure, they call those swampers. They hada go behind the sawyers and chop trails so team of horses could snake those logs out of there. And, they demanded that from the sawyers at one time in the very deep of the depression...you hada have trails chopped and not a brush on the log covered and you hadda do that free gratis.

I: And you were also only paid by piece work?

R: Un huh...

I: That hurt you pretty bad then.

R: Yup, we got a cent a lineal foot and then they took a penny off each log...you got thirteen cents for a fourteen footer...fifteen cents for a...eleven cents for a twelve footer...then ten cents...no, two cents for butts. Now they're ten cents. A butt is a portion of a...that section of a tree you cut out to make a...saw the log off with. And
there was times they didn't pay anything for them too.

I: Were swampers still needed for the tractor-crawlers?

R: No...no

I: When the tractor-crawlers came in then, did that eliminate the need for the swampers?

R: Right.

I: Oh...so that is where a lot of the savings came in. That's what I was trying to figure out. Okay, now these skidding tractors they have now, who makes them?

R: Well, there's many companies. Pettibone is one and Tree-Farm is another one, that's made in Canada. Pettibone is made in Chicago although some people think it's made here but it's in Chicago. And, Clark, I don't know where they make them, that's one of 'em...I don't remember how many others there are...several though. Caterpillar had one too now...John Deere had one.

I: What does a Pettibone skidder run?

R: You mean cost?

I: Yes

R: I'd say, off-hand, right now I think they're up to about eighteen thousand I believe.

I: Wow...little more expensive than that horse, heh?

R: Yeh...but everything else has gone up too now.

I: What advantages did this have over the skidding tractor?

R: Well, it has faster speed and I think it can pull more at one time than the crawler. Because the crawler, they didn't have a winch on it...these have a winch on 'em...they can...they don't have to have the machine right up to the tree whatever they're gonna skid out...they can walk that cable back on...generally have ah...eighty to hundred feet of cable on it and that's the main cable and then they got these chokers...they're just like limbs on a tree that are attached to the main lines.

I: Many chokers to one cable?

R: Yeh...there's about five or six.

I: How many sawyers can one of these modern rubber-tire skidders take care of?
R: Well...if you got a real good sawyer and a real good skidder, it's just about even, you know, that skidder can keep up with that sawyer from day to day...if he doesn't have any breakdowns or anything.

I: But, you don't have anymore swampers, right?

R: No...no

I: Do you have a bulldozer operator?

R:

I: He makes the roads...he does what the swampers used to do?

R: No...no...these are...he makes the roads that you haul off from. These swampers used to make them roads that are in the woods from wherever you cut the tree to from there to the truck load, you know.

I: Skidding trails, you mean.

R:

I: Okay, well there's also been some changes then, obviously, from the cross-out to the power saw.

R:

I: Okay, when did the first power saw come in? If you remember..

R: Well, I used my first one in 1945 or '46...I don't remember which year it was...but '45 was when they started using 'em...some of 'em, but there's very few of them that made a success of it.

I: What were the first power saws like?

R: They weighed a hundred and five pounds...Mercurys were the first ones out here.

I: Were these two-man power saws?

R: Yes...and I...well, in making that a success there's at least one of the guys hadda know something about falling timber and so forth...where the other guy at least hadda know something about mechanics and machine; otherwise it didn't work.

I: Had a lot of breakdowns on them?

R: Had breakdowns, yeh, but if you rev it in time you don't have too much trouble
I: What did those cost?

R: Seven-hundred and fifty dollars we paid for our first one.

I: That's a little more than that seven dollars for that crosscut saw.

R: Yeh, that right...but you cut a few more logs with it...you just gotta kick out of cutting a great big maple with that when you're used to that crosscut saw.

I: That give you a pretty good feeling to rip through those trees?

R: You bet...yup.

I: Could you cut a lot more?

R: Oh yes...you could cut...in fact we took ours out either first part of may or latter part of April and we cut all through that thumb there...we averages a hundred miles a day and...

I: You said before, your best was fifty logs with the crosscut

R: Yeh, fifty - sixty logs...the average sawyer, I think, would say sixty - sixty-five logs a day...that's a fair...days work.

I: With a crosscut?

R: Yes...but there were guys that cut a hundred and over...they were racing one another, but they couldn't continue that, you know, for any length of time.

I: What was it like working that two-man Mercury? How many horse power were those?

R: Eleven horse power...it was...the motor end of it was a...had like motorcycle handles on that end, and the other end had an oiler on it...small aluminum tank, but we used to cut that oiler out when the saw was new because it was baulky...was hard to drag from under a log after you cut the log. With that oil container cut off...it only took about a two inch space to pull that out from under a log. And the first chain that came with that saw...they were called scratcher chain...they weren't the chipper chains that they were sharpened from the front one edge and then from the top also. They were real hard to cut with. They didn't take chips, they just tore the wood. And then they knocked you on your rear many a times.

I: How would they do that?

R: Well, if you got a tree down and see that chain rolls forward when it's cutting and when that cut goes through when the tree is down, well naturally blows that top part of that cut closed and that grab that
chain...well naturally it'll pull you this way and knock you on your can so quick that...

I: Will it throw you?

R: Oh yes it would...you're used to have your shins blue and yellow whatever color all the time.

I: Have you ever really been thrown...you're a pretty big man...about how much do you weigh?

R: Well, I seen a man over there...Frank Burcor (sp)...he weighs about...he weighed two hundred...at least two twenty-five at that time and just muscle and I seen him fly on his can so quick there one time. But, you get used to those things...you get into things like that you can hold your motor by the handles down against the ground. Your partner will raise that other end slowly and cut yourself right out of that grasp...or visa versa...if it's closer to the...if your saw is closer to the log you can just leave that small end tail stock on the ground and just raise it gradually with your motor unit and cut yourself out of there. Then you put a wedge under that saw so when the chain comes through, well there's a crack and you can lift that up. Then on hillsides you had to cut on an angle because the log when it's cut naturally it'll roll down hill...you gotta cut it on such an angle that it won't roll on you, see. It'll clear everything. The worst thing was if you had two log tree...you had it down and you hadda cut the top first and then you hadda go out that center cut...well both of the logs would roll then. Well, you'd have your partner finish it from the...your motor would always be on the upper side...you'd have your partner finish that because it's not safe on either side of that saw, you know.

I: What kind of power saw came after that two-man mercury?

One-man Mercury...it wasn't worth a darn. I sawed with it a year and a half or so but if you had a foot of snow that thing would be dragging the snow...only weighed about forty-eight pounds.

I: What kind of horse power was that?

R: I would say about three and a half or four horse power, but that also came with a scratcher chain first...there's almost impossible to cut a...make a belly cut on a log. That belly cut means something you'd...shove your saw under the tree and cut it upwards. That would kick you out of there too.

I: That would toss you too?

R: Yeh...it would just kick back so much that you couldn't hold that steady, see. Then when the chipper...so called chipper chain was...they're using today, you know...that had a different tune and you could...didn't do any of that.

I: When did this one-man Mercury come out?

I: Must have had some advantages though, huh?

R: Well, it was lighter weight and you could saw alone...you didn't have to have a partner. Where on this two-man Mercury you had to split all the earnings two ways.

I: Did that make it possible to make a heck of a lot more for the Sawyer?

R: Yeh, if you really wanted to work; but that was hard work too with that...it was so awkwardly balanced that...and heavy. Now they're improved a hundred percent.

I: It changed the nature of the job too. Before you'd have a partner out there...you'd have someone with conversation and like that. Since then you've been working alone, eh?

R: Yeh, that's why so many guys that talk to themselves today.

I: What came next? What power saw came next then?

R: You mean the brand?

I: Or the kind...

R: Well, I forget what the name of that...I can't think of that saw that came out about the same time as one-man Mercury. What the heck was that blue...painted blue...

I: Did it start with a P?

R: No, you're thinking of Pioneer.

I: Well, anyway what kind of saw was it rather than just the brand? Was it just still a one-man job?

R: Yes and everything since then...that's been one-man saws...nobody wants no part of two-man saws anymore.

I: Well, what were the next improvements made on the saw?

R: Well, Pioneer came out...what year would that...that'd be in the early fifties...and I went through about seven or eight Pioneers. They were a good saws. I still got a couple of 'em.

I: What improvements did they have on 'em?

R: Well, they...wrist vibration...then the weight is what we always used to squack about. These are lot lighter weight than the old ones used to be. You figure five pounds difference in the weight in a day...what you carry
in a day means a lot. This saw I have now...it's a...well it's at least nine and a half horse power and it only weighs...no more than twenty-five pounds...I think it's around twenty-four pounds...has a twenty-four inch bar on it and the chain will last you...some will last you a month, you know, in the wintertime it's only a couple of weeks. Frozen timber you go through chains a lot quicker.

I: You have to buy your own saw and own chains and your own equipment, right?

R: Everything...yes.

I: When did that chipper chain come out?

R: Well, that came back in the late forties there.

I: That was a big change, wasn't it?

R: Yes...it was...yeh.

I: After that could you saw a lot more?

R: Oh yeh...took a lot less power...effort. Now they have so many improvements over that...they have some of these so called chisel type chains. It's a flat surface...in otherwords, the top of your tooth is flat...it just travels like a plane...blade you know. It's a little bit fussier keeping them in shape...cutting edges...but cut a lot faster.

I: What does the average saw cost now? The good kind that a sawyer uses?

R: Three hundred and fifty - sixty dollars.

I: How long does it last a man?

R: Well, if you take any care of it, it'll last a year and a half at least. You can have accidents with them too.

I: Can you cut a lot more than you could with that first one-man Mercury saw?

R: Yes.

I: How many logs a day can you cut now?

R: Well, I haven't really tried too much because of my age already...we just put in five - six hours. But, here about three years ago...I still had a Pioneer then...I cut two hundred and thirty-seven in one day...but there was some pulp wood in there too...smaller ones, you know, mixed with 'em...but I think that's the most that I've cut.

I: It's made quite a difference then

R: Oh yeh.
I: How does age affect a sawyer? Like, there are some jobs, obviously, like some sort of office job where age doesn't affect you that much.

R: Well, your bones and your muscles aren't there like they should be. Your reflexes are slower and you just don't have the zip, that's all. I was in my prime when...I was in good shape when I used to cut when I was about...between twenty and thirty, in through there. Like I told you, I could chop right in the sun there all day long and, oh it wouldn't bother you. Not now. And then in time, well I suppose that exhaust from the muffler will have some effect on you.

I: You breath a lot of fumes, don't you?

R: Yeah, especially in the winter when you got quite a bit of snow, you gotta tramp that snow from around where you're cuttin that...making that cut on the tree. Naturally, you saw just fits in there and all that exhaust is in that hole right under your fact all the time. Sometimes it's so putrid you got to turn your head away to breath.

I: I imagine that that would be pretty hazardous?

R: Yeah, it just stings your nose, sometimes.

I: What are some of the things you like best about this work now?

R: I don't like any part of it right now.

I: What do you dislike worst about it?

R: The winter...the winter months are...which is the worst darn time because today you don't got the timber to begin with. It's not like it used to be. It's more scattered and short and smaller and then the snow. When you clean out them trees you get wet and every tree you put down you get snow in your neck and the snow is deep enough your logs get buried there...covered by puttin the (???) in the snow there and dig 'em out and make your cuts and you should see where to cut it from and it's pretty hard to tell in the winter when it's covered with snow...where you should cut it. Well, I don't have to do much of it now, because we string out (???), but when we used to cut ready logs in the woods, why you hadda cut 'em for grade and straightness and soundness and all that.

I: What's most of the lumber used for now?

R: Hardwood lumber...I think they make mostly veneer for furniture and things like that.

I: Surface wood, huh?

R: Yeah, although they used quite a lot of that for hardwood floors, too. It's coming back now again. They wasn't to crazy about it few years ago, but now they're using more of it. And they make bowling pins out of it too.
I: Why buys it? Where is it sold?

R: I don't really know who buys it because most of these sawmills they have their own lumber broker...they sell it.

I: Okay, most of them sell to a lumber yard, eh

R: Well, these logs they go to a sawmill, most of 'em...local sawmills. But, then the finished product...they haul 'em hundred of miles away too, especially the special lumber trucks that do the hauling they haul an awful load on 'em. Lot of that goes down to Wisconsin too. And, going back to the more modern methods of logging, years ago we worked west of here about ten - twelve miles for Baraga Lumber Company, well they had...they used to call a tractor a Beff and they had a couple of old Holts there...and Caterpillar Company eventually bought out Beff Tractor Company. You hadda have a so called swamper...each operator had a swamper and we had four sleighs that one time. I was swamper there for two - three winters I'd drive empty once and awhile, I'd drive 'em back in the woods and they'd have extra sleighs in that there'd be a crew in the woods. They would load up four loads for us, but they were so heavily loaded that a team of horses couldn't put 'em all together, you know, couple them together. They got one load here and drag it maybe far enough so they could replace that empty spot with a empty sleigh and load that and they had...them days they even had a special guy top loading...they called 'em top loaders. His job was to put the right size logs in the right places and put a neat load - something that fall apart when you start hauling it. And, they had a team of horses...they call that cross hauling...there was a jammer...jammer is like a boom made out of wood...

I: That's for piling the logs, right?

R: That's for loading also...and they had a man and a team cross hauling...they'd pick them logs up one at a time...there was a hook on each end and they'd place them on a load. Then you hadda have one man hooking on each end of the log.

I: And kind of guiding it while it's going in the air or something?

R: Yeah and then bring the empty back. Well, that was the two hookers, man driving the team, and a top loader...that was four men which have been eliminated today. You don't need any of them.

I: With these modern trucks?

R: Yeah, with the modern loader they don't need anyway. And this is a lot faster loading...they can load a load now in twelve-fifteen minutes easily with these loaders, you know. And those days, why, we worked day and night hauling them and sometimes you'd get out there night time and you dropped your empty sleigh behind these full ones, then you'd have to find a way to get around the full ones to get in front in that dark and sometimes you'd get hung up on long stumps out there and you'd have to go under that tractor and try and saw that stump off so you'd get released and you'd finally get on the road and you'd back up the load against the next one...sometimes you'd have to have pulled some of them...four at one time and I think the longest haul there was about eleven miles and there's nothing as rough riding as
that crawler tractor.

I: Is that right?

R: You bet, and then on those hills well sometimes you had to have guys sand them...they put sand on the hills so the loads wouldn't go down too fast. They go down too fast you can't control them loads and you jackknife.

I: Well, these logging trucks they have now, well for instance the one like Toivo or Charlie has, that's a special job too. Now, years ago how was that done...back when you were using horses as a team.

R: Well then they didn't have the roads then to handle these tractors. You gotta have a good surface on the...hard surface to handle these trucks now.

I: These trucks don't go out in the woods.

R: Yeah, they do today. But, they got the bulldozer to make the roads with now. Them days when they had horses, well they didn't have bulldozers. Those roads were all hand made. They sawed them stumps way down close to the ground as they can and feet for holding and put some what they called corduroy...they were wood or six - eight - ten - twelve feet long and they put 'em in the deeper holes then they put a little dirt on top of them. Same thing with the real boggy areas, they'd have to have wood in them.

I: And, years ago they'd haul them with a horse and wagon?

R: They never used wagons around here at all

I: The sled...most of it was winter work, eh.

R: It was mostly winter work

I: Okay, all of the hauling was winter work, in fact.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, once they'd get it out of the woods, would they haul it right to the mill or wherever it was going?

R: Well, some cases they hauled it to the mill and some cases...most of the cases it was to a railroad landing where they could load them on railroads where they could ship them to the south or where ever they wanted. Then they would pick veneer logs...they were higher value...they would...often they wouldn't even saw them into lumber...they'd sell them as logs...same thing with birch. You go for veneer...they were shipped out of this area. There's no veneer mills in this immediate area here.

I: When the caterpillar skidding tractors were used...at that time they were using trucks too.
R: Oh yes...yeah they were all trucks them days

I: The truck, the logging truck made a big difference in the whole operation. They made it possible to get a whole lot of the wood out and make it a year around operation, right?

R: Yes, and eventually they'd need lot of improvements on the trucks. They're bigger and more axles on 'em now and heavier and they have their own loaders on 'em. But, they do cost a lot of money.

I: A truck like Toivo's roughly these days costs about how many thousand...approximately?

R: Well, with the loader...you don't have to renew that loader every time you renew the truck, but with that loader like that, I think it'd be about twenty-two thousand dollars.

I: And these guys, the independent haulers, what do they operate? Do they go into the woods on these bulldozed roads and get a load of wood...is it already piled, already decked?

R: Well, there are some cases it's already decked, but most of it they just skid it along side the road. Some places there's maybe fifteen twenty logs in a bunch and sometimes there's only one-two logs in a bunch, so you've gotta move often, you know.

I: So, what these guys do is drive through when there is a pile of logs they stop, jump up on the truck, pick them up with their lift, pile them on, go get a few more, when they've got a load then they haul it.

R: Right...and they're all contract work too. They get so much a cord or so much a thousand cord.

I: The woods work has changed a lot since the old lumbercamp days.

R: Oh yeah.

I: Did you work in any of the lumbercamps and stay in the lumbercamps?

R: Oh yes, many times.

I: What were the camps like...what was life in the camp like?

R: Pretty stinky out there sometimes.

I: Is that right?

R: Blue smoke all over the place. Well, they used to have...like Hazel Camp here for instance...Baraga Lumber Company camp at the Hazel siding, there was, well I don't know off hand, but I'd say there was maybe thirty-five - forty men staying there. They had a cook and the cook had his helper, they had a bunkhouse and a cook room and the office and the blacksmith's shop, and every time a meal was ready,
the cook rang a bell over there and they'd all rush out there and they'd...they used to feed lumberjack, I'll tell you, they used to feed them pretty heavy. They'd have pork chops or steak in the morning whatever you wanted, it was all on the table...potatoes, pancakes, cereal, whatever you wanted. And then, after supper...say hour and a half - two hours after supper you could go out and get a light snack before you go to bed...some fruit or cracker, you know.

I: What was it like inside the bunkhouse?

R: Well, they used to have single bunks...double decked up on each side of the camp and there was a space in the center, maybe eight - ten feet wide, that's where they'd have a big wooden stove and a pile of wood and some of them lumberjacks that's where they'd dry their clothes at...they had wires over the stove, over that. Then one end of the camp they had a makeshift sink made out of lumber and the chore boys they generally had to carry that water there in buckets...there was a larger container in the bunkhouse...you'd wash up there, you had to wash up before every meal. And there's one instance, why it occurred at supper one time, and he got through his regular course and was waiting for dessert. Well, there was a full pie there and the first one takes a piece, and I thought was mincemeat pie and it happened to be meat pie. I took my piece out of there and I didn't say anything to nobody...fact was nobody said anything...they ate the whole thing. Then when we got back to the bunkhouse, they all started laughing...nobody didn't want to admit that they didn't know mincemeat from meat pie. It looked the same color.

I: You weren't supposed to talk much while eating then.

R: No, you couldn't talk at all...and you had your own plate too. The cook knew each guys position and you better be on your own or he'd get pretty rough at you.

I: What happened if a green guy went and sat down where he.

R: Well, a guy that hadn't been there before, there was excuse for that because after all he didn't know where to go, but saw one instance over where Mike and I were sawing for Bill Rouna out there near Arvon and we used to come home for weekends on Wednesday nights. This particular time we were having dinner there, although we generally carried our dinner in the woods, but this time we didn't. There was a tractor driver there that was repairing his tractor there...it wasn't his own was a company tractor, but he was repairing it, and he used to travel from home to work and this time the tractor was right there at the camp and he figured well heck he might as well go and eat with the rest of the crew, you know, although he had traveled from home...big fellow too. He went in the cook house and the cook told him, "get out of here, you big S.O.B. you don't eat here, you eat home", and he wouldn't feed him. He swore at him...think he would have used the meat cleaver if he'd tried to get in.

I: I thought there was pretty good hospitality about that sort of thing...if a...
R: There used to be generally, but this guy... I don't know he's an elderly fellow at the time and he drank quite a bit, I suppose that got the best of him. And, he could of had it in for the guy for some reason... I don't know.

I: Lumberjacks have been known to pull tricks on one another, right?

R: Well, I don't know if they're more so than anybody else.

I: What kind of pranks would they play on one another?

R: Well, I don't know if I ever saw any pranks pulled on one another out there.

I: I thought you once told me about when people sit around the fire drying out.

R: Oh, those are... I wouldn't call those pranks, those are just natural. When you're drying... sitting around a fire... standing around a fire in the woods... specially lunch time they used to have a fire and they dry their... somebodys... they used to dry their mits there... if they were burning nobody was supposed to say a thing about it... just let 'em burn.

I: Have you ever seen that happen?

R: Yeah, I did that last winter once myself.

I: What happened?

R: Well, there was a guy... we had a fire over there... well this was in a shack actually... he put his wet mits on top of the stove... it's a great big wood burning stove. I could see them curling up but I didn't say nothing. Then the guy said, "holy cow", he said, "I burnt my mits". I said, "yeah I saw it, but I wasn't supposed to say anything."

I: Have you ever seen guys catch on fire and not know it?

R: No, but I have seen the sewel and patent (???), they are real heavy patent (???) and generally you gather them snow balls on the back of your knee, and they have that portion toward the fire... their rear to the fire to dry up things, and that can easily catch not really in flame but it'll burn enough that it turns a color of brown a little bit and a couple of days takes a big hunk off that... it's actually burnt... leave a big hole on the back of your pants.

I: You've seen that happen, eh?

R: Oh yeah... and sometimes you used to have them high top leather boots in the swampers and you had 'em too close, you know, if you're standing your back against the fire. That leather starts getting hot... it gets so hot that you just have to put snow on it to, you know, otherwise it'd burn your flesh especially them sixteen inch tops... they used to be way up here... all leather. And, when they get hot
they are really hot.

I: How about some old violating stories from way back.

R: Don't know a thing about it.

I: I've got collections of them so far... I won't mention names, though.

R: Well, I got one. You know this lumbering... this same Baraga Lumber Company camp there's a fellow from Baraga... he's a Finnish fellow too... and an Indian from Baraga. They got drunk... although they weren't drinking together. Fact is, this Finnish fellow drank some of that alkie... they used to raid the area. And, they got into some kind of an argument in the camp over there... in the bunkhouse. And they used to have these can hooks... you know what a can hook is... well they used to make them. They're all homemade can hooks over there, black... rough. 'em out first and then you'd dry 'em on the rack on top of the stove for sometime before they were finished. Well anyway, this Indian... I think he had a thirty-two caliber revolver... he tried to shoot this Finnish guy. He clicked that hammer three times and none of the bullets went out. So this white guy... or this Finnish guy, he grabs one of them can hooks stocks and handles and hit him over the head and knocked him out and that was all there was to it. They didn't... there was no arrests or nothing... they just let it be. But, just think, if anyone ever shot with a gun now...

I: Attempted murder.

R: Why sure, yeah. Going back to the violation racket... I am ashamed to admit some of the...

I: It's alright... I won't put you down as having been... you might read about it and I'll just say - "Oh an old Finn" and you'll recognize it and no one else will.

R: Well, I don't know I violated so much, although I'll tell you, I never left any meat in the woods. We made use of every bit of it.

That's the way it was back then.

R: Yeah, but I think I got five in one day... I saw six and I shot five.

I: In one

R: Yeah...

I: Back when?

R: Let's see, that would be in... I think in the late forties or early fifties. I think it was in the early fifties. And there wasn't a legal buck among them. And there's another guy from Chicago... he took... I don't know if it was the rear half of one or was it a hind quarter or anything... somethin like that... he put in a suitcase. He's traveling on the train and the darn thing bled out there in the train. I
don't remember just how he got by with it, but anyway he didn't get caught with it. They didn't make him open that suitcase.

I: Could have been a human in there.

R: Yeah...they were all little deer. Boy them little deer all used to be good eatin in them days.

I: I heard...there was one story from someone...your dad had a run in with a game warden.

R: Yeah...yeah right

I: And they were tugging at the gun and...tell me about that one.

R: Yeah, I saw that myself...I was right there. That was back in 1922 I believe. That's the time the fire went through here...this area was burnt at one time...it went from southwest to northwest. And we were, oh I don't know how many miles from here...not too far from here. And there was a fellow by the name of Mitchell. He used to live in Baraga...and then his partner was Koo...K O E P...maybe was a double P...but he was from Marquette. He was a district supervisor of the fire department at the time. And, this Alfred Sowla...that was married to Mrs. Koski, our neighbor here, well he came over one day and he asked my dad, "let's go huntin". He said, "okay", so he went from my home there to Walter Makela's...they both had their deer rifles and just as they were in the yard there, these game wardens they drove in from the (?) Road into the yard. And, Alfred Sowla he went and rammed his gun between the logs in the hay barn over here to hide it, but the game warden saw that. Well, he told Sowla to go get that gun that we saw you hide. So, he went up there and got it and gave it to them. And then they asked the old man. He said, "no", he said...some didn't have a license...my dad had a license but he had left it home, see. They told the old man to give them the gun...he said, "oh no"...they didn't even introduce themselves...they didn't say who they were...no uniforms on...he said "oh no, how in the hell do I know who you are". So, he wouldn't give 'em the gun. Then he grabbed a hold of that gun barrel...it was a forty-sixty-five Winchester...and wouldn't let go...he just hanging on to a spot there going around in circles...he wasn't a big man that Koep...but that Mitchell was a big man, but he was around this area but he wasn't doing anything. He tried to jerk that gun, but the old man wouldn't have gave it to him.

I: They went around in circles?

R: Yeah, and he told the old man to rack them bullets out of there...I think it held ten - twelve bullets...long slugs, you know. Well, the old man started racking...well they fell on the ground. He was gonna take 'em. He said "no, don't touch them", he said, "those are my bullets, I paid for 'em". And, he let 'em alone. And then, there's a fellow by the name of Alo Ranta...he used to live right across the river from Raymond Makela's...he happened to come there and him and my dad and Sowla they came over to our place with the game warden and old man showed them a license and that Alo Ranta verified that
that's his license. And, they didn't do anything about it. But, they took Sowla's and he had to pay $14.75 in fine and cost, but they gave him the gun back then and Sowla told 'em, "I got some snares over here in the wood for deer...I'm gonna go look at 'em right now", he told the game wardens. That was deer season but there was no snow on the ground. And, I came from where Neimi's live now...then days we boys used to wear them God damn World War I braces...Army braces...high cut, and I had a partridge or two inside of them. I didn't have no license but I was under age anyway and I hid the twenty-two over there...and my twenty-two shells I hid 'em over there and I walked right through where these guys were arguing. They didn't question me at all...but I was scared of them. Yeah, they couldn't do anything with the old man.

I: You told me once way back about one time you had got one but clip wasn't...the seal wasn't quite fastened.

R: Oh yeah, that was back in...that wasn't really too long ago, it was in, I think, 1938. The first time I hunted south of Alston...Kero from Alston and his boy, Ralph Harju and Loren Andrews (???)...we were all together and Edwin and Ralph Harju were in the pickup box and I left my dad's car at Kero's. Down on the Silver...or West Branch bridge, well, Sinclair Wilson was waiting on the bridge that came from the woods. Had his car crossways in the road so we couldn't get by...icy conditions and he asked me "how's my luck" and I said "well, I got one back there". And he said, he said "properly sealed"? And he didn't even wait for an answer...he saw Ralph Harju monkeying around with it. I told Ralph when we left the woods "if we get stopped, you shove that all the way in there", I said, "it's not locked now...just shove it all the way in". He seen Ralph and said, "what the hell's goin on here"? "I'm lookin for my hand gloves, my fingers are freezin" although he's trying to shove that seal and set it. Well, then I had to give him my license to see if it corresponds with the number on the seal. But, that guy was so drunk too that he's trying to pull that seal out sideways...it didn't come out. "Okay" he said when the numbers corresponded and when we got to Kero's that thing was right out of that nob...that tag. If he would have pulled it straight or halfway straight, he would've got me. That's as close as I've ever been to gettin caught.

I: Boy, that's comming close.

R: Yeah, well next day I went and got another one with that same seal. I already had it shot the day before this thing happened, but he was out there...oh, six miles from here anyhow. So I used that same seal then to get that one. And, on this homestead, when we stayed there 1932 I think it was, and there was a bunch of us Pelkie guys there...was the tail end of the season and was a lot of 'em went home already, but we got left there, and William Haataja one of them old side horse there because they worked in the woods there parttime or something. He had a two-wheel wagon, heavy heavy wheels, so he had...I think we had five deer on that God darn cart. We left from there in the evening...bright moonlight. That poor horse got stuck on some of those water holes there...it was cold enough that them
water holes were frozen some, but the wheels went through that and
in the mud we had to go out there and help turn them God darn wheels
so that horse could pull it through. Anyway, he dropped the deer that
I had, he dropped them at my house and then he continued on right
through old Peikie school and along the main highway to Elo...that's
where that guy was....

I: With deer on there?

R: Deer on the wagon and a headlight on his God darn head besides...
go ing that way. Them days they didn't care if they got caught
or not. That was the same God darn evening I hunted...went out quite
early in the morning and I shot a deer about 9:30 in the morning and
then I didn't know where in the heck I was, but I wasn't gonna leave
that deer there, so I cleaned the deer out and I cut a sapling with
a notch in it...put it on the bottom of his jaw and I dragged that
with me...all day. And, I went round and round and I came at an old
railroad track, then I followed that to the road that goes to that
last homestead where we were staying. But, I left it at the forks
when you turn this way...I left that deer there...I hid it a little
bit and I started walking from there to the hunting camp and there
was one of these skidways with...they had logged, you know, maybe
five - six years before that, but it was still fairly clear and I
moved on a little bit and I could see three streaks there...I knew
they were deer...I had a little thirty carbine...they weren't far
from me and I shot...I got two out of there at least...I don't know
if I got that third one or not, but one dropped right there although
they were all going like heck, you know, they were going across the
road but they noticed me, so they shot back and I dropped the first
one right there and then the next one, I knew I hit it, but I had a
scratch a match to see his tracks where he was and I cleaned that
out and two guys coming from the...one of the Haataja's...Ira Ahala
(???) they were coming from that hunting camp, said, "what the hell
you shootin over here in the dark?" I said, "I got a couple of
deer". "Fools" they said, I said, "well lookit". So, I dressed 'em
out and they took them two deer on their sleigh and then they picked
that one up yet that I had dragged all day. They took all them three
derer and I didn't have to drag them home.

I: That would have been work.

R: Yeah...they're all small deer. Boy, I don't know, I used to love
that venison them days, them little deer, you know...seventy - eighty
pounds...they were so delicious.

I: There were a lot of them then.

R: Yes, you bet. But 1934 I saw six deer that season and I shot five
out of those and they were hard to find any deer that year...I figure
that hell the deer are all gone because everybody and his brother was
shooting them around here, you know, because we just hardly gettin no
work, you know; but, it didn't take long and they bounced right back.
Was a lot of logging in that Homestead area. We used to do a lot of
that shining at nighttime too, and I was one of the worst shots, I
guess, around here because I always aimed at the eyes and when a deer looks at you that's the highest part of his head. So, I shot over every time until these old timers told me to aim about four to six inches below the eyes...then sometimes you get 'em right in between the eyes on the head and sometimes on the neck. You very seldom miss then. Even with buckshot I used to shoot over 'em at close range.

I: Why would that be?
R: Because the eyes are right on top of the skull and...

I: Oh and their head is...sideways...
R: Yeah...right...right.

I: Oh, it's not straight...
R: No...unt-un...and they look so big and bright like that you can't miss 'em you know. But, I had one experience with a guy that...well that/that place where you lived years ago. We had a shotgun and a thirty carbine with us, and we exchanged guns because I didn't want to take a chance on a shotgun at that range...it was quite a distance for buckshot. We changed guns and the barrels even clacked together and they still stood there looking at the light and I got 'em. And, started walking towards them, well another one took off...I could see his...just one eye going up and down like that and I shot once and I got that one too. They were both fawns. I don't know where the mother was and I was way back in Hilliards Road back there oh, couple three miles from here. We walked and crossed the Otter...waded across the river and then up on the Otter hill we walked down this road all the way home...well it must have been wee hours of the morning, but we both had a little fawn deer with us. Well, this was in October...it was last year's fawn. Them days they didn't last too long. You go through a deer a week at, well there was, let's see there was eight in our family.

I: That was all eating, eh?
R: Oh yes, and I was the one to get the meat because I was the oldest of the boys. And, I shot my first deer right here, where I'm livin right now. Used to have a salt lick just a few feet from the barn and my dad wouldn't let me use a high-powered gun. I used to have was a twenty-two...little crack-shot twenty-two...so mother and Dad went to some church services in the evening. So, I took that old forty-sixty-five off the nail over there and a few bullets and I walked over here and climbed that tree steps and there's a little platform that you sit on...it's only fifty feet from the salt lick. And, a good sized doe came to that. It didn't stop...it just kept walking. Well, I figured a deer had to be standing before you can shoot at it, so I didn't shoot at it. And, well then finally it stood a little bit and I pulled the hammer back and it clicked...I didn't think of holding the trigger back...that'll prevent it from clicking and that thing heard me and it took off...it came this way then towards the house...well the house wasn't here at the time, but
well, in fact I had never fired a high-powered rifle and it was pertnear dark already when I came home here. And that thing took off, it had been standing all along...it took off over this little valley over here between here and the barn. I raised that gun and I just fired one shot and that went right through the neck. I got him an inch below the top of the neck, you know...below the top of the neck, you know...just beyond the skull. Well, that thing dropped right there, big doe, and I didn't even have a pocket knife with me. So, I went home and told Pa about it next morning and Pa and Edwin well then they came and got it and it wasn't spoiled although the guts were left in it overnight...quite early the next morning they got it. Ever since that, the old man let me use the gun anytime I want it.

I: Were you aiming right behind the ear there?

R: No...just that general direction. I wanted to fire a high-powered rifle period to see what it feels like and it happened to hit that deer that's all. That's the way my mother used to get me out of bed sometimes...used to be pretty hard to get me out of bed sometimes. "Hey Art, there's a deer in the field over there"...boy I'd be up like a spring pole out of that bed. We used to pick raspberries back of where you live up there...up there on the hill...they carried that big deer raffle up there...I went up there one time...I don't remember who was with me...the other brothers anyway, I had shells in the gun but I didn't have any in the chamber and I seen a deer standing maybe a hundred - hundred-fifty feet away...standing broadside. I took careful aim and click...God darn it, then I realised I should have racked a bullet in there, but I didn't want to do that because of safety...I racked a bullet in there and that deer was gone...I couldn't get another shot at it. From then on I had a bullet in the chamber too.

I: Did you ever get buck fever?

R: Yeah...I got that buck fever many times. I had my first deer I shot legally, that was in 1926, back here maybe three-fourths of a mile. I was working for Baraga Lumber Company...1925, that's when it was. We were making that road out there...my dad and I were together and I asked the foreman if I could have half a day off to get my license. Even Saturday then you had work 'til five o'clock. But if I can have a half a day off or couple of hours at least to get my license. Okay, I walked from back of Koski's from there on that Hilliard Road all the way to Hazel then along the railroad track to Pelkie...got my license...this was on a Saturday. Now, so I asked him if I can take a day off for hunting. I suppose he didn't really like it. Well, anyway, I went out that Sunday because there was no work, and it was a pretty fresh logging road over here and there was about fourteen - fifteen inches of brand new snow. Nobody'd been in there...tracks or nothing...I was walking along...real bright sunny day, and I had this savage I got now...a nice buck I figured was seven or eight pointer came from the side and stood in the middle of that road and he wasn't over a hundred feet off and I missed the God darn thing. The shot...it must have gone over. I didn't know what the hell to do. Well, I took another shot and then I happened to hit him and he
dropped right there...hit him high on the front shoulders. I didn't have no knife then even, God damn and so...and no tracks beyond that neither, so I just grabbed a hold of the horns and just started dragging...I started back along my old track and Kinny (?) he was on his tracks over there but he was in some gully...he couldn't hear that shot or them two shots that I had. And he come up to dead end there...he couldn't figure what the hell happened because he couldn't hear them shots and nobody elses tracks because when I dragged that deer they covered my tracks too. And there's no tracks beyond that. He told me he couldn't figure what the hell...well, I said, "I shot and, in fact, I missed that first shot". But, he couldn't hear it and he didn't know what the hell because he didn't see nobody's tracks there. He usedto be a great (?) too. He got caught here one time, well that field back of Koski's house there and it cost him a hundred and thirteen bucks...them days even, that was a lot of money boy. And, I don't even think they had a deer, but they were shining...but they knew I suppose he had shot a lot of 'em. And one time I was trapping mink and muskrat on the Otter down below the forks there...couple bends down and I run across (??) setting a muskrat trap and I heard the water splashing and I looked up stream there's three deer crossing that river...two does and one was a six point buck, so I shot at that first one because it was coming on my side and didn't want to come in on that side so, I knew I hit it because there was all kinds of blood...blood in the river and I turned around and he got on top of the river bank and he dropped there and then the buck stood there...ass towards me and then I got him through the neck and that third one got away. So, I came home and I told Pa about it and Pa and Edwin and Ernest and I went to get them and Pa put that God damn big buck on his shoulders and carried that all by himself from out there. We had a hell of a time getting that other deer...the three of us together.

I: Is he a big man?

R: Well, he's a pretty husky guy, yeah. But, when they're limp like that they're damn hard to carry.

I: Awkward.

R: Yeah.

I: Did you ever carry one out like that?

R: Yeah, I carried one time a...Maurie Kemppainen...he wounded one one day way up on the south side of the west branch of the Otter and he didn't want to go across...wade across, so the next day him and I went out there. And, a little God darn pole, I don't know...six or seven inches in diameter across the river and the water was high in the fall...heavy rains and snow, and we nailed that buck out there...it was a four pointer. And, we couldn't figure out how we were gonna get it back across there. I said, "I'll carry the God damn thing". I said, "you take my gun then". I had swampers on and I put it on my shoulder and oh that log was goin' like this...it was just nip and tuck that I didn't fall in that God damn river with that deer. I just got
across that S.O.B. Gee, I was scared. Then Laurie came after with
the gun, you know. With guns you can balance yourself, you know, but
that soft deer on your shoulders...it's so limp that it's hard to
control it. I shot...finished a few deer for him once in awhile too.
Was up in the Silver Mountain area one time. I was on one hill and he
was on the other hill and Earl Kemppainen...Joe Kemppainen's son...he
was...we were sittin' side by side and we heard somebody shootin' like
heck out there. He had a three-fifty-one automatic...so I think it
was him. We seen a deer comin' down below the hill and I took one
shot and he went down. Bill didn't even have the time to raise the
gun up yet. And I didn't know whether it was Laurie's or whose it
was. I went down there and I cut the throat on it and here comes
Laurie along the tracks. Yeah, I shot it on the rump...on the rear
right by the hump like that out of it. That thing would of gone a
long way.

I: Did you ever come close to gettin' shot?

R: I got half shot, but I don't...no I haven't really, no. They may have
been some accidental shots but not anything, you know, mistaking you for
deer or anything.

I: Have you ever shot a bear?

R: I've shot a few of them, yeah...shot two in one hole, one time.

I: When was that?

R: Was 1960...I think, 1959 or 60.

I: Where was that?

R: West of here about a mile. There was...I had been looking for coyote
pups in that area the previous spring. I came up to fresh mound of
dirt...I figured I found one. And I looked in there and a bear had
just left that couple days before that. So, I kept that in mind for
the following deer season. So, I waited until about the 25th of
November. Went out there and started treadin'...I couldn't say exactly
where it was, but I stood on a little mound and I figured it should be
here someplace. And I looked down...here I was less than three feet
from that hole. There's the mother bear sound asleep. So, I didn't
want to shoot at it...get Adrian with the movie camera take some
pictures then stir it out of there. Took one step back when it woke
up and I shot it then 'cause I figured it's gonna go anyway. And
that...it didn't hit where I wanted it to...I hit little bit too low
on the forehead and it was coming out of that hole...well that thing
wasn't a foot from my gun barrel and I shot another time. I killed
it and pulled it out of there and I didn't know what the hell I was
gonna do with it after I did get it. I put the bear on one side and
laid the gun against the tree and looked into the hole...there was
another one in there...a little one and that hole was about five feet
deeep and it's kind of dark in there, so I took a shot at it and that
thing was still stirring around there, so I took a little stick and
I was stirring it around...I wanted to see how big the feet were on it,
were little cub like...that four inch paw, so I grabbed ahold of it's tail and dragged it out of there. It was still alive but it was mortally wounded anyway and oh in about another ten minutes it died. And just a week before that, Martin Clement and his son, they had hunted rabbits right by the bridge here and their dog treed one of them cubs and the mother bear killed on of their dogs and I think these two were what was left of that bear family there.

I: Have you ever found any coyotes when you've gone out like that?

R: In the spring, I've found three dens so far.

I: What kind or day do you generally go out?

R: Well, I generally pick a day that you had a few inches of new snow especially if most of the old snow is gone...melted and you get new snow overnight, well that's the time to go out...next morning.

I: Somewhere around the spring.

R: Well, first week in May or later part of April.

I: Tell me about how you did it once.

R: Well, I went out Platt Lake Road one time and I walked in there...I used to work in that area...I walked in there about a mile or a little over. Used to be coyotes there and I saw a coyote track that had been made during the night sometime...about, well was only about two hundred yards from where I parked the car. I didn't pay any attention to those so I went out to where I intended to. I saw all kinds of tracks there but they were all...couldn't really pick one out because they were all criss-crossed and I spent a few hours there and a couple hours I came back well I...instead of going to the car I figured I'm gonna look at these tracks...see where it goes. And I didn't have to go over a quarter of a mile and I found a big pine log where the five young ones were. But, the mother had left already, so I fished them out of there, had a sandwich and coffee and put them alive in my bag and took 'em home and left them in the box and had a little lunch there and went up again on the Otter there and found an identical den in a little short rotten log...even the males and females were the same number in both litters. In other words, I got a hundred eighty dollars worth in half a day then.

I: Phew...how do you kill the little ones? I tried to kill them with the exhaust from the car. I had the car idling pretty fast for twenty minutes. I had 'em in a cardboard box and sealed it and just put a hole in there the size of the tailpipe. Went to pick 'em up and they were all alive yet. I couldn't...it didn't faze any of them. So, I had to take and witch 'em with a hammer and clink 'em over the head with the hammer. But, I didn't want todo that to begin with because that messes the scalp...you have to skin 'em for the bounty and it's all a mess of blood if you have to hammer 'em. But, they are tough. Well, previous to that I found one...a litter with only three males in there. I could see some sand had dripped from this mother that I was
trying to...on this little knoll out there he had his hole and I
didn't know if he had made its young ones yet or not so I had a deer
rifle with me and I sat down there for a while and contemplated what
to do and I happened to notice some of that aftermath from the births
nearby the entrance to the hole and figured well he must have had
'sem. And I didn't have a shovel. I had a single bladed ax with me and
started digging in there and, man was that a job; so, I took out a
slender little stick and I poked it in the hole and then I pulled it
out and put it on the surface...laid it flat and measured how far that
stick went. And I made a hole straight down to the hole. That way
I didn't have to dig the whole hole out. Well, I got so far well, I
didn't know whether I had gone by it or not, so I...I was smoking
cigarettes them days and I blew some smoke in that hole. I could
hear them young ones squeaking and so then I knew which way to go
from that. And the hole still continued on from where I picked up
the young ones, but I don't know whether the mother was in there or
not. I didn't see him or hear him anyway. Three males and I worked
for two and a half hours with a single bladed ax to shovel it out and
I was just wringing wet. But, it was exciting anyway.

I: How do you know which way to follow the track when you find it?

R: Well, it's hit and miss; but, I generally...if I have an inkling
that this is just about the area where they would den, I would go
backwards, you know, on their track.

I: Oh, you look for a certain kind of area

R: Yeah, you know, from what you've traveled before, you know. You know
if you've seen a lot of coyote signs around certain areas, it's not
generally too far from there where they den out then.

I: Have you ever felt kind of funny about killing those little pups?

R: No...unt.un...not the least bit because they tear the heck out of
some of our deer too when they've grown up. I've seen that happen
I didn't see that happen actually, but I've seen the sign of it.
One deer...one coyote would kill a deer that was in good shape too
I'd say it weighed pretty close to a hundred and forty pounds, so
what will a bunch of coyotes do. He had a hole on its, where it's
kidneys are in his back...I say ten inches in diameter.

I: It's kind of hard on the deer herd.

R: Yeah and next morning out in the same area...well two days after...
well I used to do a little logging back here and I had a skidding
trail along way up there...I could see that the coyotes...there was
more than one had been at another deer and that deer hung pretty close
to the house before he cut off and there was many places where I could
see hair along the roadside, but they didn't kill him anyway. The
deer got away. But, it's nothing unusual to see seven - eight
carcasses out there when you were looking for coyote tracks, you know,
coyote pups in the den. Not saying that coyotes kill all of them,
but there are a lot of them that are killed by coyotes. Well, I
suppose you've learned all you need to know about violating now you can start on your own.

Stop in tape

Note: Third person is heard on the tape at this point but no identification is made prior to his comments. Identified in typing as RR:

I: Could you go over that?

RR: Well, just that in the early days, in the 30's and 40's there was an awful lot of logging around here and it could support the deer herds and, you know, the new shrubs would come up and there was a lot of food for them. But since then, logging had dwindled out considerably and it's become very localized. The trees that were small then that the deer were living off of have since grown up and they are too small to be marketed so they're not being cut down and they're too big for the deer to eat the tasty buds.

I: And the leaves are higher up too.

RR: Right, so they just...therefore the herd goes down.

I: Because the food supply is shorter...that's the official DNR explanation.

R: Sure, the department's got you brainwashed on that.

RR: No, but isn't that the truth, though, you know there's a hell of a lot less...

R: Well, I'll tell you one of the biggest reasons is that...doe kill

RR: Well sure, granted, that has a lot to do with it, I'm sure, but can't you also agree that the food supply just isn't here.

I: That's generally...

RR: Except locally very locally.

I: Then there should be deer locally if they're logging locally

RR: There is...in Keweenaw there's deer.

R: Yeah, but they haven't had doe season for many years, though...in Keweenaw County.

RR: But, they're also being well fed and taken care of during the winter.

R: Yeah, the times we used to log back on the homestead then when Baraga Lumber Company was logging there, there was no logging there at all during the summer months, but in the winter months they logged you could go out there...we used to go down with empty sleigh north in the evening or you could go out there Sundays...you could count
eighty to a hundred in a single pile and trails were that deep in
the snow.

I: Three feet deep or so?

R: Yeah, and boy I'll tell you they were nice shape too...and that was
all virgin timber except where they were cutting at that time. They
used to come to the...see the horses were fed oats out there at
dinner time, and...

I: At the logging camp there?

R: In the woods actually...not at the camp. And they ate every God
damn grain of oats that was left, you know from the horses. Well, I
actually thought in 1934 that they ain't gonna be no deer herd left
in here but they multiply fast.

RR: Why, did people shoot 'em out or what?

R: Yeah, they were shootin so many.

I: Right after...that was right after the depression.

R: Yeah during the depression.

I: What was it like in the evening back in...let's say in 1931 or so in the summertime around now? Would you ever hear a gun shot go off?

R: Well, later in the summer but not too much in mid summer really...
well August, September and in the very early twenties, well somebody...
from my home you could see three - four - five lights at one time here someplace...trying it in the fall, you know, October...Matt Obila
(???) used to shine over here...Laase Peterson and his dad and...

I: Everyone

R: Everyone and that Ray Alola's dad (???) he shot his own son

I: And he killed him?

R: Yeah...I forget what his name was.

I: How the hell did he do that?

R: Well, they were both shining...not together but in separate areas
and somehow they came to within sight of one another and old man Alola
thought it was a deer into this guys light and shot. That can happen.
Is that thing on now?

I: Un huh.

R: One time we were going to the lumber camp here...it oh maybe a mile
away...Matt Kokko used to stay at that camp...and it's in the creek
bottom and there's lot of shrubs and things like that all over. We
used to play pinochle there a lot and he had them old time table lamps, you know, small kerosene lamp...I forget who was with me, anyway going around the bend I was maybe a hundred yards from there I could see that light and I figured there's a deer down there, but well as fate would have it, I didn't raise the gun up but I turned my light off, you know. You got your light on your forehead. I turned my light off you could still see that light so therefore it's not an eye if you still see it. You turn your light away, if it's another light you can see it but if it's an eye you can't see it.

I: Oh, so it is very possible to.

R: Yes it is. But anytime you happen to be shining, just turn your light away from that what you think is a eye and if it still shows after you turn the light away naturally it's not an eye but a lamp. Well, lookit what happened to...talked to Winkler last fall...he was coon huntin and he shot the hell out of his car out there.

I: Is that right?

R: Yeah.

I: I should hear about this.

R: Well, his cabin over here

I: I'll be darned.

R: Yeah.

I: Raccoon hunting?

R: Raccoon yeah...he saw some shiny spots on that car...I don't know what part of it, but he shot the hell out of it and he was using another car then to go to his office with...while he was gettin the God darn thing fixed.

I: I've heard the same story only it wasn't raccoon he was hunting.

R: I don't know, but I heard raccoon

RR: That's the only thing you can hunt at night anyway.

I: That does kind of pinch you down, doesn't it, huh?

R: He got pinched one time. He came home with a frozen buck the first morning of deer season.

I: That's a hard one to explain.

R: You bet.

RR: You know, things like that wouldn't hold up anymore, would they...in the court system nowadays...that shit just wouldn't go. You couldn't arrest a man for possession of a frozen buck the morning of deer season.
R: Why not?

I: They just would have to catch them killing it.

Yeah...you have to.

R: You can't get away from it because your season opens at seven o'clock you can't possibly freeze a deer before that.

Yeah, but this was like...I remember when it happened...that was around nine o'clock that morning.

R: Yeah...yeah.

RR: Everything worked on assumptions.

R: He bought that from somebody.

RR: Oh yeah, but they arrested him for possessing an illegal deer, but it wasn't really illegal because it was after season had opened...and he hadn't necessarily have had to have shot that...maybe somebody gave it to him or something and there was a lot of things that he could have just told everybody to go to hell...and he could have gotten away with it.

I: It's impossible to make a conviction just about.

R: Yeah

RR: Right, it's really hard.

R: There's a guy one time hunting at that homestead over at Pelto's (???) homestead...think it was 1932 or 33...one of those years. Well Aldolph Haataja and Ira Alala (???) they're both dead now, but they hunted together, but they used to go to the border of the fresh cutting in the old virgin timber. The deer would come into feed just late...pretty darn dark in the evening...that was regular deer season then...they claimed they shot a heck of a big buck...well next day I was kind of anxious...I asked them just about where it was, I knew that they were...they told me, so neither one of 'em had a license so I'm just gonna go and see how big that buck really is. And I finally got there and heck somebody had started dragging it away. It was Moilenen...he's dead now too, he used to be a taxidermist. I forget there was about two other guys...two or three and one of them was big shot from some God darn...

End of Part III

I: Okay, and then he was a big shot.

R: And I followed these deer tracks 'til I caught up to these guys. I said, "that deer doesn't belong/you guys", I said, "that belongs to a couple of guys at our camp". He said, "well there's no license on there". "Well", I said, "nevertheless it belongs to these guys at
our camp." So, they...I don't recall whether they continued dragging it or did they stop there, but anyway I rushed back to the camp to tell these guys about it. I was half running part of the way and I seen a big buck coming...he's gonna cross the road I was trotting on, but he stopped right on the edge of the bush where there's some hazelnuts and I could see the outline of it but I just had a thirty carbine and I didn't want to take a chance through that brush, so I waited 'til he crossed the road. Took one jump across the road and I nailed him there and that had only eight points but that was the most beautiful buck I've ever seen...and I didn't have time to clean it...I went and told the guys at the camp. So, they rushed back and they got a hold of them guys...they gave them four bucks for that deer and Weino Maki came with me then from that camp to where I had my deer and he helped me drag it in and I sold that to he was a Secretary of State for the State of Michigan at the time...

I: It's okay...the statute of limitations...

R: ...and he gave me eight bucks for it...I wanted ten dollars but he only give me eight bucks and while it was maybe a couple of years after that, happened to be state fair...they had a police day at the state fair and by that time he was the governor and he was only three rows away from me sitting and gave him a big hand out there...I had a notion to ask him how the venison was.

I: Beautiful story...beautiful.

R: This is the truth...I'm not BSing you.

I: That's a beautiful one...no I know it...when I mean story...

R: Well, he was a...staying in Alston. There was eleven guys all told. And he said they got...ten guys and a cook...ten hunters and a cook, and he said they had a hundred dollars to spend for the guys that couldn't get of their own, you know. Well, heck, I don't know why he didn't pay me more than that eight bucks. That was a real beautiful buck...perfect horns and the body was so perfect.

I: That's happened before...big shots coming down and buying deer

R: Of course, them days money was hard to get too.

I: Do you know any more stories about either happening to you or happening to someone else about big shots coming down and not getting deer but buying them?

R: Oh there's all kinds of 'em, yeah. I sold so many of them I don't know where to start. They ask you how many shots you took at it and where'd you hit 'em 'cause they gotta pat that story out too, you know.

I: Is that right?

R: Oh yeah.
RR: Krist...they hadda buy a story too.

R: Well, their buddies see a hole somewhere else...well they got a lot of explaining to do then. I'll tell you one of the funniest things happened to me one time...this is in the very early forties or late thirties. Ernest was...my brother Ernest was living yet and he hunted at a hunting camp and he had a thirty-two-twenty Winchester. They short bullets and he had shot at a big buck on Saturday and he came to the river...to the West Branch of the Otter and he had shot at it several times and he's at it 'til ten o'clock that night before he got back to hunting camp...I don't know if he came home or not, anyway he told me about it. So, this was on a Sunday then I went hunting with Laurie Kemppainen...then a guy by the name of Carlson from Chassell and he was by that camp tree clearing out there real nice Sunday afternoon, and he was sitting on the tree right there, no snow on the ground and I talked to him for awhile. So, I said, "I'm gonna go down the river there and see what I can see there". There's a pretty steep bank then there's a beach there with logs on it. I could see from the top of the hill that there's a deer on the sand beach maybe thirty feet out of the water. I couldn't tell whether it was a buck or doe and I set there real quietly and trying to duck around where he couldn't see me. Gettin a little closer...closer...I already had my buck anyway...gettin closer and closed and finally I seen the God darn...I think it was either eight or ten point buck...it was dead there. And that's the one that my brother had shot the previous evening but he had gone down the river at least a mile and a half if not two miles. So I came back up to this guy on the hill...he's only five hundred feet from the river and I said, "do you want a buck?" He looked at me because he didn't hear no shot or nothing. "This is one of those crates". I said,"No, I'm not kidding...there's a nice buck out there standing on shore...it's the one my brother shot last night." Oh he hesitated, but he came with me and I told him, "well if you want it you gotta clean it" and he cleaned it out and it's still warm from the inside. So, I told him "it doesn't cost you anything...you take it." He was glad to take that one. Then he asked me, "what'll I tell my partner where I shot at". I said, "well I don't know where the bullets are, we gotta look for 'em." There was bullet holes all over the God darn thing.

I: You didn't make anything off that one?

R: No, I didn't want to sell it, I just gave it to him. I helped him drag it up to the road.

I: He did all right on that one.

R: Yeah. It was the first day of deer season, I walked from our hunting camp clear across Bruno south...oh Krist it must been about a mile and a half that way...going on a big hill I seen two deer start from the bottom. See, one was a buck...big bugger so I got two quick shots in there and I dropped that buck and I finally got there...oh was that a big son of a gun...it was only eight point, but he had points like that and hell it was only hundred feet to drag and I cleaned that out
and dragged it there and this Raymond Olger from Alston, he had a Model A Ford...him and I got it then the next morning. That thing was as long as that God damn Model A was. And, some guy hunting up there and wanted a deer...he hadda go back to Detroit right away...so I..."yeah, I'll sell it". I got forty bucks for that one.

I: That was alright.

R: Well, he didn't have to go back right away, but he bought it right away and he shipped that deer by express from Baraga. He weighed two hundred and forty pounds dressed. That I know for a fact because that's what he hadda pay express on and I could've...if I would have cared to have entered that in a contest, I would have won another twenty-five bucks there. I think sixty bucks is the most I ever got for a buck.

I: Do you remember any other big shots coming down and trying to buy it from you?

R: No, I...when I used to have one or so for sale, I scout around for a deal myself, you know.

I: What kind of guy is the guy that buys one?

R: Well, I think the guy to begin with, he's gotta have some money...just to show off, I think that's more than anything...that he has a buck, that's all.

I: Big talker, right?

R: Yeah and then naturally the bigger the horns the more they pay for it.

Stop in tape.

R: Well, it's not really violating...we were hunting...this is somewhere in the late forties...I mean thirties...way back on the homesteads and Ernest Koski, my neighbor, was with me and he had a three hundred savage and he only had three bullets and I had a thirty carbine and I went up on a hill in the virgin timber to hunt. So, it was really cold. I had a pair of cold cotton wet mits on and I seen, well I think it was a four point buck...it wasn't sixty-seventy feet from me...came in there in a hurry and stood there just a moment and I couldn't get that hammer on for love or money on that gun there, my fingers were so cold. Then I tried to press it with the palm of my hand like that and I finally got it on and the deer was gone. I got so darned disgusted I turned back and I could hear Ernest Koski shootin'. He was in the cutover portion...the freshly cut timber left below the hill...it was a flat actually. I was on top of the hill and here I seen a deer running and Ernest after him and he was trying to catch ahold of that tail because he only had one bullet left. And he was so intent on catching ahold of that tail that he didn't watch his steps too much...he fell down nose down in the snow and the deer gained a little on him and finally he went after
it and that deer finally got mad and he turned around and he came after him, you know...little fawn and he cut his throat with a knife and he still saved his bullet. I couldn't do anything...it was within range of me to shoot, but he was so close to that I couldn't shoot that deer when he was so close to the tail on it.

I: You could have popped him.

R: Yeah...yeah I could've shot that deer but I didn't wantta when he was that close. But, I got a kick out of that the way he was running. I: That must have been an interesting sight...a man grabbing onto the tail of a deer.

R: Yeah...it was just within reach

I: Did you sell any other deer to big shots?

R: Well, used to be a guy...well these bar owners they would handle the transactions really, you didn't know which one really bought it because there'd be a group of maybe three or four hunters together...their own group and you don't know which one actually bought the deer, see. But they...but word always got around that they want deer over there and over there and over there and, you know, if you had anything, you didn't have no trouble gettin rid of it.

I: What would they do...sell venison in the bars?

R: No, not as venison, but the whole buck, you know. They'd be inbetween guys 'cause after all they spent a lot of money in the bars too.

RR: Yeah, those were more trophy deer that they sold. They'd have something to go home and tell their wives.

I: Oh, I see, a guy would come, drink in the bars and the bar owner would find out what the story was and how much this guy was willing to pay ...

R: Yeah, right.

I: And it would go through him and he would get a piece of it

R: Well, I don't know...that was his piece already...all the booze he was selling them to begin with and sometimes the guy that had the buck would give him a little bit too.

RR: That's still quite prevalent now.

R: Well, not quite so much...it's so damn dangerous now that these officers...they even sent some of the conservation officers to buy deer, you know...trying to buy deer out there and then they nail you. The buyer and the seller they're in the same fix.

I: It's all changed now, the whole hunting scene.
R: Oh yes, you... I don't think there's many bucks sold today because there isn't too many bucks available.

I: But, the whole hunting picture has changed.

R: Yeah.

I: Here you got guys that stand on the roads.

R: It's all road hunting practically now.

I: Who pounds the bush like you guys did, huh?

R: Yeah... there was no roads and no cars them days, well we used to... I'll tell you twenty-five - thirty miles didn't mean nothing to walk them days.

I: Do you think it's possible that there are deer... only they're back in there?

R: There are more than there appears to be I'm quite certain, but they're out a long ways and scattered.

I: Where the old timers who used to hit the bush can't go anymore and where the young people aren't used to going.

R: Well...

RR: Well, now isn't that going back to what we said earlier about the harvesting of the timber up here? Well, you had the roads and the railroad tracks to walk on and, you know, granted they weren't good enough for cars, but you walked up there and you worked up there and you were awful familiar with the area...

R: Yeah, well that means more in hunting than anything else... if you know the area... every ridge and creek and hill and knob and then you figure your wind comes into consideration and any clusters of hemlock and trees deer season. If you got a big hardwood slashing and you're hunting and you got kind of nasty weather... wet snow or rain or something, you'd be assured that there'd be some laying underneath them hemlocks, you know. Them days where there was a lot of deer, now it could be different again, I don't know... that's what I used to think always... between them two homesteads out there grew them hemlock but they used to be some clusters.

RR: But, that's still true today because in our snow mobilising up there south of the homesteads, those clusters of hemlock still stand.

R: Yeah.

RR: And there's deer in there... but you try and see one, it's impossible.

R: Yeah
I: Not with a snow mobile...

Definitely... granted... yeah but even walking. If you walk up in that area you can see a hell of a long ways but so can the deer and they're much more intent on saving themselves than you are in seeing them.

R: They've gotta have cover even if they do have the feed, they still have to have cover.

I: Well, a lot of things have changed. First of all, there was a lot of virgin timber back then and you could see farther in the woods.

R: Yeah...

RR: Was there virgin timber back then?

R: Why certainly.

RR: I mean, what kind? Was it hardwood...

R: Hardwood... hemlock... everything mixed.

I: Oh yeah?

R: Some of that God darn... that hemlock and the hardwood too, it was like a park in there. Not a bit of undergrowth in there. You could see a deer or coyote a long long way in there. We was shootin' one time... when Ed Kenna and I were way back on the homestead there... that was virgin timber too and nice sunny Sunday afternoon and deer came from Bruno... oh it was a big buck... and it stood; and just because there was three of us in one group, none of us could hit that damn thing. I emptied my gun at it... I had a thirty carbine, and Onnie had about five or six shots and he even had two or three shots where he leaned his gun against a tree and then Ed Kenna... he's an old guy and he's a stubborn bugger anyway, and he couldn't hit it. But, he didn't want to admit it... "Oh", he said, "he hit it". We went along the tracks and... in four - five inches of snow... and there was a windfall maple that the wind had pushed over... stump had broke maybe three feet off the ground and it had those long snipes there, you know how a tree breaks and it's got snipes sticking up... slivers like... well that deer had gone too close to that and there's some hair left... dropped there... he said, "I knew I hit it". He just didn't wanna give in, you know. But, if I was alone or anyone of them other guys had been alone, we'd a got it, you know.

I: Why would that be?

R: Well, you're over anxious to see who's gonna knock that down, you know, who's gonna be the one to get it, you know.

I: How do you know though, when everyone's firing?

Oh, you don't really know

R: Well, it's hard sometimes to say. I've shot a deer with another guy,
he had a three-hundred savage...I had a three-hundred savage at the time and bullet holes were that far apart and we only had one shot...we divided that together...that was a doe anyway out of season...that wasn't too far back either.

RR: Remember that same thing happened back there in that clearing behind Koski's a few years ago...there's you and Toivo and Norman and Ronnie and myself...

R: Oh yeah

...and that buck came up from the swamp...like a hundred feet from Toivo and he shot and he missed it and it went back down there in the swamp and that son of a...dad was taking the upper most part of the swamp walking through and I was coming through from somewhere else...we all got to the clearing at about the same time and that damn deer came out of there and the five of us opened fire...and we took eighteen shots at that thing through an open clearing and it's still going today as far as I know.

R: I had this automatic...thirty-six automatic with that scope on it and I couldn't get that God darn thing...no sir. Was open field but it wasn't really too long a distance, you know, was in the bush...

Was pretty damn far..

R: If I would have had that savage I think I'd of got him, you know, with the peep sight, but that scope is hard to get in the clear.

RR: That deer had a gifted life.

I: I guess so.

Altogether, you know, there was eighteen shots...

I: A lot of lead around that deer.

...eighteen shots at once...and before that there was three more shots that Toivo had put at it.

I: Twenty-one shots at a deer.

Right and we never got it. I didn't even see the horns on it...everybody else saw 'em.

I: Going back to what you were saying, it should be harder to see deer now because there's more cover...more brush.

R: And less deer.

I: Okay, there's probably less deer, but maybe there's more deer than we think because no one goes way back where they are. Everyone's a road hunter now, huh? The younger generation don't walk, for the most part, and the old guys your age can't hit the brush like you used to, okay?

R: Yeah

I: So, no one goes back in there and pounds it...
R: They'd have a hell of a lot better chance to hunt way back there now than we did in our day because they can go out in their snow mobiles and you got maybe quarter of a mile hike from there.

RR: But still there are people that go back there...there's not many of them but there are people...Ray Aho for one...

R: Yeah, and Charlie...

RR: And Charlie and Kenny...they get out there and they see deer too, know, that's true they do see deer.

End of Part III (Side B on Part II tape)