FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store Days</td>
<td>770-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouna's Store</td>
<td>773</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooster Lumber Co.</td>
<td>774-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Motor Co. Job</td>
<td>776-77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging for Arvon</td>
<td>778'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmill Business in Tapiola</td>
<td>779</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Timber</td>
<td>781</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Through the Depression</td>
<td>783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Trucks</td>
<td>784-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holts and the Caterpillar Tractor</td>
<td>786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Power Saws</td>
<td>787-88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumber Camps</td>
<td>789-90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in the Camps</td>
<td>791-92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernized Logging</td>
<td>793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Carry-lift</td>
<td>794</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging in the Future</td>
<td>795-96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Education</td>
<td>797</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbering During the War</td>
<td>798-800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Packsack&quot; Loggers</td>
<td>800-01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Big Lumber Operations Today</td>
<td>802</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Pulp Lumbering</td>
<td>803</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauling by Boat</td>
<td>805</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Conservation Department</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>Dick Train</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUBJECT: Logging History, Pelkie Area

SOURCE: Matt Oja, Reuben Oja -- father and son. Matt was a local merchant who became involved in the logging business. His store became a "company store" and the men received credit

COMMENTS: there when they needed it. Unfortunately his memory is not all that clear. Reuben helps out in the interview, but this gives it a more recent slant.

Interviewer: Allan Lavery
R: Matt Oja
R-1: Reuben Oja
R-2: Mrs. Matt Oja

I: I've been told that you've been around a long time and know a lot about the forestry business up here.

R: Oh, are you up here at the forestry?

I: I'm a forestry student at Michigan Tech and my professor told me that you've seen a lot of changes around here.

R: Oh yeah, I've seen a lot of 'em, sure. I've seen a lot of them in the last...oh I don't know how many years.

I: Well, how old were you when you first started in the forests?

R: Well let's see...I wasn't...probably about 1917 or something like that...17.

I: Why did you do it?

R: Well, I just got started in it, that's all...slowly.

I: Did you hire onto a crew?

R: No...no...just kept on. Was running a store then. I got the store in 1917.

I: Store? What kind of store was it?

R: Well, was a regular grocery store and in 1917 I got that from Alphonse Gauthier.

I: Where was it?

R: It's in Pelkie
I: Pelkie?
R: Yeah, in Pelkie, yeah and then I got started in lumber and timber business.
I: The same time?
R: Well, almost, yeah...1917...just about, I guess. Hard to remember that far.
I: Well, how did you get into the timber business with a store?
R: Well, it was with the company. I was with a nine-man company...nine men in it and we started logging. I wasn't in the deal, I was just outside...outside of it but I was in with the men anyway.
I: You weren't a partner in the...?
R: Well, I was a partner...we all were partners...but I don't know how many was there...I really don't...about seven of us.
I: Seven?
R: Yeah, seven of 'em.
I: Did you seven do all the work?
R: Yeah...well we had teams...people that worked there they had horses and we had teams and everything in our own company; but that was the start.
I: Were there other people working for you?
R: There was...let me see...I can't remember the number...yeah, there was seven of them working...were working in the company.
I: And you ran the store?
R: Yeah, I had the store then...I had a place to keep these fellows going.
I: You said it was a grocery store...must have sold other things too.
R: Yeah, had general merchandise...everything...everything put together in the olden times.
I: You sold them food and
R: Food and clothing and everything that belonged in the store, you know.
I: Tools that they needed...
R: Yeah...called the (???) Company
I: The what?
R: The Rokoland Company...R O K O L A N D...the Rokoland Company. There was nobody was the manager...was all worked together.
I: Did that work good with nobody being the manager?
R: It worked alright, yeah.
I: Did you have any problems with it?
R: No, we didn't have any problems...they all took them themselves.
I: Were there any other stores around or other companies?
R: Well, there was another store right across the road...he was in the same kind of business...logging and store business.
I: Then all the people in the town were working in the...cutting timber for you. Were there any farmers?
R: Yeah, there were farmers, but there wasn't much farming then...it was pretty small.
I: Well, how many people were there?
R: Oh, I don't know...there was quite a few, you know, there was other people too.
I: More than there are now?
R: More than there is now, yeah.
I: There were more then than there are now?
R: Yeah...there isn't many out there now, you know. I can't get this stuff exactly because it was so far...long ago.
I: Do you have any pictures?
R: I haven't any pictures of that, no.
I: Of your partners?
R: No... all the partners are all dead... yeah, they're all gone. There's none of them living anymore. No, they're all gone. Some of them died almost right away and some kept going, you know, little by little that they're all gone. Will be five years ago the last one died.

I: What was the town like?

R: Town? Well, there wasn't much town there

I: What other kind of buildings did it have?

R: Well, there was stores there, there was... Rouna had the store across the road... I had the store on the other side... farmer's store started up, Pelkie Coop... is still going.

I: You said Rouna's store?

R: Rouna's store was across the road from my place.

I: Is he a good friend of yours?

R: Yeah, at that time, yes; but he died almost right away too... he died.

I: I saw that name Rouna on a sawmill by the Celotex Plant. Is that a son or grandson?

R: Yeah, that's a great big place that's been going right along. It's the boys running it now.

I: That's the same business?

R: Well, it's kind of the same business, but there isn't too much of that... must be all built over by William Rouna... William Rouna.

I: What was his father's name?

R: His father's name was Matt

I: Matt Rouna? Same as yours.

R: Yeah... that was in 1917 I bought the store and we started logging.

I: Where did you take the logs?

R: We sold the logs in the woods... decked 'em up and then they hauled 'em out of there.

I: Who hauled them out?
R: Wooster Lumber Company at Chassell. They hauled 'em out.

I: You cut the logs...

R: And decked 'em up and they hauled 'em out.

I: Was that a big company?

R: Well the company was big, yeah...Wooster Lumber Company in Chassell, you know, they had lots of other logging going on...their own logging; but this was...our job was just a small job. We sold some logs to them...then we sold everything that we had.

I: All the logs that you cut you sold to them or did you sell any to anyone else?

R: No not to anybody else, we sold 'em all to them.

I: How did the logs get to Chassell from Pelkie?

R: From here they had a railroad coming in to Chassell.

I: A railroad.

R: Yeah...to the camp up there...the railroad run there. They brought the logs on the landing there or other landings along the railroad and took them out as they used 'em up during the summer.

I: When did you cut the logs?

R: We cut 'em in the wintertime then and they picked 'em up there.

I: Then they came in the summer and they hauled them.

R: Yeah...yeah.

I: Which way did the railroad run from there?

R: From there it run northwest...I don't know, how did that go. Not northwest, northeast.

I: Was it just a short run from Pelkie to Chassell?

R: It was from Chassell to out to the woods where they had their camps out there...out about twenty miles or more. It couldn't have been more than twenty miles from Chassell. That was the start of it...something like that. Worked with these whole bunch of men and we parted then when they took everything...sold everything...
and if there was anything to sell, parted and that was the end of it.

I: Was there a reason for selling everything?
R: No...there was no reason but just figured that it would probably would be some harder times we'd probably run in the hole, you know, was a change to lose everything.

I: Were times getting harder?
R: Well, I don't know, about the same...same kind of times that wasn't any harder. It just didn't fit...was too many men in it, you know, too many to keep on a going, you know, and this was the part that each get away, you know. And I started logging for Wooster Lumber Company...big company...over in the...down below the hill there and they hauled that...hauled that to Hazel.

I: Where is that?
R: About six - seven miles from there, they hauled it to the (???).

I: From Chassell?
R: No, right from the woods out there. See, after we quit the logging, you know, I got a job for myself with the Wooster Lumber Company and then I started logging there and I bought some timber of my own and started logging my own stuff with no partners then.

I: You stayed at the same place to work then.
R: Yeah, that sameplace.

I: When you broke up, you sold your property. Did Wooster Lumber Company buy it all?
R: Yeah, well there wasn't anything there to buy...was just some logs that we left there. We didn't keep the land or anything.

I: Oh, they own the land?
R: No, the land I think we sold the land or I don't remember what happened to the land...we left it there probably, the state got it. And this logging was going on in 1923, '24 and '25 when we done this logging. '26 and '27 that's the two years I logged for Wooster Lumber Company. And then I bought something for myself there and I sold
'em what I had...my own timber. I didn't sell to Wooster, I sold to Hilliard...he bought 'em right on the sleighs...sleighs you know. He hauled the stuff out to Hazel and shipped it out there. Hazel, that's where the railroad slip came in from Keweenaw Bay and went to Mass.

I: The railroad? That was the name of the railroad?

R: Yeah, Mineral Range Railroad.

I: And it ended at a place called Hazel?

R: No, it went to Mass. We...I think we hauled everything to Hazel and loaded on the cars right there. We didn't do anything...we sold 'em on the sleigh. They bought 'em on the sleigh so much and they'd haul out the stuff. That's the way that went and in 1929 that's when I started work for the Ford Motor Company.

I: Ford Motor Company?

R: Yeah...started then. A neighbor, Matt Turunnen...he was my neighbor...he was my partner and we started together. We left all that other stuff there because we didn't have nothing...nothing...we took some of it out the next year or so, but it didn't amount to much.

I: What did you leave?

R: We just left the stuff there and then we sold it as we went on, see. We left it there because we got a bigger job. I took a bigger job on Ford Motor Company that year...1929, I took a job with three sections of timber back of Pelkie over here...three sections, that's about...

I: Three sections?

R: Three sections...a section is a mile all around...a section that's four forties that's a section...I contracted for three sections to log for them. I logged that in 1929 and 1930. Gee I don't remember that I logged any in 1931...I might have logged.

I: What kind of equipment did you use?

R: That was different kind of equipment...used all trucks there...all trucks for hauling.

I: Different than you'd used on your own?
R: Yeah, was all we had was trucks.
I: You said you left your stuff there. What stuff did you leave?
R: I left all that other stuff that I had logged my own, I left it there and I logged that afterwards. Afterwards in summertime when I had nothing else to do probably.
I: You had sleighs and what were you talking about...the trees you just left them until...
R: Yeah, the trees...that's what we left there because I had some timber left there and I didn't know what to do with it, so I left it there.
I: You worked for Ford in the winter?
R: Yeah, well we worked for Ford...we started in '29 and we worked for Ford...19...about 1940 I guess it was...forty - forty-four, I don't remember and I left Fords then.
I: You were with them for sixteen years?
R: Yeah, yeah just about.
I: What kind of trees were you cutting at first?
R: All kinds of trees...anything that come along.
I: Was it like hardwood?
R: Hardwoods
I: All hardwoods or softwoods or everything.
R: Hardwoods and softwoods...every kind.
I: Pines?
R: There wasn't any pine wood. That was inbetween in that time I was up at the woods...logging up to Herman here...about a year and a half and I also was on that logging out there at Misery Bay, that's out the other way for about two years out there. Anda lot of that stuff was taken away from me. And in 1938...in '38 I started logging over there in Arvon and was there for three years...'38, '39 and '40 and I went right back over to Pelkie again where I was and logging over that way. So, I cut that time pretty short...what did I say that sixteen years?
I:

R: Sixteen years that'll be in 1940 did I say?
I: You said 1945.
R: 1945
I: 1929 to 1945.
R: Yeah, I guess that's about it, yeah...1945, well from then on that's over to Arvon, that's three years...
I: For who?
R: Arvon...that's a place over Huron Mountains.
I: Was that another big company?
R: Yeah, these were all big jobs, there here.
I: Are any of these still around?
R: No...not any around...they're all gone now.
I: How long did Arvon last?
R: It lasted over there three years.
I: For you?
R: I cut in three years I cut thirty million feet off there.
I: You must have had a lot of men working under you.
R: Yeah...there was a lot of men working there.
I: What was your position then?
R: My position wasn't anything...just looking after the job that's all. I had this other fellow with me, Tourinen, and he was looking after the job...lots of fellows looking after the job. Had about twenty-seven trucks hauling so it kept many of us busy keep help to the job to see that everything is going good.
I: You kept everything working right
R: Yeah I did. In the meantime, all this here time...some years we were not cutting, just one or two years but then rest of the years we were always cutting something
at the sight...camps. It's kind of hard to remember, you know, it seems to be that it happened...I can't remember. 1945 as I said there, well then we started the sawmill business over there in Tapiola.

I: Sawmill?
R: Sawmill...so we starting sawing it.
I: And you'd never been in that kind of business before?
R: Well, I was in that little bit but not enough to know much about it so then we got a sawmill and cut every day and then we'd know every day how much we cut...how much we'd (???) timber there we bought from Rouna and Keweenaw Land Company...I bought some timber from Copper Range over here back of Tapiola...I kept going at that then for years and years like that. And during the last part...that fellow that just come in, he's my son. He logged here during 1950 something...he logged a little piece of timber over here back of L'Anse over here. Cut it up hauled it (???). But I was on the big gang in 1944 'cause I was in the Ford stuff...we were talking, I owned stuff then and I'd buy the timber and log it and buy some more and keep on logging.

I: Just a little bit at a time to keep going.
R: Yeah, and then I sold the stuff...every evening when they closed the mill up, everything was sold...everything was measured right there and was sold and hauled out on a truck.

I: Sold it by the day
R: Day by day, yeah. In between all these days I couldn't remember how much timber I cut, cut you know, we always cut a million or more...I mean, ten million or more.

I: Board feet?
R: Board feet, yeah...every year that we cut, you know. That was the way that went.

I: Was it all sold?
R: I sold it every night...when we'd get through, everything was sold off of the trucks...everything went on the truck.

I: Who bought it?
R: It was a fellow names Soli...he's dead too...he used to buy all our timber.

I: Then did he sell it again?

R: I suppose he sold it...I suppose. That's all I had to do with it just set it on the truck there.

I: How far do you suppose the lumber that you cut went?

R: Well, I don't know where it went, you know...he shipped it off...I don't know. It's kind of hard to remember stuff from so far back...have to remember everything twenty years, you know. Hard to remember that far. Somebody must have been over to question Rueben, this fellow that just come in...they must have questioned him. I'll find out from him.

Stop in tape.

R: We were just talking about this logging here...different logging about here and Tapiola that the sawmill run over there over ten years, I guess.

R-1: Yeah, it started in 1943.

R: Yeah, it was '43...pretty close, I remembered it was '45...in '43, well that's...

R-1: '43 to 1951...'52

R: Then you came in here and you logged a little bit.

R-1: Yeah, that was in 1955 or '56.

R: Yeah, you logged some...

R-1: We logged two forties...I logged two forties when I was here.

R: I couldn't (??) Yeah, I remember that was the end, that's all we logged.

R-1: Yeah, that was 1956.

R: Yeah, that was below (??>). But anyway that timber was there and we cut it and hauled it and sold it.

I: What kind of trees were they?

R-1: Hard maple.
R: Hard maple and soft, yeah. It was over here by Herman wasn't it?
Yeah, back out over here.

R: Yeah, back by the river
By the Silver River

R: Yeah, I remember. It's hard to makethis come out, you know, to show that where the timber went...how the timber was cut.

Where the timber went? Well, the logs were cut into lumber and the lumber went to Soli Fords Products.

R: Yeah, I know, he got all the lumber.

Well, the logs that were shipped then to Cliff-Dow Chemical and then to...yeah, all the chemical went to Cliff-Dow.

R: But, there's so many different angles

Nikoesha Edwards

R: Nikoesha Edwards got that
Oh yeah, he cut that down

R: Hemlock was shipped right out to Nikoeshia Edwards...of course, that belonged the Coop. Ford Motor Company they took all that, of course that was their stuff and we just got paid for the work.

I: What did you...haul some chemical logs?

R-1: Yeah, well we sold chemical for all the while we logged. For just about every year we cut chemical timber. Then we put it on railroad cars.

R: Shipped it to Iron Mountain to go to...
That was Ford Motor Company.

R: Yeah
They went to Marquette.

R: And they used that for chemicals.
Yeah, they make chemical products out of it.
R: Yeah

I: Was that the same wood that you (???)? The same trees? Well, let's just say it was hardwood. It's really just the poorest part of the tree that's what your chemical comes out of. It's a log where you don't get any lumber out of.

R: Yeah, it's just the...yeah that's the way it was because we had a crew over here at the small camp there...all this here crew was cutting chemical wood.

R-1: Yeah, well that was Iron Mountain.

R: That was all shipped to Iron Mountain then...all went in, I think, big trucks hauled that out. But they come in and pick up that stuff that when they had a load or two to bring it out. We hauled that to Midnaw...that's over here on the south shore.

R-1: There's so many different...like he was logging out of so many different phases of each logging. He started logging in 19...what year did you start logging...1924.

R: I started in '17.

'17...alright if you're gonna start recalling each logging, you gotta go through different phases of what he's logging.

R: Yeah, I know.

Like he logged for Wooster Lumber Company, Ford Motor Company, then for yourself, you know...gotta go through that to what...1942.

R: Well, I figured 1945 when I left Fords I guess.

Yeah, well it was a little earlier than that. Yeah, then you went on your own in...you moved to Tapiola and was there until 1957. See, there's the different phases of his logging and sawmills.

R: Yeah, there was lot of logging going on in different phases.

Like Ford Motor Company...he was contracting for Ford Motor Company. Took it out on so much a thousand and that was all his equipment. Then all the private logging he did on the side. He run sawmills...what
year did you have the sawmill up in North Laird up there?

R: I forget when I had that sawmill.

R-l: 1933 - '34?

R: I think that was in 1933 or '34. That was in the summer-time. We couldn't even get anything else to do. Yeah, all that stuff is getting left out.

R-l: Well, what'll this be used for?

R: This is something like Orva Erikainen started, you know

R-l: Is this some history of the logging or...?

I: I'm taking a course and Michael Loukinen...

R-l: Oh, I see, Michael, yeah I talked to Michael too.

R: But what has Michael got written on there...you got anything?

I: Well, these are some questions I...

R: Tell me what some of those questions are

I: They're all mixed up. Well, you worked right through the depression, didn't you?

R: Yeah

I: And World War II. Did you have any trouble getting through the depression?

R: Well, there wasn't any trouble. Of course there probably was a year or two inbetween that we didn't work, probably.

R-l: 1934 I remember that's the year that you didn't

R: Oh (???)...but it's tough to remember see. Do you remember any other year that we didn't log then.

R-l: That was the year you moved to Herman country for Ford. You moved there in '34, but there was one year that I remember that the only thing you had was one truck out. That was when Mattson drove your truck. That was in '34. That's the only year that he came when I've been.

R: Yeah, I think so too. There wasn't too many...that was the year we were idle, yeah. Yeah, like logging over
here to Arvon with twenty-seven trucks on the road and they were all our trucks...they all belonged to us. There wasn't any...there was one hired truck...that Kangas...Henry Kangas, this fellow from...where was he from over here?

Trout Creek

R: Trout Creek...yeah that's the only, I think...it was twenty-seven trucks on the road and I don't know how much stuff you took out of there in the spring and hauled all of these gears into Iron Mountain, I guess. Did they go over there or did they get left in L'Anse?

What's that?

R: The gears, you know, all the good chains and that.

Oh I don't know. That was on the trucks then.

R: Yeah, and during the depression everything got lost...the truck wasn't built for hauling, see.

R-1: It wasn't built for Ford Motor Company, they did the re-designing on it.

R: Yeah

They recalled all that so we didn't get all the parts back on the trucks. That was 1935 - '36.

R: Yeah, it's hard to remember sometimes.

I: What were these gears that they...

R: The rear end...the rear end. We had all Ford trucks because we...that was the only truck that you could take the rear end off without taking anything else off. The rear end...how did you take that off, do you remember?

Well, I'll tell you the reason they had Ford trucks was because Ford Motor Company wouldn't allow anything else.

R: I know, but then...

Well, it was a simple truck to repair, that's the reason.

R: Yeah, it's the simpliest truck to repair...that was just the simpliest truck.

I Were they any other kind of trucks made then?
R: Yeah, sure...there were all kinds.
I: Were any of them better than the Ford trucks?
R-1: Yeah, there were better trucks but you just weren't allowed in the yard with anything but a Ford truck.
R: Yeah, I suppose.
R-1: Dad had...you had about five Internationals at that time...you hadda get rid of 'em.
R: Yeah, I got rid of 'em.
R-1: And you were an International dealer that time.
I: Were trucks used in 1917?
R: No...no trucks...horses.
I: Horses.
R: Yeah
R-1: And then the big caterpillar tractor and hooks come out in...what year did you log in back of the Limestone up there?
R: Oh, that was for Hilliard. That was 19...
R-1: '26 - '27?
R: Yeah, it was around there, yeah, because it was '23, '24 and '25 that those were...that Rokoland Company was there and they went off and I start logging for myself, see.
R-1: And that was for Hilliard.
R: And then I went on with that logging until 1929. In 1929 I contracted for Ford, see and I was with Ford 'til...I said 'til 1945.
R-1: I think you're a little bit...I think it was 1942 you were with Ford.
R: Yeah, it might of been. Well anyways, it's close enough. Yeah, well what question did you ask?
I: Well how much could the horses do?
R: The horses never done very much for me...only the first
two or three years I guess I had horses.

Well, for skidding, horses were really used in the woods until...they weren't moving logs on the road or anything. Then in '26 the big caterpillar tractors came out.

R: Yeah, in '26.

They sleigh hauled with 'em

I: The tractors?

Yeah, they used to call 'em holts...H O L T.

R: Holts and then they...

That's the forerunner of the caterpillar tractor.

R: And then they had the other one too, the other tractor was called...it was a smaller tractor...Holt was...

R-l: Holt was the big one

R: Yeah and the smaller one was the one that was hauling over into the railroad...at Hazel Siding. They were hauling...there was two of them hauling and then that Holt was supposed to be out there getting loads out and getting them ready and all they were doing was fixing that Holt. It didn't belong to us or I didn't have nothing to do with it, but...

R-l: Belonged to the lumber company.

R: To the lumber company...Baraga Lumber Company...Rudy Hilliard.

I: Were the caterpillar tractors used for skidding?

R: Yeah

R-l: In 1933 - '34 it was.

R: '34...yeah and after while we used them for skidding.

I: First they just used them to pull sleighs?

R: Yeah, that's right

I: Out of the woods?

R: Yeah, on the roads
Beginning of Side B

I: Forties?

Late forties.

R: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

Then the power saw came along.

R: Yeah

I: What were those like?

Clumsy the first ones...they only weighed about a hundred and ten pounds then.

R: Now they weigh about ten pounds.

Yeah...ten - twelve pounds.

R: You can buy a saw ten pounds.

I: One guy couldn't carry that around then.

R: No

Two men.

I: So, you had two men on a crosscut saw. Then the same two men could use the power saw then?

R: No, not always. You got some of them big saws left yet.

Yeah, I got two of 'em.

R: Two big saws.

The first power saw that was made is the one I got at home.

R: Oh, that's right...I remember that too.

R-1: It weighs over a hundred pounds.

I: Who made those?

R: Mercury...Mercury was one of the first saws. There was a Mercury engine and Distant - saw who made the chain or either Orvon, I forget which, it's either Distant or Orvon.
I: Those were improved then too.

...they weigh anywhere from ten pounds to thirty pounds now.

I: I mean, what was the first big change they made after they put out their first saw?

Well, they made 'em a lot lighter and they got more horsepower out of a smaller engine...better chains. You'd have chain trouble. And automatic clutches instead of the other mechanical clutch and all self-oiling. Well, they developed as they used 'em. They found out their mistakes.

I: What chain trouble did you have?

Why, you'd break the chains on 'em...break the rivets. You'd bust the rivets and your chain'd just fly off. You have to stop and you put in new rivets or either break a link or...

I: How did they cut? Easier than a crosscut?

R-1: Well sure they did. Well, one man with a power saw could cut seventy - eighty logs a day whereas it'd take two men to cut maybe fifty with a crosscut. Of course it'd all depend on the timber...where you were cutting too...it wasn't always the same.

I: You said they made self-oiling saws...what were those?

R-1: Chains...the chain is self-oiling.

I: How was it oiled at first?

R-1: Was manual oiled...with manual oiling. Then you hadda press the button, that's about the only thing...but now they're all automatic...and your clutch is automatic. As soon as you speed up your motor your chain'll rotate. First saw that came out they had an idle clutch on it. Boy there's a lot of improvements to tell you the truth, I haven't even seen one of the lastest saws now...they're so improved that...

I: What brand of saw do you use now?

R-1: Well, I don't know. What I've got at home is that old saws and that's a Mercury and the other one's a Homelite. But I think the most popular saws today are Homelite and McCullah. There's Pioneer...quite a few makes.

R: Yeah, there's quitea few of 'em.
I: You said that you worked in camps? You worked in camps when you first started?

R:

R-1: Yeah, we had camps...you had a lumber camps.

R: Oh yeah...yeah we had camps.

I: Did you live there all winter?

R: Yeah, we lived there, yeah...yeah that's right there were the camps.

R-1: Remember the big camps like for Ford there...one winter I think at three camps there was over two hundred men that time.

R: Yeah, yeah that's right.

R-1: And there was a ??? from home yet (???)

R: Yeah, they were coming from all (???).

I: How was the camp set up? What buildings were there?

R-1: Well, you had a group cook camp, and you bunkhouse, and your office, your garages, your repair shops, your blacksmith shops...it was a regular little village.

R: It was a village of its own.

R-1: You had your own power...your own power plants.

R: Yeah, the old power plant. One time we hadda fire...remember that?

R-1: Yeah, that was the last day of the year too...I always remember that fire, it was December 31st.

R: Remember what year that was?

R-1:

R: 1938, yeah.

R-1: Burnt the garage up over here on the Prickett Dam.

R: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

R-1: Saw the fire was coming up up the road and I could see that fire through the woods. I was a young boy. They
were repairing tractors in the shop there and a welding spark flew from the welder into the gas bucket. She went! She burnt three tractors I think and all the... well all the shop equipment and one man just about lost his life there.

I: Lost a lot of equipment.
All the garage equipment and the tractors
R: Yeah, I remember that time.
R-1: That was '38.
R: Yeah, '38...it was the year we come outta here and we moved over there and we decked the logs. We decked the logs and then we hauled 'em out in the wintertime. Did we do any skidding in the winter?
No...no they were all decked
I: What was life like in the camps?
It's hard to describe...you'd have to live in a logging camp.
R: You'd have to live there yourself.
Plenty to eat...good food...most of the logging camps.
R: Yeah, all the camps
The board was cheap...dollar three cents a day eatin all you want...good clean beds...you got your beds the same dollar.
R: What year was it when we got the beds?
Bunks?
R: Yeah
Oh, that was way back in 193...first year that you logged up at Arvon.
R: Arvon?
R-1: Yeah, I'm pretty sure.
R: I think we had 'em up here
R-1: Up by the Dam over here.
R: Then I ran 'em up there, see.

R-1: They could a been...I don't remember.

R: I didn't bring any to Arvon, I think we used the old ones there and we put them up over here on the...

R-1: That's the time you made the new set of camps up here on the Sturgeon Dam that time.

R: That was on this side of the river...?

R-1: The other side.

R: Yeah, the other side...that's where we had...

R-1: That was '37.

R-2: Dad started logging in Arvon, that was thirty-eight years ago now in September.

R-1: Well, that'd be 1935.

R-2: Yeah it was when Alice was born.

R: But then I logged...when Alice was born I logged in Arvon.

R-2: Arvon, yeah.

R: Same thing and then take three years from there. Well, that's right.

I: What were the different jobs in the woods?

R-2: Well forty years ago you were logging over by the dam over there.

R: Yeah, yeah...1933.

R-2: Yeah, about then...yeah.

I: What kind of jobs were there to be done?

R: The jobs?

I: Yeah

R-1: There were so many job classifications that if you started that...

R: You'd have so many that you

R-1: If you started at a modern camp then you wouldn't have so many; but if you started at an old-time camp, well then you'd...well you gotta cook, then a bull-cook, and a chore boy and then your cookees in your cook camp.
Then you got your bosses, your walking boss, your starting boss, might even have a couple of starting bosses.

R: Yeah a couple of 'em...one couldn't take care of it

R-l: Well, then your mechanic, your blacksmith and blacksmith helper, and you'd have a wood butcher, he'd make all the (?) stops and (?) the axe and do all the woodwork. Then your teamsters...that'd be the old-time logging.

I: Then your teamsters?

R: Yeah, that's right.

R-l: Hookers and sawyers, swampers...

R: Had a quite a list of 'em, eh.

R-l: Truck drivers, tractor drivers.

R-2: What's the purpose of this?

Stop in tape.

R-l: It's modernized. The crew of men...two hundred men that years ago I think a crew of fifty men could do same logging.

R: Oh yeah, about fifty men.

R-l: About a quarter of the work force. Because, now a truck driver will go in the woods and he'll load his own truck and he'll drive it out and he'll unload it on the railroad car or on the landing as where years ago you hadda have a crane operator or jammer operator and two hookers, that was three men. That one truck driver does all that work himself now. The sawer he saws all alone, where there was two men sawing, now there's one man. The skidders they go in the woods, they can pull tree-length stringers into the skidway and they cut 'em up there.

R: Yeah, yeah, know what they're doing.

I: How long do they work a day? Sounds like hard work

R-l: Well, one man sawing...a sawyer'll work about seven hours...six- seven hours a day. It's usually about eight hours...eight hour shift.

Modern camp is different than an old one.
R+1: Yes, and it's all together different
R: But there's no camps now.
R+1: No, I don't think there's any lumber camps even
R: I don't think so.
I: What did you mean when you said a modern camp?
R+1: Yeah well, I mean like well they were modernized up in
the forties and fifties. It's different than you take
a camp during the thirties. There'd be most of these
jobs and from the fifties now into the seventies, there
a lot of jobs that aren't anymore either that used to
be in the fifties. It's just, well it's modernizing
like everything else is.

Because there's better equipment that does more jobs
R+1: That's right.
I: What is some of the equipment that's replaced...changed
the jobs?
R+1: Well, your skidder is one of the biggest changes.
Now it's a truck with a loader on it. That's one of the
biggest improvements and one of the most...
I: How were the trucks loaded before that?
R+1: Loaded with a jammer...with a A-frame jammer aided with
a crane. Last year, we used a crane to load.
R: Yeah, had a crane for that.
I: Who makes the...caterpillar still makes the skidders
they can use?
R+1: No...yeah they make skidding machines. There's a lot
of places they use crawler tractors, but most of the
loggers are using rubber-tired skidders. They make them
here over across the bay at Pettibone then some are
made in Canada and some are made on the West Coast.
I: Pettibone makes them right over there?
R+1: Yeah, they make skidders there.
I: They bring in the parts from...
R+1: Yeah, they're assembled here. Well, they do all the
welding and all the frame building here and then they put the engines and the transmissions in. Whatever parts they need well they get 'em in different places.

I Where is the main body then...company...Pettibone, where is it...

R-l: Located?
I: Headquartered?
R-l: Well, I don't know. This is a subsidy of Pettibone in Chicago I think. Actually I don't know too much about Pettibone but this is Pettibone, Michigan down here in Baraga. They're the ones that make the hi-lift. This is actually the home of the carry-lift here.

I: Is this the only place it's made?
R-l: That's right...yes this is the only place it's made.
I: What does it...what does a carry-lift do?
R-l: Well, mostly around lumber yards...carry bundle of lumber and one load of logs and carry logs into the mill, move lumber piles. Very versatile machine.

I: How are all those jobs done? Without that machine?
R-l: Just by hard work.
R: Yeah, just hard work.
I It wasn't too long ago then must have been doing that hard work. What was it?
R-l: About fifteen years ago.
I: Fifteen?
R-l: I'm not sure...yeah it seems...'63...yeah was around fifties there was a lot of bull work yet.
I: There's still bull work, isn't there?
R-l: Not so much anymore. It's pretty much machines that does the work.
I: What would you say is the hardest job now? Who has the hardest job?
R-l: Who has the hardest job...I think the man figuring out
I: The one that gets tiredest.

Well, I wouldn't know. It's hard to say. I think sawing logs is the hardest job in the woods right today. Because you know he's gotta be a pretty husky guy to saw logs.

I: Does it take a lot of skill to do that?

R-1: Yes, it takes a lot of skill. It takes a lot of skill for that.

I: What are some of the secrets of the trade?

Don't ask me, I've never sawed logs.

R: You never sawed, that's right.

I've never sawed logs. I've done everything else in the woods, but I've never sawed logs.

R: Yeah, that's right.

I: What other jobs have you done?

R-1: Everything else there's to do, I guess. Drive bulldozer, drive trucks, skidd logs, scale logs.

What's involved in skidding a log?

Skidding a log? Drive your machine to the log and pull it out...that's about it.

Don't you do anything else?

Well you use a cable of course, snake it out with a cable.

I: Do you see any changes coming? Logging has been changing, how do you think it's going to change in the future?

Well, start hauling logs with a load like they do in the West Coast. Ever seen pictures of 'em or you see them where they run 'em up on the hi-line...but they'll never do it around here because they haven't got enough timber to do it. Like in the mountains on the West Coast, they use these balloons even to haul 'em out or dirigibles or whatever you call 'em. They snake 'em out with long cables. Timber's gettin so scarce around here...there isn't much left anymore.
I: Some people say the amount of timber is increasing up here.

R-l: Increasing sure, in the size of it. You got more of it, but it's not increasing the tree itself.

Stop in tape.

Let's see, it'd be on an average of about...you think he had thirty there? Be about seventy-eighty trucks in there to be hauling to these two mills in Pequaming and L'Anse.

I: That was a lot of wood they hauled.

R-l: Sure

I: Would you have any figure how many board feet.

Like my dad...some of the best years I think he put between fifteen and eighteen million feet alone. That was during a period...oh from...let me think about how many months that would be. January, February, part of March...would be two and a half.

R: Want me to get the paper?

Yeah...he worked seven months.

I: That much in seven months. What is the timber being mostly cut for now? It is for pulp or saw timber?

R-l: I don't know...???

Stop in tape.

R: Other things are kind of fading away, you know. This here...like lot of them are going into teaching...well, there's only so much teaching.

R-l: Teaching is on the down grade now.

R: Yeah, kinda down grade, you know, it has been this year already.

Too many teachers.

R: Too many teachers.

I: You said there's a good future in forestry. I've been told that right now it's hard to get a job.

R-l: You mean in forestry?

I: Forestry.

R-l: I wouldn't know that much about it...but I know one time
there, they were crying for foresters. All these big companies like Mead Corporation...and a lot of the big logging companies like Connor and well Cleveland Cliffs and logging companies...they were looking for foresters.

I: Did you ever go to any forestry school?

No

I: Do you think now if you were just starting out you'd have to get that kind of an education now?

You mean, would I go into forestry?

I: Yeah

I think I would

I: I mean, how did you start out? With your father?

That's right. I worked in the woods. Started in the woods when I was fourteen years old.

I: Raised in the woods.

R-l: That's about it.

R: Well you were at college for a year.

R-l: Yeah, I went one year to college.

R: And then the war time come and...

R-l: Well, that's when the war broke out, 1941.

R: And you come back and you didn't go college.

R-l: No

R: Yeah, that's what happened there, you know. Well, the war continued on '41 'til '46 there and there was manpower shortage at that time.

I: Was there a bigger demand for lumber during the war?

R-l: Yes, some of them days you could sell anything with two ends on it. That's what one skidder told me, "I'll buy anything you got".

R: I know, I remember.
EVT 798

R-l: ...or log buyer or lumber buyer. The veneer plants and the lumber mills...everybody they were buying.

I: But you didn't have enough men?

R-l: Well, there was always a shortage of men...because lumber had a high priority during the war...very high. Because we could get trucks and tires and gas and oil and anything we needed. Matter of fact, I think we got about three new trucks that time right during the war when trucks were hard to get. Tires...we were allotted all the tires that we needed.

I: They were rationed.

R-l: They were rationed and the gas was rationed. And meat was rationed, food was rationed. But, we didn't have lumber camps that time.

R: No...no we didn't have any

I: Who was buying all the wood...all the lumber?

R-l: All the lumber? Well, the different companies. You'd sell it to a broker then he'd do what he wanted with it. He'd sell it for you...he'd buy it from you...lumber broker. Same thing in the log broker. He'd maybe buy a car of vaneer and he'd ship it down to some vaneer plant in Wisconsin. Maybe he'd buy another car and that's the way he'd be a commission buyer.

I: What was it being used for that there was such a big demand? Was it being used up in the war?

R-l: Yes they...I don't know what the...they used lumber in too many places.

R: Yeah, at that time it was...

R-l: And vaneer, they used a lot of vaneer...made a lot of plywood. Chemical...there's a lot of chemical in hardwood.

I: Lot of men leave this area...

R-l: During the war?

I: ...during the war time?

R-l: Yeah, there was a lot of men.

I: Lot of them come back then?
There was a lot of them that didn't come back too

Then when the war ended did the demand for lumber drop off?

R-1: No, it didn't right away, did it dad? It went on for a few years after the war.

R: Yeah, it went on for a few years.

Yeah, because I think all the big companies their inventories were pretty well run out...they hadda get back and build up their inventories again. They got down where they didn't have anything. Just like everything else was run down. Automobiles were just about pretty well run out...they hadda start manufacturing cars too and trucks.

R: Yeah, that's right.

I: Business was booming after the war.

Well, sure after the war it's booming. I don't know how many years it boomed.

I: But it finally stopped, didn't it?

It stopped in the fifties...the fifties was quite a recession in the fifties.

R: How long did that war last?

R-1: Well...it started and ended in '46.

R: It started in '40.

R-1: '41...December 7, 1941 that's when we entered the war.

R: I don't remember, I was out somewhere this side of Iron Wood.

Wakefield.

R: Yeah and that's about the time he...Mr. Lucas, he went back to Finland, didn't he?

That was in 1941

R: Then we came back and that was the start of it.

When the Japs...that was on a Sunday
R: Sunday, yeah

I’ll never forget that day. I was in the woods packing road that day. We were ready to start on (???) up here in Baraga Plaines and I came in the camp that evening and the boys said that the United States was at war with the Japs, attacked Pearl Harbor that morning...December 7, 1941.

I: When they heard that, did a lot of 'em go out and join the army?

Yeah, quite a few did

I: Just (???) the camp?

R: Oh yeah they did, some of 'em left.

Well, they started drafting men already in...when did they start drafting...1940?

R: I don't know, I can't remember.

I think the draft started in 1940.

in tape.

R: 1966 was it? I think it was '66. Yeah, it's about that time.

I: Who's the biggest employer around here or are there just a lot of independent...

You mean in logging?

I: Yeah, in the wood business

Well, I don't know...there's a lot of what you call jippo gangs now...about three men go together or four men go together, they buy a truck and a couple of tractors and they work that way. They can make more money at it that way. Well, I don't think there is actually a big logger around here.

R: I don't think so.

Actually like the time when dad logged and'd have fifty sixty men hired. I don't think there's anybody around here that's left with many men. They're almost what you'd call pack-sack loggers. What they only can put in the pack-sack...well not exactly the pack-sack, but they used to...years ago they used to call them pack-sack loggers. They had a tractor and maybe a skidder
a truck.

I: Why'd you call 'em jippo loggers.

R-l: Well, I don't know. They call 'em jippo loggers.

I: Is it a Finnish word?

R-l: No, it's not a Finnish word. I've heard that...since I was a young kid I've heard that jippo.

R: Jippo...jippo, yeah.

I: How long do they stay in business? Until...

R-l: They'll be in business all their life. They start when they're young men...they quit and all they do after is log.

I: They have to keep moving around?

R-l: Well no...take all these guys around here...like some of these men have worked I betcha fifteen - twenty years in the same area. I wouldn't say right within a mile or two, maybe within a fifteen - twenty mile area.

I: Do they own any of their own land or how do they stay employed?

R-l: Well, no...well they can get timber from the state. stumpage...go log for Mead Corporation of stumpage basis, contract for Mead.

I: Oh, I see, they contract.

R-l: Yeah, well like I said, they bid on state lands.

I: A lot of the land is state land. Does that have any effect on how much can be done around here?

R-l: No, it's all marked timber...state doesn't let you go in and cut everything down. They selectively log.

I: If there wasn't so much state land, would there be more timber cut?

R-l: I don't know...you got me there...I couldn't say. Well Mead Corporation owns a lot of land. In Escanaba in the big pulp mill down there...Celotex has got some land...no Celotex doesn't have any...they sold it all to Mead Corporation. (? ? ? ) Lumber Company they've got a lot of holdings in Baraga County and Marquette County.
I: These are all big companies outside the county. They are from outside.

I: Is there a lot of them?

No, there isn't too many around here. There's only Mead Corporation, the biggest and Connor. Connor's from Wisconsin. And Calumet C & H...Calumet and Headland.

I: C & H.

Yeah...Copper Range...they're two of the biggest land owners up to Keweenaw...well it isn't C & H anymore, it's Universal Oil. It used to be C & H Mining Company.

I: They take wood from this here Pelkie area?

R-1: No, they own lands.

I: Does the Copper Range Company take...

R-1: They don't, no. They take off their own land. They'll buy it if you have logs to sell...they'll buy it, but they don't have any loggers on it, only on their own...on their own land.

I: They have their own loggers.

Yeah

I: The trucks and everything?

No, they hire their loggers, people that contract out.

I: That's what you do...contract out?

No, I haven't done anything now for awhile...I used to truck...hauls.

I: What's that like?

It's a lot of hard work...long days.

I: How many loads do you take in one day?

It all depends on where you haul from. If you go to a sawmill close to you, you make more trips. Like you go to Ontonagon, you can only make two loads a day. Well, like from Pelkie area, that's a trip about...that's over a hundred mile trip...about a hundred and twenty mile.
I: To Ontonagon and back
And back.
I: You don't take logs from the same place, do you?

See, the way I used to do, lot of these truckers around here they contract out, they haul for anybody. Supposin you had a load of logs that was going to Ontonagon and you wanted me to come and get it, I'd haul it on a contract basis for you, so much a cord or so much a ton I'd haul it in there.

I: You make a contract for a season?
R-l: No, just for a load.
I: Oh, one load.

One load and maybe this time I'd/have only maybe three - four loads for the whole month of January or December. Maybe a fellow over here, five miles away, maybe he's got about three or four loads that's going there. That's the way a lot of these guys do it. They offer different people.

I: Do loggers contract out to the people who own the land then drivers...truckers?
Well, most of the people that own the land they do the work themselves.

I: Oh

R-l: You take like a farmer. He's got two forties of land that he's cuttin some pulp, you know, maybe to take a cut of it...a few cords of pulp or something off it just to thin out his timber or something...he's improv-ing his wood lot, well he'd ship it out because now they'll buy pulp just about any place.

I: How is the trucker paid? By the load?
Yeah, by the cord
I: When he delivers?
By the cord or by the ton or sometimes by the trip so much a trip.
I: If it's a long trip ?
Well, he'd just make 'em a flat price. I...you'd say
maybe I'll haul a load for you...be forty bucks I'll take that load in for you...just a flat price. Forty dollars for that load and that's it, it's so much a trip. Maybe make two loads.

I: You mean make two loads and make eighty dollars.

Eighty dollars. But most of the time it's just done on a cord basis or a ton basis.

I: Who pays you?

R-l: Pardon?

I: Are you paid by the mill that you deliver to?

R-l: No, the man that cut the wood, he's gotta do the paying. The mill doesn't...they don't pay anything. They pay...they (???)...that's what the mill wants and then they pay by F.O.B.

I: What's that mean, F.O.B?

Well, that's F.O.B right on their yard...free on board or whatever it means. It's right there, F.O.B. their mill.

I: I talked to Mr. Olson over at the yard at Celotex. He's the buyer up there.

I: Yeah, he said that Celotex pays the truckers by the ton.

Yeah, that's by the ton.

I: That's not the same thing that you're talking about.

No. Maybe they do pay the truckers now, I don't know. I haven't trucked for many years. I wouldn't know, see, that might have changed too that they pay the truckers now, I don't know. When I trucked, the man that cut the timber he's the one that did the paying.

I: And he was paid by the mill?

The mill pays him. Yeah, it'd been nice to see the mill that Ford Motor Company had right here. There was a big sawmill there. Right down where the Celotex plant is. Was many million feet of...many million, well yeah many millions of feet of lumber they piled on the dock and they'd load up...the big boats used to come in here and they'd dock down over there, they'd take the lumber
out by boat.

I: By boat? I never heard of that.

Sure, that's the way they used to do it. Two big carriers used to come down here...they could still have 'em down here.

I: Those big freighters?

R-l: Big freighters...well they wasn't too big, I don't know whatsize they were.

I: They just took the wood and the round logs?

No, lumber.

I: All cut by the sawmills. Do you know where the carriers took the lumber?

R-l: They'd take it down to Detroit and use the logs in auto bodies.

in tape.

I: Are you still working in some kind of forest...?

No, I've been out of the forest work for what...five...

I: Hard to find a job then?

R-l: No, it isn't too hard.

Stop in tape.

I: How does that, having that right nearby help the forestry in this area? Or does it?

Well, they do a lot of experimenting there. Lot of experimental wood plots and everything and well they go out and they do a lot of cutting out there and they see how much timber grows in a certain amount of time and what species of trees will grow fastest and what different soil conditions.

I: So, anybody that wants to know that information can go down there to the Ford Forestry Center.

Well, Ford Forestry...there a lot of information they get from Tech through that wood research laboratory up over there too.
I: Yeah, Institute of Wood Research.

R-l: There's a lot of sawmills and they get a lot of good hints from over there because Tech has got the money to experiment with that that sawmill operator he can't afford it.

I: Does the Conservation help out with tips like that?

R-l: Not so much

I: Or on growing trees, tree farms.

R-l: And there's another one, the Soil Conservationists. I think they used to pay the farmers for clearing off some of their wood lots. They don't do it anymore, I think they cut that out. They'd pay 'em so much an acre if they'd cleared out your wood lot. Sure they would

R: They got a forestry...this here...

R-l: Yeah, Ruth Hansen works (?

R: Yeah, Ruth Hansen works (???) in the next house here. She's a...she's the leader of the...what department is she the leader of?

R-l: Soil Conservation.

R: Soil Conservation, yeah. She...

R-l: Well, she's the manager of the...well I'd say office manager.

R: Yeah, she's the office manager...something like that

R-l: They've got their...their field men are out of Houghton. Dick Train, maybe you know him.

I: I think I met him.

R-l: Dick Train from Houghton...he's one of the field men that goes around.

I: One of my classes he talked.

R: Pardon?

I: He talked to one of our classes.
Yeah...Fred Kikko in Ontonaton, he's another one of the surveyors.

I: How many people are employed by the state then... in forestry?
Conservation Department?

I: In the Conservation Department. Very many?
I don't know... I wouldn't know.