

M: Okay Arthur, tell me a bit about yourself and your life in the Adirondacks.

Arthur: I just live here in Hartford, Hinkley and Willsboro, that's as far as I ever got. And I worked in the woods way back in the 30s. Off and on, I worked for myself for about 7-8 years. Had horses and everything.

M: You logged with horses?

Arthur: Uh-hum.

M: Tell me about life in those days.

Arthur: Well it was tough, what are you gonna say. I mean you got up the morning, they got you up.

M: What time?

Arthur: Well, daylight. In the summer--three o'clock when you've had horses to take care of in the woods. And went into the--down the barn, took care of your horses, come back had your breakfast and out you went. You stayed out till 5-6 o'clock at night.

M: This was in one of those lumber camps?

Arthur: Uh-hum.

M: And how many people would live in one big bungalow?

Arthur: Well would be about 60 men. That is in all. In all--the whole job would cover about 60 men. Mostly soft wood them days. Hard wood now. And today it's altogether different. You go home, get up in the morning and get in your Cadillac and go in the woods and cut a tree down and

come home. That's the way it is though. You get skidders that skidding 7 miles up here to get the logs out the good road. They don't build no more roads. Years ago everything--roads were built in the swamps and you pulled everything down the swamps in the wintertime and loaded it out then in the spring.

M: How long--how far could you skid with horses?

Arthur: Oh not that far, half a mile would be awful. But you didn't skid, you just bunched 'em and put 'em up on skidways and then in the wintertime they went around, they made a road where the skidways were and moved them on sleighs and dragged them over to the river, Moose River here, that's where they're dragged. All soft wood was driven those days.

M: Down the river?

Arthur: Uh-huh. I worked on Moose River. I was a--

M: Were you leaping from log to log yourself.

Arthur: No, no, no I never got that good. No, no I didn't--we used to run along the bank to push 'em in. And you were soaking wet all day and all night.

M: What years would that have been?

Arthur: Well 37-38-39.

M: And when did that logging kind of go out?

Arthur: Well _____ went out in 49 I think. 48 somewhere along, when the dam went out at McKeever that was

the last drive.

M: How many drives did you do? This would be one per season.

Arthur: Every year. Every year.

M: It'd be just one big drive?

Arthur: Yeah, in the spring. So they'd go into camp nine and like that and they'd drive the things down to the river and pile it right up on the ice. And then when the weather--the water started comin' in the spring, well they'd knock it out and they'd go down to McKeever and then they'd sluice them down there and they'd go on in _____ Falls.

M: Is it pretty dangerous to the guys who were out on the river?

Arthur: Oh hoo, the boatmen and like that, they were great men. You wouldn't believe what they could do for bein' the type of men they were, wild.

M: What did they do that was so difficult. I don't know much about the life.

Arthur: Well dangerous. When the logs pile up on those rocks, ever been down Moose River?

M: No.

Arthur: From McKeever down. Well it's nothing but rocks and when they pile up on the rocks they had to go out and get 'em unplied, sent them down the river.

M: How would they do that?

Arthur: Those three men in a boat, and then they'd go out there and they'd either push 'em off, dynamite 'em--

M: Get out of the way in a hurry.

Arthur: Yeah, oh yeah. But they were--they were quite good men.

M: Any of 'em get killed or wounded?

Arthur: Oh yeah. I don't know how many men, but--the last--I think it was the last year they drove--Patty O'Leary, he went--he sluided right down through to McKeever. You know where the McKeever bridge is up here. Well there used to be two bridges down below there. I worked on that bridge when the constuction built that. And used to be two bridges down below. And when the dam went out it took them bridges, moved 'em. The big bridge was in already, but it wasn't all open. They was puttin' traffic over the old bridges yet. And the logs _____ indians took care of that.

M: How did this O'Leary guy die?

Arthur: Got careless or something, went through the sluice.

M: Huh, poor guy.

Arthur: Fell. I don't want to say anything that's-- could have been. The last years they got back in that.

M: You were saying about the indians here?

Arthur: Well McGee used to have a bunch of indians up

there. Good men, good men. They were just _____ and a lot of 'em were steel workers, some of the best there is. But he had that crew, they were a pretty rough crew. Good people.

M: Did they get into fights and drink a lot?

Arthur: Yeah, yeah, yeah very much so. But he run 'em.

M: What was life like in those big cabins, when you have a camp cook in there?

Arthur: Cook everything. Never could feed you like that today. There was stuff on the table 24 hours a day. No limit to what you ate

M: Was there a boss who was pretty tough?

Arthur: Well they weren't tough but you earned your money or you didn't stay because there was 10 million people looking for work.

M: So you sort of shaped up anyway because didn't want to lose your job.

Arthur: Well yeah, you got three bucks a day. In them days you paid a dollar a day work or you come out with \$2 a day. But that was before the tax and like that.

M: Yeah, \$2 a day. And that was back in the 30s.

Arthur: Yeah. I worked on--where I worked 2 different years, we worked on Fish Creek off the Fish Creek club ground _____. Then when they got it down here to

the mill would peel wood, when they got down to Miller went through a thing cut into five or six--I think five pieces, went through the grinders. I don't know much about the--inside the paper mills 'cause I never worked in there. Didn't want to.

M: Tell me about this Odds Fellows Hall.

Arthur: Well all I know about it, it's been here fer--I think 1903 or 04 they took it over. And they run it here. And my brother used to belong here and a lot of people in W_____ belonged here. The old timers. And it went out in the 70s I think, 'cause my mother belonged to the Eastern Star here too. Auxiliary that goes along with this.

M: What do old people do here? Just talk and--

Arthur: Just like any other--just like your Masons or anything else. Only they had different rigmarole to get--they had--when I took this over there were a lot of the old uniforms and stuff they used in their rituals there, you know. And then they had a big bag of rocks, a doctor bag full of rocks, I never understood what it was for. Then they had a coffin and a plaster of paris skeleton in there. And I don't know what. I sold it to a junk dealer there and he--I guess he sold it--fixed it up and sold it for quite good money. Get down you stupid cat.

M: That's really interesting life. So a lot of changes since you were--

Arthur: Oh this town, see I don't know for sure, but this town was went out in the 30s sometime or in the early 40s. I think the 30s. This was a village here. And there was a harnessmaker down there. Building's there yet. Go on now. Goddarn it.

M: Was it a pretty prosperous town then?

Arthur: Well yeah, 'cause up until the last of the 30s or 40s the loggin', Culpepper and everybody went through this side and up the river. Up into North Lake and _____ went up through Wood_____, Buffalo Head, that's where they had their mechanics headquarters. They all lived tractors. And then--I don't know, I can't remember just when. And they went up and went in from McKeever way then. They built a road in that way. And old camp 9 up there was the one that everybody knew about. That was the old big one then. Stayed there for years.

M: Was there any famous characters among the loggers who you knew?

Arthur: Well not too much--they were famous in that way that you knew 'em just from local.

M: Oh just local I meant, you know.

Arthur: But like French Louie and them are just characters. I don't know if French Louie was real or not. But accordin' to Haskell up there he was.

M: What did he do?

Arthur: He wasn't really a logger. He was a man that lived in the woods that's all. And took care of huntin' and fishin' and, you know, guided and like that.

M: Was he kind of a hermit?

Arthur: Yep, uh-huh.

M: French Louie, yeah.

Arthur: He worked in the woods some but he wasn't a regular lumberjack. But he was the same thing accordin' to the book. You ever read that book?

M: No.

Arthur: Ah, if you'll study this thing, a million pictures in there of the old time.

M: Yeah, when did French Louie live?

Arthur: In the eighteens--he lived up until this--I forget now--I just read the book here, two or three years ago. And I forget--that's when the days he died. But he died up in Haskell's up here at L_____.

M: What's the book you're referring to?

Arthur: That's the name of it, French Louie. It's-- if you're interested in this section it's a good book to read about H_____ before the H_____ was there. The camps, you know, the private lands up there. I don't know much about it because I never worked up there, I was in there 3 or 4 different times, I had a horse that they rented from me years ago up there.

M: How many horse teams would there be in a camp like yours?

Arthur: Thirty teams. 60 horses.

M: And they had separate barns and--

Arthur: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

M: Really fascinating in a way.

Arthur: Oh I loved it 'cause I love horses. When I logged I had horses of my own. I'd rather be with a horse than any skidder, anything. But today you can't do it you got too far to go to get to the woods. Them days the wood was right here in your backyard.

M: And what kind of people became loggers? Was that a real choice for a lot of people or did they do it out of necessity?

Arthur: Necessity a lot. You'd be surprised at some very good big families, you know, guy went on the bum or somethin'. And there was a lot of Polish. French, course, French, Irish, Polish. But a lot of Frenchmen. Wild good people. Wouldn't get hurt. Course anybody ever worked in the woods, you either worked or you didn't stay there. They didn't put up with you.

M: How many hours a day would you be out there?

Arthur: Daylight to dark. The old times. Now it just 8 hours. Not even that. Course they don't have the lumber camps anymore now.

M: No. The people I met go from their homes and they come back.

Arthur: Yeah, with their Cadillac cars or their 4-wheel drive trucks. They drive in to where the logs are and they chop the trees down, a guy comes along in a big skidder, they yank the whole tree right out.

M: Machinery tears up the woods an awful lot.

Arthur: Yeah, very much so. But see, like around here these lots have been cut 4 or 5 and 6 times. And now they're in there and they're takin' like Payne and Levy, they're right in there and strippin' it. Makin' chips for _____ to burn. They don't leave nothin'.

M: Demolishing the area.

Arthur: Yeah, yeah. Oh it'll grow back but it'll never--hard wood never returned itself. Soft wood will grow maybe 6% in 40 years, come back. But it will never go back to the virgin timber. Never. We had to blow down a lot around here, I mean, me and a friend of mine we had a camp we worked for _____ out of Old Forge. And we'd pull up little wood, _____ we didn't even make a dent in it. And at that time of the near birch in there and maples in there and we dragged--cut the logs right out and just get them out of the way to get that _____. Walked right through the hardwood. Today--my god that would have been worth well 12-1400 a thousand feet. And more maybe.

M: That's something, you know, you were paid \$3 a--
what \$3 a day?

Arthur: Yeah, that's what you got. But that was big
bucks. What the hell they were out here working for 29 to
38 cents an hour out here. My dad worked in a milk station
here in _____ \$25 a week and he had to work 10 hours a
day, six days a week for that.

M: Course nowadays you can buy--groceries--

Arthur: I guess so. \$5 dollars worth you had a job
carryin' 'em. Now you can buy one little piece of meat and
your \$5 is gone. There's no comparison. A nickel, I
still--way we'd think about a nickel, but the kids doesn't
know now.

M: They'll be spending 5 | bucks on an ice cream cone,
you know.

Arthur: Oh it's pathetic. It's just they say that
hamburger will be \$12 a pound. | What's the difference.
You'll be making 65 thousand a | year but hamburger will be
\$12 a pound, where've you gained anything. Well today I
believe its _____ keep up with the Joneses that what makes
it.

M: Where's the time.

Arthur: I had one new car in my life, 72 years.

M: You're 72?

Arthur: Yep, one new car. I bought that way back

before the war. New Mercury when they first come out. Yep, I'm workin' in the woods.

M: How far have you traveled? Have you been around the country and all or have you--

Arthur: Oh I've been out in Colorado and around like that. And up through the mountains. I walked all of these. And I used to--way back I used ta cruise timber.

M: But how old were you before you left your area?

Arthur: Oh, I left--we went not far to CC camp in the 30s. But I never--I went to Georgia in the army.

M: Oh I see, yeah.

Arthur: I never just--never wanted--we never had to go lookin' for jobs. I had a chance to go overseas on them big towers, iron work, but I didn't want--why should I go I was makin' all I could spend here.

M: Once again, who were these guys in the woods?

Arthur: Well guys in the woods like well Patty--Pat Kelsey lived over here in Booneville, he's dead now. And Bob Beck, he was the biggest drunk in the world, but when he was in the woods he was one of the key men. He was a boatman on a drive. And there was a guy by the name of Joe Wild Goose--I never knew his last name.

M: Wild Goose?

Arthur: Uh-huh. He was a Polish guy. A big fella and one of the nicest guys in the world. But when he went on a

drunk he was just total bunk. And most of 'em are. They were. But when they were in the woods top men.