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M: Tell me about farming, yourself and the mules, whatever you want about your life and living here in the Adirondacks.

Beecher: Well I will be 65 years old next May. And I've always lived here in the Adirondacks. And fer the last twenty years I've on this one farm. I started out here there was hardly anything. The land was run out and everything but manurin' it and workin' on it we got it to where it cut better 'n 600 bales a hay this year, plus we raise our gardens and it's a relaxing place. Any time the tension is too great on me I come here and it's relaxing. I--my father before me, he was a farmer and he always told me in order to take out of the land you have to put back into it. So I've always believed that and I've been gettin' some chemical fertilizers. One reason is they burn, they burn the stuff. You really don't know, myself I never knew how to use 'em I always put too much and I burn my young plant comin' up and with this regular horse manure, cow manure I can grow--I can grow anything I want and I know just how to use it and how ta--and it does grow a crop a weeds. But my father always said if you can't grow weeds you can't nothin'. The weeds is gotta be there if you're gonna get a crop because it's just one of those things using natural fertilizers. That's what happens is you get the weeds. You have to get the weeds out of there in order for

your crop to come. But I don't know I--while I'm poking in the soil and workin' hard is the most relaxing. I come here every weekend. I'm tired out on Friday night but I drag up here Saturday and Sunday and by the time I go back to work Sunday I'm feelin' real good. I'm workin' on the place.

M: What do you do during the week?

Beecher: Carpentry work. I work at carpentry work, in fact I'm boss carpenter on that big store they're building at--Safeway it is down on the Quaker Road in Glenn Falls. And I don't know--there's a lot of work to farming but there's no young people that's even attempting--now this place here in the condition that it's in today I couldn't get a young one to come in and take over for the man that owns it and keep it up and take care of it. They just don't want that much work.

M: A lot of young folks are drifting out of the Adirondacks to the cities.

Beecher: Ah, out of the farming part. They sure going out of that. All the farms in the country, the city people come in and buy 'em up. First thing you know, you got a crop of young scrub trees growin' up and brush. This one here we had quite a job keepin' the brush back away from the wood line, you know. They were all cut over there last year. We cut 'em back. Makes the place look a thousand dollars better.

M: You mentioned that you also do things with mule  
and--

Beecher: Well I drove the--I've always drove horses all my life. Before I was a carpenter I was a lumberjack and I've always drove horses and always had horses and I love 'em. And this pair of mules is a pair that--Malcolm Monroe owns 'em--they're pure white and I drove 'em--drove 'em only for pleasure. We got no equipment to work 'em, but they're strong devil. I had drove 'em in a--in three shows, that was two years ago, I came in first place in three shows with mules against horses. And second place the third show. And I won the trophy because I had, you know, I had got two first place, and I had to win the trophy. And I would have got better the second time that I drove 'em is when I got the third place. But I had my grandchildren with me and they were already in the wagon, and boy I wasn't gonna hear 'em cry that I wouldn't go in there and drive with 'em. That was against the--they decided that they didn't want that. That no riders should go with ya. But I took my grandchildren anyway because trophy or ribbon to a man my age means nothin' but my grandchildren--I couldn't even hear 'em cry, it wouldn't be worth hearing the first one breakdown and cry. I took 'em with me.

M: I agree.

Beecher: We--we've always played horse. My daughter

and one son showed horses. We owned quarter horses. I raised quarter horses and we showed them. My oldest son he never rode in the world in a show. He couldn't--he wasn't the type. He would have been one of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Rider had he came at that time but-- He could ride any kind of a horse, no matter what it was like or how mean it was he could ride it. But he never did show.

M: Tell me a bit about when you were in your younger days here. What life was like in the Adirondacks. And some of the--

Beecher: Well it was hard. My father raised--there was four of us boys and during Depressions my father had a ten acre farm and ten acres of soot soil as there is right here. It was right back of the town of Orangeburg. Was real good soil. Some of it was better'n others but he knew where to put the crop to get the crop that he wanted. On the loitest soil he'd grow buckwheat, he used to send that to the mill have it made inta flour. We had buckwheat pancakes, I don't believe there was a mornin' my mother didn't make probably 50-60 pancakes when us boys was growin' up. Why each one of us would eat 10-12 pancakes. We were-- and that's the way we grew up. We had lots a potatoes. My father'd put about 50-60 bushel in the cellar and he never threw away none. My mother would peel approximately a peak of potatoes to a meal. We went barefooted, we had sneakers

same as all the other kids. We went barefooted in the summer went to school wearing sneakers and overalls and we were just a poor family but we managed. We had enough to eat. We never went to bed hungry. We had--my folks were the type of people they were close to the earth--we had Johnny cake, fried pork and such stuff as that, which people don't even eat today.

M: Tell me, in those days did families like yours get into debt with big mortgages like they do now?

Beecher: Oh no. My father, I don't know owe nothin', I bought my wife a new car recently and I did this 2 point somethin' financing, a new Chevrolet. I bought that there was no reason why I wouldn't pay cash but my money was makin' more in the bank then it was to finance it so I bought the new car and that's all I owe for in the whole world. I don't believe no--my father, no he never went in debt. Maybe he had to, he had friends, all he had to do was ask and he could barrie a hundred dollars or two hundred from just a mutual friend. But they never went in debt my people. They didn't believe in that.

M: Nowadays people do it all on purpose almost, you know. But in those--

Beecher: Yes, yes they do. I got a daughter that--I don't want ta talk about that. It's discouraging. How far they get themselves in and they just keep going down and

down and down farther. No--

M: Something goes wrong with their salary they've kinda had it.

Beecher: Right.

M: With you, you know, you sort of just get back to the soil and then--

Beecher: Yep. Well I don't know of anything much I could tell you other'n that. I--from there I got to be a carpenter and the carpenter work was so much easier than the lumberjack I've stayed at it. I've been 41 years carpenter.

M: At least some of it's indoors.

Beecher: A union carpenter. Yeah, well that's right. Right now we're inside completely down there. We don't have to work in the storms. My gosh, they want to get it open by September 10th and there ain't a chance that they can do it and work 5 days a week.

M: What were you doing as a lumberjack? What was life like then?

Beecher: Well that was before I went in the service--after I came back from the service and before I went in. I was in the army, I remember questioned the Draft Board asked me, they said, how long you been a farmer? The reason they were askin' extension service man thought I oughta get a deferment and they asked how long you been a farmer? I said that's hard to answer. Well they said, what would you say?

I said well I don't know whether it was when I went to the barn with my dad, snaked back the empty bucket. That he would carry a bucket full of stuff to the pigs and I'd snake it back to get the skimmed milk for the next day and sour milk, or whether it was--might be when I took over the farm and was 15 years old. My dad died and my mother never had any help with the county--welfare--nothing. We never--she never had no help atta 'll, just me. I quit school when was 16, 8th grade. And went home to operate the farm. My father died in April, I become 16 in May so I quit school, went to farming. I never had no further than the 8th grade education but I made a way for myself because the carpenter work was I wanted and that's what I done.

M: So how long did you stick to farming before you switched over to carpenters?

Beecher: Oh until after I got out of the service. I was 20--about 21 years old when I went in the service and I got out in 1946. And that's when I started carpentry.

M: When did you do the lumberjacking?

Beecher: Oh, all my life as well as the farming. I had a big team of work horses and we would cut and and skid wood. Sell the wood to get dollars, pulp wood and also firewood. And cut logs and skid them.

M: That was all with horses in those days?

Beecher: All horses, yeah. That was when life was

good. There was a job for more people then then there is today. There was all kinds of jobs. In fact I myself have had enought horses going so I hired five men ta drive 'em and work, you know. One was a gutterman, he'd cut the roads so you could get back to the tree, cut a path enough to get back, they called 'em guttermen. And I skidded logs for a lot of the sawmills Burton Lumber Company, Lake George. Cut logs for Woodbury, cut logs for a lot of 'em. But there really wasn't any money in that. You'd do that for somewhere near, back then about \$6 a thousand. And--

M: That was what--board feet?

Beecher: Yes. But it's in the log you know.

M: Yeah. Did you live in one of those lumber camps?

Beecher: Well we camped out on the site of Lake George one time, a camp that they put up that fall. And we built a horse barn there. I was about 18 years old that year. And I and two other guys stayed in the camp and on the side of the property, the rest all went home. And of course I had a team of horses there, you'd get up 5 o'clock and feed your horses. I saw it--one mornin' I saw it 55 below zero and we got up 5 o'clock and head onto the mountain. We went up brought down the first load of logs on bobsleigh. You used one sleigh an' the back part of the logs dragged on the ground. And it was a very steep mountain and we came down in they couldn't start. They had 34 trucks and the engines

of the sawmill--there wasn't a thing would start that morning. They claimed it was 55 below. That was about 40-- I'd say 1943 or 44. I was 20-21 years old then. But--

M: That's fantastic.

Beecher: Well that's about all I can say.

M: Yeah, you gave me a lot.