

Emanuel Maroun

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M: Tell me your name again.

Emanuel: Emanuel Maroun.

M: Okay tell me about yourself and your family, you know, living here in the Adirondacks.

Emanuel: I've lived here all my life. At Tupper Lake. And my grandfather settled here, my dad.

M: What date would your grandfather have come?

Emanuel: 1893. To Tupper Lake.

M: You're one of the first Lebanese to come here?

Emanuel: Well one the--one of 'em. There were others, you know.

M: Could you tell me about that, any stories that he had?

Emanuel: Well I'll tell you the truth, I wasn't born when he died. But--

M: Okay now we're running again.

Emanuel: Well my grandfather first came up here, he use to peddle on his back. They travel like 25-30 miles to sell off the packs. Back peddlers.

M: How did he get around?

Emanuel: Walk, walkin'.

M: Walk, oh back packing.

Emanuel: And my father did the same thing. He came here he was 15 years old. And he followed in my grandfather's footsteps peddling, you know, into lumber

camps. Back around 1910-12.

M: What kind of goods were they selling them?

Emanuel: They had everything. They had like a, probably two big suitcases they'd carry. They had one he hooked right onto his shoulders. And they carried everything, pins, needles to clothes, household wares, utensils, you know, pots and pans. And not food stuff but everything: shoelaces and the works.

M: That's a lot of walking to carry suitcases. They couldn't get the horses or donkeys or something or--?

Emanuel: No they walked it, they walked it. My grandfather my father and other Lebanese in town as well. The early Lebanese.

M: How many years would they have been doing that?

Emanuel: Well they probably did it like for--he did it for probably 5-6 years, peddling, walkin'. Then he bought a car like around 19-- probably 1919-1920 they bought a Model A Ford then they peddled in car. Put all their goods in back in the car and go from--they didn't know the language. It was very hard times. No place, you know, that--

M: Did they go to the lumber camps?

Emanuel: Lumber camps, years ago they use to have like nothing to have like 60-70 men in a camp, big lumber camp.

M: Did they know any French?

Emanuel: Well they could get along in French.

M: Were there French-Canadians here then?

Emanuel: There were mostly French-Canadian. And they would get along. And of course then you had a lot of other nationalities, you had your Italians, Polish, Russians, Swedes, as well as French.

M: So when did you get the store here, that we're in now?

Emanuel: The store we're standing right in here, was-- they ran--they opened it up on Thanksgiving day 1946. That's 40 years ago. But then they had a store next door where I live now. They opened that in February of 1937, which is 50 years, it'll be in February.

M: That's virtually the same spot.

Emanuel: Same stock same lot--the same lot and everything.

M: That's pretty fantastic.

Emanuel: But my father use to say it was very hard times when they first started. You know young kids--

M: So your father opened the store?

Emanuel: Well he opened--him and my mother both.

M: How old were they then when they did that?

Emanuel: Well they opened in 1937, my dad was probably 40, let's see 47, 46 years old. Then he went worked for ten years piling lumber in the lumber yard. And for the state on the highway.

M: While he had the store?

Emanuel: Yes, my mother took care of the store.

M: 'Cause he's going to do another job.

Emanuel: Bring up 5 kids. Doing it. It wasn't like today. Everything was done by hand. Washing machines weren't like today. And we didn't have an automobile.

M: Fantastic. Is there any more stuff you can tell me about the olden days. And your grandfather going on foot and so forth, any incidents that-- Where would he sleep at night? I mean would he come back to his--

Emanuel: Well they use to like go--they'd go from town to town. They'd hit one town like during the day. Say like they go from here, they probably they'd get to Pursville, the next town, you know. The town you just passed through coming in. About 6-7 miles. They would sleep overnight at somebody's house. Maybe eat breakfast there and then start off again and go on--

M: But not back here?

Emanuel: No, they'd keep on goin'. They go like from here to Cranberry Lake, Star Lake. All by walkin'.

M: How far was that from here?

Emanuel: From here you're talkin' about 35-38 miles. Cranberry Lake, Star Lake.

M: Then they'd work their way back?

Emanuel: Then they'd work their way toward the other

end, like goin' east from here, towards Saranac Lake. And beyond Saranac Lake like Lake Clear, they'd go all around. And you had a lot of boarding houses them days.

M: Would they run out of supplies before they would come back or--?

Emanuel: No they carried a pretty good supply. Enough to carry 'em, to last 'em.

M: So how long would a circuit take?

Emanuel: A circuit probably take them within, we're talkin' probably five days. Then they would come back home, get supplies and go back on the--go back.

M: That was a tough job.

Emanuel: Tough goin'. The roads weren't like today.

M: What age was your grandfather then, when he was doin' that?

Emanuel: My grandfather, well he was probably a man 50-55 years old.

M: And before that what did he do? What did he do-- When he first came to this area that's what he did?

Emanuel: That's what he did to make a livin'. They had to do that to make a livin'.

M: So how old was he when he came into 1890 you said he came--?

Emanuel: 93.

M: Oh 93. How old would he have been then, already

grownup I mean.

Emanuel: Probably was a man 40s, in his 40s then.

M: Oh, I see. And he came from Lebanon?

Emanuel: Lebanon, oh yes. Right from Batuta, they come. Up in the mountains.

M: Quite a group of Lebanese who came here?

Emanuel: Oh yes, part of a group.

M: Why did they choose this--the Adirondacks, or this part of the Adirondacks? They just did?

Emanuel: They just liked it up here. They'd come up here on the train. The train use to come in from Utica, city of Utica where it's heavily populated Lebanese today. Utica, New York is heavily populated. So from there they took the train, they come right up here. And they just liked this area. Then like when one would settle, he'd go get his, you know, he'd send for his family.

M: Back to Lebanon?

Emanuel: Back to Lebanon. And they were like all one family. They all knew each other.

M: By the time he sends away for someone, how long would it take for that person to arrive here?

Emanuel: Well it would take 'em a month, 'cause they come by boat.

M: Yeah, but I mean by the time they get the letter and decide to come.

Emanuel: Oh it would take a well--it would probably take a month for a letter to get back home. A month to get 'em ready to come over. It would take probably three months, four months before they could come over. Wasn't like today, there was no airplane, no phones really as far as like today. But like I say, and then they would start sending over and bring different ones with 'em. Then they'd just settle in the area.

M: So your kids now would be the 4th generation.

Emanuel: 4th generation, right.

M: Living--what are they gonna do with their lives, are they gonna do something else, like--?

Emanuel: Well it's a different ballgame today. Today I imagine they'd gonna want to go to college. Get into the computer age so to speak. Not like-- There's not much around here for young people today, I mean.

M: Still I see quite a few young people who stick around. Most--a lot of rural places they'll disappear and do something in the cities. But--

Emanuel: Yes, well it's more opportunities. And here you'll make a living, but that's about it, you know. You just make a living.

M: That's funny, a lot of folks who taken the country just to have an easier life.

Emanuel: Yes, yes, it's an easier life they claim.

Lot easier life. My dad came 1909 here. To the United States. He came 1909.

M: So when your grandfather came here he left his son, your father, still back in Lebanon.

Emanuel: Yes, and he went back. See, then he came back with him.

M: So your grandfather went back to Lebanon to pick up his son.

Emanuel: And come back here.

M: And start all over again.

Emanuel: All over again. Then my dad went back in 1928 and got married. Brought my mother--tradition--brought her over here. And I went back in 1966 and got married to my aunt's daughter. So it's all in one family. My father married his aunt's daughter, I married my aunt's daughter and it's all one family. On the father and mother's side, you know what I mean. The same family.

M: So you sort of keep up a traditional--

Emanuel: It's a trad--it's kept right in the family. 'Cause see my wife's mother and my mother were sisters. And my father married the same family, into the same family.

M: Yeah, that's fairly rare.

Emanuel: It's the same family.

M: If you chose to have married a purely American person and just sort of lost your identity, that way, you



could have.

Emanuel: I wouldn't want to lose my identity. No, not a bit.

M: Is there a Lebanese identity still in this community?

Emanuel: Oh yes, we still have it good. Still pretty strong.

M: So how many Lebanese live nearby that you see each other all the time?

Emanuel: Well we must have, what 50-60.

M: People or families?

Emanuel: People I would say. That's still here.

M: Still that's a good community.

Emanuel: Oh yes. And we're still close, I mean like at funerals, weddings. You know, different occasions we still get together. We still get together.

M: But other groups might not have that type of a strong identity. I mean let's say people from Scotland or French-Canadians might not be that clannish. Or Italians might be sort of clannish but--

Emanuel: Sort of--Now I don't--

M: Would you say Lebanese are more clannish than other groups who have come here and kind of lose their identity.

Emanuel: Sort of, yes I could say they probably do. They still carry the traditions, like the dishes, the same

foods.

M: You have Lebanese dinners, meals and so forth?

Emanuel: Oh yes, all the time.

M: Do your children learn Arabic?

Emanuel: Oh yes, they all talk Arabic.

M: At home or--?

Emanuel: At home.

M: Oh I see, they can't learn it in schools.

Emanuel: There's no place to learn it, there's none in schools.

M: That's fantastic.

Emanuel: Oh yeah, they all speak it. Understand every bit of it.

M: So you went again in--?

Emanuel: I went back in 1975 with my family. We stayed a month. The whole month of August.

M: With your relatives there?

Emanuel: With our relatives right there. With my aunt and uncle and meet new acquaintances and saw--

M: What's it like for them seeing people from America come back all the time. I mean in 66 you were back, 75 you were back.

Emanuel: Nine years later. Nine years later. Well it's just like a lot of people think of a foreign people. They think they're different. They think they have to be

different. Everybody's people, no matter where you go, you know. They had their problems, good times.

M: But you and your kids when you come back are still purely Lebanese and very closely related to the people.

Emanuel: Oh yes. We carry the tradition really heavy here. We carry it very heavy here.

M: But still I mean Italians who are second generation who have no idea which town their grandparents came from. Totally lost it.

Emanuel: Totally lost the whole tradition.