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Gerard Arsenault oral history interview
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Marge Lamey: Hello, my name is Marge Lamey and I'm a member of the staff at the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake. We're going to be bringing you a series of programs on Adirondack history through the cooperation of channel 5 television. In case you don't know anything at all about the Adirondacks, let me show you first this map. This vast wilderness area covers most of Northern New York State, stretching from Lake Champlain on the east, to the Saint Lawrence River Valley on the west, from the coast of the Canadian border on the north, to the Mohawk Valley on the south. The Adirondack Museum lies almost exactly in the center of this vast area, here at Blue Mountain Lake. We're a nonprofit educational institution chartered by the State of New York, and our job is to preserve the history of this Adirondack region and then to tell you, the public, about it. One of the most colorful aspects of that history has been the lumbering industry, which reached its peak during the last century but is still an important part of the economy of the region. Since this time of year was the time when one of the most exciting parts of that operation took place, we thought we'd talk about it with you today. With me are HJ Swinney, the direction of the Adirondack Museum, and Gerard Arsenault, a woodsman for Finch Pine & Company who has been a working lumberjack all his life. We have some pictures, some films, and some tools to show you to illustrate the whole lumbering operation. I think the best way to start is to take you on the route which you would follow if you came to the museum to visit. In the main building there, we have a series of dioramas illustrating various parts of the lumbering operation. Mr. Swinney, maybe you would explain what a diorama is to begin with.

Mr. Swinney: Well, the diorama is a kind of three-dimensional photograph. It's a very common device in the larger museums. A glass case front through which you, the visitor, view a miniaturized model of people, of scenes, of activities, of whatever the museum has on its mind that it would like to tell you about. Some of these are sometimes quite good sized, others are very small. At the Adirondack Museum, the dioramas are in a case front about that wide and the figures are about that high. One of them, in fact, is on the slide which has just come on the screen behind me.

Marge Lamey: This one is entitled peeling hemlock and it shows several phases of the logging operation. We have some tools too to illustrate. Perhaps we should talk first of all about the hemlock and why we showed the hemlock.

Mr. Swinney: Well, hemlock peeling began in the early days because hemlock bark was used for tanning leather and in the fringes of the Adirondack, the hemlock trees were felled, the bark was peeled off for the tanneries, and the trees were left where they lay. Long in the 1890s, the hemlock lumbar, itself, became profitable and then the bark was peeled and the bark was left or nothing but in the meantime, people who were still alive became familiar with it. Gerard, have you ever been involved in hemlock peeling?

ARSENAULT: No. When I came to this country, they were through drawing the hemlock to North Creek. They had to harvest the hemlock between Long Lake and Newcomb, and it was sort of a spring job. They drew that after the logs were taken out of the woods.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: What I seen about the hemlock lately, I was walking through the woods and I come onto a pile of hemlock that was cut during the first World War and it's amazing how well kept it was, even the skids underneath weren't even rotten.

Mr. Swinney: In other words, the logs were a matter of 40-odd, 50-odd years old and were still sound.

ARSENAULT: Underneath that hemlock. It kept them there. It was amazing, you know, to see those old things.

Mr. Swinney: That was the tool that people used to peel the hemlock bark in the old days. What do they call that thing?

ARSENAULT: That's a spud.

Mr. Swinney: A spud. I thought a spud was a potato but.

ARSENAULT: You know what happened once and it really happened. I don't know if that fellow was playing a trick but the foreman told him he says when you go to the cook house and ask the cook, he says there was a dirndl and they kept the spud there. He said go and get a couple of spuds and come back with a couple of potatoes. I'm telling you that was –[inaudible] He did nothing.

Mr. Swinney: It wasn't always serious in the lumber camps but the work was serious nevertheless because there was an awful lot of work involved in it. I suppose in the earliest days these were the commonest tools of all in the camps weren't they?

ARSENAULT: Well, I came from Canada and I've seen a double-bladed axe.

Mr. Swinney: Really?

ARSENAULT: I've never seen a double-bladed axe in that country. I think if you brought a double-bladed axe in a camp they'd kick you out.

Mr. Swinney: In Canada?

ARSENAULT: In Canada. They were afraid of it. When I came here, I found out that it was a very good axe and amazingly –

Marge Lamey: Why did they have the double bit? Why was that developed?

ARSENAULT: Well, the double bit when you were doing a lot of work, especially when they were peeling, their knots had to be cut a lot shorter in order to peel, and they always had a good bit. The back bit, if they cut under the tree, under that log –

Marge Lamey: To cut off the limbs.

ARSENAULT: - then they hit a rock and you couldn't afford to spoil that axe.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: They had to put in a days' work.

Mr. Swinney: And then the front bit would be ground sharper and finer.

ARSENAULT: Very much sharper and it's amazing that a man that's used to his axe hasn't got to look at the bit because he gets accustomed. That's his trade.

Marge Lamey: He knows the feel of it.

ARSENAULT: He knows the feel of it. That's a good axe.

Mr. Swinney: Around Blue Mountain Lake, in the Central Adirondacks, a certain number of double-bitted axes had the curved handle that's more commonly seen on a single-bitted axe. With the curved handle, you can always tell which bit is which but if you're using a curved handle with the back bit, it's always the wrong way too. Nevertheless, in the Central Adirondacks, you do see these handles in double-bitted axes and just last Saturday, down in Central New York, I asked an old-time hardware store man whether he had ever seen a double-bitted axe with a curved handle and he told me that no such thing existed.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: (Laughing)

Mr. Swinney: Now, we're going to break for a minute or two I think, and then we'll be back to tell you more about lumbering in the Adirondacks on behalf of the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake.

(Break in audio)

Three of us from the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake are here talking with you today about the story of logging, which is such an important part of Adirondack history. It's an especially important time for us to do this right now in the spring when logging was so much a part of life in the old days. Marge Lamey is from the museum staff and ARSENAULT is a professional lumberman who spent his life at the trade. Behind us is a slide of a diorama from the museum of making a skid way. This was the time when logs began to be brought out of the woods.

Marge Lamey: Right. This is the next stage in the operation and the logs were stored on a skid way right Mr. ARSENAULT?

ARSENAULT: Yes.

Marge Lamey: And then picked up by the sleighs –

ARSENAULT: Yes.

Marge Lamey: - to be taken down to the banking grounds and the streams.

ARSENAULT: Well, there was a – if you want to talk a little bit about the operations – there were three operations in getting wood out of the woods when I was in the woods. First, you had the 30% grade, 30-35% grade chained wood.

Marge Lamey: This is on the higher peaks of –

ARSENAULT: Because the horse, that's the only thing he could draw back uphill was that chain –

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: - and you chained it down to where they could get a hold of it with a (T7_011_02.wav, 04:32).

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: And the (T7_011_02.wav, 04:34) then would take it down to the doubleheaders, which are a bit high, in order to be able to load that wood.

Marge Lamey: To load the wagons, or the big sleighs.

ARSENAULT: No, the big sleighs.

Marge Lamey: The big sleighs from there right.

ARSENAULT: And then from there on they went to the ponds or the riverbank.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: It depends where they unload it.

Marge Lamey: Now what about marking. How did the different companies mark the blocks so that they knew?

ARSENAULT: This was a very important thing, marking. Years ago –as of today, it never changed. The markings today are still the same because there's been a lot of pirating done and today is the same thing.

Marge Lamey: Even though it goes by truck today.

ARSENAULT: It doesn't make any difference. What I do I scale a couple of million pieces of logs a year, which is very little, but I used to scale 40,000 cords a part per year.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: I had 300 men cutting, you know what I mean, but I was peeling.

Marge Lamey: By scaling you mean measuring?

ARSENAULT: Measuring that wood.

Marge Lamey: You know how much they've cut.

ARSENAULT: Amongst them 300 men, there was always somebody looking for material to tell in the springtime about how they got the best of the scaling and they got the best of me quite a few times.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Mr. Swinney: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: I had times I'd tell you how they had done it. It's very clever. This was very important for the simple reason that when a jobber and you sent in the money, especially when they had the jobber, and they had these markers, individual jobbers used them.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: And when they sent in that scale, that man needed the money to pay his man, and the New York office, no matter where the office was, they wanted to be sure that the wood was there, that it wasn't still standing up and not on the skid way yet.

Marge Lamey: Right. It's still growing (laughing).

ARSENAULT: It happened lots of times. In those days, when the scaler came into the woods some days he had a necktie believe it or not. The only person you ever saw with a necktie and they had a place for him at camp, especially for him, and he didn't meet with the lumberjacks either. He was a respected man. Of course, a lot of them were chased by that double-bitted axe I had a while ago.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing).

ARSENAULT: That's the way it went.

Marge Lamey: Now, how were those log markers used? How did they?

ARSENAULT: They had men. The scaler, himself, that's what you call mark and measuring. It comes around that title. Now, they call me a scaler or the French will call me a voleur, it means a thief.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: That's what they said once in a while but there were times on both ends.

Marge Lamey: Both ends of the log, I see and they just whacked the end of the log with those hammers?

Mr. Swinney: This is a hammer-shaped stamp, which is simply struck into the log, just like a hammer, and it makes a mark like the marks you see on these stubbed logs we've prepared just to show you.

Marge Lamey: We've painted them so that it would bring up the mark.

Mr. Swinney: It's painted in there.

ARSENAULT: They tell me that that drives in about four inches.

Marge Lamey: Really?

ARSENAULT: If you hit it, you had the big hammers you know? Because a lot of fellows would cut the end, that's one thing they were looking for.

Marge Lamey: That's another thing they could do is cut the end of it.

ARSENAULT: They would have you scale a pile twice so in the spring of the year they could brag about it and it had to be authentic. They said where did it happen and how did you do it? They had a lot of fun with that.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: They needed the material. I didn't see anything wrong by them doing it in a way because they had to have the material to have their spring shows.

Marge Lamey: Well there was a lot of competition of different kinds between the men and between the companies right?

ARSENAULT: Well, between the men what happened is if you come in and scale, we'll say every two weeks, or once a month, sometimes it was once a month and you couldn't remember unless you took a picture whether you were scaling wood twice or not. It didn't happen very often but it could happen.

Marge Lamey: But they tried.

ARSENAULT: But they tried it.

Marge Lamey: Well, now you mentioned the –

ARSENAULT: The list was posted in the camp and who had the king pin, who cut the most in other words, to know what's mine.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: There was a bonus given on that too. There was a bonus.

Marge Lamey: How much could a man cut in a day?

ARSENAULT: Well, if he's cutting on a skid way with a box saw and he went through 7 to 9 cords, it was a good day for him.

Mr. Swinney: He was busy all day -

ARSENAULT: He was busy all day.

Mr. Swinney: - cutting 9 cords wasn't he?

ARSENAULT: Yeah. Stump piling is that you're way up in the mountain and you cut the trees. It's called stump piling because you pile them at the stump. You may pile 4 x 4 or 2 x 2 but at first we try to keep it high because in the winter the snow covers them and you never saw them. Once I will tell you how I cut those you know and I rescaled the thing, but I had paint on it. What I did I took them to camp and just in front of the camp, before the men come in for supper, I hung them up. I led them to the camp.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Mr. Swinney: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: They said who did it? (Laughing) I never told anybody who did it but they tried it on me anyways.

Marge Lamey: Well, now you mentioned the various stages of hauling and we've got a slide which shows part of the winter haul. You can see it just briefly on the monitor.

Mr. Swinney: The sprinkler wagons were used to ice the roads so that the huge sleighs with heavy loads of logs could run on those wood roads. Sprinkler wagons full of water went back and forth through the woods at night in the freezing weather, spilling water along the roads to make them slippery. And then, finally, they got the loads down to unload them at the pond. The pond would be frozen, of course, and it would be possible to unload the load so that it would go down in the river drive next spring.

Marge Lamey: And they were loaded both on top of the ice on the ponds and along the banks of the river right Mr. ARSENAULT?

ARSENAULT: Yeah. Sometimes, lots of times they couldn't get on the pond. They had to freeze on entrance. Then, when you went on the pond with the first load, I remember it was very dangerous. You put a lot of horses in and you had to choke them out, what they called choking out a horse. You had to choke them out of the water to get them out of there.

Marge Lamey: Right. Save them.

ARSENAULT: But after it went down the ice kept coming up and if they didn't have enough water, they cut holes through the ice and the water was coming up to make more rise.

Marge Lamey: To make it rise.

ARSENAULT: And they rolled it.

Marge Lamey: Now, we have a film strip which will illustrate quite a bit of this winter hauling operation.

Mr. Swinney: I think we ought to go to that.

Marge Lamey: Fine. Here we go.

Mr. Swinney: These films were taken about –

Marge Lamey: 1940.

Mr. Swinney: – 1940.

Marge Lamey: Right.

Mr. Swinney: About 25-28 years ago, when they were still logging in the woods with horses. Look at the size of that load.

ARSENAULT: That's a double rack they called it.

Marge Lamey: Why?

ARSENAULT: That load there I would say has about 10 cords, maybe a little more.

Mr. Swinney: Of course, that's pulpwood cut 4 feet long, intended to be made into paper, not into lumber.

Marge Lamey: That right there is the camp cook (laughing).

Mr. Swinney: Important man that was.

Marge Lamey: And this is one of the big sleighs right? There checking over. Here we come with a tractor haul.

ARSENAULT: Yeah, that tractor is chaining.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: He must have had some wood down in a hole somewhere that he couldn't get out any other way.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: Because it couldn't have been practical.

Marge Lamey: The chains are just wrapped around big bundles of logs right?

ARSENAULT: That's right.

Marge Lamey: And they're pulled out.

ARSENAULT: But remember the chains –

Marge Lamey: Watch this now. This is another way of unloading one of those but that's not a sleigh. That was a (T7_01104.wav, 02:03) wasn't it?

ARSENAULT: That's a (T7_01104.wav, 02:03). Yeah, you can't do it with a sleigh.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: Because there's no sleigh on the backend.

Marge Lamey: And this is 4-foot wood, not the big logs. Here's another scene of that same dumping operation.

ARSENAULT: Yes.

Mr. Swinney: That's the easy way to unload.

Marge Lamey: Right.
ARSENAULT: But it was kind of dangerous because that fellow was sitting just on the bar, if you notice between these two stakes.

Marge Lamey: This section illustrates some of the breaking operation. You see there's a line on the back of that sleigh and that looks like hay in the track, up above there on the hill, right? That was used to slow down the sleighs.

Mr. Swinney: The sleighs are too heavy to run down the hill alone. The horses can't handle the load so they are braked down by a line that goes to a brake, a braking mechanism, at the top of the hill.

Marge Lamey: There is a picture of it.

Mr. Swinney: There's the brake.

Marge Lamey: It's called the Beringer brake.

ARSENAULT: Yeah but most of the people wouldn't have known what it was. It's a drum.

Marge Lamey: Right.

ARSENAULT: (T7_011_04.wav, 03:03).

Marge Lamey: There were three drums right?

ARSENAULT: No.

Marge Lamey: Oh, I see.

ARSENAULT: No, they called it a drum. If you went to a lumberjack today and he says have you ever run a Beringer brake and he'd look at you and say what's the matter with you? It was a drum.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: That was the way they called it. Running a drum was a very fussy operation. If you notice if his cable ripped, it would mean that you could kill them horses.

Marge Lamey: It could break and the load would be out of whack. You lost a lot of horses in those days eh?

ARSENAULT: Quite a few of them.

Marge Lamey: When the loads got away?

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

Mr. Swinney: Look at the size of this load.

Marge Lamey: Of course, this one's being pulled by a tractor.

Mr. Swinney: Well, that explains it doesn't it? A Caterpillar tractor.

Marge Lamey: Now, this was a later development, the Linn tractor, which was the first really mechanical, or mechanized, operation.

Mr. Swinney: Here is a halftrack mechanism, like a halftrack in the military, used to haul logs. Safety was quite an important thing in the woods too. We've brought along something quite curious that came to us from Finch, Pruyn, and Company. I think through your help Gerard.

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

Mr. Swinney: To avoid accidents, a poster written in English, on oil cloth, and posted in the woods. In order to be sure that everybody could read it, there it is. I can't read it in French, can you?

ARSENAULT: (Speaking in French).

Mr. Swinney: Yes. Now, we'll have one that none of us can read.

Marge Lamey: Oh, he can read some of that.

ARSENAULT: (Speaking in Finnish), that's Finnish.

Mr. Swinney: He can read it. I take it all back. I didn't know that before.

ARSENAULT: I lived with the Finns you know for a couple of winters.

Marge Lamey: Well, I think you have a great line anyway. You say the horses had to be smarter than the men were because they had to understand two or three languages.

ARSENAULT: Yeah, that's another thing. You think the poor horse who worked with the Finns for two years and everybody talked Finn to him. All at once you were transferred to another camp and you come to a bunch of Frenchman. You have to start all over again.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing).

ARSENAULT: Then, there was a camp. We had a camp that was all Polish people and they wouldn't let the Frenchmen and Finn around that camp. It was all Polish. They stuck together in there. They were very good lumberjacks.

Mr. Swinney: The three of us are from the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake and we're talking about the story of logging in the old days in the Adirondacks. This is one of a series of programs from the Adirondack Museum that will come to you over this station all summer long. Now, we're going to stop for just a minute.

(Pause in programming).

In the old days, once logs had been gotten out of the actual forest, they had to be gotten out of the Adirondacks and down to the mills, and they were generally driven down rivers to the sawmills that lay on the outskirts. About 30 years ago, the Reverend Frank Reed of Old Forage took some remarkable films of the river driving days. In fact, he's the man who took the films

we showed you earlier on this same program. Now, we'd like to show you just a couple of minutes of what the Reverend Reed saw in the days when they were still driving the river.

Marge Lamey: Here we go.

Mr. Swinney: Lots of logs and men standing on the logs with what Gerard?

ARSENAULT: Peaveys.

Mr. Swinney: Peaveys.

ARSENAULT: They didn't use the pack pole until they got down the river. They could have used either one. It didn't make any difference but this is a very dangerous job what they're doing now. That's what I remember.

Mr. Swinney: The logs rolled.

Marge Lamey: Now these logs are piled along the riverbanks and the men are starting them at the beginning of the drive right?

ARSENAULT: Yeah. In later years, I was watching some drives when they didn't have men in front like that. They had bulldozers that pushed that off, pushed them into bulldozers.

Marge Lamey: A little safer that way.

ARSENAULT: Certainly.

Marge Lamey: It wasn't so bad for the men. You had to be pretty agile and you had to have pretty good balance.

ARSENAULT: In the olden days, well a man it wasn't so bad. If you lost too many peaveys, that's another story.
Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Mr. Swinney: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: I remember that one foreman's line, never mind the men but be careful of those peaveys, they cost $3.00 a piece.

ARSENAULT: It was true.

Mr. Swinney: The men, of course, are walking directly on the logs in the old-fashioned way. It's important to realize that those logs are floating in the water while men actually work on top of them.

Marge Lamey: They're called log riders right Mr. ARSENAULT?

ARSENAULT: No. They are not log rollers.

Marge Lamey: Oh, they are not. I see.

ARSENAULT: You can't put everybody on there but you had to be pretty agile and pretty good to stay on.

Marge Lamey: So only a few of the men did this right?

ARSENAULT: Yes because if one of the men went under them logs right there –

Marge Lamey: That was the end.

ARSENAULT: Well, I saw a man once that happened. He went under a jam and you wouldn't believe it. It happened on the Opalescent River. It was 4 foot. When he came out, he didn't die. He lived to tell the story. Took the shoes right off his feet.

Marge Lamey: I'll be darned.

Mr. Swinney: Good Lord.

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

Mr. Swinney: You can see right now on the screen how these logs pull away from their banks and start down the river, and you can imagine what a great deal of force is involved in all of this.

Marge Lamey: Now, of course, there were also damns along the streams to build up water supply to carry them.

ARSENAULT: Oh yeah. That drive went hard. It has some big damns built in the back.

Marge Lamey: Right and at various places along the streams, the upper streams. Once you got down into one like the lower Hudson, though, you didn't have to worry so much right? There, the force of the water would carry it.

ARSENAULT: The lower Hudson –

Mr. Swinney: He lost his footing but he made it.

ARSENAULT: Oh no, the lower –

Marge Lamey: They still had to have the water for the damns.

ARSENAULT: Oh yeah.

Marge Lamey: What would they do? Let out those damns as they needed it?

ARSENAULT: Well, they had about, let's see, maybe six damns and they probably caught on water from a couple, depending how far down they were.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: And then if they had something big to go over they called for more. That would be their last chance to get over these bars.

Marge Lamey: The last bit of water they had saved up.

ARSENAULT: Sometimes they had to hang them up, hang the drive up.

Marge Laney: Hang the drive up, and what does that mean?

ARSENAULT: Well, the first year I came to Windy Lake I went to see this man, this boss. He was a super and I asked him for a job and said did you ever drive ever and I said yes. Did you ever ride a log? And I said no because if he ever found out he'd probably fire me that I couldn't ride a log so I hit the what'd you called a hung up drive on the Cedar River. The next morning, I'll never forget it, the foreman come around the truck driver and the super was there and I was the only one in the back of the truck, and the foreman says is that my crew? I was fitting to get hired and fired at the same time. (Laughing) But anyway, I started on what you'd call a hung up drive. It had been driven there the year before and that's as far as it could get.

Marge Lamey: They ran out of water in other words and they couldn't take the logs any farther.

ARSENAULT: So we took it to Glen Falls, no to (T7_011_06.wav, 00:43), and come back and meet another drive, a 4-foot, and we took that one way down to (T7_011_06.wav, 00:49). We wound up on the Fourth of July.

Marge Lamey: That's a long time from the end of April, or the beginning of May.

ARSENAULT: So I made two, a log drive the same year, and a pump drive on the same river.

Mr. Swinney: The same river.

ARSENAULT: And I'm going to tell you one thing if you ever saw the upper Hudson in its beauty, you know what I mean there.

Marge Lamey: Yes.

ARSENAULT: I saw it twice.

Marge Lamey: That wild stretch.

ARSENAULT: That wild stretch between (T7_011_06.wav, 01:13) Falls and we say North River, all the way. It's the most wonderful thing you ever saw, with the high water.

Mr. Swinney: I can believe it.

Marge Lamey: I bet.

ARSENAULT: You know I stayed in that camp. They had a 40-foot lean to and a 40-foot blanket.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Mr. Swinney: (Laughing) And 40 men under it.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. And 40 men you had to go sideways you know?

Marge Lamey: And the men on the end really had it tough didn't they? (Laughing)
ARSENAULT: He had to roll to the blanket.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: You know the only way I could find my way and I stayed in that lean to twice. There was one guy who snored all the time. You were sleeping next to him. You were walking over corpses all the time, bodies. (Laughing) But I liked it.

Mr. Swinney: I'm afraid we don't have time as usual in the museum business to show everything we'd like to. You've got lots of other things like this, though, at the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake. Like everything else in the museum world, it's hard to see it all in one program. We have not only the story of logging in the Adirondacks but paintings of the Adirondacks, which we'll be showing you on a program on this station next month. We have boats. We have tools. We have the story of transportation and a great many other things. We hope to be showing you a series of these things this summer with Marge Lamey from the museum, myself, and various other people who are on the program. Marge?

Marge Lamey: Yes, we hope you will come to see us when we open the museum June 15th. Look for yourself at what we have to tell you about the lumbering business and other

Adirondack history. Thank you Mr. ARSENAULT for being with us and telling us something about your experiences as a lumberjack. It's helped a great deal.

ARSENAULT: I enjoyed it.

(Music ending the program)

(New program starting)

Marge Lamey: An interview with ARSENAULT of Indian Lake done by Marge Lamey and Nancy Diamond, May 2, 1969. Lumbering in the Adirondacks.

Nancy Diamond: Well, Mr. ARSENAULT. You've given us a lot of help at the museum in setting up exhibits and bringing in objects of different kinds. While we can find lots of information in books about the whole lumbering process, I think it still would be helpful if we just kind of talked, or chatted, a little bit about the whole operation from start to finish and then particularly brought out some of the things that were perhaps unique in the Adirondacks or of particular events, things that occurred that you could remember, or anything unusual. I don't think we need to tie this into a package at all. I think it should be a pretty free and easy discussion. How about starting with something about the way the lumberjacks year went, in other words what you did during the different seasons, just briefly, so that you have an idea of how it progressed. You started with your cutting when? Of course, it made a difference whether you were cutting wood or had to peel.

ARSENAULT: Well, just as soon as it started to peel, that was in the month of May.

Nancy Diamond: In May, oh. Early or late?
ARSENAULT: Well, I would say late May.

Nancy Diamond: Late May.

ARSENAULT: They were always anxious to start the peeling. It could have been a little sticky but they had to start sometime and they were anxious. They –

Nancy Diamond: Why were they anxious?

ARSENAULT: Because there was a reason why they were anxious. If they took a job and say it was 400 cords to peel and the season is well in August it starts ticking and then you have to do each fitting, the cutting and put it on a skid way. Another thing, they were broke.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing).

ARSENAULT: Most of the time they were broke. They spent all their money in the spring. At first, there were no men that were going on the river drive. It didn't make much difference

because some of them didn't like to peel so they'll do the river drive and come back for the bucking.

Nancy Diamond: Now so those two overlapped a little bit, your river drive was apt to carry but only part of the crew went on the river drive then?

ARSENAULT: Yes but you see it was a job. When I worked in the woods, most of the people worked got sold that they were cutting by the cord, or by the tree.

Nancy Diamond: The individual man?

ARSENAULT: Well, yes. There'd be probably three men working together.

Nancy Diamond: I see.

ARSENAULT: And then the company had some men peeling by the day. A lot of it was peeled by the day, so much a day, and that wood had to be skidded and the men from the river drive would come and start bucking. They got out of the sticky mess of peeling you see. That was good for them.

Marge Lamey: What is bucking?

ARSENAULT: Well, you see. The chainsaw went out of business, the cross-cut saws, as far as soft wood is concerned probably around 1925 when the bucksaw came along. Then in the soft woods, they used a saw, they used a cross-cut saw to fall the tree but when they cut on the skid way they didn't use a cross-cut saw anymore. They used a bucksaw. So, then the cross-cut was put aside with the hard woods and bigger work but it wasn't used anymore. The bucksaw took its place.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: The bucksaw lasted from the time I mentioned to 1945 and then the chainsaw came along, and then the bucksaw disappeared. It's strictly out of business. The only place where they use a bucksaw now is in camp. Then, they came along with a two-man chainsaw, which is a very clumsy chainsaw, heavy, and they used it to cut on the skid way. The bucksaw was still in the woods at that time. I'll take that back. On the skid way, they used that two-man chainsaw. Then, they improvised. The big chainsaw they made a one-man chainsaw, which today are very small and I see that they're using a lot of small chainsaws in the woods. They're light and they do very good work so therefore, at that time, I would say the bucksaw was put to rest. He was sent to the museum.

Marge Lamey: I see. (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: That's about the only place you'll see them. Some of the men made some bucksaws that I wish, at that time, I never thought about the museum but pictures that were cut in and painted on those bucksaw frames it was out of this world, those fellows, and the work that they could do. It was wonderful.

Nancy Diamond: They did this in their spare time.

ARSENAULT: They did their bucksaw frame and they decorated, like a totem pole I would say.

Marge Lamey: Did each man have his own particular design usually?

ARSENAULT: Well, there used to be some that were factory made, just roughly cut you know, when of course they could whittle them down to what they wanted, but most of the men made their own bucksaws, especially the Finns. I'd like to talk a little bit about the Finns because I worked in their camps and when they came back in the spring and they usually go down to the city, those men, and when they came back in the spring the first musts for their spring work was the steam bath.

Marge Lamey: Steam bath. A sauna?

ARSENAULT: Steam bath.

Nancy Diamond: A sauna?

ARSENAULT: The sauna. Had to be built because they weren't happy, they couldn't work if they didn't have the steam bath because they wanted to get rid of that city grime they had - their back and they weren't happy until they cleaned up good, and they said that's the only way you can do it.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: I went into a steam bath when I worked at their camp.

Nancy Diamond: Why don't you describe one?

ARSENAULT: The steam bath was – there's one that's still in existence up in the Boris and it's – well you can see how it was built. They built it themselves and everybody helped to build it. When I went to their camp, of course they talked Finn, that's all they talked was Finnish, but once in a while I hear Yeti or the Renchmen. See, the Finns can't stay their F's so they called me the Renchmen. When it came time for steam bath time, the first one that was built, they said Yeti, steam bath, so I went to one of them, and they put me on the upper shelf, you know the roost, like chickens you know?

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: They put me on the upper shelf and all of them big Finns around there were all crowded. It's not too big of a place so one fellow took a gallon of water and he threw it on the stones and I'm telling you, I thought I was going to pass out. But I'm telling you one thing about the steam bath, when you get out of there you haven't got any dirt under your fingernails.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: You're so clean that it isn't even funny.

Marge Lamey: You just sweat it off.

ARSENAULT: They used to come out in the wintertime. I didn't like to do it but they just rolled it in the snow and then walked to camp, and the camp was about probably a hundred feet away, you couldn't get the water, and then they were happy. They'd sing in Finnish and they'd roll the dice, cribbage was a big game in them camps. I played poker with them and I found out they were pretty honest because they were always talking Finn and I didn't know who was behind me telling them if I had a pair of kings or you know things like that. They were very honest and very nice men, very good people.

Nancy Diamond: You went in, in the spring and built your camps then, when you set up for your years' operation.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. Most of the time if the camp wasn't built in the fall, especially if they started a job and didn't know where they were going and it came in the spring. You went in there and you built the blacksmith shop. That's the first thing that they built. There were just a few men starting to skid the wood to build the camp and some of the time, if the walk was too long, those men stayed and stayed with the horses and the blacksmith shop after they built it. It didn't take them long to build a blacksmith shop, or sometimes the horse barn. That was the first thing. They stayed there because after working all day, 10 hours a day or more, they decided that they needed to rest so they stayed there. That was the first must.

Nancy Diamond: In some places, there was a permanent location in the camps that were built later or did the jobber just know in the fall that they were going to go and then they built their camp?

ARSENAULT: Well, some of the time they knew in the fall and they built their camps in the fall. They probably didn't finish their camp. They built them during the summer you know and the camps –

Nancy Diamond: They have used this. In other words, they'd have a camp built wherever it was they were going to be driving so if they were going into a new area, you mean, they would built a camp in the fall?

ARSENAULT: Yes.

Nancy Diamond: Because that would fill in, I suppose, that slack time.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

Nancy Diamond: I see.

ARSENAULT: They'd have their camp ready.

Nancy Diamond: We got a little bit diverted but maybe we should finish talking about the order in which they built the camps since we're talking about it here. They built first the blacksmith shop and the horse barn, then the rest of the structure; I mean the cabin where the men stayed.

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. Well, the first year I came here they had different camps. They had an upper level, I mean a two-story camp, like the one your mother, Mrs. Diamond, cooked in was on the Cedar River Crossing was a double decker and there was another double decker that I stayed in that was a house, mine now where it stands, a little bit probably a mile this side where the old furnace is. There was a double decker at that place at that time.

Nancy Diamond: That's what they called them then too eh?

ARSENAULT: There was a two-story camp. I mean the kitchen and the men's room was on the bottom and upstairs was a place where the men slept you see but then they discontinued that. They didn't build anymore double deckers. They built some camps that were 100 feet long. Well, maybe half of the space was used for the men to sleep in, and the other half was the culinary part of it, the cooks. And in between they had a washroom and a dingle, what they called a dingle.

Nancy Diamond: What is a dingle?

ARSENAULT: Well, I'll tell you why I think the word dingle came from and I wouldn't say for sure but between the two camps they had a bell and it was an arrangement that they rang that bell –

Nancy Diamond: To call them.

ARSENAULT: - to call them and it dingled, and I think that's where they got the word dingle. I don't know but it seems like it. That bell was used for a lot of things. Sometimes you could hear it quite a ways and I remember once we had a barn that caught on fire up on Cedar River, burnt some horses, and we rang the bell and the men in the woods heard it. The one mistake they made is they let the horses go and when the horses got there, they wanted to get in that barn. I'm telling you. We had quite a time because you know –

Nancy Diamond: Oh my gosh, yes.

Marge Lamey: They would want to run right in.

Nancy Diamond: Isn't that a funny thing how horses no matter even if a barn is on fire they'll run back in to it.

ARSENAULT: Yeah and we had to beat them off of there. That's all there was to it. Because a horse is the same, like once they had a (T7_011_09.wav, 01:15) burn and the horses had to come facing that fire and they just didn't want to come out of there. We had to put bags over their heads and take them out of there because they were very, very nervous.

Nancy Diamond: How about in the camp? Were there other buildings added besides those?

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. You had the – we talked about the blacksmith shop –

Nancy Diamond: And the horse barn.

ARSENAULT: - and the horse barn and they had the meat house.

Nancy Diamond: Oh yeah.

ARSENAULT: Now, the meat house was a house that had to be - there was no refrigeration in those days – and it had to be web screened so any flies wouldn't get to the meat. That meat came in twice a week, especially in the hot weather you had to be very careful with the meat.

Marge Lamey: Now was this a kind of icehouse, this meat house?

ARSENAULT: No, there was no ice at all. It was just a lot of air. It was screened in where the air could blow through, circulate, and it was well screened in to keep your meat. Then, of course, they had what they called the filing shed. They had to file in those days. You used to file the saws. Most of the men filed their saws but then we had a lot of people come from the city and they didn't know how to file so he filed saws and made wedges, wooden wedges. He made them in his spare time. He had sacks of them all dried and when somebody wanted a wedge, they just stopped in and got it see. Then, we had the blacksmiths.

Marge Lamey: Now did one man just file and make wedges? One man specifically?

ARSENAULT: Yes, that was his job yeah. Then, we had the blacksmiths, which I always got a kick out of the blacksmith because if you broke a whiffer tree or anything, or a peavey handle, and you brought it to the shop he didn't like to see that. He always mumbled, how did you break it and stuff like that you know but there was one blacksmith in particular. He was a Finn and you never wanted to go in to his blacksmith shop and tell him how you broke it. The best way to do it was to come in, if the door was open, and throw it as far as you could and get out of there because that was the safest way.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: But he was a very good blacksmith and he made a lot of things that are here in the museum.

Nancy Diamond: What was his name?

ARSENAULT: His name was Louis Keschfelt (ph), the Finn. Everybody knew him. He made axes, he made anything.

Nancy Diamond: Where is he from? Where does he live now or does he live?

ARSENAULT: Well, I don't know where Louis is now but he came from Finland, and I always had a good time with Louis because when I used to go to the Finn's camp, there was a fellow by the name of - what's that fellow's name??

Marge Lamey: Charlie Thornton?

ARSENAULT: Nope, no, no. McQueeny?

Marge Lamey: McSweeney (ph)?

ARSENAULT: McSweeney.

Marge Lamey: Bill McSweeney.

ARSENAULT: Bill McSweeney was the blacksmith of the headquarters. I went up to the Finn and the Finn says what's Sweeney doing now? I say he's making a gun. He says how do you make the gun barrel? I said he made it, he's got it all rifled nice, and now he's blowing it. Well, Sweeney making a gun, he says. So he came down and he went and got a quart of whiskey, you know, and he came back and he says, Sweeney I want to see that gun. Well, I took it to Cooper

Lake, he says, I want something done on it. So they had an argument. Anyways, Sweeney, after they had a few drinks, when he told them, he says you know when I first came to New York from Finland, he says, you couldn't even carry coal for me. (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: But it was good, it was good you know because there used to be a lot of competition amongst the blacksmiths. They used to make little miniature anvils, hammers, and hardies and everything. They had to be so perfect see. They were good. They were really good.

Nancy Diamond: Can I just insert one question? Are there many Finns left in this area? It seemed to me that most of them traveled on.

ARSENAULT: No, the Finns that were here there wasn't too many of them married. They were married but their wives nagged them a little and they couldn't stand it so they came to be free up in the woods. The younger generation didn't come back to the woods, neither did the Polish. They just completely disappeared.

Nancy Diamond: Did they settle here or no? They went on.

ARSENAULT: No.

Nancy Diamond: It was kind of migrant.

ARSENAULT: They were floaters really.

Nancy Diamond: Yeah right and they went on to another area.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

Nancy Diamond: And went on.

ARSENAULT: Yeah and now you don't see no more Finns in the woods.

Nancy Diamond: Because I don't know of very many Finnish names in this area.

Marge Lamey: No.

Nancy Diamond: The French stayed. They didn't drift on to other jobs and I wondered why the difference.

ARSENAULT: Well –

Nancy Diamond: Of course, you still had ties in Canada, many of you, family living there. I suppose that was one of the reasons.

Gerald ARSENAULT: Yes and the Canadians it's been quite a big factor in lumbering, you know. They do a lot of lumbering. They know how to do it and today, it's pretty hard to find anybody else but the Canadians. As a matter of fact, there are some good lumberjacks besides Canadians in the woods.

Nancy Diamond: But mostly those who have grown up in this area or some area like it right?

Gerald ARSENAULT: Oh yes. There is a lot of - I'll take that back. Now, for example, if you go to the Tupper Lake show, the lumberjack show they have in Tupper Lake, the first years it was mostly Canadians.

Nancy Diamond: My brother won that once or twice, I want you to know.

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Gerald ARSENAULT: And now you don't see hardly – you hardly see a Canadian name so that goes to show that there are a lot of other nationalities.

Nancy Diamond: Let's see now. We were talking about the building of the camp, the lumber camp, so we got as far as the filing shed I guess right? What else was there?

ARSENAULT: I think we put the filing shed in didn't we?

Marge Lamey: Yeah.

Nancy Diamond: We had that.

ARSENAULT: We talked about that.

Nancy Diamond: We talked about that a little bit.

ARSENAULT: Well, then you know these fellows they liked to play poker you know and they used to start playing poker in the camp and of course, some of the men were tired and they wanted to sleep so they told the foreman we don't want those poker players in the camp after 9 o'clock. Of course, they'd carry on and have a lantern. The only thing you could hear is the noise of the cards and the money, exchange of money. Then, they moved in the dingle. They put a table in the dingle and a couple of benches there.

Nancy Diamond: How come they couldn't play if you had separate eating quarters? You had a room, like a dining room like. They didn't play in there?

ARSENAULT: No, no. The cook wouldn't have the poker players. The cook was a very mean man. He wouldn't stand for that.

Nancy Diamond: I see.

ARSENAULT: The other section was the sleeping quarters.

Nancy Diamond: That was the only other place then?

ARSENAULT: They played there probably for a couple of weeks and then they moved to the dingle and then the foreman would say better go set up a poker shack so they went and sometimes they moved in the blacksmith shop, or the filing shack, and those men didn't want them in there either so they built their own shack because there was a lot of poker played at night.

Nancy Diamond: That's a funny thing. (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: There were a lot of games played.

Nancy Diamond: I don't know how you had any time for poker, the hours you worked, but anyway I won't interrupt you now. We'll talk about that later.

ARSENAULT: There were a lot of games played. There was a lot of cribbage, pitch, and checkers. Checkers was quite a game because people would stand around and see who the champion checker players were. There were some pretty good ones. I liked to play cribbage in those camps, and it was a very good game too.

Marge Lamey: How about songs? Did you sing much in there?

ARSENAULT: Well, we always had a couple of people that could put on a show, you know? Especially the French Canadians, they used to sing the song for their country, like Providence of Quebec would have somebody that played a mouth organ and some had guitars. It's amazing. You wouldn't believe what entertainment we had but we had a lot of it, and the Canadians from Quebec would probably sing the Bella Lorraine, which is sung, I don't know why it's the Bella Lorraine because La Bella Lorraine should come from Lorraine, France. They originated in that country. Now, those fellows from Nova Scotia they used to call the Scisch (ph), they're mostly Irishmen from Nova Scotia, from Cape Breton, and they had their own songs. The people from New Brunswick, like myself, we had (speaking French) was sang a lot you know by somebody who could sing the (speaking French) and I should have brought a tape and you could have taped it.

Nancy Diamond: Oh, we can do that another time.

ARSENAULT: We could do that.

Marge Lamey: I'd like that, yes.

ARSENAULT: (Speaking French). You see, we come from the sea. The sea is my domain. (00:03:35). I'm from Britain, around that country. You'd be amazed at the shows those people used to put on just for entertainment. Well, swapping jokes and stuff like that. It was very interesting. I'll tell you one thing I missed on the show, when I was talking about those lumberman that I cherished every moment I ever spent with them because they were all good men. I used to ask them why are you here. There were people that had college educations. They were teachers. Well, the drinks. Some of them were the drinks.

Nancy Diamond: They had trouble drinking and they had –

ARSENAULT: They had drunk too much you know. I used to see some fellows that would come in to camp and promise we will never drink again. That's the last time. After they were through peeling, they'd go out and when they'd put their pants in the corner they were so full of sap they'd stand there right in the corner and they'd go back and they'd never even buy a pair of pants and come back sick, and broke, and put on the same old pants they had and that's the way they went on.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

ARSENAULT: But I asked some men, I know with some men it's amazing, they had very good education you know. When I first came to this country, I had a fellow by the name of Tom Moretti (ph) and he was very well educated and he asked me -- I couldn't speak very good English -- and he said, can you read it. And I said yes, I can read it. Well, he said, then you can learn. And he helped me tremendously in learning to speak, to talk, you know -- get the words out, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Where did he come from?

ARSENAULT: Well, he was around Weavertown, I think, and he has [T7_011_012.wav, 00:24] Indian Lake.

INTERVIEWER: But I mean originally, where did he come from before that? When he first came into it -- you said he tried to --

ARSENAULT: Well, he --

INTERVIEWER: [T7_011_012.wav, 00:32] too --

ARSENAULT: Well, he had brothers that had pretty good positions, but he drank too much and that's why he came to the woods. And I'll never forget once -- when they'd give the bonus -- [T7_011_012.wav, 00:48] bonus -- he got the check and he had over 800 dollars, and he says to me, he says, Jerry -- he used to call me -- he said, why don't you put that check in the bank, and he said, don't let me have the money. So I said, all right. So I went to the bank and put the money in the bank, and I took off on a trip. I took the bank book with me, and I told the bankers and people over at the bank, I said, don't let that man have no money. I said, he doesn't want to spend it. And that was during the Depression. He came up with 300 dollars that he earned on the drive, and he had 800 dollars, and after eight days I come back, he was broke and he had overdrawn his money. And what he did with them is -- they [T7_011_012.wav, 01:35] checks, you know. He was drunk and make out a check and he'd come with an old check [T7_011_012.wav, 01:40], so he'd write out another, because in the Depression days, to be able to spend that amount of money in that short of time, there was something very crooked -- I mean, it wasn't right. And when I came back, he was up in camp and he was in a -- they locked him in a blacksmith shop because he had the DTs, so when he came into camp, I would [T7_011_012.wav, 02:03] blacksmith shop, and [T7_011_012.wav, 02:06] he wanted a drink of water, but I gave him his drink of water and he told me, he says -- I'll never forget this -- this was said many times, but he said, man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn. And he was right, because it was inhumanity to man that society would take his money just in order to get his money. So the next day, I took him to the bank and straightened things out, and then he got better. He used to, you know, [T7_011_012.wav, 02:36], but he was a wonderful man. I liked him.

INTERVIEWER: Now, let's see. We finished that on the organization of the camp, sort of where [T7_011_012.wav, 02:49] --

ARSENAULT: Well, we got the -- we had -- we forgot the dynamite track.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

ARSENAULT: We had the dynamite track.

INTERVIEWER: There must have been the shacks for other provisions, too -- the storage.

ARSENAULT: Yes. They were very strict about the latrines in the camp. Something that hat to be taken care of by somebody every day with the lime and stuff like that -- the sanitation -- because you couldn't have done too much if your men were sick, and that was something that had to be done well. Whoever had to do it, had to do it well, because the foreman was always checking on it.

INTERVIEWER: There was a separate crew assigned to that, too?

ARSENAULT: Well --

INTERVIEWER: Or did that change?

ARSENAULT: No, there was no --

INTERVIEWER: Did the chore boy --

ARSENAULT: No. No, anybody working in the kitchen wouldn't do anything like that, no. You either had -- they had what they called a [T7_011_012.wav, 03:40] in the camp. He washed the floors in the camp and didn't probably always made the beds, but he kept it clean under the beds as much as he could. That was the [T7_011_012.wav, 03:54]. That was his job.

INTERVIEWER: The [T7_011_012.wav, 03:57].

ARSENAULT: The [T7_011_012.wav, 03:58] would take care of, like, latrines and stuff like that. And of course, the barn boss played a big factor in the camps. We didn't talk about it.

INTERVIEWER: No.

ARSENAULT: But I'm telling you one thing, a barn boss had to be a very smart cookie because sometimes when they brought in horses that were fresh from the west -- western horses, you know. They'd bring them in, and when you first start a horse out, he had to know whether the collar was bottom side up or not, because some people would come in there and they didn't even know how to harness a horse. The collar had to be -- the barn boss knew and the foreman -- that if you run his head under the collar, whether it would choke the horse, and whether the horse -- the collar fitted that horse because you could start a horse, in one week, his shoulders would be just like an ulcer, and those sweat pads -- some horses didn't need a sweat pad. But then if it got so he was sore, same like a man, going in, you get blisters after a while. If you didn't get to use -- get used to it gradually, he would have blisters, and suffer with them a few days. Well, the horse was the same way. They had to fix them sweat pads, and then, if the horse had a bad shoulder, they always kept a few spare horses. He'd have to stay in, and they'd wash -- well, some people steeped hemlock bark to toughen it, you know. They had some powder that they had to put on there to heal it, but that was very important. The barn boss, he knows how to handle the horses, and he knew -- if you were misusing a horse, he knew it too, because if that horse came in, and he was cut all over, he used to check their feet.

MODERATOR: Yeah, that's was what I was gonna ask you. It must have been awful hard not to injure them working around them, and corking especially.

ARSENAULT: Yes, very -- corking, yeah. Some horse you never forget could get corked, you never could cork them, but others were corked very easily, and they had to be taken care of, because there could be a lot of time lost. The horses meant a lot, they cost, and the loss of the time. And now, the feeding is another thing. They couldn't let every man feed his own horse,

because he probably thinks, “Well, I can give them all the grain I want,” but that’s not meant to be that way, you see. When you came in, at night especially -- I worked with a horse, and we came in -- you bring a bucket of water to the horse when you came in. That was all he was gonna get before he starts eating his grain -- not his grain, his [T7_011_013.wav, 01:41]. And then, after supper, we spent an hour brushing him, curry comb the horse, you know, because it was a must. If you didn’t curry comb your horse, you could --

MODERATOR: That, every man did for his own horse.

ARSENAULT: He done to his own horse, and then came the watering time again. We’d water the horse, or sometimes they didn’t water the horse, they’d give them the grain, and -- I used to get a kick out of it. There was always kind of a naughty horse in the place. Well, there was one that had to be fed first, or else he’d tear the stall apart, and I used to tell the barn boss, I said, “Why don’t you let him go? Why don’t you feed some other horses first,” you know, because it’s a funny thing, anybody else could walk in that barn, but when the barn boss walked at that certain time, the horses knew it was him. When they heard the grain wrappers, they started to pound. Oh, I’m telling you, it was quite a thing, but he always felt -- there was always a horse in there -- the same, like a kid, he had to fed first, and that’s the way it went, but the barn boss played a big role into keeping the horses in shape.

MODERATOR: He was really almost a local veterinarian.

ARSENAULT: Yes, and of course, they had -- that’s true. He had to know what to do, and of course, there were a lot of cases where you couldn’t do anything, and the best thing to do was to shoot the horse, you know.

MODERATOR: And sometimes, the blacksmith was the man who took -- really took care of the health of the animals, wasn’t he?

ARSENAULT: Well, he took care of -- the blacksmith, really what he did, it was the shoe.

MODERATOR: But didn’t some of the blacksmiths also -- the people who doctored the animals?

ARSENAULT: Well, in some camps, I suppose in the first days, they didn’t have a barn boss. The blacksmith is the one who done it, you see, but when you take and outfit that I worked in, they had a barn boss. That’s all he did. That’s was his job, but some of the blacksmiths, oh yeah, they probably -- maybe the barn boss had to go and ask the blacksmith what to do, and he probably would go to the camp, and ask some older men in camp.

MODERATOR: I was gonna they usually -- usually consulted a lot of people.

ARSENAULT: It was a team.

MODERATOR: I see, about everybody was a common industry -- everybody worked together really, because if you didn't help each other out, everybody suffered in the long run.

ARSENAULT: Oh yeah.

MODERATOR: Now, were there any other particular buildings or things you had to worry about when you were organizing the camp? Anything else that you had to -- how about the water supply?

ARSENAULT: Well, the water supply -- when I was in the camps, most of the water supply was piped in.

MODERATOR: Right.

ARSENAULT: Because they always had a camp on the brook -- most of the places, they had a camp on the brook, or as they --

MODERATOR: So, you had in camp?

ARSENAULT: -- had water -- running water. Later in the years, if they didn't have the brook, they had a well, and they'd pump it in, because it requires a lot of water. I'll never one incident, they had a pump [T7_011_13.wav, 04:48] here, but salmon ponds, or they had a tank, I think, probably a 500 gallon tank, and they had a gasoline pump, and this [T7_011_14.wav, 00:02] boy, he always went and felt to see how full it was, you know. So, one day, he went and felt, and he said, I think it could stand a little more water, and it's a good thing there was nobody around, but actually happened is it let loose -- that steel tank let loose. The bottom stayed there, and the whole tank went right through the roof, and nobody was hurt, but he pumped just a little bit too much.

MODERATOR 2: Just a little bit.

ARSENAULT: The water supply was --

MODERATOR 2: But I don't understand, how would it have gone through the roof?

MODERATOR 1: Yeah.

ARSENAULT: It went right through the roof.

MODERATOR 1: But --

MODERATOR 2: You mean the tank itself?

ARSENAULT: The tank, itself, went through the roof, yeah.

MODERATOR 1: The water pressure was that high?

ARSENAULT: The water pressure -- you know, you could take a -- you could take a bottle of water --

MODERATOR 1: Oh, I see it was covered on --

ARSENAULT: Yes, and you can take it --

MODERATOR 2: Oh, I see.

ARSENAULT: You can pump with a hand pump, and you can put enough pressure, and you can bust it open, but that was -- that happened inside of a barn. A lot of people are [T7_011_14.wav, 01:03].

MODERATOR 2: I think we ought to use that principle in sending off some of missiles into space.

ARSENAULT: Well, I think it's about --
MODERATOR 2: I thought that they were all set from the bottom.

ARSENAULT: No. No, this one -- the bottom of the tank stayed on the floor. The pressure was so great, that's what happened.

MODERATOR 2: Well, did you need any other particular building then, or anything to --

ARSENAULT: No. No, the two sheds that was in the blacksmith, that was built joining the blacksmith shop, right down to it to keep the spuds, and the peas, and the saws, and [T7_011_14.wav, 01:43] and stuff like that.

MODERATOR 1: All your equipment.

ARSENAULT: The equipment, yeah, because sometimes, you know, the blacksmiths were a little fussy, and it's better have a little shed attached to it, enough to go in there and not bother them, especially after they come back from the city, if they've been gone a week or something.

MODERATOR 2: Well, let's try if we can, though, just to get back to kind of sketching out the lumberjack's year first, so that we know about the order that we go in. We can come back and do the individual thing. So, now, then you -- your river drive, and the beginning of your cutting operations overlap in spring. Some of the crew go back and start cutting right away, while the river drive's still going on.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

MODERATOR 2: And then, you peel -- did any of the men draw during the peeling season? Did they skid during the peeling season? No, they just cut and peeled.

ARSENAULT: They just cut and peeled.

MODERATOR 2: Yeah. So, then in the fall, you started skidding.

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

MODERATOR 2: And then, how long did that go into the winter?

ARSENAULT: Well, it went into late October.

MODERATOR 2: I see.

ARSENAULT: The first of November, the skidding.

MODERATOR 2: The skidding.

MODERATOR 1: Bringing the logs from where their cut down to the skidway?

ARSENAULT: That is -- yeah, you see, these fellas had a job, and the company would build a road in the middle of their job wherever it was, and if they 400 cords -- they had -- the skidding distance, I wouldn't say is -- maybe the skidded a quarter of a mile or a little more, but it's what they called skidding distance.

MODERATOR 1: Can I ask one question?

MODERATOR 2: Mm-hmm.

MODERATOR 1: Did you call -- I heard this term, gutter roads, before. Did you call these short little roads from the cutting down to the skidway, gutter roads?

ARSENAULT: Yes, we did, but you see, the jobbers and the time you're talking about, Nancy -- when they were working up in Cedar River, up in Twin lakes, up in the Cedar Lakes, they didn't operate the same as they did when I was in the woods. In those days, a man that used to be a log cutter -- that was the axe. They didn't use no saws, they used the axe, and this man was cutting, probably working 10 hours a day, and if he was cutting 60 logs or 70 logs, he got more money. Then, if you wanna cut 50, you got a certain price, but you know --

MODERATOR 2: That's logs a day now?

ARSENAULT: That's logs per day, and you know, I was figuring the other day, that man, in order to cut these 60-70 logs a day, had to cut one long -- remember -- every 10 minutes he had to cut one log. That's all in his tree. He didn't leave that tree.

MODERATOR 2: No.

ARSENAULT: He went to these 13 feet, and he cut it, he fell it, and then there was what you call the gutter men. This is where your gutter men come about. Somebody came and limbed that tree, and then made a gutter path to those trees, and in them days, you couldn't even have a twig in the road. The horses – [T7_011_15.wav, 00:00] -- then they had the fellows that was skidding. That was a separate -- they had a [T7_011_15.wav, 00:06] and then they had the skidder. He skidded those --

INTERVIEWER 1: The big logs.

ARSENAULT: The big logs.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah.

ARSENAULT: But --

INTERVIEWER 1: So your gutter rollers. And wasn't that partly too because they made such a cut when they were skidding the logs out. It made a gutter -- you know, made a -- just hollowed it out. Skidding the logs themselves cut out your [T7_011_15.wav, 00:27].

ARSENAULT: Yes, yes. You can see up on the side ends where the bark has gone off the tree [0:00:32] porcupine [0:00:33] it was when the logs used to scrape on them, you know, and you can still see the signs. Go back in the woods and you can still see.

INTERVIEWER 1: I think that's where the gutter roller [T7_011_15.wav, 00:43]. It's from the logs themselves making a [T7_011_15.wav, 00:47]

INTERVIEWER 2: I probably should have waited with that question.

ARSENAULT: No, I think it's a good thing that you did ask such a question.

INTERVIEWER 1: Well, we're going to come back and get some more details, but I'd just like to get the schedule worked out just a little bit first. So then you had a break when the men went out of the woods then in the fall, right?

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: After you skidded. You had to wait then before the snow in order to begin hauling. So that would go from -- well, through most of November then.

ARSENAULT: I would say November, yeah, until Christmas.

INTERVIEWER 1: Until Christmas. So you might have as much as two months off in the fall.

ARSENAULT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: And there was no work in the woods unless you maybe were building a camp or something.

ARSENAULT: Yes. Some men -- a few men worked steady probably to build a camp for another year, and if the roads weren't done, the road crew. They had the road crew.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah.

ARSENAULT: And that's all they did all summer. Different camps built different roads. I know one jobber that didn't make how high the rock was, you know. He skidded over. And he filled it full of brush and when the snow came, he couldn't start as early as the others because he was depending on the snow. But after he started -- remember this, that he had the best road that anybody had because he was level and it was packed just right, and he always finished as fast as the others. And they called him high skid Ali. His name was [T7_011_15.wav, 02:12] Ali. He had high skids, but he had the nicest road that you could find. It was skidded and put brush in between, you got enough snow [T7_011_15.wav, 02:20].

INTERVIEWER 1: Of course, if he had [T7_011_15.wav, 02:21] winter, he was in trouble.

ARSENAULT: But, you know, it's amazing that he had some winters where he didn't start until the 20th of January, and he had his roads -- after he did get started, he could produce so much more, and this guy was very -- he was an engineer. I [T7_011_15.wav, 02:39] -- I went up to his camp once and there was -- you had to come around a ledge and he built the road from the top of trees, tide to the ledges -- to the stumps on those ledges, and went around and [T7_011_15.wav, 02:56] in the wintertime when it was cold. I was there once. I went up there for some reason -- I don't know what it was -- but it was a very good, big job. He was an engineer [T7_011_15.wav, 03:08]. I'd like to bring him in here someday. He's still alive.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, yes. We ought to have [T7_011_15.wav, 03:12].

ARSENAULT: He's in North Creek. Yeah, he's a --

INTERVIEWER 1: What kind of trees were they that he roped in like that? He cut and tied the trees [T7_011_15.wav, 03:18].

ARSENAULT: Yeah, he tied -- he cut the top of the trees, you know what I mean? He cut the top of the trees and tie into them and tie into his ledges, and some places I saw where he had

some irons, you know what I mean? Pins in the ledges, and then strapped the iron to hold [0:03:36]. And it was a very good -- very good engineer, very good man.

INTERVIEWER 1: That sounds like -- with the weight of some of those logs, that had to be quite a feat.

ARSENAULT: I asked him once, I says, how are you going to build afterwards -- he used to be a road builder for Finch Pruyn Company. And I says, how are you going to build a road across this swamp? He said, I can build a road anyplace if you got the money. And it's amazing today when you go into [T7_011_15.wav, 04:01] and there's a swamp there and it never -- they never sunk through. He built it. And sometimes it's hard to have a road hold, but he built that road, and you can drive most any time of the year on it. He was good. A very good man.

INTERVIEWER 1: Well then, so you had sort of cleanup detail, but most of your men went out of the woods then during that two months before Christmas. Of course, that was about the only time their families saw them, was that couple months, wasn't it?

ARSENAULT: Yes. Some of the men. You know, in those days, they used to stay in camp most of the time, you know.

INTERVIEWER 2: About when would this be, just approximately, say --

INTERVIEWER 1: November and December.

INTERVIEWER 2: I know, but --

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, you mean when this changed?

INTERVIEWER 2: Just about what year would this have been just around?

ARSENAULT: Oh, that was in -- well, when I started in, it was a couple of years before the Black Friday. That gives you an idea.

INTERVIEWER 2: In the 20s.

ARSENAULT: Well, yes, 27.

INTERVIEWER 2: 27. Okay. I just wanted –

ARSENAULT: [T7_011_16.wav, 00:00] good years. For a while, they were good. Then it came to Black Friday in 1929, and that changed. The whole picture changed because nobody had any money, and you had to survive and the wages went down, but our company -- Finch Pruyn Company, I worked for -- they -- during those years, they started to build a better camp.

Shower/baths -- they had -- if a fellow wanted to keep clean, there was no trouble in doing it and they had everything. They had running water.

INTERVIEWER 1: Is it in the 20s now.

ARSENAULT: No, that was in the -- no, this happens in -- after -- I would say after '29. After '29, they started -- they built a better camp. They had -- at that time, they used to sleep two in a bed -- a double bed -- with a pole in the middle. Took a spruce pole and put it in the middle and that made a difference, you know, in crowding one another. They got rid of the double bed and they got single beds, and it was very good. The people liked them better, you know. You don't like to sleep with somebody else sometimes.

INTERVIEWER 2: They used to get lousy [T7_011_16.wav, 01:15].

ARSENAULT: Oh, they used to get -- I remember the first camp I went in, I slept -- we came from -- we were young fellows, and I slept with this guy and he says -- after a while, he says, about 10 o'clock, he says, there's something funny in his bed. And I says, yes, there's something funny in his bed, and I says, I think I know what it is. Apparently, it was a lousy bed and the other Canadians, we were -- the others were Canadians and we were Cajuns, you see. And they didn't like to see us come into the camp, because the Cajuns and the Canadians at that time didn't get along very good. They were the pea soupers and we were the herring chokers, or the [T7_011_16.wav, 01:57] chokers, you know. So we survived the first day we went to work. Well, no, this fellow -- this man I was sleeping with -- he says, I'm going to fix them. So he goes and gets a half a gallon of kerosene and poured it over the blanket. Well what happened -- we got burnt.

INTERVIEWER 1: I don't wonder.

ARSENAULT: Of kerosene. Trying to keep the lice away, but then the cure was worse. So the next night, we found a big pot there and we went by the brook and we started boiling. You had to boil -- these lice were so big and tough, I'm telling you, we had to boil them about two hours to kill them. But this was one of the things, you know, that happened. But then I'll tell you what happened. With the advent -- or I say when DDT came along, there was no more lice in the camp. That disappeared. There were rats in the camp at one time. I'll never forget this Fin -- this one guy who came in there and -- a one-arm guy came to the Fin's camp, and the next morning he had a complaint. He hadn't worked yet, but he went to the Fin and he told the boss, he says, you know, Mr. so-and-so, he says, you know what happened last night? He says, I got bit by a rat. Oh, he says, it's just because you're a stranger. He says, our rat knows us and they get used to you after a while. That's all he got out of it.

INTERVIEWER 1: How did you keep the rats out of the food supplies, the meat, for instance?

ARSENAULT: Well, they built these places -- meat houses -- meat proof. There were screens, you know -- rat proof, I mean -- rat proof. They were rat proof.

INTERVIEWER 1: What did they do, take the screen down into the ground?

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. They would -- well, every day there was -- every day they would see if a rat could go around, see. And the bears -- there was nothing you could do --

INTERVIEWER 1: And at night -- night's when you can't --

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- [T7_011_16.wav, 03:51].

ARSENAULT: Yeah, but I mean, it's very hard for a rat to dig a hole and get in if it's [T7_011_16.wav, 03:55]. But then the bear would come along and take what he wanted once in a while [T7_011_16.wav, 04:03].

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, do you remember what we were on?

INTERVIEWER 2: We were just at the point of the rats and how you get the varmints out of the meat house.

INTERVIEWER 1: Now, is there anything else that we need to add here about the year? We've come around just about -- you did the whole wintertime, once you got snow.

ARSENAULT: Yeah, we're through with the skidding and the road building --

INTERVIEWER 1: And you went in as soon as there was snow.

ARSENAULT: That's --

INTERVIEWER 1: What if snow didn't come until real late? Were the men kept -- stayed out of the woods all that time, or did they go in anyway?

ARSENAULT: Well, most of the men came in because they didn't -- they were broke and didn't have anything to do --

INTERVIEWER 1: But would the companies take them on if they couldn't go home?

ARSENAULT: Yes, they kept them in the camp. They stayed there. They probably -- if they had a little work to do on the roads, they'd divide it up so a fellow would get enough money to pay his board, you see. They charged 75 dollars -- 75 cents a day for board, but —- if you lived outside in the city, you would be probably drinking a lot, heavy, and getting in debt. You know what I mean. And it would cost you a lot more. So then really you were getting in shape. You were in training camp.

INTERVIEWER 1: But you paid 75 cents a day all the time you were in camp for your board.

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Your company didn't provide it. I never knew that.

ARSENAULT: Well, that came in the picture --

INTERVIEWER 1: When you took on jobbers.

ARSENAULT: That's right. That came into picture. The board -- now, when I was talking about 1929, we didn't pay board. We had so much --

INTERVIEWER 1: The company did.

ARSENAULT: Yes. The jobbers paid for it, but the man working for the day was, you know, so much a day and his board, you know, and they changed it [T7_011_17.wav, 00:52] then they charged board.

INTERVIEWER 1: So then after the whole cutting operation changed, when they took on individual crews -- or independent crews of three or four men -- those men, you mean, had to pay for their board.

ARSENAULT: They paid for their board.

INTERVIEWER 2: These jobbers -- were they usually cutters or [T7_011_17.wav, 01:08]?

ARSENAULT: They done everything, the jobbers.

INTERVIEWER 2: Indirect question. I just wondered what the difference between a jobber and a man who lives and works there in the camp.

ARSENAULT: Well, the jobbers were the fellows that took a job. Now, as I said before, they took 300 cords of wood, they peeled it and they got so much for peeling. They could draw so much on peeling, and they could draw so much for skidding after -- you know, skidding and cutting, you see.

INTERVIEWER 1: In other words, if they did the whole thing, they got paid a certain rate.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. They had so much a cord --

INTERVIEWER 1: [T7_011_17.wav, 01:43] so they only did part of it. They might work -- they might just want to cut. I knew some crews who used to want to just cut. That's all they wanted

to do. They'd cut and they piled it right there. Somebody else came along and skidded it. Well, then they got paid just for that part of the operation, and the other man got paid for skidding it out, or however he got it out, you know, depending on --

ARSENAULT: You know, they got that very, very -- it was the foresters -- when the forestry walked in there, they could -- they marked every tree and they called it calipered the wood. They marked every tree, and when the jobber took the job, if he had 400 cords of wood to peel, he had maybe 1300 trees or more or less, and every night after his day's work -- you know, their day's work -- supposing there was one man -- sometimes, if they were a good -- if it was a good man, he could peel for two men, falling and [T7_011_17.wav, 02:40]. And when this first came on, this modern forestry, you know, they put job lines on all their wood. You know, there was a job line, a double-spotted line that meant this is your wood. The other side is somebody else's, see. And they didn't want to take it that way. They said, we don't believe in them foresters. I don't think they know what they're doing, but they found out that it was good for them because every night if they peeled 50 trees that day, they put it down in their book. Halfway through the job, if they had 600 trees, they knew that they were halfway and about how many cords they already had peeled. They didn't want to do it, but they kept track of it. They were smart enough --

INTERVIEWER 1: They found out that they were [T7_011_17.wav, 03:26] --

ARSENAULT: They kept track.

INTERVIEWER 1: Right.

ARSENAULT: And it's amazing to see how those foresters -- how close they could come to within 5% -- you could really take a job because all that wood was skidded and piled and rescaped, but they could have took the job on this caliper scale and come out pretty near even. And after the second year, the lumberjacks, they liked the system so well that they couldn't get along without the system. They liked that system because they knew how many trees they're going to have left. If they were up to 1100 trees, they were tickled to death because they said, we only got another 100 trees to go and we're peeling, the day is over and we're going to draw so much a cord, we're going to Tupper Lake or Albany and we're going to have a good drunk. And they'd come back for the skidding.

INTERVIEWER 1: That's good because that brings us around now to where we wanted to start on describing the operation itself. And the first thing, of course, is cruising the timber. And, as you say, you know, this whole business of marking out your sections. Now, it was done a little differently way back --

ARSENAULT: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- earlier. You told me about that one time, about the chaining the -- your chain --

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. At one time, you didn't have your woods all divided up into sections and know just exactly where you were. They didn't lumber that way. They didn't have the foresters and they just went in the woods and took one watershed and cut it, you see. But when forestry moved in – especially the company I was with -- they done a very thorough job. They'd take a township -- 36 square miles -- six by six by six -- and established their boundaries, their six-mile line all around that township, and when they did -- they ran those boundary lines for the transit and that was the start of their cruising, because when they ran that boundary line, they picked up every brook, every height, every type of timber, whether there was a swamp, they had [T7_011_18.wav, 00:35] and all of that, and then that was cut into square miles. The whole township would be cut into square miles, or else we'll leave the township out. We'll take -- they'll do a square mile. You see, there were lines around the square mile, what they called block lines. They were square miles. Or, if they didn't own the whole township, they probably would be -- you'd probably wind up with half a square mile, you know what I mean? Or a quadrant or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: A section.

ARSENAULT: And then it was cruised every tenth tree. They started from the southwest corner up the mile square. And that was their cruise. They started to cruise. They went -- they probably -- if they were next to the state, they had to run one chain inside the boundaries in order not to mark trees on state land. You see, they had to keep 66 feet to be sure --

INTERVIEWER: That's the chain.

ARSENAULT: That's the chain.

INTERVIEWER: A chain length is [T7_011_18.wav, 01:35].

ARSENAULT: The chain length, you see.

INTERVIEWER: Well then didn't that throw them off, though? [T7_011_18.wav, 01:39].

ARSENAULT: Well, no, because all their boundary lines, all the square miles been done before, and if you started the -- it didn't throw them off. No, because the plot was plotted at a certain place and you could still use your block line, but the plot was spotted. They knew that on their map the plot would be 66 feet away from that block line. And then they went the ten chains and they took a bearing and they'd go north -- whether north or south -- because they told them [T7_011_18.wav, 02:18], you know.

INTERVIEWER: [T7_011_18.wav, 02:19].

ARSENAULT: They run -- their bearings run north 24 east, and south 24 west, or south 66 west and north 66 east. You see, as you go from the opposite direction, see. They started from

these poles that was already scribed on -- whatever it was -- ten chains south or north, and they went that mile with a compass. About every ten chains, 660 feet, they'd come to a tree, put a mark on it and they scribed it a certain number, and that number is amazing. That number, if you find it in the woods, you had a map, you know just exactly how far you are. First, it gives you your range and your section, and the two last numbers told you how far you were from the north or west line, you know. Well, [T7_011_18.wav, 03:18], you just stepped on me, but I forgive you. But I want to tell you about this guy I worked for 40 years. Name was Johnny Madison. For 40 years, I worked with him. It got so it was, well, you argue and you nag, and once -- he was very fussy. His eggs had to be cooked to a crisp on both sides. They had to be that they'd bounce right up and down on his plate. He wouldn't eat an egg [T7_011_18.wav, 03:50]. And one morning -- we'd been out the night before, and I was cooking sausage, with just me and him over there. I dropped the sausage on the floor and I picked it up and I threw it back in the frying pan. He says, you dirty hog. He says, what in the heck is the matter with you. I said, why are you kicking about. I said, I had my stockings on. There you are, you see.

INTERVIEWER: Back to the timber cruising, then.

ARSENAULT: Well, after we'd taken the first plot -- now, that was in the compass man's mind is to try to hit the other post, you see. You wondered how his pocket compass -- that's all you used, a pocket compass -- and he was on a bearing, you know. And of course, he was very careful. He had to make eight plots before he hit his other line. And everything was taken within an area on those plots of -- now how many -- 56 feet, or -- I don't know. Anyway, it was an area -- it was an acre -- I forgot. This was a quarter-acre plot. You took diameters of all the trees in that plot and you took heights. You had an Abney level and you took the heights, and then you knew just exactly in that certain parts of the land how much wood there was. That's your hard woods and your soft woods, and you know what you had -- how many cords you had per acre. When you finally wound up, you could figure it out because when you came to a swamp where there was no wood, you didn't have no tally, but you still put a plot there, because on your map, you had to know that that was swamp land and when they come to lumber it, they could look at it, but they couldn't put horses through it and they couldn't put the road in the summertime. That's why it was so good to have those maps because they told you just exactly where you were, and it was marked better than the highway because every ten chains -- 660 feet -- there was a mark on a tree. And that --

INTERVIEWER 1: All the time, you knew where you were.

ARSENAULT: You knew where you were at all times.

INTERVIEWER 1: But this was only after the foresters came in --

ARSENAULT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- and about when would that have been?

ARSENAULT: Well, they made the big scale, my company, in 1930s. They started in 1930s. There were fellows -- they were all fellows, graduates, four-year men from university somewhere, and they had their helpers. Some of them are teaching now. There's one that I remember very well, Henry Plumber. He's teaching at the University of Maine. Many others that I -- there's another man that's teaching at University of Maine. They went back to teaching, but they took their training in the woods. They put in their two years and that's where they took their training.

INTERVIEWER 1: And then before that, you must have worked on some jobs where just a jobber went in.

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Or did you only work for the company?

ARSENAULT: The company before that had -- didn't have their --

INTERVIEWER 1: They just didn't have it laid out so scientifically.

ARSENAULT: Didn't have it laid out that way on the map. No, they didn't. No. The foreman --

INTERVIEWER 1: They just came in with a crew -- they just --

ARSENAULT: -- the foreman used to go in and he'd take his -- started a watershed and -- those days, we got to give a lot of credit to the old timber crews, too. Those men had the ability to go through the woods and pick up a parcel of land and tell you just about how many cords you had in it. And they were good men. They weren't what you call a woodsman, because today a woodsman -- I'm not a woodsman. A long way from being a woodsman. There isn't too many woodsmen. Now this Johnny Madison that I was talking to you about, he was a woodsman, although he got lost and got me lost many times, but he was a good woodsman. Today, a lot of people would say, well, he's a good woodsman. The hunters come up, you know. They had a little parcel of land, they know every drop, but that's not what I call a woodsman. A real woodsman is those fellows that could go into a strange land, there was no trees there before, and today there's trees all over wherever you go in the woods. Those men were real woodsman, and I tip my hat to them. I wish I was a woodsman.

INTERVIEWER 1: And they could come out pretty nearly as close as the foresters --

ARSENAULT: Yes. They were --

INTERVIEWER 1: -- on estimating how much would come out.

ARSENAULT: That's right. Well, it wasn't done in a scientific way. It wasn't --

INTERVIEWER 2: How did they do it? Did they just walk a certain distance --

ARSENAULT: They walked. They walked, yes.

INTERVIEWER 2: -- and then over or something.

ARSENAULT: And I talked with some of the old men and they said, those days, we didn't have no compasses. We went out when the sun was out and -- there was a lot of compasses in the woods. They said, if you look, you have your brooks -- they're compasses. The sun is a big compass, and that's what we used. But those men learned -- they didn't depend on a compass and they were good men.

INTERVIEWER 2: And how did they estimate, though, just by looking at the --

ARSENAULT: Well, what they did, those men, they done it on a lot of pacing way. Like, if I'm going to -- when I went -- if I went in the woods without a chain or a scribe or anything, I'd pace. Now, I'd pace 25 steps to a chain. Now, if I find a plot tree now in the woods and I want to go, I haven't got -- if I want to go to the next tree, I'll go in the general direction, which is 66 on a 24 degrees, and I'll pace ten chains and then I'll start looking in this immediate area, and you'd find it.

INTERVIEWER 2: I see. Go on about timber crews again.

ARSENAULT: Well, they'd done so good in forestry, the company I was with, that they finally got it. So they had volume tables and they'd have it -- we'd say they had a section. They all had different sections. It was a different price. Some sections it was small wood, then there was medium wood and big wood, so they had to have a different price. But they cut --

INTERVIEWER 1: You mean in what they paid.

ARSENAULT: In what they paid. They paid by the tree, but they all came out to the cord. And I don't know how that worked. The fellows would start cutting and they'd cut those trees and they would skid them on fresh roads, and then they would come and take those trees with a tractor and take it to the skidder and cut it up, you see. It was all the -- the fellows that were skidding them with the horses through those roads, and then the tractor would come along and pick them up, see. The way they'd skid them, they'd bunch them up in pretty good bunches, you know. But this was done by the tree, so what I would do, I'd go in, and this section -- we'll say they paid 97 cents a tree, you know -- this was about the smallest price. I'd go -- and I had a system. I had a tally board and -- these fellows, when they started cutting, they started marking number one, number two, number three, on the stumps with a piece of chalk. It was a must, you know. And I'd come with my tally board and I found number three, I'd put a dot next to the number three, and then maybe I'd go through the whole job. They'd have 40 trees and I'd say, where is number 17 or number so-and-so. I can't find it. Sometimes they had made a mistake.

They had skipped one, but as a rule, they'd find it, you see. So they were cutting really by the stump. The stump was their stake, and that's the way they got paid. It was a good system.

INTERVIEWER 1: They paid stumpage.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. Yeah, this is the way --

INTERVIEWER 1: Now, but you didn't -- I don't think you quite finished explaining. You wanted to know in the old times how they estimated.

INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: They not only paced it off, but then they would estimate the number of trees, their height --

ARSENAULT: They would take -- that's right.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- and depending on what they were doing, their size, you know --

INTERVIEWER 2: Circumference.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- and then they could figure out -- they'd just figure about how much it was --

ARSENAULT: How many cords.

INTERVIEWER 1: You may have to look at a tree and say about many board feet of lumber would come out of it.

ARSENAULT: Well, now in the hard woods, we had Rupert [T7_011_20.wav, 02:08]. He was the boss in the hard woods. He worked for [T7_011_20.wav, 02:13] and he got to be very good because he knew his hard woods, and he could tell whether that tree had 500 feet or 300 feet in it, and he could tell per acre, because you could stand -- the way I would do it and the way they're doing it today -- I wish I had remembered how many links it took, you know, from the center tree. You stood here, and I can guess was that tree in or out -- out of your corner acre plot, because lots of times you're cruising, you're in a hurry, you'd say what it's in. If nobody comes and checks you, you're alright. But if somebody comes back -- the checker -- and say that tree was out of that plot, you know. So somebody calipers. You look at the center [T7_011_20.wav, 02:59] and you pull your chain to about 66 links. It's a different length. But anyway, you can tell right there, you can say how many trees you got and you can tell in that quarter acre how many board feet or how much soft wood you've got. And then you would just go to work. You'd say you've got a half a mile area, and you can take how much you've got in your quarter acre plot and there you've got how much wood you've got. And it comes out pretty close.

INTERVIEWER 1: Now, was it the foreman -- way back, in the early days --

ARSENAULT: Yeah, the foreman.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- it was the foreman who did this, who estimated it.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER 1: And who decided where they were going to move the operation next, and if it was into a new section, then this is when you had to come in at the beginning of the year and set up a camp and get the whole operation underway there. How much did they move around? How much -- for instance, from one year to the next, could you stay at one camp and keep lumbering a big area, or could you cut off most of the section in one year?

ARSENAULT: Well, those years, they had to go with the water. Now, you take -- if you worked in [T7_011_20.wav, 04:07] valley -- we'll say it comprises probably four square miles or three square miles -- well, you had to work that valley. And then you'd move over a height because in those days you had to go with the water. Probably move into [T7_011_20.wav, 04:26] valley or any valleys that you had to move in.

INTERVIEWER 1: So, roughly speaking, you could lumber in one year -- lumber off a four- or five-square mile area --

ARSENAULT: No, no. Not in one year. Oh no. No, no. No.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- oh. About how much then?

ARSENAULT: I don't think that -- in one year, you'd be -- a square mile would be a big job.

INTERVIEWER 1: It seems to me it would be.

ARSENAULT: Yes, it would be a big job.

INTERVIEWER 1: But it depended also on the size of your crew.

ARSENAULT: Yes. You see, it's your heights. Some heights, you just -- it's impossible to go over, they've got to go into another area or --

INTERVIEWER 1: Now, if you had -- for instance, you talked about the competition between the companies in the old days -- or between the foremen. If they were working, let's say, for separate companies -- they might be working for separate companies, right? Or would they work for the same company?

ARSENAULT: The same company.

INTERVIEWER 1: The same company. But they were in a nearby area. They were, like, next to each other in this area. And so that's why they could compete so much -- or why they would be competing so much.

ARSENAULT: Yeah, they would --

INTERVIEWER 1: They were timbering in the same general location --

ARSENAULT: Yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: So that they had the same kind of factors to compete with and to take care of.

ARSENAULT: Yes. Some of them had -- it was different what the ground was, too. I mean, the ground has a big factor in lumbering. How much swamp land you had and if you had some good side hills and -- because it would make you or break you.

INTERVIEWER 2: How did they keep tabs on each other, just to see who was getting so far ahead? Did they just wander over and look at the other fellow's job and --

ARSENAULT: No.

INTERVIEWER 2: -- or how did they know --

ARSENAULT: No, no. [T7_011_21.wav, 01:11] come back on the scale --

INTERVIEWER 2: Oh, I see.

ARSENAULT: -- how much wood was scaled.

INTERVIEWER 1: You kept that -- see, the foreman was keeping track in the camp each time, and then your guys, of course, were exchanging if you went out for a day -- because you'd -- now and then, the men would go out of camp during -- in the middle, like in the middle of the week or something, or middle of the season, and they didn't stay right in the entire time.

ARSENAULT: No, they went in. They took time off because in order -- what they called to break themselves. Some of them would work so hard that they would break themselves. They'd get so they would shake and they -- they had to go out. And some of the men -- they were too proud to quit. They were going to do as much as the other crew was doing, but they didn't have the --

INTERVIEWER 1: The stamina.

ARSENAULT: The stamina to do it, so they worked until the last minute and then everybody knew ahead of time that they couldn't take the pace, so they'd go out. Sometimes they -- they never got out of it, really, to be able to work that hard. It's the same like horses. It happened the same with horses. You could work them so hard at one time that you really never recuperate back to the -- and then that's what happened. Well, it happens with athletes.

INTERVIEWER 1: Sure.

ARSENAULT: Same thing. It happens all over. You can overdo it.

INTERVIEWER 1: But the competition was that strong?

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. There was competition. A lot of competition.

INTERVIEWER 1: Because from what I had heard, I thought that the competition more often was kind of in fun. I mean, you maybe got a little extra pay or you had the satisfaction of beating someone, but that would have been on an individual basis more.

ARSENAULT: You take when -- those fellows, you know, that was part of their game, who was the best man. Some couldn't care less. Some were in there and competition didn't bother them at all. They're in there to do a good day's work. It didn't bother them. But if you wouldn't have had any competition, it wouldn't have been any good. You had to have the competition. Who can cut the best wood. At one time, there were -- when there was pressure, [0:03:18] peeling. You see, peeling -- when you peeled wood, it took away 14% of the weight that would have went down the rudders on the drive. It's amazing, but the bark and the knots take 14%, you see. And in order to get the knots cut short, they'd give a bonus, and especially the scaler. If there was too many knots, sometimes he'd refuse. They'd have to take it apart and recut the knots, you know. And there was a lot of competition on who done the best work.

INTERVIEWER 1: [T7_011_21.wav, 03:51].

ARSENAULT: The Fins were very, very good at -- very proud of their work. I'm telling you, when they put up a cord of wood, it was nicely done. But later years, they quit the peeling because -- well, they were asking for better wood, you know. In order to get better wood, you couldn't peel it and let it dry all summer and harden on the outside, and then when it went down the river drive, it didn't have the protective skin on it to keep the sand from getting in the crevices because they split a lot on the top. So in order -- that's why they quit. They'd rather have the wood rough -- what they call rough is like -- I remember at some time they could really cut it, load it when the truck came in, cut it that day and take it down to the mill the next. It was run through the mill to make a book or something.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh yeah. Well, they had also by this time developed the barking machines, though, so that that made --

ARSENAULT: Oh yes, yes. They had -- oh, they had --

INTERVIEWER 1: -- [T7_011_21.wav, 04:51] --

ARSENAULT: Sure, they have the barkers now. All the wood that's cut today is debarked. You take it all to the sawmill.

INTERVIEWER 1: In other words, you aren't peeling today.

ARSENAULT: No, no. No, they don't debark. You take it to the sawmill. They debark their wood because -- they're debarking their wood, they sell the slabs, which is a good part of the tree and they sell it and they make paper with those slabs. They chip them. Most of the mill now, instead of shipping the slabs out, they have their own chippers, they have those big trucks standing under the chippers, and the chips go in and it keeps on going. They sell their sawdust and there's nothing lost, you see.

INTERVIEWER 1: Well now, the time where you were just talking about a minute ago, when they wanted the wood protected. What were they using that wood for? I thought that was for fine paper.

ARSENAULT: Well, it was for fine paper, yes. It went to -- they had debarkers then and it was to make a better paper. But then --

INTERVIEWER 1: That is also what made it possible for them to -- because earlier they couldn't -- you couldn't possibly have sent your pulp down with the bark on it because they couldn't have got it off.

ARSENAULT: They didn't have the debarkers. Well, they --

INTERVIEWER 1: I mean, if you cut pulp and let it dry with the bark on, that was it, wasn't it? I mean, you --

ARSENAULT: Well, most of the wood, I think, was -- you see, I'll tell you what happened. The first logs that went down the river, it was mostly [T7_011_22.wav, 01:20] all those mills. Of course, we're talking way back --

INTERVIEWER 1: Way back.

ARSENAULT: -- it was [T7_011_22.wav, 01:25].

INTERVIEWER 1: And [T7_011_22.wav, 01:26], but this is soft wood now?

ARSENAULT: Yep. Oh yes. You couldn't drive -- that's one thing, you couldn't drive nothing else, yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh yeah, that's right. You never drove the hard woods.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER 1: Because they didn't bulk. So then what kind of trees? What were the trees being cut --

ARSENAULT: The soft wood.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- in the soft woods. [T7_011_22.wav, 01:44].

ARSENAULT: Well, it was the spruce and balsam. Oh no, I'll take it back. When they cut -- when they first came into the Blue Mountain area -- this big area between Blue Mountain and Raquette Lake was mostly pine.

INTERVIEWER 1: Pine. That was the first --

ARSENAULT: That's where they -- they called the market the pine, you know. They used a market scale at the time, and it was pine.

INTERVIEWER 1: Thirteen foot -- six inches?

ARSENAULT: Thirteen -- well, it -- no --

INTERVIEWER 2: That was market scale?

ARSENAULT: The market was 13 foot long.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, even 13.

ARSENAULT: What you're talking about, that was -- when we saw the drive on the Moose River, that was 13 foot 4.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, 13 foot 4.

ARSENAULT: And that was used for pulp. Because they had the 13 foot 4, and that was for transportation. If they cut them -- what their grinders were using then was they were using a 32-inch grinder. In order to skid those logs, it was a lot better to skid them when they're 13 foot 4 length, which they cut in five 32's, which gives you the 160 inches, whatever it is. And it was to helm them. You see, when you saw that movie there and you could see the logs were longer and they could helm them better. And I think, too, that was why -- when they drove the Hudson, they had the 13-foot logs. They called them market logs. It was that there weren't -- now they cut a lot of 16-foot logs that they draw with trucks, but it would have been too hard

to drive. I think the shorter log, that length -- and I believe that they had the extra foot for the snubbing on rocks, because I've seen some that were just worn practically on the ends.

INTERVIEWER 1: That's how the 13-foot log developed [T7_011_22.wav, 03:34].

ARSENAULT: I wouldn't be surprised. That's why they had that extra foot, is for waste, like -- same like today. You cut a log and you send it to the mill, you want four-inch trim because they're going to be checking on the end, you know, and if you don't saw it this year or next year, it's going to be stained, so he needs that trim.

INTERVIEWER 1: Same principle as a baker's dozen, you know. Now, let's see. I had another question back there, though. Oh yes. When you had to peel, what were you cutting when you peeled?

ARSENAULT: Spruce.

INTERVIEWER 1: Spruce and balsam.

ARSENAULT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: And then later -- well, let me ask you to go back and do it the other way. You started out cutting pine. That was the first in the [T7_011_22.wav, 04:13] --

ARSENAULT: That was in the logging, yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- in the old days.

ARSENAULT: The logging.

INTERVIEWER 1: Then the market changed. They did some -- went to hemlock, right? Or was that --

ARSENAULT: No, they didn't cut those. No hemlocks, no. Hemlock was a very, very minor --

INTERVIEWER 1: Minor -- I thought so, too, yeah.

ARSENAULT: And some companies took hemlock for -- they still take it for pulp. But the company I was working for -- they used spruce and balsam.

INTERVIEWER 2: How about hemlock bark for tanning?

INTERVIEWER 1: Well, that was another separate thing.

ARSENAULT: That was altogether -- that was separate.

INTERVIEWER 1: From way back. But now, when you came here, they weren't still cutting pine, were they?

ARSENAULT: Oh no. No, no. The pine was all gone.

INTERVIEWER 1: So the hemlock, you see, was kind of a minor part of the lumbering industry as a whole. So then by the -- after the pine, then, they went to the spruce and balsam.

ARSENAULT: Spruce and balsam.

INTERVIEWER 1: And then -- now, later they used poplar, too.

ARSENAULT: Oh yes. They --

INTERVIEWER 1: And that you have to peel.

ARSENAULT: Some companies was poplar, and they sometimes --

INTERVIEWER 2: Poplar?

INTERVIEWER 1: Poplar, yes.

ARSENAULT: Yes, poplar, aspen or whatever you want to call it. Even the company I was working for, they'd probably get another outfit that had another mill come in and take a certain section of poplar, or aspen, and cut it. They would peel the poplar, but the company I was working for didn't use it.

INTERVIEWER 1: Wouldn't take it.

ARSENAULT: They tried to make the better paper they could make with -- mostly percentage was spruce. The balsam wasn't so good, but they cut the spruce and the balsam. After -- I remember now -- I was [T7_011_23.wav, 00:59] to a lodge there, oh, a few years back, and I was telling them -- they asked me about what was the best tree. Well, I said now they started on -- they make a very fine paper -- the company I worked for made a very good paper.

INTERVIEWER 1: And this is Finch Pruyn.

ARSENAULT: Finch Pruyn.

INTERVIEWER 1: You've always worked for Finch Pruyn.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. And I said, well, we see a beautiful birch tree. That makes the most beautiful -- the yellow birch -- paper there is. It's just like cream after it's cooked. It's just as

creamy. But it cannot go alone. It may be mixed. It's a team. It may be mixed to make that paper with a scrubby oak or a scrubby beech. I don't say the beech is not a good tree, but they're all mixed in together. And this fellow was telling me, he says, you know, he was telling me that they were running short of paper by that time. They were printing at Peyton Place, and there was such a demand for Peyton Place that they were printing on any kind of paper they could get a hold of. And I says, we object to that. We cut a beautiful tree and I said, look at what they print on. I said, we don't know where it's going to wind up. No, but I got a kick out of those guys. They were buyers, you know, and they were trying to get -- because Peyton Place made such a rush on the paper, you know.

INTERVIEWER 1: But they do -- they use the old yellow birch?

ARSENAULT: No, no. The yellow birch is, I think, is, they make -- and white birch is good too. What they use now, the company I worked for, they want to use different things I've heard, but I don't know. They use the maples, which is your --

INTERVIEWER 1: Hard wood.

ARSENAULT: Well, yes, and your soft and your hard maple. And beech --

INTERVIEWER 1: That's something I've been meaning to ask somebody. A soft maple is still a hard wood tree, right?

ARSENAULT: Oh, certainly. Certainly.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah, okay. Just checking.

ARSENAULT: That's your rubrum. They say rubrum, and that's the Latin word for your soft maple -- red. In other words, you've got your rubrum. And the sugar is your -- hard wood -- is your acer saccharinum. That's your scientific name for the sugar maple.

INTERVIEWER 1: But you started to say they're going to use the maple now?

ARSENAULT: Oh, they've been using it for years.

INTERVIEWER 1: I never knew that [T7_011_23.wav, 03:24] paper.

ARSENAULT: My company -- they make this beautiful paper. It's all made out of hard wood now. That's all they're using. That's all they're cutting [T7_011_23.wav, 03:34].

INTERVIEWER 2: Hard woods.

ARSENAULT: Hard wood.

INTERVIEWER 2: When did most -- when did the market rise for hard wood lumber?

ARSENAULT: Well, I will tell you a little story about this hard wood lumber. Once -- I was just a beginner. I didn't know too much about scaling, but this Mr. Hoy -- Mr. Krashaw -- they sent me into Blue Ridge to scale some hard wood. And I stayed in Blue Ridge and I used to watch those guys, but I was just a young fellow and I didn't know too much about it [0:04:10], you know. And you know what this man was paying for stumpage? Two dollars and a half a thousand. Well, that was a big price and they were taking all the best. Well, it went on for a few years and then they raised the price to 14 dollars a thousand, and everybody was going to quit. But today, on the yellow birch, it's closer to 200 dollars a thousand. It's hard to believe [T7_011_23.wav, 04:40]. And those days, what we were trying to do -- the hard wood was nothing. The hard wood was just --

INTERVIEWER 1: You ignored it, yeah.

ARSENAULT: Ignored. It's because there was no market. They weren't using hard wood. The soft wood is what they wanted. And they were worrying about running out of soft wood to keep their mill and all at once disappeared. Had to sell to somebody [T7_011_24.wav, 00:06]. I mean, that's the way those things happen if you haven't got the market for it. Now, we have some nice trees up in this country. We have white ash. Occasionally we'd have a beautiful log or a nice cherry log, but it isn't like the big price log, like the hard maple and the birch -- the yellow birch. That's what really counts. The other ones, they're sold just the same, but there isn't enough to have a big market. When I was a kid, we used to go and set nets for herring, and once in a while you'd get one of those beautiful sea trout, you know. But that didn't belong there. We threw it on the side. Now when I think of it, I'm trying to catch a trout here, it makes me mad. Why didn't I take care of that trout then.

INTERVIEWER 2: When did the market rise for this, about -- do you know? For hard woods -- about when did they start cutting in great quantities?

INTERVIEWER 1: [T7_011_24.wav, 01:15] because by that time they developed the techniques to use it.

ARSENAULT: I would say, yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: Before that, they hadn't been able to --

ARSENAULT: The price was pretty high on the hard woods. It started to raise quite a lot just after the war, say '45 or '46.

INTERVIEWER 2: Okay. Is there anything that we --

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh yeah, there's more. Shall we go on as long as we have a little more time, or do you want to --

INTERVIEWER 2: Okay.

INTERVIEWER 1: It's up to you. Do you want to quit?

INTERVIEWER 2: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: [T7_011_24.wav, 01:47].

INTERVIEWER 2: [T7_011_24.wav, 01:48].

INTERVIEWER 1: Well, I wonder. It's quarter to 1. Maybe we should stop.

INTERVIEWER 2: Okay. Go on about the market log.

ARSENAULT: Well, I should -- I would like to tell about the market log because it's something that -- if I were to -- if I told somebody about the market log, you know how they're going to react? They'll say, we got a book and we can find out about the market log. Some people, they use a [T7_011_24.wav, 02:15], others have got the encyclopedias, but everybody's got their own book. They can find it because everything is in it, but they can start looking. They're not going to find it. It wasn't put down no place. There's no place where -- how he figured it out, I don't know, but he came out with just as good a scale as you can find because he took -- he squared his 19-inch --

INTERVIEWER 1: Why the 19 inch now?

INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah.

ARSENAULT: Well, that's what you figured out. The 19-inch log, 13-foot long -- 19-inch in diameter is a market log on the top end.

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, the top end.

ARSENAULT: The top end of the log is the market log. So he squared the 19. He must have squared it because the square of 19 is 361. So after he got that 361, he had a key. So therefore if you were cutting a log, how many market logs -- probably you skid all day and probably never hit the market log. You'd probably never hit the log. You'd probably hit a log that was over market because it was 20 inches in diameter, or else we'll say if you hit the 10-inch diameter log, 13-foot long, you would square the 10 inch, which would be 100 over 361. So therefore, it would take 3-1/2 -- we'll say roughly -- of those logs to make a market.

INTERVIEWER 2: Right.

ARSENAULT: So it doesn't make any difference. You could still scale a whole skidway. He was using that 361 and they were paying by the market, and that's what it came out. It didn't make any difference because he could have had a three market log. For instance, he could have had a log, 32 inches to the top end, 13 foot -- three markets.

INTERVIEWER 2: So market is simply a standard. You can sell logs that are smaller.

ARSENAULT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Well, of course. Same measure in terms of [T7_011_24.wav, 04:15].

ARSENAULT: It's the same thing. But it's amazing how he figured it out. He figured it out so close that it takes five markets to a thousand board feet. Well, you take the Scribner rule, a 19-inch, 13-foot long, which gives you right in the area of 200 feet, you see. So five markets made a thousand board feet. Or two markets to a cord. And still we got a thousand feet of wood. Now a thousand board feet of feet, we'd say in logs [T7_011_24.wav, 04:52] 2-1/2 cords. So he came out with the same thing we're using today. We could use that scale just as well and it -- It was interested because who would have figured out the market law that it isn't used any more, was very clever, but I would like to find a book that would explain the market law.

Nancy Diamond: How it was developed.

ARSENAULT: Yeah because (T7_011_25.wav, 00:13) and how he came to this conclusion.

Nancy Diamond: Do you support it was one man or something that developed in practice?

ARSENAULT: Well, I suppose that it was one man that figured out a scale. That's all he did. We're gonna pay them by the market and that's what they're be paid by, you know? And he figured it out. It's interesting. Oh, I had some fellows go to the books and they said we'll find out. Well, they came back and they said well we heard something and we couldn't find it in the book.

Nancy Diamond: (Laughing)

Marge Lamey: (Laughing)

Nancy Diamond: A lot of things like that they were trying to pin down.

ARSENAULT: Yeah. You know as a rule you can find those things.

Nancy Diamond: But not that one.

ARSENAULT: No.

Nancy Diamond: That was also only an Adirondack term, the market.

ARSENAULT: I think so. I would say so. I would say that it wasn't used many other places.

Marge Lamey: The standard, that kind of standard, wasn't used?

ARSENAULT: Yeah.

Marge Lamey: Was a Scribner scale used in other places?

ARSENAULT: Well, the Scribner they had a lot of scribners. I don't when the Scribner, or the Doyle, or the Vermont, or the International. There are so many scalers. The scales vary so much but I'll tell you one thing, you take that 10-inch log now if you scaled it Scribner you wouldn't come out to the five market to a thousand. The (T7_011_25.wav, 01:39) would saw out these thousand feet just the same but they wouldn't like to admit it, but they were still sawed out. That's why it was a good scale. That was a good scale. Now, you take the difference between – let's say the (T7_011_25.wav, 01:53) for instance. We'll take a log like a 12 inch in diameter, 12-foot long, that's 48. The shorter the difference there is between that rule and the Vermont rule, the Vermont rule you take your 12-inch diameter, half the length of your log, and multiply it by half, by 6, which would give you 72 feet, and that's why the spread from 48 to 72. See the spread there is a difference in scales, you see. To wind up the whole thing about the scale, if you get a good scale you get a lesser price. It all comes to the almighty dollar. It all comes back to the dollar. If you're cutting down Doyle, you're gonna get more money. If you're cutting down Scribner, you'll get less money. If you're cutting down on the Vermont rule, you still get less money. It all has to mesh in with the price. It doesn't make any difference.

Nancy Diamond: So then who decides though? The company decides just for itself?

ARSENAULT: That's right. That's right.

Nancy Diamond: So then, today for instance, the jobbers are gonna be the ones who come out on the short end of the stick.

ARSENAULT: Now, they're not gonna come out because if they're cutting down the Doyle, they're gonna get more money for cutting it. You see what I mean? They're gonna get money. It all comes back to the dollar.

Marge Lamey: Now, does the company have to publish what kind of scale it has used? I suppose this is obvious to whoever is cutting it.

ARSENAULT: Yes. Supposed you went in there and took a contract, they put on there you're gonna use Doyle, or Scribner, or whatever it is.

Marge Lamey: I see.

ARSENAULT: Your contract calls for – like today they are by laws. The logs I scale, which I don't scale too many, I set a couple a million feet a year, probably three million feet a year, but when they buy those logs they have a certain understanding that they have to take a certain percent of defect. You see that's why they call a scaler sometimes a voleur or a thief because he's got to take out that defect. There's a defect in that log. Let's say a 10-inch hole, well you've got to square that 10-inch hole 1 inch over, you got to square it, and then divide it. Like the Doyle you divide by 17 and then it gives you so many feet you got to take out of that log. There are too many knots on one side; you've got to take a few defects. You can take so many log knots but you can't take all knots you know and that's the way it goes. Scaling is you go into a skid way of logs, some you can give the full scale, some you can't give the full scale because you got to take out for defect. When they buy those contracts, it states on the contract that they are supposed to take a certain percentage, or 25% up to 40% some companies, defects and you can send a big log but probably half the log so that's around your 40% -- 50% [T7_011_26.wav, 00:00] and that's the way you got the lumber. You cannot leave all this good -- and most of the time it fits in the [T7_011_26.wav, 00:10]. All the good wood is a sapwood [T7_011_26.wav, 00:14]. That's your sapwood. That's your first and select -- what they called the FAS. That's your sapwood. That's what really brings the price because -- I would venture [T7_011_26.wav, 00:25] and tell them [0:00:26] and how the prices change from FAS to select to number one common, two common, three common, down to dummage, you know what I mean? This is the way --

INTERVIEWER 1: Down to what?

INTERVIEWER 2: Dummage.

ARSENAULT: Dummage. Dummage. That is something that's [T7_011_26.wav, 00:47] and now they have -- they cut -- they save most everything in the sawmills today. They sell what they call a pallet log to make pallets to put anything -- you know, they make those pallets to take around with a forklift. Some of that dummage is sent down to the city to put in boats to pile stuff on, you know. It's quite an operation.

INTERVIEWER 1: Very diversified.

ARSENAULT: It all comes back to whether the fellow is going to make money. When he's buying that log, whether he can afford to cut that log, because when he's putting that log through the mill, if it's a half a log, he's got to pay the same price as if he was cutting a whole log. So therefore he's losing. You cannot stomp that man down. You've got to give him a break on that log, you see, because he's going to make enough money to come out of it. And then the --

INTERVIEWER 1: You're talking about the man cutting. The man who's cutting, you're talking about.

ARSENAULT: The man that's sawing, I'm talking about. The man that's sawing -- the man that buys the log. That's what we're talking about. We're talking now about hard woods. And hard woods and soft woods are two different kind of trees when it comes to sawing because the hard woods -- it's the outside that's your most expensive, and you take it -- if you sell hemlock today, most of the people, they saw the whole tree, and if they're cutting big timbers, they take it -- the hearts are used very much, where the hearts in hard wood are not so -- they won't bring in so much money. But if you're cutting big timbers, you've got to be careful not to have the shake and the rot. You cannot sell soft woods with rot or shake in it. If you're doing it on a business way, you know what I mean? They won't buy it. They won't stand for shake or rot, stuff like that. Well, that's about all I've got to say about this.