

Interview with Carl Christensen

[TAPE 1 - CARL CHRISTENSEN - SPRING 1993]

I have to tell you how I came into Manitowish Waters in 1930. That's 63 years ago. Height of depression and there was no work. I was a carpenter. No work, couldn't get work, any kind. I put an ad in the "Wisconsin Agriculture" a magazine, saying that I would do carpenter work for any one that wanted me for my board and room. Anyone that needed any remodeling or anything else I would be willing to do it for my board and room. I got a letter from Chicago and we answered it. The letter [writer] he had a resort up in Spider Lake Wisconsin on Rest Lake and he wanted someone that had a strong back to come up there and take care of it because all he could get was Indians to take care of it and they were robbing him blind. So, we answered that letter and told him that I was just the guy that he needed I had a strong back and a weak mind. I got another letter from him he says meet me at the Northwestern station in Racine on such and such a train number in an evening. Which we did. I had another partner that went along with me. And who did we happen to meet but Joe Ilg from Chicago. He was a freight solicitor for the Canadian Northern Pacific. We had quite a chat and he told me about the resort that he had up there and everything else. He had horses on there, he had a cow on there and he had this and that that had to be taken care of and he had to have somebody that was responsible. He was willing, if I would take it, he would give me my clothes and my food and everything for the winter. Take care of it then in the spring of the year I could go on a payroll as a caretaker. So we agreed to that but I says to him I says listen I says I don't have any money to buy any gas or anything to get up in that country. So he gave me five dollars that was for gasoline 'cause I had a twenty-eight Chevrolet coupe. So we took off real early in the morning and we drove all that day and part of the night and we finally ended up at the lien going in from 51 into Ilg's cottages. We found the place all right and Joe Ilg was there to meet us. So he showed us around the place and we had to stay in a cottage called "Moccasin". So we got everything unloaded and in there. He showed us around the place and everything else that we had to do because he had a team of horses, two riding horses, and a cow. We had to feed them, take care of them and everything else that had to be done around there. So that was that week.

The next week he came up and he says we're going to go someplace else. So we hitched up the team to a sleigh and he took us way back in the marsh around Circle Lily. That was a tamarack marsh and a disease had killed off the tamaracks so all there was standing was a bunch of rampites there and a lot of logs. So he says what we want you to do, cause there was another fellow staying there, a friend of his was staying there, he was taking care of too because he was just as destitute as we were, and that partner of mine was along with me. We were to cut tamarack, load them on the sleigh and haul them in for firewood across the ice on Rest Lake. So we broke a trail, marked it with cut off pines and limbs and that and marked the trail cause it would snow over every time we go over we could keep going in the same spot. So we did that all winter and we had an enormous, enormous pile of wood hauled in by spring time. We never knew that we were not allowed to go in there but he never said anything about it. We just kept cutting and cutting, hauling and cutting and hauling. So in the spring we had to get the buzz saw going and saw all that stuff into wood, short wood, and we had a mammoth pile of short sixteen inch stove wood and there were some nice logs in there.

Then Joe decided that he wanted a log cabin. So we picked out all the nicest logs that we could find in that pile, put them aside, and we were going to use them to build a log cabin. Which worked out all right. Then when spring came he put me on wages, thirty dollars a month

and my board and room. So that was all right, so I worked and I built cottages and repaired the cottages, fixed the cottages he had and everything else and put an addition on his main house out of logs but they were all different logs. We had to get them selected logs and put them on. I think I built an oil house for him and I also built another cottage for him. Some frame cottages I built for him. I worked for him all that summer.

Winter came on he still kept me on wages of thirty dollars a month. So spring come the next year, we had more building work and repair work to do and fix this and everything else and he wanted to plant some corn and that. So he had a piece of land that was over off of 51 near Pete Vance's old house and we tilled that all up and planted corn in there and everything else and he had a big garden spot in the back and we put garden stuff in there, corn and everything. And then when hay time come then we went out on the big Powell Marsh and mowed that swamp grass, what do you call it, it's a long leaf swamp grass. And hauled home loads and loads and loads of that and made stacks and that was to feed the cattle.

So that year went by and then in the summer. That summer, they had someone out on Powell Marsh and they was gonna heat up a cup of coffee or something. They made a fire out there and they started Powell Marsh on fire. That fire swept up to the Powell Road. We fought with as much as we could fight with to keep it from going across Powell Road because it would have got into Manitowish and wiped out everything. So the wind went down and the fire died out which was lucky for us but on the other side, into the marsh it kept going. Powell Marsh is about 12,000 acres or more that burnt over that year. I worked on that because everyone in the country was called in because they recruited us to go to work on that fire. So I was one of them and George LaPorte was along there and some of the other local fellows, I don't remember all their names now. We had men from Mercer, we had men from Winegar and from Winchester. We were all working on that fire. And they called the CCC's in and the commander, what we wanted to do was a back fire and the commander says no. He says you can't back fire because that's not legal. We have to put it out. All them CCC boys was walking around with tanks on their backs with a squirt hose on so they could squirt on the edge. That was all right putting the fire out where there was a little edge on it. They couldn't get water. I was the only one there that had a legal blasting license to blast with dynamite. So what they had me do was blast holes in the marsh so they could get water. So the CCC would pound up a hole and drill a hole down into the marsh maybe five or six feet or so and then I would load that with dynamite, set it off and then they would have an open crater there that would fill with water so they could get water for their tanks.

So we kept on with that and we couldn't see that at all because that wasn't the way to put that fire out. So one night a whole bunch of us got across and we went down on lower {Wild} Rice Lake and we cut cross land, over, and hit the marsh. Carried two fire engines and 1500 feet of fire hose along and brought that over. There was a lake at the lower end of the marsh that we wrapped and connected to and put that on there and put that end of the marsh out. So then there was a canal that run from a lake that was way over in Lake de Flambeau that used to have a resort back in there. There were a lot of buildings there was a hunting camp. And they had a canal built from Alder Lake to this lake and that would fill with water so they could float the boats from Alder Lake up there to that other lake. That was full up with mud and limbs and everything that over the years and there was no flow of water going through there. So, I think there was six of us, George LaPorte he seemed to be the main boss of the whole works. He says I want two guys to stay here and keep this thing open and the rest of us will go down in the other end. So I says OK George I'll stay and then there was a fellow from Winegar says I'll stay with you. So we stayed there and we kept the water flowing down that canal so that it wouldn't fill up with anything, driftwood or anything else that come into it. We never realized that the fire was all around us until I happened to look up and it was getting smokey. And I says to the guy from Winegar I says boy I says it looks like we're surrounded with fire. He got shook up all right, right

away and says what are we gonna do. I says well we can't go through that blaze we're just gonna have to stay here. Well he says we'll burn. I says we'll figure some way out of this. And there was a lot of big pine trees there and we could get air by putting our nose up against the pine tree opposite of the wind and circled around behind us and there was enough air and there wasn't smoke in it. So finally it got so bad that we dug a hole down at the edge of the lake. There was a bank there and we crawled in that bank underneath there and wet our handkerchiefs and put them over our face. And the fire went right over us. Burnt all the pine trees around us and everything else. So when the fire had gone all there was was smoldering smoke. So we just stayed there for a while and says we got to get out of here. I says I know we do. So we started to go back along that canal and there we run into fire all the way along there. We couldn't get through it and it wasn't until late at night that the fire had gone down so that we could get through. We got back to a cottage on Alder Lake. I had just been married just a short time and my wife was up there and they told me that they had been out looking for us because they figured that we were in the fire surrounded by it and they were looking for us and everything else. They even had an airplane flying around looking for us that day. Well anyways we got out of that and then the next day we went over, crossed over almost into the {Lac du} Flambeau. And started a fire in a small narrow gap of the marsh and we started a fire there and as we went along we put the fire out because we had the hoses and the fire pumps working. So we did that during the daytime and at night we crossed over a lake or it was more of a muck lake than anything else and put all the hoses, fire pumps and everything else in the boat and we just about sunk in the middle of the lake because we had such a heavy load on it. And we got ashore over on the Indian side. And the Indians were all fighting the fire over there because it was burning into {Lac du} Flambeau. So the funny part of the whole thing was that we see spots of light here and there all over on the hummocks that were laying here and there in that marsh so we come to find out they was Indians and each one of them had a lantern and we figured out they had the lanterns to see where the fire was. Well anyway we was dragging the hose and the guy that was pulling the hoses I says to him listen I says shoot one of them Indians with a hose and see how fast he can jump and he did. And boy the guy took off like nobody's business, lantern and all. We did get the fire out. That was the end of that big marsh but there was twenty-one days that we were on that fire. We got ten cents an hour for all the fire work that we did. So that was the end of that there.

That year I had bought The Chateau, that was in 1933, Ann and I had bought eighty acres of land on 51 with some land that reached down on to the tail end of Rest Lake and had right of way to that. We were going to have a home there, build a home so I would work around there, carpenter work or whatever it is. So that didn't fit in with Joe Ilg because he wanted me to stay there. Well anyway we had saved up enough money to pay a down payment on that land. Instead of going to the World's Fair we bought that piece of land and then I made a deal with the lumber company down in, Thompson Lumber Company, near Minocqua for some rough cut lumber that they had. So they says that I could have that whole big pile of lumber that was there for twelve dollars and they would haul it up to me. It was all flat boards one by six and one by eights and there was a mixture of lumber that they had cull lumber it was. So I built myself a cottage and that lumber cost me twelve dollars. I cut all the poles, the studs and that out of popple {poplar trees} , peeled them and then flattened them on one side and left the log side of them inside of the cottage. Then there was a big thicket of balsam just a short ways from there so I went in and I cut all the rafters, all the tie beams, everything that I needed from balsam, peeled them. Then I had some windows that I found, really stole them. I had two windows and put them in framed them up. That was the cottage that we lived in after we left Joe Ilg.

Emil Wanatka {Sr.} would come on weekends and he'd say I need you and Ann to come up and work. So we'd go there at six o'clock at night because he had a nightclub and barroom. It was

dry times and he had all kinds of moonshine there gallons of it. So we'd go to work at six o'clock at night and sometimes we'd work all night, it'd be daylight when we'd be coming home. I'd get a dollar and Ann would get a dollar. Then weekends we'd go there. That was two dollars a weekend. When we'd get enough money scratched together somebody would be going up to Ironwood we'd go along with them and we'd pick up groceries. That was how we lived until the spring came on. Emil came to us one day and he says you know I want you and Ann to come up and work permanently for me because I got some early guests coming in. Well in the meantime Hank Kuhnert from the Northern Lights Hotel, down by the dam on Rest Lake, had been in and talked to us about it because he had a little building that was a barroom across the road from him. It was what you call a blind pig, he was bootlegging in there. Not him but he had another fellow that was in there that rented it from him and was bootlegging. Kuhnert didn't like the idea, the set up, so he says to me and Ann, he says, if you will take and go up there, remodel it, do the work necessary to fix it up and make it into a half way decent tavern I'll take you in as a partner. We can work it half and half. You get half of what the profits are and I get the other half, and we agreed to that. So I had just started to remodel it when Hank Kuhnert got the beer license, because beer had just come back then.

Well on Sunday people were coming down from Manitowish Waters [Ironwood ?] and they saw that I had beer, I had a sign out. Everybody stopped because that was a habit that they had up there they used to go around the loop. They'd come down to as far as we were and then they would go back on highway "w" up and around Winegar, Marinesco {MI} and back into Ironwood. They'd make that loop on a Sunday drive. We had been very very busy Ann and I. She was making sandwiches, she did a lot of that, sandwiches, and I was tending bar and everything else and we hadn't had even a chance to eat anything because the people kept coming and coming and coming. So that was toward evening when two fellows walked in they wanted to know if I was the constable, which I had been elected constable. I says "yes". Well they says we need your help. We think we've got Dillinger locked up in Little Bohemia but in case they should get loose we need you to go and show us how to set up road blocks, where we can set up road blocks and roads that were going out from there. So I says all right. So I got my jacket on [now located in the Frank B. Koller Library in Manitowish Waters} and I had a pair of old shoes on and a cap. I says to Ann my wife I says we'll be back in a little while and we'll get a couple of sandwiches. We'll make some for these men too and I'll have something to eat. But I never got back. And you know the rest of the story from there on. We stopped in at Koerner's to check a car out there. Babyface was in that car and he shot Newman under the hat and also Baum was shot right above his vest, through the throat and he caught me with eight bullets. I never found out til after I was out of the hospital that George LaPorte was walking back and forth with a rifle in the crutch of his arm. So I asked George one day what was he doing. Oh, he says, I was on guard, he says, in case they should come back. And another thing I found out was when Emil Wanatka was being held prisoner by Babyface Nelson in that car which was George LaPorte's Model T Ford and when Nelson saw us coming he got out of the car. Emil got out and he crawled into a snowbank and he had dark trousers on and on and Emil told me he says I tried to cover my pants with snow he says so he wouldn't see me. I was afraid he was going to shoot me. So all that came out after I was out of the hospital. So the rest of the story that's newspaper, you have that in my scrap book. [at the Frank B. Koller Library in Manitowish Waters] After I came home from the hospital, we had a tremendous business. All the publicity, newspaper stories about me and everything else. We really had people stopping, curiosity seekers. They wanted souvenirs from me and so on and so forth. I had postal cards made up with my picture on it and sometimes they'd buy four or five of them, take them along to give them to friends. I had that much publicity. So things were going along real good and we were taking in money and it was really, in those days, rich money, you know , good money. So I go out to Hank Kuhnert, he had promised me that if I could make good of that place there he would sell it to me when we first started in. So I says to Hank I says now I'm in a position I says I

can buy from you, buy your share out, buy the building off you. Oh no no he says I can't sell that he says that's too valuable a piece of property now. Well I says if that's the case then I'm just going to pull my share out. You can pay me off and I'll pull out and you can get somebody else to run it. Which he did.

We had already, Ann and I had already saved a nice piece of money from earnings that we had from the beginning. When he bought me out he paid me off a little over twenty five hundred dollars for all the merchandise and everything that we had in there that I had shares in. So I moved out of there and we moved up into our little cottage up on the land that I had built. We had a girl that was staying with us that was a niece, wasn't really a niece. It was Ann's sister's husband's sister it was. So she was a young girl and she was staying there with us. So what we did when we first moved up there, I was still working with crutches and I'd get to a tree and I'd kneel down on the ground and then I had an axe and I would chop off brush and clean property off of there and everything else I could do and the wife and that girl would carry it over and throw it into a pile on the side of the road where I had a piece of road going through our property. There was a bank in there and they would just throw it over the bank and we'd burn it up later on. That way I cleared out the area around to where I was going to build a new motel, not a hotel, but it was my barroom and home that I was going to build on that. We had a lot of pine trees on there, a lot of popple trees and there happened to be a clearing that I didn't have any big pines on. We had a lot of big white pines there, some of them in front of the building and around the side of the building, in back of the building. But in the immediate area where I was going to build there was nothing but popple, big popple. I hired a fellow to come along and he cut the popple down for me.

I went up to Ironwood and I had a friend with a Chevrolet dealer up there and I had him find me a Chevy truck, flat bed truck at a reasonable price. I bought that and brought that down. Then I went to a junk shop over in Ironwood and bought all kinds of steel cables, some chain, and also blocks, double blocks, single blocks, whatever I could pick up. I brought them all down with the truck.

So we started to rig up for stump pulling. What I did was use the truck the back end of the truck, I hooked it onto that. I had blocks where it was doubled up different strengths of that steel cable and chains and we stumped that whole area with the truck. I had two men helping me.

Then I got a fellow from up near Manitowish. He had a team, Charlie, oh I can't remember his name now, his name was Charlie anyway he had a team. He did all the team work around there. He come me down with a slusher and he slushed out the basement for me and everything else I needed. In that basement there was some of the finest gravel, concrete gravel that you could ever shake a stick at. So then I got four or five men together and with my instructions we formed up the concrete basement and also the crawl space where I had the dining room and that on. It was a pretty big set up. Then I got the concrete mixer, I don't remember who I got it from but he had a one bag concrete mixer, a wheelbarrow a lot of rock because the piece of property I had was so loaded with rock. So between concrete and rock we filled those walls up and made a nice concrete basement out of it. These fellows, in those days, you weren't paying too much money, you were paying a couple of dollars a day. Some of them were working for a dollar a day and their dinners.

So then there was somebody that had cut all the logs over in the Powell Marsh after that fire. They set a saw mill up over there and sawed all that stuff up. They had a mammoth pile of lumber of two by tens, two by twelves, two by eights, two by sixes, two by fours and a lot of one inch pine, one by ten pine. There was about a hundred and twenty thousand square feet of lumber in that pile there. So I made a deal with the guy that if he would sell it to me I'd take it

out. I paid him a hundred and twenty dollars for that twelve thousand feet of lumber but I had to get it out of the marsh. We had to get it out fast before the rain came because the marsh would get wet again and it happened to be the marsh was very very dry. We also corduroyed some places over there where they were real wet so we could get through and haul it. I hauled all that lumber out of there. I had men, I didn't do it, I say I did it but I didn't but I supervised all of it. The men loaded the trucks, hauled it out, hauled it home and we loaded up the sawdust. There was a mammoth big pile of sawdust that you had to have for packing your ice.

So when we had that all hauled home, the first thing I built was an ice house. We had the men help me and I was beginning to get back to work too a little bit then. So we built this ice house and had the sawdust all piled up behind the ice house. It was a good thing too that I built that ice house first because I had ordered all the lumber, all the window trim, doors, everything. I ordered that all from Montgomery Ward and they shipped that up in a car from Chicago. A whole boxcar load of that lumber came in. So we put all that in the storehouse while we were building the main building.

The main building, I had two carpenters helping me because I was able to go back to work again. I built that main building and we got that all enclosed before the cold weather came that winter. That was a terrible terrible cold winter. So it worked out that way and then in the winter time when I started the trim and that I had a furnace put in there, burned wood in it, coal, we started the trim inside. Ann's brother-in-law from Ironwood, WPA, used to come down on weekends and work with me all weekend. I showed him how to do all the different things and he was very very handy. He helped me trim up the place. We did work during that winter and had everything built up, had the bar built, everything necessary and on the first of April 1936 I opened up the barroom.

Everybody said oh you're crazy because you're right in the middle there's nobody around, nobody's going to stop or anything else. I says well, I says, maybe I can make enough so's I can get a living out of it anyway. In the meantime, I had signed up with Schlitz Beer. The agreement with them was that there was no one else in that territory that could sell Schlitz because I'd signed up with them not any closer than Mercer and that was several miles away. So that worked fine.

When I built, I had built a big cooler down in the basement that I could put four or five barrels, half barrels of beer in those days it was half barrels but we always used to call them barrels, on a track down below so that I could slide them into where I tapped without disturbing them. Otherwise they'd be wild for three or four days before they would settle down. Then I bought a real good cooler with a big heavy beer coil in it and that had a lot of ice in it and my beer was always cold because it was pretty cool down in the basement. It didn't make any difference how fast I would draw it still would be cold.

After we got organized a little bit, it was the end of April about the first of May or so, we used to send to Green Bay for fish. We would get a box of Walleyes and also a lot of perch for fish fry. And the perch, people would come around and if they wanted to buy a fish from me we'd sell them the fish. Ann, we'd have a fish fry. They used to go over so big because we'd fry up that fish and not charge them anything but they would drink beer for it. Some of them nights that we'd have fish fry I don't know where all the people came from. The highest I had was four half barrels of beer in one night. We'd probably take in seven, eight, nine hundred dollars a night. In those days that was a lot of money. That was advertised all over the country, my fish fries. Then others started the same thing.

Then we got everything set up. We had slot machines in there which were illegal but we still had them. So all the predictions was that I wouldn't be making a living. I was making a very good

living. My publicity didn't do me any harm at all because I put a lot on display, my coat and all those different things I had and I was always quite a guy for making up something funny. I bought a bunch of birch for stove wood and in it was a knee of a birch. I went to work and I nailed two beer cans on it for eyes and from when I was building the cabins there used to be spikes that were ten or twelve inches long and I drove two of them into the elbow of that piece of birch, mounted them on a plaque and hung them up on the wall and put a sign under "Spike horn buck". All little things. I found skeletons of chipmunks not chipmunks but of gophers. I mounted one of them up and then I put a little sign underneath of that "This is the skeleton of a mosquito". Everyone that looked at it says that is about the size of the one that bit me last night. Anything to be foolish and keep you know for fun.

In the meantime I used to get all these different old guides that would come in there and they would tell me stories,. So I would remember those stories and I'm going to put them on tape after a while. So that's the way it went along for a long time and then all at once spring election's coming up. So that the man that they had elected in there I don't know what was wrong or what it was but they all come saying that he wasn't he was dishonest, he wasn't doing enough for the town, which I could see he wasn't. He wasn't doing what he should of been doing for the town cause he was more or less interested in the group over in Eagle River because he'd been put on the highway committee, they had to buy a lot of highway equipment and stuff like that. So a couple of fellows come to me and says we want to run you for chairman of the town. I says "no I don't want to run", I says, I have no time for it". Well we want you to run. Well I says if you do I won't make no application for it and I says I won't apply for it or anything else. Well they says if you don't run we're going to write you in. Well I says that's up to you I says a write in never works. He says we're going to make this one work. And the fellow that was the head of it was the fellow by the name of Cap Smith. He had a place over on Alder Lake (Manitowish?). When he sold that out I think that became known as Mrs. Hutter's. I think the Hutter's bought it. So I says well it's up to you I'm not making no effort and I never said anything more about it or anything else that went on. Well anyway election came along and we all went to vote and I beat the opponent with that write in vote almost two to one. And if you've ever seen a wild man he was.

Well anyway as things went on I became the chairman I took over the reins of the town and became a member of the county board and got to know different ones around there and they all knew me in Eagle River because I was well known down there because I had the doctor down there do a lot of work for me, the attorneys down there, the county judge and all of them. I had so many petitions out and I had them signed by all different people, known people like the state's attorney generals and all those different ones used to sign those petitions for me. People were plugging so I could get money from the government which I did. Ryan Duffy was our senator from got a bill in for seventy five hundred dollars and it was passed by the seventy fourth congress. When Roosevelt signed it he would only give me thirty five hundred. So that was that. So anyway when I got to Eagle River, got on the county board down there I got some real nice commissions and committees and that like the health committee for the county and I was also on the advertising committee for the county and different things and we were well known. I was well known down there. That must have been in, now wait a minute my son was born in thirty seven, that was the election of thirty six that I was elected no the spring election of thirty seven. I was on the county board and chairman of the town of then was Spider Lake until Nineteen forty six when I retired and I moved back into the city of Racine and then went back into building, construction work that I had always done.

So all those years I was there and never had anything, no problems or anything else. I tried to give the people all equal. In the winter time when we'd have snow plowing and that I would always say now I'm going to start the plow at one end one time and the other end another

time. So I says you have equal rights on it and that worked out very nicely. Everybody was well pleased. I never had no foment after that everything went along perfectly well. So then I moved away from there I think I appointed Lloyd Voss to take my place as chairman, and that was nineteen forty six.

So that is about as far as I remember. I have been back there two or three times. The last time that I was up there was in sixty four. I imagine things have changed an awful lot in all those years.

The members of the town board of Spider Lake at the time I was chairman had two supervisors. One was Lloyd Voss and the other one was Paul Lange and Maude Johnson was the town treasurer, and Palmer Hanson was the clerk, Adolph Mussati was the town constable. There was no change in office there for a long long time because the supervisors were good. They took care of everything around the town. The Voss' were happy because Lloyd Voss was on the board and everything seemed to work fine for all of us. That was in I think we started in nineteen thirty seven.

At one of our town meetings that we had, I think it was the year of nineteen thirty eight, I brought up the question about a cemetery. We hashed it over and the board decided that it would be a good thing. So we went to work and tried to get a piece of land from the state next to our old town hall, the town hall that we had at that time. They was willing to go along and they deeded us, the town of Spider Lake, a piece of land in there and they even had it cleaned up for us. When the people of the town, some of them not all of them, heard that we were planning to have a cemetery and we were going to fence it in and that there was an awful uproar over it because who wanted to be buried up there in the woods in that lonely country. Why everybody we come from Milwaukee we come from Chicago we came from different places and we'd never be buried up here. Well anyway we went along with it and put a fence around it and everything else. One of the first ones to be buried there was our old Justice of the Peace, Bill Strandberg. Ann and I made a trip to Ironwood, I think it was in nineteen seventy five or seventy six to attend a family reunion. Her family lived up there. She was originally from Hurley. We drove through Manitowish up on fifty one that way to get to Hurley. We stopped in at the cemetery and I noticed that there was a lot of the ones that made the biggest commotion about it were resting very very peacefully there. I think it turned out to be a very beautiful spot from what I could see at that time. The old town hall I think was gone, taken away from there but the cemetery was there and it's right in the middle of the woods away from the highway, a real quiet spot.

Before Spider Lake became Spider Lake it was part of {Lac du} Flambeau. In those days, early early days, these was some resorts there. One was down on the point right on Spider Lake where the narrows were, the channel going through there between Manitowish and Star Lake [Spider Lake?]. There was a pretty fast stream of water through there. In those days the lakes were held up much higher because of the logging that was going on at that time. They would hold it up and then when they would pull the dam down to float some of the logs down the river. There would be a stream, a fast stream, going through there between the lakes, and all the different lakes and they'd draw all the water out of them. That resort was Buck's Resort. The road from Manitowish, the railroad, came as far as the dam and there was no bridge there because all the freight was hauled down by wagon or what they called the drays. They would stop at the dam and unload and anybody that had anything that was living up the lakes that was the Indians there that wanted any supplies or anything they could pick it up there and bring it up. So Buck used to send a boat, they called it a long boat in those days, up there to pick up his supplies for the resort. He had a bunch of guides that used to take the boat up there. When they would get a keg of whiskey or a barrel of whiskey in the guides knew it. So what they would

do they got foxy themselves they laid the barrel down on it's side and the rims around the barrel they would drive up a little bit away from where they originally were and then they would drill a hole through there, through the keg and they put a rod of some kind, a little siphon of some kind, so they could siphon that whiskey out of that barrel into a container they had or suck on a tube whatever they wanted to do. Buck could never figure out why every time that they came back they were half loaded with whiskey all the time because he didn't figure that they would do anything like that. So when they'd get through with it they would drive the ring back down. They'd put a plug in the hole and put the ring back down again and nobody even knew the whiskey'd been tampered with. That went on for a long long time. He finally got wise to it. Those days they still were foxy enough that they could get by with it because he always had a bunch of guides around there. That was fishing camps in those days and when you came up there to fish you stayed there at that camp and that was the end of it. You didn't go any place else. So all the guides used to take them around to all the different lakes fishing. That Buck's Resort or Buck's fishing camp eventually was turned over to Ted Koerner. I think Ted was from Milwaukee and bought it out and Koerner's was there when I was living up there.

Some of the old timers that were lumber jacks, cruisers, and working for the logging saved a little money they could scratch together. Those days they could get almost any of the lands on lakes or whatever they wanted, land on the shore line for little or nothing. They could even put a claim in on it. So some of them did save and had some nice places. Like Joe LaVigne had a very very nice place down on Alder Lake, a nice timbered place down there. Ed Mitchell picked up a big piece of land on the shores of Rest Lake, I think it was on the west shore of Rest Lake. He had a rather like a farm there and had a team of horses and everything. He built a resort hotel that had rooms in it and had a big barn and kept his horses in there because he still did a lot of logging. In the early years of the thirties there when somebody wanted a team of horses for logging or anything well Mitchell was right there. Mrs. Mitchell worked in the kitchen and took care of the resort and she used to feed a lot of people on Sunday. People would come down there and they would have Sunday dinner with them. And then I think he put up some cottages and that because in the summertime they were very very busy. That's where I met my wife, at Mitchell's. She was working as a, well not a chambermaid, she was in the kitchen. She was a helper for Mrs. Mitchell.

There was another one that had a real nice place over on, I forget the name of the lake now, he was an old time jack there too. They had saved their money and they were the principal ones, Joe LaVigne and Mitchell.

Then there were a lot of other old-timers. There was Jack (John?) Bovee, he used to guide a lot around there. Also Mike Sullivan was another one. Pete Vance was the old-timer, he was the one that knew the history of the country. He always had a lot of good stories to tell. I used to get an awful lot of fun out of old Pete Vance. Him and his wife, one eyed Sarah, they lived there on Dam Lake. There were several others around there and in the wintertime they would be caretakers for different people that had cottages up there so they would have some place to stay where it was nice and warm and they'd get a few bucks for taking care of the place during the winter time. In the summer time they would be guiding. As time went on one after the other was dropped off. They would pass away and there was no one to take there place. But I used to get a lot of good stories out of those old-timers when they would tell about days back. Of the things that they used to pull and of all the tricks they used to pull on one another.

I remember Mitchell telling about one time when his wife had gone down to Marshfield, because she had a family there her family lived originally in Marshfield. He got a bunch of the old fellows together around there and they got hold of a gallon of moonshine and they really had a party. It was the spring of the year and the suckers were running and somebody had caught a mess of suckers. So the party broke up and they all wanted to lay down to sleep and

in the morning Mitchell was the first one to get up so he was going to make a kettle of fish soup. He cleaned the suckers up and threw them into a pot, heads and all. So when he was stirring the pot up there the eyeballs of the fish when they get cooked they get to be like marbles. So he saw that and says he's going to pull a trick on the other guys so he fished around in there and he picked up oh maybe four or five or more of them marble eyes and put them in his pocket. So when the other fellows all got back up they wanted to know how Mitchell who had just as much to drink as they had was up and could cook a meal for them. Well he says he had a medicine that he takes that would cure him. So he pulled these fish eyes out of the pockets showed it to him and they begged for them. He says Oh no, he says you guys are not strong enough for anything like that. Well anyway they kept on begging and old Mitch he says well finally I gave Mike Sullivan one. Mike swallowed it you know and in a little while he was feeling good and then Jack (John?) Bovee got one, he felt a little better. He says , you know those fish eyes cured those fellows up in no time so they could start drinking all over again.

There was another old timer that lived up there further down on Fifty-one almost at the town line by the name of Bob Loveless. He had a lot of timber around there and a lot of it was on the shoreline of Alder Lake. He had built a dance hall down there on Alder Lake and he would have dances. Usually always Saturday nights he'd hold a big dance party. So he was quite a character and he would always put on a pair of tights and he had a big rope stretched from one end of the dance hall to the other end of the dance hall. During intercession and that why he would get on the rope with a big pole and then he would tightrope across the hall to entertain all the people. They got a big kick out of him because he was really a clown, a good egg. That was moonshine days, see, so they were selling moon and I think that was his object of having all those different dances. Another thing he did, he figured out that if he would flood his ice house a little bit at a time he could have a big cake of ice by the time spring come around. He'd maybe put in a couple of inches of water during the day and then he would go to work and let that freeze and the next day he'd put in some more water. He kept that up until he finally had the ice house one solid chunk of ice, maybe six or seven feet high. But his problem was trying to get that ice out of there. All he could get was cracked up ice. He couldn't get no big chunks of ice out of there because well anyway he couldn't get it out because it was all one solid chunk. So what he would do one time he took a half a stick of dynamite and drilled a hole in it you see so he could try to blow a corner off of it. He just about half blew his ice house down. So that didn't work but that was his method of making ice. The rest of us used to cut it on the lake and haul it in but he didn't want to do that. Another thing he had was an old Lincoln car. It was a sedan with big heavy glass. Where he got that Lincoln I don't know but it was an old old time car. When he'd travel in the winter time at night, he would put a Rochester lamp and old Rochester lamp in there and that was his heater. When you seen him coming down the road you knew it was Bob Loveless because it looked like a travelling show case coming down the road. He used to go to different barrooms and when he'd get there he always figured out just about supper time. He was smart enough so he used to get a lot of free meals that way.

There was another couple of guides that used to stay at Morichetti's home that she had over in the island in Spider Lake in the winter time. One of them they used to call him the "Polish Pope". He at one time was chief of police in Hurley and his real name was Frank Dardas. The other one was Joe Kullick, he was an old old timer there and he used to do a lot of guiding for Voss and also for Koerner's. But they holed up there in the winter time. So they got fighting amongst themselves and somebody found out about it. So George La Porte was constable at that time, George called up our game warden, Izzy Rheaume, in Mercer to come down. They went over because they figured they'd been doing some violating, somebody had been complaining about them. So they went across the ice and over to the cottage that they had on the lake on the island and they wanted to know what all the rumpus was and if they were violating. No no no and then they finally got fighting amongst themselves and Dardas had trapped a beaver

and he accused Joe of pushing the hide too close to the stove and burnt the hair on the hide. The pope he says that Joe was always fishing muskies so they arrested him, Rheaume arrested for game violation. They took him before Judge Strandberg, he was still living at that time. They complained and everything else and old Strandberg listened to it and he fined him. He wanted to fine him for something and he said he didn't have any money. Well he says what I can do you is give you six months in Eagle River. So that's what they do he sends him for six months in Eagle River they served about half the time and then they were back out again. But they were two characters. Finally Joe Kullick fell off a catwalk along side of Koerner's coffee shop in about two feet of water and drowned. The Polish Pope, Frank Dardas, I don't know what ever happened to him. I guess he went back up to Hurley but he was quite a character in himself. Both of them were.

[END OF TAPE 1]

[TAPE 2 - CARL CHRISTENSEN - SPRING 1993]

On this tape I'm going to tell a few more of the things that happened years back that I can remember that was told to me. Some of it is funny and others is just take it as you leave it.

There was a guide that used to guide for Koerner's. This was during dry times. So he had a guest from Chicago and I think it was guiding. When he left he gave him a bottle of Three Star Hennesey which was good whiskey, real good whiskey. So Joe took a sip of it and tasted it and it didn't taste like the moon that would burn your insides out. He thought it wasn't good whiskey. So there was an Indian that came by he was going up to Rice Lake, it was ricing time. So Joe give him that bottle of whiskey, Three Star Hennesey, and the Indian went up the lakes up to the rice beds in Rice Lake and he disappeared. They didn't see him for several days so they started looking for him. They found him up in the lake in his canoe dead. So when they had the autopsy on him the word came out that he had drank that whole bottle of whiskey and he had died from acute alcoholism. So when the word came down the lakes and Joe Colic heard about that he didn't know what acute alcoholism was so he stood there for a little while and then he says you know he says me lucky polok me no drink that whiskey. Joe never knew what it was all about.

Ann and I had a couple of Indian friends that lived on the shore of Clear Lake by the name of Mary and Tommy Haskin. Mary was one of the Devines from Danny Devine's children, he had several children there. He lived on that shore there and Danny Devine was a trapper and also a guide and worked in the camps, lumber camps. He was married to a full blooded Indian squaw. How they got the land and that I don't know because Mary could never tell. She used to tell a lot of things of when she was a little girl, about what things were around the lakes in those days. She was up close to her fifties when she was telling those things. So we would sit in the [kitchen], they would come and visit us and especially in the winter time when things were slow. They would like to get out and they would come over to see us and we'd go out and sit in the kitchen. In those days we were not supposed to give Indians any alcohol, beer or whiskey of any kind. So we would sit and Mary would tell us about all the different things. How the lakes were years and years back when she was a little girl. So one time I asked her I says Mary I says was you born here on the lake? She says no, she says I don't know where I was born because we were on a trapping trip, my father was on a trapping trip when I was born. So she says I can't tell you where I was born. And that was the same way with one of the other ones because when I was working for Ilg he had some litigations to take care of and one of them was Tommy Devine, who was one of the older ones. He asked him where he was born and that was the same thing he was born on the trapping trip. So that's way back in the early early days of the timber industry in Wisconsin.

Mary would tell about how they would pull the lakes down so low sometimes that there would hardly be any water in them. She said at times we could walk across from the north side of the dam where we used to pick up our food before the bridge was in over the dam over the lake between the north and south end of the road. They could almost walk across the bottom of the bay over to Nash's island on the other side of the lake [Rest Lake - Fox Island] where the donut king had built his big fancy home years back. And other things she would tell about, the Manitowish Island in Manitowish Lake. She says there was an Indian chief died on that island and was supposed to have been buried there. And the same way where Deer Park Lodge was on that point there that was an Indian stopping place when they were travelling on the lakes. When they were fishing and coming through there travelling. Those days you know they just travelled with the seasons. There was a lot of other things she used to tell about how that country was and so on and so forth. How they made their living hunting and fishing and everything else. Her father was a big trapper. His name was little Danny Devine and he was a red headed Irishman. He had a son that lived on the lakes too by the name of Danny Devine. He was a guide and trapping same as [?] because at that time there was fur to be gotten yet, beaver and things of that kind. In the deer seasons and that Danny would be one of the biggest guides that you could get up there. He had a party that he was guiding up around Winchester. He came out on the main roads, on "W", going on the road to Wineger, and they were all gathered together there and they were going to make another drive. Danny was talking to the men and he lifted his left arm up to make a point and as he did that he dropped down. They checked him out and he was dead. So when they got down to Pat Gaffney's undertaking parlor in Eagle River they had a post mortem on him, an autopsy. They checked him over to find out what was. And what happened as he raised his arm up a bullet hit him in the arm pit, went down through his heart, killed him instantly. No one heard the shot. They never found out where that came from or anything else. That was a They found the bullet it was a thirty o six bullet, a high powered rifle bullet. They never knew where that ever came from. That was the end of poor Danny Devine.

I can tell how some of the old timers the old guides the old timber cruisers old loggers and that how they passed away and how they were found. Like Mike Sullivan used to be around there and he was an old cruiser. He would guide in the summer time and then in the fall and the winter time he was caretaker for different people that lived down around Voss's point, behind Voss's resort and that in there on the lake. One time for a couple of days he was missing so they went to check where he was where he was living and they found that he had passed away in bed. He'd been dead for a couple of days there. But the funny part about it was the bed had been thrown over indicating that somebody had been with him the night that he passed away and we never found out who that was there.

There was another one, Joe LaVigne. They found him the same way, dead in bed, heart condition, in his place on Alder Lake. Another one was Jack (John?) Bovee. They found him at the bottom of some concrete steps from the buildings that he was taking care of during the winter. Whether he had been loaded with alcohol or whether he fell down the steps or his heart gave out but they found him all in a heap down at the bottom of that stairway. Then there was another one by the name of Charlie Rhinehardt. He didn't do any guiding or anything he was retired. He lived in a shack on the shore of Alder Lake. He was what you call a regular recluse but each month at the beginning, the first part, of the month he would come over to Voss's, to the barroom that they had out on Fifty one there. Every month he would have a hundred dollar bill cause he was retired he was an old street car conductor in the city of Milwaukee and retired up there. So one day from Twin Pines Resort, they had somebody staying there taking care of the place in the winter time because of the barroom and everything was closed up, he came down and told me that was when I was chairman of the town then, that Charlie Rhinehardt had come into his place and had passed out. So we got the doctor and everything else and Charlie was still living. They got an ambulance in and hauled him up to the hospital in Ironwood. You

either had to go to Eagle River or to Ironwood there was nothing in Woodruff those days there. So when I went over to his shack somebody had been there who it was I don't know or nobody would ever find out anyway. I got a padlock, put a padlock on the place over there and locked it up. And then I got in contact with the judge in Eagle River and he appointed me as, what do you call it, guardian for Charlie. That I should go ahead and investigate what happened in the place over there. So I got one of my supervisors and also Palmer Hanson along with us over there. We went into that place and it was so filthy in there, so dirty, that we just didn't do nothing we just locked the place up again. We went back a couple of days after and we had great big coverage over our arms and sleeves so that our coats and jackets wouldn't get dirty from the place. The three of us we had never seen anything like that. We went through everything in that place. We knew that Charlie had a very good thirty thirty rifle and that had disappeared, somebody'd gotten that. He had a shotgun there anyway so I took the shotgun and put that in my car and took that home. The rest of the stuff we left there. We found cash money, gold pieces, and all kinds of antiques and stuff like that that he had, also bank books from banks in Milwaukee. I think there was three or four banks that he had in Milwaukee. So then when I got to Eagle River I told Judge Carter about it and he says that he appointed me the legal guardian for Charlie and that I should take care of him and everything else.

So I got in contact with his relatives in Milwaukee and I told them about it what they should do what they wanted to do. They said we don't want no part of him, nothing, it's up to you to take care of him, let the state take care of him. So then when I got to Milwaukee, I went to Milwaukee and got to these different banks and we found that Charlie had a little over twenty two thousand dollars as savings and interest and that in these banks. So I got that all changed over and got that into my name as guardian for him.

Charlie, it was a bad stroke that he had. He was recovering from that but we couldn't put him back in that shack or anything else and we couldn't get him into a home anywhere around Ironwood or Hurley. The best we could get for him was a place in Rice Lake.

So after we found out that Charlie had all that money I got in contact with the manager at Rice Lake and I says now listen I says don't spare no expenses on Charlie at all. I says give him whatever he wants do everything he wants for him so on and so forth and I says he has money enough to take care of it. Well when the relations in Milwaukee found out that he had money that was something different. They wanted to take over and be guardian for him and everything else. The result of it was the judge ruled it all out. I stayed right with him and when Charlie died that was the end of it. Then it went into probate court and what happened after that I don't know. But here Charlie was he lived on that hundred dollars that he'd get every month and he had all kinds of it he was just that kind of a guy that wanted to take care of himself and I never and Palmer Hanson and I think Paul Lange was with too we had never seen a home as dirty and as filthy as that place was.

After the season was over the women would all get together and they would organize our card club. And then once a month they would go from one place to another place and they'd play cards and spend an afternoon and enjoy themselves. Then they would organize parties. Every once in a while, some birthday or something would come on, they'd have a party. We'd have it in the town hall and everybody was invited. We'd all chip in about fifty cents apiece to buy half a barrel of beer and the women would all bring something for pot luck and we'd get together and we'd have a dance. Our orchestra most always was Bob Loveless with the fiddle, Paul Lange also played with the fiddle and Geraldine Andrews on the piano. And we would really kick up our heels and have a good time. We had a lot of steins and we kept washing them off and all we had was beer no liquor or anything else and everybody had a good time.

I remember one New Year's Eve the women had all got together and they made streamers and they made paper hats and everything else that they needed to have a good time. We had horns to blow and so on and so forth. Everybody from the town was there in the town hall. It was cold, it was down below zero, I don't remember how much below zero, but everybody had to run out and start the cars every once in a while so that they wouldn't freeze up on us. Bob Loveless with his old Lincoln with the Rochester lamp inside drained his radiator so when it come time to go home he would get the water from the town hall. We had a pump there and the pump was one that every time you wanted water you had to prime it because the cylinder would drain out a little pinhole in the bottom. It was fixed that way so that the cylinder wouldn't freeze and break in the well when it was so cold. So every time you wanted water we used to have to prime the pump until we got water. It was very very good water. So then he'd get some of that water and he would put that in his radiator and he would go home with it. And we'd just had a wonderful party that night and all the other parties. Lecture parties we used to have but never no hard liquor always a barrel of beer and everybody had all the beer that they wanted to drink. So that New Year's Eve party that we had one of the fellows gave Bob Loveless a pail of water that came out of the wash tub that we rinsed the glasses off in. There must have been, you know, a little beer in each glass and that would all go in when we rinsed the glasses off. So he filled that into his radiator and the next time we see him he says you know by gosh when I got home my radiator was foaming he says the foam was coming out just like beer. It must have had more beer in the radiator than there was water. You never forget those things. He was really a card, a comical character, old Bob Loveless.

I'm very happy to know that there is someone that has interest enough in Manitowish Waters to bring back some of this history. I'm very happy that Hurley is going to relinquish and let the folks pick up my coat and my scrapbook and bring it to Manitowish Waters where it really belongs. Because at the time that I sent that to Hurley, I sent it up to one of the reporters, Armand Cirilli, a reporter for the Iron County Miner which I knew very well. I asked him if he would take care of it and bring it over to them. He wrote back to me that's too bad he says that you don't send it to Manitowish Waters he says because that's where it really happened that's where it should be. I didn't write but I telephoned back to him and I says you know Armand I says there's no place in Manitowish Waters that they can keep it. I didn't know at that time that they had the nice new town hall and all those different things that they have there now. So that's how it got into Hurley. Now I know from the curator up there, I've talked to her both on telephone and also correspondence, that they are willing to turn that coat over to Manitowish Waters. I'm very very happy to know it. I also, through Mark [Leistikow] I have learned so much about Manitowish Waters and how it has grown and everything else. It really does my heart good. I don't know how much time I've got left in this world now because I'm going to be ninety two years old now in July the fifth this year [1993]. I'm still physically able to be around but when you get up in years why you're get up and go is went. Mine is beginning to go. I would love to see what Manitowish was like now but there is no chance at all anymore. So take care and God bless all you folks in Manitowish Waters and enjoy life as much as you can.