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**FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT  
LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978**

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Bell, Roy D.  
January 31, 1974

Alan Lavery

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SUBJECT: The Experiences of a "Timber Cruiser" in the Woodlands of the Upper Penninsula.

SOURCE: Roy D. Bell, a 74 year old, articulate resident of L\*Anse.

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Allan Lavery (Student of M. Loukinen/ Social Science Department, Michigan Technological University, Feb. '74)

I: When did you first go into the woods working?

R: Oh, that was when I was seventeen years old. That would be seventeen from seventy-four, fifty-seven years ago.

I: Were you born in this area?

R: I was born in Munising...Munising was a lumbering town, that was in Alger County. I first started to work for the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company in the woods. I was a...my first job was laying steel. Cleveland Cliff did all railroad logging and timber was felled and skidded right to the track...there were no other log outs...no sleigh roads or anything; and the company used to build thirty-five - thirty-six miles of railroad every year and tear up that much and move it. And it wasn't much timber went to the sawmills and veneer mills, mostly it went to the paper mills and the chemical factory in Marquette. It seems that there was millions of board feet of good birch veneer and maple that went to the chemical factory that they made chemicals and charcoal out of...beautiful stuff. Birch three feet on the stump, you know...load them right on the car with the chemical wood and away they'd go to Marquette. And when we cut fuel wood for the camps, that was always the very best of the trees...they didn't take the poor stuff for fuel. The cook wanted stuff that was nice and straight that would split easy so that was birch and mostly veneer maple that went into fire-wood for the cook shanty. Of course, this was fifty-six years ago and they don't do it that way anymore.

I: Did you live in the camp?

R: Yeah, the Cleveland-Cliff at that time had...oh I think they had twelve lumber camps going. Two were hundred-man camps and the rest were sixty-man camps; and at that time they figured at the rate they were cutting they would have enough timber to last them seventy years. Well, seventy years is pertnear gone and they're still logging; but of course they didn't continue logging at that rate, you know. They sold some of their timber land to

the Ford Motor Company when Ford came up here, but the Cliff still has lots of timber land and they still have a sawmill down there south and east of Munising...they're still in business.

I: What was Munising like sixty years ago?

R: Well, it was a really young lumbering town. My dad was the first barber in Munising and old Tom Nester that had the big pine down in Baraga was the man that started Munising. He was the granddaddy of Munising. When I was a kid there was one time twenty-eight saloons in town and three or four grocery stores. Let's see, coming in on the east side of Munising there was first a potash factory and then a stave mill where they made barrel staves and then there was Jackson's Sawmill and shingle mill, and Cleveland-Cliff had a shingle mill and sawmill and planing mill. And down the road to the bay a little farther east was I think it was Foster's Sawmill and then there was a veneer mill and a Woodmore Factory and a big giant papermill and on East Munising was a tannery where they made leather and they used mostly hemlock bark for making the tanning fluid and the hemlock bark came from our own forests. And the bark-peeling season started in the camps about the fifteenth of May and ended about the fifteenth of August. And the hemlock forests all the trees were felled and the bark taken off in four-foot wide strips and piled up in cords and it was measured by the camp clerk...and later loaded onto cars. Then in the fall after the peeling was done, the people that peeled the bark, peeled the trees, they would go over their work again and cut the logs up into saw-log lengths and of course those went to the papermill in Munising. Made lots of paper out of hemlock.

I: What was that paper like...the stuff that was made out of hemlock?

R: Oh, I don't know. It was mostly wrapping paper. Of course they made a lot of high-grade paper there too. It was made out of spruce and balsam and they used to get a lot of rafts and thousands of cords in that come over from Canada once in awhile.

I: That must have been a big affair bringing that wood across the lake.

R: Yeah, and once in awhile they'd lose some too and so en, the (???) would break or something.

I: What did they tow it with? What kind of a boat?

R: Tugboat.

I: Tugboat?

R: Un huh...yeah.

I: What were the hemlock logs made into?

R: Well, some of it went to the sawmill, of course, but the most of it was consumed by the paper mill...they made paper from it too. That was a pretty busy town if you can imagine a little town not any bigger than L'Anse with all that industry and there was a brick yard too, I forgot to mention that. They made bricks.

I: How many people were working and living there?

R: Well, I don't know but there wouldn't be over two thousand... probably quite a bit less than that because most of the people that worked in the woods made that their business...they weren't family men, that is the most of them weren't. They were just men that lived...carried all their possessions in their pack-sack...yeah, the lumber camps were their homes. You don't see those kind of men around anymore.

I: Did they go from one camp to another?

R: Yeah, some were steady workers and some were drifters. Like on the Cleveland-Cliffs line there was...they'd run north from a point about ten miles west of Munising...no that was twenty miles long. Well, there was eight lumber camps on that line and some of the drifters, you know, they would work a day or two in each camp and then they'd meet at the end of the line and walk three miles across through the woods to the end of the Namen-Northern and there was a string of camps there and they'd make that string of camps and stay a day or so in each one and come on back again. Some of them didn't figure on working, they were just eating, just living off the fat of the land. And one old lumberjack, good lumberjack too, his name...let's see...I can't remember his right name but they called him eight-day Bill because he never worked longer than eight days...never stayed longer than eight days in one place.

I: Did you live that kind of life for awhile?

R: Yeah, I lived in those camps for eight years after I'd layed steel for one summer. I was just a kid but I did as much work as anybody and the walking boss, that would be called...now would be the Wood Superintendent, he kind of took a notion to me and he gave me a job clerking in one of the camps and the next summer I had the biggest camp on the line and I worked eight years there and then I came up here and worked forty years in the woods for Ford.

I: What was the job of clerking like?

R: Cruising?

- I: No, as a clerk what did you have to do?
- R: Oh, camp clerk...well you had a lot of bookkeeping to do, a lot more then you'd think. The head office was in Marquette; but for a hundred-man camp you had to keep track of their time and pay them off and also there was the sawyers and the tie makers and the...they called them station men...they made the railroad grades, all done by hand too. Thirty some miles made by hand every year and the clerk had to keep track of that. And then you had to keep track of the movement of timber from saws to decks and decks to cars and so forth and you paid them off once a month. You held back fifteen days always. So, if you worked this month, you got paid the fifteenth of next month...that is if you were a steady man. But if you wanted to quit, why the clerk made you out a time order which you could cash at certain grocery stores...it wasn't really a check but you could get your money on it.
- I: Did the company have their own grocery stores?
- R: No...no...they didn't have their own grocery store but they had an awful big warehouse where they kept supplies for the camps and certain packing houses shipped in meat regularly. And each camp had a root house which was full of potatoes and other vegetables...they'd have in the fall enough to last all winter.
- I: Were you a clerk then for all that time until you came here?
- R: No, I did other jobs. I was broke and fired on the railroad and I operated the steam-log loaders and the (???) ditcher that was used for making deep cuts and fills and I'd run compass for the cruisers...I had about all the good jobs there were in my short time there.
- I: Were there any jobs that you didn't want to have?
- R: No, I kind of enjoyed doing everything even working on the section...I liked that.
- I: What was that?
- R: That was laying steel for the railroad.
- I: That was hard work though, wasn't it?
- R: Yeah and it was ten hours a day too...ten-pound sledgehammer ten hours a day.
- I: You must have been pretty strong.
- R: Yeah, I was pretty small when I started...I only weighed a hundred and twenty-five pounds; but I held up my end anyway.

I remember the first month I got in I had forty-five dollars coming and I felt like I was the richest and happiest kid in Alger County. Worked twenty-six days for forty-five dollars and my board. And even when I was clerking for a hundred-man crew, my wages were only fifty-two dollars and a half for a month. And if I should...always had a big van with lots of lumberjack shirts and pants and boots and so forth, all kinds of tobacco, saws and axes, bark studs, and you sold that to these piece makers they called them...anyone that worked cutting logs by the piece...by the thousand they called them piece makers. Well, they had to buy their own tools see. So they came over to the van and I sold them their tools. Once in awhile I'd forget to charge somebody for a saw or pair of boots...that came out of my fifty-two fifty, so I didn't have very much left from a month's work.

I: How often did you do that?

R: Well, I knew the head clerk would come around once a month... end of the month and figure up everything for the month and he'd take the figures to the office in Marquette and the ones that stayed, you know, and waited for their checks, they would get their pay for this month, they'd get that the fifteenth of next month and they also checked up on the van inventory at the same time and that's where I would be caught up in my mistakes if I made any. Didn't make too many.

I: Were there anyother kinds of jobs to get besides those in the woods?

R: Well, in that town like Munising, you either worked in the saw-mill or paper mill or you worked in the woods. There wasn't anything else, you know...that's all there was.

I: Were there any farms around there?

R: A few little farms, yeah. Three miles out of Munising there was a location they called Wetmore...it was a...they had a little depot there too on the Luce South Shore and Atlantic...it's called the Soo Line now, and that was a little farming community ...pretty poor farms though...pretty sandy, you know...kind of a starvation layout. Those lumbercamps were much different than now. You didn't have single bunks, you had to sleep with somebody else. They had double-deck bunks and each bunk held four men...two downstairs and two up. Well, you always tried to get a bottom bunk if you could because wintertime, you know, you're sleeping upstairs and that big stove was popping, well you were pretty uncomfortable at times and pretty lousey too. You see, the men coming and going all the time...they only washed the blankets about once a year and your pillow case would get pretty dirty and maybe you didn't want to wash it so you'd turn it inside out and it'd last a little while longer. But, in those

days a lumberjack that wasn't lousey, he was kind of a sissy, you know, everybody was lousey. I remember when sometimes one of the camps would get just too many bed bugs, you know, that that place was kind of crawling away, so they'd run the locomotive up in front of the men's shanty and bore a big hole generally through the door...a hole that would take a two and a half inch steam hose and they hooked that onto the engine and run the steam hose through the door and then the fireman he'd shovel in the coal and the engineer would open up the valve and the steam would go in there and cook the warmits. Well, It'd get awful hot. There'd be steam coming out of the cracks here and there and tar would bubble out of the tar paper and if you happened to leave a pair of boots inside, why they'd curl up just like a potato chip, you know, they'd curl right up...the steam would cook 'em. So, you'd kill lots of bed bugs that way. They'd sweep 'em up in dustpans full after they got through, you know; but there just seemed to be always some left. I suppose they'd crawl out on the roof and then when things cooled off they'd crawl back in again. And the drinking water, that was always sittin in a couple of pails close to the sink where the men washed up, you know, and there was a couple of dippers hanging there and everybody used the same dippers, you know, no sanitation of any kind...but nobody got sick. But there was more flies in the raisin pie than there was raisins, you know, but that didn't seem to hurt anybody.

I: Did it taste alright?

R: nun:

I: Did the food taste okay?

R: Oh, they had good food, yeah...but conditions weren't sanitary. Sometimes like the (???) they furnished good...best of everything in the line of food; but sometimes the cooks weren't so good...they spoiled a lot of it, you know...they weren't really cooks, they were belly burglars.

I: What does that mean?

R: Well, robbed your stomach...the cook would...there were lumberjack terms, he was a belly burglar or a gut robber because he was a poor cook see.

I: How did he get to be a cook?

R: Well, you start out as a cookee...cook's helper and just like a cook in an army camp, you know, it's about the same thing. Some were real good; but most of them after they'd been there a month or two, they'd start gettin a little bit sloppy...time for them to go to town and spend their stake and get drunk and then come back and then they were good...pretty good cooks again

for awhile.

I: What was your favorite meal?

R: Well, they usually had everything, you know. For breakfast there was always pancakes and pork sausage and there'd be eggs, sometimes there'd be toast and eggs, but most always pancakes, and sometimes there was even steak to go with your pancakes. I liked the juice off of the steak, you know, on my pancakes with a little sugar on it...that was pretty good. We had a... up on the Mineral Range one time we had a female cook. She was real good too. And her husband was a foreman...Dick LaGuidie and of course he slept in the cook shanty with his wife which was natural and he used to put his insoles out of his swampers up on the drying rack over the kitchen range, you know, to dry at night. One time they fell down into the five-gallon coffee pot and he didn't know where they went but they were found afterwards...so we had boiled insole juice for breakfast that day. There was always beans on the table in the lumbercamp in the old days...that was...if there was nothing else, there was beans. Of course, there always was a great variety of food...meat and potatoes and other vegetables... always pie for dinner...lots of cookies, some homemade, some store boughten...ginger snaps always on the table...coffee for breakfast and tea generally for dinner and supper.

I: Did you have three meals a day?

R: Three, yeah...and then you could go in the cook shanty anytime between meals and there was always a table set there to lunch on, you know, you could help yourself. If you happen to come in from the woods earlier, if you came from town or something or hungry, you'd go in and help yourself.

I: Was it like that in every camp?

R:

I: Did everybody have to eat at the same time though...?

R: Yeah, everybody ate at the same time and there was no talking at the dinner table...for that matter whatever meal it was... there was no conversation. You just went there to eat. You could say pass the butter or pass the meat or potatoes or whatever you wanted, but that's all.

I: How did that rule come to be established?

R: Well, if you can imagine a table with a hundred men at it and everybody jabbering and chewing the rag, what kind of a unbelievable row would that be and the cook he was there to feed them

and get them on their way and get the dishes washed up and get ready for another meal. There was no lollygagging around at the dinner table. I've fellows start to talk and the cook come over with the butcher knife and tell them to shut up. That was a hard and fast rule...no talking at the table.

I: Did you ever talk?

R: No, I knew better. My uncle was a section foreman, the guy I went to work for first and he put me next to the rules...I didn't make any mistakes.

I: What was your father doing?

R: My dad? He was a barber...he was the first barber in Munising before that he had worked here in Pequaming...he was a shingle weaver by trade and he used to...he was a barber too; so when Munising started up he went to Munising...he had the first barber shop in Munising. He barbered there for forty years in one little shop. He walked around that barber chair so often and for so long that he wore a hole right through the hardwood floor. And the barbers those days always cutting lumberjacks hair see and the lumberjacks were always lousey and the barbers was always lousey. He had hand clippers too...he used those clippers so much that his thumb on his right hand became crippled. Hair cuts in those days was thirty-five cents and shaves were a quarter.

I: They're ten times that much now.

R: Yeah...on the day before the fourth of July or some holiday maybe Saturday...Saturday they'd stay open until ten o'clock at night. Dad would have maybe fifteen or twenty dollars and that would be an awful big day.

I: What did you have for mattresses in the bunks?

R: Oh, well some had regular factory-made mattresses, but they were not very satisfactory because you couldn't clean them; so the Cleveland-Cliffs they finally got to using straw ticks...that was just a big envelope made out of coarse cloth the size of a mattress and you went out to the barn and filled that full of hay or straw and used that to sleep on and it was alright...it worked good. And you could take that straw tick and wash it if you wanted to keep your bed clean. And some of the steady workers they would wash their own blankets once in awhile. The company only cleaned the camps once a year...that is as far as the bedding was concerned...blankets. It's a funny thing. I could sleep in a bed that had lots of bed bugs in it and they never touched me and other fellows, they'd eat him right up. You know around the edges and seams around the mattress edges, well that's where the bedbugs would collect, you know. So, you

would get a little paint brush and a little can of kerosene and paint those seams and that helped a lot.

I: What was it like to get eaten up by bed bugs?

R: Well, you just made red spots on your body, that's all. It kept you awake. They were not near as bad as the fleas; but fleas are terrible. They make you burn like fire and you can take and try to catch one with your fingers and you can jump ten feet and you can take your hand away and he'll jump back again. You can't catch 'em. But I learned what to do about those fleas. If you take a little turpentine and sprinkle it lightly between your blankets before you crawl in, they won't bother you. Must be the fumes or something.

I: Was it comfortable sleeping on that straw?

R: Yeah, very good. Of course you were tired enough generally to sleep on the floor and rest good. Work ten hours a day in the woods and you get tired, you know.

I: How early did you have to get up?

R: Got up at five.

I: It was dark then?

R: Well, I imagine it was daylight in the summer, I know it was; but in the winter it was dark of course. Of course we had Standard time...we didn't have the crazy time we have now.

I: When did you come back?

R: I'll tell you about getting up in the morning. Each camp has a chore boy, see; and he'd come in about five o'clock and he'd start the fires and get everything warmed up...now let's see, yep that's about five...about that time the cook would ring the triangle or some camps they had a dinner horn they blew that and you get up then after the fires were started. And then again in a half hour they'd ring the triangle or blow the horn again and you went into breakfast. So everything worked on schedule. I miss the old lumbercamps. We had them around here until just a few years ago. If they had lumber camps now I'd be out there visiting once in awhile and maybe working in one. They're a thing of the past like a lot of other good things are gone. When I first came here to L'Anse, you could walk in the virgin forests for days and hardly ever even cross a trail that's how...I didn't ever think we'd come to the end of it but it went pretty fast.

I: Why did you leave Munising to come to L'Anse?

- R: Well, I got married...that was the main reason, and Ford was here paying much bigger wages than we got down there, so I came up here and worked for Ford.
- I: When a lumberjack got married that was the end of his camp days.
- R: Well, it wasn't really the end of them, but he had to change his way of life a little bit. Of course, at the Cleveland-Cliffs there were a few family men, at the bigger camps there were a few family men...the company would build shacks for them ...two - three room shacks...and they'd go there and work steady for a few years and make a stake and maybe buy a home in town. Those were mostly the higher-class labor that got that kind of treatment. It was the railroad engineers, firemen, brakeman, camp foreman, things like that...cook maybe...once in awhile there was a cook that had a family...he'd bring his family up.
- I: Well then when you came to L'Anse, did you have to live outside for long periods of time when you were cruising?
- R: No...cruising for the company when we had to be away from town, we generally had a tenting outfit or there was some homesteaders cabin you could use...some hunting shack. Like we went out... George (???) and I went out to cruise the virgin timber on the Huron Mountain area before Sirard...Sirard was a logger...before he went in there to log...and there was a nice cabin there that belonged to Albert Olson on the lakeshore on the mouth of the Little Huron. So we stayed in there and worked that whole area right from that one spot. Beautiful country in there...lots of timber, lots of game, lots of fish.
- I: How did you get into that kind of a job from what you were doing before?
- R: Well see, I had run compass for the cruisers at Cleveland-Cliff down by Munising and I had worked one summer with a surveyor and cruisers used to layout most all the railroad grades but one summer they had a surveyor to have at some hilly country. So they thought that they would...he wasn't a surveyor, he was an engineer. Later he became City Engineer in Marquette. His name was Bill Pellicier. I worked one summer with him and then I worked with a cruiser laying out railroad grades so I had a pretty good idea of how the cruising business went. So I had a chance to go to work on a compass for Tuttle here one summer after the scaling was done...I scaled logs in the woods in the winters for quite a few years; and that was in 1937 and I've been in the cruising end of it ever since. I looked after the cut quite a few years...see that the timber was cut properly...not too much violating done in the selective cutting areas...and I had to keep the cutting areas mapped and the log

roads mapped...and in the spring after the logging was done, I had to go over all these logging areas and see how many logs were left and mark them on my cruise sheet and report them to the jobber and he had to go and pick them up. Over that time when that was done why another years logging would start and it would go all over it again.

I: What tools did you carry around with you?

R: Oh, for that job all I had was a field book in which I did my mapping and a compass and an axe...always had a thistle in my leather bag too for bear medicine.

I: Did you ever meet a bear?

R: Oh, I've met quite a few but only one put the run on me. So, I had pretty good luck with them. One time...my wife used to pick berries, you know, there was lots of wild raspberries at that time and she got so she was afraid to go out in the woods. She said that there's too much bear sign in the berry patch. Well I says, "You don't need to worry about that," I says, "I've been thrashing around in the woods here for thirty years and I never seen one while I was walking. I see them when I'm riding and I see them coming around the camps and dump over the garbage cans, but" I says, "you don't need to worry about that. Well, was only a few days after well an old she-bear took after me and I climbed right up a slippery birch tree. And she was down there underneath there looking at me, so I got the luger out of the bag and killed her. I got her head hanging on the wall upstairs.

I: Do you think you could have climbed that tree if no one was chasing you?

R: Oh yeah, I was pretty young then and pretty active; but you can climb it faster if you have to. There was an old cruiser he says to me...his name was Jim LaCourt, he says, "That was a funny thing to do," he says, "climb the tree and then shoot the bear." I said, "It would have been funnier if I'd a shot the bear and then climbed the tree."

I: Have you ever had anyother funny thing happen to you?

R: No...not that many...can't think of them anyway right now.

I: Well, when you moved here did you have to build a house or buy a house?

R: People were...it was hard to get anything to live in when I first moved here. It was a boom-town...Ford had just started, you know...people were living in chicken coops for thirty

dollars a month. But we were lucky enough to get two rooms up over the grocery store downtown...that's over where Leemons' Ben Franklin Store is now.

I: Is it the same building?

R: Same building, yeah, only it looks different now. And then we were there several months and I got a little three-room new house up on the other hill and that cost us sixteen dollars a month. We were pretty lucky...brand new. And then it started out at five dollars a day and it wasn't long until I was gettin six...then six eighty...and geees I thought if I can work for Ford for twenty years at this kind of money I'll have more money than I'll know what to do with. But the twenty years slipped by and I still didn't have anything. It didn't work out the way I figured it. Finally forty years went by and then they laid me on the shelf; but we had this house by that time.

I: Have you ever owned any acreage?

R: Oh I've owned a few forties, yeah...had a half a mile of lake shore on Point Abbey I sold before the boom for about three dollars a front foot. I got seven thousand five hundred dollars for that. The fellow that bought it from us sold it for thirty thousand; so it just goes to show that I'm not supposed to make any easy money.

What boom are you talking about?

R: Well, the land boom. The last few years the prices of the lake shore property especially has gone way up around here and other acreage also.

I: Did you ever sell any stumpage on any land that you owned?

R: Oh yeah...a little. I had one nice forty out in back of Skanee with a trout stream running through it...sold that; and I had three forties out here west of Alberta, that had the most beautiful poplar on it...wish I had it now, I'd be out there working it. I sold that too. I guess that's about all. I never had enough money to buy very much.

I: When you were out cruising did you carry along a lunch?

R: Oh, used to carry the lunch for the day, that's all. But if you went out to stay in a cabin or a ten, why you carried enough for a week and you'd go out Monday morning with this...or Sunday evening with your pack sack full of groceries, enough to last a week, and I've worked the whole township from one cabin in the wintertime. Lots of walking. People don't walk like that anymore.

I: Do you know how many miles you walked?

R: No

I: Did you ever keep track?

R: It isn't...I imagine a letter carrier for the Post Office here probably walks as many or more miles in a lifetime as a timber cruiser does. And a timber cruiser, he's got the hardest kind of walking...all the time. Through brush and over rocks and sometimes over swamps and uphill and downhill...something to catch your feet on every step. Of course in the virgin timber it's much better because there's no underbrush. Trying to cruise this scuttlebut land is difficult.

End of Side A

I: You must have spent a lot of time on snowshoes.

R: Yes, yeah...that's another thing, those snowshoes. Some winters there'd be a thaw you know, and then two - three - six inches of snow on top of the crust and skim right along over beaver dams and everything, you know, just like walking downtown. But then in winters when you don't get any thaw, you sink a foot or more every step and then come up with a load on top of your snowshoe that goes on month after month. You get kind of tired before spring. It's pretty hard work. Snowshoes are always hard work. And then along towards spring we start out good going in the morning, noon it'd warm up and snow would ball up under your heels, cling to the snowshoes. Lots of times we'd carry a club and every few steps we'd give the snowshoes a bat and knock the ten pounds of snow off. But now after my life's work is done now on snowshoes, they come out with a waterproof snowshoe. I got a pair out here in the shed I'll show you after while; and the snow doesn't stick to that and it doesn't get wet inside. The lacing is made out a neoprene covered fabric and it's really wonderful. They're nice and light and the snowshoe is made down here at Shingleton, east of Munising, pretty nice. I like the bear paw model myself. Some people wouldn't have them...they're the shortest kind...to me the nicest to handle in the brush if you're measuring trees or even if you're walking through heavy undergrowth, you know, you don't fall down so often. You don't get them caught on so many things like you do with the long snowshoes.

T: Thirty years of bear paw All your life then

R: Oh, I didn't use them all my life but I have for maybe the last thirty years used nothing but bear paws.

I: When did you find out that those worked better?

Well, the first time that I stepped onto them which was about

long ago.

I: How did you go up steep hills with the long ones on?

R: When you're young and catty enough you tip your foot forward so that your toe digs in and then you have to grab hold of whatever you can reach...it's good ot have an axe in your hand... sometimes you can reach a little farther with that and hook it around a sapling or something and help yourself up the hill.

I: Did you ever fall in the snow that way?

R: Oh, you fall down once in awhile...not very often. I have gotten into predicaments...fall down into an old top or something where I had to take the snowshoes off to get up and I have broken through the ice in a creek and gone up to my hips with the snowshoes on too which is not too pleasant.

I: How did you get out of that?

Oh just scramble out.

I How far away from...

R: The last time I did that, I was about ten miles from home and I was working with another fellow. He had the truck there and he brought me home and I changed my clothes.

I: Did they freeze before you got to his truck?

No...no it wasn't that cold.

I: What did your wife do when you were gone for weeks at a time?

R: Well, I hope she did...and I think she did stay home and took care of the house. She's always had a sister here that took up a lot of her time...she's helped her sister a lot. It's kind of lonesome for her, I suppose. For many years I scaled...before I started cruising I scaled logs...I had charge of the log scaler for five years; but I worked up on another Range Railroad which was then a branch of the MM...no Luce South Shore and Atlantic... and it run up toward Mass City and there's a lot of beautiful timber coming down that line. So, Ford Motor Company would send their scalers out to each camp or log line and the scaler would scale the logs right there for them before they were loaded on cars; and then the jobber he accepted the Ford Motor Company scale which was generally pretty fair. The company never expected to beat anybody. So in that way I worked up in quite a few Finlander Camps and I found the Finns nice to work with. It was kind of lonesome because they wouldn't talk English

but other than that it was alright.

I: Were you the only one in that that didn't talk Finnish?

R: I was the only one, yeah.

I: How long did it take you to learn how to scale?

R: Oh, log scaling doesn't take very long; of course you pick up a little of it as you go along I learned while I was clerking in the woods with the Cliff. It's not an exact science, it's more a matter of judgment. Some people have the judgment and they make good log scalers and some don't.

I: Did your judging get better as you got more experience?

R: Oh yeah. I worked the biggest landing on the Mineral Range for four winters. At that time they were hauling logs with the big ten-ton tractors and using sleighs and they'd haul all night and in the morning my partner and I would go out on the landing and there'd be two loading crews and two decking crews waiting for logs see, so we had to hustle up and there'd be maybe forty loads of logs waiting for us to scale. It sure was a busy place. Lots of nice hardwood...beautiful hardwood logs...some five hundred feet...scaled five hundred feet...twenty-six inches on the top and sixteen feet long. Some larger than that too. Something you don't see anymore.

I: Could you estimate how much wood Ford cut in one year?

R: Oh, I don't know; but I remember after the war that was their... they did their heaviest logging and Mr. Wilmundie had charge of the Ford Motor Company's land department...land and lumbering, and he told us that the company was cutting a hundred and twenty-five million feet a year and that went on for oh maybe four or five years. They had a mill at Pequaming, and one in L'Anse, a big one in Iron Mountain, one in Big Bay...that didn't run long, and then this little mill in Alberta. We could scale logs faster in those days because they didn't have this grading system which I don't think is necessary; but things are getting more complicated all the time. If you don't know how to make them complicated they don't want you around in this. But the company timber at that time we just...the only separation we made was we'd have a sheet for mixed hardwood, a sheet for mixed softwood and you could scale them pretty fast because we didn't have to keep the species separate. Of course the timber that they bought, we had to keep the species separate on that. But we'd go down to the scale shack here in the morning that was close to the bridge before daylight and there'd be a string of loads waiting for us backed clear up to the back corner sometimes, all waiting. They got down from the woods that early in the morning. We scaled them right on the trucks. Then they went either to the pond or out to the log yard and went into

decks. The first winter I was here, there was thirty million feet of logs decked out in the upper yard here up on top the hill where...in the area where Celotex had their pulp yard now.

I: What is that corner you were talking about...they had a string of logs backed way out to the upper corner or something? Where was this? When they brought them out of the woods...

R: Oh, truck loads of logs back up from the scale shack clear up to the back corner...you know what a truck load of logs is, well there was one truck right behind the other clear from down in the Ford yard all the way up here into town...all waiting to get scaled; and they were there waiting before daylight.

I: Did you have to do all that?

R: Well, there would be two of us...two of us working together on it and scaling pretty fast too...faster than they could take care of them down in the yard. Was Olie Ollefson and I a couple of times scaled two hundred thousand feet on one shift...that's an eight hour shift; but of course after they got into this grading business why couldn't do that anymore.

I: Why do you think the grading isn't necessary?

R: Oh, they have numbers one, two, three and cull...number three is pretty close to a cull and number two is a good saw log and number one is a veneer log; and the cull, of course, that's chemical log. So besides keeping the species separate, you have to keep the grade separate too and that makes a pretty slow job out of it.

I: When did they start that?

R: We started that just after the war was over. It was...oh I don't know...close to 1950.

I: Why do you suppose they did it?

R: Well, I can't figure it out. This man Fox that had the Fox Lumber Company that had the sawmill over at Trout Creek, he is the instigator of it. I think he wanted...he couldn't cheat the farmers enough on the scale so he wanted to cheat them a little on the grade too. That just give him another chance you know to do a little gipping...that's the only thing I could figure out for it .

I: How big was Fox's company?

R: Oh, they had quite a nice sawmill over there. I think they had two bands...a two-band mill. Had quite a...it was Fox and Van Platten Lumber Company at first...they were pretty big operators.

- I: Did he pick up that grading system...
- R: Oh, I don't know whether he got that from some forestry school or where he...if it was his idea, I'm not sure, but none of us liked it very much.
- I: What was Ford doing with all this wood that they were sawing up?
- R: Well, at that time...when they first came here, they were using lots in car bodies...even had a floor board department down here where they made floor boards for Model T's and then they used to use millions of feet crating each year and big Ford steamers or ships I guess you'd call 'em, they'd come in here and load on as much as six million feet of board...six million board feet in one load. And it wasn't stowed in either, it was put in in bundles. I don't know how much it could carry if they'd stowed it by hand like they used to do...put a lot more.
- I: Where did those ships go to?
- R: Detroit...afterward when they got to running this sawmill like anyother commercial mill, then they didn't butcher the logs up so much. They'd cut more for grade and sold their lumber on the market, like anyother lumber company. That's what they were doing when they finally decided to quit.
- I: Why did they decide to quit?
- R: Well, it never did pay. They generally had an automobile factory superintendent sent up here to run the sawmill and that didn't seem to work out very good.
- I: Were there other big companies around here?
- R: There were other big lumbercompanies and they didn't pay as much money as Ford and I suppose that was one of the reasons why Ford couldn't make much of a profit because they paid the big wages and they had asmany people in the office as some lumber companies did in its sawmill. There was over twenty people worked in the office down there just for this one mill. Tried to run it like you would an automobile factory and it didn't seem to work out very good. But Ford did start the selective logging business up here and we did a good job of it too. The selective cuttings at at Conner and Alwood Lumber Company bought from Ford were pretty nice...they looked good and now they look like the dickens. They've just been butchered.
- I: Did they have professional foresters on their staff?
- R: They started out there were a couple of professional foresters,

kind of old guys that came here and started us out with it and then that was...they went...I mean just Ford and their woodsmen that market the timber from there on and they did a pretty good job of it.

I: How were those lands that were owned by those other companies compared to the Ford lands?

R: They were clean cut; and Ford's clean cut land were not cut too clean. We generally tried to leave the one-log trees...twelve inch trees then were always left...supposed to be anyway; but the way they're cutting now, these modern forestry practices, I don't know...it don't look good to me. It takes a hundred and fifteen years to grow an eighteen-inch maple or birch and if you're gonna...the way they're stripping the land now, it's gonna be an awful long time before there's a log tree on it.

Stop in tape.

I: What was the town of L'Anse like when you moved here?

R: Well, it was pretty old, pretty run down, the streets weren't paved. I came in on the railroad, South Shore and walked down town from there. There was a little bit of pavement on this Catholic church hill, but that was the only pavement there was in town. There were a few cement sidewalks downtown, but that's all, just downtown.

I: Were there very many cars around?

R: Oh, not L'Anse, no...there were a few around Model T's and Chevrolets and old John Brennen had a Buick...the only one in town I guess. Old Mr. Shane hadda...let's see...he had a Hudson and later he got a Packard. Those were about the only big cars in town.

I: Were there still a lot of horses?

R: Yeah...that's all there was in the woods was horses...were no tractors at that time. Tractors came shortly after...small tractors and I think if they're ever gonna make anything out of this ever-growing modern forestry work, they're gonna have to go back to smaller skidding equipment. These big oversized tractor-skidders that they have now, they just keep the young trees just logged down, you know, bent, broken, twisted and crippled and there's only one outfit that's trying to selective log around here and they've gone to a five-year cutting cycle. It meansthat every five years they go back and take another crop Well, everytime they do that they knock down the little trees that have come up in the meantime and so I don't see how that's gonna work either. Everytime they go over their land...every five-year period, when they leave there's just a little bit less

then when they came. Their stand gets a little thinner all the time...nothing building up any place. So, all I see in the woods of course maybe I'm prejudice...I don't believe in the modern forestry practices anyway. All I can see is destruction where ever you look. This Mead Corporation that has two hundred and forty thousand acres of former Ford land, they're clean cutting it. They're taking everything right down to ten inches. They're leaving nothing but a brush pile. They tell me that they're going from a log economy to a pulpwood economy. Looks to me like they're going to a nothing economy because hardwood doesn't grow that fast. You take out here west of the old town site of ...let's see what the heck is the name of that town...Arvon, they just cut an acreage there, maybe eighty acres or more where the town's people cut their firewood eight-five maybe ninety years ago now and it's had all that time to grow back and there's very little timber value on the land yet...a few hardwood poles and brush...you could get a few small logs if you...maybe fourteen inch, twelve - fourteen inch. And north of Chatham, that's north of Alger County, I was down there a couple three four years ago and I was two miles north of Chatham which was the Cleveland-Cliff camp which was the last one that I worked in before I came up here...that was in 1922 and '23. And I helped put the clean cut in there. I was running a steam loader but that was a clean cutting job; and there's still no timber on the land, just hardwood poles. I didn't see a tree along the road anyways that was big enough to make a tie cut...ten or twelve inch tree and that's fifty years ago. So I wonder how these modern foresters figure that they're...what they're going to do with this land that they're clean cutting...when are they going to get another crop.

I: What do you think will happen to this area around L'Anse and Baraga if it...?

R: Well, it'll always be able to...it's such a vast area that I suppose you'll always be able to pick up a few logs here and there; but after this deep cut that they're doing now, I think it's gonna be pretty slow. I can't see how it could be anything else. Now, these nice logs that you see coming in now I think are mostly from some of the virgin that was left on the north end of Town Cliff Range 30 and they're probably some of the select from the Huron Mountain areas still coming intoo. Conner when they bought Ford timber lands, figured they would have enough to last them...it'd take about ten years to cut it. I think the ten years must be pertnear up. Of course they did sort of a selecting job on some of the land. They, instead of leaving the sixteen inch and smaller, they left the fourteen inch and smaller, some of them. So they left a pretty thin stand but it looks a little better than what Mead is doing anyway.

I: Are there other people doing what Mead is doing here?

- R: Most everybody does. This Alwood Corporation I think they would have done a pretty good job of selective logging, but they bought twenty-four thousand acres of Ford timber land but a lot of it was pretty poor...never did grow a good crop of timber. And so in order to keep that mill going it looks like they're gonna have to go back every five years and take a crop but pretty soon they ain't gonna have anything left. That's why I think Mr. Jacobson is trying so hard to get ahold of some state lands. But I think they would have done a good job if they had had enough good timber land to work with.
- I: Do you think that it's possible that this sawmill would ever have to close?
- R: Well, I don't see what else it can do...his timber isn't gonna last an awful long time unless he can get ahold of some more.
- I: There's only about four sawmills around Keweenaw Bay here.
- R: Yeah, and they're all small.
- I: The forest isn't able to support anymore than that with outside competition?
- R: I don't think so
- I: You must know about almost every section in the county
- R: Well, I'm pretty well acquainted for quite an area around here. I did the final cruise on the seventy-seven thousand acres that Ford sold. Ford Motor Company Fund sold that...that was the last of the Fund's timber land; and that took me three years... me and my partner.
- I: What did you actually do on a day.
- R: Well, we did a good job. They wanted us to take our time. I measured every...we did a ten percent cruise and we measured every tree that I counted and walked around it to see what was on the other side so lots of times in poor timber, it looked good on one side and the other side will be wide open, you know. So we didn't get over three forties a day...sometimes four and if there was heavy timber we only did two or if it was a long ways out. Did rush us or try to crowd us and it was a good job and I mean we did a good job on it too.
- I: Did you ever do any surveying of boundary lines, etc.?
- R: Well, we run...the last two years that I worked for Ford, we did nothing but line work...reestablished corners that had been lost and run the property lines...double blazed them...and we put pipes at all the corners where there had only been wooden

posts before...pipes and location posters. We left it in good shape. Conners' cruisers said they never saw anything like it before...everything in good shape like we had it. But they're not taking care of it. Used to be that we had a...wherever a section line crossed a road we had a location poster there. Well, most of them have been destroyed now...lot of the corners are destroyed. They don't seem to be taking care of them.

I: Who owns most of the land now?

R: Well Mead Corporation owns the biggest share of the land around here and they bought two hundred and forty-two thousand acres from Ford. I guess Celotex bought it and then Celotex sold it to Mead. That's enough to make a string of forties fourteen hundred miles long and this seventy-seven thousand acres that this Gordon Koski and I cruised for Ford, that would make a string of forties four hundred and eighty-two miles long...or pertnear from here to Detroit.

I: That's quite a lot of walking. Do you know who the big land owners were before Ford moved into the area?

R: Yeah, some of them. There was the Hebard Lumber Company.

I: Where were they located?

Stop in tape.

R: Culver owned the mill in L'Anse before...before Ford.

I: How much land did Stearns & Culver have?

R: I don't know but there was lots of it. And then Ford Motor bought some from the Cleveland-Cliff too and bought lots of small acreages from private parties.

I: What kind of timber was Hebard cutting when they got established?

R: It was...oh toward the last they were cutting hardwood and hemlock mostly. Their pine days were about over.

I: How long had they been around?

R: Oh, Hebard must have been here fifty years before Ford came. They were real early settlers.

I: One of the first ones?

R: One of the first, yeah.

I: What was this Nester Company?

R: Nester Lumber Company they had the sawmill at Baraga where.

and they were a big pine logging company...mammoth. They logged an awful lot of pine.

I: How wide spread? How big?

R: Oh, the mill wasn't...it was a two-band mill...two band saws I guess, but they were there a good many years and they cut nothing but pine.

I: You said that Mr. Nester started in Munising?

R: Yes...Tom Nester, they called him the Daddy of Munising. He went down there and built a mill I guess, started the town anyway.

I: Did he already have his mill in Baraga?

R: I think they had the mill in Baraga then too.

I: What other cities was he..

R: I don't know...he was a Lower Michigan man to start with.

I: Did you ever meet him?

R: No

I: Now that you're retired..

R: I've been retired eight years.

I: ...what have you been occupying your time with?

R: Well, it's hard. Of course I do a little cruising yet and once in awhile I run some lines for somebody, but doesn't amount to much. Summer I'm busy and I try to take some hikes in the woods, up and down the hill here. The first winter I was retired, I was really lost. I'd sit out there on the porch and look out the window and then I'd read a little bit and play a game of cribbage with my wife, maybe lay down and take a snooze, go downtown and back, and you might just as well say I wasn't doing anything but when night came I was so tired I could hardly walk up the stairs. It just didn't agree with me and doesn't yet.

I: How old are you now?

R: Seventy-five. I worked for Ford until I was sixty-seven or until the land was sold. I could have worked another year but there was nothing for me to do.

I: Do you have any plans for doing something this year?

- R: No...no I'm just living here trying to put in the time
- I: Did you have any children?
- R: Never had any children,
- I: Do you have any brothers and sisters?
- R: I've got a brother out in San Francisco and a sister down in Bradenton, Florida. I go down to see her every spring, see how she's getting along; and then I have another younger sister lives near Newberry,..lives on a farm just six miles this side of Newberry. My brother out in San Francisco I hadn't seen him for...I met him last spring and that's the first time in about thirty-eight years. He just went out there and disappeared. He worked in the mines in Nevada for over thirty years and he'd raised a nice family and put them through school since I'd seen him last.
- I: That must have been strange.
- R: Yup...he didn't look the same but his voice is the same and he acts the same. It sure was nice to meet him.
- I: How far have you traveled?
- R: Has he?
- I: No, have you ever been
- R: Oh yeah, I worked out in the woods in Idaho one summer. That was in 1920 and I worked in the harvest out there in Washington and in North Dakota...no Minnesota it was, close to North Dakota; but other than that I haven't been around very much except that for the last four or five years I've been going to Florida every spring for a month. I haven't been in many states and I wouldn't go there either if I didn't feel it was a duty to go because I'm satisfied here.
- I: Have you ever lived in Detroit?
- R: No
- I: Have you been there?
- R: I've been there, yeah.
- I: Were you visiting somebody?
- R: I had a brother that worked at Wyandotte...it's kind of a suburb of Detroit...I was to his place a couple of times. I've never been in one of the big automobile factories.
- I: Have you ever thought about living in a city?
- R: Oh, I think about it but I never would do it. If I had a chance

to go to someplace that was like...some little town that was like L'Anse was forty years ago, that's where I'd like to go. I don't want to go where there's more people, I want to go where there's less people. Used to be that we had lots of timber here, lots of wild life, lots of everything except people. Now we got lots of people and lots of brush and that's all there is.

I: Are there more people living here now than there was then?

R: Yeah...it's building up all the time

I: It doesn't seem to be thriving though

R: Well I think it is...got quite a lot of industry here in so far as I'm concerned I don't want to see anymore. Of course the young people don't feel that way, but I would hate to see this ...industries get big like it is in some cities. I wouldn't want to even see it grow like Marquette. If it ever did, I'd just move out of here. I don't care for big places and lots of people.

I: Do you remember any years that were really prosperous? More than they are now?

R: No, I don't remember when people had more money. I remember when they had a lot less money; but I also seem to remember that they were a lot more contented. It doesn't seem to be that anybody's satisfied anymore. You take that little town of Pequaming before Ford bought it. That was just like one big family when Hebarads had it. There were no modern homes...they were all comfortable little houses and were all shingled...shingles from the mill, and everybody had a garden and had their lots fenced off and quite a few had a cow and had some chickens if they wanted to and they just lived like a big family. Their rent would cost them a dollar a month and their fuel was hardwood from the mill and that cost them a dollar a load...a dump would dump a wagon load and if there were times when the mill was shut down on account of logs, nobody had to worry about groceries. They all could go to the grocery store...company store and charge the groceries until the mill started again. It seemed that they lived a lot more comfortable and satisfying life than they do now. When Ford came in there...one old lady told me..."He broke up a great big family." The first thing they did was make everybody get rid of their cows and chickens and all the fences came down and the lawns had to be kept mowed, neat, clean; but they got more money but I don't think they were as happy.

I: When did the people start leaving this area?

R: Well...you mean L'Anse or Pequaming?

I: No...L'Anse.

R: Well, after...there were a few had to leave to find work after the sawmill shut down in 1954; but quite a few went to work for Ford at other places like Detroit and little towns where they had assembly plants; but most of them stayed here and found some kind of work. A lot of them were getting old and worn out anyway and got that Ford pension.

I: What do you think about the young people leaving now?

End of tape.