

Interview with: Henry Sargent

Location: Nahma, Michigan

Date: Unknown

Interviewer: Unknown

Start of interview

(Henry Sargent) Our family moved to Nahma in 1922 I was 17 at the time and the parent company of this lumber company. You know at Oconto, Wisconsin had sent my father, who had been a jobber for the parent company in their lumber camps and they wanted him up here logging. So we moved up here and before that we spent many years as far back as I can remember moving from one little lumber town to another. And I tell you there were shacks to live in and [Chuckles] hard to believe the kind of life that people lived in them little towns.

(Interviewer) What do you mean hard to believe?

(H) Well there be a little store you know some of 'dem little towns didn't have over a hundred people in it see? And store wasn't any bigger than that, and the prices no. the prices were beyond reason because it was the only store in the country. But anyway when we come to Nahma my dad he was a robbing expert you might say. He never sized had over a year or so in one town, in one lumber town or lumber camp wherever we were.

(I) Would your entire family go with him? From camp to camp?

(H) From camp to camp I admit I can stay two or three years of education of by being in camp!

(I) And how many people were in the family at that time?

(H) Oh. At the end... well my father and mother had, well they had fifteen, sixteen children and there was one born every year so there was eight, ten, twelve, fourteen kids every time we move see! And now they tell a lot of jokes I'm going to put this in now ok they tell a little joke about a fella who move so often and he had a dozen chickens. And of course every time he moved he had no box, no crate to put the chickens in so he would only tie their legs see? He moved so often that every time he went into the backyard to get them well the chicken would fall on their back and get their legs tied. [Laughs] That was a joke but anyway my first impression of Nahma, that is my I thought just be another lumber town, a little lumber town that but I was really surprised when I got here, when we got here and we moved into a house and I will actually claim it the best house we had ever lived in.

(I) Where was that in the town? Where was it in relationship to this house?

(H) Well over at Mrs. Umstate's [Spelled phonetically] house.

(I) Ohhh all be darn.

(H) Yeah we lived there from 1922 to 1924.

(I) All be darn I didn't know that.

(H) Yeah. And so we got acquainted with the people and that was one thing that surprised us that the amount of cows that were around town! Now generally when there is a lot of cows around the town you have a stable bunch of people see?

(I) Yeah yeah.

(H) So after we got acquainted we find out some of these people had been here just about all their life, now the company started in the 70s between I guess the middle 70s. So then they were operating then almost 50 years then see.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And some of them young people had come here and married and stayed here and raise their families and they were still here! So they had one jewel that we never found in any other lumber town in the country, they had a clubhouse that would, that had a clubhouse that was set up and it was run in such a way that this clubhouse would be a...well it go over big in a big city! It was so nice.

(I) Now was this clubhouse run by the company?

(H) It was run by the company of course the company got the profits but everything in there, everything in the clubhouse was reasonably priced!

(I) What was all in the clubhouse? I don't understand.

(H) Well there was a movie theater. There was a dance hall, there was a ladies room just for the ladies and there was a library.

(I) A library?!

(H) Yeah there was a library! And an ice cream parlor, oh yes and then they had a recreation room for the kids and then they had billiard hall I think they had eight tables in it, and they were good, they were kept up. You know once in a while somebody would run a pool, you know a pool stick through the...

(I) Through the felt.

(H) Through the felt but they always kept up the pool tables up good and they had a beautiful bowling alley. And their hours were as good as any place you find in the country.

(I) Was this clubhouse now, was it at the scene of the present clubhouse over here?

(H) No no anyway in 1924 let's see... yeah no, that clubhouse, this was a second clubhouse they had. The first one burnt in 1921 when the fire went through.

(I) Oh Nahma had a fire I didn't know that.

(H) Oh yeah in 1921 it burned about half the town out you see.

(I) Is that right?

(H) Oh yes! It started in the plain mill burned the store and the cripes the entire street where 'dem...

(I) It be on the east side of town?

(H) Yeah well anyway from where the old, I mean where the building is now, I mean the township building.

(I) Yeah.

(H) From that to the clubhouse was all houses in there before the fire. Of course you know we weren't here but they told me about it.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well the fire burnt all of that and all of this and whatever was left here. This was one of the new houses they built see.

(I) I see.

(H) And the entire street then was all new houses and 'dem double houses were all new houses. All 'dem houses on that street right there and then remember that street that went up to you know where Shorty Warner [Spelled phonetically] lived?

(I) Yeah.

(H) All 'dem houses that was all brand new houses.

(I) Much of the town was burned then?

(H) Oh yeah about half the town was burned see.

(I) All be darn. I didn't know that.

(H) Oh yeah. Heavy wind when the fire started and the fire started in the powerhouse and the field house I guess and somewhere rather.

(I) Once you got here now did your dad go to work then for the company?

(H) Oh yeah he worked...

(I) Was it in town or up in the woods or what?

(H) Up in the woods. We came here in about the middle of the summer and right away we went up into camp and we build our camp. And then we start to log and we stayed there that the entire winter, then we come down here in the summer and we would work at the mill or in the yard wherever there were work.

(I) What type of work would you do?

(H) Well it was handing lumber or handing slabs or whatever because the company put out, well they had a shingle mill and of course the company in eight hours they would cut a hundred thousand board feet of lumber. You can imagine that you know the company run for 75 years at least you can image how much lumber went.

(I) Is that White Pine now?

(H) Well it was White Pine on the start. After the White Pine was through well then they because 'dem days at the White Pine it was all drive, there wasn't any railroad 'dem days see?

(I) When you got here there was no railroad?

(H) Oh yeah. Oh yeah they because they put the railroad in well the early part of this century see? Well anyway they, after the White Pine went through well then they went to Hemlock! Well they could drive Hemlock alright, you know down the Sturgeon River.

(I) Oh that's what you mean by drive!

(H) Yeah.

(I) Ok I didn't know what you meant! Ok.

(H) Well yeah part of it you know the thing of it was when they were cutting, you know before they had the railroad they could only run in the summer because they had no way to get the logs down in the winter!

(I) I see.

(H) So in the early part of the century they put in their own railroad they crossed the Soo Line at Nahma Junction which is about five mile distance.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And then they...their first camp was at Camp Five that was five miles above the junction now after while. They called it Camp Five, from then on the camps run way up to Camp 33 and every one of 'dem camps had a year or more circle years a logging around them see. But at that time the Bay de Noc Company, that was the name of the company owned just about all of Nahma Township see. And they also owned a good part of Garden Township or I guess that's Garden Township?

(I) Yeah I think it is yeah.

(H) Because all 'dem plantings up there...

(I) Up towards 13?

(H) Yeah. After you cross the river the big fish dam well that's Garden see?

(I) Oh I...

(H) Well the Bay de Noc well in 1930 there was a cruiser and I went compass for it and we were there Red Head Fish dam and we were tented there for 52 days and the Bay de Noc owned 225 thousand acres that they sold to the government that you know for the CCs.

(I) Ohh.

(H) 225 thousand acres they sold but course that there was plains. You could look for miles and you wouldn't see a tree on it at that time. Well you couldn't see a single tree.

(I) They cut it completely right down to the ground?

(H) Well then the fires and the White Pine and the fires cleaned it off every year, every time there was a fire...Cripes I know we picked blueberries there for several years up on the plains.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Blueberry plains if there wasn't a fire, it takes a fire to make, to you know make blueberries.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And if there wasn't a fire there if there wasn't in a reasonable time somebody would set it see?

(I) [Laughs]

(H) Because nobody cared a hell of a lot then which way the fire went see? Because nobody owned anything besides the big company, didn't bother 'dem much. But then the Bay de Noc to get back to my impression of the people of the town, the boarding house, I got to bring in the boarding house. Because I worked then for several years in these little towns up in northern Wisconsin and in lumber camps and no matter what town they had you worked in it was always outdoor plumbing see?

(I) Yeah.

(H) But the boarding house didn't in Nahma and wait I got to tell you about this, I always stayed in the boarding house that we eat, that we had to have a can of Kerosene on leg of each bed on account of the bed bugs!

(I) You mean trying to crawl up and get into bed with you?

(H) Well would they! And then they would drop from the ceiling! Besides honest to god 'dem, have you ever squeezed a bed bug?

(I) No [Laughs]

(H) It smells like skunk did one.

(I) [Keeps laughing] oh that's nasty.

(H) Honest to god just so you turn off the light and they begin dropping at you!

(I) [Laughs even harder]

(H) Oh boy... but anyway you tough it out because you got a job and you are making a living and the wages were 25 or 30 cents an hour and one town I worked in...that time there were working ten hours a day, six days a week. If you come to work every day and you worked every day you could get off on Saturdays afternoon at 4:00 o'clock and they would pay you for 'dem two hours.

(I) [Laughs]

(H) They'd give you a break oh that was a big break. Oh boy. So anyway when I went to the neighbor boarding house, jee cripes! Other boarding houses had 'nuting but a wooden stove in it. If you were close to the one with a wood stove you were warm if you weren't you were cold. Cold I mean cold! Along with the bed bugs I don't know they were having that, how they could live in that but they did. Well Jesus cripes there were these rooms they had two single beds in, and the beds were made up and the rooms were swept and clean sheets on the beds all the time, 'dem girls always done that. Indoor plumbing, a shower! Holy...!

(I) That must have been unheard of luxury?

(H) You never heard of anything like that see.

(I) [Laughs]

(H) 'Nuting but rich people had something like that. Not only that they had a company store that didn't want or didn't try to gauge you out of every dime you had.

(I) They were pretty fair with their...

(H) Oh they were fair, they had a store that would do credit to any store in the big town because they had a meat market that they had the meat was always fresh, brought in every week on the railroad in a car or ice car you know refrigerated car.

(I) Did Bill Henderson [Spelled phonetically] run the meat market in those days?

(H) No no. Hank Duty [Spelled phonetically] run the meat market.

(I) Oh I see. Who ran the store? Wasn't Joe Susick [Spelled phonetically]?

(H) Oh well Jackie Cameron [Spelled phonetically] was the big boss until he died.

(I) What year did he die?

(H) He died in I think the early 30s I don't know.

(I) Cause I know Joe ran that store for like 30 or 40 years did he?

(H) Ill tell ya how long ago, Joe started to run that store in 1947, that's when Cal Dugan [Spelled phonetically] that Cal Dugan run this store.

(I) Oh I see.

(H) Cal Dugan run the store from the early 30s until well he then he bought that store up at Seney?

(I) Oh yeah yeah.

(H) Thar would be about 47'

(I) After the war?

(H) Oh yeah yeah. So uh they have a shoe department that was god it was unbelievable the shoes they had!

(I) They sold shoes in the store?

(H) Oh cripe!!! That whole side of the store there that was all shoes!

(I) All be darn. How about medicines? Anything like that?

(H) Yeah they had medicine but well they would packaged medicine of course.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well then um they had a hospital and believe it or not they had a doctor and it cost you a single man a dollar and half a month and a marriage man two dollars a month. Up in this hospital they had rooms for anybody...anybody that were too sick to stay home they'd put 'dem in the hospital and never cost 'dem a nickel! Because the two dollars a month took care of it see. Other than that they got nursing care and they got doctor care.

(I) Was it a pretty good hospital I mean was clean real good?

(H) Well for the day and age they beat anything that we had ever seen and the doctor or vet he efficient that a man had his entire arm pulled off so that his entire left side was exposed and yet he pulled that man through and he lived many many years afterwards.

(I) Do you recall the name of the doctor?

(H) Oh yeah doctor Summer Bell. He brought I don't know how many how many he hand in this world and there were never any charge for baby delivery. He always had a lot of medicine in the hospital there, if you went there with a cold or something he could clear up with his own medicine, it never cost you anything. Yeah they were really good, yeah for two dollars a month that's, for the entire family.

(I) It was deducted automatically from your pay?

(H) Yeah but you know you went there once a month and you got a sediment you went to the office once a week and you didn't draw your entire check you drew what you wanted. You went to the cashier in the office and no matter how much you had coming you only drew what you need because nobody ever want much around the house because of course there weren't much money to be had anyways. But you draw what you wanted, then once a month the company would give you a statement, showing how much you had drew out then if you had any charge

account and your rent would be taken out and your wood. You know you could heat your house for 15 dollars a year see.

(I) 15 dollars a year?!

(H) Wow I'm telling you you could get a dump car and load all good hard wood from the mill that you could sell it here for hundred dollars. It was that big and that good of wood. So and I think what impressed our family more than anything else is that the company was really proud of their town.

(I) What do you mean I don't understand what you mean?

(H) Oh every house had a wire fence around it. Every house in town had at one time a wire fence around it.

(I) All be darn.

(H) And chicken wire fence, yeah the company give you the cedar post to both and they'd... oh yes when we live in the other house we had a wire fence around that house.

(I) All be darn.

(H) Yeah.

(I) Must have been before my time.

(H) Well no because you and I well we were cutting wood at the time.

(I) I remember the white picket fences.

(H) Yeah but that was afterwards.

(I) Was that it the American Playground put those in?

(H) When in hell did they put 'dem white picket fences in? Must have been... cause when they...no.

(I) Maybe it wasn't Bay de Noc?

(H) Maybe it was Bay de Noc that put in the in the picket fences. But when he lived in house over there, there were wire fences and everybody had wired fences yet. And so...

(I) What about the railroad now...? When did you get into that?

(H) Now wait now. And then they had a hotel that was really nice, nice place and our hotel was really nice. I don't know they took particular care of the entire town. When we first come here it was all wooden sidewalks see and that's all one man done was repairing sidewalks because there were always somebody breaking the boards you know, all he done is going all around town and the sidewalks were about four feet wide... yeah. But in... I think it was 1941 they put in cement sidewalks but since the they'd been eroded away and...

(I) Pretty much gone to hell.



(H) Yeah. Well then I worked in the woods there for a while and then my brother got on the railroad here and then...

(I) Which brother was that?

(H) My brother Jimmy got on the railroad then, well then a year or so later I got working with him on the railroad the brakeman, he was a conductor then. We worked together for quite a while until we had a wreck and I didn't get a scratch but he was killed see.

(I) Was this up in the woods?

(H) Up in the woods yeah.

(I) I see. Wasn't this just prior to his marriage?

(H) Yeah, yeah.

(I) Now as far the wreck was concerned a train wrecks were there a lot of them? Or...

(H) They, I'll tell you no they were good, the company had an awful lot of track on the woods when they finished up they were a good 40 miles from Nahma to the last camp in the woods. And that's spurs all... well they were right on the edge of 28, highway 28.

(I) Up that far?

(H) Up that far yeah.

(I) Bet that's almost to Lake Superior!

(H) Well yeah. Yeah we were that, then we had a branch that we called a Whitefish Branch were we cross the Whitefish River and we riding back riding back to Tannery.

(I) You were far up then.

(H) Oh yeah they cleaned all of that timber out of there for years and years and years. Well they had, they always had two engines in the woods hauling logs down the ties and cedar posts and before that it Hemlock bark.

(I) Hemlock bark?

(H) Yeah, they used that for tanning.

(I) I don't understand.

(H) Oh you don't know that? Well years ago, not too many years ago they take, every town or every city well even Manistique had a tannery. Escanaba had a couple of them and they used Hemlock bark to tan the leather. But now it's all mechanical because there's no more Hemlock bark see.

(I) Aside from the wreck that your brother was killed in were you involved in any other wrecks that you can think of?

(H) Any other wrecks? Yeah well you know things going on I mean, you know fact was that bat the Bay de Noc did the best they could, they couldn't afford, the lumber company couldn't afford to have a main line or anyway because most of their spurs weren't... of course the main line they kept up pretty good.

(I) Yeah.

(H) But most of their spurs would only going to be for a short time anyway until they got 'dem logs outta there. They got that section logged out and then they would move the spur up.

(I) I see.

(H) But I think there is a couple there on the railroad it was snow.

(I) Oh. Snow?

(H) In Nahma when there was a lot of snow and we would have two feet here in Nahma when we get up in the woods 20 miles wed have four feet! Well then you'd be in that Tannery of all things see.

(I) Right yeah.

(H) Oh so branch when we we'd open up a new branch you know a track would be there and you are going to open up a new branch so they can begin logging then.

(I) Yeah.

(H) The snow would be laying there two or three feet deep well the engines weren't very big they were about 65, 70 ton engines.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And in front of each engine there was a snowplow and behind them we had a snowplow too and that would pull we had a snowplow.

(I) Yeah mhm.

(H) So one time we gonna plow out a branch...we got in and it was too much for one engines so we backed up and waited for the second engine to come up. It came along and it had a snowplow on the front end and also a plow behind it. So we take it a run up that's that Mormon Creek there.

(I) Yeah yeah I know where that is.

(H) And we take a run at her and next thing I knew the engine we are out in the lead engine, next thing I knew we are upside down in the ditch.

(I) The engine came right off the track?

(H) Right upside down the ditch. Good thing there was a lot of snow the only thing that broke on the engine was the handrail because there was so much snow you know.

(I) Acted like a patting when it hit yeah?

(H) Yeah. Well we got the Soo Lines big hook they call it.

(I) What's the big hook?

(H) Well it's a big Danik on well its built right into a car.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And it can life a couple hundred ton you know. It's got a big hook on it that's why they call it the big hook at the end of the cable. Well of course it was the end of winter time it was in the summer they wouldn't have come in because the track wouldn't, you know for the handle an engine that heavy, they wouldn't have done it. But in the winter time the ground was frozen and the rails were frozen in the ground.

(I) I see I see.

(H) So they came in see were we had fifty pound steel well the Soo Line at that time had eighty pound steel.

(I) I see.

(H) That's eighty pounds to the yard see. So they came in there wrapped a couple cables around it and picked it up as old toy.

(I) Set it right back on the track?

(H) Put it right back on the track and started the fire up in it and no problem at all.

(I) No damage to the engine?

(H) No like I'd say the only damage was, was the handrail where we used to hang on the front.

(I) No one was killed?

(H) No.

(I) Hurt or anything?

(H) No nope. But oh I had some, so many things happened that was interesting at the time might not be interesting in this. But...

(I) How about the fishing around here? What about the fishing? Was there a lot of people involved in fishing at Nahma at that point or?

(H) I want to tell you this here one little incident on the railroad.

(I) Ok.

(H) We were at this camp it was about 30 miles from Nahma it was 10:00 at night cold at least 20 below zero and we had a terrific we had a long string of log cars behind us.

(I) Yeah.

(H) It was cold, it was so cold some of 'dem wheels wouldn't turn you know they would slid you know the heavy grease, after a mile or so then they'd begin to roll but then there was one fella got in the caboose he had thrown his shoulder outta joint and we went down one hill from one hill to top of another with just about a mile when you went down this long hill, going to make it?

(I) Yeah.

(H) When you went down this long hill the engineer had to open up wide open in order to make the next hill.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And right behind the engine there were two gondolas and after that were log cars. We broke over the top of the next hill I bet we were going a good 50 miles an hour and the rails broke and behind the engine and curled up and went right through 'dem two gondolas!

(I) It like two spears?

(H) Yeah! I look back and I see these gondolas leave the track and tip upside down with these rails in 'dem see. 'Dem lumber cars came up again 'dem but the funny part I was going to tell you about was that this lumberjack, he was a foreigner, who had threw his shoulder outta joint and was in agony in the caboose and we had about 35 rows of logs behind us and 'dem cars had lot of slack in 'dem you know 'dem log cars.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Course they stopped all of a sudden you know and when the caboose pull up in that slack he found himself underneath the stove!

(I) [Laughs]

(H) And he got up the conductor was fired by this he got up shook himself jeez my shoulders alright!

(I) The shoulder went back into joint on its own?

(H) Yeah it threw his shoulder right back in yeah got off the caboose went back to camp!

(I) All be darn.

(H) Yeah.

(I) Speaking of lumberjacks you know Nahma was lumbering town and everything wrapped up in the lumber what do you know about lumberjacks in general?

(H) Well lumberjacks if you going tell story about lumberjacks you cover a novel.

(I) Awful lot of books have been written on them?

(H) Yes and yet the lumberjacks as I knew them because I started to work as a lumberjack when I was twelve years old and I wasn't the only twelve year old kid in camp. There were a hundred

men and a couple of us there were a few of us kids and that were 'dem big hearted lumber men 'dem days. They'd give you work that's all it was work. Give you nothing else but work.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well you take the lumberjack when it come, he can make a camp first thing he'd done was find you know to get a job the camp boss would hire him then the chore boy was in charge of the sleeping camps see. And he would give you a bunk he would tell you whether it was upper or lower and tell you who you were going to sleep with, ninety nine times out of hundred they would be with strangers see.

(I) Yeah.

(H) But nobody thought anything of it and so one thing about it with the Bay de Noc camps the big camps I were in there was always enough blankets. The only thing is and back in your bunk of course you know 'dem camps they were all made out of unaged lumber and they were covered with tar paper on the outside.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And you'll slept with your head right next to the wall I don't know why cause every morning the inside of your, of the lumber was all white with frost see. You could just about to turn around and have your head towards the stove but I don't know why we never did we did. So the first thing you do then is all the can goods and all the course in 'dem days there was dried apples and dry peaches and all that stuff you know dried fruit everything came in wooden boxes you know that were days before cardboard boxes.

(I) And the train brought the stuff in?

(H) Well yeah or else there were too far, if the track was too far away well then they'd go off with horses and bring it in because you were very seldom but the camp right on a railroad. So you did run wooden boxes of about a foot square then you'd name it at the head of your bunk there and you'd put all your treasures in like your razor and your watch and whatever else you had that you wanted to save. So 'dem big camp did have from 100 to 125 men and at the end of the camp there were little table 'bout the size of a card table with a lamp on, that was the only light you had in the camp see. There were always somebody with a deck of cards so they would play cards every lumberjack came in always had two or three dollars on him you know. So by spring one man would have the whole thing see, and you know the odd part of it is he could leave that money right in plain sight in that box while he worked for 30 dollars a month, he'd have three or four or five hundred dollars laying in that box and there was always lumberjacks coming and going see. I was different camps where I'd see a lot of money and where one man had you know how it always turns out, one man is always going to win it all in end after all winter after five, six months in camp see. I never knew of anybody ever stealing anything and I don't know why a lumberjack every wanted a hundred dollar watch but the men would come through and this particular man his son now runs a business in Escanaba and he would come through with a pack on his back and he would have oh three four hundred watches!

(I) Good watches?

(H) Oh some of them at that time for a hundred dollars you could buy the best there was see. Now why a lumberjack would want a hundred dollar watch I beyond me cause he wouldn't take it to the woods cause he didn't want to ajar it did he?

(I) And nobody stole from anybody?

(H) And nobody stole from anybody and of course lumberjacks didn't have any money in camp because you didn't get any money until you went to town to the head office. So I said to this fella, this man that was selling the watches I said, does anybody beat you out of your money? Cripes I see you sold as much as 25 watches here. And I said you never got any money to pay for it oh he said when they come down the spring he said they pay me when the camp breaks up. I said did you ever lose any money like that? He said I've been doing this all my life and he said a lumberjack never beat me out of a nickel yet. He said they come in and they pay first thing in the spring, they come and pay me for their watches.

(I) And that's something.

(H) Yeah completely honest, completely honest he like I say when he hit town there is only thing better than a dress that meant bottles and corsets.

(I) [Laughs] Bottles and corsets I was going to ask you about booze and women.

(H) Yeah [laughs] he was you know the goody goody lady around the town they were set up their libraries and I bet he would not pay for that.

(I) Looking for the whore houses right?

(H) Oh yes well these going to town for, every town he'd go until he was broke, he'd drink until he was broke and some kicker they god dam I think you'd be off your broke see. You better take it easy there, here's a pint why don't yeah head back to camp. Cause if you stick around here you are really going to be sick and I think you are right, take the pint and head her back to camp.

(I) How often would these people come out of the woods to?

(H) Well many went up in September they wouldn't come down until the camp broke up in the middle of April. Oh I've done that lot, many winters. So I was in camp in Kent City, Michigan there, for Christmas the company sent up chicken. Holy cripe.

(I) Chicken?

(H) Man right next to the cook camp door when you were going inside was a barrel of apples, now I'd tell you that Mr. Gibbs he was man of all heart.

(I) [Laughs]

(H) Now the lumberjack he was simple in a way, he didn't know nothing about the, what went on outside of his camp or and he didn't give a damn see. He could fight, that was one thing that he'd pride himself, he could care himself physically until he got to town or went on a drunk see.

But then that was only about twice a year and that was going to be about a week each time. Holy cripes I'd tell you I worked in a camp on morning well the door had to be high enough for at least a six foot man to go through to go into the camp and when you come out of the woods they had to kick the top of that door.

(I) Kick the top of the door?

(H) They could jump up and kick the top of the door if they didn't now it would rise the hell out of him all evening.

(I) Was that kind of a...if you could do that made you a man or something?

(H) Well that means you weren't all in it means you weren't built or anything.

(I) Oh I see I see.

(H) Oh yeah.

(I) You're Long Jimmy with booze and the women in other words.

(H) They would know. Mostly the thing was, there were two things that were never allowed in the camp that was booze and women.

(I) Is that right?

(H) Oh a women was poison! Never allowed in a lumber camp.

(I) I wonder why?

(H) Well Jesus cripes they wouldn't long and they'd be a bunch of matchberry you know...

(I) Fights would start and there would be problem I suppose.

(H) Oh no no women or booze. You came to camp drunk fine but you don't bring any booze with you. I worked in a camp that the chore boy had a little room, a partition block on one end of the camp where he slept cause he had an alarm clock had he didn't wake anybody else up at he got up at 3:30 you know.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Cause he had to wake the cooks up and get the fires going. There was a man there he was a Swedish fella and he used to, I have to see him, he was a man about middle age and talkin' nervous man. He would walk up and down the camp couldn't, you know 'dem camps are probably a hundred feet long they were big you know?

(I) Yeah.

(H) Walk up and down the camp back and forth every night and I don't know how the hell that wood alcohol got in there but he found some wood alcohol and he drank it and he died that night, and he was sleeping with the chore boy inside this little room. I was sleeping next to the little room on the outside and I can hear that man groan all night long and he died during the night.

(I) Died of alcohol poisoning?

(H) Well that wood alcohol it killed him yeah.

(I) I'd like to ask you about some of the so called personalities that come to mind, at least come to my mind about Nahma and see what you think about them. What about a guy named Dave Reddington [Spelled phonetically].

(H) Well that's our uncle, our second uncle. Dave Reddington.

(I) Who was he and what did he do?

(H) Well Dave Reddington originated in Oconto, Wisconsin that's the home of the parent company, the Bay de Noc Company. He left as a young fella, went to work there in the woods there for the company and the company seen that he had more on the ball than a regular lumberjack so they made him a camp boss and then after camp boss he got to be a woods superintendent the position he held all his life see, the rest of his life. I think he was 74 when he died and they claim it was really an accident cause he got off the caboose he used to always spotted the caboose in behind the store see.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And he could when there were supplies to load they would load them right in the store right into the caboose see. And he got it was late at night and they lived in that house right next to well right next to Mutt's house.

(I) Yeah yeah.

(H) And when he was walking home that night after dark he slipped and fell on his head I guess and that killed him.

(I) What about a guy named George Farnsworth?

(H) Well he, George Farnsworth's father, George Farnsworth senior was the originator of the Bay de Noc Company.

(I) Oh he founded the company?

(H) Yeah he founded the company in Oconto and then they before they come up here see. The Oconto Company run before they come up here.

(I) Yeah.

(H) And then he come up and then they opened up Nahma then they bought timber up here then and they opened up Nahma, it was odd in 'dem days when they had to drive the logs down they soon as soon as a freeze up come and there were no more logs see and they couldn't run the mill anymore. Well all the men then would go to camp for the winter and the women would be by themselves and their families down by themselves.

(I) What about Charlie Good?



(H) Charlie Good he were born and raised here in Nahma his father was one of the, course the farms the Farnsworths and the Goods they originated from down east, you know a bunch of 'dem lumberman come up in this country they call them down-easters.

(I) Yeah.

(H) They come from Maine you see well that's where the Farnsworth and the Goods originated at. Well when mister Good he eventually he comes superintendent of the town and Charlie was his son and they had a daughter and another son. Of course Charlie he spent his life with the company.

(I) What did he do?

(H) Well he was he was in World War One and after World War One he was superintendent of the Oconto Mill and lumbering set up. And then during the hard times...

(I) You mean the depression?

(H) Depression. Well then they this superintendent they had here they I don't know what happened they let him go anyway and then Charlie come up here and he become the superintendent and he was superintendent here from about 32' I think he was superintendent here for about ten years and then when George Farnsworth junior now that house that big house or the hospitality house that big ol' hospitality house.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well that was built for George Farnsworth junior because he was superintendent here for a good many years until his father died and the head office was in Chicago see. And then he took over the head office in Chicago and then mister Good he would be some kind of boss around here then he become superintendent. Well then in 1942 George Farnsworth junior died well then Charlie Good become president of the...

(I) Of the whole works?

(H) Yeah. But in 1942 the Oconto Company had also shut down.

(I) They closed up period?

(H) Yeah they closed up because they you know they run outta logs then.

(I) I see.

(H) So he come up here again and he run and then in 1942 he went to Chicago and he was there until the company sold out until 1951. He...I heard one man say what I thought was a pretty good thing to say, and he say well what kind of fellow is Charlie Good? And this guy said I think he was just as good as he dared to be. You know because people walk all over you too see.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Especially in little town like this people didn't began to leave Nahma until well when the Bay de Noc got through and awful lot of people left that is younger people left. But then this new company that come in here they are still here yet running on a very reduced scale.

(I) That's the American Playground?

(H) Yeah that the American playground.

(I) Were you here during the warriors during World War Two?

(H) No no no. We left here, that year we got married in 37' then we went down, we went to Pontiac and we were there for eight years but I guess you got to where your roots are cause we come back to Nahma in 46'.

(I) And so far as you know did the company continue to run pretty much as...

(H) Oh the company always run now a little mixture about the hard times, the mill didn't t run for two years there were no work at all and they had 36 million feet of lumber in the yard which they, you know they couldn't sell. So the WPA holy Mackinaw! A family only got two dollars and half a week from WPA that's all that they were allowed to work! You know two dollars and half a week.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well what the hell you know they were living in company houses and the company never owed to anybody out there house because they didn't pay their the rent or their power the company was furnishing power too you know electric power. Because they always kept the power house running.

(I) The company had its own generator here then?

(H) Oh you know that little engine when you go in the door into the house?

(I) That's right that's right.

(H) Oh I run that little thing lots I tell you. But anyway the company was good that way well then the company knew the people wasn't getting enough to live on and that's when Charlie Good came here see he knew the people wasn't getting enough to live on so they got what they call McCullen coupon books. Each week you could go to the office and you could whatever the size of your family you could get a book that size, you could trade at the store but the Bay de Noc was in the hard shape itself! With all that lumber and they borrowed and borrowed until they couldn't borrow anymore but if you had a toothache and you had to go to a dentist they got the money for you some way or rather see.

(I) This is interesting my impression of company towns course I don't know much about them but I had always had the impress that they were fairly ruthless with their employees.

(H) Well now you are thinking about [chuckles] what Ernie full did to sixteen ton.

(I) Right.

(H) He owed his soul to the company store well it wasn't that way here.

(I) They took good care of their people?

(H) They took care of their people and if you were sick and you weren't able to work your family wouldn't go hungry and they had clothes in the store they weren't the latest style but they were good, they were good clothes and...

(I) I was going to ask you um the barn here which is located over it would be the southwestern corner of the town as it stands today, what was that barn used for?

(H) Well the horses before the tractors came in the tractors come in they 'dem in the early 30s but they still used horses in the woods.

(I) For what skidding?

(H) Yeah skidding the logs but the main reason they got the tractors so they could log year round see. They could skid logs in the summer time or they had went then to hardwood logging see, course the big hardwood logs was almost too much for horses so they went to tractors of course the tractors 'dem days weren't much either see. God damn tractor gears I guess they were they stripping them all the time you know they aren't like the gears they are now. But they toughed it out and eventually oh at one time they must have had at least fifty teams of horses.

(I) And they were all housed in the barn over there?

(H) Oh they had more than fifty teams cause there were some in the woods and the barn they used 'dem around the yard here to haul lumber to the plain mill and before they got 'dem they didn't have a truck in here until... let's see when did their first truck I mean to haul wood, a dump truck well then we used to called 'dem dumpcarts that was in the early 30s. The horses well we had four horse teams you know to fill 'dem big dumpcarts you can tell how big 'dem there. You ever see one of 'dem dumpcarts?

(I) I don't think so no.

(H) Behind the wheel was about six foot high and the front wheel was about two feet high. All the weight was on that hind wheel see on 'dem two hind wheels at the axel and had a tailgate on tailgate they used to load her up and in the front you had open like that on a swivel and you bring the dumpcart down when it was empty and you hook it on that and then you turn that down see that hook. Well you didn't dare get too much weight on the front end or you wouldn't be able to dump that thing so when you come to a yard you took off the tailgate and just turn this little thing upside down and you always had a bar with you just got up and dump the entire load and that's why it was called dumpcart see.

(I) I see.

(H) Yeah.

(I) What about driving the logs down the river?

(H) Oh boy that's...

(I) Did you ever have anything to do with that?

(H) Yeah when I first started out as a kid, the first spring I got a job I went to Crawl the Line Again, that was the boat that the man eat and you know they eat on it at night and they slept on it and they slept. Now that was the life that is unbelievable what how 'dem river drivers were, how tough they were. Just assume 'dem because oh every ten or fifteen or twenty miles or whatever it was sometimes not even that far they had dams. And that day what they call headwater of the dam and they would hold back as much water as they could because all the logs would deck along the river see.

(I) Yeah.

(H) Well then they would roll 'dem logs in then they would open the gates, all by hand and big gates now a lot of river runs at least driving this see and it wasn't getting 'dem big gates all the way across and a big gorilla would open the gate, that's a questionable man there day and night there but that was a job too. Well then they'd open the gate and they called it a fresh it this a bunch of water would run out and pick up these logs and bring them down to the next gate because it was about time they got down to the next gate the water was begin to go down see. And as the logs got through they would close the first gate until they built up another fresh it and it was so and so all the way down the river. You know that big hill there at well the Fourteen Mile Hill?

(I) Mmhm.

(H) Well if you went to the left the road to the left there?

(I) Mmhm.

(H) Well that's where the dam there that was the last dam on Sturgeon River and they would that was the last dam but there wasn't anything, or any sign of it anymore but image how the you know but went through every year they used to do what they call improving. They had to take boats and go up the river and cut all the trees out that had fell into the river see. That fell into the river they'd clean the river out, had to do that every summer see after the drive went through for a long kind of in the Fall then see. See in the Spring there wouldn't be any jams then, log jams but anyway I worked on this boat here that boat must have been cripes 75 feet long and at least 50 feet wide, with a cook shack and there's room for about 50 men to sleep in the bunks. They'd come out of that drive they'd come off the river, pitch dark soaked and wet...every man wore red wool underwear, pitch soaking wet and every man wore they wore twelve inch shoes hell are they now, oh Copelane Rider with really with quartz in it well sharp quartz. Course you didn't walk over any stones or any cement with 'dem all wood or sand see. You come in you eat you go right to bed with 'dem wet clothes on they always said that's the best way to dry out your underwear, dry out your clothes. It was it was already in the Spring that it was kind of ice on the river in the morning from a quarter to a half inch of ice you know. And there were logs hung up in the middle of the river and he had breakfast it was always pretty along the river, you get out and walk and break that ice. Yes sir, break that ice and go and roll 'dem logs out 'dem sandbar or something like that.

(I) Would he use a canned hook?

(H) Use a canned hook or a PB one or the other they were both, a PB is a canned hook with a spike at the end of it.

(I) I see. I see

(H) Everybody had a PB that's about end of it.

End of Interview