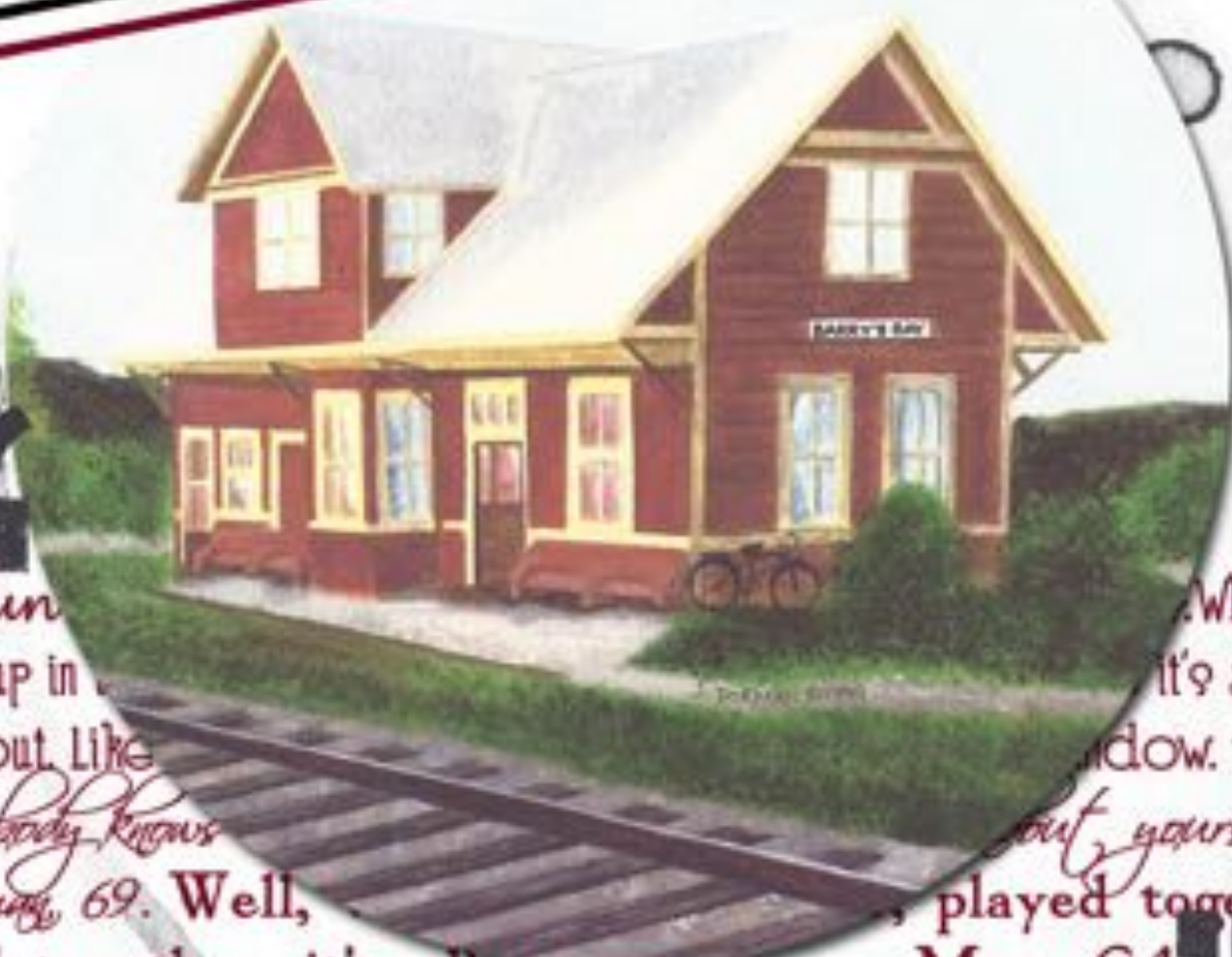


Just a Part of Life

Memories Across the Generations of Rural Ontario



“

It's fun when you wake up in the morning and it's always nice out. Like when you look out the window. -Man, 24.
Everybody knows
-Woman, 69. Well, when you're out, yourself.
loved together, it's all in the game. -Man, 61”

Sali A. Tagliamonte, Lyndsey Leask, Kinza Mahoon, Anna Shortly, Kelley Tai



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TORONTO

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A part of the Ontario Dialects Project



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Acknowledgments

We'd like to offer our thanks to the entire community for your hospitality and help throughout our stay. The kindness you extended to us made our time in the area very special, and we'll never forget our visit.

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Some of you welcomed us into your homes, others drove long distances to meet with us, and all of you allowed us a glimpse into your lives. Many of you not only shared your stories, but also introduced us to your friends, helping us meet people we would never have had a chance to speak with otherwise. We could not have anticipated just how fond of you we would become, or the treasured memories we would gain.

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-Sali A. Tagliamonte, Lyndsey Leask, Kinza Mahoon, Anna Shortly, Kelley Tai

Preface

In May 2014, a group of researchers from the University of Toronto came to the Madawaska Valley for a week. Our goal was to talk to as many locals as we could about what it was like to grow up in the area, in an effort to capture the heart of the community. We received a very warm welcome, and many people shared their stories, personal experiences, memories, local culture and events. What follows is a compilation of stories gleaned during our research.

This compilation includes but a few of the stories and memories generously offered to us by members of the community. We quickly discovered that there are many gifted storytellers in the area, and the amount of wonderful stories we heard could fill a dozen books like this one! We have merely provided a small glimpse into your community's culture and rich heritage, as revealed through the oral recollections of community members. We hope that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn from the experiences recounted here.

In conversations, unlike in written stories, sentences are not all cohesive and perfectly formed. Speakers pause and think while saying 'Um' and 'Ah'; they start saying one thing but finish with something else; they repeat a word multiple times or may just stutter a few times at the beginning of a word. To facilitate reading many of these instances of spoken irregularity have been removed in the following stories. Commentary by the interviewer or other parties is not included unless it contributes in some way to the story. However, in order to preserve as much authenticity as possible, absolutely nothing has been added and everything is verbatim from the recordings.

Some members of the community have given us permission to include audio recordings of their stories. A DVD containing these stories is included in the back of this book. The audio for the stories follows the same order as their written counterparts in the book. Our goal in providing this DVD is to preserve complete authenticity, allowing the listener to hear any speech irregularities that were removed from the transcript. The audio also adds another dimension to the experience, transporting the listener into the story by letting them hear it straight from the mouth of the speaker.

As we listened to the recordings, we found some common threads that many of you touched upon, and those formed the basis for the chapters of this book. For confidentiality purposes, names and addresses have been changed. A few exceptions were made on the basis that the story revolved around a well-known historical figure or a celebrity. We take full responsibility and express sincere apologies for any errors made during the production of this compilation.

A note on reading: During your reading, you may notice a dash (-) or (inc). A dash means that what was said started out as one train of thought and then changed to something slightly or completely different after the dash. An (inc) means that the transcriber was not able to tell what was said in that moment on the recording. Italics denote the interviewer speaking, and are sometimes used within a paragraph to represent sound effects. Square brackets are occasionally used to provide context.





Community

“...we fell in love from day one, we fell in love with this place.”

-Woman, 76

My mom always says, like, you call the wrong number and you end up talking to someone-

Mom: Yeah, you're having a better conversation than who you're actually talking to. Every wrong number, "Oh hey fellas, how you doing?"

-Woman, 17



Signal the Doctor

Now you know you got the air ambulances coming in, eh? And when my dad would be on call, he kept his plane. He had, like, an amphibian plane that would stay down at Trader's Farm. That was where his first hanger was.

And so he'd be on call, but it would be not very busy and so he'd go down, go flying, and he'd fly around. And the nuns knew that if there was a call came in, they were to go up and put a sheet on the line and Allan would see it from the air. And he'd land, walk up to the hospital and take the call and the emergency. So, can you imagine doing that now?

-Woman, 50s

“... can you imagine doing that now?”

Didn't Know Any Better

I was working with a local doctor. And probably the first time I answered the phone was when the phone rang and he was being called to an accident in Combermere on the bridge. And actually, you know what I did? I hung up the phone, I didn't know any better. When I went to get him to come to the phone, I put the phone back on the receiver— because I didn't know any better. But they called right back.

-Woman

Someone Call the Doctor

As a brother older than me was being born, my mother told me this, so she sent my father down to the doctor's in Combermere, there was a doctor there, to get the doctor to come up. So my father went and the doctor says, "Oh, it's only her second one, it'll take quite a while, have a cup of tea." So he sat there and talked, had tea and just walked up the road a little ways back to their house. By the time they got back, the baby was there alive and kicking.

Oh yeah, I bet your mum wasn't impressed.

No, no she was not. She's a little Irish woman, yeah, so she didn't mince her words on that.

-Man, 63



A Doctor's Gift

Oh, when I was young, at five, yeah, I got pneumonia, but anybody can get that. I survived that, too. That's another one of my lives. I almost died there, too. Yeah, I was pretty sick, so my mother says, I can't remember.

The only thing is, I remember that that time, you know, the doctors- he was so happy, that doctor was so happy to see me live, he bought me a- I'll never forget it, a truck about that size. Metal truck, eh?

For a little kid five years old, I played with that for years.

Oh, the doctor there, he was surprised that I lived.

-Man, 76



“I played with that for years.”

There Would Be Dances

Oh, we did a lot of things! At the Legion Hall in Barry's Bay, there were dances that we used to go to every Saturday night, they had a dance at the Legion. So my sisters and friends, we would all go there on Saturday nights. And they always had- I don't know if they have them anymore, but back in the day, the whole place was packed, and it was a wonderful time. They had live country bands.

-Woman, 53



Performing at the Wilno Tavern

Well, I've played a couple of times with a band that I used to be in at the tavern right here. They have a lot of live music here that's absolutely- there's some really great bands that come through. A lot of blues.

So, the first time that I got up there was when I was sixteen. And I had been working for this woman who- I was her prep chef. And she is a musician, and she had welcomed me to come and get up and perform a song with them. And so I've always been quite courageous in that way, so I said, "Yes, I'm good to go." But what happened was I got up and I totally flopped it. It was awful! And I was so devastated, and thought it was the end of my life, kind of, as I knew it.

And halfway through the night, she got me to get up again. And for some reason, I was bold enough to get up again. And I got up again and I rocked the house. So, that was- yeah. Yeah.

Never let yourself go on a bad note.

-Woman, 34

Hide-and-Seek
We'd play hide-and-
seek in the whole
town. So, as you can well imagine,
the poor lad who had to find us really
had quite a scope to look in. So, some
guys never did get found, and at the
end of the day, they'd just go home.

But that's the way it was. It was
interesting. Of course, always the first
person found was the next seeker, so
to speak.

-Man, 66

“And then Saturday
afternoon, we had a
theatre in town, and we
would go to the theatre!
A matinee.”

-Woman, 50s

Lucky Slice
I remember going to my
friend's, Tessa's, for a birthday. That
was very exciting because Tessa's
mother made cake! And in the cake
were little treats
wrapped up in
wax paper.

So there
might be, like,
a little lucky,
you know, four
leaf clover, like, a little silvery charm.
And if you were really lucky, you got
a dime that's wrapped up in paper.

And I guess it was a layer
cake and she would put these little
treats and make sure every girl got it.
But you know, when you're young,
you don't realize that the adults in
charge have made it so that, you
know, every piece is going to get a
little something, a little present in the
cake!

And I remember thinking,
'Oh my God' it was, like, so
exciting!

-Woman, 61

“And if you were
really lucky, you got
a dime that's wrapped
up in paper.”

In Times of Trouble

People come with food, and money, and all. My next door neighbour up here who just earns barely minimum wage, eh? Knocks on the door, hands me an envelope, I open up

“... everybody’s there to help.”

the envelope, two hundred dollars in it. Like, I literally broke out in tears, oh my God. That’s the way it was.

And anything, you know, you didn’t have to worry about it. They were there. And that’s to this day, you know, anything happens in town here, bang, everybody’s there to help.

-Man, 76

Setting Up the Rink

On the opening day, my brother and I, we went up on the rafters with no- we weren’t tied down or anything. And we’d go up there and put up all the banners for the opening day and the look, all that. I remember when I went back when my son was about five years old, we went back in there to take

“You can do anything.”

him skating. And I looked up at the rafters, and I said, “Oh my God, I went all the way up there not tied down?” It was quite a drop! But at the time you don’t have any, you know, you don’t have any fear. You can do anything.

-Man, 81



H

ow We Met

I had a car accident. A girlfriend of mine had just bought a car at the dealership that he was working at. And she thought that she got a really good deal, and that they treated her very fairly. So, she gave me the salesman's name - it wasn't Bob - and sent me down there.

So, down I go, and I had to take the Greyhound because I had

“... are you going to
sell me a car?”

totalled my car. So anyway, I go into the car lot and it was just as they were opening up, Saturday morning. And there was an older gentleman sitting in a rocking chair out front.

And I looked at him and said, “Do you sell cars?” And he said, “Mm-hm.” I said, “Do you sell cars here?” He said, “Would you like a coffee?” I said, “Yes, but I'd like to buy a car.” He said, “Okay.” He just sat there rocking away, it was an older guy. Anyway, I said, “Are you going to sell me a car? Will you?” He said, “No, I won't, but I know someone who will.” And so I sat there, and I said, “Well, when will this person be here?” He said, “just be patient. He'll be here.”

So eventually, Bob came in, and he introduced us. And Bob went to sell me a car in time.

“Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob. Do you not know anything? This girl has just come in from Renfrew. She came down for this. Even if she had breakfast, she's probably hungry by now. Take her out and buy her a coffee and see if she wants-.” So, this

Carson guy that I had never met before introduced Bob and I, and sent us out for breakfast.

So, we went out to this little restaurant around the corner. And we started talking, and we knew a lot of the same people. And probably, I mean, we shared some friends. And so at the end, we probably thought, well, we probably- been at the same party or at the same thing, but just had never been introduced, never noticed one another.

So, then we went together, and we were married, and, at our wedding, it was beautiful. The grass was green, we were married in early March. The grass was green, it was beautiful beforehand.

The day of our wedding, “Take her out...” there was a

nice storm, so, we ended up staying in Combermere. And, on our honeymoon, someone, well, I guess it would've been someone we knew because our car would've been there.

Anyway, we went back to our motel room and everyone was there, including Barry McDonald. There was no place to sit. The bed was full of people. Everybody was sitting, everyone was singing, and people were sitting on the dressers, and on the floor.

Husband: Playing guitars. And Barry wrote us a wedding song, and it was called, “Thirty-Eight People in a Motel Room, that's What You Call a (inc) Honeymoon”.

-Husband, and Wife, 60s

Q2 Family

“My grandmother lived close to where we lived there, right beside the river, so that was like a second home to me.”

-Woman, 83

Midnight Mass

I remember when my one brother got a ruptured appendix, was taken taken to the hospital soon enough. My mother had to stay with him at the hospital. He was very sick, he was draining, and all the time she had to help out with the nursing, of taking care of him.

And we were alone at home, so we'd go to mass everyday, 'cause this was Lent. And one day, we got to church, and it was darkness and everything. And we wondered what had happened, and I don't know, we set the clock wrong, and it was like, two in the morning when we got there!

-Woman, 84

“Only fifteen years old when he went over there.”

Father Was a Cook in the Army

Around the age of fifteen, at home, I guess his mother showed him how to cook and so forth and everything, and he was interested in cooking, eh?

And in those days, he went to fight. That was around the time of the war, the First World War. He went to the First World War. And he went with the- there was a group, and they call it Haller's Army, eh? And to fight with Poland in France, I think, they were in France at that time, eh? And so, they prepared to go over there, about twenty or some from this area went, and went down to Niagara Falls. They were trained there.

And they fought with the Polish, um, servicemen from Poland, eh? They had their own type of uniform as well, eh? And so he went over and he was a cook in the army. Only fifteen years old when he went over there.

-Man, 74

Underneath the Apple Tree

My dad was, since he was older, he didn't do a lot of farming. But I remember my dad, he used to smoke a pipe and he used to go underneath the apple tree in the summertime and smoke his pipe. So, and then he'd fall asleep, and I used to take the grass and I used to tickle him under the nose.

Did he wake up?

Yeah, he'd wake up, and he never ever got angry with me. Yeah, he was like a big teddy bear to me.

-Woman, 57

No Flowers

And he never liked flowers, my dad never liked flowers. I think that they had, you know, they took by horses, and I guess that there was flowers on the, probably on the sleighs, and maybe he thought that well, the flowers maybe had something to do that, they took them on or something.

And he never wanted, so we give him his wish, we never had flowers when he died, at the funeral home. Yeah, because he never liked flowers, we don't know why, but I guess with that would be maybe that he seen the flowers when they took mom to the cemetery or something, and I don't know, we never figured out what it was. Yeah, you never know, but he said he didn't want, and we give him wish. But we had, like, greens, and then we had made, like, a nice wreath, somebody made, and it was made out of twigs or something, like something, you know, to have something different, you know, but not flowers. No, we kept his wish.

-Woman, 79

Memories of Grandpa

Another childhood memory I have is my grandfather,

Samson Kruszynskie, owned a trout farm in Combermere. Yeah, and I always remember going there doing a lot of fishing, and I go on their paddle boat and go around the pond. And even in the s- in the winter time, sorry, we'd ice fish. Yeah, and he had all the toys, though. That's why, he was, you know, a fun grandpa because he had the sea-doo. My grandfather had a sea-doo!

What is that?

On the water, it's not a boat but a sea-doo it fits two people and they're fun and you can go in circle and flip off it's a water toy. And he had the tractor, the skidoo, you had the nice truck and he would always come in get us to go. I remember going skidding a lot and swimming in the back of the caboose, it's like a trailer sort of thing

-Woman, 30

Passing it On
Our grandkids, we try to throw in the odd word of Kashubian to them. And they'll say it back to us, you know? Connor is only, what? Two and a half, and he'll pick it up just like that, eh? You know, you say something to him and he'll say it back to you. Could be a good word or a bad word. Bad words are picked up more easily, I think!

-Man, 61

“... that was special to me.”

It Was Special
My grandmother, at the time she was quite elderly, but she always had this thing that kept her going. So for me then, she knew that I was getting married and at times her health wasn't good. And she kept saying, “If I could just live to see you get married! I just want to live to see you get married.” You know? So the fact that she was there, that was special to me.

-Woman, 50s

The Number
Thirteen
My girlfriend has this book about numbers, what they supposedly mean and stuff. And the number thirteen, about the last year and a half or two years, kept coming up.

I could check the time ten times a day. Eight out of those ten times, it's thirteen minutes, or the number thirteen comes up. And it's something to do with a person from your past looking out for you or

“That's my personal interpretation...”

helping you in some way.

Whether it's right or wrong, I interpreted it as my grandmother being happy and wanting me to fix the farmhouse up and move here.

That's my personal interpretation of it. Whether it's the exact thing or not, but-

Well, it's a good outcome.

-Man, 44

“...I’m proud of it.”

Old Wilno Cupboard

I have an old cabinet in the dining room that is like the old, old China cabinet that was made by somebody in the area, probably a hundred and twenty years ago.

Where did you find it?

My grandparents actually had it. My grandparents had it. It was in their kitchen, and they used it for dishes and storage. And then, ultimately, you know, when new kitchens came along, then this unit got put out into their workshop.

And after my grandparents passed away, this cupboard was there, and nobody really was interested in it. But I brought it home. I

brought it home, actually, with the intention for my husband to have it in his garage as a storage for his tools.

But once I brought it home and got studying up on this old cupboard, I realized it was an old Wilno cupboard. And then I needed to be doing something with it.

So, I started to strip it. And little did I find out that it had a coat of blue on it, that covered the coat of yellow, that covered the coat of green, and underneath there was the original wood. You know?

So, I worked at stripping, my husband worked at stripping all this paint off of it. And then we ultimately gave it a nice coat of maple. And it’s in the dining room now, and I’m proud of it.

-Woman, 50s

“...I needed to be doing something with it.”

A photograph of a forest floor. In the center, a large, weathered log lies horizontally across the frame. The foreground and background are filled with lush green ferns and other vegetation. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a dappled light effect. The overall atmosphere is serene and magical.

“...just magic, magic,
everywhere...”

Harvesting Wild Leeks With Mom

So they grow in my favourite kind of forest, which is a hardwood forest, where we get our maple syrup from. Maple trees. And it's back in the Brudenell hills, this particular patch of leeks.

So we went out and it was just- we were both so- like I love taking pictures of flowers, and it's kind of funny because there's not too many people- like my friends, we all love nature. But, there are some of us, which is me, who's really like, "Oh my God! Look at that trillium!" kind of thing.

And, so, both of us, we were just like- what- she used some, um, awesome word. 'Cause we were like walking into the forest and it was a gorgeous day. And the forest- like the ground was just, like, sparkled with white violets and yellow violets and sunshine is falling down- like the sunbeams and the shadows onto

these amazing, green, beautiful plants everywhere. Leaves dashing, just magic, magic, everywhere! And, yes, so there's dogtooth violets, white violets, yellow violets, trilliums, jack-in-the-pulpits. And the forest is just like scattered with this totally incredible decoration of beauty.

And yeah, we just had the greatest time. We went with our cameras, clicking, clicking away and harvesting the wild leeks. And going through, we saw a porcupine up in the tree. Yeah, hanging out up in the tree.

And I came to an area where there was like on a slope going down, a pretty steep hill with, like, rock cliffs and moss. And it was, like, animal condo place. 'Cause there's all these holes all over the place. And there were animal dens, you know? So, it was a very special place.

-Woman, 34

Redig

Emma and I, we were first married, and we were on this property my father gave me. I was building a fence to fence off a garden apart from the horses, that was it.

Wife: Basically in the middle of nowhere.

And I put all the poles then, and I was just ready to string up the cage wire. So finally my dad comes along for his inspection. "Uh-oh that's not straight, you have to move that." What is it, six or eight inches?

Wife: Six inches.

I had to move it to the far end, so many poles! I had to dig them up, redig, and line those poles all up. All that fence is still standing and it's perfect, because what happens if you're out of alignment when you put cage wire on, it falls off the whole stretching of the wire, so you got to be exactly straight.

Guest: There was a reason for it.

Yeah, but I wish he would have come a little earlier.

-Husband and Wife, 60s

“... we couldn't wait for mother and dad to leave, eh?”

S

liding Down the Stairs

We used to have, you don't see them anymore, we used to have what they would call a feather tick. It was a big blanket about that thick with feathers, eh? You slept under that and you were warm, you weren't cold.

And if mother and them left, we used to put it on the stairway and we'd slide down! Oh, that was a big- we couldn't wait for mother and dad to leave, eh? We were bigger. Up *ba-ta-ting* and we'd take that. And mother wouldn't let us do it because you'd damage it, eh? Like you could rip a thing or wear the material but oh no, we couldn't do it until mother left and then we'd go to it, eh?

-Man, 70

F lies In a Jar

Since my grandma's house was next door to our house, I practically lived at my grandmother's house. And, ah, maybe I should tell it to you in Kashub.

With my grandmother one day, we were looking out the window and there were these flies in the window. And I said to my grandmother in Kashub, "(speaks in Kashubian)". And grandma would say to me, "(speaks in Kashubian)." And she went and she got a jar-

“... you should have them.”

So what did that mean?

Oh sorry, okay. What I said was that we don't have these flies at home, that were dancing around the window. Okay, and she said you should have them.

So she went to get the jar, and so she allowed me to catch some of these flies in the jar. And I went to our house, and I said to my mother, "(speaks in Kashubian)." Which means that, "Guess what, mother? I have something in the jar here that you don't have in the house here." And, of course, my grandma was just absolutely delighted with all of this!

-Man, 61

C hristmas Presents

Not until my older sister had married and we'd get gifts. I remember her and her husband got me a brownie camera, and at that time I thought it was so amazing because there weren't too many cameras in the area.

Did you bring it everywhere you went?
Well, I took a lot of pictures with it.

-Woman, 83

“I thought it was so amazing...”

T affy Trouble

Did you ever get into trouble for making taffy?

One time, we had been- there's about five of us that got sick. And we had the chicken pox, eh? And mother was just about ready to whoop us, you know? She give us a good spanking for making the taffy.

And my brother walked in, he had just come in from the army, and he had walked in and he caught mother, that she was going to spank us, you know?

And he says, "No, no, no, don't spank them." He says, "I got the money now, I can buy you an extra bag of sugar." So, that saved us!

-Woman, 73

Shortening the Distance

Oh my gosh. It's hard to explain, you know, how that felt, eh? Because I remember the fir— that was already later in years.

My sister had left home at the age of twelve years old, I guess. Her and my dad, they couldn't get along very well, for some stupid reason I can't even remember now why it was.

But anyway, so she left home, and so when he passed away in 1964, I believe it was, I had to call long distance where I had never called long distance before, and she was in Ottawa. So I didn't know how to tell the operator how to, you know, so I just told her in plain English as much as I could. I just told that my sister was living someplace in Ottawa and this-and-this was her name, and if she could get in touch with her, you know, and so she did.

She tried to get her, and then she got back to me, and she says, "You realize how many such-and-such names are in the phonebooks?" She says, "There's maybe about two and a half pages under the same name. How am I going to pick that name out?" "Oh", I said, "I didn't know that." Which I didn't know, you know?

So anyway, after about the fifth call, she got my sister on the phone. And so I was very pleased to even talk to her on the phone. That was the first communication we had for years and years, you know? Oh, at least twenty years. It had to have been, you know?

So, we communicated on the phone, then, you know? And then she came down here. And then from that time we were, you know, two sisters, and mother and daughter, and you know, because like that we had lost her, eh? You know, because she wasn't around, eh?

-Woman, 73





T

hank You, Dad

Oh wow, one of the things I want to tell you about, now that we're drinking tea. I remember I was quite young, but I was with my father in the bush and we were cutting wood, firewood.

So in those days, you went with your horses, so it was quite an effort to get there and back. So I could remember myself getting sick, like with a flu bug or something in the bush, and my father had an old coffee tin with a wire on it. And I don't know if he melted snow or got water out the creek or something, and I told him I was sick and I was really sick and he got a fire going and he made a thing of tea, put tea in it! And he gave me tea to drink. You know what, nothing has ever made me feel as good as a cup of tea I had, my first cup of tea back in the bush seem to, you know, really bring me up.

-Man, 63

F

alse Alarm

My mum wanted us to go pickin' berries, blueberries. And my aunt was coming down from Toronto, and every time she comes, she'd always bring us treats and clothes and different things 'cause she knew that we did without. And they lived in the city and they worked in the city and made all kinds of money, and they always have a brand new car and new clothes, and they partied for a whole week with us.

Anyways, they were coming down that afternoon and my mum wanted us to go pick blueberries. So, we went blueberry pickin'. We walked from the farmhouse, which was over the hill there, through the bush, through here, and up that hill, there's a hill over here that called Blueberry Hill. So anyhow, Mason, Robin, and myself, Rory and Jacob, we all had gone and pickin' berries. So we made up this story, so we ran home and we pretended we had leaves in our pail and that we were scared and we were running home. We were out of wind and said, "Mum, there was a big bear there and it scared us!" Well, my mum was going with a gun to try to shoot this bear!

Did you tell your mom there was no bear?

We couldn't tell her anything! They would be really upset. They would punish us, you know? They'd do away with things for us so this is like, what do we do right? She was going to go, the gun, she was getting all the shells ready, she was getting my brothers together. And three or four of them were going to go to the bush, and my aunt decides to come, so that was the end of the hunting.

-Woman, 57

The 3.

Hunt

“It’s like going out and cutting the grass. It’s just a part of life.”

-Man, 33

Chiseling Away

We have to use an ice chisel, or an ice auger. The ice chisel is just a- it's this long metal shaft with a sharp blade on the end. We'll either use that if the ice isn't too thick, but once it gets thicker, we use an ice auger. It's just a round, round bit that spirals, it has one or two blades on the bottom with the gasoline motor on top. And it does it all for you, so you save a lot of time and heartbreak chiselin', and chiselin', chiselin', then you realize you're too in shallow water!

-Man, 24

“... looking back now, I don't know how he did it...”

Rowed Around the Island

With my father, what we used to do is, we would start here in a small little boat 'cause we didn't have a whole lot of money. And my dad would actually row us around the entire island and we would troll. And I remember usually catching two or three fish by the time he rowed around the entire island.

And looking back now, I don't know how he did it, because I've rowed around the island in a canoe, but not in a rowboat, so he must've been in decent shape. And we didn't have a motor at the time and it was quite simple.

But, um, some very nice memories of catching some fish, spending some time with my father and doing that sort of stuff on the water.

-Man, 46



Hunting Camp

It's a hunting camp. It's a place for guys go to, to stay in the bush, in the hunting area so that you're right where the deer and moose are.

And it's like a home, cottage, whatever you want to call it. But a camp that, you know, there's ten of us in a group and we each contribute so much money a year for upkeep and maintenance and building and the whole bit.

“... it's like a home...”

Yeah, and it's there. Anybody can go out and use it whenever they want. If I want to get out of Dodge, I'd go out to the hunt camp, and I can be there all by myself alone and build a little fire in the wood stove and feel comfy and cozy

-Man, 76

“... And my partner, sound asleep...”

Hitch a Ride

Most of the lakes were along the rail-road track, where the good lakes were. So, we used to hitch a ride out in the van, the rail-road guys let us go in the van, and then they stopped the train and let us go fishing. And when they'd be coming back, they'd toot the horn about maybe a mile or two before that we'd be ready to get on the train.

-Man, 76

Bad Bear

I had one would stuck his head in my tent. Three nights he robbed us. We were interior camping and we had bait hanging in the tree and, three nights in a row, that son of a gun robbed us. He'd be up the tree, jump at the rope, grab the bait, and gone before we'd have a chance to grab our rifles or whatever.

Well, the one night we were in bed, partner and I, and I purposely left the lantern on and I left the tent door open, right? And he stuck his head right in our tent and my partner sound asleep. He was a bad, bad b*****. I raised the gun just as he stuck his head in the tent, *boom!* And my partner, sound asleep, “What the hell!” That was kind of a dirty thing to do, but we got him! He was bad.

-Man, 50

Duck Hunt

Husband: You know what? I really didn't know how to hunt 'til I met Stephanie. I have a picture of my first partridge I shot.

Wife: Well then, my father was a hunter. Oh, I have to tell you a story. David and my dad, you know, they would go hunting and they sometimes were together in the bush and so on.

And then, of course, David wanted to go hunting ducks. So he went down to the lake here, Campbell Lake, and he comes back and he says, "Daddy," he says, to my dad, he says, "oh you should see the ducks at the lake, you should come." So dad gets his gun and goes with David and they were sneaking up, you know, to get a good aim at these ducks. They start shooting and these ducks were just kind of just kind-

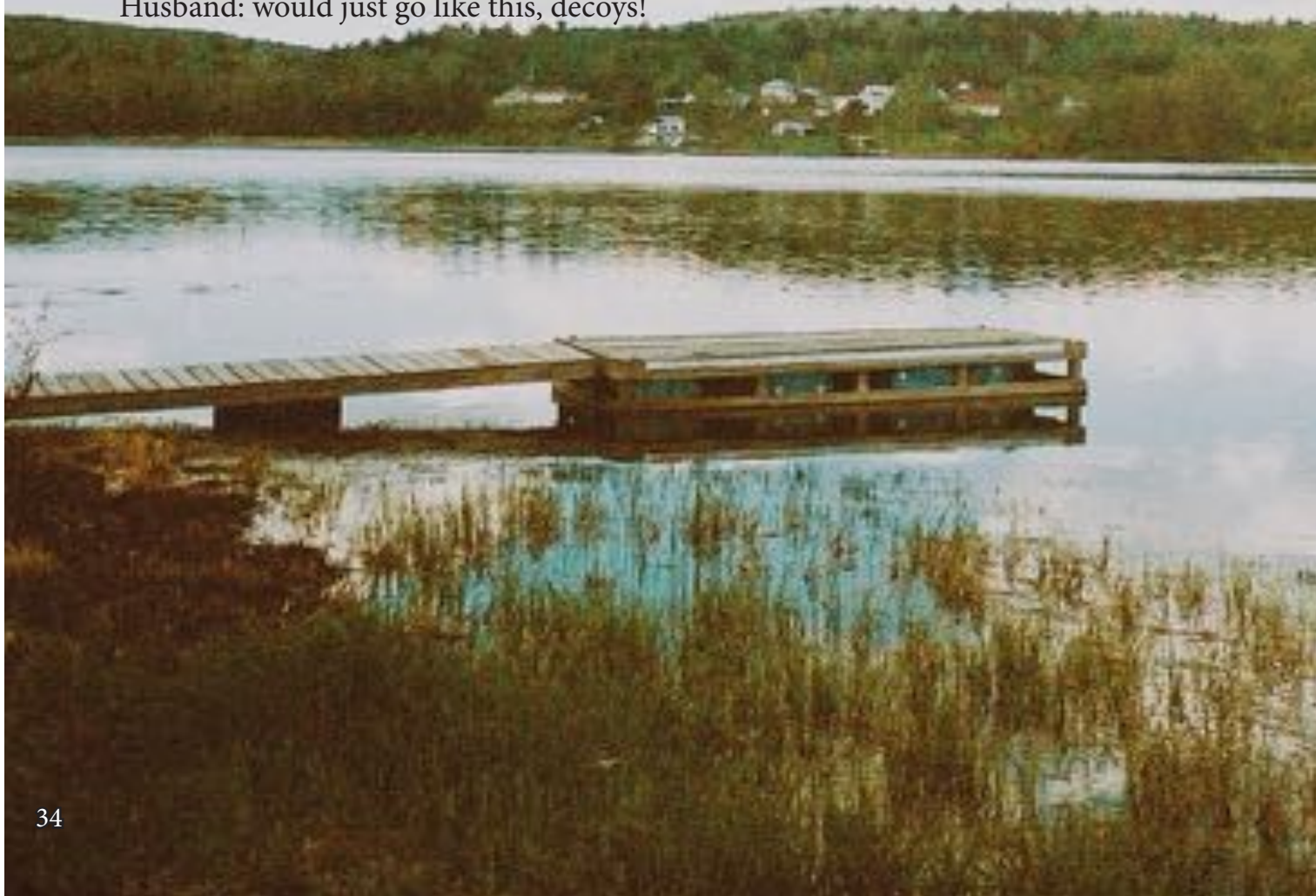
Husband: would just go like this, decoys!

...you should see the ducks at the lake...

Wife: And he [father] said, "You fool, those were just decoys!" Well, we laughed that they shot at these decoys. And this poor man, his name is Mr. Peclan. He had a cottage here, just behind us, and he used to walk down to our farm and he would have these decoys and he'd hunt rabbit. He'd sometimes have a rabbit on his shoulder.

But anyway, he would go and put those decoys out in the lake so he that could get the duck, but my father and David was never told, that poor man that somebody shot them. Because he would stop at the farm for a cup coffee or tea and he says, "Wou know? My decoys, I don't know, but they have all holes in them," and my father just didn't tell him.

-Husband 57, and Wife, 53



First Hunt

But I remember, probably about 5 years ago now- no, it might have been, like, 10. And we went hunting. Me and my dad and my sister went hunting at my dad's farm. Well, my dad's parent's farm. And we'd just gotten there and I remember looking out the window and there was, like, three deer, and I was like, "Dad, there's a deer!" It was sad because I told him and was setting them up to die, but he only got one.

Were you happy he only got one?

I think I was, I definitely think I was. Maybe that day we got another one. It was a very eventful day, and it was, like, the first time I ever went hunting.

-Woman, 17

“... it was a very eventful day...”

She Shot the Buck

One time, they chased out a big buck with attached horns. And there was nobody at home except my mother and my sister.

So they decked the boat, and my mother turned that gun and she shot her in the water. Oh, were they ever mad at her! Oh my God.

Because he could've drowned us. He could've drowned it. But my mother didn't know that. She just seen the big deer coming, and they were hunting,

they didn't have nothing, so she took the gun with her. And my sister drove the boat, and she shot the deer and brought it in.

When the guys came from hunting, they had no deer and they got the deer here. But they were mad at her!

She says she never was supposed to do that because "It was a big buck," he says, "You could've upset that boat with them." They would have drowned, because they couldn't swim.

-Woman, 95

Lost and Found
I was hunting in unfamiliar territory and I kind of got lost, but I didn't panic. I just, you know, did what you're supposed to do. Found a pond and fired three shots into the pond so that, you know, my family would

“... I didn't panic...”

know what was going on or whatever. They came and found me.

I only waited, like, half an hour. They knew exactly where I was 'cause I shot into the pond. And they knew where the pond was, and it makes a very distinct noise as to shooting up in the air.

-Man, 33

“... his dog
wouldn't eat it,
he told me!”

Mystery Meat
My uncle tried to play a trick on me. He had bear meat, and he said to me, maybe two weeks before we actually had it, “Have you ever tried bear meat?” “No.” “Oh, okay.” And that was the end of the conversation.

So then, one day, I'm looking at this food on the plate, and I'm highly suspicious, but then I remember the conversation.

So he waited until I was totally finished eating, and then he said, “Did you know that that was bear meat?” “Oh!” But it tasted okay.

“... I'm highly
suspicious...”

I had no problem with it, unlike my uncle who was a great hunter. And he once shot a bear and he thought he'd try the bear meat, and he hated it, he didn't like it at all. He threw it on the floor. Even his dog wouldn't eat it, he told me!

-Man, 58

04 Animals

“Raised the way we always raised them. Feed them and treat them good, and they treat you good by having calves.”

-Man, 44

Ambush Ambushed

Oh, there was one time when I was a little kid, and me and my friends were hiding in the barn waiting for our sisters to come home from a birthday party. And we

“... we freaked! ” were going to jump out and scare them. And then we started to hear wolves

howling in the distance, and so we freaked! I was five or six. And so we started to run back to the house just like totally, totally, freaked. And you know when you freeze because you car- totally terrified? Like, I don't know if you've had this happen in a dream or something where you're, like, stuck. So I fell and I couldn't get up because I was so panicked. And nothing happened, but I was like lying in the dirt going, “Ahh! Ahh!” with wolves howling in the distance!

-Woman, 34

I'll Get Him

One time, two of us stayed in the camp one night. The bear wanted to be getting the cookery. So, the door was there and then there

was a two by four like that, eh? A chunk of two by four. There was something at the door and I said to Eli, “You open the door and I'll run out with that two by four and I'll get him.” But then, I didn't get the bear, I got a racoon! It wasn't a bear that time.

“...you open the door...”

-Man, 70s

Rooster Line-up

Chickens, they're amazing what you can do with them.

What can you do with chickens?

Oh, you can train them. My mother had, I think there were seven or nine roosters one year. I think it was the year I was building my house, 'cause I was living at the farm that year. And these little things, when they were babies, day old, I started playing with them. And I could do with those roosters anything that- I think it was seven of them. I could sit on their trough, which is right down at the ground almost, put my hands out like this, put my arm out, and I could line up all seven of them with their heads on here and they would just stand like that for me. And anybody else came in, they would bite them. Like, they were, you know, roosters are not the tamest of animal. They're not the friendliest.

-Woman, 69



Rooster Bite

Yeah, I went into the barn once, I think from him. And then I was milkin' a cow and they had a rooster at the farm, a real cross one. I didn't see him coming 'cause he was comin' from behind. I was milkin' the cow there and there he bit me in the back of my leg. Oh, I bent the pail and I spilt the milk 'cause I didn't see him comin', eh? So he was hiding from behind. I can walk and you wouldn't even see him eh, until he bit me and milk spilt out and I bent the pail.

Oh no, did you get into trouble for bending the pail?

Oh no, because they see how it was bleeding, eh? But that was hard because you have to keep moving it steady or it got stiff, eh?

Really? So how did they treat that then?

They just put some stuff on it, put a cloth around it, eh? No, see before there was no bandages, they used to take a rag and just wrap it around, eh?

-Woman, 71





Hugging the Cow

When did you find out you could hug the cow?

It was probably- well, it was a year old by then. It was last winter. Last winter, I could pet it all I wanted, it wouldn't even budge.

And now this winter, I would steady hug it, and it still wouldn't even budge. I could push it, I could, like, shove it with my butt and it would just *pff*. He'll be eating, like, I'm trying to put a pail on the other side but he's in my way. And the ones on the other side, they can't even get out to go onto the other side of him. So I have to push him to the side, and he won't even budge! It takes, like, twenty-five minutes before he actually budges. He's that calm.

-Man, 13

Raising the Deer

We had a deer, a little baby deer for a while. I found her when I was living up in that log home. She come barrelling out of the bush one rainy day. So I just kind of scooped her up, started looking after her and feeding her, and kind of raised her until she got old enough to leave.

And she just left?

Yeah. Just left. Sad to see her go. Sad to see her not come back. 'Cause she'd leave and then come back, leave and come back, and then finally she just didn't come back. So it was kind of sad.

What was it like living with a deer? A wild animal?

It's entertaining. You know, they're not used to, say, the wooden floors or tiles. So, I'm sure you watched Bambi. The feet everywhere, flying kind of thing, and that's what it was. It was, like, this tall when I found her. So it was just a baby, baby, baby. It was great. Fun.

-Man, 33

Pet Raccoons

I remember we actually had pet raccoons when I was little.

Pets?

Pet raccoons. We had their mother, I'd guess, I'm not sure how, it's nothing we did, so we had five little raccoons. They didn't have a mom and they were just babies so they weren't violent or anything.

So we bottle fed them and we kept them in our house for until, you know, they were getting too big. So it was probably a good

“...they were just babies...”

few months we had these. I think I actually have a picture somewhere. But these little raccoons, we named them all and we brought them outside and they didn't run away. You know, they just kind of wandered around and they came back to us. And they were actually, like, they're very easy to train, which was surprising.

Yeah, but we had to let them go at some point. They're not anymore, but they always used to come back to the house, but I don't know where they are now.

-Woman, 17

Beaver Logs

But my father discovered that there are beavers on this big lot, and they've dammed a part of the creek. So now, the water was really getting up too high, and just onto a prime land.

So, he'd ask us to go and take a look at the beaver dam. And we did, and it was quite a lovely beaver dam. And we decided to let some of the water through and to let the water go down, you know? As my father had instructed us. So we did, and we returned back to this beaver dam about two hours later, only to discover that the busy beaver had rebuilt this dam and- !

The whole thing was back up?

Yeah! They're such hard workers. They're very fast.

-Woman, 50s

Swimming Surprise

We have, like, a natural sand beach.

And because of my interest in scuba and skin diving, I was down on the bottom. It was a nice, bright day with the sun coming through the water, so you get the rays.

And there's this big snapping turtle, and it had to be, like, two feet in diameter. It was right in front of me, coming towards me. So, needless to say, I got out of there quickly.

-Man, 60s

Goose Chase

The geese would lay eggs, but my mother had a building so that they could lay their eggs in the spring. And when we were small, when the little ducklings were born, we used to like to go see them. One time, I was going and the gander jumped on my back. Only for my mother he would have killed me! He just started beating me with his wings.

Oh, my. Yeah, that sounds scary.

It is scary. You have to be careful. Like, even now, somebody has geese, they'd chase you. The gander would chase you.

-Woman, 95

“It is scary.”

M

an's Best Friend

Oh well, there was beaver pond you know, and I had to walk up the Opeongo there and over the beaver pond, you know, the bridge, where there was a beaver, you know? And somebody caught the beaver, you know, through the night before. And all the water went down so it was about that deep, you know. I would have fallen right in there, you know. But Sparky, he wouldn't let me cross that beaver pond, and I was mad at him, you know, like what the-. Then I found out, you know, if I wouldn't have walked, yeah.

Wife: He would have fallen into that and never, never got out, you know?

Or break a leg, you know, or something in between the storms. Oh, he was smart, he saved me a few times. Those bears, Holy Christ, he used to warn me, you know? And then he go out on watch where the bear was, you know, 'cause I was going towards it and then after that he took after the bear, you know?

He actually took after the bear?

Oh yeah, he took after the bear, you know. Well because I was so close, you know?

-Man, 83, and Wife, 79

Woman's Best Friend, Too

One time, I drove out to Halfway, some place there, right? Our oak field, rather, and I went pickin' berries and there was a big patch of berries.

And I'm pickin' and pickin' and I have this- Sparky with me, eh, our dog, eh? And he's steady after me like to go, go, go, eh? He didn't leave me alone, eh, and I didn't know why, and I said, "Get out of the way, you're just dropping my berries," you know?

So anyways, and then he almost, like, was going to grab me, you know, like, my clothes, eh? And I thought, 'well, something has to be wrong'. So when I got up and I looked up, there was a bear right above us, eh?

Oh my God, then I knew what the dog was telling me, eh? I just took my pails and I ran to the car, never went back after that.

-Woman, 79

Bear In a Trap

The Ministry of Natural Resources, at the beginning it was the Lands and Forests, actually, and then they changed it to the Ministry of Natural Resources, hired a staff to trap these bears. And they used these culvert traps, and they would put bait inside. In the morning, when we would come, of course they would bring it from the campground to our summer headquarters there. And every morning, we looked forward to seeing if the culvert had a bear in it or not. And-

Yeah, did you ever find one?

Oh, there was always a bear in the culvert. And I remember sticking my nose a little too close to the grate of the culvert. And there was this bear inside, and he didn't particularly like what I was doing and he took a huge swap with his paw right on the grate, and just scared the heck out of me! And it's quite a thing to see an angry bear, who who would prefer to be someplace else other than in that culvert trap. And bears don't smell nice, either, by the way. They are pretty-

Friend: Rancid.

Yeah. It's not a pleasant smell!

-Man, 61

Surrounded

And, but when I
was younger, me and
another guy were there.
We're walking up this one
trail, we were just going on for a
walk and we walked really far and
we didn't have no lunch, no water, no
nothing.

And then the bush there's this
beech trees, they call
this a beech tree, it's a
small gray bark. And
there's beech nuts and
it looks like diamonds.

It's a shape of a diamond and you break it open
and there's wee, wee little seed in there that's
a white seed. The diamond itself is kind of a
dark brown colour, and when you open it, it
is real good, it's good stuff, eh?

So, I said to the young lad we
were goin', I say, "You know what? I know
where all this beech trees are." And I
said, "we're hungry, we're going to fill
up our pockets and then we'll go
back to the camp. If we can eat it,
we're golden."

And of course I
have my gun with me,
but I don't shoot

anything for now.

So we were there and,
of course, in the fall, all
the leaves are down so you're
digging in the leaves. And, of
course, the bears did the same thing
and the deer, and most of the animals,
eh? So, we were not paying attention, I
was down diggin', diggin', diggin' and filling
up our pockets until
they're full. And I got
up, and we both got up
and looked around and
one, two, three, four,
five, six, seven, bears all doing the same thing
we're doin'!

So, I just, you know what? *Dum dum
dum dum dum* then step toward you, but
didn't shoot them 'cause I wasn't good at
that time, eh? And then we just *dum dum
dum* we left! They never paid attention to
us! They were so busy eating just like we
were! We've never seen them come.

-Man, 68

My wife once thought she saw a wolf. We have a black lab, and there are black wolves, and she saw this black dog cross in front of her, a little bit of a distance away. And she thought it was our black dog, but then she turned around and our dog was behind her!

-Man, 58



Lunch Time Bear

Oh, yes, I encountered a bear so close that I- luckily, he woke up before I did. I was just going to go down like that on him and he jumped out. That was lucky. That was the closest I've come and I don't want to come closer!

And now since I've been living here the last eleven years, I think it was about 2005, there was a bear came at lunchtime and rapped on my door. He was smelling me and the scent on the doorknob. And it sounded like a rap, because I had just made my lunch, sandwich, and I had the newspaper here and I had the radio on for twelve o'clock news. And I thought, 'Who is bothering me?' So I jumped up. Luckily, I didn't open the door. I went and I looked out the window and all I could see was the bear's butt!

-Woman, 69

Early Warning

In my boat a few years ago, I was coming down the Madawaska halfway between the lake and Combermere. And there was this black object in front of me, only about forty feet in front of me.

It's a bear! And there were people up on a cliff on the right-hand side, and the bear sort of walked up the cliff to them. And they had binoculars and they didn't see this bear coming towards them. They were looking down the river. And I said, "The bear! The bear!" So they jumped almost out of their skin and ran, ran in the house.

-Man, 60s

Who's Chasing Whom?

But this one time, I had two dogs, one of them our own and one of my daughter's. And we were going down, and all of a sudden, the dog ran up a bit of an incline behind some trees. Dogs do that, they put on a lot more miles than we do when we go for a walk. And the first thing, you know, I see a bear come running down the hill. So with the other dog, which was now an older dog, so that's why she was still with me and not racing ahead, so I just started backing up quickly, and the bear was huge!

And I couldn't tell if the bear was chasing the other dog or whether the dog was chasing the bear, I don't know! And then I lost sight of it, and the first thing you know, the other dog came along. So we just headed back to the house and then we continued the walk up the road, the paved road.

And on the farm, there were a couple of cars that were abounded there. I thought if I could make it to the cars, I could get inside the cars. So I checked the doors, but the doors were locked! Imagine old derelict cars sitting outside a farm house and the doors are locked!

So what did you do?

Oh, I just headed back to the house and never saw the bear again, so I'm guessing the bear was scared of us.

-Man, 58

Bear Thief

I could see a million bears when I was at Algonquin Park, I was a foreman. There was no side roads before. Well I mark 'em, most of them out.

So, when you're walking alone, years back, that park was full of bears. They had the Killarney Lodge, they had a garbage dump. If you went to the dump there was at least thirty-six, forty big bears in there. And we had the camp, we were camping. We always had a lot of bears coming in.

Wife: He was even left in charge of watching that the bear, that the bear wouldn't carry out the beef and the pork.

At Algonquin Park, yeah, we got paid to stay, the two of us, stay there in the camp to watch the bears so they wouldn't break in and eat all that stuff. I would put the radio on, and fell asleep, and then in the morning, everything was gone!

Wife: The bear had carried everything out!

So that happened often?

No, no, no. No, no, because that's the only time we did, we fell asleep.

Wife: I know, but it happens a lot in- Oh yeah, if somebody wasn't there, yeah. It happens. But we would set a trap or snare around, lots of bears, the bad ones, the thieves would come.

-Man, 70s

05-
Child-

hood

“I usually biked in the summer or
snowmobiled in the winter.”

-Man, 53

First Impressions

That's a funny story, actually. We were two years old, I think, yeah, we were both two. And their family just moved in from across the street, like, his mom was originally from this area but moved to Toronto, or lived in Toronto her whole life. But her family was from here, so they moved back, and they came over for the first time with my parents, invited them over just for a drink or whatever.

And we saw each other and we were fine the whole night. And then when we were about to leave, my mom and his mom were both standing in, like, the doorway leaving my house, and we both grabbed a shoe and tried to go at it at each other. So, that was kind of our first memory.

-Man, 16

“... that was kind of our first memory.”

Hide and Seek

In Wilno the train that the cars that were there, like, you know, the boxcars for lumber and all that. Well they turned 'round, got a guy in there and they locked him in!

Really?

Oh yeah, until the parents started. So then they had to go to the guy that was, what did they call him? The Dispatch?

Friend: My grandfather probably. Station master.

Yes, station masters, yes that's right. He would go, and they had to rap on his door and tell him that they locked him in. And whatever happened, they couldn't open it, so he had to come and he'd grumble at them and laughed and give them hell and "Don't do it again." And they were there the next day, like, "Please give him help" But they knew you couldn't stop them from doing, because kids are kids! And the next day when he'd see the kids, he'd laugh and he'd shake his head.

"Don't be doing that!"

-Man, 70

I remember when that war was. It was couple of lads here, they had to go to the war. And this lad said, "Basil, you know what? You just get yourself a birth certificate and put one year behind." And it worked. They didn't bother me.

-Man, 86



Snake In His Shoes

Oh, I can remember playing ball, it was here in the field. We had a little ball field. And we didn't go to the church, it was only the neighbourhood we played. And this young man, Louis Pankowski, he used to have his shoes and he'd only have one lace in them. And they were, you know, running around and somebody hit the fly ball and he had to go in, partly in the marsh. He come out and he was running and screaming, and a little copper snake got into it. And then, and every time he stepped, it would- on it it would move. We had to catch him, and then he had the shoes knotted on, we had to cut the laces off to let the snake out. *Tchhh*, [the snake] gone into the lake.

So I guess he didn't step on it, then?

Well, every time he stepped on it, it would move! So, he was runnin' around on one foot!

-Man, 76

It Was That Wink

So, how did you two meet?

Wife: I used to deliver the attendance paper to every classroom every morning. And, ah, I don't know! And, you know, as soon as I would walk into the classroom, well, all the boys would be whistling away, eh? That was normal, eh? You know, just-

Husband: It must've been the hair that caught her attention.

Wife: I had beautiful, long hair that I could sit on. Long, long, long, long, long hair.

Husband: Long, very long hair.

Wife: Yeah. And it was perfectly straight, you know, just nice, thick. And...it was that wink.

-Husband, 61 and Wife, 62





Flying Without Permission

They [brother and friend's father] were the same age. And a friend of my dad's, Flynn Sadowski was his name, he had a plane that he made. He built that plane, eh? Flynn?

Friend: I don't know, that I don't know. Yeah, I think so. Anyway, he had a plane and, of course, that was the real novelty in Barry's Bay. And those guys, my brother Patrick and Allan, her dad, would have been probably in about grade seven or eight. So maybe 10, no, 12, I guess, 'cause we didn't have kindergarten.

And they went down, the two of them went down to where he used to dock the plane, the wharf, and they talked him into taking them up in the plane. And when my brother came home and said Flynn had taken him up the plane, my dad just went ballistic. "How can you go?" I remember that, "How can you do that? How he's crazy. I'll go talk to him." And they were friends, so it was, like, settled right there and then.

There was no animosity or anything, and Flynn knew he had done the wrong thing by taking the boys without permission, but who knows? They might have lied. They might have said that our dad said it was okay. And apparently, according to Allison, the same thing happened to her dad. He told her that, you know, when he got home, he got a few cracks across the butt for that.

-Woman, 65

Sink or Swim

I'll tell you how I learned to swim. Well, nobody taught us here how to swim. Here, you had to learn all by yourself. Anyway, I was down at the beach and I was on a log. And I went out to the- floating out there, it was large enough, I could paddle on top of the log. It was just going along real well, and I fell off! And the water was over my head! Hoh! I just got up and I started just paddling like a dog. And I got up on top of the water. "Ah," I said to myself, "You know, you can swim!"

-Man, 81

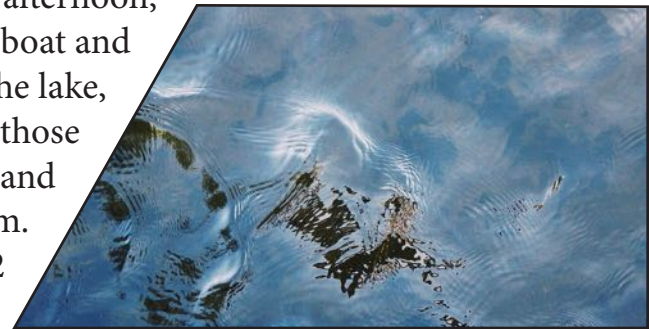


Swimming Lessons

Do you remember when you learned how to swim?

Yes, my dad would take us out and we used to go from the farm cottage to that time- or not the cottage, the farmhouse, he used to take us down and we used to have like, a picnic. And we used to on Saturdays or Sundays in the summer, they used to take us down, and we could never go alone, down to the lake. And right out front, put the blanket, and that's where we stayed for the day. Sunday afternoon, usually, or Saturday, or whatever. And he used to have the boat and the little motor and he took us out and threw us out in the lake, and that's how you learned how to swim. We used to have those tubes from tires. And that's what he'd throw out in the lake, and you'd grab onto that, and that's how you learned how to swim.

-Woman, 62



“...you have to learn
all by yourself.”



C an't Wait

I can never understand why young people, they don't know what they want to do with themselves. Because I had my tonsils out in the hospital, they did it in Pembroke. And that was kind of shock too, you know, going into a hospital, and then being a woman, a very private place. And in the middle of the night, this nurse came up. And I looked up at her and she had a white cap on, and she looked so nice. And I said to myself, "I'm going to be like you some day". I wanted to be a nurse really bad.

-Woman, 84

Mummy Mischief

See, we didn't have hydro then, eh? So mother would give us a little lamp and we went to bed, boys in the room.

Friend: Like a coal oil lamp.
Coal oil lamp. You couldn't get out of bed because of knockin' that thing over and startin' a fire. Well I decided, mom was gone some place and dad was off. And if mother was there, she was quite a big woman, she'd start going upstairs just like that Jack in the Beanstalk, *boom boom boom!* And we'd get under the blankets and when we got under the blankets, I sat one time with my brother, we used to go close up, and we put the blankets and we'd roll ourselves in the blanket, eh, you know? Like two mummies, eh? And she'd get the little stick and she'd pound it, well she wanted the blanket off while we'd stay stiff, and she'd have to pull two of us. So she'd drop us down and she'd be banging with this little stick,

E avesdropping

People used to get together, and they'd visit, they had more time than we have now. And people were happy, they were talking about different things, you know?

And as kids, when I was growing up, like we weren't allowed to be listening what they were talking, eh? But I always managed to sneak somewhere, you know, and I was listening to them!

-Woman, 79

“...she'd start going upstairs just like that Jack in the Beanstalk...”

eh? And we pretend we're crying, she wouldn't get out the thing, and we're laughing back. So anyway, Dad would be shouting, "Boys!" Oh no, and I'm on the dresser and you know, the big mirror, eh? And then it would put a cast on the wall, eh? And I was dancing and you know the shadows, oh they were big and I'm doing—we're laughing. The three of us are laughing.

Dad sneaks up, eh? He gets in the room - he had a stick but I knew damn well he wouldn't have - and I jumped into the bed and I went right through, *boom*, right through. Dad took one look and he turns up, walks over, and I'm like this in bed sleeping. "He learned the lesson," he had caught us jumping in the bed so the next day he fixed the bed, but he wouldn't fix it that night, no.

So you slept on the floor?

Well it was all canted, eh? Punishment was there. But next day, he said, "Don't be doing that. We don't want any fires, eh?"

-Man, 70

Celebra- tions

“Just a fiddle and a guitar, and
square-dancing and waltzing...”

-Woman, 84

“... it was almost like this magical land...”

M

agical Land

I remember Stedmans, the V and S store, before they only had the main level, and the basement was reserved for Christmas. I remember it was only opened, just maybe it was a month before Christmas. And then there was toys and all this, it was so exciting 'cause it was almost like this magical land. And then now it seems like, even when you go at Christmas, it's no different than any other time. Everything is, you know, the same! I don't find really any change, maybe the decorations

and that, but Christmas just seemed to be a special time. And the owner of Stedmans, his wife used to bake goodies and there was, like, a Christmas party. They had it opened on a Sunday which was, you know, before nothing was opened on Sundays. So his wife would bake all kinds of delicious treats and you'd come there on that Sunday party at Stedmans, and they had the basement opened. And there was Christmas trees and, like I say, the toys, you could just imagine. You could be writing to Santa about these special toys that were there that were never there at any other time during the year.

-Woman, 53

“...that was never there at any other time during the year.”

“Christmastime we have a big dinner here. We've done it, what, two, three years in a row now? Jessa and I put a Christmas dinner on here and everybody, so there's fifty, sixty people in the house here.”

-Man, 50

Christmas Lights

Probably our favourite, and if you talk to any of my siblings, our favourite Christmas memory would be the year my dad put up Christmas lights outside, around the outside of the roof of the house.

Nobody had Christmas lights in 1965 or '64, or very few people in Barry's Bay. I don't know about Toronto, but I know in Barry's Bay- like I say, we went to Toronto to see the windows in Eaton's and Simpson's because it was, you know, people didn't decorate now like they do.

And we thought pretty well magic had landed. Christmas lights were on and they were all different colours. There was none of these, you know, designer Christmas decorations.

It was literally magic. You know, you'd go to bed and we had a bungalow, and so the bedrooms were all on the ground level, and the roof was just like it is here. And you'd turn the lights out and you'd leave the curtains open and, oh my gosh,

it was like all these lights in your room. It was so, so wonderful!

And to this day, all of my siblings, our favourite Christmas lights are the coloured ones, 'cause it just reminds us of when we were young.

And then my dad got somebody - I think it was Frances Rojek - got him to, on plywood, cut out a big, huge star. And then he put Christmas lights, my dad, around the star.

And then he carried it up the TV tower, 'cause we had gotten a TV by that time. And we had this huge tower, and he climbed up the tower with this star. And I guess wired it onto the tower so that, you know, you'd go outside- oh, that was another magical thing!

-Woman, 61

“...It was literally
magic....”



Elvis Wedding

I can remember one couple in Renfrew, they were getting married, an older couple. And they came along and she presented the music she wanted for music, eh?

“That was an interesting one.”

And so, anyway, soon as she mentioned the thing, she wanted to come down the aisle by a song by Elvis Presley. I said, “I’m sorry,

that’s out.” And, in fact, it was the bishop at the time, he says, “If we’re going to celebrate that wedding.” And so anyway, I told him, he says, “You did the right thing.” But she was in her seventies. And she wanted to come down- Elvis Presley! I said, “No way!” That was an interesting one.

-Man, 74

It Was Different Then

I got married in St Hedwig’s Church and we had the wedding on the farm. We had the platform outside and that’s there for three days. That’s the way they had a wedding. You had a

wedding on Tuesday morning at nine o’clock, and you all day danced.

And then Wednesday, they danced. And on Thursday,

we went to Ottawa on the train, I and my husband. And we came home Saturday. And then Sunday, we had another reception, another dance.

“...and you all day danced.”

-Woman, 84

Where's the Priest?

We got married here in Barry's Bay, our reception was here in Barry's Bay. It was super nice in the morning, so nice, gorgeous. Sun was shining, you know, there was a few clouds. We go into our wedding ceremony, which was in Combermere, at the church, St. Marters, and come out, it was pouring rain. And our ceremony was over an hour long because we couldn't find a priest.

Our regular priest Father Kirk O'Connor had broken his collarbone.

Oh no, the day of?

No, no, we'd known about it

but we had some issues. And there was a deacon who isn't a priest, he can be married and can have children or whatever, he wanted to marry us and I didn't approve of that. I wanted a priest. So he got upset and he got a priest from Madonna House that had never done a wedding ceremony before.

Were you okay with this?

No, but what am I to do? I wanted to get married! You know, all my family and friends were in the church, so, like we had to! But everybody remembers our wedding ceremony because it was so long.

-Woman, 30

First Communion

When he had his first communion - grade two - he went up to the priest and gave his communion. He came back, and he said, "I only got two 'Hail Mary's, dad!" And he said,

"You didn't tell him everything!"

-Woman, 50

Bells Would Be Ringing

We used to go to midnight mass with the horses. That, we liked.
Did you ride, like, on a sleigh?

Yeah, on a sleigh. And then there was a stable at the church. You tied up the horses and we went to mass and then you came out. And then you had bells on the horses. And everybody would be driving and their bells would be ringing. It would be nice. That would be nice.

-Woman, 84

07
Oops...

“We’ve just learned to pick ourselves up and keep mowing the field.”

-Man, 20



Church Burned Down

Husband: My parents went to church that time of day, that was in the Sunday morning. My parents went to church, and I stayed at home. And then they came back shortly after, and I said, “Mom, the church is burning!”

How did it start burning?

Husband: Oh, that was just fire, there was no electric at that time. Just the fire-burning stove.

Wife: It was probably from the stove, eh? Yeah.

Was it in the summer or the wintertime?

Husband: That was in the winter.

Wife: The winter, yeah. That was in February. January or February, yeah. I think it was February, yeah.

-Husband, 86, and Wife, 79

Teeter-Totter Troubles

I guess I was bugging them to have a turn on the teeter-totter, so they let me go on. They put me up really high and then they jumped off, and I fell. It's a wonder why I wasn't killed or badly hurt! I flipped back, I was knocked unconscious and they brought me into the house. And I woke up with my mother yelling at them over me, and I still remember that, “How could you do that! You're so stupid, you killed your sister!” And I'm like, “No it's okay, I'm awake now.”

Were you hurt badly?

I might have been. I mean, I might have been, who knows? No one ever took me to the doctor, like, you could have concussions. I don't think so, you know, I've had a lot of back problems now which could trigger to some of that!

-Woman, 65

Bull Attack

Oh not my mom's farm, but my dad's farm, they had cows. And I remember, me and my siblings were in the field, and the bull started charging at us. And I remember I was just running to the fence, my brother Mason throwing me over.

Really?

And they just tried getting it over as fast as they could.

Did they follow you?

No thank goodness! He didn't try to go through the fence, he just stayed back and we were safe.

-Woman, 17



Chainsaw vs. Quarters

Like, I've had close calls. One in particular, I was limbing a tree. Limbing a tree is when you cut the tree down and you walk along the trunk part and cut all the little branches off. And I was just walking along and I just happened to have, like, twenty-five quarters in my pocket that day. You know, I was just coffee money, kind of, whatever. So, it was all spread out to my pocket along the bottom part. And I was walking along and I kind of stumbled, and slipped and the chainsaw bounced off my leg, and bounced off every f***** quarter. *P-ting!* Yeah.

That's good.

Yeah. I was, like, lucky as well.

-Man, 33



Wipeout

There's a bridge in Combermere and I live just on, if you're going out of Combermere... you see that big, what's it called, big kind of like motel thing with all the vines down the side of it? I live down that road. And there's a bunch of people jumping off the bridge, and me and my friend Callum, we're coming back from the store, and we had, like, a bunch of candy in a bag or something. And I was coming down on the hill, and the bag got caught on the spokes and I went right over the top! All the people who were jumping off the bridge saw me, it's pretty embarrassing, but...

That must have hurt.

Yeah, I think I was more worried about the people, all the people, watching me than...yeah.

63

-Man, 18



Lightning in the Room

Yes, we used to, 'cause there used to be severe storms. And way down below the farmhouse, we used to have a cottage. It was just a small building that my dad had built.

And we were down there one time, and my brother and my cousin were playing. Like we used to have those steel bed, you know, those old-fashioned iron beds. And bolts of lightning came right through and it knocked Toby, he was unconscious.

He was very lucky to be alive.

But it knocked most of us just on the floor 'cause there was no oxygen in the room, 'cause it just went right through.

That was horrible, that time. I remember that one, yeah. And it used to, always, when a storm would come, 'cause we used to be very afraid 'cause we'd always seemed to get hit.

-Woman, 62

Got Away

My mother learned to drive after my father died, so she was, like, fifty-three or whatever when she got her license. And she was never a really good driver, heavy foot, and she used to take the boys to hockey.

One time, she got stopped by the police and she didn't have her seat belt on, but it was a guy from Killaloe that we knew. So she said to him, "Oh," she said, "it's so hard on my chest, I just can't put it on. You know, it just pains me to put it on!" He said, "Well, go ahead then, and don't be speeding." You know, like she would have excuses! Oh my God.

-Man, 65

Lightning Likes Us

And lightning really likes us for some reason. Like, me and my dad were fishing and there was a storm coming, so we got out. And I was holding an aluminum boat in the water and he was up getting the trailer. And it's coming closer, like, "Okay, hurry up dad, or I'm gonna get hit by lightning!"

Well, here's something. I let go of the boat, yup, it was a good idea. Lightning hit, like, four feet from behind the boat.

-Woman, 16

Reservations for Seven O'Clock

It was my
wife's birthday, and
I planned a birthday
party for her at a neighbour's
house on the island, on the
lake. And we had guests that were
staying, ten people in all. Anyways,
I made up the story that, "Okay, Bree,
we're going to take you out for dinner.
And I made reservations at the local
restaurant for seven
o'clock."

So, anyways,
oh my God the worst
storm, electrical storm,
lightning, wind, hail, the whole bit, eh? Just
horrible. Anyway, okay, I said, "Bree, it's almost
seven o'clock, we better get going." We left the
house here at seven o'clock to go to the party
that was going on at my friend's house. And
the rain was coming down, oh, just tons of
rain. So we made it there, and they had a
tent up and everything, so that was fine,
we were out of the rain.

But I wasn't even there for
five minutes, police crew comes
up, and the officer gets out
and calls me over, "James, I
want to speak to you
for a minute."

He says,
"it's something
sad to tell you. I think
your house has been hit by
lightning, eh?"

So we jumped in the cruiser,
crossed over here. I could see from a
distance, I could see the black plume of
smoke going up into the sky. I just said to
myself, "Ah, what the that's it, it's finished,
it's done. House is

“...the minute hand was frozen at gone.”
twelve minutes after seven.”

And we left the
house at seven. We
have a mechanical
clock, Chinese mechanical clock. And the
minute hand was frozen at twelve minutes
after seven. So we left the house at seven, at
twelve minutes after seven, that lightning
our neighbour saw it. She actually saw the
actual ball of energy hit in two spots in the
house here. It blew it. If we had been here,
of course, we wouldn't be here anymore,
that would've been it.

And, so it's a funny feeling
waking up in the morning and
all you have is the clothes on
your back and not even a
toothbrush, you know?

-Man, 76



Pow!

Because I worked with the paving crew, and I was a heavy machine operator, but I also drove truck. And I was putting a liquid tax sealer that joins the cold pavement with the hot pavement, and I was spraying that. And I just turned the sprayer on, and because I had to do it manually from the back of the truck, and I made one step out from the shoulder out onto the highway. And because it's spraying and I'm at the back, I gotta get into the truck and start moving. And it was just a *pow!* And this here muscle, I blew it. And I went down to the point that I grabbed it like this and I looked. There's gotta be blood, because, for the noise, you know. And, no, it was just the noise and the muscle, blown.

You heard it?

Oh yeah, heard the pop, yeah.

-Man, 56

O**h, Just Broke My Ribs**

So, I got my skidoo out. Like, we had like no snow. We had probably five centimeters of snow, which is definitely not enough to go skidooing. But we just got a layer of freezing rain, and just the following fall I had studded my tracks so I'm like, "Oh, it'll hook up really good on the freezing rain." No snow, no helmet, no gloves, no coat. Jeans... I'm like, "Yeah I'll go for about a five minute rip and I'll come right back".

So, I got these, like, brand new snowmobile boots on so they're really, like, slippery still 'cause they're not broken in or anything. So I'm, like, bootin' her across the street at eighty kilometers an hour. And I'm going to step over to the other side, like, of the running board, to shift my weight to turn. And my one foot completely misses the running board, 'cause of the new boots, and catches on the freezing rain. I don't know if you guys know but we got about three millimeters

of freezing rain, and when it goes on snow, it makes kind of, like, a really hard crust. And then the snow underneath is still really fluffy, so as soon as your foot goes through it, then it all catches right here, and then, like, pulls, right?

So my foot goes off and now it's slowing down. I'm, like, in slow motion here. And I'm like seeing my foot go towards the snow, like, "Holy wow, this is gonna hurt!" And so, foot catches the snow, my sister's up on the hill watching me. Foot catches the snow, I go this way, snowmobile goes this way. I do, like, three cart rolls, and so I come to a dead stop. I'm on my back. Okay, I see the sky. Oh, I'm still alive! And so I get off on the snowmobile I'm like "Ok, I'm fine, we're all good."

Go back to the house, go back inside, sit down and my ribs just... oh, like, they're on fire now by the time I get back, they're just on fire. We go to the doctor, and like, "Well, you just dislocated about half your ribs."

-Man, 16

I t Was a Shock

So, in auto class, teachers can bring in stuff that they need fixed, 'cause we don't charge a shop fee or anything, so it's pretty much free maintenance for them.

So, one of my buddies, I was working on a teacher's little Husqvarna weed eater, and it wasn't starting for some reason.

“... we have no idea if it's sparking or not.”

So, the first thing we do is check for spark. So, the spark plug is kind of arced a little, and that makes the fire, and that makes it go *boom*, makes it go. So we take the spark plug out of the ho-

Girlfriend: (laughs)

Shut up or I'm not gonna be able to tell the story! We take the spark plug out, we put it back in the spark plug wire, and we touch it to the cylinder, because it has to be grounded to make the spark. And Mitt pulls it over a couple times, and we're trying to see in there but it's this really small hole and it's- where it's touching, we can't see anything.

So we're like, “Okay, we have no idea if it's sparking or not.” So, now we're working on a steel bench, mind you, okay? And so we're like, “Okay, what are we gonna ground this thing to?” So that we can see if it's gonna spark. And I noticed that there's a ratchet laying there with the spark plug

socket on, that we use to take out the spark plug.

And I'm like, “Oh, well this is metal, and it'll ground to this no problem.” And so, not thinking that electricity has to ground through something, I take the spark plug and the wire in one hand, holding the wrench and socket in my other hand, touch the spark plug to the ratchet and socket - not touching it to anything else, just my hand, not touching it ingeniously to the metal bench that I could be - and I'm touching it with, like, my waist area here.

Okay. And I've got a metal zipper, keep this in mind, okay, this will make more sense later.

Okay, bear with me here. So I'm touching the spark plug to the socket I'm holding in my other hand.

And I'm like, “Okay Mitt, give her a rip!”

Girlfriend: And he's wearing his dog tags.

And I'm wearing my dog tags, keep in mind ok. So he pulls on it and all I hear is *zip zip zip!* and three little bolts of electricity go up my arm, through my dog tag, down and out through my zipper, obviously, and you can guess where they went to! And *zip zip zip!* into the table!

And so, if you've ever seen a guy jump, oh my gosh.

-Man, 16

08 Winter

Wife: You know, you really get to appreciate
where you live, like, out here in the
country.

“Husband: We got spring, summer, fall,
winter, that’s what we want.”

-Husband 57, and Wife 53

Endless Ice

This past winter, we had about two feet of ice, or a little more depending on the lakes. Some of the bigger lakes, there was upwards of twenty-seven inches. And the lake I was fishing on for most of the winter, it stuck around the twenty-four inches, but it eventually went up to twenty-six. And some of the other lakes went up to about twenty-nine, thirty inches of ice.

Guest: You can drive vehicles on there, right?

Yeah... 'cause I was driving right out

“When you’re driving
you’ll hear the cracking”

with the truck all winter long from here. Yeah, 'cause the rule of thumb with any of, like, a truck or a car, it's usually wait 'til about twelve inches of ice and then you're safe.

When you're driving, you'll hear the cracking and whatnot, but you don't have to worry about it. Some people get freaked out and then they're, like, waiting to jump out if the vehicle goes down. I said “Don't worry about it, just take your seatbelt off, crack the windows a little bit so if so happens, you can open the doors and you get to jump out right away.”

-Man, 24

Near Miss

There was a time I recall, we had a lot of snow, and we were trying to make it up a hill. And I was in the back of the vehicle, and it didn't have adequate tires, and we lost traction and we started to slide down the hill and, um, very narrow type road. And then on the other side, there was, a huge drop-off into a bit of a ravine hill. And I thought for sure that the whole vehicle was going to slide down that embankment and end up crashing. But fortunately, we were able to gain some traction and we end up sliding off the road. But that was pretty scary.

-Man, 46

“Oh, we don't get snow
like we used to. And
then we had a crust, you
know, sometimes I know
we were skating on the
crust. It would freeze here.”

-Man, 83

Bob Skates

I can remember one year in the forties, I was only a kid on the bob- just I can remember, bob skates, you know, have you ever seen a bob skates? They had four runners on them. And my sisters are skating, and we're skating out in the field behind us because there was an ice storm, and we could walk and skate and everything on the crust.

So it was really thick, then? Solid?

Oh, yeah, it was about an inch thick. It killed a lot of partridges and stuff like that, too, because the partridges buried themselves in the snow and then the crust came, they couldn't get back out.

-Man, 76

Skiing Nun

I remember the time I started out [skiing]. It was in elementary, no, I guess it was grade nine then, and they had built a new little school near the old St. Joseph's elementary school.

And I was looking out the window, and I didn't know why people wanted to ski. I thought, 'Why not just take a toboggan and stand up on a toboggan? Why get skis?'

But then there was a nun from the hospital, Sister Roselyn, and she had a white habit. The ones at the hospital had white habits, and the other ones at St Joseph's nuns had black habits. And she was coming to visit the nuns. And I was looking out the window of the classroom, and she came around the corner on skis and it was an eye opener.

I didn't know, on flat ground, that you could move so fast on skis! And it was downhill skis that she had on, it wasn't cross-country skis.

And this nun was amazing! During winter festivals, she would get people out on the lake, on skidoos and trucks to pull her on a rope, on her skis so she'd go out for a ski on the lake! And when I saw what skiing was like, then I got a pair of skis.

-Man, 58

“Why gets skis?”

W

inter Roads

And speaking of going in the bush and cutting our wood, in those days, you would always bring your wood out for the next year the winter before, because you could travel through the bush with sleighs where

“That’s how we got our wood in...”

you couldn’t once the snow melted because it was too rough, too rugged.

But you could pack your trails, and go with your horses in sleigh, and load the wood on the sleigh and bring it home. But the lay of our land there, we had to come down around, which is presently today the highway, but back in those days, it didn’t matter where you could go with the sleigh. There was snow on the road, and lots of it, so.

That’s how we got our wood in, to keep warm. The snow is there, and then you would have to- well, they referred to them as a winter road. And even in the logging industry, in the winter, they made the winter roads out of snow.

-Man, 63

S

leigh Rides

Now, when my sister started school, rather than her having to walk across the fields, I used to take the sleigh and a horse.

And my grandfather lived not too far from the school, so I’d leave the horse and sleigh there and he’d look after it during the day, and feed it, and get it all ready for me when I walked back to his house. And then I’d drive the horse and sleigh, with, of course, my sister as well, back home again.

So some days were pretty cold where we’d tuck in underneath the, ah, we’d call it a buffalo blanket in

“... we’d tuck in underneath the ah we’d call it a buffalo blanket ...”

those days, ‘cause it was made out of, I guess it was made out of hide.

Friend: Yeah, I’m not sure what kind of hide it was, but I don’t think it was buffalo hide. It probably was some other hide.

They called it buffalo hide, but it was definitely a heavy type of hide blanket that you’d hide underneath.

-Man, 66

Well, before we had like a January thaw,
and when that rain came, then we had that very
heavy crust on the snow. You could walk on it,
and slide, do everything, eh? Now you don't get it.
-Woman, 79



Breaking The Ice “...that’s how cold it was.”
And winter time, if you wanted a drink of water first thing in the morning, you had to break through the ice in the pail, in the bucket, because it was frozen solid. Before, when you make the fire in the cookstove, you know, to fill the kettle for tea or chocolate or whatever in the morning, you had to break the ice in the bucket in the pail in order to put the water in the kettle. ‘cause that’s how cold it was. It was very cold

-Woman, 53

Back on the Ice

I was actually working at the rink and then, the team that I used to play on, they were losing terribly. Like, every game they lost, they lost, they lost. Finally, the coach came up and begged me to come back and play, so I said “Aw, whatever, you guys, like you need a little boost.” So, they recruited myself and another player.

And for the first game, I showed up, forgot my shoulder pads. Thank God we were in town here, so I just raced back home with all my equipment on, threw my stuff on, went back to the rink, and jumped out on the ice, and they were already losing by that time. So, they were like, “Okay! Get up! Go and play!”

So, play was down at our end. So I was left wing and the puck just happened to come to me, and so I was like, “Oh, yeah.” I haven’t even practised yet. I knew it was first time back on the ice, so I- going up the ice and flip the puck on the boards, pass the defence men, pick up the puck, skate all the way into the zone, come into the goalie and score a final goal!

We never lost a game after that.

-Man, 33

“... so I was pumped up, right?”

Better Hide

I remember one snow day, I woke up and my dad said it’s a snow day, so I was pumped up, right?

But I couldn’t, like, I couldn’t fall back asleep. So me and my buddy, we were outside, just playing around in my yard, and we see the bus coming. I’m like, “Oh s***, it’s not a snow day.” So we hid behind my car and the bus started honkin’ the horn at us ‘cause she saw us, and we just hid out, we just hid there until she drove away.

-Man, 16

School Days

“We used to run away from home because, in the morning, if it snowed hard or if it rained, my parents wouldn’t- you know, you stay home. And we would run because we wanted to go to school!”

-Woman, 62





Pipes Expanded

Many a time, even though we came from the farm, which was about two and half, three miles, we'd walk to school in the winter and we'd be the first ones there.

And all the town kids, who would be waiting for us to make sure that the heat was on, and we made the fire. I mean, students making fires in schools was, you know, it's something that's not heard of these days.

And I remember one time, we loaded it up too much and it got really, really hot, and the pipes expanded. And I'm not sure if you're aware of it, but we had a stove near the back of the room, and we'd have maybe three, or four, or five sections of stove pipe that were connected that went to the chimney.

And this one time, I guess the heat was so high that one of the sections expanded to the point where it actually slid over the top of the other one. So you had this gap between the stove pipes. And it was really interesting because we could feel the heat coming off that, of course, and this- my friend of mine got the crazy idea of, "Well, let's see, we'll take a little piece of paper and just stick it there." Well, as soon as he put the little piece of paper and stuck it in there, it was sucked up the chimney because it was such a strong draft.

But anyway, when one of the senior kids from town came there and he says, "Oh my goodness, what happened here?" So, he was able to kind of control it. But I mean, school went on!

-Man, 66

Roy Rogers and Jersey Milk

I went to St. John Boscoe, the Catholic school. It was just opened, I think, a year or two before I started, because I remember my mom and my aunt, we went to take a look at the school because it was in the summer and it was just opening that fall. But I wasn't going to school I think 'til the next year, which was 1967, so I think it must have been 1966 it opened. And I remember us going there and we were somehow trying to peak in the windows and see this brand new school that I was going to go to, you know?

So it was very interesting to have this school so close to home because we could take this path kind of thing, so I'd go home for lunch, I'll have time. So in grade one, I remember my dad dropping me off at school and I had a Roy Rogers school bag, it had Roy Rogers and this horse on the front of the school bag. And my mother says, "I'm giving you a Jersey Milk bar and you could have it a recess. Don't eat it during school, though, because the teachers won't like that."

-Woman, 53

“I’m giving you a Jersey Milk bar...”

It Didn't Work

And then I went back to be the principle in Combermere, and this one year everybody thought, "Well, let's do something different," because they were all tired of doing concerts and they were always complaining. So I would say, "Well, let's try something different this year."

So we thought we would have a sing-song outside, we had bales of hay, people could sit around, we'd have a sing-song outside, then we'd come in and do the Christmas story and have hot chocolate and time to talk and that. Well, it rained or snowed or some darn thing so we couldn't go outside, we had to stay inside. So a lot of people thought, "Well, if it's not outside, they're not having it!" It was like, oh my God, so they didn't come! It was a disaster.

-Woman, 65

The Big Performance

Did you ever have a performance gone wrong?

Ah, oh gosh, yes, yes! In one of them, we were gong to some, um, it was like a competition, but it wasn't the All-Ontario. And I remember, for me anyway, the performance didn't go wrong, but I got to the front and I totally froze. I couldn't remember! And I had done this I don't know how many times! And I just- I stood there, I said, "Uh, I- I- I have to leave!" And I walked off the stage, and people thought it was part of whatever the play was. They thought it was part of the performance!

-Woman, 61

Field Trip

One time, they had some kind of, what they called it, the King or Queen Jubilee. And it was up in Boulter someplace, I remember. And they hired my uncle, he had an old ton truck, and he put benches in the back. And we sat on there, and that's the way we went.

“...that's the way we went.”

But on the way up, in Craigmont, the back wheel run off the track on a- there was a little culvert there, you know? Run over that, and they were stuck. So, we had to go to the neighbour and come with the horses to pull us out.

-Woman, 83

T

ricked

I remember Bob Hull. He was one of our hockey coaches and he was also our guidance counselor.

So anyway, I remember one afternoon, I had double woodworking in the afternoon, but I got some jobs at home to do with woodworking. And then, 'Oh, I'm not gonna stick around here.' I wanted to go home and work already, commission work. So I said to my buddy, I said, "I'm going to skip woodworking this afternoon." Well, he didn't know it for a joke and he went over to Bob, he

“...just glad you're here.”

says, "Devin wants to skip this afternoon."

So, because that would have given me the whole afternoon, more than the afternoon-- from about ten o'clock on. And so Bob said over the PA, the announcement, says, "I would like to see Devin Brotton in my office at four o'clock."

So anyway, so I went to Bob, I said, "Bob, what do you want?" "No, I'll talk to you at 4 o'clock". Okay, so I guess I gotta stay here and went to class. He came into woodworking class and I said, "Okay, what do you want?" "No, just glad you're here". And that was it. And then he says, "Oh yeah, forget about that four o'clock appointment."

Oh really?

Oh, yeah. He went along with it

-Man, 57

C

areer Plans

I knew I wanted to be a teacher in grade two. We had a teacher that- she did things differently. She had our names along the blackboard at the front, and she would have some of the students act as a teacher, and have the other students read. And then you would put a star up if they did very well. So, I knew I wanted to be a teacher right from grade two.

-Woman

D

isappeared to School

Many, many, many days, I would leave my mother, she wouldn't know where I was half the time. But finally, she found out where I would go.

I would go down to the school, and just go in there, and the teacher would give me something to do. We didn't have slates. You know what a slate is? Generally a frame, a piece of slate in a frame, and you would write with a piece of chalk on that. That was your books.

But I would find something to do, and then of course I would fall asleep, and the teacher would fold up his coat, make a pillow for me. We had big double desks at that time, two chairs sat to a desk. And he would stretch me out on a desk and I would sleep.

My mother would wonder where I was. She'd desperately go looking for me and she'd find me down at the school. When I disappeared, she knew where I was.

-Man, 86

Doodle Buddies

The best moment I've ever had with Ms McConnor was, I wasn't really paying attention in math class, and she didn't really notice I wasn't paying attention, but she knows that one of our classmates wasn't paying attention. And so I was just kinda drawing on my hand with a pen and, so I guess she was talking to the other student, and she just says, "Lyle, can you please tell Cory what I just said." And I'm like *sigh*, close the pen put it on my desk. "If you interrupt me one more time, you're staying after class!" and the whole class burst out laughing. It's what she did say to Cory but it's not what she was saying to the class. So I narrowly escaped trouble because she was also laughing, and it was good day.

-Man, 20



Matchbox Snakes

We caught a bunch of little copper snakes and put them in a matchbox and put them in her [the teacher's] drawer when she wasn't in there. She opened it up, she says, "What's this?" She opened the box up and these snakes come snapping out and she screamed! she nearly took a heart attack!

Did she catch you?

No, she didn't know who it was! Well, the whole class was kept after school for, what, three or four days? Nobody squealed.

-Man, 76



Sometimes We Were Bad

Sometimes, we were bad. I have memories of one teacher that used to come to school on a Monday morning and he'd say, "Okay children, I think we should all rest our eyes." And so of course we rested our eyes, and our teacher fell asleep! So then we would leave because there was nothing for us to do. For the longest time, my parents did not know until one day, my father and a neighbor were putting together a big tile down by the bridge. And we came out from the mountain and my father was asking, "What are you doing here? You should be in school!" And, of course, we ran! And later our teacher talked to my father and said, "You know, I will call the truant officer because your children ran away from school."

-Woman, 53



Sometimes We Were Worse

Because there was, you know, some older students, and we thought we'd surprise our teacher. And we, you know, we'd open the door, and fill a bucket of water, and set it on the top of the door. So when the teacher came in, guess where the water ended?

Yeah, so that's how I got the strap for it, and I still remember the strap was about this thick. And, you know, in our one room school, we used to have, of course, from the front, there was big black boards, but on each side there was a smaller black board. So I found a space between, on the left side of the wall of the blackboard. There was enough space, so I found the strap and I put it in behind the blackboard and the teacher never found it!

-Woman, 53

Boy vs. Nun

There was, I don't know, five or six boys, but they're really, really, really, strong, tough boys.

Wife: Farm boys.

Ox-like men, eh? And their dad was pretty rough on them, but it made them really tough. And I remember this one fellow, one of the Mohns boys that was in my grade at school, he got the strap for pulling some girl's hair or something like that. But anyway, the nun was starting to give 'er the strap.

She'd hit his hand with the leather strap and he'd laugh at her, eh, because it didn't hurt. You know, he'd laugh and she's getting madder and madder and madder and, finally, he'd laugh at her because it doesn't hurt.

So finally, she takes the strap with two hands and he pulls his hand back and she hits her knee with the strap, and they had skirts on back in those days, and she had a black welt on her leg for months! Oh, he got in trouble for that! That's a true story.

-Man, 50



Nun Down

I remember there was about three of them, and he can tell you their names, I think it was Sadowski he lived

“... it was really kinda wild.”

down on the lakeshore.

But they sat up on the hill here and one of the nuns was out in the playground on yard duty. They had

swing shots and so I can't remember what Jimmy told me they took, but they were aiming them one of them, and knocked her right off her feet. But anyway, yeah, it was really kinda wild.

-Woman, 50s

First Day

Well, I remember we were going down the road to the school and there was boys. I guess

they were hiding in the ditch, that's all I remember though, not too much in the school inside. I was the fourth youngest, so I had with- my brothers and

“...they were all going to school there.”

one sister, one sister's a long younger than I am. So then, she wasn't going to school yet, but they were all going to school there. So I remember the boys were hiding in the ditch and they jumped out, you know, to scare us!

-Woman, 79

He went and he didn't dot an 'i', and she saw that it wasn't dotted. And he went and told her, "Well, you must be blind." So she took this ruler, then hittin' him. And I thought, "Oh my God, what do I do? She's going to hit me yet!"

-Woman, 71



Not A Word

My first day in school, I didn't know a word of English.

So, do you remember that first day?

Of course, I remember it quite well. Well, the thing about is we were very fortunate. One of our teachers was Kashubian. And so she went out, learned the English language and also the subject that- they had an interesting job, because not only did they have to teach you a subject, but also a language, right?

I remember it quite well. My younger sister, she was just about four years younger than me, right? And I remember her going to school, she cried all day that first day, right? And I- "Calm down, calm down." And 'cause she didn't know a word of English, she had a hard time, right? But we somehow adjusted. We all adjusted and we picked up on the English language and then we went from there.

-Man, 63

10 Tradi- tions

“Mother: But it was lots of fun back in the morning before you went on to go- they played the fiddle and everything, you know? Like, you know the song about say goodbye to your mom and dad, and thank your mom and dad.

Daughter: All in Polish, of course.

Mother: All in Polish.”

-Mother, 84, and Daughter, 50

Spruce Tradition
One of the traditions they had, and that was Easter Sunday (speaks in Kashubian). They'd call that (speaks in Kashubian). You'd go with him and you'd try and get into a house with not cedar, but spruce branches. And you'd try to get 'em out. And, like, I mean, what we did here, but from what I could see, that's where that came from.

Oh, so you did that here?

We did, yeah. It was kind of a, you know, you'd go and you'd hope- you didn't want to break into a house or anything, you're just doing it for fun, someone that you knew.

“... just doing it for fun...”

Say, okay, “Let's take a chance and drive down to Daniel and see maybe he left his door unlocked, he's in bed.” So you get in there, you sneak up into his room, and you would go take the blankets off and a few whacks across him, cedar or the spruce branches.

-Man, 57

The Pig Spleen
And if you're killing the pig, and if you look at the spleen on the inside of the pig, some of the people can forecast the winter's weather. Predict.

“... it could be a long, cold winter.”

How do you forecast the winter's weather?

You predict the weather. How it has grown inside, whether it's long and thin, or if it's short and fat, or maybe- depends on the size.

Give me an example of a forecast, or prediction.

Well, it could be a long, cold winter.

Wife: If the spleen is long and narrow, it's going to be a long winter. And if the spell is short, it's going to be short. And thick, thick, big, round, that's going to be a cold, short winter.

-Husband, 61, and Wife, 62



D

omesticated Beehive

Wife: It's to prevent allergies. So they say it- and none of us have had allergies or asthma. Allergies, eh? And that's what every family had- majority of them have it, I bet you.

Every family?

Wife: Well, usually, it was to prevent asthma, allergies, coughs, I guess. Yeah, it was more like, medicinal purposes or something.

Husband: For me, it's only up there for looks. We had another one on the other corner that's still there. One in the other corner. Now, it isn't as big, I don't think.

Wife: I have to decorate it up.

So how does it prevent allergies?

Wife: I'm not sure how- and it does work! Because even my nieces, eh? They were always, ah, ear infections was another thing, you know? It's going to prevent your ear infection. And I don't know what it is, but.

So, you had it growing up? In your house?

Wife: Oh yeah, we had two or three in the house.

Husband: And they say if you have one of them at the door, it prevents flies from coming into the house. Or wasps. That one I picked up a year ago.

Wife: You could buy the fake bee's nests. *It works just the same?*

Wife: No. Definitely not.

Husband: No, these are real. This

one I picked up in the fall, eh? Was it this fall?

Wife: Yeah.

Husband: I know where there is another one, but I haven't been back there yet, so.

Wife: So all you do is just pick it up in the fall, you know, break it off the branch. And then, what? Make sure that the bees are all gone, eh? And leave it outside for a couple of days. And then all I do is spray hairspray, and so it keeps it intact, then.

Do you have to replace it or is it good forever?

Wife: Oh, it's been- well, those are there must be twenty years, at least.

Husband: Oh, those are there for a while. Yeah.

Wife: 'Cause we've only had the little ones, eh? Yeah.

Husband: If you can preserve them that they don't dry up too much, then they last for a long time. Hairspray.

Wife: That's why the hairspray, eh? *How did you get it?*

Husband: It was an adventure to get it, but, we got it. Oh yeah, it was up in a tree.

How did you do that?

Husband: I climbed the stone fence, and I reached over, jumped, and I caught the branch. I pulled it down as low as I could, and then I broke the branch off, and put it in my truck, come home with it. In my propane truck, I was driving the propane truck that day.

Wife: In the passenger seat, there's the big bee's nest!

- Husband 61, and Wife, 62

Balsam Trees

Martin, the other guy that's born in Round Lake, he had bad asthma. Years ago, when he was young, we always had to take him to the hospital with respiratory and all that kind of stuff, eh?

I talked to lots of the older people, of course, coming in here all the time, so I talked to everybody and they were saying, "Oh Mitchell, you got to take them to the bush and there's a special balsam tree, there's, like, bubbles on the tree and there's a syrup inside and like it, *ugh!* Wicked stuff, eh? But you only give him a little bit, eh?" So they said try some of that and that might fix him up, so, okay!

So, wheel 'er to the bush, when he got older he used to come with me. And we always go there, and I'd give him some food and I'd go to the tree and *woosh*, get a little bit, just a little bit eh, kind of mix her in and here, eat that. Well of course, he didn't want to do that but he could still taste it, but he did it! And then he lost all his asthma. I don't know if it's from that or from what, but something helped him.

-Man, 68

“... you're invited to the wedding.”

Pistol Wedding Invitations

In the early days, there was no invitations to weddings. They're essentially- the bridegroom, or the best man I should say, went to all the locals. And he'd walk to the house and just outside the house, before he entered the house, he'd let off a shot with his pistol. I believe it was three times to announce his arrival. Then he'd walk into the house and he'd have a saying that, in Kashub, which basically means, "I came across the threshold to announce to you that so-and-so is getting married and you're invited to the wedding."

That was essentially the formality of the invitation. I remember that happening when I was very, very small because we were always saying, "Oh, that guy is carrying a pistol."

-Man, 66

11 Work. ○

“It was a clean way of life.”

-Man, 63



If Toronto is the engine of the economy of Ontario, then the Northern parts of Ontario must be the fuel.

-Man, 76

Working From Five to Nine

When I was, I don't know, maybe twelve or thirteen, grandpa had asked me to work on the farm in the summer, right? So I had a choice, you know, I could go and play with the kids in town where they had fun and all that, so you know, why not?

And what's interesting about the farm is that you know the song "Working from nine to five"? How about working from five to nine? It's the fact, right?

-Man, 63

“So I had a choice...”

Bought a Horse

'Member one time my father bought a horse way back in Maynooth. So I would say it was probably twenty-five miles away from Combermere, or what will that be in kilometers? Forty kilometers? Something like that. And it'd never been ridden. It was two years old and he put a saddle in the trunk of the car, took me, he wouldn't pay for someone to come and haul that horse home with a trailer. Put the saddle on that horse and you ride it home, or you get it home, or whatever you do.

Guest: That's a long ways.

Yeah. That was all day. Took me all day. And I put the saddle on the horse, played around with it a little bit, petted it up, got to know it, and got out on the road leaving the farm. It kinda didn't want to leave, so it bucked a couple of times and it was perfect. And I had that horse for years and years and years and years.

-Man, 63







Stone Boats

And before you could plan to do it, you had to take all the stones off, every one of them, you know?

Wow, did you ever have to do that?

Oh yeah, but I had what was called a stone boat that you used the horse- and the stone boat was a piece of steel perhaps twice as big as this table to just lay flat on the ground so you can roll the stones onto it. See you had to lift it, bar or whatever, and then you'd pull it along your stone fence and then roll, get those stones in there.

-Man, 63

Making the Fences

The horses would pull it, and then you'd roll them off into the fence row. The big ones at the bottom. Sometimes you did it just by horses here with a chain around it, and drag it.

-Man, 84

Picking Stones

Lot of stones. So we had to pick stones. Every spring, you had a new crop of stones to pick. And then, we just, you know, make stone fences out of them.

And it was hard to make them. Like, they placed the stones, they didn't just throw them there. They would place them so that the stones wouldn't roll away.

-Woman

“And you’d better be listening...”

Fresh Out of the Garden

But then [the boys] ate potatoes all the time. And then when they got so many bags of potatoes, they kept for the winter what you wanted, what they needed. And after, they had a pit, you put the potatoes in the pit, and your carrots, and broccoli, and whatever you had, eh? You put it in that pit and then you covered it up with straw. You closed it up real good and it stayed like that all winter. So when you opened it up in the spring, it was just like fresh out of the garden.

-Woman, 71

Always My Job

In the barns itself, it had what they called a hayfork, which was a unit that perhaps was that tall, and it’d be that wide, and had the two prongs. And you would drive that down into the hay, snap these two handles closed, and that would put a grip on the hay down in the load.

Then you’d put a team of horses on a cable, it was rigged up with cable and pulley, and it would pull it right to the roof of the barn, right to the very top, right to the peak. Then it would hit a track and run along until where you wanted it dropped in the barn, and then there was a rope on it.

When you got to the spot, someone shouted to you to stop the horses. That was always my job, driving those horses and pulling that hay out.

And you’d better be listening, because if you didn’t get those horses to stop here, you’re out through the end of the barn with the hayfork! You had to be very aware of that.

Then you pulled on the rope that I mentioned, and all this big- and it was a huge bundle of hay, it would drop down into the maw or whatever, in a loft, depending where you were putting it. Then you’d have to get up there and spread that. You would have to tear them all apart with those forks and throw it to the walls, because all the dumping was done in the centre. So you had to keep moving that hay up there to the walls, or it would just fill up.

-Man, 63

F

First Day

I was petrified the first day.

I had thirty-three grade one students, they all sat there with their feet on the floor and looked at me. And my thought went through my head, 'Somebody say something! What am I doing here?' They were just so attentive. And at the end of the day, the local doctor's little girls asked me, "What's our homework tonight?" I'll never forget that, it was so cute!"

-Woman

“What am I doing here?”

S

Skidding Logs

Well, okay, let's say that it's a log, this is a log, you know? You wrap a chain around it and you use a hook. And then you hitch it to the horses, you know, the horses at the bar. You know, like, they call it the wickle tree, you know? Like, they have a little thing that they pull.

And then you say just, "Get up," and the horses would listen to you. It would be just like a dog, you know, you can teach a dog anything. So, a horse, too. And the more you looked after them, then the better they were to you.

-Man, 84

L

Lumber Camps

Then I worked in the lumber camps.

What did you do there?

Skidding logs. You know, there'd be six of us in a gang. There'd be two cutting wood, cross-cut saw, back and forth.

You know what a cross-cut saw is, mm-hm? Big saw. One guy on each end, going back and forth, you know, until they pull the tree down. Cut it, you know, sixteen feet or ten feet or whatever.

And I have to hitch onto it and take it to a pile, you know? And then there was one guy that would be

“... six days a week.”

nicking a tree, oh you know, for the horses, you know, like if there's twigs or something like that, you know, they had to nick it.

And then there was one guy where the pile was, you know, he would be piling them, you know, rolling them up. So, and that, well, it wasn't really that bad. We got up at five o'clock in the morning and we worked 'til dark, six days a week.

-Man, 84

Building a Skidway
As I said, my brother was the teamster, he would hook onto the log. We would create a cleared area and build what's known as a skidway. We put the smaller logs down on the ground, and then we'd start to pile the logs up and make a big pile of them.

Then later on in the winter, they would ice the roads. They had tanks made of boards on sleighs. They would fill these tanks and that fellow would go along. They had, somehow, rains of water would run out onto the snow and gradually make an ice road so that the sleighs would slide easily. And they would create these roads all over.

Then, larger horses with larger sleighs, they would come along and they would pick these skidways of logs up onto a big sleigh, haul it out to the side of the lake, and create a huge skidway that logs would stay there all winter. And in the spring, when the water was high, it would break the skidway and roll along into the river or into the creek, and float them down to the mill.

-Man, 86

Lucky Day
The first day, we had our breakfast, you were up and going at daylight. And the trucks would haul the sleighs on the better roads. Truck would bring a big sleigh load of logs, and it would slope like this, you know?

So, there's a whole bunch of men there piling these logs up with chains. So they broke the load of logs and the logs came tumbling down, down the skidway, and I foolishly grabbed one with my cant hook. Boy, it came around, it took my leg,

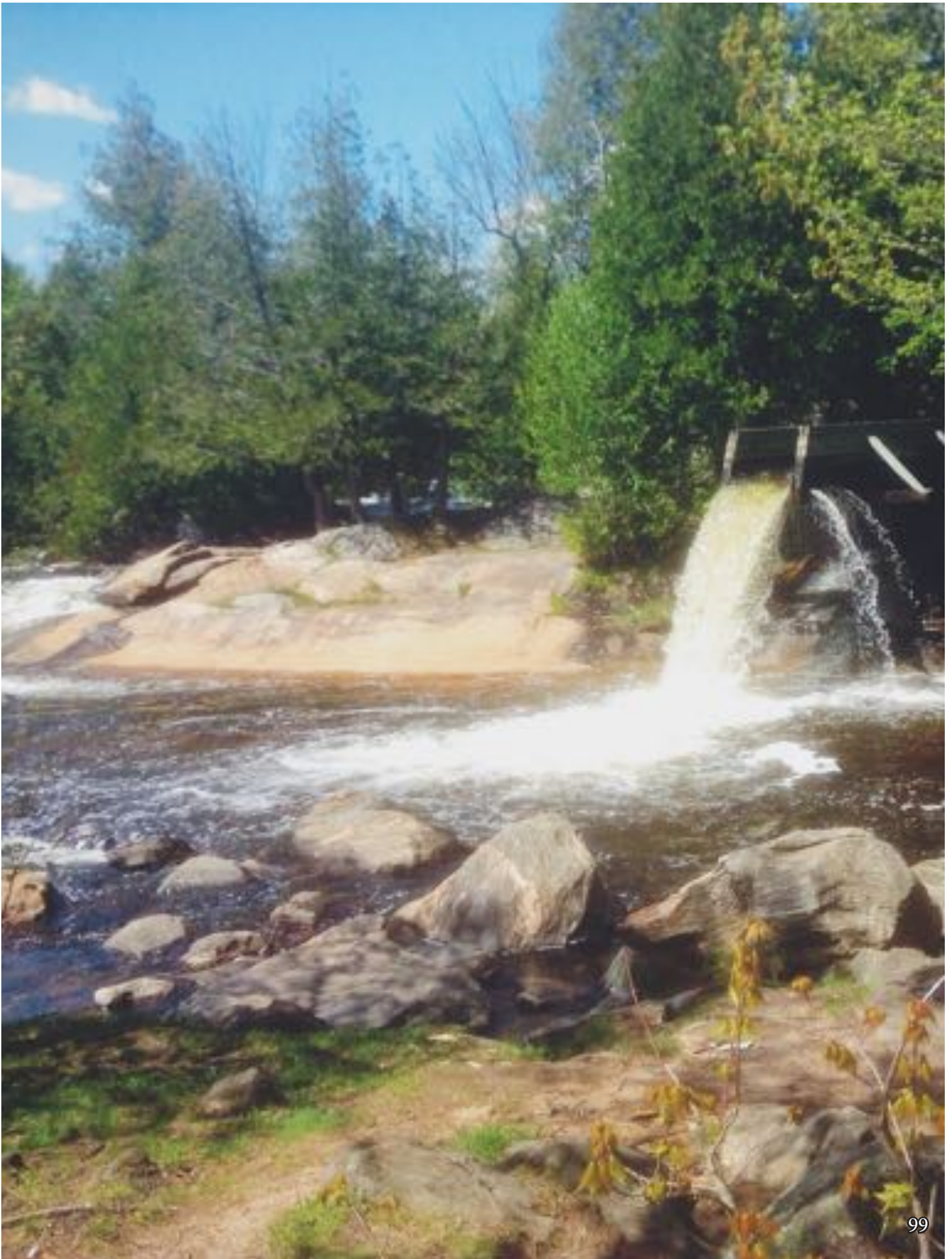
“Oh, I was lucky...”

it threw me in the air about twenty feet!

The foreman came running over - he was a very kind man - he was very concerned that I was hurt. I said, “No, I'm okay.” He said, “Don't ever do that again!”

Oh, I was lucky, yeah. It could've killed me easily.

-Man, 86



Closing Remarks

Throughout this project, we greatly benefitted from the assistance of the Madawaska Public Library, its librarians, and volunteers. While we were there, we discovered that we were not the first people to collect oral recollections from the community. A researcher named Gwen Foster had done the same, and had also benefitted greatly from the assistance of a local librarian, Angela Lorbetski.

In her own words, Ms. Foster explained what inspired her project, which she titled Madawaska Memories:

“Well, I guess the thing that got me is reading Joan Finnigan saying that if the Opeongo Trail had been in the United States, it would be famous today, and all those log houses on it would still be there. Instead, all of them were sold off and moved somewhere else to be built by other people. And it occurred to me we have a plaque right in the middle of Barry’s Bay that talks about the Opeongo Trail. That’s the only thing we have that was here to remind people that this was a finer trail over a hundred years ago. So, let’s find the people who could tell us some of the stories about it.”

We hope that we have continued in the tradition that Ms. Foster started, and that we have succeeded in helping to keep the rich history and culture of the Madawaska Valley available for future generations.