

## **Cecil Weingartner**

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Transcribed by: Jennie Hakes 08/29/2001

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### **Notes**

This interview was done in the museum in the Aitkin Depot.

## **Side 1**

### **Introduction**

Joyce: ...1987, and this is Joyce Wunseck (I didn't know how to spell her name), a volunteer at the Aitkin County Historical Society. Today I am going to interview Cecil Weingartner, who is a long-time resident and pioneer of this area.

How are you today, Cecil?

Cecil: Fine.

J: OK, we'll start out with Cecil's... you can give your name and your age today.

C: This is Cecil Weingartner and I am 85 years old.

### **From Germany to the United States**

J: OK, Cecil. Where did your people originate from – your forefathers?

C: The Weingartner's, when they came to the United States, there were three brothers. They were Germans varying (unintelligible). One of 'em, when they landed, they came to Holland, and then came across on the boat to New York. When they landed at Ellis Island, they asked 'em what their name was. One of the boys says – he was educated, the other two boys, brothers, were uneducated – the one that was educated said that his name was "Weingartner." So they asked another brother, and he said his name was "Weingardner." So they asked the second one, the third one, what his name was, and he said "Weingartner." So I am one of the "Weingarners."

J: And all of the spellings were different once they got to this country.

C: They were all brothers.

J: OK. And now your, that is on your paternal side. On your maternal side, you say your mother was Irish?

C: She was the great granddaughter of Robert Fulton, that invented the steamboat.

J: Well, isn't that interesting! OK. When you first came here, when they first came here, where did they settle?

C: The Weingarners settled in Ohio at a...

J: Some kind of an occupation or a business?

C: A store.

J: Oh, a store. OK.

C: Ford. In Thomas, Ohio. They used to own the land that Columbus, Ohio was built on.

J: I see. OK. And from Ohio they came to the Aitkin County?

C: No, they came to southern Illinois.

J: Oh, southern Illinois. And then from Illinois over here?

C: My father, Art (?), left southern Illinois and went to Springfield, Illinois, where my father was a fat cattle feeder.

J: I see.

C: Aberdeen Angus. He worked at a fat cattle feeder. In the spring of 1914, he moved to Rockheart, Minnesota, and farmed in the Red River Valley.

J: Is that where you were born, then, Cecil?

C: And I was born in southern Illinois. I was born in 1902.

J: Uh huh. And now when you were home living with your parents, what was the language of the household?

C: English.

J: So they were all English-speaking and could read and write?

C: My mother was an elocutionist for the...

J: School?

C: No, for WCTU.

J: Oh, for a radio station! Well, isn't that interesting!

C: No, WCTU was liquor.

J: Oh, oh my! That's a little different than school teaching, isn't it.

C: The Women's Christian Temperance Union.

J: Oh, I see. So that's the part that she took in the temperance movement. OK, now I'm going to ask you what year were you born? You said in 1902. And how many were in the family?

C: Two. My brother and I.

J: Uh huh. And your brother's name?

C: Donald.

J: Donald. OK. And describe your childhood and your growing-up years. Was it a happy time for you? Or was there a lot of chores for you to do? Or what did you partake in your family?

C: When I was six years old, something like that, I would get in the nice wood for the stove. And after 1914, we moved to Red River Valley, and I was 11 years old and driving 8 head of horses.

J: Oh, my! That was quite a young age to have such a responsibility. OK, do you remember some of your holidays, or anything that stands out in your mind about Christmas or any other holiday – that you had a good experience?

C: Well, I remember when my father... we didn't have a Christmas tree when I was small, real small. I remember my father climbing a pine tree up about 20 feet and cutting off a limb. And when we stood it up, it was an odd-shaped Christmas tree!

J: (Laughs) Well, nevertheless, it served the purpose.

### **School Days**

J: OK. Now, what school did you first attend? Was it in Illinois?

C: Yeah, Illinois.

J: And was it a one-room schoolhouse?

C: One-room school. We called it Apple Ridge. In the middle of a big apple orchard.

J: I see. And how many pupils were in the room, do you remember?

C: Somewhere around 15.

J: Uh huh. How long did you attend school? What grade did you finish?

C: I finished up until eighth grade until I moved to Aitkin County. I moved. At that time, if you had a teacher with a college education, you could teach nine and tenth grade in the rural school. Which I took. And then I started with high school by correspondence for eleventh and twelfth grade. They asked me one day question, taking an examination, what I thought of the... of the...

J: Something that was going on in the country at that time?

C: It was the Versailles Treaty. I had to write an article about the Versailles Treaty. And I said that they would break the Versailles Treaty over there if they wanted to, it wouldn't be binding. And they wouldn't graduate me!

J: Oh, is that right? All for that reason?

C: All for that reason!

J: Oh, my. What a shame!

C: And they broke it, too!

J: They did.

C: When World War II came on, they broke the Versailles Treaty!

J: Aha! So you had predicted that way ahead and it did come true. OK, but then didn't you go on to college for theology?

C: Theology in Kansas.

J: In Kansas. Uh huh. What religion was that that you were...

C: Methodist. Wesleyan Methodist. See, there were two different... Wesley Methodist. John Wesley started that in Scotland, and the Methodist Episcopal Church was started by his brother.

J: I see. But that never materialized for you. You never took that up as an occupation, then.

C: Well, I did quite a lot of preaching. And... 1925, 26 was hard times. You couldn't raise money enough to go back to school. I'd married, and my wife was taking...

J: ...some of her classes, too, I suppose.

C: She studied music and psychology when I was taking theology.

J: OK, well, we'll get back to your wife after. But now, I want to ask you another question.

### **Jobs**

J; What was your first job as a young man? Your very first job?

C: I guess driving 8 head of horses!

J: That was your first. OK. And how many changes of jobs did you have in your lifetime?

C: Well, I worked for my dad there on the farm for three years. And then I... when we came to Aitkin County, I'd been here two weeks and I loaded up the first car of pulpwood.

J: You did.

C: I was 14 years old.

J: 14 years old, and loading.

C: Pulpwood. Carrying one stick on my shoulder at a time into a boxcar.

J: That seems to be quite heavy work for such a young lad. You must have been a strong fellow!

C: I was.

J: OK. And now I'm going to ask you... that wasn't a trade you couldn't have learned from your father. It was something that you hired out for and acquired.

C: He gave me some pointers on being careful, and not getting' hurt.

J: Sure. Um hm. Safety precautions, uh huh. At what age did you retire, Cecil?

C: About '82.

J: '82, oh my! Then you've had a long life of work, haven't you! Were you ever in the service of your country?

C: I was called up and they asked me what was I doing. I told them I was working in the timber business. They said, I was needed more in the timber business than I was in the

army. And we fixed it up so that if they did call me up in the next draft, why, I would go as a chaplain.

J: As a chaplain. Oh, well, that would have been A-OK, too, huh?

### **Courtship and marriage**

J: OK, now we'll get back to your courtship and your marriage. Where did you meet your wife-to-be?

C: I was hauling ties. It was in the summer time. It was pretty early spring. And I was hauling railroad ties with a team and wagon up to Swatara. And I was coming out of Swatara and she had taught the gate up in school that winter. She'd come over on the Hill City Line, from there from Jacobson to Hill City, and her brother and Sarah Fossen and John Aklestad from town here, had come up with the car to pick her up, and take her... bring her home. And as they went out of town, she leaned over and waved at me.

J: Do you think that was love at first sight?

C: I do.

J: (Laughs) And what was her maiden name?

C: Edith Fossen.

J: Edith Fossen. Well, that was a nice name. And what age were you at the time of marriage?

C: I was just going on 22.

J: Oh, that was a young man, then. It seems to me that they married just as young then as they did a few years back.

C: Yeah.

J: And where did you first set up housekeeping with Edith?

C: In Kansas.

J: In Kansas? Oh, because she followed you when you went to the...

C: School.

J: ...school for theology. Um hm. Did you have a little apartment or...?

C: We had a house, big house.

J: Oh. Um hm.

C: And it was owned by a missionary in China. And we rented the house for, I think, we rented the house for \$5 a month.

J: Well, that was cheap enough, wasn't it?

C: Yes.

J: Right. OK, and I won't ask you if your wife had an occupation, because I know she was a teacher.

C: Yes, she was.

J: Uh huh. And she taught school here in Aitkin.

C: Sixteen years.

J: Sixteen years. Uh huh. Well, that was a long time, too.

## **Family**

J: And how large a family did you and Edith have?

C: Well, she gave birth to four, and we lost three of them.

J: Due to illness, or at time of birth, or...?

C: Well, shortly after birth. If they had the facility now, I think they probably would have saved them all. But we lived thirty miles from a doctor.

J: Did she give birth at home to the children?

C: Yes. But the girl who was... the girl that we have, she was born here in Aitkin. Two of the girls was born in Aitkin. A boy and one girl was born at home.

J: I see. And so now, right now, you have one living daughter. And her name is...?

C: Dorothy McKeller (?).

J: And Dorothy is living where now?

C: (unintelligible), California.

J: And is the daughter that you spend the winters with?

C: I have a grandson and a granddaughter.

J: I see. And what are their ages?

C: The boy is 26, and not married. He's going to San Jose State College this winter. And the daughter is 23. She is an adopted girl.

J: Adopted? Uh huh. And the son is a biological... born to both.

C: Yes.

J: And they are... do they come to visit you at all?

C: When I'm not out there, why, they...

J: They come here to visit. Well, how nice! Uh huh.

## **Religion**

J: Now we're going to go on to another subject, and that was religion. And you've already told me that you'd been to a theological church.... Well, I shouldn't say...

C: About 70 miles west of Kansas City.

J: I see. And so you've already told me that was a Methodist religion. So have you followed through with that same religion here in Aitkin?

C: No. When we moved away from the homestead, we moved farther away from the Methodist Church. So we've been members of the Baptist Church since 1926.

J: Uh hm. Well, that's a good long time, too.

### **Community life**

J: And your community life, here? I know that you've been very active in the Historical Society and have made so much contribution to the log cabin next door, and most of those artifacts in there belong to you, from your logging experience. And you have a key to that building, and you're the one that is in charge when we have visitors here at Aitkin. What other kind of organization do you belong to?

C: Well, the church wouldn't allow me to belong to any denomination... any...

J: The Legion?

C: The Legion would be all right. But we could work at a (unintelligible) at the Legion, or something like that. But as far as...

J: Have you taken part in any other community affairs, like maybe the newspaper, or...? You have published a book on your sixty years of logging. That must have taken quite a bit of time...

C: Yes.

J: ...and thought. OK.

### **Working in the timber industry**

C: I was (unintelligible) when the war came on, about 1942. In 1921, I was cook on the log drive that went down... the last one that went down the Mississippi. In making that drive, they had a foreman, and then they had a general superintendent. And the general superintendent was general superintendent for Weyerhaeuser timber company. And he stayed with me on the (unintelligible) part near all the time, to see the logs come down river. And so, when the war came on, he contacted me, and wanted me to buy timber for him. And be a buyer. And so I got the Soo Line Railroad to put in a dock and crane so we could load there. And they just took them out here (unintelligible). But anyhow, I bought timber all over the state. I bought timber and shipped over 30,000 cords of mill wood (unintelligible).

J: Um hm.

C: (unintelligible) ...what they used to build their atomic bombs.

*(break in tape)*

J: You were a man that knew your timber, and they must have trusted you to do the picking and to do the purchasing and whatever the work entailed.

J: Now I'm going to ask you about other hobbies that you have, or other interests, other than writing your book. Was there something else that you did for a hobby?

C: I don't know that I had much time for that.

J: So work was really your hobby and your occupation and everything combined. OK.

### **Cloquet fire**

J: In my visits with you, Cecil, I found you a very interesting old man, and I have listened to your little stories down at the Historical Society. And I'd just like to have you share some of the things that you have told me about things that have happened in Aitkin County here. Let's just start with the Megarry family? And the experience with the fire? Would you like to relay that?

C: When we came to Bain, the town of Bain, in 1917, there were two stores in town. One by the Megarry brothers, and one by Pete Waldach (not sure of spelling, pronounced "Wall – Dack"). I believe it was in 1918, that Pete Waldach died of a heart attack. And the store, that store was not taken care of much, and Megarry's had to (unintelligible) their timber mill. And they kept the store there until about 1934. And then they moved to St. Cloud. And...

J: Ok. There was something you said about a fire in a boxcar. What happened?

C: Well, a big fire - the Cloquet fire, we called it – it burned Cloquet, it burned Bain, Lawler. And the fire came through in the afternoon about 90 miles an hour. And Mary Megarry - she was married Bain, she married Billy Megarry – she had her boy, Francis, about, I don't know, two months old or something like that. And they got to Palisade, the (unintelligible) train did, and they found the town was burning, and they cut loose and picked up some boxcars, and backed up to Bain and picked up a lot of the people that was there. And Mary got in the boxcar with Francis. And they took them out until (unintelligible).

J: That story is almost like the Hinckley fire, isn't it?

C: Just.. pert near the same thing.

J: Pert near the same thing. Uh huh.

### **Derailment**

J: OK, and then we talked about a railroad derailment that you had experienced seeing. Something about the cars going way up in the air...?

C: (unintelligible) ...the Burlington Northern.

J: At Motley?

C: Motley.

J: Oh, at Motley. Oh, that's what you were talking about. OK. So that just hasn't happened too many years ago here. Um hm.

### **A light pole saved his life**

J: And you had another experience about hanging onto a light pole to avoid an accident? Was that something to do with... you were jumping from a train?

C: That was right here.

J: That was right here in Aitkin.

C: And Mr. Holtz (?) (unintelligible) he was sitting right there. And the train had parked here on the siding, and called over to Ziske's<sup>1</sup> for hamburgers. And I came in the Depot here, and Mr. Holtz said, "Cecil, would you go out there and straighten up some of those end sticks?" He said, "They're stickin' out this way." And I walked out and got up and started straightening the ends, and they came out and got in the cab and started out, and I had to get off there. And I swung down on the side of the car, swung around. And if I jumped off too quick, I'd jump off underneath the train. I hung on until we got to the road, and on the left there was a light pole there, and I run and grabbed around the light pole and I was (unintelligible)

J: Did they forget that... where you were?!

C: They didn't know that...

J: Oh, they didn't know you were in there! Oh, my! That could have been a tragic accident!

C: I had two years' experience in spotting cars, so I knew how to do it.

J: Uh huh!

C: If I hadn't have been, I would have went underneath the train.

J: Um hm. Well, that was very lucky for you to be able to... I see poles are in your life, aren't they?!

C: Yeah.

J: (Laughs) OK.

### **Tractor runs over him**

J: Then there was another experience. You said you had a tractor accident when you were just a young man, farming?

C: About forty years ago.

J: Oh.

C: I was working in the woods. A fellow wanted me to get him out some cedar poles, and I couldn't drive the tractor down to where you could get the poles. So I took... took the tractor and I drove down to the swamp, and put on about a dozen or fifteen, on the fork. And drove out, and put down, and went back. And it was getting out of the... boom was coming out of the forklift. I walked around in front of the tractor, and put that boom back, and didn't quite go (unintelligible). Reached over to put the... fork down, and didn't look while I was doing it, and I got ahold of the clutch. And I run the tractor right over the top of me. (unintelligible)...and fluid in the tire. Went across me here, and across my face and my head.

J: Oh, my. You're lucky to be here telling me all about this today!

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<sup>1</sup> Ziske's was a popular grocery store/lunch counter/feed store in Aitkin just 1 block west of the stoplights.

### **Witnessing 60 mph in 1910**

J: Then there was another time that you said that you had, back in 1910, there was two experiences. Something about Barney Holfield (not sure of spelling, pronounced “Hole – Field”)? Do you want to tell us about that?

C: Barney Holfield was... had a car, and the Offenhauser was a German-made machine. The automobiles were very scarce, you know. Automobiles were... there was that one car. Nobody else could race against him. He just went around the track.

J: Oh, I see.

C: And he made 60 miles an hour that day there.

J: And in 1910, that was quite a speed.

C: It was.

J: Right.

C: Women fainted.

J: They fainted?

C: Fainted.

J: At such a sight?

C: At such a speed.

J: Oh, my.

### **Seeing the Wright Brothers**

C: Then the Wright Brothers, I saw them. I got a picture of that. Wright Brothers flying their airplane 200 feet off the ground.

J: I see. Um hm. OK, so those two experiences were in 1910.

### **Meeting Charles Lindbergh**

J: And then you said you had met Mr. Lindbergh.

C: Yeah, I met him here at Aitkin. His father was running for the United States Senate.

J: I see.

C: And he came... flew in from Little Falls. Their home was in Little Falls.

J: Yes.

C: And they flew him over here to a Farmer Labor meeting.

J: Oh, to help campaign? Is that what it was?

C: Campaign.

J: I see.

C: And he... while he was talking, his father was talking, I was talking to the boy.

J: Oh – aha! Well, that was quite an experience, too. And now he is history, isn't he?

C: He is.

J: Right.

C: And his cousin used to board at our place when they had the... they worked for the Minnesota Light and Power, his cousin did. And they'd stop there to have supper at our place, if they had worked. My mother would get supper for them.

### **Grave of Indian girl**

J: I see. Um hm. There are some other things that I'm interested in, and that is the cemeteries. And you were able to contribute something there for me about some of the Indian people that were buried? That the graves are unmarked? And do you want to tell us about that little experience, about the little Indian girl who was buried? And how your brother was going to... had instructions to move some stones or something?

C: Well, this fella, this fella came and was going to go back in the woods, and he... there was a hole in the road, the toll road. And he was going to... he told my brother, "I'm gonna take that pile of stones and put 'em in the mud hole." My brother said, "You better not, because there's a girl, a baby girl, buried there under that." I don't know whether that's still marked or not. But I saw lots of Indian graves in the Red River Valley. They were plowed (? unintelligible), too.

J: They were. So the burial grounds were not honored like they are here.

C: No.

J: Uh huh. Isn't that a shame.

### **Cecil's brother writes a book**

J: Also, today you shared with me about your brother. I know that you have published a small book, or little pamphlet, that you have sent to the different lumbering companies. And now you tell me that your brother is about to publish a book.

C: It's a regular book. A long book.

J: A novel that he has written. Um hm. And you want to tell us the name of that?

C: It's "A Spike Phantom of the Canyon" (not sure if I caught that right).

J: And also now, that is a western story, you said.

C: Yes.

J: Uh huh. And it's fiction. It's something he's made up. And your brother is what age now?

C: He's 82 ½.

J: Well, both of you men are very intelligent to be writing books at that age. It's almost like Grandma Moses beginning to paint!

C: (Laughs)

J: Well, that keeps the cobwebs out. And you're very brilliant men. Is there anything else that you would like to share? Any kind of stories about Aitkin County, Cecil, that

you think that would be interesting? Something that you would want the people here to remember you by? I know that you have the log cabin, and there's been a nice picture framed here in the museum for you. And I don't know just what other things have been done around the county in remembrance of all your work that you have contributed. But if... would you have some thing that you would like to share with us today?

C: The people of Aitkin County have treated me well. Especially in town here. And my neighbors.

### **Married over 61 years**

J: And you are a widower now. You're wife passed away when?

C: November, two years ago. It'll be two years this November.

J: Um hm. And it's difficult to get along by yourself, I imagine.

C: Yes.

J: Sure. After being married so many years and such.

C: 61 ½ years.

J: 61 ½! Oh, my! Well, that's a lifetime.

C: Yeah.

J: But you were a hard-working man, and your wife, also, a hard-working woman.

### **Factors for a long life**

J: What do you attribute to your longevity?

C: I really don't know. I never smoked a cigarette in my life.

J: Did you ever have a shot of brandy?

C: Never!

J: Never?

C: Not even a bottle of beer!

J: Is that right? Well, maybe that contributes to some of it then.

C: My brother is the same way.

J: Is that right. And for your family also.

C: My father didn't. And my grandfather didn't. The only thing my grandfather did (unintelligible) smoked a corncob pipe.

J: I see.

C: And grandmother made him go out in the woodshed to smoke it! (Laughs)

J: Ah hah! Well, that was quite popular in those years.

C: It was.

J: Un hm. And they used to chew tobacco, too. And they didn't... and neither of them did that, either, huh?

C: No.

J: No. Well, it sounds like you didn't have any vices. I think you're almost eligible for sainthood, Cecil!

C: (Laughs hard)

J: OK. I think if you don't have anything else to offer, there are just a few more minutes left on our tape, and I really just want to thank you for all your cooperation. You've been very sharing with us at the Historical Society today. Even if we haven't had a tape recorder, we've shared many stories. And this is why I kind of jotted them down, so we could have a repeat. And I don't know if there's anything that you would like to add about the early times in Aitkin here?

### **Father walked 60 miles in one day**

C: To show you how hard these people are: My father walked to Aitkin, 30 miles. They had a land sale the next day. And he walked to Aitkin 30 miles. When he got here, they were having a war bond rally, World War I, and every bank and everything was closed.

*(end of Side 1)*

### **Side 2**

J: OK, Cecil, do you want to continue with your story?

C: He got himself stranded here in Aitkin with no money, and so he walked 30 miles home. He walked 60 miles that day.

J: Oh, my!

C: He got about a half a mile from the house, and he fell down. So he laid there for half an hour.

J: Oh, my! Well, what was the object of coming to town for a land sale? Did he think he was going to purchase...

C: He was going to borrow some money at the bank, and to buy the land, because it had timber on it.

J: I see. And he was going to sell the timber and pay back the bank, I suppose.

C: Something like that.

J: Uh huh. OK. Do you have anything else that you'd like to reminisce about?

### **Trucking fruit from Illinois**

C: I used to haul fruit from southern Illinois to up here. I'd get a thousand bushels every fall and sell it out. Peaches and apples. And my wife, in the spring, she'd go with me to help spraying the orchard.

And until one time, when I was coming back with the car, we got down... it got late, and she said, "I'm going to get a blanket in the back seat and lay down and sleep." While I drove.

So pretty... in a bit I run into a truck stop, a big truck stop, so I pulled in there, and I said to her that I'm gonna go in and have a cup of coffee, you want to go along?

"No," she says, "I'm all right. I'll just stay here and sleep."

So I went in and had a cup of coffee and come back and got in the car and started out. I didn't notice she'd got out and went to the lavatory!

J: (Laughs) How long did you drive before you missed...

C: It was five miles before the highway patrol caught me! (Laughs)

J: Oh, my! Oh, my goodness!

C: (Laughs) She never said a word for twelve miles. The State Police pulled in behind me, and started blowing their whistles. I stopped and got out, and said "Now what have I done?!" They said, "We got your wife here!" (Laughs)

J: (Laughs)

C: She never said a word. For half an hour.

J: I bet she didn't want to go back to sleep very soon, though! That woke her up, didn't it?

C: She started to laugh.

J: How... the land that you had in Illinois is where you raised this fruit?

C: Yes.

J: And then you went down and picked it up? In what, now, a truck? Or how did you transport this?

C: In an insulated truck.

J: Oh, insulated truck, I see. Uh huh.

C: They'd make pies out in Mound (unintelligible)

J: Oh, my. That was a lot of traveling, wasn't it? But you owned the land down there, so that was profitable for you then, to do it that way?

C: We sold it.

J: Uh hm. At one...

C: They had a wreck, a big truck wreck here the other day, and that was one of my trucks.

J: Oh, really?

C: The one that rolled over?

J: Oh, my.

C: Totaled it out.

J: Oh. Well, that was the end of that truck then, huh?

C: When I sold it to this guy, I'd put on 87,000 miles.

J: Do you still drive now?

C: I haven't for some time. I'm going to take the pickup out and drive it.

J: I see. Uh huh. Are there... is there anything else now that you can think about from your early days? Things that you want to remember about Aitkin?

C: Well, let's see.

J: There was a flood, I believe, not too many years ago.

C: That was down around town. We were on higher ground where we lived. We didn't... it didn't bother us. But on that... the big fire was one thing, in '18. And then...

J: Well, we had a couple fires, didn't we, that came through here?

C: Yes, we did. None like the big fire that was in '18. There were almost 700 people burned to death in it.

J: Um hm. I visited the forestry display that they have at Grand Rapids, and I talked to the lady there in the building. And when I mentioned your name, she said, "Oh, yes! We know Cecil very well!" So you are well known all through the smaller towns that are up north where the logging took place.

C: Yes.

J: And I believe you're going to be in the Hall of Fame?

C: I am already.

J: You are already! Is your picture up there, or what is it that...?

C: Yeah.

J: They have a picture of you?

C: Yes. I used to make speeches up there.

J: Oh, you did. I see. You gave talks about lumbering?

C: Logging.

J: And logging.

C: And then, I was in Bemidji in August.

J: Oh. Uh huh. Oh yes, uh huh. They had... fifty years of logging. Uh huh. 1937 to 1987. That was Park Rapids and Bemidji.

C: They brought the last log drive out here. (Unintelligible) went to Rainy River and out to International Falls.

J: That was in 1937, wasn't it?

C: '37. The one I was on was in 1929.

J: I see.

C: They'd come in the Mississippi River and send the pulp over to Brainerd and the logs to Little Falls. When my wife was living, every once in awhile we'd go down to Little Falls and visit Lord Gene (not clear, this is what is sounded like) Musser. The Mussers, two Mussers, one Newton and two Weyerhausers comprised the Weyerhauser syndicate. And we've got (unintelligible).

J: Do you suppose, Cecil, the room that is in the St. Paul Historical Society, the Weyerhauser Room, is this in commemoration of the logging family?

C: Yeah.

J: It is. Uh huh.

### **Meeting James J. Hill, the railroad baron**

C: I met Grampa Weyerhauser. And also Jim Hill.

J: Oh, yeah. Do you want to tell your little experience about Jim Hill? That was very interesting.

C: I... My father had had a lot of wheat to cut. It was a bindery... laying on the ground, we had to chop it up in shocks. And so he sent my brother and I with a one-horse buggy into Lockheart to meet the train to hire somebody... we call 'em hobos, they'd ride... floaters, you know. And get a couple of men, if we could. And as the train pulled past... the train pulled in, why, out walked a guy who raised up the window. In them days, you'd just raise the window on a train just like you could here in this building.

J: Um hm.

C: And I asked the guy if he was looking for a job, and he said no. I said, "Well, Dad's paying \$3 day and board, for shocking." And he didn't need a job. So after the train pulled out the depot, (unintelligible) come up to me, and said, "Say, sonny," he said. "Do you know who you were talking to?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Jim Hill!"

J: (Laughs) I guess he didn't need a job, did he?

C: (Laughs hard) No!

J: Did he look just like any other man on the train?

C: Like any other man! A big Scotsman.

J: Uh huh.

C: He says, it's a wonder he didn't pile up the shocks, he's just that kind of a guy.

J: Oh. You mean he didn't wear a three-piece suit or anything on the train?

C: No. Had a coach on the back end of the train with a kitchen in it. And they run it there on the siding, and cooked his meals. Had a cook.

J: Uh huh. So you offered him a job. Well, that was really something, wasn't it? Ok.

### **The Depression**

J: During the Depression here in Aitkin, what kind of work did you do at that time?

C: Well, I'll tell you. I don't know what... My wife did teach some during the Depression. But I had cedar posts, such as that, and I hauled to the southern part of the state, and sold poles. I sold a good 1500 guard rail posts in Brown (?) County, down in New Ulm. Twenty-five cents apiece. Seven and eight-foot, with six-inch top. And then I'd buy hogs, pigs, down south, and bring 'em north, and the hogs would dress out 50 – 60 pounds for a dollar-and-a-half apiece.

J: I see.

C: And the people up here wanted them because they had milk, and (unintelligible) pigs, and I'd bring corn back. You could buy all the corn you wanted for 9 cents a bushel. And I fed, hauled hogs back. I must have hauled back a couple hundred of 'em. And one time, in the fall, my dad was dying with cancer. He had to get rid of the cattle. I hauled his load over to Eliot, and cattle over there to Eliot, and sold 'em. And we had, the cows brought six dollars apiece.

J: My, that was just a small amount. When you say, to Eliot's, would that have been Eliot packing?

C: Yeah, Eliot packing.

J: I see. That's where you hauled the hogs.

C: And then they... the cattle was \$6 apiece and the hogs... just a joke (unintelligible). I unloaded the hogs with the cattle. I went upstairs and got my check, come back, and they said, back that truck up here to the chute.

I said, "Well, why you want 'em back up the chute? I sold them to you."

"Yes, I know we did, but we don't want 'em," he said. "We'll pay you, but you can take 'em home!"

J: You got paid to take them home? (Laughs)

C: "Nine cents a bushel," I said. "Corn is nine cents a bushel, I haven't got the nine cents to buy a bushel of corn."

He said, "I tell you what we'll do." He said, "We'll dress 'em out and give 'em to the hired help."

J: Well, that was sure nice, wasn't it?

C: The weighed, they dressed out at about 110, 115 pounds. They'd been fed on tankage, and corn. So they was good eating.

J: Well, and I imagine when times are hard and the food was sparse, that was certainly a godsend, wasn't it, to have something given to you like that?

C: Yes.

J: Um hm.

C: The relief check didn't buy a lot of stuff. But they was a lot of people that didn't get it. I didn't. I didn't get any. I was working on (unintelligible). I hauled (unintelligible) flour, 20 lb. sacks, up to Megarry's store, and they passed it out. And some people, they would wait to get a sack of flour, but they wouldn't help unload it.

J: Oh, well! Don't we have that today, too?

C: I guess we do!

J: So, things don't... some things in lifetime doesn't change. No. But it seems like the people that worked and helped themselves... I guess it's true – God helps those that help themselves, right?

C: That's right.

J: So, well, I can't think of anything else that I would like to ask you, Cecil. I do want to thank you for taking the time today, and coming and talking to us. And I can guarantee you that this tape will be the property of the Historical Society, so you'll always live on.

C: The (unintelligible) or the tape?

J: Pardon?

C: (unintelligible) or the tape?

J: Probably both. Um hm.

C: They have me at (unintelligible).

J: Have they really?

C: Um hm.

J: Well, we are trying to get all of the pioneers and the older people in the county here that can contribute to some of the heritage that we now have.

### **Preacher story**

C: Here's a story I should tell you...

J: OK.

C: Old steamboat pilot, the Christopher Columbus, they come in one day, and the lumberjacks were in town. So the preacher come in from Duluth, going to preach at the Methodist Church that evening, and then go into Brainerd - catch the night train - and go into Brainerd and preach over in Brainerd. (Laughs) The preacher got down here at the end of the (unintelligible) north, along where the Post Office was, they caught him and cut his tails off his coat! The lumberjacks did!

J: (Laughs)

C: He got out in the middle of the street - the mud was almost knee-deep - and Mr. Sutton (?) he walked out where the fellow was and the fellow was standing there, and didn't know what to... what Sutton was going to do or anything. He was a big, stout man. He took him by the shoulder and took him down to the Methodist Church, they made him sit there in the back while he preached, and toted him back and put him on the train again.

J: (Laughs) So he was forced to listen, right? Well, that's an interesting little story, too.

C: He was quite well know, Mr. Sutton. He, afterwards, started preaching.

J: I see.

*(break in the tape)*

J: About ten years or so ago, I believe it was in 1983 that they had their centennial? And at that time, what kind of participation did you contribute to the centennial?

C: I drove a 19, about a 1918 Model T Ford truck.

J: That you had owned at one time?

C: At one time. And most of the people didn't know how to operate it, because you did it all with your feet. You know.

J: You had to be a pilot to run it, didn't you?

C: To run it, yeah.

J: Um hm. And you drove that in the parade?

C: In the parade.

J: Uh huh. And the party that bought it from you restored it. So it... did it seem just like it was a brand new car for you?

C: (unintelligible)

J: Uh huh. OK, Cecil, well, we'll end this taping today. And I want to thank you very much for your time, and all your stories, and I'll thank you once again.

*(end of side 2)*