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## **Additon, Errol oral history interview**

Mariah Pfeiffer

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## **Interview with Errol Additon by Mariah Pfeiffer**

### **Interviewee**

Additon, Errol

### **Interviewer**

Pfeiffer, Mariah

### **Date**

July 24, 2006

### **Place**

Leeds, Maine

### **ID Number**

MC 101-01

### **Format**

Audiocassette

### **Biographical Note**

The Additon family moved to Leeds, Maine in 1790 and established a farm. Errol Additon did not grow up on the farm, but he and his family have owned land on it for the last 40 years. Additon is one of three Town Selectmen for Leeds.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This interview covers dam politics and policy: raising and lowering water levels, flowage rights, flooding, and dam control of the Androscoggin Lake; recreating on the River: the obstacle of pollution and initiatives to promote river recreation; sources of pollution; environmental interventions: oxygen pumping and ATV clubs; potential oral history contacts; the use of the river for transportation; Additon family farming; bridge planning in Turner and Leeds; Additon's work as a selectman; the region's economic prospects; electrification of the region; Additon family history; the state's impact on river issues; and Senator John Nutting's political career.

### **General Notes**

The recording begins abruptly, midway through Additon's reflections. There are three interruptions by children.

**ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Mrs. A:** ... the coves especially.

**EA:** Settled back into the coves. And of course some of it depended some on, you know, how much water was traveling. Because the way they let the water out, and raise and lower it sometimes, you know, you don't get much movement there. When you don't get a lot of movement, that's when it was really, it would really be, and you know, so from that perspective, in my lifetime you'll never see me going in it, I ain't going in it. But my cousin says, oh yeah, he says, you know, and I asked him if he's been in, and he says no.

**Q:** He just says you can go in?

**EA:** Right, but he hasn't been in. But he, you know, they catch, but I mean I've seen just a tremendous change in it because, you know, I would never have thought of going out on it for a ride or something. My brother had a boat, and he took us one time when the balloon festival was in Lewiston-Auburn, and we went down and set up from the dam just, on a boat, and watched it from there. And it's quite a sight, I try to tell people now, you know, they ought to, you know, go out and just go up and down it because it's a lot of wildlife, and it's a lot different than it was back in the '50s and '60s. I was, you know, the first time I went on it I just couldn't believe what I was seeing, because I was used to seeing tires and logs, and that's all you saw, you know, just the crap that came down.

**Q:** When was the first time you went on it?

**EA:** I don't know, it probably was, how long ago was it, ten, twelve years ago?

**Mrs. A:** What, with Kent?

**EA:** Yeah.

**Mrs. A:** It was five.

**EA:** Longer than that.

**Mrs. A:** But she said, when did you first go on it?

**EA:** Yeah, that's the first time I was ever on it.

**Mrs. A:** You never been on it all your life, never went out on the river on a boat?

**EA:** No, I don't go on that thing. The boat would rot right underneath you.

**Mrs. A:** Oh, stop.

**Q:** You didn't grow up along the river?

**Mrs. A:** No, I'm from away.

**EA:** It was probably ten to twelve years ago, was the first time I was ever on it. Something in that range.

**Q:** How did that feel?

**EA:** Oh, it was great, you know, I really got quite a lot different perspective of the river than I'd had. Because I'd been prejudice, you know, no getting around it. I mean when you grow up in that smell every, every day, well it wasn't every day during the summer. It was only when, you know, as I say, but it was, you drove over it and you just saw the trash that was in there, you know, mostly logs and, but even now when they draw it down, you know, there's tires, there's all kinds, lots of tires in there, and junk.

The year that Ken told about, see, they repaired the dam, and that was, how long ago was that Justin, when you and Dad got mired out in there? He and his father took my four-wheeler out on the mud flats, and they got (*unintelligible*). And then they had a, not a very pleasant experience. His father lost his glasses, and they had to wade, they had to crawl, because they couldn't walk on top of it. He could walk on top of it, his father couldn't. We had quite an experience to get the four-wheeler out. Of course they weren't supposed to be doing it anyway.

**Q:** These are mud flats right around here?

**EA:** Yeah, that was right out here. Because they went up the river here, because they drew it way down. Like Ken said, down to probably about, in fact one the Varneys that he spoke about, Charlie Varney, he said that at that point the river was just about like he remembered it.

**Q:** From before the dam?

**EA:** Right, before the dam. And, well, he's a man that's probably seventy-five, or so. So I don't know the years, you know, as far as when the dam, I'm sure you can find when the dams went in. But he said when they, when they drew it down to fix the dam, and that was, that was after Florida Power and Light took it over. Because they didn't

like the looks of the dam and they put in an all together new style of dam.

**Q:** How often do they raise and lower the level of the river?

**EA:** A lot, weekly. Quite often, quite often they lower it on the weekend. Now I can't tell you why, but quite often it's down on the weekends. They do now, they do work with the bass fishermen. And if the bass fisherman are having a tournament, see, they have like three or so a year right out of the cove over here, then they won't lower it, they'll keep it up for them. But you know, it's up and down I would say weekly. And more often than not, you'll see it down over the weekend while they draw more water through, or they want more, I suspect maybe it's to produce more power, you know, on the weekend, you know. I don't know, I shouldn't get into that. That's really, that's something I don't know about. I can tell you that it's, more often than not it'll be down on a weekend.

**Q:** I'll look into that.

**EA:** And they do holidays too, like the 4th, it'll be down usually. I don't know, because I know that was a problem of one year. We had these coves down here one year were right year were right full of dead fish. Just, you could, if they'd hold you up, you could have walked right across. And you know, we got no way of knowing for sure, but I have a lot of friends that worked at the IP Mill and some of them claim that they just dumped chemicals, it was over the 4th, and they had a shut down, a lot of the people weren't there, and they just dumped used chemicals, old chemicals, right into the storm drains, and let her go.

**Q:** This is years ago?

**EA:** Yeah, like I say, that's hearsay. Yeah, but the fish kill was not hearsay. Let's see, about when was that. I can't get any idea how long ago that was. A lot of years ago, twenty-five. It was at that point that they started in thinking, the reason the fish died was lack of oxygen, they do know that. They immediately put a tank right down here by the bridge, ran a line out on the bridge, and put oxygen into the river at that point. There again, the guy that lived right there by the bridge said they only filled it once, you know, but a lot of the stuff was for show, for looks. But at that point, that's when they did start putting in the plan for the oxygenation plant, which is down at the big, Great Pond. And that probably has been one of the biggest things that's, you know, that's helped the river, or one thing. I mean, of course the paper companies have had to cut back on what they put in. That's been big thing, but this has been a big, and that's where my cousin could tell you a lot about that, because he's been very active, he helps when they put it in every year. And I know they've put a lot of oxygen in, there's trucks going in there every day. It's a tremendous amount of stuff that they put in there.

**Q:** And you've seen that help?

**EA:** Oh yes, there's no question. But the two things is that paper mills are cutting back what they're putting in, and that, as far as, that's helped bring a lot of fish back. Because when I was a kid the only thing that was there was what we called hornpout, they're like a catfish. That's right, they're down near the bottom, they're bottom feeders in that trash, you know, they'll live anywhere. In fact actually, actually you won't find them in a good clear river or lake. The only place to find them is a place like that. But now, you know, this is a great bass, they have bass tournaments here, and they catch, it's one of the best rivers in the state.

**Q:** Do you do any fishing on it?

**EA:** I don't, I don't fish, I'd rather watch paint dry. I've always told people it'd be about the worst punishment anybody could give me, tell me I got to go fishing. I love to hunt, but I don't fish. That's one of the biggest changes that I've seen is the fish. It's actually, the fish and the fact that people go on it now with boats just to ride up and down it. And forty years ago you never, just never saw a boat down there, never, I mean it just never happened that anybody put a boat there.

**Q:** What other kind of things do you remember from growing up? I mean, you've mentioned the smells, or other things?

**Mrs. A:** We didn't have a boat launch. There was no boat launch, nobody boated.

**Q:** When did that get put it, the boat launch?

**Mrs. A:** I'm sure in somebody's history record.

**EA:** About fifteen years ago. See, the state bought a big chunk. I don't know if you realize, but on the other side of the river the state owns about sixteen hundred acres. And they own about four hundred on this side, all on the river. Well, I think, there again, check my figures, don't, I know the one on this side is about four hundred because I'm a selectman here in town, so I know they own in the four hundreds, but don't use the figures over there, check with somebody. But it's a big chunk of land. It was owned by Diamond International Paper Company and it was sold, there's a chain of events. Who actually, I'm not sure whether, because it was Diamond International, then it was Diamond Occidental and, you know, which one actually made the sale, but the state at that point thought that it was a good piece of land to own for recreational purposes.

It was game preserve for a number of years, that whole parcel on the other side of the river, there was no hunting. That got opened up before the state bought it, so that part of it started getting some recreation, but only for hunting. But once the state bought it, then they put in the boat launch, and they also put in an area for, a parking area for people to go in that wanted to walk, or four-wheelers and snow mobiles. Snow mobiles

were one of the first things to start using, and it's a great snow mobile trail. And then four-wheelers, and four-wheel drive trucks started to use it, and that started a real problem because they started erosion, it was serious. So what the state did is they blocked it off so that trucks couldn't get in, but four-wheelers still use it. But of course, I mean that's a whole day's, another conversation, about ATVs.

**Q:** Well, but it all ties together, though.

**EA:** And now they're trying to form ATV clubs and get the people to police themselves a little better. And they don't open it up until it's got dried up, trying to keep not only from eroding the land, but the main trail follows the river very close, in fact when we're snowmobiling you can see the river most of the time all up through there, because it's the road that Diamond used when they were logging out of there, see. It goes clear down to – I don't know if you're familiar with the airport down on Route 4, well it goes clear down there from here. Starts here right on this road, turns down the Bridge Road and goes all the way to the airport.

**Mrs. A:** They land airplanes in it, there's another, you ought to go down and talk with them. Michael or Terry.

**EA:** Yeah, well Terry's not there, Michael (*name*), he would be at the airport. Michael and Dale, Michael and Dale are the two, you know, but they're father has run a seaplane business out of there, for ever since I can, back in the forties at least, and I think before that, I think at least back into the forties, he ran a seaplane business, using the river.

**Mrs. A:** My nephew lives down below that. Do you want to talk to somebody that lives on the river?

**Q:** Sure. I mean, yeah, I'll take, at the end maybe we can go through and see if there's a whole bunch of people who you can think of. That'd be great. Anyone that you can think of I'd be glad to go check out.

**Mrs. A:** He has a party boat. Hey, he might give you a ride.

**EA:** Yeah, that's too bad that Paul is gone, because Paul Varney had one too, and he would have been a good source. And I'm sure he would have, he'd have taken her out.

**Mrs. A:** He grew up there.

**EA:** Because he grew up on the river. And a lot of what, you know, that I know about the river I got from my grandfather.

**Q:** What kinds of things did he say?

**EA:** Well, I mean about the roads, more about the roads and the things, and about, you know, when they actually, of course he was alive when they put the dam in. And they, my father and my grandfather raised potatoes, and they used the river for transportation during the wintertime.

**Q:** How did that work?

**EA:** Well, what they did is they used both horses, first just horses, is they'd put them on what we call a scoot, or a drag, and they took them to Lewiston. And that was the best way to go, was go down and go on the river. And then later on, they even went with truck on the river and took their potatoes down to Canal Street. And then they also, one year they wholesaled, they peddled them out down on Lincoln and Canal, in the French speaking, like Little Canada. Twenty-five cents a bushel. But that was another thing. And everybody along the river used it. I mean my grandparents on my mother's side, my mother lived right on the river down below Kent here a ways, and her father used.

**Mrs. A:** She probably knows, where Bates has their boating area. Do you know where that is?

**Q:** Yeah, yeah, I do. Right there?

**EA:** Yeah, the next, if you go beyond it, coming this way, the next place beyond that driveway that goes down, there's kind of a big old house there, that's where she was born and brought up. Her father used the river to log on. He worked in the woods in the winter, and he worked the summer on the other side, and they'd go cut logs for people over there and go back and forth. But as I say, they, I don't know how much other traffic there was on it, but I know they did it a few winters.

**Q:** Mostly winter traffic?

**EA:** Yeah, they used it in the winter time.

**Mrs. A:** Indians used it.

**EA:** That would have been in like '43, '44. Because they went out of the potato business in '45 so, and I know '44 was the year that there was such a bad year, and they wholesaled a lot of them. And then, if you could have heard my father tell it, he took the horses and, two teams of horses, but they did run the truck on it too.

**Mrs. A:** Just in this whole hill, all full of potatoes, all plowed up, potato rows. Rows, and rows, and rows of potatoes. Then up there by the treehouse.

**Q:** You mentioned something about the land right down here, they used to have farms on it, could you explain a little more about that?

**EA:** Okay. Well, of course with the road being, following the river all the way out from Lewiston, it was right along the bank, and so naturally a lot of the farms were along the river. All the way from, well I don't know how much down to Lewiston, because I'm not familiar, but I know once you get into Greene, pick up the River Road there in Greene, because I don't really know where it went. See, I know where it came out to 202. I can't tell you where it went once you got down out of Greene towards Lewiston, but up through Greene, then on up through Leeds, and on up through Livermore. And also some on the other side, but I don't think there were anywheres near as many. Most of the farms were on the east side of the river.

**Q:** Why is that?

**Mrs. A:** Varney's was on the other side.

**EA:** Yeah, until you get above here. I can't tell you. One of the things is, it's awful steep, leaving the river and going up, it's pretty steep for quite a ways until you get pretty well down to the airport. Now when you get down there, there's the Waterman Road where I met you, there was two or three farms in there. And then again, there were some in off River Road in Auburn. But I think probably that's the reason, it just wasn't, it wasn't farm land, it was rocky and steep. But when you got on this side, and once you got beyond the bridge here, then it's flat. And the way the road went up through, and there were, you know, farms all the way up through. In fact, my grandmother -

**Mrs. A:** Show her the map?

**EA:** I think Kent showed her the map.

**Q:** Yeah, yeah, he showed me that map. It's really cool.

**EA:** My grandmother lived on the river on the Turner side. She lived above this, what we call the Varney, Varney's were the biggest farm, they were by far the biggest farm that was on the river. A big family and had quite a sizable farm, and there's still, a lot of them that live in Turner. But as I say, my grandmother was a Pratt. She lived a couple places up. But all the way up through here there were farms, and when they got ready to put the dam in, they came along and just bought them, bought them off. Bought what they called flowage rights back to a elevation, it's 272, I think, and that's the way they decided. But in most of the cases, you know, they bought the whole farm. But they actually just, they kept the flowage rights up to that 272, I think it is, marked all the way. And then, to this day they still, you know, they have the right to flow it back to that point if they ever wanted. It's never even, well right here, it's never come back to that during

flood times, but some places it's gone beyond that. Because that, of course that's another whole issue which I really am not familiar with – you'd have to get in somebody a little older – is the floods that happened on it. Which the worst one was '36 or '37, took out most all the bridges that were on it, the bridge here, all the way up through, took just about all of them out. And I can't tell you, it's either '36 or, I believe it's '37 but I wouldn't be wanted to be held for sure. It's either '36 or '37.

**Q:** Yeah, I've heard a little bit about it.

**EA:** Yeah, there's a lot of pictures.

**Q:** Documentation, yeah, right.

**EA:** Yeah, on that. I think Nana had some, didn't she? But I mean you can find them, if you went to the *Sun-Journal*, they have all kinds of stuff. And then of course there's been, oh, I don't know how many in my lifetime, where it's, we've never had any that have been over this bridge.

**Q:** There was another flood in '87 or something?

**EA:** Yeah, something like that.

**Q:** Was that pretty bad here?

**EA:** Well, not here for us really. I mean we didn't see any effects from it. It didn't get very close to this, but the ones at the other end of Leeds, what we call Twin Bridges, there's two bridges, they go out onto an island and then go across, which they're going to be replaced.

**Q:** Is that a project?

**EA:** That's a project that's in the works. In fact, as a town, we just got notice last week, it's been on for about, I don't know, about eight or ten years, and then the state took it off the list a year or so ago, lack of money. And they can't come up with a plan that satisfies everybody. That's one of the biggest issues.

**Q:** What are people disagreeing over?

**EA:** Well, they're looking at, you got, they found some, I think some Indian, some old Indian like settlements and so on, so they don't want you to touch that. And then you've got a real bad traffic situation on the Turner side, and the people in Turner, and also the people in the state, can't seem to decide what's the best way to correct it. And then you got cost, because of course really probably the best way to correct the traffic problem is the most expensive, and that's move the thing down river quite a little bit. Because not

only have you got to move the bridge it sits along, but then you got to reroute (*unintelligible*) traffic, kind of loop them around, or you're going to have the same problem that you've got now.

And we've got kind of a little community right on the other side of the bridge, you know, there's a (*unintelligible*) and eight or ten house, (*unintelligible*), and they don't all agree on it because a couple of houses will have to go. But as of last week, they did put it back on the drawing board again, so it is back on to be done. Because it's, you know, the bridges are old, they really need work. And the traffic, you know, there not wide enough now for the traffic that's, that you have. DeCoster Egg Farm especially, they haul across it all the time.

But it was '87, it got up pretty high. I almost think that they closed those, because it got up fairly close to them. But it didn't get, I wouldn't say, within six feet maybe of this one here.

**Mrs. A:** They didn't close this bridge.

**EA:** No, no. I say, it didn't get up even so they was really any worry about it. Of course, you know, the damage was in Lewiston-Auburn, and some (*unintelligible*).

**Mrs. A:** Also along the river, all the way up through to Rumford.

**EA:** Yeah, Livermore Falls really is up fairly well. They don't get hit as bad. Canton, Dixfield, and on up to Rumford. But the lower part of Lewiston, and New Auburn was the worst.

**Q:** Worst hit?

**EA:** Yeah.

**Mrs. A:** They have a book on it, you can get that at the library here.

**EA:** And there's been others that have, you know, got into New Auburn over the years, and further up, Dixfield, Canton.

**Q:** Well, you mentioned that you were a town selectman?

**EA:** Hmm-hmm.

**Q:** What kinds of things do you do for that?

**EA:** Well, we run the town. In other words, we're like a city council would be in a city. We, there's three of us, and we make the day to day decisions for the town. We meet

once a week. We also, we have, we call it administrative assistant which is, I tell people it's the town manager without the town manager's salary.

**Mrs. A:** You could call her the town clerk.

**EA:** Well, it's more than that, but she, she does the day-to-day things but, you know, they have to be okayed by us.

**Mrs. A:** Her father's a historian, Berkeley Holburn, he's in Greene.

**EA:** Yeah, but he hasn't done anything on the river, much on the river. He is a historian, though. Carol Burgess is another one (*unintelligible*), she's down -

**Mrs. A:** She lives on the river.

**EA:** She's down, she lives on the river now. She didn't, she's only lived there a few years, yeah, probably thirty.

**Mrs. A:** A few years?

**EA:** Maybe thirty.

**Mrs. A:** We've been married forty, she's been here before I was.

**EA:** (*Unintelligible*).

**Q:** So have you seen the town of Turner change a lot as well?

**EA:** The town of Turner has changed more than the town of Leeds has. Turner has really grown. Turner at one point, oh, back in, I might have to look that up, but around 2000, late 1990s, 2000, they were named the fastest growing town in the state. And they still are, every piece of land, you know, it's a bedroom community for Lewiston and Auburn, they're really, you know, Lewiston and Auburn are losing people and Turner – *and* Green as well. Now Leeds is just enough, we're growing some, but we're not growing anywheres near as fast as – Greene had a big spurt about the same time Turner did, and then Greene has kind of just leveled off, and Turner's continuing. One of the things that's made Turner continue is, there's been a lot of farms gone out of business, farms and orchards, and that's opened up a lot of land. I mean, they owned a lot of land.

*Interview Interrupted*

**EA:** ... but I can't tell you where they went, you know, how far, where the mill was, whether they went to Lisbon, they might have gone to Lisbon, but that's the only one I

knew about. I don't know, that would be something to find out. But I know he told about, because that would have been, that would have been 1900.

**Q:** Were they driving in Lewiston, in this area, or was it coming from upriver?

**EA:** They were coming from further north, down. But they held them up, in other words, if you go down here, you can see there's a pipe set in cement out there, and he said they tied them up and held them, in other words, until they got them all together. That's the way they did it on all the rivers. They'd have a place where they'd hold them, they'd have booms like across. And then once they got ready for them down river, they'd let the booms go. And the men, of course out there walking on them. You've probably seen pictures.

**Q:** I have, yeah, I've seen some pictures of it. Looks pretty crazy.

**EA:** But I know it was, that was when he was young. And he was born in 1891.

**Mrs. A:** It was 1891, and Nana was born in '92. (*Unintelligible*).

**EA:** I know that was, you know, turn of the century. And of course, and he saw them put power in. Of course, because once they put the dams in, then they put the power in. And the people had to, people had to help foot the bill, you know, like even beforehand, you had to pay ahead and sign up. And there was quite a few people, he said, even farmers that didn't sign up, they weren't going to have that power. They milked cows by hand, and they were still going to do it.

**Q:** All right, resisters.

**Mrs. A:** Stubborn farmers, they're farmers because they can't work for anybody else.

**Q:** I guess they got converted eventually?

**Mrs. A:** Yes, when they realized how much faster it was.

**Q:** Right, right. Did you say that you didn't know what year the dam was put in?

**Mrs. A:** That's what he said.

**Q:** Okay, all right, I'll have to look that up, it's an interesting point.

**EA:** But he said there was quite a few, you know, and then he went out and campaigned to try to get people, because it was similar to cable television now, I mean you had to have, they weren't going to do it, they weren't going to string the lines unless they had enough people that were interested in power. That would have been in 19-, in the '20's, '20s or early '30's, something like that. Yeah, it would have probably been

'20's.

**Q:** I can't imagine that.

**Mrs. A:** You don't want to.

**Q:** And have you always lived right here?

**EA:** Yeah, my family – well, not right here, (*unintelligible*) the farm. My family came there in 1790.

**Q:** Where's your family from?

**EA:** They had a big family, they came from Mass-, well, they lived in another place in Leeds, but then they came from Massachusetts, but they settled, as I say, one other place in Leeds, but evidently they weren't there too awful long and then moved over here. Not actually to that set of buildings that's there, it's over where my mother's house is, which is over the road a little further. And then that place there was Beals, and my great-great grandfather married a Beals, and then he inherited that set of buildings. But the family's been here on the hill since 1790.

**Q:** And when did you build this place?

**EA:** We built this -

**Mrs. A:** This? Four years ago.

**Q:** Oh, okay, wow, pretty recently then?

**EA:** Yeah, up until, we didn't own this land here until 1965.

**Mrs. A:** That was a few years ago.

**EA:** Well, it wasn't part of the original farm, it went, well it went with Ken's farm.

**Q:** Oh, this did? Okay.

**EA:** This went with Ken's, and then the people that owned Ken's place sold it, and they lived in a little house across the way. And the person that bought Ken's place didn't have any use, he was a woods operator and he had no use for the fields. And at that particular time we were making a major expansion, and so we needed them, so he sold them to us. It was key for us during the expansion, worked out well for him.

**Q:** Right, now you continued the potato farming of your grandfather and father?

**EA:** No, my grandfather went out in 1945. My father didn't like the potatoes, see, they were, they were dabbling some in cows, milk cows. He was really just buying and selling, he'd go to Canada and buy a bunch and bring back here, and keep them during the winter and sell them in the spring, is what my grandfather did. But my father liked the cows, and he didn't like the potato business. And in '44 they had a disaster, the blight hit, I'm sure you've probably read about what happened in Iowa. Well this was the same thing here.

My grandfather was the largest potato grower south of Aroostook county back in the '40s, he had a hundred acres of potatoes. So they sold all the potato equipment in 1945, and went to New Jersey and bought a herd of cows in New Jersey. And of course the rest is history. We got up to where we milked, oh, some over a hundred head, two hundred head, my father. And my grandfather, you know, he embraced it. The only thing, one little kind of funny side note is, once he stopped raising potatoes, he never had a potato in his garden. There was never a potato raised on Additon Farms until my wife came there. And he had a big garden, and he never put potatoes in. When Cathy came, well she had to have some potatoes. But, no sir. You know, I always thought that was funny, man raised potatoes all his life and then he wasn't going to have anything to do with them. Once they were gone, they were gone. He had a friend of his that did raise them, and he always, he'd buy them, you know, he'd buy his whole winter supply. His friend there's up in Livermore (*unintelligible*). So then, you know, we were in the cow business up until, oh, about five years ago, and we went out and sold the farm.

(*Interruption*)

**EA:** ... I didn't suppose it would be possible. I mean it was that, well I mean it was, it was rated one of the worst in the country.

**Q:** Yeah, I read that.

**EA:** Yeah, it was one of the very worst rivers in the country. People that weren't on it or weren't around it just can't imagine, you know, what it was like. But my grandfather, he had a saying (*unintelligible*), well, it was something about, it was too thick for something, and too thin to plow.

**Q:** The foam on it?

**EA:** Well, just the river, the water would froth, and of course it was too, too thick to boat and too thin to plow (*unintelligible*).

**Q:** Something like that?

**EA:** Something like that. I remember that it was too thin to plow, but it was pretty, it was odd.

**Q:** And was there anybody at the time who was saying, we should clean this up?

**EA:** No. I don't think so, and I can't tell you when, you know, the interest really, it may have been when, the fish kill may have been one of the things that got it. I don't know really, but it was, I don't know how long ago it was. But back then, no. I don't think there, I don't remember that anybody, we just assumed that's the way it was going to be, you know. Didn't assume that there was anything you could do about it.

And of course, you know, the mills were, an awful lot of people made a living, and still do. I mean they're still pretty vital. And I'm one that I think reacted, we have to use a little common sense that, you know, the economics, to have it perfectly clean, I'm not sure if we can ask the mills to do that, because it would drive them out of business. I think, you know, we can, I think we've come a long ways but we still got a ways to go, but I also think that, you know, we've got to do it reasonably, and not close the mills up. Because they're just hanging on by a thread as it is. They may, they probably are going to die a natural death. I don't think there's probably, or maybe not in my lifetime, but surely probably in yours they will leave. There will be no, it's foreseen.

IP was just bought, and this company that bought them has a history of about seven years, and then selling. Well, their history is that they'll just work it right into the ground, or won't put any money back into it, and walk away from it in seven to ten years.

**Q:** So if not mills, what do you see for the future of the river, and the area, I guess, in general?

**EA:** I don't know. You know, it kind of scares me. But, you know, we've survived with all the textile mills leaving Lewiston and Auburn, and the shoe business leaving Lewiston and Auburn. And you know, we said the same thing about that, you know, that we couldn't survive without those, and we've managed to do it. So I suspect we'll do the same thing here when the mills, when the paper mills go, you know. I don't know what it's going to be, I don't know if anybody knows what's going to come. I think it'll always be, or at least for the near future anyways, it will still be a key for power. And I think now, you know, with what I've seen in my lifetime, the way it's cleaned up, I think, you know, you're going to see recreation be a big thing on it. I think you're going to see people buying the house lots, and camps, everything they do at any other body of water.

*End of Side A  
Side B*

**EA:** ... seventy-five to a hundred boats on a big one, on a weekend. So that tells you

that, and then they have at least three (*unintelligible*). And then they also have another one that's on the Dead River, which actually comes into the Androscoggin up near Leeds, comes out of Androscoggin Lake into Androscoggin River. Another whole issue there, there's a dam on that. That's another whole issue, trying to keep the water, Androscoggin river water out of Androscoggin Lake. I've been fairly involved in that. (*Unintelligible*) legislature, testified as to, mainly just that the town of Leeds wasn't going to take responsibility for it, that's what they wanted. We didn't create the problem, and we're not going to be part of the solution is what I told them.

**Q:** What exactly was going on, water from the Androscoggin was going -?

**EA:** What happens is, they call it a dam, which really it isn't, it's a pollution control device, is really what it is. And it's on the Dead River, as I say, which, and the idea is to keep pollutants from Androscoggin River out of Androscoggin Lake. But every spring the water gets too high, goes over the top of the dam. It also brings down trash that comes in, logs and stuff. They get in the gates of the dam, so when the water actually goes down, these logs will be stuck in the gate, so the things wide open for water to come in there. And it's a dam owned by the state, the only dam owned by the state, and they, about four years ago wanted to, they wanted to turn it back to the two towns that are involved, and that's Leeds and Wayne, and that's when I got involved. See, of course, Wayne really is an awful lot of property – I don't know if you're very familiar with the town.

**Q:** I'm not, no.

**EA:** Well, the town of Wayne sits right around Androscoggin Lake. And it's an old money community, no new places, you can't find a new place in town because they don't, nobody will sell anything. You've got to buy something that's already there, you don't build something new. And they, of course were, they started seeing some problems, dioxins mainly. And then, the state says, look, you folks need to take that dam over. As I say, that's when I got involved because, being on the board of selectmen, I mean we're talking tens of thousands of dollars, and this little town, we don't have the.

So what's happened is, you know, the two towns have done a pretty good job. We've been able to convince, we got some grant money, we did some studies, trying to find where the pollution is coming from. And also to make repairs to the dam. So what we've actually done is raise the height of the dam, but the problem is we still get ice jams that come down and they, they're the, they still (*unintelligible*) down, so it means, it costs five to ten thousand dollars a year just to repair it every year. And we've also got the two mills, in Rumford and Livermore, that put money in to help repair the dam.

And the state at this point has said they'll keep ownership of it, which is what we wanted. We do some, a lot of the, the Lake Association, actually, Wayne Lake Association does the maintenance, in other words, keeping the trash out of the dam,

and so on. And then the town of Leeds, we maintain the road so that they can get to it. But it was a pretty, it's been a pretty hot issue for a while.

**Q:** Yeah, I'd imagine.

**EA:** You know, and some of the people, again, some of the people in Wayne, they said it's got to be nothing can come in. Well it's not practical, because I don't care how high, at the point, without, the only way they could do it is they'd have to build an all new dam at another point. Because this place wasn't, it wasn't a very good place to put it originally, because it's in a bend. And what happens is, that stuff that comes down, it just gives it a chance to really slam. If they build it more on an angle so that stuff would have hit, you know, and kind of gone off to the side.

Plus, it's not at a place where the banks are the highest. So it'll never, I mean it'll be almost impossible to get it high enough there. And it'll cost, it's over a million dollars to put in a dam that would keep out everything. In other words, a hundred year flood. And so finally, through this process, I think we've convinced at least enough of the people in the Androscoggin Lake Association that maybe if we keep out a twenty-five year flood, that's reasonable compromise as far as, although, it isn't everybody, there's still some there that were mad.

**Q:** Have you done any work with the Androscoggin River in specific, is it mostly up by the lake and Dead River?

**EA:** Well, most of it's, yeah, it's dealing, of course the river has been tied in because of the paper companies and so on. In fact at one point, the Androscoggin Lake Association was ready to sue the paper companies. That was their, in fact they'd hired a lawyer.

**Q:** Because of the pollution?

**EA:** Yeah, because of the pollution. And we just felt, some of us, especially the selectmen in Leeds felt that wasn't the route to go, that we better try and talk to them and work with them as opposed to, you know, try to hit them over the head with a hammer. And I think it was the right thing and so, they get ten thousand dollars, five thousand dollars apiece from the two mills a year. And that takes care of the maintenance of the dam, and puts the boards back if they get taken out, which they usually do just because of the ice and the logs coming down the river. And one of the things, there again, you got agencies, state agencies, what bothered me a lot is, (*unintelligible*) on the river, but on the Dead River you got trees that are hanging right out like they're all ready to fall in. To me, you should be able to cut those and take them out of there, so they don't end up in the river, but.

**Q:** You can't. And this is a state regulation?

**EA:** Yeah, DEP, you can't touch it, it has to fall in. Well, and of course what they're saying is that when you cut it you're going to disturb the ground, and that way you're going to, you know, put more pollution in there. (*Unintelligible*).

**Q:** Do you see the state's role as adequate in cleaning up the river?

**EA:** Oh, not really. Some people, of course one of the key people that's been, been working to clean up the river, John Nutting, Senator John Nutting from the town of Leeds, and his farm sets right on this dam. So if you walked down, his cows go right down to the water there, and I mean the dam's right there on his farm. But he's been in the senate, well he was in the house, and now he's in the senate. He has probably been one of the main ones pushing things to clean the river up. The last, of course he served the last twenty years or so.

**Q:** For a long time.

**EA:** Yeah, off and on. He's been out because he, he was in the house, and then he turned down the house and then stayed out for two or three years and then come back in the senate. In fact, he ran for governor three, four years ago. (*Unintelligible*). One of the problems with the state is the different agencies don't all, aren't all on the same page. You get regulations from Department of Conservation, DEP, a lot of times they, you know, they're complete opposites. And that to me is one of the things that, you know, slows the cleaning part of it.

Then you got Forestry in there, you got any number, once you, if you start to do anything, you know, on the river or around the river, just like these twin bridges, you just, you run into everybody because you got your archives, they're in there because of the Indians and that, you know. See, some of those, those are the kind of things that bother me, you know, where they're going to spend a million, two million more money because there was an Indian site, they found some Indian arrowheads there or something. Those are the kind of things that panic the conservative Republicans up there. (*Unintelligible*), you got strike a balance, you know, that's the way it is with the whole thing on the river, I think you got to have a balance, you got to balance the need for cleaning up the river, but also the need to make it economical and not drive people out of business and lose jobs at the same time.

**Q:** Yeah, that sounds like a great goal, you know?

**EA:** Well, of course, as I say, it's common sense. But if you, once you get to Augusta, evidently, once you cross that bridge into Augusta, you have to leave that on the other side. That's what I tell everybody. They don't allow them to have that over there. But it's also the same in Washington too, common sense just seems to, to the common man anyway, it just seems like they don't, you know, the obvious solutions are

there.

*End of Interview*  
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