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Nottestad, Birger oral history interview

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Interview with Birger Nottestad II by Mariah Pfeiffer

Interviewee

Nottestad, Birger, II

Interviewer

Pfeiffer, Mariah

Date

July 11, 2006

Place

Berlin, New Hampshire

ID Number

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Format

Audiocassette

Biographical Note

Birger Nottestad's father immigrated to the United States from Norway as a child. The immigrant was the foreman of a river crew in the Brown Company for over 40 years and also served in World War I. As he grew up, Birger Nottestad camped at lumber camps with his father during school vacations. Nottestad worked the river himself in the summers of 1954 and 1955 but did not like the work. Nottestad quit high school in the April of his senior year to join the Navy. When he returned from the service, Nottestad worked briefly in local mills. He worked in sawmills and hotels until he retired, and also managed a family campground.

Jaelyn Nadeau is also present for the interview. It is not clear what her relationship is to Nottestad.

Scope and Content Note

This interview covers river work: work sites, accommodating German prisoners of war, Nottestad's family's history with river work, Nottestad's river work experience, processes and practices of river work, and equipment; the appearance of the river; the Norwegian Village; Nottestad's relationship to his father: stays at logging camps and not working his father's jobs; Nottestad's various jobs; his experience in the Navy; Nottestad's reasons for returning to New Hampshire; remembering and preserving signs of river work: a boom pier burning accident, memorial plans, and photographs; decline of the use of the Androscoggin for logging: important dates in the decline, public reaction,

the economic impact of the decline on Berlin, new lumber transportation methods, and the use of the river after logging; local hero and photographer Roger Cooper; Nottestad's family life; and the unionization of river work.

General Notes

Occasional talking in the background makes segments of this recording difficult to understand. Also, Nottestad talks quietly and in fragments when he shows the interviewer photographs, which is difficult to understand.

ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Q: Could you please state and spell your name for me?

Birger Nottestad: My name is Birger Nottestad, and it's spelled B-I-R-G-E-R, N-O-T-T-E-S-T-A-D, the second.

Q: Okay, great, thank you. Now we can talk about your father.

BN: These are the places where the river crew worked for the Brown Company. Some winters they're up in Letoux, Canada, then Sunday River, Maine, then all your big lakes up north, the Big Diamond, Lower Diamond, Aziscohos, Lake Umbagog. Then they logged – I'm not sure if that was up in Umbagog or where – well, they had to make the New Keenan Bridge up there, and that was named after the Keenans on Prospect Street. And his sisters were all high school teachers at Berlin High. Then during the war we had prisoners in Stark, New Hampshire, on our farm. The Brown Company had to go up there in the winter to sand the roads up the mountains for the prisoners to go up and down and cut some wood, et cetera.

Q: So you grew up right here in Berlin?

BN: Right.

Q: And you had a family farm somewhere around here?

BN: Yes, in Stark, New Hampshire, and that's where they had the prisoners of war from Germany during that time. And at one time we had loads of pictures of all these, and they up and disappeared someplace. Well, now I can't see what I wrote.

Q: That's okay, we can just start talking. So your family has been involved with logging since really early on?

BN: Yes, my mother had two brothers who worked on the river crew, and then she had a brother-in-law that worked on the river crew, plus my father, and I worked there in 1954 and '55, until my summer vacation. Because I was only 118 pounds, and when you're on the middle of the river on the catwalks, that's what they call them, I had the pick poles, which were twelve feet long, and I'd stick them in the logs because they had to go in a different channel. I couldn't pull them out. I'd go head-first and they'd have to come and get me, because I couldn't pull the pick pull out because I was too skinny or not strong enough.

Q: So you had a rough time of it?

BN: Yes, and plus the sun. That was always at the Pine Island sorting gap.

Q: Okay, where is that?

BN: Sits right up here on Main Street, above the Berlin Dairy. Then the next one was up in Marlin, the Marlin sorting gap, which was another same idea. Then in the spring when we had to – you go down and clean up where the water goes down – we had to go up on the edge of the farms, etcetera. In them days we had to wear the big hip boots, because the sewer still ran out into the river. Then eventually they had to make them put in the septic tanks, and that was a hell of a job.

Q: So how would you describe the river back then?

BN: Well, in the spring it was cold. In the summer it was beautiful. Then every once in a while, on the catwalks, we'd see nice rainbow trout. They'd be on the logs coming down, eating the seeds, and we'd try to catch them. But you couldn't because they were too slippery.

Q: Could you catch them with the poles you were using?

BN: No, we never tried that. I guess I didn't think of it.

Q: And so your dad was doing similar work on the river?

BN: Right. And he quit school at fourteen and went into the woods, until the First World War. Then when he come out he went back in again, and he worked forty-seven years, and he was a foreman on the river crew.

Q: What exactly does a foreman do?

BN: Well, he's the head of all the work, but he still had to do his job the same as the others. Then they had Milton Harriman from Marlin who was the logging boss. He was above them. And he had Stan Winchell, which was the head one that was right in the Brown Company Woods Department office up on Main Street.

Q: Okay, and so how did your family get involved with the logging industry?

BN: On account of my father, I guess, coming from Norway. Because they're logging there and fishing or whatever.

Q: Your father was first generation from Norway?

BN: Yes.

Q: And the neighborhood that you were living in, how would you describe that

neighborhood?

BN: Well that was the Norwegian Village, and some worked in the woods, or the rest went into the mills. It varied from I guess what they liked to start with.

Q: So your dad liked going into the woods. Why was that? Why did he prefer that?

BN: I guess he was born into it, see. Because his oldest brother went to Michigan. Well, he went into the carpenter business and over the years he got to be the big engineer, you know, for the Ford factories and all that stuff, see.

Q: All right. And then, so you only worked for two summers in high school?

BN: Yes, and then some winters now, when I was young. I stayed in the lumber camps on vacations in the wintertime, which was good. Their breakfasts were big. They'd make the big, big sugar cookies, they were like pancakes. That was my good stuff.

Q: So did your dad have to travel up and stay in the logging camps all winter?

BN: Well, yeah. They traveled a lot. Sometimes, it depends on where they were working you know, how far or what. Because then he had the truck that he had to take

the men back and forth to work, if they stayed up there for two weeks or whatever. And it was a rough life for them, because they'd come home and in the summer time, they still had to work on the river. And they still had to hay for the Brown Company, because they had the horses for the Brown Company Farm, until they got modern tractors and stuff.

Q: So all summer they were haying?

BN: Oh, the river, plus then they'd hay after they got done on the river at 3:30 until night time, eight or nine o'clock at night, see.

Q: Wow. Sounds like tough work.

BN: Actually, in the winter we never seen him. He'd leave in September, October, then come back in the spring and start the river drives again.

Q: How'd your mother feel about that?

BN: Well, she couldn't say anything really. That's what provided us, right? I guess our food, plus we had to farm.

Q: Then how did you decide to start working for the logging drives?

BN: Because before that I delivered papers, all year round, and you didn't make much money. So that summer I said I'll go, because I made good money at least. The most I ever made for the summer months. But when I got out of school – I quit in April of my senior year, then I joined the Navy because I wanted to travel, so I did. Then when I come out I went into the mill for about four months and I couldn't take the mill.

Q: How come?

BN: It just wasn't for me. So then I worked in the sawmills up here. Then saw mills and hotels until I retired, which gave me a change.

Q: So you got to travel during the Navy?

BN: Yes.

Q: Where'd you get to go to?

BN: Well first I was stationed in Miami Beach. They put bulletins up on our two ships for a new super tanker home-ported in Naples, Italy. So three of them from our ship and two or three from the other ship all said, God we'll be able to travel. Otherwise, we would have been right in Miami Beach until we get out. So we got home-ported in

Naples. Then my second ship was a survey ship and we were home-ported right in Bethlehem Steel in Brooklyn, New York, which was better than the regular shipyard. And from there we had to go to the Mediterranean because we had to survey the Black Sea. So we got in there, after you go through all these states, then we got in there and that is the only sea that is fresh water, completely.

Q: Wow, I didn't know that.

BN: So we get in there and started surveying. Here comes these little commie jets, right over our heads. You know, they had their guns and we'd be scared. Because they didn't do – they were just checking. We'd be petrified. And we were supposed to go to Stalingrad first. They changed it to Leningrad. Then we ended up in Odessa, which was beautiful, though. Then we got done there. I can't even remember how long we were there. Then we came back to Bethlehem Steel in New York, then we had to go to Hawaii and home-base there to do the Sea of Bangkok. You know, survey all the coastline and everything. So from there we'd get R and R, we'd go to Hong Kong like at Christmas or whatever.

Then I got discharged. Well, from there I had to go to Treasure Island and Frisco to get discharged. And I was going to re-enlist. I come home and I waited two days too long. I went down, I lost my ship and pay-over money, so I didn't go back. Which I wished I would have, because I might have gone some other place. So then I come back here

and I'm still here.

Q: What made you decide to stay here?

BN: Well, I'm the only one that really likes it here out of five children. And my brother, he's here, but he still wants to go to Vermont, because he never liked it really here either. So I take after my father, I guess.

Q: Why do you like it here so much?

BN: Well, the woods and everything, see.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Do you feel really connected to the woods?

BN: Yeah.

Q: I'd imagine.

BN: And I ran a campground until two years ago. Well, four years. At the end I was alone, because the people who owned it, they were old and they couldn't come up anymore.

Q: A campground whereabouts?

BN: It was Napehorn Campground in West Marlin.

Q: Is that north of here?

BN: Yeah, it was. They sold it and now it's completely gone. Someone bought it. They've cut all the timber out, and from what I heard they're going to build housing lots and everything. So that was that.

Q: How did you enjoy running that campground?

BN: Oh, I liked it because I had the whole run. You know, you got the campground and you got to cut trees when they fall, and you can't do it when people are there so you have to wait until they leave in the winter time. I could still stay up there in my trailer. You know, there's a lot of work. You can cut wood and get ready to have wood for the campers in the summer time and different things.

Q: So it's kind of like the logging industry, a little bit different.

BN: Yeah, more or less. It's still like doing the same thing, right? Except for check in people and collecting money.

Q: That's the key, though. So you stopped doing the river drives and then, or what

was the reason, I guess, that you stopped doing the river drives?

BN: Well, I quit school in my senior. I wanted to travel. And my father didn't want us to go on the river anyways, because of what he went through I guess.

Q: Did you talk about that a lot?

BN: Oh yeah, even when I went in the mill at first, he didn't want me going there. He said, keep out of all this, because it's hard work. I guess he knew I wouldn't like it, and I didn't, so it didn't matter.

Q: But he kept at it his whole life?

BN: Oh yeah.

Q: What kind of things did he tell you about it?

BN: Well, I mean the hard life which we knew by seeing him as we grew up, you know, in the winter and spring. Working in the cold water and stuff, and they end up with arthritis and bursitis and everything. Then lots of people drowned in the river drives, slipping off wood and stuff. It's dangerous with your pulp pokes and your pick poles. They get in your ankles or anything.

Q: Yeah, sounds like dangerous work. What are the pulp pokes and pick poles?

BN: Well, the pulp poke is the short – I mean to describe it, it's got the handle – let's see now (*shows one*).

Q: Oh wow, right there.

BN: It's hard to describe, see? See that right there with the hook? That's a pulp hook. Then you had your pickaroon which, let's see, this is a pick pole that we had to use. See how long they are? That's why when I did it, it'd stick in the wood and I couldn't get it out, I'd fall head first into the logs, bang my head.

Q: And this is to kind of separate the logs?

BN: Yes. That's when you had to sort them, because they had different channels, see? They had one just four foot which, it got peeled and would come down over the (*Unintelligible*) over the rocks. That was one special order, just for Eastman Kodak, which, they kept that (*unintelligible*) Bridge Street Bridge, Berlin. Oh, that's a little can dog. That was when they roll the logs. In the lumberyards, they have to move them. They have different types of pulp. You grab them, to pull them whichever way.

I'm looking for the pickaroon. It's a handle, but then it just has the hook that goes out like this, on that, see on that one side. A lot of people over the years, who knows what happened to the stuff. Like my nephew implied, he's got all this stuff, that my oldest brother took with him when he went in the service, so his son has all that stuff. I didn't have nothing. Well, I wasn't into antiques and stuff like that, which they had been good.

Then you got your buck saws, which they used way back, which we had to use growing up in our own yard cutting wood. Then the cross cut. We had the two-man crosscut. There's your crosscuts right there. I did give one of my father's to a cousin of mine in Maine because he wanted it so bad. And then my father's hat, he wore the same hat, it must have been a good forty years. That's how we tell in the pictures, when they're on the river, you know, at the Pine Island and all the different points. A lot of interesting – they got so much equipment they had, gosh. Then you had your big chains.

(Unidentified woman) Well it was all specially developed, it was specialized. They knew what they needed to get the job done. Sometimes they were improved or added on. Like the Peavey was invented by Mr. Peavey, but it was just a modification of something to make it better, more useful.

BN: And all your *(unintelligible)* gaps, they had sway booms. These are booms that had the big chains. That was to open up one channel, like on this side river, to go one way, the other way, back and forth. And those you had to pull, which for me was hard,

weighing only 118. Then they built all the piers. (*Unintelligible*) going up in Berlin, those by the river here.

(*Unidentified woman*) Did you go see the historic marking at the new piers (*unintelligible*)?

Q: Yeah. I was there yesterday.

BN: All the last piers they built was in either '52 or '53, and these were right at the Brown School and A Street, in Berlin Mills. That's the last ones they built. Oh, right there, see, that's what they were. And that was a big job because they had to do this in the winter, to go out with the horses and wagons with the rocks and stuff.

Q: Okay, and this is on the ice of the river?

BN: Yes, right. That goes all the way up through. All of them are gone now, and when they did the river fire, right? That's what really got me teed off.

Q: What's the river fire?

BN: It's been two years now, right, they've done it?

(*Unidentified woman*) Yes, they modeled it after Providence, Rhode Island, because

they put out like, I don't know what they put out there, but they're like lanterns or something and they light up the river at night. And they do it every week throughout the summer. We do it once a year around Halloween, but instead of putting out a lantern or something like that, they just built up some wood on the (*unintelligible*) piers and lit them, and the first year it was extremely windy and it caught the rest of the wood on fire, so they burnt.

BN: See, most of these are gone now and that's why – I mean, I wanted to say something, you know, I was really teed, but I didn't. Because they were trying to keep the heritage, by doing this, most of the wood is gone, everything. All went through, there's beautiful birch trees that grow in the middle, from the seeds where the wind blows them, and they burned. You got a few more growing, but it made it pretty.

(*Unidentified woman*) Some day they'll restore a couple right opposite the historic marker, but we have to find the money to be able to do it. And the river doesn't freeze like it did. Our winters aren't as cold. They used to be able to ice skate all the way to Marlin. The river doesn't freeze anymore.

BN: We skated all the way up there. When we were kids, we could skate past the Marlin Bridge. Today, it doesn't freeze above the Twelfth Street Bridge, right up here. Years ago it froze. One year, I think we were in Brown School still, they were right by a street that's way back, when the ice caved in and they lost the horses and a big wagon

full of rocks. The men were lucky. They saved themselves.

Q: So the boom piers, they still existed, but it's just the rocks.

BN: Yeah, most of the wood's gone from when they started these, mostly just the rocks now, which you saw.

Q: And these were to separate the river, kind of.

BN: Yes.

(*Mrs. Nottestad*) There was logs hooked with chains that floated between, and so the river was totally divided in half all the way to Marlin.

BN: And at the sorting gaps they had three different ones for the different logs, twelve-foot logs, or the long logs, whatever.

Q: So they sorted them by size too?

BN: Yes.

Q: All right. For both mills that were running?

BN: Yes, for both mills. And in the winter they still would stockpile it up at the old ski jump, about where the big one is now. Then they just had a little airport there, until they moved it to Marlin, and they stockpiled at Bridge Street. Well, they had stockpiles of wood everywhere for the spring, when they would put it back into the river too.

Q: I see. Seasonal movement?

BN: Yes.

Q: And then when was the last river drive?

(Unidentified woman) Sixty-four? It was on the historic marker.

BN: My father retired in 1956, then it went six more years before it closed. I think it was six years, right? Just about?

Q: Looks like 1964.

BN: Yes, because my father got done in '56, and it ended shortly. Yes, because I went in the service the year he retired, so it was two years after I got out that it still ran.

Q: And what did people say when the river drives ended?

BN: Well, it's just a thing. The end of an era, to modernization.

Q: What kind of modernization was going on?

BN: Well, the wood came in, then it came in on the trains and, well trucks too, until the mill closed, which is probably the end of their mill forever up here. Like the coal mines disappeared and they said they never would. All these different things, you know.

Q: Right. That just happened in May? The closing of the mill?

BN: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Seems like a big change.

BN: Oh yeah.

(Unidentified woman) There's been a mill in Norway since about 1870.

Q: Yes, so that's over two hundred years.

BN: And Berlin was big. When we grew up, we had three movie halls and we had a bowling center down on Glenn Avenue. I can't think of the name of it either, but we had everything. And we used to have big parades all the time, carnivals in the summer, circuses. And now it all goes to Gorham, and the people would rather give the money to Gorham, which I know. You see, these things really tee me off. Our money should stay in Berlin, we should still have parades again like we used to.

(Unidentified woman) But we do have parades. We split. They have the 4th of July parade and we have the Thanksgiving parade. They have fireworks at the 4th of July, we have it Thanksgiving, in the evening. So we just split it.

BN: But I mean, it's not like – Gorham makes more money really.

(Unidentified woman) Because it's at the intersection of Route 16 and Route 2. We're just self-sufficient. We're a city, the only city in the county, whereas they depend on the tourist trade so that's where all the motels and restaurants are. Here, it's just the homes and you work.

Q: So do you see that big change that's going to happen since the closing of the mill?

BN: Oh boy, yeah, because every street. You know, on my street there's four houses

for sale right together. And no matter where you go, you go towards Marlin or West Marlin, they're all for sale. People that are getting to look for jobs probably will move away. That's what happened way back when the International – and what was the other company?

(Mrs. Nottestad) International Paper, and they closed up around 1930. And then they dismantled the entire mill, there's only the foundation that's left. And the population dropped after that. Yeah, the city was twice as large as it is now, about twenty-three thousand.

Q: What is the population now?

(Unidentified woman) Ten something.

Q: And the people that are trying to sell their houses in your neighborhood, did they used to work for the mill?

BN: Well most of them did, yeah. And a lot of them, the thing is they're all young too, which is hard. They have children, and who knows how much they owe in property money or whatever they call it.

(Unidentified woman) Yeah, their mortgage isn't paid for yet. It's not like the older

ones whose mortgage is paid for, the kids are out of college.

Q: So when the river drives ended, how did the river change? How would you describe the change going on?

BN: You mean at the end?

Q: Yes.

BN: Well, everything just came in by truck and the railroad to the mills. And that was the end of the whole -

(Unidentified woman) And nobody really used the river. There's houses by Horn Street, they're right on the river, so they have a boat and so they went fishing a little. But it's like the river was just there. It wasn't used anymore. Now it's being used again.

BN: That's about it, I guess. As far as them working the woods in winter and in the summer, rivers drives, that was it. Just a tough life.

Q: And you got to experience a little bit of that it seems like?

BN: And they've got loads of pictures. Well, you knew Raymond Cooper, right? No,

Roger.

(Unidentified woman) This is his album. I did not know him, but this is his album.

BN: Because what happened was, just before I went to Michigan he called me. He wanted me to go over when I got back. I was out there four months at my sister's. I come back, and I don't remember who told me, Roger Cooper passed away. I never got a chance to go up. He was going to give me a lot of pictures, on account of my father and him. Because he worked on the river in between too.

(Unidentified woman) He would have been one to talk to, because he could scuba dive he helped to inspect the dams. And so he was involved in a different aspect of the river. He did help with the river drives, but he also inspected the dams, under water.

BN: He was like a photographer for them too.

Q: Is this where all the photos come from that are in the *(unintelligible)*?

BN: Because hen he broke his leg, that was up on Mount Washington, right?

(Unidentified woman) Oh, I don't know. I did not know him.

BN: Because they had that in the paper. When he died they had it in the paper.

(Unidentified woman) Well, *(name)* Tardiff did write about him.

BN: See, the avalanche, that's when he broke his ankle, and he had that all the rest of his life. It was like, twisted or -

(Unidentified woman) He broke it and he dragged himself out.

BN: Yes, he was an amazing person.

Q: One of those injuries that happens on the river at some point.

BN: I can't remember if it was Mount Washington.

(Unidentified woman) I think went hiking, taking pictures.

BN: Yeah, because even out West to a couple of different places too, there were some other logging companies. I can't remember.

(Unidentified woman) There was a lot of logging out west, yes.

BN: Washington state, he went all over.

(Unidentified woman) So all the photos in here were taken by him. See, we have a picture of covering the last drives, see? That's the last of the logs coming off the river and going up into a pile. You'd feed it in, and then it goes up to the top to create a pile. And, what do they call those log piles? There's a name for them.

BN: She asks me now and I can't think, you know. But that's the one (*unintelligible*).

(Unidentified woman) There was a word for it. It's where they stored it and used it over, until the next drive type of thing. And then after when it came in by trucks, they still kind of stacked it like that. Now, though, they mostly do it in cords. But there's a picture of the very last. See, this is '58. At least it's all well marked. I thought it was in here that he had a picture of the very last one going up. There it is, see, November '64. These are the last ones touching the last logs, getting ready to put it in.

BN: What gap is it, though? Does it say what sort of gaff?

Q: No, it doesn't say.

BN: All those, I knew them.

Q: You knew them all?

BN: Yes. See, that's what we called (*unintelligible*), about this wide. A catwalk, like on a ship, you know, you're going over the engine room, you have to walk over, and you look way down, you know, when you have the guard duty at night or whatever.

Q: Did you work with all these people?

BN: No, just knew them. Well, a couple of them I did, because they worked until they got done. My father retired. They made him retire on account of bursitis and stuff. Okay, this is a (*unintelligible*) sorting gap, our first bridge. You see, I never got the chance to. But I come up once (*unintelligible*), the Norwegian stuff.

Q: Was there a large Norwegian community in the -?

BN: Berlin Mills? Yes, that was strictly Norwegian. Now this is down, that's got to be Bridge Street just before it goes into the mill. They went up on chains where they stacked them and all. I mean it was a big operation.

Q: About how many guys did they have working there at a time?

BN: Must have been at least fifteen, but sometimes there was (*unintelligible*) up in the Marlin sorting gap too. It varied, see, all over the place. (*Unintelligible*). I can't see,

what's that?

Q: October 1958.

BN: Now, it looks like my father, but he retired in '56, I'm pretty sure. I think. I don't know. It's all confused.

Q: It says (*unintelligible*) and Berquist.

BN: Okay, it isn't there. See, these are the last years. That's what it was. This is the one where our bridge, Bridge Street was ours, for the Norwegians. Now they have a new bridge, and the old bridge is just a walking bridge. That's the one we had for Eastman Kodak, all the peeled wood.

Q: Peeled wood.

BN: Fifty-eight, yes. That's all at the end (*unintelligible*).

Q: That's '58 as well, so there's a lot from that era.

BN: I was just trying to see if there was anything down there. That's why I think they did it, because they knew they were closing, right? That's why (*unintelligible*). I wanted to go back before '56, though. You can look at this after. Not to be rude. That's still

'58, right?

Q: Fifty-seven, that says. What did your father say about the closing of the mill?

BN: Oh, he died in '72. So my father and all these guys, they never stopped (*unintelligible*), that's why. There was a lot of people. The tourists would stop on the sides of the river just to see them working.

Q: Huge pines.

BN: Yeah, that'd be in the winter time. We still had to go up and take wood down. Like the one winter my father got the pulp hook, you know that (*unintelligible*), right in his ankle. But he didn't go home. The next day he still went to work on the river. They were stubborn. They got to keep the river going.

(Still looking through photos, commenting in low voices.)

Q: You can't even see the river in these pictures.

BN: That's got to be at the mill itself, downtown. Now, I can't see -

Q: Fifty-three, that one says.

BN: See how you can see all the piers, when they were in good shape.

Q: Right. And these are like chains of logs separating them?

BN: Yes. You got logs on this side here. That's how it was separated, in three, three, *(unintelligible)*.

Q: That says '60 and '61.

BN: That's on the river. And that one, I don't know. That's got to be old.

Q: What's going on here, what are they doing? Oh, is this scuba diving?

BN: No, that's where he's going under the ice. Yeah, pulling something out, see?
One of the Brown Company trucks went through the ice up on Lake Umbagog.

Q: I can't imagine scuba diving.

BN: In the winter time, yeah.

Q: Let alone wearing high waders to get in the dirty water. You remember scenes

like that?

BN: Yeah, oh yeah.

Q: What's the first thing you remember about the river?

BN: Well, when we were little, because I'd go up to all the gaps with my father when I was little, in the summer time, oh yeah. They brought their lunches, eat cold lunches and whatever.

Q: So you'd go and hang out?

BN: Oh yeah. That's what I liked.

Q: Oh yeah? Talking with the people, or what exactly?

BN: Oh yeah, and watching them work, and just doing anything kids do. I thought I was a big shot, though.

Q: It seems like there's been a lot of change since your early memories, up until now, but is there anything that hasn't changed for you?

BN: No. We're still in Berlin, and it's going down worse than it did. Because of the mill and that. Well, less population, yeah.

Q: How do you feel about that?

BN: Well, actually it doesn't matter to me because I'm retired. We don't have to worry, see. The young generation, really.

Q: Now, do you have family? A family of your own?

BN: No, I'm divorced, after thirty years. She's in Nashua. She's up here all the time. I won't live there and she won't live here, because she was from Boston, so it's just, whatever.

Q: And do your brothers and sisters have kids?

BN: Yes.

Q: Are any of them in the area?

BN: No, my youngest brother is not married, and I have a sister from Boston with two children. They're grown up. And my sister in Michigan has one son, he's in Salt Lake

City. And my oldest brother's in Illinois. He had six kids. And his middle son, Paul, just had their sixth baby.

Q: Wow, all over the place.

BN: Well, he said he's going to beat his father, so we'll just wait and see. The little girl is about a year old now, so we're just waiting to see what we hear. I mean, it's expensive too, today.

Q: So you're the only one who wanted to stay here?

BN: Yes. I mean to me it's still my home, and I think that's from being with my father so much on the river and different things, you know.

Q: Did none of your other siblings spent much time on the river?

BN: No.

Q: Are you the only one that worked for the mill for any period of time?

BN: Yes.

Q: So how would you describe the role of the mill in your life, or your father's life?

BN: You mean if it was good or bad, or what?

Q: Anything.

BN: Well no, I mean, I guess to us it was, well he liked it, so I guess to us, I mean I thought it was good. I know that my sister a couple times would bitch, because the money was smaller than what the mill people got, and they didn't have the union until, I think it was only about the last eight, nine years that they got the union in before it closed, then they made money like the mill.

Q: So the union came in about end of the fifties, beginning of the fifties?

BN: It was after '56, though. And these things didn't bother me, but my sister and them were (*unintelligible*).

Q: Right. So how did the loggers become incorporated in the union? How did that happen?

BN: I guess they fought. They tried for quite a long time to get it, see? And then they finally got it.

Q: Was your father part of that?

BN: No. Oh, you mean for the union. I mean, no, he retired before they got it.

Q: But he was fighting for it?

BN: Oh, I don't know if you'd call it fighting, but they were trying, I know.

Q: Well I think that's about it for the questions I have, but is there anything else that you think -?

BN: Well, like I said, if I find anything out I'll let you know. And I will say now, you guys, did you get pictures or not?

Q: Yes, definitely.

BN: Okay. I think this is the Pine Island sorting gap, the second one up the river. And we do know he was about forty there. See, all these pictures we're getting out, these are the ones my sisters had in Michigan. Some of them we never -

End of Interview

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