Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Carson Hinkley for the Madrid Historical Society. The date is November 5, 2022. The interviewer is Molly Graham. The interview is taking place in East Madrid, Maine. Well, we can get started if you're ready. I'll have you just say when and where you were born.

Carson Hinkley: I was born August 12, 1958, at Franklin Memorial Hospital that was in the Fairbanks area of Farmington, Maine, but my family lived here. My mother, father, sister, and brother moved over here the year before I was born.

MG: Can you say where here is and where they were before?

CH: It's in the eastern part of Madrid, which is known as East Madrid now. But before that, it was known as the Perham area or the Perham Stream Settlement. Where the house is, it's right in the peninsula of the Perham Stream. The stream goes three-quarters of the way around the house.

MG: And when did that name change happen?

CH: The name changed – well, the original village was just a settlement. There was no name to it. Then, in 1794, Maine had surveyors come in to survey for town areas. One of the names of the surveyors was Lemuel Perham. He named the stream, and then they adopted the Perham Stream Settlement or the Perham Settlement. Then, in 1836, when Madrid became organized, then it would change to East Madrid.

MG: Did Lemuel Perham settle here himself?

CH: No, he was the surveyor. Lemuel Perham was the surveyor. He was from Farmington. There's a valley – intervale area – known as the Perham Intervale, and that's where his family was from.

MG: Okay, it sounds like maybe he has French Canadian roots.

CH: Yeah, they were French Canadian.

MG: You said your family moved here to this home the year before you were born. Where were they before that?

CH: Across the street, where right now is Perham Stream Birding Trail. That was Thomas Pickard's home. Then it was handed down to – Nathan D. Wing bought it, and then it was handed down to his daughter, and then his daughter to my parents. My brother and my sister was born in Farmington like I was in the hospital, but they lived over there. My brother was born in '56, my sister in '53, and they moved over here [to] this house in '57.

MG: What precipitated the move? Why move across the street?

CH: To let my grandmother move back over there [laughter] because she was living here.

MG: Okay. Which grandmother was this?

CH: No, I'll take that back. My grandmother's living here. That was Carrie Wing, and she died in ’57. Then they moved over because this heated better than that house over there did. That house, the cellar was starting to fall in places, and the foundation was getting bad. So they moved over here.

MG: Did someone move across the street?

CH: No, it was used as storage. We still had chickens and cows. We had them over there. We had a few milk cows here. But mostly, it was for storing the hay because the barn over there was getting a little rickety too. We kept some cows over there and the chickens. My father used to work on snowmobiles, so he made it his workshop.

MG: Oh, good. Well, I'm wondering if we can trace your family history, which I know goes back very far. Let's start as far back as you know on your father's side, on the Hinkley side.

CH: Miller Hinkley was born in Massachusetts, and they moved up to – not Sebago, but real close to Sebago. Then he moved up here to Madrid in 1794. He lived where the town of Madrid is now. The village was over here, and he lived on Route 4, where the village is now. The whole village was his whole farm. When he died, it went to his four sons. Samuel was next in line. And then, after they died, George was the next in line. That was in 1832, I think it was, somewhere in there. I'm not exactly good on dates, you’ll find. [laughter]

MG: It's unusual for me to talk to someone who has access to their family history so far back. Do you know where Miller Hinkley hailed from? Where in Europe did he come over from?

CH: He was born in Barnstable, Massachusetts. His family came from England, in the Hinkley village in England. I think there's still a church over there named Hinkley. They came over in the 1650s. In the 1650s, they came over.

MG: Not long after or far from where the Pilgrims arrived.

CH: Yes. Shortly after Pilgrims, there was a big influx from England and France. It was in that time period they came in.

MG: Was it for similar reasons, religious reasons?

CH: What my family has told me is it was because of the taxes. They just [were] taxed right out of existence over there. So they had to come over here. They were always farmers, all the way back. I've got a Hinkley genealogy book, and it goes all the way back to 1192. [laughter]

MG: What does it say about 1192?

CH: It tells that the Hinkley name was Hyncliyfe, H-Y-N-C-L-I-Y-F-E. It tells about the – he was a lord over there, and they had a coat of arms and so forth. Then there was another one, and he was a captain. That was when they think they changed it Hincklyne. Then in – I think it was about the 1300s – they went to Hinkley.

MG: That's really impressive. What kind of people were they? You said lords.

CH: They oversaw farmlands was what they did. They had tenant farmers tending the properties.

MG: So farming is really in your blood.

CH: Oh, yeah. All the way through. [laughter]

MG: You said earlier, before we were recording, that you're learning a little bit more every day about your family history. I was curious about what your resources are and what you're learning.

CH: I just do a lot of research and going through archives at different historical societies, and the historian/archaeologist is doing the dig across the road. He does a lot of it, and he tells me that he's found this and found that, so I just added to it.

MG: Well, it must be so interesting. For most people that I know or that I interview, their family history is lost after a couple of generations. So, I'm wondering how it shapes your identity or how you think about your place in the world.

CH: Kind of saddens me that I'm the last of the line, put it that way. It all peters down, that they either died or so forth. There's a few scattered out, but I don't know where they are. As for the knowledge of the family, it all comes down to me, and that's it. When I die, the genealogy books that I have, and all the farm ledges and all the diaries that I've gotten from my great grandmother, and so forth, are all going in the [Madrid] Historical Society.

MG: Well, hopefully, they'll safekeep it, and will be available for many more generations to come because of their safekeeping.

CH: It saddens me that I'd like to get somebody up here to learn from me how everything operated and so forth because I know how all the machinery worked. A lot of the farming practices they have now – they were telling about the other day that there was a new type of drilling wells that was going to be more cheaper and more economical and wouldn't be affected by drought. I thought to myself, "That's the way the old-timers always dug the wells." [laughter] And they're telling about [how] it's a brand-new idea, but it's not.

MG: Well, I wonder if that's possible. There's this renewed interest in homesteading and getting back to the land, maybe it's possible.

CH: Well, I think the weather change, the climate change, is going to make people realize they've got to go back to the old ways of doing a lot of the things and get somebody up here [to]

learn how. My father took us to the Norlands Living [History] Center down towards Turner. We watched him for a day, and my father said, "They're going to kill themselves because they're doing it all wrong." [laughter]

MG: You could teach a master class on those kinds of things.

CH: Yeah. Well, when I became disabled, they sent me to a psychologist. And he says, "I've got the perfect job for you, but you can't do it," because of my back. He says, "Teach people how to farm." He said, "You can read it in a book, but you have the knowledge of how it was actually done and what works and what don't. But you couldn't take standing on that cement floor all day long."

MG: Well, we'll have to come up with some kind of solution. There's no next generation? Nieces or nephews? Do you have children?

CH: No. I have a son, but he went with his mother after we got divorced, and I haven't heard a word from him. My sister never had any kids. My brother never had any kids. So I'm the last of the line. My half-uncle and aunt – one had two girls, and one had two boys. They had kids, but most of them are disabled or sick, and they don't have any kids. This whole area is down to me.

MG: Well, it's amazing you've preserved it for so long. I think the ways families are changing and growing, it's going to be harder and harder to keep these lines intact. Well, in my notes I have that Miller Hinkley was born in Georgetown. So what brought them from Barnstable to Maine?

CH: I think it's because [there] being so many kids – well, at that time, there was a lot of Massachusetts contracting people to settle up in Maine. I think that was one of them. Then, when he got up to Georgetown, a lot of them were there, so he decided to go even further.

MG: Do you know what he did in Georgetown or what his life was like there?

CH: He was a farmer. I guess he married his wife there, I think it was.

MG: Rachel?

CH: Yeah. I think she was a farmer. I'm not sure. There were just so many people that he decided to – Moses Abbott, [who] was the governor of the Madrid Township in 1793-1794, allotted it to – sold out to Phillips, [who] had control of Phillips, Freeman, Carthage, Strong, and all that. And Jacob Abbott was his overseer, and he was out looking for prospectors to settle up here. I think that's how they got Miller up here.

MG: Okay. Yes, Miller Hinkley was part of a group of early settlers that first founded this area. Do you know how he found that group or it formed?

CH: I think it was from the governorships with the heads of the area. Massachusetts put out the proclamation that they were going to expand more, and they heard about it. So, they signed up for it and came up.

MG: Yeah, I think what I read was it was via Lynn, Massachusetts. So there were folks there who were also making similar efforts?

CH: Yes. Because the Dunhams were from Lynn, Massachusetts, and they were coming up through the same time. As I said, George was the third generation over there. He's the one that moved over here in what was called the Upper Neighborhood. It was behind what is known as the Welch Place. Then, after George, it was Wesley. After Wesley, it was Eugene, and then [after] Eugene, my grandfather, Arthur. Arthur was actually born in Massachusetts because Eugene went down there to live for a year or two for a job that petered out, and then they [came] back.

MG: What do you think about this area appealed to those folks who were founding the early settlement here?

CH: The reason that they settled here is because of the old Indian settlement that used to be up above here in the intervale, and this area where this house is and where the Pickard house was, was all corn. This was all natural open area. The intervale up there was all open area, and the Indians raised wheat, rye, and clover. They had a trading trail down through on the other side of the stream down to the Oberton Stream, the old Oberton trading trail, which turned into the narrow gauge Sandy River/Rangeley Lake Line. It being opened, they didn't have to do so much cleaning. Then, as more people moved up here, then, of course, they had to do more clearing. But it's good, rich soil is the main thing.

MG: Were there Native people still living here?

CH: Yes, there was. My mother has a basket from the last of the Indians that was up on the end of the interval. I've still got it. It was given to a white man who lived up there, and then he gave it to my mother.

MG: Which tribal community was it? Do you know?

CH: I don't know exactly what it was, but I know that Micmacs went through here and the Abenakis went through here. It might have been some of the Penobscots. I'm not sure. But I do know that even when I was a young boy, Madrid selectmen were either three-quarters Indian or full Indian. So there was no dispute; they coincided with the Indians.

MG: There was assimilation over the years.

CH: The Indians helped out, and they help them understand the working of the land and so forth and how to keep it so that it didn't destroy anything, but nature would work with them.

MG: So it sounds like there was a symbiotic relationship with the tribal communities that were here.

CH: Yeah, that and nature, the soil, and so forth, because they never changed much of anything. They did clear some areas, but they didn't destroy it, and they learned how to rotate the crops so that it wouldn't deteriorate the nutrition of the soil.

MG: Miller Hinkley would have been too young but did he have any relatives that were involved in the American Revolution at the time?

CH: Don't know whether he was or not. I do know that Miller's father was a serviceman in the Revolutionary War. He was a corporal. Other than that, I don't think they did, except my grandfather was in the First World War. As for the others, I don't know whether there's any that was or not. I do know that Thomas Pickard was screwed up on the records in the wars because Thomas Pickard – they put a flag on his grave for the Civil War, but he died in 1851. But he was the right age for the War of 1812. His four sons, Justice, William, Charles, and Daniel, fought in the Civil War. And they all came home – well, Justice died in the battle, and the other three came home and died – two of them died from disease, and Daniel hung himself from depression. On the archeological dig, we found a military uniform button dating between 1809 and 1819, which puts it around the 1812 area. Then, a week later, we found a brass trigger guard from a British musket, a British "Brown Bess." They started to stop making them in 1799, but they used them in the Revolutionary War. The archaeologists did some research, and in the War of 1812, the Americans used confiscated weaponry from the Revolutionary War. So we're putting it as – Thomas Pickard had that rifle in 1812, not the Civil War.

MG: That makes sense. Well, it must have been the survivor's guilt from returning from war.

CH: Well, William and Charles got diseased from injuries that were from the Civil War. Daniel was depressed ever since the war, until he hung himself,

MG: Had he had a chance to procreate before he hung himself?

CH: One girl. They had one girl. I think she married [and] had one boy, but he never married.

MG: The one girl would have been Nathan's half-sister.

CH: Yeah.

MG: Okay. You'll have to correct me, if I lose track.

CH: Yeah. It's all right. [laughter]

MG: Do you know anything about this group of men who came here to settle the area, what their intentions were, and how they envisioned this settlement to be?

CH: I think they just envisioned it to be a farm community. That's all. Every single one was – most of them were farmers. There were, of course, the blacksmiths. They were religious, but they never built a church. They used either homes or schools to hold the service.

MG: Wasn't Miller Hinkley involved a little bit in that first church that was built, the Reeds Mill Church?

CH: Reeds Mill Church. Yeah, he was involved in that, and he was involved in very hard pursuing to get Madrid organized as a town, too. He was one of the ones that really pushed for that. He was the one that – there was a community, and they decided they needed a place to worship. That was for the town over there, not for over here. Over here, there was just – as I said, Miller had the farm in Madrid, and the settlement was here and then just slowly moved over towards Reed's Mill. Then that's when they decided to build a church when the settlement was there. It was, I would say, more of the village type, the town people – more of building the town because it was more into manufacturing then.

MG: Was there any connection to Spain? Why call the area Madrid?

CH: The reason it was called Madrid is they were going to name it Perham. But they couldn't because in Aroostook County, there's already a Perham. So they couldn't use Perham. So then they decided – they had a committee to discuss it. Two or three people came up with the idea that – why not call it Madrid in respect of the Spanish helping in the Revolutionary War? That's why that became Madrid.

MG: Was it originally Madrid? Or has it always been Madrid?

CH: It was supposed to be Ma-drid, but everybody called it Mad-rid. [laughter]

MG: I think that's Maine for you. What else do you know about Miller Hinkley? I thought they had eight children, Miller and Rachel.

CH: Yeah. There's five boys and three girls. One boy moved out, back to Massachusetts. The other three girls married into other families, but in my Hinkley book – because they're more on the line of the Hinkley, not the others lines.

MG: What do you know about their life here? Where did that family live, Miller and Rachel and their kids?

CH: Over where the town of Madrid is. The whole area was his farm.

MG: I imagine his kids helped out on the farm as well.

CH: Yeah, and that's why, when he died, the four boys – it got divided up into four different farms.

MG: And next in line was Samuel.

CH: Yes, of mine.

MG: Tell me a little bit about what you know about Samuel.

CH: Not much except that he married, and he had a slew of kids. I can't remember how many there were.

MG: I have ten in my notes,

CH: Yeah, it was about ten. I think there was one that wasn't recorded that died at birth. George was the one in my line. He bought a place next to his father's farm. Then he sold it and moved up here. They did have a mill over there. The Hinkley Mill was over there. Some of the brothers combined [and] made the mill, and that was a lumber mill. And then after that, they had a carriage mill – not the Hinkleys, but other mills. That's when it became more of a town. They had the carriage and the textile [mill] and all that.

MG: Which areas were these mills serving?

CH: The Hinkley Mill was serving the area over there on Route 4, because it was on Route 4 on the Sandy River stream, and it was building the houses and the village over there along with a couple others. This one over here was building this area. It was a sawmill with clapboard and shingle machines, and it built all these houses in this village.

MG: In old pictures, can you recognize which houses were built by the mill?

CH: Yeah, I've got them, too. [laughter] I've got all the pictures. The mill originally was like you picture, the old water wheel mill, but later on, after Pickard sold it to Prescott, they took the water wheel off and put a horizontal one underneath the mill so that they could operate during the wintertime. They had a dam, and they could operate it during the winter. So it was horizontal underneath. I've got a picture of the water coming out from underneath the mill there. There's a small shingle sanding shack down here below the bridge, that once they'd done the shingles, they smoothed them up over there. That was operated by – get this right – Joseph Masterman, and Joseph Masterman was the brother to Lucinda Masterman, which was Nathan's wife.

MG: That name is familiar.

CH: They came from Weld, the Masterman Settlement in Weld. Lucinda was one of the triplets. I think she was the youngest of the triplets. She was deeply religious too. She helped form the Baptist community here, and they held the church over there because they had a big parlor room. They could hold the church there. Plus, they held the school there two or three times, too, between different school buildings. The services would be moved to – when they built a new school, they would hold the services in the old school for a while until they used the building for something else.

MG: Would the Baptist Church draw certain people to the area who wanted to participate?

CH: Not really. They did get ministers and clergymen from different areas that come up for weeks or months and so forth and to stay at the houses. Other than that, they did welcome others in, and they, of course, gave letters for other people who moved out, too. But if they moved, it was to move to a better – they were farmers, but then the younger ones would progress into more manufacturing, and then other people would move in to take over the farm and that aspect of it.

MG: Okay. Would you say most of the townsfolk were part of the Baptist church, or were there other kinds of churches around?

CH: It was all Baptist. It was open to everything, all religions. They just called it Baptist, but they were non-denominal, really.

MG: That must have been a big part of people's lives.

CH: Oh, yeah. Because it was more of – well, it's like in England – the pilgrims. Everything was based on the Church of England and so forth. Here, they did peter off a little bit of the [religion] and more onto the Mother Nature type area because of the Indians and so forth joining in. As my mother used to say – people asked her why she didn't go to church. She said, "I got the best church in the world. Just walk outside and look at the mountains." [laughter] God built the mountains before man built the church.

MG: I can understand why she would say that. Were both Sam and his wife Abigail a farming family as well?

CH: Yeah, everything right down through Miller, George – everything was all farming. Of course, they were lumbering the firewood and so forth like that, but they were mainly farmers. My family was more on the cattle until – my father's mother's side was more on the sheep. Then, of course, when Arthur – he was more of a lumberman than a farmer because he worked in the woods and helped Barnjum Mill and on the Narrow Gauge – he worked on that. My father was a farmer and caretaker for the out-of-staters who lived up here that didn't know how to farm. We had to teach them, like I'm teaching his nephew now how to operate tractors and so forth.

MG: Good skills to learn, no matter who you are, I guess.

CH: Right.

MG: Samuel Hinkley died when he was fifty. I know that life expectancies weren't very long. Do you know what some of your family members perished from or what happened?

CH: I don't know about Miller, Samuel, and George. I take that back. George, I think he died of a heart – I'm not sure, but I think it was related to sugar because they called it the sugar disease, not diabetes back then. Eugene had problems with sugar too, but I don't think he died of that. Wesley, I think he died of just natural [causes]. My grandfather died [of] diabetes after losing both of his legs. My father died of Alzheimer's and diabetes. My uncle and half-aunt both died

of Alzheimer's; that comes from my grandmother's side on my father's side because she was senile at the end of her life.

MG: Who was that?

CH: Lucinda? And Nathan spent the last twenty years in a wheelchair. That's where my back problems come from, was that side.

MG: What caused him to be in a wheelchair?

CH: Back problems.

MG: Back problems.

CH: I've got his degenerative bone disease in the back.

MG: Is your guess that he had the same thing?

CH: Yep. Because my grandmother died of a liver rupture. But she had problems with her back, too. And my grandfather, of course, died. My father died of Alzheimer's and diabetes, but he had back problems, too. Then, of course, I've got back problems. My brother says he's got it, but he don't show it. My sister don't show it. But I also had a moose accident. I fell off a barn roof. I had a motorcycle accident. So that didn't help my back much.

MG: Certainly not. No. So, George married Rachel Davenport. Do you know where her family hailed from?

CH: Not exactly. I don't even think the book even says where she's from. I think I would have sent it to you if it had said.

MG: It sounded like a dignified last name. I didn't know if she came from a prominent family.

CH: I think she came from a fairly prominent family because I think there was something about a land transfer business with her father.

MG: Yeah, I'm always curious how people come together in these earlier generations because you can't meet at a bar or online. [laughter] It sounds like it was maybe –

CH: [laughter] A lot of it was church-related or [the] grange, or things like that, places where they went to go dance and things like that.

MG: Yeah. He had been previously married to a woman, Louise Lake, and she passed away. Do you know what happened to her?

CH: I'm not sure what happened to her, but I know she was sickly.

MG: When you're living here in the 1800s and you're sickly, what are your options? Who treats you? Does the doctor come door to door?

CH: Yeah, the doctor came [and] visited. But you had to take your chances because the doctor might not get here for weeks. [laughter] But you took your chances. Other than that, it was just family. Because my mother learned from my grandmother, her mother, and my father's mother, if you scraped yourself, how to take care of it. My half-uncle came down one time after going up to his camp here. He was doing some sawing, he fell down, and pretty near cut his thumb off. He come down, and my mother wrapped it up, pushed it in together, took a needle, and tried to stitch it the best she could. When the doctor did finally arrive, they said that was one hell of a good job. It saved his thumb, they said.

MG: Yeah, you have to be very self-sufficient. I was curious if there were any remedies you heard about or that were passed down. I've heard about vinegar-soaked bandanas, things like that.

CH: About the only one that we used around – of course, we had all the family remedies and so forth. They told about mustard plasters on the chest. But the one that we always used around here was hot water, vinegar and honey. You take that, and you take it regularly. My grandmother taught it to my mother, and she never applied it until I really started high school. But when we started that, we went through – I'll take that back. It was eighth grade that we started using it. Eighth grade, ninth grade, and all four years of high school, I never had a cold. My father took it, and he went to the doctor one time for [an] injury on his tongue area. They said, "When did you have your tonsils out?" He said, "I never had them out." The only thing he can think of is that mixture pickled the tonsils right out.

MG: Well, I'm going to start trying that. I've got a daughter in preschool. She's bringing home every cold.

CH: What the honey does – it eases the tang of the vinegar, but you want to drink it as hot as possible. We never had any cold all them years.

MG: Good tip.

CH: Now, my brother, if he starts to feel like a cold's coming, he'll drink whiskey. One shot of whiskey, he's cured. But if my brother-in-law or my sister [who] live with me – if they start getting one, I'll start in that vinegar mixture again, and I won't get it.

MG: Was there sort of a rejection of modern conveniences and doctors and things like that in your family over the years? Would you just prefer to take care of things on the home front?

CH: No, you had to take care of it on the home front because the nearest doctor was eight miles away. Then, when we got into high school, the nearest doctor was thirty miles away. So you had to do something.

MG: Would that have been in Farmington?

CH: Yes.

MG: Were there other accidents you heard about in your family over the years?

CH: Not really. My grandfather, of course, lost both his legs. He fell off the lumber car one time. He was buried under the lumber, and the crew had to pull him out. Other than that, they listened to the old folks, and they learned from the old folks' experiences that you don't do that or you're in trouble.

MG: Did Louise and George have any children before she died?

CH: Louise? I think she had one, and then she died. Then Rachel had all the others.

MG: All the others were four more children?

CH: Yep.

MG. Were they the family that first moved to the area where we are now?

CH: What they call the Upper Village. See, it's the main village where we are. This house is virtually the center of the village. And then you went up over the hill. It was always called the same village, but the reason they called it the Upper Village [was] because the farms stretched up onto a high hill, which was called Mecham Hill, and then it went down into Barnjum with the upper end of the Perham Stream. But that's why they called the farms up there the Upper Village, and the main village was down here. He had a farm up there, and then Wesley had the same farm after George because George moved into the Welch place. Wesley was up there, and then Eugene, of course, when he got of age, he went down to do that job which petered out after Arthur was born. Arthur was one of three kids. Last I knew, the only one left of his siblings' line was Erwin III, and as far as I know, he has no kids either.

MG: Did all the families in this area get along, or were there any Hatfield-McCoy situations?

CH: No, there's no Hatfield-McCoys. There were a few incidents. They did rob the post office up here one time. That was my Hinkley side of my family. The Wing side of my family was the post people. [laughter]

MG: What happened? Which generation was this?

CH: It was Eugene's generation, which would be my great-grandfather. It was his cousin. The diaries mentioned a big robbery at the post office – twenty-five cents. Of course, twenty-five cents back then was a week's wages. But they got twenty-five cents, and they caught him. The one that caught him was Carrie's mother – not Carrie. Carrie was the post-deliverer. It was Lucinda that found out where he was and, of course, they arrested him.

MG: What were the consequences for that robbery?

CH: Nothing, just a slap on the hand. [laughter]

MG: It must be hard to get away with things like that.

CH: Oh, yeah. Everybody knew everybody. You couldn't get away with nothing.

MG: George and Rachel – were they the first in your family to be buried in the Byron Cemetery?

CH: Yeah. The other ones in the Byron Cemetery of the Hinkley line – my grandmother on my father's side started being buried there about the same time.

MG: How was it determined where to be buried?

CH: See, Miller and Samuel are over in the Dunham cemetery, over in the further part of Madrid because that's where they were. Then, the village ones here – they either was in this cemetery up here or out in the Byron Cemetery in Phillips, or they had a plot either out in Phillips or over in Madrid or somewhere, a family plot – ancestors's plot.

MG: Were most of the children of these families that we've discussed so far staying in the area or were some trying to go West, strike gold, and explore other options?

CH: Some of the relatives did move out to North Dakota and so forth like that. There's a lot of them that went to North Dakota of the Hinkley family. Other than that, they stayed right around here because, as I said, "Why leave what you got here?"

MG: What was the prospect of North Dakota? Were they seeking gold in the Badlands there?

CH: No, it was farming. The big land grants that they could get out there – wheat and so forth. It turned out that that weather was a lot like this weather.

MG: Wesley Eugene Hinkley was born to George and Rachel in 1856. You mentioned he was the one that went back to Massachusetts for a bit. What was the job there that you said petered out?

CH: Not Wesley. Eugene was.

MG: I have Wesley Eugene Hinkley in my notes.

CH: Wesley is Arthur's, right?

MG: I have George and Rachel's first child was Wesley Eugene Hinkley.

CH: Yeah. His children were – I don't think it was Arthur. I think it was Eugene.

MG: Eugene Arthur Hinkley.

CH: Yeah, because they used Eugene instead of Wesley; he always went by Eugene. The reason I [inaudible] up is because Arthur's middle name is Wesley.

MG: They don't make it simple.

CH: I know. [laughter] But he went down to do a manufacturing job and petered out. Then they came back.

MG: And when would that have been?

CH: Arthur was two years old, I think.

MG: Was the manufacturing job related to his wife, Addie Stroud? She was from that area. I wondered if it was her father's business or something like that.

CH: No, it was something to do with the lumber and shipping business, building the ship because they were contracting up here, that time period, for the hornbeam trees. And the hornbeam trees are used for the big, tall mast because they're pretty near as hard as a rock, the tree itself, and it's long, straight. They were harvesting it. That's how he got the option to get down there to do the manufacturing to form the trees to the mast.

MG: That must have been a big business, especially with the connections to the Cape. When he came back, did he continue farming?

CH: Yeah, he went back to farming just like everything.

MG: Were these farms the kinds of farms that would sustain the family, or were they selling milk and produce to the community?

CH: They sustained themselves. They sustained the community. If there was any extra. they did – because Nathan and Lucinda and their daughter, Carrie, which was my grandmother, shipped chicken eggs to the Rangeley Inn up on the narrow-gauge railroad. They shipped the wool from the sheep out to the Phillips wool mill. But as for the meat, dairy, and that type, it was all virtually for use within the community because, as I said, my great grandfather and grandparents [had] sheep and chicken. The mill owner who lived over here during my great-grandmother's time raised hogs. The one on top of the hill – there's still a cellar hole up there – was a post office. Before it was a post office, they raised beef cattle. So if you wanted some pork, I want some beef, I'll take a chicken – and the house over there between the house was connected through to the barn. But in that section between the main house and the barn was what they called the milk house or the milk shed. That's where everybody brought their dairy milk down to get it separated because they had a cream separator, and they had a butter working table, and so forth. The butter working table is an easier way to knead the butter to put it into the mold. You didn't have to use your hands; you could just use a paddle, an auger, to straighten it

out. Also, on the upper end of the house was what they called the ice shed, [where] they stored all the ice for the ice chests.

MG: Is it through these diaries that you have that you're learning about these practices?

CH: Yeah. Diaries and all the farm ledgers that I have.

MG: What else have you learned from those diaries and ledgers?

CH: I've learned all the kinds of weather that they used to have to deal with – the floods, the freshets, the heavy snows. The snows, in this valley here, would last nine to ten months. You'd have two to three months of growing stuff, and you had to supply yourself for the other months. When I was seven years old, I woke up on my birthday, and there were two inches of snow here.

MG: In August?

CH: August 12th. We were using snowmobiles to go to the top of Abraham [on] May 29th on snow and not hit any bare grounds. [laughter] You had very short summers. Wxhen I was real young, we didn't have any month that didn't have a frost. You had to cover everything up every month. We could hardly get the corn ripe. You couldn't grow squash, couldn't grow cucumbers, you couldn't grow pumpkin.

MG: Because of the frost?

CH: Right.

MG: So you have some pretty compelling firsthand evidence of how the climate is changing.

CH: Yeah.

MG: I imagine there are a few fewer months of winter now.

CH: Oh, yeah. When I was growing up, we always put snow tires on by Halloween. Of course, they're all-season tires now, but you don't even think about it until December. But when I was growing up, come September, you was busting your butt trying to get everything in before the snow hit before Halloween. [laughter]

MG: The summer is when you're supposed to relax, but it must have been busy.

CH: No, summer was hectic. You rested the dark months, and you was busy the sunny days.

MG: I feel like I should point out that it's maybe sixty-five degrees out here today. A very warm day in November.

CH: Yeah, this valley here, as you come up over the hill, what is Conant Hill, the tarred hill – when I was growing up, you come up there, [and if] the windows were open, you could feel the

air drop twenty degrees. You can still feel it drop about ten. We don't have milkweed up here. It's too cold for it. The gray squirrels are just starting to show up. We never had any gray squirrels. The stream here, Perham Stream, for the last three years has been very, very low. My grandfather told me that his father said that if this stream goes dry, man is in trouble.

MG: That's your telltale sign.

CH: Yes.

MG: How's it doing now?

CH: We finally got it back up, but it was low this summer. It's been low the last three years. It's warmer now. It used to be when I went out to go fishing when I was young, you step into water [and] you'd feel like you were stepping in an ice bucket. Now you can go out, and you can feel it's cold, but it's not like an ice bucket anymore. [laughter]

MG: In those diaries, would they talk about how they would pass the time? I'm curious about what people did for fun, especially during the winter months.

CH: Well, in winter months, of course, they tended the [animals]. That's your daily job. You have to attend [to] the animals first before – you fed the animals, you tended to them and made sure they were comfortable. Then you fed yourself. The men were mostly taking care of farming outside. The women, of course, they'd do a lot of sewing, a lot of knitting. They played a lot of board games. Family get-togethers – like that.

MG: Did any of those games get passed down?

CH: Yeah. I don't know if anybody even knows the word Flinch anymore. It's a card game you used to play. Flinch. Canasta, of course. The Canasta we play is not like what they play everywhere else, which I found out from my brother's wife. The way they play out there is deceitful. The way we played it, it was a community thing. They used to get together to make quilts. I've got three or four friendship quilts and the village quilts and so forth.

MG: What about meals and holidays? How are they celebrated?

CH: They [were] celebrated mainly with the family. But once in a while, they would get together. The village did hold community picnics, socials, and things like that. But mainly, it was the families because the families were big families because you had to have [a big family] to operate the farms. So there was a lot of feeding.

MG: You mentioned one family lost a child in infancy. Did that happen other times?

CH: Oh, yeah. There was a lot of that. It averaged maybe half to a little more than half of the infants would die, even within the first five years. There was diphtheria and bubonic plague and everything like that. It was mainly because of how hard it was to get a doctor here. You had your midwives, of course, and so forth. But most of it was from labor.

MG: Yes, I wondered if the remoteness of the area spared folks from exposure, but then it also probably kept them from treatment.

CH: Right. Both.

MG: Was any family member impacted by the 1918 flu epidemic?

CH: Yeah. There [were] a lot of deaths. In the graves, [there are] a lot of young people. There's a grave site over in what they call the Henderson area; it wiped out the whole family. They've got a graveyard, and we've finally got access to be able to get to it, to investigate it, to map it out, and so forth. But the whole family died. I do know that, but not my line, but the Welches lost a lot of kids in the flu epidemic. The Peters pretty near got wiped out. The only reason they got it through is because the community pulled together and helped them.

MG: Is that recorded in a diary somewhere?

CH: Oh, yeah. Diaries about going up and comforting them for months afterward.

MG: That's a blessing of a small town; everyone can stick together.

CH: Yep.

MG: Have you seen that change over the years? Do you still feel that solidarity?

CH: Yeah, I've seen a change for one big reason. When I was growing up, my family was the only family up here. All the others have moved in since. Either that or they're summer residents from New York City and Houston and so forth. They come up for the summer, and that's it. But as for the community itself that was here, they either all moved out, or they all died. When I was growing up, from my birth until 1980, my family was it up here. We [were] the only ones up here.

MG: What was your take on that? Did you enjoy being the only family here? Did you wish there were others?

CH: I was never depressed, put it that way. I've never been depressed in my whole life.

MG: What's your take on folks from away coming to this area? Does it change things?

CH: It does in some ways because it takes away – the ones moving in aren't nature-orientated like the old village was. They want to change things completely around, and they don't want to go with nature. They want to possess it virtually. Some of them – they've come to realize that their ways of thinking have got to be changed to survive, which, to me, is the way it should have been. But there's some that come in here that have moved in here that took right into cooperating with nature.

MG: So, adapting to the land instead of vice versa?

CH: Right. There's two or three that are trying to be community-orientated and others that don't want to talk to you at all.

MG: Yeah. Well, I think there's something that must be unique about the folks that find Madrid as a place to vacation or spend their summer. They must be at least drawn to the landscape here.

CH: Yeah. The main thing – they come in for the – well, I know when I opened up the birding trail, a few came in for the birds. Then they realized what scenery there was in here. Then the word got out. Now a lot of people [are] coming in for the scenery. But now, a lot of people have found out that I'm so knowledgeable about this whole area that they're actually coming to listen to me.

MG: You're a tourist attraction.

CH: Right. [laughter]

MG: I found the cemetery records for Byron Cemetery and saw that they were two Addie Hinkleys, and maybe it was just a glitch. I saw Addy Strout and Addie J. Are they the same person?

CH: Two different people. They both married Hinkleys, but two different ones.

MG: Were they related?

CH: No.

MG: What do you know about Arthur Hinkley?

CH: Arthur Hinkley was my grandfather. He became diabetic in '67. He lost his first foot in '69 – his right foot. He lost his left foot – hold on. He became diabetic in '62. He lost his left foot in '63 or '64, his right foot in '65, his left leg in '66, his other leg in the fall of that next year, and died because he never paid attention to his diabetes.

MG: Did you get to know him?

CH: Oh, yeah, he's the one that taught me not to smoke.

MG: Was he a smoker?

CH: Oh, yeah, he was a smoker. He rolled his own cigars. He caught me out back of the barn when I was real young, and I had a cigarette in my hand. He said, "Throw that damn thing away." He says, "You smoke this." He stuffed it in my mouth. He lit it, and he says, "I want you to smoke in one drag." To his dying day, I could not get in the same room when he was lit up. I had to leave. I could not stand it.

MG: Well, that was effective.

CH: It kept me from cigarettes. [laughter]

MG: Where did he live while you were growing up?

CH: Lived here with us.

MG: Right here?

CH: I was the one that had to inject him with insulin. So when I became a diabetic, they tried to teach me, and I was teaching them.

MG: You had experience.

CH: Right.

MG: Arthur, your grandfather, was the one who served in World War I.

CH: Yep.

MG: Do you know anything about his service? He was in the infantry you said.

CH: Yeah, he was supply infantry. He never went across. He stayed in the United States. His unit supplied the meals. They cooked the meals and so forth, packaged them up, and sent them over on the ships to send them over.

MG. But he was shoreside.

CH: Yeah.

MG: Where was he stationed?

CH: Out west. I think it was Arizona. I'm not sure. But it was between Texas and California, somewhere in that area. He always complained – I never knew it, but when he was at home, he was always complaining, "It's God-dang hot out there."

MG: Well, there must have been an adventure for him to travel so far away from home.

CH: That's why they did it. They wanted to get the servicemen accustomed – the ones out West were shipped up here to the naval station up here because they wanted to get them acclimatized to a different kind of climate. You're shipping all over the world; you don't know what kind of climate you're going to get into. [laughter]

MG: Do you know where he did his training?

CH: Out West. It was out there in the same company. I guess they did the training, and the service unit that was doing the cooking was virtually right there, too.

MG: Did he share other stories with you about his childhood or his time in the Army?

CH: He told other childhood stories. He told the stories of the ones that he heard from his father about the old legends. One was this whole valley was made by a glacier. There's rock right out here that's got glacial scars right on it. So you know it. That's why the water's so cold. Another story is this valley was made by a meteor. As you walk around the area, you'll see over towards Saddleback on the lower side, on the left side, there's a plateau that goes out, and then it curves right into a half-moon shape. That half-moon shape is actually three different nubbles positioned, and it's in line with Abraham. Abraham is pulverized on this side and solid ledge on the other side. The Farmer Mountain is a younger mountain than Abraham, and there's iron all through this valley. The compasses don't work right. The story handed down to him [was] that the meteor come through and made this valley and pulverized the side of Abraham. That's why it's so much iron; it's so rich. Another story is the rubble on Abraham. The reason this stream is so ice cold all the time is because there's so much snow and ice in them rocks that it never melts all summer long. That's why it's so cold all the time. [laughter]

MG: Well, what's your theory?

CH: I'm thinking that them stories had some truth to it because a guy with a metal detector went through the stream here, way back here, and went all the way out past the two fields, and there was continual buzz all the way through. My whole family, my grandparents' family, and my great-grandparents' family have never had any iron problems in their blood.

MG: Because the water is so mineral-rich?

CH: Right.

MG: Well, that's interesting. Any other local legends passed down?

CH: Just the stories of the Indians that used to live here and the culture they had here, how they grew the plants, and the trading trail and so forth. Other than that was my grandmother was the first one to see the first white-tailed deer.

MG: Tell me about that.

CH: The white-tailed deer was never here; it was elks before. The elks disappeared before my grandmother was born. But when she was seven years old, she saw the first white-tailed deer that moved in the area. There used to be wolves here. Now they've gone, and they've gone in my lifetime because there used to be wolves. Then there's the wolves and coydog mix. Now it's coydog and coyote, and the wolves have moved on. That was just in the last five years. We never had any gray squirrels until the last two years. As I said, the milkweed didn't grow. We used to have the birches. [There] used to be a lot more white birches. A lot of gray birches now

but they're dying. They're losing the leaves before the rest of them are. That's because of climate change in my time. Other than that, the legend was that all these canopy elms around here – the archaeologist researched – they can't find any record of a canopy elm.

MG: A canopy elm?

CH: Yeah. That's that tree right down there. It's like an elm. It is an elm, but unlike most elms that branch out like a regular tree, this goes right up and blossoms out on top and spreads out on top like an umbrella type. There was twenty-eight of them here in this village, and everyone died of old age, not the elm disease.

MG: What's the significance of these canopy elms?

CH: I don't know. It's just that they was here. The closest it ever resembled is the American elm, but the American elms don't really look like these. There's a stump out here with a rosebush. It was cut in 2003. The smallest one went up forty feet, and then it split into four trunks. The smallest trunk was 132 years old.

MG: Oh, my gosh.

CH: And the one up in intervale they had up here, they had it, and my grandmother – of course, she died before I was born, but my grandfather said my grandmother said that her grandfather remembers that tree up there just being a sprout. So, that's four or five generations back. That's almost 200 years.

MG: Yeah, it's an interesting way to measure time and historical change. When you were talking about the deer, where were they coming from?

CH: They come in from the South. They come up. My Grandmother Carrie told my grandfather and my father that Lucinda, her mother, was the last one to see the elk.

MG: They've migrated north?

CH: Yeah, they migrate north, and then the white-tail deer moved up. That's just due to climate change and so forth. And the trout – the stories were that they could go up on the intervale here for a weekend and come back with four hundred trout. The salmon organization in Maine was trying to get this back into salmon. Well, I was looking at a diary, and it didn't say trout in the diary; it said trout and salmon. So, they took that back to the state to prove that this stream originally had salmon in it. When I was growing up, it was just brown trout. But now it's mostly – it was brook trout. Now it's mostly brown trout. So it has changed the climate.

MG: What kinds of fishing techniques were they employing to catch four hundred in a weekend?

CH: Worm.

MG: Wow.

CH: That's how abundant it was up in here. Because they'd go up to the intervale here; there's the stream, and then there was the beaver pond in back of the stream on one edge, behind the stream. They'd go up there, and it was just abundant. Beavers was here. My half-cousin could spin a yarn about a beaver the same way that my great-grandfather, Nathan D Wing – he was alive when my half-cousin was just a young boy. He learned it. He had the beavers virtually twitching the logs with a rope and everything else, building the dam and construction. Had one beaver there standing, measuring out this, and measuring out that.

MG: They had hard hats on.

CH: Yeah. [laughter] But there is the story of the Peters. Peter Adley. We always called [them] the Peter Family, but his name was Adley. He was a horse whisperer. He could go up and speak to a horse, and the horse would do anything he asked. The Welches used to have a horse that was very ornery. They couldn't get the horse to do anything. He'd go up, just whisper [to] it, and the horse would start doing whatever he wanted to do.

MG: Was that a service he offered? Was he paid to do that?

CH: No, he just did it. Any animal – he could do that. Just go up and speak to it. It would do whatever it was told. It would last maybe a month or so. And then he'd have to come up and calm it down again. A lot of the animals – when you're milking a cow, they like to kick and thrash and so forth. He could go speak to them, then you could milk them for a week or so with no problem.

MG: What do you think accounts for that? Was it what he was saying, how he was saying it, or who he was?

CH: I think it was who he was because it's just like these people that can dowse for water. It's their anatomy that they can get connected with the animals.

MG: Do you feel more in tune with nature being so embedded in it?

CH: Yeah.

MG: How does that manifest itself?

CH: It's just that you virtually know how the animal's going to react and so forth. I can do it in some aspects, in some ways, because I will have hummingbirds – when I take feeders out, they'll set on the feeders and ride out with it, or a squirrel will come and – taking the feeder out, he'll come and sit in my hand. I go walk out and hang it up. Then, he'd go into the feeder. I've had these people up here, the out-of-staters from New York – they had an accountant up here when I was – I think I was twenty-six. They had a dog. They was at the building up there, and we was haying the fields. I started walking up through the field, and the dog come barreling right out,

and the woman comes barreling right out behind and said, "No, no," like that. The dog come down full blast, and he opened his mouth like that, but he never shut it.

MG: Right on your arm.

CH: Right on my arm. She comes down. She said, "It bite you?" I said, "No." She said, "That dog has bit five people." I said, "Well, I ain't scared of it. It knows it." There was a woman over in Salem that had a dog, and she wanted me to have it because it was older than what she could take care of. She said, "It'll have a long life." I was there for a little while. She said, "I want you to get accustomed to it. They will have to be accustomed to [you]." The dog come right up and sat in my lap. Jumped right up in the lap. She said, "Oh, I guess, that's no problem." When I was taking it home, I said, "You know this dog's not going to last very long." She said, "Oh, yeah, he's got seven years of his life." I says, "He ain't going to last very long." A year and a half, he died from a heart attack.

MG: Well, dogs have such a strong sense of people.

CH: Yeah. Well, it's that connection that Peter Adley [had]. He had more of a connection than most people. He could just go up and speak to any animal. They would cooperate with him.

MG: I wonder if there are many people like Peter Adley today.

CH: They tell about that dog whisperer on TV, but I don't think he has half of what that guy can do. There's a few. They're scattered around, but they're around.

MG: Getting back to your family tree, Arthur Hinkley married the widow Carrie Wing McLaughlin?

CH: Yep.

MG: Her first husband died from pneumonia.

CH: He had pneumonia.

MG: Did they have children before he died?

CH: Yes, that was my father's – Victor McLaughlin was the oldest. That was my half-uncle. And Amber was the younger daughter. They were before my father. After Ralph died, she married my grandfather, and then they had my father. They both died of Alzheimer's, too, just like my father did. The only difference between my father and my half-aunt and uncle, my half-aunt and half-uncle kept running away. You had to chase them down. My half-aunt died in bed. She said that she was going to go to the old farm, and then before she got out of bed, she died. My half-uncle froze to death on one of his wanderings away.

MG: Due to their Alzheimer's, they were wandering?

CH: Yeah. My father did not. In fact, he stopped driving because of Alzheimer's. He said, "I'm going to stop driving because I can't remember how to get home." That's the way he was. He would not get out of this house at all.

MG: As you get older, is it something you're concerned about?

CH: Not as much as I'm concerned that my sister and my brother are going to have it because of the way they act. But I think the main reason that I'm not going to is because I'm more in tune with my mother, always learning, always getting information. My sister, all she does is – she stopped cooking. All she does is just make the meals and so forth. She used to be a big baker. She, like my mother, used to be a big baker. She don't know how to sew anymore. My brother, every time he comes up, he's almost forgot everything that he knew when he was growing up. I asked him the other day about milking a cow. He says, "How do we do that?" You'd sit down, you get the cow fed, you rub her side, and so forth, so you can sit down and milk, so she won't bother you." [laughter]

MG: And your role is as the family's memory keeper.

CH: Well, I think that's why I keep learning. I know I don't know that much. I know there's a lot more to the history here that I don't even know. But I think that's what keeps me going.

MG: What are the black boxes for you? What's unknown about the history here that you're more curious about?

CH: Well, the diaries I've got only go back to the late 1800s. But there's another hundred and fifty years of history in this area that there's no record of, and that's what I'll keep trying to find out. Now, the historical society did a calendar for the last two years in this area on the village and so forth, how it was made. Now, they're doing the Reeds Mill area. I just found out about three of the farms way up on Potato Hill that Madrid didn't even know about – the historical society. So I've found out information, and the woman – I just found her name and called her two days ago, and I'm going to meet with her. She is a great-grandchild of one of them up there.

MG: We'll have to do an addendum after what you learn. I imagine keeping a diary was standard practice, especially for living on a farm. But did you learn anything in those diaries that maybe you were uncomfortable learning or was private?

CH: I learned my grandmother was quite a hot woman around here.

MG: What do you mean?

CH: She was running around all over the place with everybody.

MG: Oh, yeah? She was having other relationships.

CH: She didn't have other relations, but she was –

MG: Courted?

CH: She courted. She was the one that instigated a lot of the relationships. A lot of them recorded in the diaries, I found out that they stayed the night at her place a lot of times. [laughter]

MG: This was Carrie Wing.

CH: Yeah.

MG: That's not unusual now. But was it frowned upon then?

CH: I don't know if it was frowned down, but it sure was racy in the dairies. There was one telling about – they was hanging the May basket on somebody, a man. Her and Jenny Wheeler, which was the postmistress, was hanging a May basket on a guy, one of the Welches. When they hung it on him, they hung it on his back. They hooked it to his back on his belt. They told about [how] they were running away and so forth. "And that night," she says, "he spent the night." [laughter]

MG: Okay. Can you say for the record what the significance of a May basket is?

CH: A May basket was – originally, a May basket was supposed to be a greeting to a person. It's almost like a Valentine, but not quite. But it was also a joke at the same time. Then, there was the social of the maypole and so forth, dancing and get together like that. Then it became more of a – the basket became more of a joke. And then the last I remember, the May basket was – you hung a basket on the teacher. You gave them a May basket and so forth of fruit. It's more of an, "I like you," sort of, but it wasn't really a "love you" type.

MG: These stories must have been from before she was married to either Ralph or your grandfather.

CH: Yep. In a week's time, there was three to four different guys. [laughter] So, she got around.

MG: Well, I wonder how the rest of the townsfolk felt about that. Do you think they knew?

CH: I guarantee they knew. [laughter] You didn't keep secrets around this time.

MG: Is there any other sort of local lore like that? Any figures are stories that stand out? You mentioned some of the legends and theories about how the land was formed.

CH: Yeah, that was the theory of land and so forth. Other than that, it was just the farming. There was one time that the Welches claimed that their horses could go faster than Nathan's horses, and they had a race here. It was a tie. [laughter] Other than that, the only other legend – well, this was actually a fact – was when I was a young boy, an airplane fuel tank fell off and landed up here. It was full of fuel, and it burst, but it didn't ignite, and it just evaporated. It killed all the trees in the area

MG: In how large a radius?

CH: It was over six-hundred feet wide.

MG: Oh, wow. Was the plane okay?

CH: I have no idea. All I know is we was up in the field mowing, and my father looked up, and then he mentioned to us. We all saw this thing tumbling off the plane, and the plane veered off sideways. As far as I know, the report was that the plane landed safely. But that was in my lifetime that that happened

MG: It sounds like it had a real effect on the area around it.

CH: Well, it was all in the woods area and nowhere near mills or anything. But it was a big deal because we had newspaper people up here, and people come in trying to find it and take a piece of souvenir metal and so forth.

MG: That reminds me to ask about how people were getting the news during the early 19th century and maybe in the 20th century.

CH: Post office. Because they had the post office service. They went down to the railroad to pick up the mail and so forth. The newspapers and letters to their friends. Carrie had, I would say, at least seventy-five correspondences she had with people. Some of them out West. Some of them down to Florida.

MG: Were these relatives?

CH: Relatives. Friends. She sent a letter to, and they sent stuff back.

MG: Do you have those letters?

CH: I have quite a few of them. Yeah.

MG: Oh, interesting. What were some of the topics in the letters?

CH: Carrie was into the family reunions a lot. Because of the Wing Family, that's how a lot of correspondence got done because a lot of times, people out West with the same name would come to the reunions and things like that. That's how she coordinated. They'd usually have how their life was, how many kids, how the weather was, what they were doing, and then they'd have a page of genealogy with it.

MG: It sounds like you come from a family of good record-keepers.

CH: Yes. My great-grandmother, Lucinda, was a diary keeper. Carrie, my grandmother, was a diary keeper. My mother was a diary keeper. And I'm a diary keeper.

MG: What do you write about in your diary?

CH: The weather. All the birds [and] animals that I see. The temperatures. Whatever happens. Today, I'll tell you, "Molly come up and interviewed me."

MG: Well, it'll be nice to be in the record for the future in that way too.

CH: Yeah. [laughter]

MG: Did Arthur and Carrie meet after the war?

CH: Yeah. Well, met before the war, too.

MG: They knew each other.

CH: Yeah.

MG: What year were they married?

CH: I can't remember.

MG. I have 1920 here.

CH: It probably was. I think it was. Yeah, it was three years before my father was born. He was born in '23.

MG: Your father is Wilson Hinkley.

CH: Yeah.

MG: I was curious where the family names come from. I don't have the other siblings' names, but were names passed down? How were people choosing to name their kids?

CH: Most of the names were passed down. I know Carrie was into a lot of passing down names. She'd go way back in the records to find a person that was related. Wilson was actually named for Wilson Hinkley back in England. Those are a sibling of one of my line that was named Wilson, and that's how she named my father. Victor was on the McLaughlin side, back. Amber was on Lucinda's side. One of her sisters was Amber.

MG: What do you know about your father's early childhood?

CH: He was a mechanic. He loved to tinker on things all the time. He was born here. He was in farming like his parents. But he'd tinker on all the machinery all the time, keep it running. About the time my mother showed up and married – he went down and harvested apples down in Wilton. That's how he met her for a while. Then he got married. Shortly after they got married, he bought two Dodge touring cars for five dollars together. They were just a wreck. [He]

chopped them and made them into stump jumpers or tractors. That's how I learned to drive was on one of them. I have one of them sitting down here. The other one's in Madrid. The guy fixed it up and got it running.

MG: Oh my gosh.

CH: He tinkered on lawnmowers, tractors, and things like, and other farm machines. He was always tinkering. I never got into the tinkering, the mechanic part, but I was good at mathematics. If there was anything that had to be done with carpentry, I could just look at it and figure out how to do it. My father one time told me – we had cows out here where the shop is now, and it was starting to fall down and so forth. He says, "We're going to have to build this. Buy some lumber and this and that and everything to fix it because the cows are going to need something for this winter." I said, "Okay." Three weeks later, he went out. He come back in. My mother told me he said, "I don't know how the hell he did it. He didn't have anything to do with it, and he built a stable for the cows."

MG: Where do you think that skill came from? Is it innate? Did you learn it from somebody?

CH: I don't know where I learned it from. I don't know of anybody in my family that was a [carpenter]. My father could see an engine and know what was wrong with it and fix it. I can see something that needs to be built, and I can do it.

MG: I wish I had that skill. You mentioned the cars. When did cars first come to this area? When did your family first purchase a car?

CH: My family purchased their first car – well, my father purchased – in '31, he bought his first vehicle. Of course, they was all used vehicles and all the way through. In fact, the first new vehicle I just bought [was] this year, a brand-new vehicle. Other than that, it was used ones. But as for the vehicles coming in here, the first vehicle was in '27.

MG: Do you remember what kind of car that was?

CH: It was a DeSoto.

MG: I can't picture a DeSoto.

CH: It's one that's long gone, long dead. It would be like – it's a combination of them red pickups the have for Christmas and the Model T. It's halfway between that in style.

MG: Okay. Before that, were folks getting around with horse and carriage?

CH: Yep. Horse and carriage. Horse wagon. Sleigh.

MG: Do you know if there was resistance to cars?

CH: No, there was excitement to it. The closest vehicle you could get to purchase, you had to go to Lewiston. So, it was a long time before it got up here. [laughter]

MG: Your father was maybe seven or eight years old when the Depression hit. Do you know how people were impacted in this area?

CH: Ration tickets. My father was a – I can't remember the word they used. He was exempt from the service because he was the only son of a farmer. That's why you're exempt. It's the youngest or the only. Other than that, the only aspect that my father and mother said was gasoline. Other than that, it was just a normal life.

MG: He was about eighteen years old when World War II started.

CH: Yeah.

MG: Was his family relieved that he didn't have to serve?

CH: It was to my grandfather. It was a real relief. But I don't think it affected him either way, really. He was very pro-[America]. They supported it. A lot of the food and rubber from the tires and so forth, they sent out to service, so they would go into the service – donated that. They went without vehicles as much as possible to conserve.

MG: I had asked about the Depression. Then I was thinking about some of the efforts during the Depression era, like the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Did they come to this area? Were there opportunities here?

CH: No, not really any opportunities because it was just farms, that's all. There was nothing for them to construct, really, because the railroad had already gone out.

MG: Tell me a little bit about your mother, her life, and how she met your father.

CH: My grandfather was a worker at Foster's mill. They come from Washington County originally. They didn't own a farm. They was tenant farmers is what they were, and they tended to other people's farms, animals. Then they moved to Fairfield, where she was born – Fairfield Center – and then they moved to Wilton. My grandfather worked in the dairy, dairy farming for an apple orchard farm. She went through to the second year of high school. That was it. She worked at Foster's manufacturing, making toothpicks. She virtually met my father by my father coming down working on that apple farm. Then they went to dances and things like that. They got married in Wilton, and then she moved up here and fell in love with land just like my father had.

MG: She seemed well-suited for this kind of life.

CH: She was virtually a homemaker. She knew how to sew. She knew how to cook. She was a very good cook. She was a very good sewer. She was a rugged woman. She was well-built,

heavy-built woman. She wasn't fat. She just was heavy-built. She could throw an eighty-pound bale of hay [with] no problem.

MG: She sounds hearty.

CH: Yeah. Right.

MG: You were talking earlier about how we're losing farming skills. I think we're also losing some of those skills that it sounds like she had.

CH: Oh, yeah. She taught me how to cook when I was nine years old. She taught me how to sew when I was eleven. I made a leather vest for myself when I was twelve years old. Now my sister's completely forgot how. So, I've got this sewing machine here, which was almost the first sewing machine in the village. It's all preserved. She used this a lot. I've used it. I've got anothing sewing machine in there. This one is going out into the museum, now that I got the museum weatherized.

MG: The museum here?

CH: Yes.

MG: Did your father finish high school?

CH: No. He didn't even go to high school. He finished eighth grade, and that was it.

MG: Was that so he could help out on the farm?

CH: Yeah.

MG: You said your mother taught you how to cook when you were –

CH: Nine years old.

MG: Nine years old. What kinds of things would you cook together?

CH: Homemade bread. The reason she told me – she said, "If you're going to stand here and look at that batter all the time I'm making this stuff, you're going to make it yourself." So I started making it. I can make pies, cakes, cookies, homemade bread – just everything. I make my own pizza shells.

MG: From scratch.

CH: Yep. Make lasagna from scratch. Everything.

MG: That sounds good.

CH: Make doughnuts all the time.

MG: We were talking a bit about your parents. I was just curious if you know how their early married life unfolded.

CH: Virtually, they were just here doing the farm and so forth. As I said, my brother and sister were born while they was living over on the other side, and my grandmother and grandfather were over here. Then, when my grandmother died, they moved over here to take care of my grandfather, and then I was born.

MG: Tell me about each of your siblings, their names, when they were born, and a little bit about how their lives unfolded.

CH: Belinda, my sister, was born in '53. She grew up here, of course, with us too. She had busted her collarbone, falling down the stairs. She had hepatitis when she was young. Then she went and took care of an old woman over towards Kingfield. Then married a man, and they moved to Farmington and then to Nashua, New Hampshire. She was a security guide. Then they got divorced, and she married a trucker, a long-haul trucker. They moved back up to Millinocket and two or three places in eastern Maine, then out to North Dakota, and down to Florida, and back and forth until he became disabled from diabetes. Then, they moved back here with me.

MG: Did she continue working throughout her life?

CH: No, just that one time [when she] was a security guard. Other than that, she didn't.

MG: Was her first husband a Dunham?

CH: Yeah, Elton Dunham.

MG. That's a common name in this area.

CH: Yeah. But he didn't come from the Madrid area. He came from, I think, the Massachusetts area.

MG: A different Dunham line. What about your brother?

CH: My brother, Kendall Hinkley, grew up on the farm like me until after high school. When I got a job in the shoe mill, three years later, he got a job at the sawmill. And then, he worked at different sawmills until he retired. He's living in Jay. But he never wanted to go – he keeps saying he wants to go back to farming, but he never will because he don't like it. Never liked it in the first place. He's married to Barbara, and she had a son from another marriage. They're retired and virtually taking care of her son's kids now.

MG: What are some of your earliest memories from growing up in this area?

CH: As I said before, waking on my birthday with two inches of snow. The earliest memory is laying in the back of my father's dump truck and going up to a giant rock in Phillips. We're doing it at night, and I was watching the stars and the trees go by.

MG: Why were you going to this rock in Phillips?

CH: Because the guy that used to live up here above us from out of state – he owned property up there, and he wanted some trees cleared. For some reason, they left some equipment up there, and they had to go get it that night. [laughter]

MG: Can you tell me a little about the house we're in now, which is where you grew up? Tell me about each of the rooms and their purposes. I'm also curious about the history of the home.

CH: The farm, as I said, was the mill owner's place after they built – the second owner of the mill built this place. He raised hogs in the barn. There's a big barn. Right now, part of it is the museum for the Old Village Museum. That is the big barn. The barn closest to the main house is the carriage barn, and that was used for hay and to keep the animals in. The big barn was the hog barn, too. Then there was the woodshed and the alcove, which now is my brother-in-law's and sister's bedroom and dining room. Then, there's the kitchen which used to be lower than it is now because it had to step into where we are here in the living room. This used to be the dining room because there was no dining room out there. The pantry has always been the pantry. The cellar has always been the cellar. The bathroom used to be my bedroom when I got older, and my bedroom now was my parent's bedroom. But when I was really young, it was my brothers and my bedroom, and my sister was upstairs. And my workroom, which has got the bay window on it was always the living room. When we was young, that was my parent's bedroom. The stairway was rearranged because it used to come straight down, didn't come over this way, and they had a lot higher steps on it. So it was harder to get up than it is now.

MG: Was there an outhouse previously?

CH: Oh, yeah. At the end of the shed next to the carriage barn, there used to be an outhouse. That's where we went to the bathroom. You had to walk out in the cold to go to the bathroom. There's an outhouse between the two barns now. Just a backup. Of course, it still brings back memories. [laughter]

MG: Tell me how it works. I have a five-year-old. I can't imagine her going outside by herself. Would you go by yourself?

CH: Oh, yeah. Well, the outhouse we used to have had two holes. So you could use two holes. But you'd walk out, sit down, go to the bathroom. You had your toilet paper and do your business like you do now. But you didn't have to flush it.

MG: When did you get a bathroom?

CH: Got a bathroom in – I was born in 1958 – got a bathroom in 2001.

MG: Oh, wow.

CH: I used an outhouse a long [time].

MG: That might be a record. Why did you get a bathroom at that point?

CH: Because Community Action had enough money to build a bathroom.

MG: Oh, good.

CH: That's the only way we could afford it because we couldn't afford it otherwise. When my family was growing up, the yearly income for the family was eight thousand dollars – the year.

MG: Where was that income coming from?

CH: The next-door neighbors.

MG: Caretaking.

CH: Taking care of the out-of-stater's properties, mowing lawns, and so forth. We got just eight thousand dollars for the five of us for the year. Other than that, it was self-sufficient. We had the cows for the milk. We had chickens for the eggs. When the cow got old, you slaughtered it, and you had the meat and a couple of pigs once in a while. Had your garden. You made sure you had enough food for over a year, so you wouldn't have to worry.

MG: Were there any lean years or tough times that you remember?

CH: No, because you always had supply to go. There were years that the crops didn't do that great. And there were years it was hard to keep animals because of the cold weather. Because the barns weren't heated. Just the animal heat kept them warm in the barn. A lot of times we had to put two cows together in a stall, so the cold nights, their body heat would heat each other.

MG: How did you heat the home?

CH: We heated the home with wood and kerosene. We had three wood stoves. I think it was my senior year when I was seventeen years old; there was a week we had forty-five below for over a week. That was day temperature, not night temperature. We had closed up all that side of the house, and we was all bunked in the living room here. We moved the dining room table into the kitchen and had a kerosene heater there and a wood stove there to keep us warm.

MG: And still have to go to the outhouse?

CH: Oh, yeah. Still had to go to the outhouse. You went out with a winter coat on and everything else you could think of.

MG: About how old were you when that happened?

CH: Well, I was seventeen. It was my senior year. I graduated when I was seventeen years old. I graduated with credits so I could be a sophomore in college if I wanted to.

MG: But you didn't go on to college.

CH: No, because I had three teachers that said I didn't need to. They said you didn't have to go to college because you could survive and manage the way you are. You had enough knowledge to do it.

MG: You said it was 1972 when your home finally got electricity. What accounted for getting electricity in the first place? Was it the poles going in?

CH: No, the neighbors had electricity before. My father just said, "Hell, we might as well put it in." CMP [Central Maine Power], at that time, would put a pole in free if you needed it. Now you have to buy the poles if you need them. My father decided to finally do it. That was back when they could – as I said, the poles are free. That's another interesting story. When they went to put the pole in, they dug with the augers. They could only go down to two feet everywhere they tried. My father come out, and he says, "What are you trying to do?" "We're trying to put a pole in." He said, "You can't put a pole in here. There's only three rocks." He says, "There's rock out back." He pointed to the big iron rock out there, the rock out here that's got scarring on it. He said, "And that big rock down there in the stream." They kept going and going and going. Everywhere, about two, three feet down, they'd hammer, and they hit a rock. Finally, where the pole is setting right now, they brought the auger up, and there was a rock about the size of the pole. They took a crowbar and popped it out. There were three rocks angled just like my father said. They said, "You're right," and they stuck the pole right down in that hole.

MG: It sounds like you both have just real intimate knowledge of the land, its layout, and its makeup.

CH: When you plant a garden, you got to know where to plant the garden. You got to know the soil, the condition it's going to be. When they dug the well – finally dug the well – we always used river water, piped it in, or went with buckets [to] get it. But when they finally dug the well in 2002, they was going to dig it, and they would come up and dowse it and so forth. They took the things. I said, "Try it right here." He did. He says, "You got three veins here." I says, "I know." He says, "How do you know?" I said, "Because I can see the lines of the old cellar holes that used to be around here. They dug down. They dug it out. There's a five-time reservoir the size of the tiles – five times more. So I've got a good reservoir. Neighbor come down [and] said there wasn't going to be water in it. You could just see it start [to] trickle out. The next morning, the thing was chuck-full. They put the rocks in. They covered it up. They put the tiles in – everything. They never had to filter the water. It was that clean. Then, they started ditching for the pipe. He said, "Why'd you have it so far over that way?" I said, "Because that's the only way you're going to get to the cellar." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You go ahead." They started digging. They dug through, and they hit the very edge of the ledge that went up over the hill. They went just by it. He said, "You know the land." I said, "Yeah, you kind of have to."

MG: How did life change when you got electricity here? Did it change?

CH: Yeah, it made it a lot easier. Stayed up more at night. Because before, you went to bed. When it was dark, you went to bed. Your candles don't last very long. [laughter] Kerosene lights don't last very long either. It slowly changed the heating over. Now I've got a heat pump and so forth. Other than that, it's a heater because of my back; I can't go out and split wood like I used to.

MG: Did your family get a TV at any point?

CH: Yeah, we got a TV. We had a TV before we had electricity. We had a battery-operated TV, by the car battery. We hooked it up. We could watch it three hours a night, and that was it because we couldn't run the battery down dead. [laughter]

MG: What would you watch?

CH: It was always family. Everybody was together, sitting on the couch watching. We watched *Gunsmoke* and a lot of the old Westerns, [*The High] Chaparral*, and things like that. We watched a lot of comedy shows, *Andy Griffith [Show]* and things like that. We always watched the news.

MG: That was my next question. Did you have this battery-operated TV during the Vietnam War? In the late 1960s?

CH: No. It was after that. Wasn't until probably '69, '70, we got the battery-operated TV. That's one reason we decided to go to electricity. Dad said, "I don't want to keep running the battery down." Plus, that made it a lot easier because you got the electricity; you could have a water pump. So, didn't have to go haul the water.

MG: That must have been a big chore.

CH: Yeah, it was a big chore because you had animals you had to water.

MG: Was that your chore to do on the farm?

CH: It was one of the chores. You had chores the moment you got up. We got up. We had chores from 4:30 [AM] until school. As soon as you got back from school, you had chores until bedtime.

MG: Walk me through a typical day starting with getting up at 4:30 AM.

CH: A typical day, you're getting up at 4:30, you get dressed, you went out to the outhouse, and then you went out and tended [to] the animals. You fed the animals, you cleaned behind the animals, you wiped the animals down, washed them down if you had to, calm them down, rub them like you pet a dog. You had to pet the cows just to calm them down. So you could sit

down and milk by hand – not machine – by hand. You put your hand on them teats. If the cow didn't like it, you aren't going to get much. [laughter] Either that or you're going across the barn floor. But you do that. Then you go in. Then you'd eat your meal. You cook your meal – breakfast and so forth and have a big meal, and then you'd get ready for school. During the summer, when there's no school, as soon as you got done the meal, you went out and started in on the hayfields or cutting wood or whatever because you had to cut the wood for the winter. Plus, you had to go out, and in the Spring, you have to cultivate the fields and so forth and plant the garden. Then in the fall, you'd have to harvest it all, and all this time, you'd have to be sawing wood for the winter, too. Then you get home from school, and then you get the cows in from the fields, and you'd hook them up, feed them, pat them down, rub them down, you sit down, and milk again. Then make sure that they had enough – when you get done the milk, then you'd make sure they had enough feed and enough bedding for the night. By then, it was about eight, nine o'clock at night anyway.

MG: A really full day.

CH: It was always a full day. There was no time to worry or stew or complain, "I'm bored." There's plenty out there to do.

MG: How did you feel about this kind of work? Did you wish you were doing something else, or did you enjoy the hard work?

CH: I enjoyed it. It kept me healthy. Kept me going. [I'd] go to school; kids would say, "It's so boring at night." I said, "How? Why?" I got ribbed because we was the only ones that had cows in the school. All the other school kids didn't have any. There was one other. My fourth cousin, Mark Hinkley, worked on the farm. He didn't live on a farm, but he worked on a farm, so he knew what it was. But all the others, we called them town folks; they didn't know anything about it. Of course, being around cows, you're going to have the smell of a farm. So, we got ribbed all the time. Finally, in high school, the one guy [who] was at me all the time – they were always at me anyways. I got fed up with it. Because they were saying, "Here comes the cowboy. Here comes the cowboy. Here comes the cowboy." I walked up and said, "What the hell are you, a cowgirl?" He got so pissed and mad. He was getting ready to attack me, and seven guys stopped him. They said, "He's right. We're either a cowboy or cowgirl." [laughter]

MG: That's what it comes down to.

CH: Yeah.

MG: You put something in your pre-interview notes about how these kids wouldn't last a day in your shoes.

CH: No, they wouldn't because they couldn't handle it. We had one guy come up here from – well, my friend had a camp up here. They come up here all the time. He still comes up. He talks with me all the time. I was up there helping him cut somewhat we call widow-makers, the dangerous trees that are going to fall and destroy something or hit somebody. We was getting them down because they're busted off or half busted off. He used to come up, and he came up

with a friend that was his neighbor. The guy came up here and looked. He says, "How the hell can they do that?" I said, "We do it all the time." It was the fall, and we had an apple tree out front here. My friend said, "I'd like to go feed the Hereford." I said, "Okay," and we went to feed the [Hereford]. Took the apple out, and we stood at the road next to the fence. The Hereford was clear on the other side of the field. The guy says, "How are you going to feed the Hereford? The Hereford's clear over there." I said, "Just like this." I held the apple out and never said a word. Pretty soon, the Hereford lifted its head and saw it, and she come full barrel. I mean full barrel, about twenty-five miles an hour speed. Come right up. She wasn't slowing down one bit. The guy ran to the other side of the road and jumped over the fence on the other side. I said, "Go get that guy." They got the guy. About twenty feet from the fence, the Hereford just locked all four legs and slid right up and just reached [out and] took the apple out of my hand. He said, "I wouldn't dare even think of doing that." I said, "That's how I do it." They don't know how to – they never knew how to milk – if they went out and tried to milk a cow by hand, they wouldn't know the technique. The city kids couldn't throw eighty-pound bales of hay around like a football.

MG: No, you have important skills that are lacking, missing, and certainly dwindling in society.

CH: Yeah. The thing is, they wouldn't be able – the reason I said they wouldn't be able to survive [is] because they haven't the capacity to figure out how much they need to survive nine or ten months of cold weather.

MG: Yeah. Don't you think that's gotten so out of whack in our society?

CH: People have stuff in the fridge that will last one day. I've got stuff downstairs that will last me – I'm sixty-four right now. I've got enough food downstairs to last me until seventy-six.

MG: We were talking earlier about radio and television. Were you following along with the events of the 1960s, the social and cultural movements of the time? I mentioned the Vietnam War. Were you following along with and discussing those kinds of events at home?

CH: Yeah. Of course, we had the battery-operated radio before. But we always kept up with the news, kept up with information going on. My father was worried about the war. Him being exempt from going, he was worried that my brother and I were going to have to go, at least my brother. My brother did have to sign up for the draft. But when I became eighteen, they'd stop the draft, so I didn't even sign up. Then it got so that when he signed up, it was shortly then that Vietnam was shutting down. He calmed down. But he was worried.

MG: He was worried that you would go or wouldn't go?

CH: He was worried that we would have to. Because they'd stopped the exemption of the youngest one or the only one being a farmer. They stopped that exemption, and he was worried that we would have to.

MG: Were you talking about the war and current events with your family and around the dinner table?

CH: Yeah. We would talk about everything around the dinner table.

MG: Were your parents politically minded at all?

CH: They weren't like it is now; you're either Republican or Democrat, and you're evil. It was never like that. It was you're supposed to do what you're supposed to do right. You're supposed to be out there to help humankind and do what you can. It was never political. We followed it. We was always disgusted that they couldn't agree because there's no reason they can't agree because they wanted the same thing anyways. Just do it.

MG: In the 1960s, there was the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement. I was curious about what those big movements looked like in a small town like Madrid.

CH: Well, I don't know about Madrid, but over here, there was no civil rights. You were on a farm. The civil rights was women have the right to do what the men [do]. Farm? Women do the same thing as men all the time. They're out there working all the time. There ain't no gender job; it's that's the job, no matter whether you're a woman, a kid, or what. That's the job.

MG: It reminds me of what you were saying earlier about the Great Depression. You were governed by survival and not the stock market. That's interesting.

CH: My father always said they ought to stop money and give beans as payment. Baked beans as payment.

MG: That might work.

CH: At least, if you got destitute, you could eat your money. You can eat beans.

MG: Yes, and you can plant them and make more beans. I was curious. I meant to ask earlier how you came to be named Carson. And your middle name is Darrell?

CH: Middle name is Darrell. My grandmother Carrie, wanted me named Darrell Carson. Darrell was not spelled like you'd think, It's D-A-R-R-E-L-L. A lot of it is D-A-R-Y-L. Actually, Social Security has got me two ways: D-A-R-R-E-L-L and D-A-R-R-E-L, just one L. Got them both ways – Social Security. So I can have it either way I want. But I always used the two L's. Carson, my mother loved it for the one simple reason – the meaning, beloved son. And Darrell – she just liked the sound. My brother Kendall Corey is because Kendall was a friend of hers, and Corey was a distant relative that died early. Belinda Rose, my sister – Belinda is because my grandmother, her mother, wanted her third child to be named Belinda. Rose is because my grandmother always loved the yellow rose.

MG: Did you get along with your siblings growing up?

CH: Yeah. My brother was my best friend. Then he married his wife, and [his] wife just cannot stand me.

MG: His wife can't stand you?

CH: Yeah. She's always been jealous of me. I don't know why. She's still jealous of me. My brother is actually talking with me more and more now. But as soon as he got married, it was, "No talking to him." He couldn't talk to me. But my brother was always money-wise – "Got to have money. Got to have money. See what this is worth. See what this is worth. See what this is worth." Like the sewing machine, he says, "You can sell that sewing machine for three, four hundred dollars." I said, "I can sell that sewing machine for five thousand dollars. I ain't. It's worth more just sitting right there," because of the history that that sewing machine has got.

MG: What do you think accounts for that difference in perspective, where you're seeing the value of the history and the memory?

CH: And all he sees is that money aspect. And more so since he's married her. It's money, money, money. My sister is almost a hoarder. Any container that she eats food out of, she's got to keep the container. My brother-in-law and I throw a lot of it [out]. She don't even know about. She's always doing that. And she hides money. One day, he opened up a box, and there was thirty-two one-dollar bills in it.

MG: Do you think that comes from how you were raised and having to scrimp and save?

CH: Neither one of them was raised – because my mother and father was very generous. When we sold hay to other people for horses, they'd pay us for twelve bales; we'll give them fourteen. You come to visit; you're not going home with an empty stomach. You're going to eat something. They would give the clothes off their back to any stranger. That's the way we grew up, and that's the way I am. You help your fellow man no matter what. That's why I've got the trail. People come and say, "How much is this?" "It's free." They say, "What?" It's there. I didn't make the land. [laughter] It's there.

MG: I think so many people would go in a different direction. I think it's great you haven't.

CH: Well, as I said, I let that be purchased by High Peaks Alliance to put it in preserve. I sold it. They wanted to buy it. They said, "We got to give you money." I said, "They're not going to give me much money." They said, "Well, we got to give you the value." Of course, I had to have a lawyer for my side. The lawyer said, "You know you're selling this way under value." "It's valued that." "No, it's not. It's valued a lot more." I said, "That is the tax value." I said, "That's what the state says it's valued, and that's what it is. That's what I'm selling it for." My brother come up and says, "You got gypped. You could have sold that for three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand." I said, "Yeah." I sold it for sixty-two for the simple reason it's going to be there the same way after I'm gone.

MG: I imagine you've had offers.

CH: I've had people wanting to build houses out there. That's what my brother wanted to do – divide everything into house lots up there, be eighty acres of house lots. You can [make] all kinds of money. But there's eighty acres of preserved natural land.

MG: Well, I think you did the right thing. It sounds like it's in good hands now.

CH: Right. Now, I've just got to work on this part, the house part and the museum.

MG: I want to ask you more questions about your childhood, growing up, and your education. But I wanted to explore a little bit more your father's mother's side. Was Moses Wing your grandfather?

CH: Moses Wing. That would be my great-great-grandfather. That was Nathan Wing's father. He was blind and disabled.

MG: Moses was?

CH: He was blind and disabled. That's about all I know of him. He married Cordelia Swift. Then, they had only one child, Nathan D. Davis, and he bought the Thomas Pickard place over here. In the deed, it's deeded that he had ownership of the land and everything, but there was a section of the will that Cordelia, his mother, could live out the rest of her life in one half of the house. The deed says the upper half, but she was in the lower half. [laughter] She lived the rest of her life there, as far as she could before she became disabled too – invalid. Then Nathan married Lucinda. As I said, Nathan was an adamant farmer [and] lumberman. He was part owner of the mill. They had the milkhouse, which was a community [milkhouse], and the icehouse, which they harvested the ice out of the pond here. He raised his sheep and the chickens. He became wheelchair-bound for the last twenty years of his life. Lucinda was bedridden for the last five or six of her life. They had a daughter Carrie, [who] married Ralph McLaughlin. Ralph died of disease, and then she married my grandfather, Arthur. They had my father, and Carrie died of liver disease in '57. That's about all the history of that I know, except for my father and grandfather.

MG: Did you put in your notes that Lucinda Masterman was a teacher for eleven terms?

CH: Yes, she was. She taught in these schools here. There were several schools. It shifted back and forth between buildings and the house across the road. Eleven terms. The terms back then was only either the spring term or the fall term; it wasn't all winter long. So, eleven terms – that's only five and a half years. [laughter] Not like they are now.

MG: What kind of teacher was she? What did she teach?

CH: It was a one-room schoolhouse. They taught all grades all at once. They learned a lot more because of that. They didn't have to hire an assistant. They had assistance [from] the upper-grade people. That was their assistance.

MG: The older kids –?

CH: Taught the younger kids. They learned a lot more because of it because they did have that interaction with the others. The older kids didn't ridicule the younger kids because they was helping him. When I was going through school, a senior wouldn't talk to a junior, and a junior wouldn't talk to a sophomore. That was a no-no. Back then, you talked to them [and] you helped them.

MG: I read there were about six or seven schools in the settlement here.

CH: There was one school, but it kept moving around.

MG: Okay. I had wondered why there were so many schools for such a small community.

CH: The reason is the first school was the Perham School, which was on top of the hill here. That was around, I'd say, mid-1800s, something like that. I don't know the exact dates. It came to be that it needed a bigger building. It wasn't even enough to be a one-car garage. It was a small building. It was just a small shack. And then it came to be that they had to have a bigger one. But before they could get the bigger one built, they had to hold school, and they held school in my family farm over there for two years while they was building the school. Then they built the school up on top of these two hills called the Mill Hill School, which was a little bit bigger. It was actually a one-car garage size. [laughter] That one went to being a shed for somebody. Then, we got more kids, so they had to have a little bit of a bigger school. So then they decided that they was going to split the school, the upper neighborhood and this end. Before they could get them two built, they had to hold the school in a house across the road again for two more years. Then they built the two schools. That old school was where the church was held for two or three years until it became a garage out in Phillips for somebody. Then the upper two schools decided to combine again to one school, which was a bigger one, which would be about – I'd say it'd be about the size of this living room, the pantry, and that cellar-way area. Before they could get that build, they had to hold it on my family farm again for a year. Then they built that, and then them two schools went to being sheds for somebody.

MG: When was the last school here?

CH: Last school was what they called the East Madrid School. That was in – it was before '23. It was 1921, something like that. My father never went to that one. My grandmother went to the Mill School and that one.

MG: Where did your father go to school?

CH: He went to school in the Blethen School, which was in Phillips. Going down that long hill there that you turned – right there on that corner, that house on the right, that was the Blethen School.

MG: How would he get to school?

CH: Slide. Walk and slide.

MG: I think it might be literally uphill both ways.

CH: Yep. It was uphill out, then downhill to the school, then uphill from school, downhill home. [laughter]

MG: Did either your mother or father share any stories about their school days?

CH: My father did. He told me about all the times that he went to school and about the two or three times the kids all got together, and they all walked out; it was the wintertime. They get to the top of the hill. And they all decide to see how far they could go down the hill. A lot of them went down past the school, down past the swamp area, down beyond that, and so forth. They got to school an hour late [laughter] because they had to walk all the way back. Of course, when he come home, one time he was coming down the hill there. They all come down these two hills. One of them missed the bridge.

MG: Yikes.

CH: He went across the bridge, but one of the other kids went right down across the street. Luckily, it was frozen solid. [laughter]

MG: You mentioned that some of your family members in the past have had Alzheimer's. How was Alzheimer's diagnosed and treated in that era in the early 1900s?

CH: It was called senility, or crazy in the head. That was it. They either tended to them at home, or they went to the insane asylum.

MG: Was there an institution nearby?

CH: No. Nearest one was Augusta. There's one – not in my line, but an offshoot of Lucinda's from Weld that did go to Augusta. But other than that, any of them, they just dealt with them at home, just like I did with my father. We dealt with him right here. He died in the bed in there.

MG: Was it your father who had been treated at Togus?

CH: My grandfather. That was because he was a war vet. He was able to go to Togus. That's where they operated on his legs. My father's Alzheimer's – we dealt with him for three years here.

MG: That must have been –

CH: It was tough. It was tough for the simple reason – it was hard on my mother. It was hard on my mother for the simple reason – my brother was here, upstairs, and his wife, and his wife is a certified nurse. She was a certified nurse. Any time that he messed his bed, didn't get out of bed, mom would call me to do it. With my back injury, I had to lift him up and carry him to the bathroom. She's a certified nurse, and wouldn't touch him. Then, when he died, I lived here.

The last year and a half, my mother was bedridden. I had to pick her up and move her everywhere. My brother and sister-in-law never came up to help. It was hard on my mother. She's got a certified daughter-in-law, and you're making a handicapped person help her. So, it was hard on her.

MG: I imagine there was some tension around that.

CH: That, and his financial business of losing half the land that we used to own, too.

MG: Can you explain that a bit?

CH: My sister-in-law had a debt of a repossessed house. They foreclosed on it and tried to get it. Being married to my brother, they put a lien on all this property that we owned. We didn't know about it for three years, and they were about ready to foreclose. The only way we got out of it is because the neighbor up here decided to buy half of our property on the deal that my brother got off the deed. That was hard on my mother.

MG: That sounds complicated. If your neighbors hadn't stepped in –?

CH: We would be on the street.

MG: Yikes. You couldn't have listed the property or part of the property to save yourself. I don't know how that works.

CH: No, it was on lien. It was ready to foreclose and take the property. The thing was that we'd sold other sections to other people. Them people would [have] lost their property too because it was on the same time period – we sold after it was put on the lien that we didn't even know about. It was real tough. I almost lost her through that.

MG: You almost lost your mother through that?

CH: Yeah. Because of the stress.

MG: When was that?

CH: That was in 2012, 2013.

MG: Not that long ago.

CH: No. As I said, she died in 2017. The reason she died [was] she went in the hospital because of a calcium buildup in [her] legs. But the reason she died [was] she had seventy-two ulcers in the stomach and intestines from that stress. They tried to fix some of them, and died of internal bleeding. Couldn't stop it.

MG: What are your feelings about that?

CH: I'm disappointed in my brother and sister-in-law, yes, but I don't blame them. It's something that wasn't really her fault. It was her fault for not dealing with the financial problems with her first husband. I don't owe them any ill will. He's mentioned it. "Well, he's supposed to have all the land, and I was supposed to have five acres." I said, "No, you know our father always wanted all three of us to own the whole land together. He said something about property and so forth and so on. I dealt with that. I said, "There's only one way that you're ever going to get back on the deed." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Get up here and show me that you actually want to do something with the land." I said, "You keep saying this for the last twenty-five years, but I ain't seen you get up and even cut a piece of wood." I said, "You do that." Then, of course, when I had that opportunity to sell to [High Peaks Alliance] that I know it was preserved, he hit the roof that I didn't sell it [for] enough money, [and] he didn't get no money out of it. I said, "I didn't either." The money went to either repairing or finishing the museum or fixing the house. The only thing – I bought a vehicle because I didn't have a vehicle. I was riding around with my brother-in-law and sister.

MG: Can you tell me more about the family up the road and their connection to the area? It sounds like they've been close to your family for a couple generations.

CH: Yeah. They're originally from out of New York City. Bronson and Sophie Griscom moved up here. They bought a lot of the property in the area. He went up hiking on Saddleback Mountain one time when he was young. He said he'd like to own this area. His father was an ambassador, United States Ambassador to Brazil, and to Argentina, and to Italy. So, he had a lot of money, and he owned seven newspapers in New York City. So he had plenty of money. So when he got old enough and retired, he decided to come up here and start buying property, and he bought property here and bought property over to Phillips, down to Chesterville. This back half of Saddleback, he owned all of it, and all these other upper farms here. He wanted to buy my father out, and my father said, "No." Then, of course, being from the city, they didn't know even how to mow a lawn. So, we became caretakers of the property. My mother became their cook and so forth. When we was old enough, we worked on the farm and so forth. As soon as you start walking, you start working. [laughter] That's the way it was on the farm. We worked for them, too. My brother and sister, and I mowed lawns, and we helped hay their fields and so forth and so on. We learned what money was right from the beginning. From kindergarten through, we bought our own school clothes and material. If we had anything left, I usually bought a matchbox car, or something like that. You knew how much money you had and how much money you had to deal with. You dealt with the money right from the beginning. They did not pay minimum wage, by no means. They had the idea that they are civilized and everybody is a servant. So that's how it was.

MG: They paid less than minimum wage?

CH: Yeah. Way less. I was working – I think I was working – when I was in eighth grade, I was working – maybe a dollar and a half an hour. Something like that.

MG: What would you save up your money for? You mentioned matchbox cars.

CH: Matchbox cars, reading books, science fiction. I loved science fiction books and history – anything on history. I was always a history buff. History, math, and science fiction – that was me. History, math, science fiction.

MG: Are you still interested in those subjects?

CH: Oh, yeah. I think the science fiction comes [from] that night that I told you about riding in the back of that truck, laying down, seeing the stars. Ever since then, I've been always going out looking at the stars. It was then, in my second grade, I told my mother, "I want a telescope." I still haven't got that telescope, but that don't stop me from knowing what stars are what out there.

MG: Maybe you didn't see it on TV because you didn't have a TV, but do you remember the moon landing?

CH: We watched the moon landing on TV.

MG: You did?

CH: We had it on battery operated – I was real enthused with that.

MG: Yes, that was a big deal. What else do you remember about certain historical moments?

CH: I remember [John F.] Kennedy. I remember [Ronald] Reagan. I never got into sports that much. I never was into them. I do watch the Superbowl. The only reason I watch is to see what the mid –

MG: Halftime show?

CH: – halftime show and the commercials. If they have a decent commercial. They haven't had [one] since they had that Budweiser frog. That's the only one I really watch. Other than that, soccer once in a while if I can, but not really. But there's more important things than ball games out there to do. I collect stamps. I collect some coins. Other than that, it's just science fiction. My biggest hobby is going out and enjoying nature. People come up and say they're a birdwatcher. I see the birds, yeah. But I'm as much interested in a butterfly or a flower or an ant as I am a bird. It's all nature.

MG: The whole ecosystem.

CH: Yeah.

MG: Were you always that way, even as a child?

CH: Yep. My father, when we was haying, I'd go along. We'd be haying. I said, "What kind of grass is that? What kind of grass is that? What kind of grass is that?" [laughter] I know all the different kinds of grasses.

MG: It sounds like you learned a lot from your parents.

CH: Oh, yeah.

MG: And that you were close with them as well.

CH: Yeah. I think I was closer to my parents than my brother and sister are. I was in tune to what they were like. They worked with nature and appreciate the nature. You're not going to get ahead. Well, when we was doing anything – getting firewood and so forth. My brother would take a hook and a log, and he'd throw it and so forth like that. My father and I [would] drop a great, big tree. My brother, "Well, you know that thing's going to be heavy." Dad says, "Work with nature. It ain't." We'd get it up and put it on its edge and roll it over. Go to put it on the dray, lean it up, shimmy it a little bit, and then twist it, and then let it roll onto the dray itself. I said, "You work with nature. You can lift it and be a brute, or you can work with nature and let nature do it, too."

MG: Nature and physics. I want to ask more about your experiences growing up. I want to make sure we're not missing anything from your family history and parents' generation. I want to make sure we talk about your mother's family history. But we've been talking for about three hours. Do you have enough energy to keep going?

CH: Yeah, I'm fine.

MG: Your mother was a Fenlason. Can you trace her family history?

CH: Actually, it goes all the way back to Fenderson in Scotland. It was originally Fenderson. The first one that was in America was Darius Fenlason. He was the grandson of the one that I have records of. One of my mother's relatives, the last one of the daughters of my grandfather's siblings – the last one alive – sent me what she had just recently. It goes to a Fenderson in Scotland, and then his son, and then Darius came over. They lived in Washington County, in the blueberry barrens. They was blueberry farmers. They had several kids. They moved to Fairfield Center when my grandfather was a little boy. I found out from that – when I went to one of his siblings' funerals – that he was pissed off because he had to go with the women in the wagon a week later, not with the boys a week before. He had to ride with the women in the wagon a week later to get to Fairfield Center. He wasn't too happy about that. He wanted to be with the boys. He was a happy-go-lucky guy. He was cheerful right to his dying day. Darius, I do know – handed down through the history – is where I got my red hair from and my light complexion because Darius died at the age of eighty with a full head of red hair.

MG: I was curious about that.

CH: They always said it was Irish. My grandfather always told me when I was working with him up here in the rose gardens for the neighbors in the gardens, planting flowers. I'd say something about, "Well, it's getting three o'clock." At three o'clock, you had to be home to milk the animals. We didn't have animals then. But it's a habit. You get home to do the

housework. I said, "It's getting close to three o'clock." He said, "Don't worry about it." I said, "Well, it's getting [to be] three o'clock." He says, [imitates his grandfather's accent] "Shur-n I be a bit-o-Irish, and a bit of Swee-dith, I wern't be threw, til I be Fin-nish."

MG: I'm not sure I understood any of that.

CH: I did it backward. As sure as i be a bit of Irish, and a bit of Swedish, I won't be through until I be Finnish. That's what his saying was. I told my mother. She said, "I grew up with your grandfather, and I never heard him say that." I said, "He said it to me all the time." So, that's why I think that we was actually Irish, Scottish, Swedish, and Finnish. We're Scandinavian. We're the Vikings.

MG: I can see that.

CH: I had a woman come to walk the trail. She's from Sweden. We got talking about it. I told her that. She said, "You're more Swede than I am." [laughter]

MG: It sounds like you don't have as much information on this side of the family.

CH: No, I don't because my grandmother, Ada Fenlason, her name was actually Mary Ellen Philbrick, not Ada May Moore. She was adopted Ada May Moore by her aunt. Her parents died in a car crash when she was three years old. The family records of the Fenlasons and the Philbricks were burned up in the church. All I got is just hearsay of what they said, and that's it.

MG: So, Dexter Fenlason married Ada May.

CH: Which was Mary Ellen Philbrick, actually. She was Mary Ellen Philbrick and became Ada May Moore.

MG: Do you know anything about the details of the car accident?

CH: No. All I know is they was killed in the car.

MG : Going back to Darius, I found a record online that said his first marriage was to an Annie Belmore, and his second marriage was to a Mary Berry. But then in your notes it said his second marriage was to Hattie Adelaide.

CH: Yeah. The second name you said?

MG: Mary Berry.

CH: Mary Berry is his brother's wife.

MG: Okay. So his second marriage was actually to Hattie.

CH: Right.

MG: He had nine children with Hattie?

CH: Yes.

MG: Your mother was one of two children.

CH: Right.

MG: What do you know about your aunt?

CH: My Aunt Olive married – she was a flirtatious woman, too, evidently. She married everybody she flirted with. She married a salesman. And then that petered out in a year and a half time. Then she married another person. I don't even know his name. That petered out. Then she married Chandler (Libby?), and they had a son Albert (Libby?). Chandler (Libby?) died [in] a tractor accident. The tractor turned over on him. Albert Libby was born diabetic. Then she married Herbert Mitchell, Olive did, and they had Barbara, Billy, and Betty. They owned the hardware [store] out here in Phillips. I remember the old Beal Block that used to be in Phillips, that was a hardware section. They owned the hardware [store] and, later on, a clothing store, and then the mercantile beside it. Then there was a drugstore at the end. The only part I remember about the whole store is the hardware office. I'd go in after school a lot of times. We would walk down the street to the town to go in there and wait for my mother and father to come out and pick us up. He'd send us into the office to sit while he tended to customers. In the back corner, there was a great, great, great big black safe. [laughter] I remember that thing. I thought it looked like a tower. [laughter] He had it open one time. The door was that thick.

MG: Was there a lot of money in there?

CH: I don't know whether there was money in there. He had drawers and stuff. That's the only thing I remember about the whole store.

MG: Did you get to know your grandparents on your mother's side at all?

CH: Yeah, I worked with him a lot up here as a gardener for them. That week that I told you it was forty-five below here, and we closed everything up; that was Christmas week. My mother said – on Christmas day, she says, "Don't expect your grandparents to come," because they'd visit my aunt's family in the morning. Then they'd come in the afternoon up here and visit us for Christmas. She said, "Don't expect them to show. They're not going to come. It's cold. It's forty-five below here at noontime." I look at the window. I said, "There they come." [laughter] They wanted to come. They came.

MG: They were hardy folks, too.

CH: Oh, yeah, they was hardy. When he was a young man, he worked on the snow rollers that parked down the roads in the town, them horse-drawn snow rollers.

MG: To pack the snow down?

CH: They packed the snow down so the horses would have a solid ground and the wagons and the sleighs would have solid ground. It was a great big roller they had.

MG: That sounds like an important job.

CH: It was. Other than that, he worked [in] carpentry in Foster's Mill. Actually, he helped build Foster's Mill in East Wilton. He was a hardy farmer. He worked at the apple orchard there. He was a carpenter. Him and my grandfather Hinkley both had the same saying. When we was putting the hay in the wagons or hay in the barn. "Plenty of room up there. There's plenty of room up there." They're out in the field. Both grandfathers out there. Grandfather Hinkley said, "There's plenty of room up there." Grandfather Fenlason said, "Yep, space is the end."

MG: They were pointing up.

CH: Right. [laughter] In other words, "Keep stacking. Keep stacking. Keep stacking."

MG: It sounds like the families got along well together.

CH: Yeah. The kids, after high school – Billy, Betty, and Barbara – kind of wandered off and did whatever they wanted. Albert hung around. He was always up here, snowmobiling with my grandfather. My uncle would come up. My aunt didn't come up so much, but my uncle was always up. My half-uncle and half-aunt lived here, and they was always helping out with this and that. They all worked together. That's what the community – that's the way they use – that was the way people used to live. You helped everybody. It wasn't you; it was them. That's the way they were. We'd work right up until dark, and they'd be just as rambunctious as we would be. I think that's why I became a light sleeper. I was always an early riser. I was always up, and I was always up at night. With this disability, it just coincides with what I was doing anyway. I only get two hours of sleep at night because of my back.

MG: Which two hours?

CH: Between twelve and three. I'm up until twelve or one o'clock, and I get up between three and four.

MG: If you want to take a rest at any point during our conversations, I'm happy to.

CH: Whenever I need to, I'll stand up when I have to.

MG: You let me know.

CH: I know. I deal with it. I've been dealing with it since '95. I know pretty well what I can do and what I can't.

MG: I want to ask next about your experiences, but I want to make sure there's nothing we're missing in terms of your family history or stories from your parents' generation.

CH: The only other thing is my grandmother, my mother's mother, died of senility, virtually. She lost her mind. But she loved anything lilac. She'd come up, and first thing she'd say – "Are they budded yet? Are they budded yet?" Because up here, the lilacs are always pretty near a month later than Phillips because it's so cold. It'd be dying out there. She come – "Are they budded yet? Are they budded yet?" [laughter] She loved snowmobiling, going snowmobiling. There was one time – they moved out to New York for a while when I was young. The day before they moved out, they was wondering whether they were going to be able to have – it was in the spring. The snow was pretty near all gone. I remember my grandmother saying, "I wish I had one more snowmobile ride. We're leaving the day after tomorrow, and I'm not going to be able to go snowmobiling again." That night, it snowed four inches. So, she got her snowmobile ride. [laughter]

MG: What brought them to New York and where did they settle there?

CH: They settled west of Albany, and they live just below a dairy farm, and he took care of the dairy farm.

MG: But they ended up coming back here?

CH: They ended up coming back here and living out in Phillips.

MG: What years did they pass away?

CH: My grandmother passed away – I can't remember the dates exactly, but I would say in the late '70s, and my grandfather died in '89. He was just like a boy the day he died. He's just as active. They always complained about – my mother and I both inherited one thing from him, and that's our high instep on our feet. So we have to work hard finding shoes. [laughter]

MG: And you had a hookup with your shoe factory work.

CH: Yep, I became a shoe factory [employee]. Back in '79, '80, I decided they weren't going to pay enough up here – Bronson and Sophie. I said, "I got to get some money into the family," so I went out. One of their people they always had up here for supper, dinner – a promotional thing for their status. He owned the shoe mill out here in Phillips. So, I went out, and I talked to him. He said, "Yeah, go talk to my manager." I talked to a manager. He said something about – he says, "Well, can I count on you?" I said, "I'm a farmer." "I should be able to count on you. I'll give you a chance." I started working for him. I got to working for him. I was ten, eleven years working for them. I was up to pretty near twelve hours a day working. Anytime they needed something, I was there. Then I decided – I said, "I got to get back on the farm. Got to get back to getting stuff done." But anytime that they needed help, they'd give me a ring, and I'd run right back and help them for a week or two weeks or whatever. Then, I went down to – they wasn't paying enough. I said, "You're not paying me what I'm worth." I'm doing just about every job there is here in the shoe mill." They had new owners. The owners come in. "Oh, I'll give you a

dollar more right now." I said, "That's a little too late. I'm going down to Bass." I went down to Bass; they hired me instantly. They saw my qualifications, they hired me, and I became one of the main workers that they could count on. I was there at five o'clock in the morning, and I wouldn't leave until twelve o'clock at night. I was working double shifts. Later on in the year, they said, "We got to stop double shifts." The boss of my night shift went up to the boss of the day shift. He says, "I could get rid of every single worker that I have and keep Carson and get the same work [done]." Then he went to the plant manager, and the plant manager said, "Well, we only got one more month of that shift anyways. It'll be done." They said, "All right." "But if you slack on your job during the day, you're going to have to quit." Every week they have a tally of what you do. The day I was getting done my night shift, I said, "How'd I do?" He said, "Damnit, every week that you were doing that double shift for over three years, every day's job increased production." I was able to take a shoe from the stitchers and put it into the box. Put every part of the sole on. I became one of just two workers to do that.

MG: It sounds like you enjoyed this work or at least found some value in it.

CH: One of the jobs was – it's called Little-Way. It's a stitching machine that stitches the sole onto the shoe. I don't know why it's called Little-Way. The machine is a right-handed machine. I'm left-handed. The boss down to Bass says he could never figure out how a left-handed person could use a right-handed machine. I said, "Because left-handed people are in their right mind. We can do things that other people can't do." That's how I got started up in Phillips was on that machine. Everybody, even up in Phillips, was thunderstruck that I was left-handed [and] could operate the right-handed machine. All the time I was working, I had – it's called Little-Way. I'm working a little way up in the world. I'm working my little way up into the world.

MG: That's cute.

CH: But I became disabled. I said, "I got to get back to land."

MG: Backing up a little bit, I want to hear about your school experiences growing up. Where was the school that you attended for elementary school?

CH: Phillips. Phillips Elementary School. That was from kindergarten to eighth grade. Then we went to Mount Abram High School, which I fought all four years. It's supposed to be Abraham, not Abram, but they wouldn't listen.

MG: What happened there? What do you mean you fought for it?

CH: My sister went from '72 to '76, the spring of '76. They started the Mount Abram consolidated school in '71. They went around and asked all the towns what to name the school and what to name the mascot and so forth like that. Everybody in Phillips wanted the Falcon, but all the other towns wanted the Road Runner in Wile E. Coyote. So, we lost on that. I was the only one – and my brother and my sister – in Phillips that said it ought to be Abraham. Everybody else said Abram. It's at the foot of Abraham Mountain in Abraham Township. Mount Abram is in Bethel, Maine, with a ski slope on it.

MG: What was their rationale for Abram?

CH: Because everybody didn't want to say Mount Abraham. Abram is shorter. My sister fought it all the years through high school. "It's Abraham; it's not Abram." They kept saying, "Well, it's behind Mount Abram. It's behind Mount Abram." "No, no, no. It's Abraham." Then, we went through the school, we went through, and my senior year, I finally figured out why it was called Abram instead of Abraham. It's because nobody's honest. If you name it Abraham, they're not going to think of the [Bible]; they're going to think of Abraham Lincoln. Then they're going to shorten it, just like they shorten everything else, to "Honest Abe High." You shorten it to Honest Abe High, that means everybody's honest. All the kids were cheating as much as [they] possibly could. That's why they had to call it Abram instead of Abraham. That's my theory. [laughter]

MG: It sounds like you have mixed feelings about your high school experiences. You enjoyed some subjects, but the kids weren't necessarily kind.

CH: The kids, as I said, they picked on us because we were the farmers. I kept telling them, "If it weren't for farmers, you wouldn't eat." It's that simple. Unless you have a farm, people ain't going to eat.

MG: Growing up, what were the other industries in the area? What were other people's parents doing for a living?

CH: Lumbering or factory work. They was town; I was country. "You're a country hick. We're towners. You're a country hick." We didn't get involved in sports and things like that, and dances. Dances was always after school. There's cows to milk. Sports game? After school. Cows to milk. My coach actually wanted me to join the football team. I said, "I'll join [under] one condition." He said, "What's that?" "You go milk the cow." He never come over to milk the cow.

MG: Looking back, do you wish you had had opportunities to do sports or be more social?

CH: Not really. I don't have any regrets of anything in my life. Just like getting disabled; it's a nuisance, but I've got to deal with it. You either can complain about it like my brother-in-law does, who complains all the time, or you can just deal with it. I had some good times in high school. In high school, I even proved some teachers wrong.

MG: Oh, yeah?

CH: Yeah. Home ec. [economics] school. I [took] psychology for half a year in my senior year. I flunked it. I didn't flunk it for not knowing it. It's stupid ideas. [Sigmund] Freud – some of his ideas are way out. I think he was on drugs or something. The teacher said, "You're going to fail this, or you can go to another class." I said, "I'll go to another class." He said, "Why are you doing this?" I said, "Can you figure this out?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, there you go." But then I went to home ec. In my home ec. class, it was all girls except for three other boys besides me. One boy was from Strong. He was from a family of farmers. He wasn't a farmer,

but he was from a family of farmers. Another boy – his uncle had a farm. The third guy was my fourth cousin in that class. The teacher was so pissed off at us every time because when we had that home ec. class – they don't do it now, but it had the policy – when they did home ec. cooking, the cooks from the school would come in and rate the best foods. Then they'd take it to the teacher's lounge for the teacher's dinner. We boys, every single week – and the teacher said, "All the girls …". They knew why we were doing it. They knew how we grew up.

MG: Are you saying you won the cooking competition every time?

CH: Every time. She had two girls measuring out ingredients exactly. You got the exact this, the exact – we'd make a cake. Dave would say, "That's enough. Throw that in. Throw that in." I said, "We got to put a little more of this in." No measurements. We just filled it. The cooks would come in and taste it. It'd go right to the teacher's lounge every time. We wouldn't do what the teachers were saying, and yet, we was winning the competitions every time. Then, one class we had, we were supposed to design a house. You were supposed to use these fancy big aristocratic decorator's ideas on how to build a house and how to design rooms. David, Peter, and George all agreed with me. We started building it, and we started making rooms. She flunked us. She says, "Who in their right mind is going to have a room and have a pink wall, a yellow wall, a blue wall, and a brown wall?" I look back and [say] to myself at this age, "Interior designers are doing that now." She flunked us because of what interior designers are doing now.

MG: You were ahead of your time.

CH: I know. [laughter]

MG: Why did you want four different colored walls?

CH: It looked good.

MG: I can see that.

CH: You don't have to have exactly the same thing all the way around the room.

MG: No.

CH: When you put furniture in a room, you're not going to put a couch on all four walls. [laughter]. You got to coordinate with what you're going to do. In another class we was going to have, it was supposed to be – refurbish this old chair. David, Peter, George, and I had this old, dilapidated – it was almost falling apart. She said, "You can't refurbish that. You can't re-stain that." Peter said, "You want a bet?" Three days, we had that chair completely repaired and repainted. She was pissed off that we could build a chair. Not just refurbish it. We built it.

MG: That should have earned you an A.

CH: I know. But she was so pissed off at all four of us boys all the time, upstaging what she was trying to do.

MG: Something you wrote about in your notes that you were interviewed by the local newspaper for a craft replica of the royal English crown that you created. How did this come about?

CH: One of the projects that we had in history – they said that they wanted to – we was [learning] about English history, the royalty and so forth. People was making paintings. They were making drawings and paintings and pieces of thing – just a piece of paper. I come home. I said, "I got a job." Mom said, "What?" I said, "Everybody's making a picture or a painting or something about the royal clothing and stuff like that." I said, "I don't want to do that." She said, "Well, don't do that." Mom said, "Don't do that. Do what you want." I pondered, I pondered. It was Friday, and we were supposed to present it a week later. It was supposed to be at an open house or something. I pondered, pondered all weekend. I said, "I'm going to the library." I made wood and cardboard replica – wood and cardboard replica of the royal crown, all the jewels and everything. The top and the cross on top – with all the fur. Because my mother had all kinds of cloth and everything. You had silk. That's why they did it. I took it. Everything was done at home. They kept asking me, "Well, how's your project coming?" "It'll be ready. It'll be ready." "We ain't seen it." The school was having an open house the week that we were supposed to have it finally presented, and I brought it in. All the kids in my class – the teacher looked. He said, "Holy smoke." They had it open. Set it out at the open house, and there were news reporters there. They spotted that. They took a picture of it, and they wanted to know the information of the student and everything. They put it all down. This was in January. Prom night – school prom – I was a sophomore this year. At the senior prom, they used that for the crown for the king.

MG: Did that make you feel good?

CH: It's in the yearbook, a picture with him wearing it. Yeah, it made me feel good that I actually made something that everybody else didn't even think of.

MG: Well, it seems like you were a promising student. You talked about how you earn credits beyond your high school years. Did you ever consider going to college?

CH: I considered it, but there's no way I could afford it on what we was making. The math teacher, my accountant teacher, and my bookkeeping teacher all said – each class, they had students come up. The teacher would evaluate whether they should go on to college or whether they should go on to – my school, all the classes did that – whether you go into shop, or whether you go into mechanics, or whether you go into carpentry or science, like that. All three of them said, "You have the credits. You could be a sophomore in college with the credits that you've earned, but you don't need to because you can apply it in your life no matter what." He says, "College would be just a waste of years."

MG: What did you hope to plan or do when you were getting ready to graduate from high school?

CH: Right here. This is my life. This is what I wanted to be. I wanted to keep the history going.

MG: You've always felt that way?

CH: Yeah. My senior year, my brother had the studies, but every day, he had two study halls and every other day he had another study hall. The other day was gym. So, he had two to two and a half study halls. I didn't have one free class my senior year. I had Accounting. I had Bookkeeping II. I had Typing II. I had Business Math II. I had Math. I had Algebra. I had three Biology science [classes].

MG: What made you want to stay so busy?

CH: I've always been busy. Why waste time?

MG: I wondered, too, if you thought those classes might help you run a working farm.

CH: Oh yeah. You can't do a farm without math. You can't build something that you need to work on the farm unless you know math. You can't cook without math. You can't sew without math. For science, you got to have the science to know how to do things – what minerals will help what plant, how nature works with the sunlight and the weather – it's science. You've got to apply that. I've been good in science, and I've been good in math. I said that's farm working. That's what I'll need.

MG: I think you said in your notes something about – you were so good in math that you really didn't even need to do your homework, but you still aced –

CH: Seventh and eighth grade, I didn't do any homework whatsoever. The teacher was flunking me, [giving] me F, F, F, every day because I wouldn't do any homework. Towards the end of the year, I said – Brakley was our teacher – math, algebra, all mathematics. I said, "My regular eighth grade teacher is flunking me in math." I said, "What is the math rating for scoring for the year?" He said, "If you can do the exam at the end of the year, that's three-quarters of your grade." I got 100 on it. The teacher stood right over me, watching to see if I cheated. Because I said, "You watch this. You watch me when I do this algebra." She stood right there and watched me. She said, "How did you do that with no homework?" I said, "Why do I need to do the homework when I know it?" I was helping five other students that year with their algebra. Why should I have to do it when I'm helping them do it? It's just a waste of my time. The time that I was going to do the homework, I was helping others do their homework. I wasn't giving them the answers. I was teaching them how to use it.

MG: It's like the mentality of the one-room schoolhouse you described, where the students help each other learn.

CH: Yeah, the only reason my brother made it through seventh and eighth grade was because of me through that math. Every night, he was racking his brain, trying to figure it out. I kept

saying, “Well, do this, do this, do this. Do it this way. Do it this way.” I said, “I’m not going to give you the answers, but I’ll show the directions to do it.” He managed to get a C in both grades, so he could pass.

MG: You’ve described all these moments where you have to prove yourself, where someone thinks you’re not qualified or capable, and you have to prove that you are.

CH: Somebody told me, “You got to be the best.” I’m not the best. I’m not going to be the best. There’s always somebody better than you, but that’s no reason that you can’t strive to be as close to him as possible. Don’t waste your life when you got a chance to do something with it. It doesn’t matter that you are the top league. The only reason that person is top-league is because this person down here is holding you up.

MG: Tell me a little bit about how your duties on the farm changed over time.

CH: Well, the change over time was we got rid of the animals. [laughter]

MG. When did that happen?

CH: When my father got disabled. Because my brother did not want to do it. That was about the time that I started in the shoe mill business, or in the shoe mill. I couldn't be on the farm as much. So we had to get rid of the animals. I think we had fourteen cows at that time. We just decided that my father couldn't handle it. My brother didn't want to do it. I said, “I can't do it and do the millwork, too.” So, we got rid of them. We didn't sell them or anything. As they got older and older and time to slaughter them, we slaughtered them and had the meat. We just never restocked it. That was in, I’d say, around ’80, something like that – ’80, ’81. Then I just kept trying to keep the fields as best I could and mowed them until the sickle mower cracked. Then we had friends with Bush Hogs. They come and did them. I kept telling them, “You got to get out into the edge of the brushes to keep the field, or the trees are going to increase on it.” That's what they’ve been doing. Then, in 2014, they had the birding trail up on the road here. I saw them walking around out there. I said, “What's going on?” He said, “We’re losing our bird trail.” I said, “Well, you’ve never been on my property, have you?” He said, “Well, it’s not along the stream much.” He said, “There’s not many birds.” I said, “Have you ever been out there?” He said, “Yeah, but I don’t want to swamp trails.” I said, “There’s no trails to swamp. It’s the maintenance lumber roads that were out there.” They went out there, and they just fell in love with it. I said, “I’ll maintain it, too.” So, that’s what I’ve been doing.

MG: When did you start doing that?

CH: 2014. That’s when the deals with my brother’s business got done with. They were losing that trail up there. A woman didn’t want them to walk on it. I said, “That’ll keep me busy.” Because I’ve got to keep mobile with my back. I said, “That will keep me busy.” Plus, doing the bird feeders and so forth. So, I’ve been doing it. Everybody’s been praising how great a job I’ve been doing out there.”

MG: I've seen so many comments online describing the trail, but you're always mentioned as a significant feature of the trail.

CH: Well, you can walk out there. You can see the scenery. Then, you find your historic sites. If I go out and I explain a few things on the trail, when they get on it – "Oh, yeah, that's a peat bog that they harvested out. Oh, yeah, this is the cemetery. The old village. Oh, yeah, that's where the post office used to be."

MG: Going back to your years after high school and working on the farm, was there anything else you wanted to say about that work? I'll ask you next about your work at the shoe mills.

CH: That was the time period where my father had to go down to the hospital a lot because of his disease on his liver and so forth. It was a time that I started seeing my brother's true identity. It put me in a situation. I said, "I've got to keep holding on." I keep plugging along. I said, "I don't care …". He wants to leave, fine. I've got to keep this as best I can like my father and his father did. That's what I did. Then, as I said, money started getting short, and I had to do something to get more money because they weren't paying enough.

MG: You mentioned you were married at one point. Were you married at this point?

CH: I was married in '91. I married in '91 to a girl that said that she wanted to be a farmer and so forth. But when I got up here, I was still shoe mill working. I'd come home, she said, "I got to get out and see people." I said, "I'm people." That's when I found out what she was." She wanted to be in town. She wanted a store next door and so forth. We did have a kid, but it got to the point where she left and took him with her. Then, he was supposed to have visitation rights. And every time he'd come, he'd act up. He'd say I'm being mean and so forth. She'd treat him to everything. He had a Playstation. He had a computer. He had everything handed to him. When he'd come to visit my place, he had a few toys. If he didn't pick up the toys, he lost the toys. That's what he should do. He had rules to [follow]. With her, he could do anything he wanted. Then, she moved out West somewhere. Then she moved back. The last I knew or that I talked to him – I tried talking to him. He wanted to talk with me on [the] phone. Then, I called her up to talk to [him]. She said, "He's not talking to you. He's not going to talk to you. He's not going to talk to you." That's where I left it. I finally got him on the phone. I said, "If you ever want me, you know where I am." I said, "You got my number. You know where I am. I'm here." I haven't heard a word for him.

MG: That sounds tricky.

CH: I've put feelers out there, trying to find out where he is, but I ain't found anything yet.

MG: I hope you can reconcile if that's what you both want.

CH: Yeah. I'm hoping someday he will contact me. I actually got her to contact her family because she'd left her family completely – wouldn't even talk to them. I finally [told] her, "You've got to talk to your family. Family is family." I got her connected back with her family.

MG: I wonder what that's like for you as someone so connected to their family history.

CH: It's rough but I got to keep going on.

MG: Your first shoe factory job was at the J.L. Coombs factory. Did any of your relatives work for him previously or encounter him? Coombs had been around Maine in the 19th century, I think.

CH: He was out there. The only contact I know of him – I don't know the original ones that owned it. But when I was getting up towards [my] thirties, the owner was a frequent supper guest up here. Then I went out and talked with him and found out that the mill boss was actually related to my half uncle. But other than that, there was no connection. Other than that, I just did the same ethics as I did at home. You did your worth of work. I got along with all the workers no problem.

MG: Tell me more about the workplace. Did everyone else get along?

CH: Workers get along all perfectly fine. It got so that everybody – it was a three-story [building]. They worked in the basement. They worked on the main floor, and they worked on the second floor. When I got there, each floor was each floor. As I was working, with my abilities, I got to move [to] all three floors. I eventually got each floor – they didn't really connect yet, but they appreciated more how things worked. Before I got up there, the plant boss said that there used to be hassles, one floor complaining that the supplies ain't coming down. But as I worked different floors, I got them to realize there might be a hassle up on top for your suppliers because the middle supply isn't supplying the upper section. It all worked together. Of course, every month, they would have a feast. Everybody would bring food in. Well, I brought food in. Then, I brought food in for the upper floor the first and the second time [and] the third time. Then, the other floors got wind that I was bringing something up that was disappearing completely because I was cooking it. So, the mid-floor – I finally brought one for them. Then, the basement heard about it. They wanted to try it. So, I got to my last year working. I was bringing three meals, one for each floor. I had a cake. I called it the whoopie pie cake. It's a full cake. It's a beet-chocolate cake. I make the cake, and I cut it in half, take it out of the pan, and cut in two layers, fill it with filling, then put the top on, then frost it. It takes a whole pound of butter, six eggs, and the mill made a bet. The first time I made it, the top floor made a bet that they could eat it. They couldn't finish it. So, the next month, the middle and the basement decide to join in. They did manage. All three floors together managed to finish that cake. [laughter]

MG: It sounds rich.

CH: It is rich. I made twenty five dollars off of that by one guy. He said, "I can eat at least half of it." Ate two pieces and that was it. When it got so that I thought they weren't paying me what I was worth, I said, "I've got to go down [to] Bass," and they was trying to deal with me and so forth. I said, "No, it's a little too late." I heard that they hired three people to replace me.

MG: That must have made you feel pretty good.

CH: Yeah. Then two years exactly to the date, they went out of business. Then I went down to Bass there, and then I became disabled. I worked for a year and a half disabled, trying to keep helping them out. I said, "It's getting to the point that I'm working three hours a week, and I'm laid up the rest of the week. You're wasting your money. So, I told them – I said, "I got to quit." They didn't want me to, but I said, "I got to." Then I found out, two years after that, Bass closed up. Then I found out by a worker that after I left, they replaced me with two people to do the job I was doing for three hours a week.

MG: You must have been very productive.

CH: I give them what they're worth.

MG: Was your disability the diagnosis you received about your degenerative bone disease, or was it something else?

CH: Hereditary bone disease.

MG: Walk me through that a little bit. What was going on with you and in your life when you started to talk to doctors or figure this out?

CH: I was out here raking the lawn. I was working at the mill and so forth. I was working one spring, getting the rocks off from the edge of the road here, and my back snapped. I pretty near fell over. My mother come out and my brother and got me into the house. I rested the rest of the day. I was out a week of working at the mill. It kept getting worse and worse. I said, "I got to go to the doctor." I went to [the] doctor. The doctor said I was a wimp. I just didn't want to work. I couldn't take pain. I said, "Talk to the nurses up there to Bass." I said, "She'll tell you I can take pain" because that was after my finger.

MG: What happened with your finger?

CH: I got it caught in a sole press machine – this finger – and all the meat ripped right off it. I could see the bone.

MG: Jeez.

CH: I hit the machine to release it, looked at it, took it like, and walked into the nurse. I said, "I got a problem." She said, "What?" I said, "I think I need a couple of stitches," and she passed out. They took me to – they got an ambulance and took me to the hospital. Got into the hospital. He looked at it. I said, "I think I need at least five, maybe six stitches." It took fifteen stitches. He said, "You're calm about this." I said, "What am I going to do about it? You're supposed to be stitching it up." He said, "Okay, we'll knock you out and put it together." I said, "Okay." So, they give me anesthesia. I wake up. I said, "Haven't you started yet?" "You're awake?" [laughter] I sat there while he was stitching.

MG: Oh my gosh.

CH: He said, “Boy, can you take pain.”

MG: Were there other accidents? Would accidents happen regularly at the shoe factories?

CH: Oh, yeah. The shoe factories, you always have an accident. For the eleven years I worked there at Bass, I think the best record we had was fourteen days accident-free. Because you’ve got sewing machines that – they’re going through leather and rubber and everything; they got needles like that. Them needles, if they break, they shoot like a bullet right across the room. Plus, you’re working around knives whipping around fourteen RPMs a minute, and your fingers are right there, turning the shoes around. The knives are spinning like that, taking the edges of the sole off, and your fingers are right here. People have lost their fingers and everything else.

MG: How were they treated when that happened? Would they receive workers compensation?

CH: They received workers comp, rehabilitation, everything. But when they diagnosed my back, they found out it was hereditary, so they didn't have to pay workers comp. But they did facilitate in trying to rehab me and so forth. Nothing they could do because it’s just something that’s going to progress the whole time.

MG: So, tell me what it is you have.

CH: It’s a degenerative bone disease in my back. It's the vertebrates. There’s a gel between each vertebra. The gel is gone. The vertebrae is sitting right on top of one another. And it's S1, S2, L1, L2, L3, and L4. That’s all the lumbar and two below it. It’s sitting on – just like that, and there's nothing to stop it from slipping off. So, I have to watch how I get up, how I move, and so forth. I'm living with pain 24/7. The pain, which most people say pain is six to seven. My pain, regular pain, would be eighteen or nineteen out of a scale of ten. or 19. They put me on medication. They've tried forty-five different pain medications. And the only one that works is ibuprofen. I take that. I’m supposed to take it every eight hours, but sometimes – some days, it’s every three hours.

MG: How are you feeling right now?

CH: Right now, on my scale, I'm about a seven which would probably be most persons around a fifteen. [laughter]

MG: What would be helpful right now? Do you want to take a break? Do you want to take some medicine? Do you need a walk around?

CH: I’ll take my medicine. I got to get up and move shortly, yeah.

MG: Why don't we do that now? We can take a short break, and then maybe I'll ask you a few more questions about how the rest of your life unfolded. Then we can take probably a break for the day.

CH: Okay.

[Recording paused.]

MG: We were talking about the disability that you discovered. You were how old when that happened?

CH: It was in ’95 that I found that out. I can't figure out days. Be around thirty-nine, forty.

MG: It’s degenerative. Does that mean it's getting worse?

CH: Yep. It'll just keep getting worse and worse and worse and worse. I've noticed now that it feels like there’s a couple vertebrates higher than the lumbar area.

MG: And there's nothing they can –?

CH: They can fuse it, but they said with the arthritis that I’ve developed around it – with that, they can go in for surgery, but I’d have a five percent chance of getting out of bed. So, I’d rather deal with pain than not being able to get out of bed. I’ve dealt with too many people not getting out of bed – my father, my mother, and my grandfather. So, I’ll keep going as long as I can.

MG: In your write-up to me, you described a number of things that have happened or that you've had. Maybe start from the beginning. You said you were born with eczema and psoriasis.

CH: Yeah, eczema, psoriasis – what they called the skull cap. I had a crust all over my head. That developed into eczema and psoriasis, so I get scale-type coverings on my head and lots of dandruff. Then, I was born with a small esophagus. So, it made it – I couldn’t take any medication. I had to have it in liquid form. Then, when I was about nine, ten years old, I had an accident in baseball, and it hit me right in the Adam’s apple and shoved it backward. So, that don’t help my esophagus much, and that’s what I was coughing for because a little phlegm on that hangs. Then I had a motorcycle accident in – let’s get the date right – in ’86 that busted the helmet. I was banged up for over a week. Then, I had a – let’s see. The next thing was I fell off the barn roof and landed on my back on a pile of rocks. So, that didn’t help my degenerative bone disease much, which I didn’t know about then. Then I had a moose accident – killed the moose and killed the car, but I survived and had a black spot on my lips because of it. Everybody thinks it’s [from] smoking, but it’s from the moose’s head.

MG: What happened?

CH: I was going to work down to Bass in the morning, and I saw the moose. The moose was crossing the road. As I was coming up to it, I was going to veer to the right just in case, and she did – she flipped right around, bolted across the road, hit the front of the car, and come right in the seat with me. The radio was in the backseat. The only thing that saved me was the window and door frame on the driver's side didn't buckle, and she was a female, not a male – didn't have the horns. That was one the only thing that I survived from, but the car was dead completely, and the moose was dead in the ditch. I've still got a few abrasions of glass in my arm. They

don't bother, but they said if they don't bother, don't mess with it. Then I had my appendix blow, and that was after they discovered my diverticulitis and back injury. Of course, of the back injury – they didn't discover the diverticulitis for a while because when the diverticulitis acts up, that's irritated cuticles on your intestines – when that inflames, it pushes against your back. When that pushes against the back, it feels just like my back problem. When my back problem flares up, it pushes on the intestines which causes that diverticulitis to act up. So, it was a while that they weren't figuring out what it was. I was having attacks every single month, keeling over in pain, and then they finally found out it was the diverticulitis that was doing it. So, then I changed my diet. Then I had the appendix blow on me.

MG: You've got nine or ten lives, I think.

CH: That's why I'm a Leo. I'm a cat. [laughter] I'm getting to the end of my list here.

MG: I know. I think you have just one more.

CH: That's why I got to get this stuff down. [laughter]

MG: You skipped over a couple. One was a bee sting at nine.

CH: Yeah, that was dirty bees. We were running around, playing across the road in the old milk house. There was an old basket full of rotten apples, and there was a hornet's nest in the apples. Somehow, I hit it, and they swarmed. I had seven stings on my head and fifteen on my left hand. My left hand blowed right up to a balloon, and I became allergic to dirty bees.

MG: Can you see what a dirty bee is?

CH: A dirty bee is a bee that's made [a] nest in rotten foods. So, it's got the contamination of the food on their bodies. So when they sting you, there's a contaminated needle they're stinging with.

MG: How were you treated for this?

CH: I was treated with medication and salves. Of course, being left-handed didn't help much because that was my left hand. I was out of school for over a month.

MG: That's a big deal.

CH: Yep. And then, on the codeine – we found out from my degenerative back disease that I was allergic to that. It gave me shakes, shivers, and rash. So, they took me off that immediately. Put me back on ibuprofen.

MG: When you were fifteen, you came into contact with a gas plant.

CH: Yep. It's a plant that the neighbors had up here. She imported it from Europe. On a full moon, it emits a gas, a liquid that evaporates. Its liquid is all over the leaves. It slowly

evaporates. You can take a match and put it to it, and it will burst into flame, the liquid. It won't burn the plant, but the liquid will burn. Being a gardener up here with my grandfather, I brushed against it. It gave me a rash and sores and so forth.

MG: How did you treat that?

CH: That was treated with salves and topical skin lotions and antibiotics.

MG: Your poor mother.

CH: [laughter] She actually said I was the easier one compared to my uncle.

MG: You also suffered from chronic migraines, but that's not something you still experience.

CH: No. My mother, her mother, and her mother, as far as I know – what the story was – there's no records of it because of the burning of the church, but I do know my grandmother and my mother had them. They're weather-related. Any electrical current in the air would give us a wicked massive migraine. It started in around thirteen, fourteen years old, and would go until you're about forty, forty-two, and then it'd stop for some reason. But you would be out for, sometimes, two, or three weeks at a time. My mother was the same way. Even now, being in Maine, I can tell when a thunderstorm's in New York. When my mother was near a computer, it would shut down. I have shut down the Bass computer just by touching it. I was going out to – we had them (SKU?) cards that you run through for the timecard. We got joking around – coworkers. I said I could foul up computers. They said, "Prove it." So, when I ran my (SKU?) card through, I put my hand on the terminal, and I ran it through. Nobody could use it afterward. Nobody could. They was working – everything was shut down. Come the next morning, there was no – couldn't do anything. They were getting a crew in and everything else. They said, "The crew will be here tomorrow." I said, "Wait a minute." I took my card, put my hand on it, swiped it. I said, "Now try it." Everybody was clicking right in.

MG: What do you think accounts for that?

CH: It's the energy in us. My mother and I both can take hold of an electric fence, cattle fence, and not bother us at all. We can feel a little tingle, but that's it. But if somebody touched us, that'd jump them right off the ground. But all we feel is just a little prick.

MG: Maybe it's all the iron in your systems that's grounding you.

CH: Iron and electricity.

MG: It's interesting.

CH: It's hereditary through my grandmother somehow.

MG: In your notes, you said it started around when you were twenty. Do you know what accounted for its coming on in the first place?

CH: No. Anywhere between fourteen and twenty is when it starts. Around forty and forty-two, it stops. It always hits the youngest person in the family.

MG: So fascinating.

CH: My grandmother was the youngest. My mother was the youngest. And I'm the youngest. My sister says that she has it, but she's never been out and have to pull down all the curtains and shut all the doors and have complete quiet. I've had it sometimes in the summer, and a cricket outside is driving me crazy – with everybody shut up. I can't stand it. It's so hard.

MG: Well, I'm glad that's gotten better for you.

CH: What they call a migraine now is not what we have. It feels just like somebody's taking a three-ton weight and just set it right on your head.

MG: Sounds so uncomfortable.

CH: Yeah. But it stopped when I was about forty-two. My mother stopped when [she] was forty-three.

MG: What would doctors say about it?

CH: "You're crazy. Weather don't affect them. There's nothing to do with the weather." There's one time that I was coming – we was coming back from Waterville, from a family trip. We was going along, and all of a sudden, I had to pull over. I was driving. My father said, "What's going on?" I said, "There's a storm up ahead." "No, they're ain't." Mom said, "Oh, yes, there is." As soon as I pulled over – it wasn't five minutes – there was a massive downpour, lightning banging and thundering.

MG: Have you lost that sense a bit?

CH: No, I can still feel any storm coming in. I can feel it.

MG: Interesting. Well, I hope you put that in your diary because I think that's fascinating.

CH: [laughter]

MG: You listed a number of other things you wanted to talk about as part of this conversation. One of them, I think you mentioned, was the 1923 Dodge touring car.

CH: Yeah.

MG: That was what you learned to drive on.

CH: Yeah. As I told you, my father chopped them two Dodge touring cars. One was a 1919, and the other was a 1923. He chopped them down to make stump jumpers, and that's what I learned to drive a vehicle on that was that '23. The '19 is sitting on the birding trail out here. The '23 is still actually working in Madrid. You had your clutch, you had your break, and you didn't have a gas pedal. You had a gas lever and a choke. Your gear shift was all afloat. You had to hopefully engage each shift, whether it was rear. You're going along, you're going in third, you might pull it out, want to go into second, and it'll land in reverse. [laughter] It was tricky.

MG: It sounds dangerous.

CH: So, by the time I learned to drive, I took my driver's test in the wintertime. They usually hold it through – my sister took hers in the summer. She went through two years of permit before she took it, and she failed it. Then she had to have a half a year, and then she passed it. She went in the summer. My brother took his, failed, and then took his second time in the summer. I took the written test. I passed it. I had two questions I missed on, both dealing with alcohol. Of course, they didn't know I had two mai tais before I took the test. [laughter] That's why when they said how long it took, I doubled it. Then, when I took my driver's test, it was in the wintertime. There was a five-inch snow storm that same day, same night. I was taking the test, and the instructor was telling me what I do. He says to park it and so forth like that. I did everything. Then, it was going past somebody that somebody had pushed all the snow right out into the road. He said, "Oh, uh." I said, "What?" And I just drove right straight through it. He said, "Take it back. You passed." He said, "If you can drive through that, you've passed." I said, "Well, if you knew what I learned on." He said, "What?" I said, "A 1923 Dodge touring stump jumper." He said, "You passed."

MG: The other car you drove when you were nine, was a 1964 Comet.

CH: Yep.

MG: What does that car look like?

CH: A Comet is a small Ford. It would be like a Ford Escort. It was a two-door. It was blue. It was virtually the first compact Ford that they made.

MG: You were nine years old when you learned to drive that?

CH: Yep.

MG: Did your dad teach you?

CH: Yep. Well, let's see. There was the '23 and the [inaudible] both because the '23 was around in the farm fields, and so forth. The Comet was the one that I actually drove on the roads because that was a licensed vehicle. The stump jumper's not a licensed vehicle.

MG: What was your very first car?

CH: My first car was a Delta ’88 Oldsmobile. It was a hand-me-down car from my father. The family ran it for – let’s see. We bought it in ’83, and we ran it until – no, it was ’73. We ran it until ’78. Then my father got another one. My brother had already bought his Buick, and I got that one. It had 198,000 miles on it. It was a V-8. I ran that for seven years. So it was over 300,000 by the time I got done with it. I told my father, “It’s time to get a new vehicle.” He said, “What’s wrong with this [inaudible].” I said, “It’s time to get a new – it’s getting worn out.” He said, “It’s only got 300,000.” I said, “Yeah, 300,000, these old cars – they weren’t meant to go over 100,000.” So, we parked it down here on the intervale, and I got a Dodge Diplomat, and I ran that for a while. Then, a week later, after I got the Dodge Diplomat, I come up to help my father. Well, it was here anyways. Dad said, “Let’s go down and start that Oldsmobile.” I said, “You know it’s going to start.” He said, “Yeah, but let’s go down and start it.” So, we walk down. The car had dropped to the ground. The whole frame and the tires and everything had gone right up into the car. I said, “And you wanted me to keep on the road with that.” [laughter] He says, “Yeah, but I bet it’ll start.” I said, “I know it’ll start.” He said, “Go ahead.” It started right up. The guy, a month later, came and saw it. He said, “Is the engine good?” Dad said, “Yeah, there’s no problem with the engine.” He said, “I’ll buy it for five hundred dollars.” He said, “Okay.” The guy ran over, pulled the engine out, and he raced that engine in his car races for three years.

MG: That car had good bones. I think you mentioned the motorcycle accident that sounded pretty heavy-duty. Was that the last time you rode motorcycles?

CH: I finally got that fixed up. The last I rode motorcycles was after I found out about my back. I bought a Kawasaki 1100 in ’95, and I rode that. I was supposed to have gone on group trips, but the group peeled out on me, so I went on the trip by myself all the way to Lake Champlain and back. I spent the night over there and did a lot of running around the state of Maine with it. I put in close to 15,000 miles on it. Then I had the accident. I was going around – well, I had three accidents. The first accident, I managed to keep the bike upright. I was pulling out of a restaurant, and there was a car way back – I was pulling out, and I was going to pull out, and a car jumped out of another road and gunned it and almost hit me. I went down, and I scraped my leg. The momentum brought the bike back up, so I managed to save myself on that. Two years after that, I was going up along the road strip, and a crow hit me and knocked me off my bike. The bike didn’t get damaged much with that. But the other one was – I was going along the road in the spring, and the dirt from the winter was still on the road, and I lost it, and I busted the helmet and tore up my leather coat and leather chaps. The front end of the bike was completely smashed. I took four months to get that fixed, and then I rode for three or four more times. Then, I found out about my back, and then I said, “That’s it.” I’m not going to be able to sit on them seats that long anymore now – when they found out about my back, they gave me five minutes standing, five minutes sitting, and five minutes laying.

MG: You were only supposed to do those things for five minutes at a time?

CH: Yep. So, what work schedule is going to do that? And only lift five pounds. That was the original – now it’s whatever I can tolerate. But that was original. I don’t know of many jobs that

consist of five minutes laying, five minutes sitting, five minutes standing, and only lifting five pounds.

MG: Do you miss riding motorcycles?

CH: Yeah. I loved motorcycles.

MG: Tell me a little bit about the relationships you have with your neighborhoods and their connection to the birding trail.

CH: The neighbors up here, the ones that are above me here, are the nephew of the original people that we used to work with. One lives in Rhode Island, and one lives in Texas. But they had a birding trail up on what they call the intervale, where the Indian village used to be on the upper end. The woman that owns the land heard there was going to be an outing, an event that the people was going to come, and she thought there was going to be eighty, ninety people, so she said, "No more." She's still not allowing it. So, they was walking around, and I said something about something. I said, "My property out here." He said, "Well, didn't want to have swamp trails, and it wasn't against the stream." I said, "It's along the stream some." And the old twitching roads were my ancestors, and they went out there, and they saw this [360] panoramic view of the mountains and so forth and the different bird habitats that I have because I have the fields, I have the woods, I have the swamps, I have the thickets. I have the river. So I've got all the habitats of it. I've got a sand pit that Kingfishers used to nest in. They just fell in love with it. They said, "If you want it, we'll do it." I said, "Well, I'll do it, as long as I maintain the trail." So, it's now become my trail, not their trail. The High Peaks Alliance has been – the neighbor, one of the brothers up here – nephews – is part of the High Peaks Alliance, and he was saying something about easing up on my taxes and so forth. He said, "You know, each year [it's] getting harder and harder to maintain it." So, they come up with a plan. I said, "I've got stipulations I've got to have," and they agreed to every single stipulation. So, we closed the deal, and now they're the owners of the property. They're going to help me maintain it. So, I don't have the whole load all myself and keep this preserved.

MG: Throughout our conversation, you've talked about how you're aware that you're the last of the line here. So, what happens in fifty years or whenever you're not here anymore?

CH: That's what I'm trying to do, is put it into the preserve, so that the whole business is still here the same way it is. Over there is all settled because that's going to be preserved the way it is. They've got crews – they had a crew up here last week to help me do some work, and they said they'll get better at it, get more crews up here to keep it maintained better. The crew listened to me and did exactly what I told them to do. So, that's working out pretty good. Now, as for this house being the last of the village, I want it preserved somehow or recognized, and somebody get up here and learn everything in the museum because I have used everything in the museum, and I know how it works and know what the history of it is, so they can learn the history, so somebody can take over and keep this going. If this becomes vacant – any house [that] becomes vacant, falls down quick. That would be the last of the village.

MG: It sounds like that would be really upsetting. I think I know the answer, but I'm curious to hear what you have to say. Why is this so important to preserve?

CH: It's kind of hard, but the root of it is to recognize the people who went out and did the challenge to get this settled and all the hard work that they did. If it wasn't for me and some knowledge, all the work would be gone.

MG: I think that's so important. I'm so glad we're having this conversation and that you're working with the folks who see the value and want to preserve that. Not many people have the opportunity to live out their years in the house where they grew up and where their family members grew up and in an area where they've had such deep roots. I think it's incredible that you're so connected to this area and want to make sure it continues on.

CH: Yeah. The historian/archeologist said that he's worked for the DOT [Department of Transportation] in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine because that's what his job was. When they was going to make a new road, they had to do the research, see if there's any artifacts that had to be preserved and so forth. He said it's very rare that he has the opportunity to go to a place and have somebody actually knowledgeable about that place. He says, most of the time, he goes in, they tell this is it, but he don't know what the history is. He has to really do the digging. Whereas, talking to me, he's got it.

MG: When did these efforts begin in a more concerted way to start to really get the history down and get the surveys done?

CH: They started about the time that I started the trail, when people started realizing what the trail consisted of. Because in 2015, when they opened it up, they had a few officials in 2014 come from different areas of the United States. I think the main one was in the – October 2014, they had seventeen people here all related to National Parks. One of them stated at the end – he said, "In the United States, there's only three that include nature, history, scenery, and animal life." He says, "You're one of the three."

MG: I can tell that's so meaningful to you.

CH: In 2017, a family [came] up here. I'll probably break up on this. Iit's so meaningful because they came up, and the boy had bone disease in his whole body. They said they didn't know how far they could go. It was about an hour later. I saw them come down the road. As soon as she saw me, she ran.

MG: Can I get you a tissue? Stay put.

CH: Thank you. She ran all the way up and gave me a big hug. I said, "What for?" She said, "He made it all the way." I said to her, "That's why I've got the trail."

MG: Of course.

CH: The boy is dead now from the disease. She wrote me the other day. She said, "That was the best thing in his life."

MG: It's such a special spot.

CH: That's why I want it preserved.

MG: Of course.

CH: I told that woman – I said, "I don't care for a cent. That's the reason that I made it."

MG: That's precisely why it shouldn't be developed.

CH: That's why I wanted to get this down, so people know about this stuff.

MG: Well, I'm really glad we're having this conversation and that this worked out. There's still so much more to capture. Let me pause the recorder, and we can make some decisions about where to go next. [Recording paused.]. We were talking about the need and the value of conserving this land and the different folks involved. I also wanted to ask about your involvement with the Madrid Historical Society. You told me, when we were taking a walk earlier, how you got involved. Maybe you could tell that story again on the tape.

CH: Well, in 2019, I was going up on the trail. I always maintain the cemetery on the trail, too. I happened to see a sign for the cemetery; it said, "Plains Cemetery." I said, "Well, that is wrong." Somebody stuck it up sometime. I didn't realize. So, I went over. I knew that Madrid had a Madrid cemetery committee. I went over to them. I said, "That's not the sign." He said, "We didn't make the sign. The historical society made the sign." But I became part of the cemetery [committee] because I told them – I said, "I maintain that cemetery." So, they agreed to make me a board member. I maintain this one. So, then I went over to the historical meeting that they had. I said, "Who made the sign on the cemetery up there?" They said, "We did." I said, "It's the wrong sign." "What do you mean? It's the Plains Cemetery." I said, "No, it's not the Plains Cemetery. It's never known as the Plains Cemetery." I said, "Who told you that?" They said, "A person up at the upper end of the field." I said, "He's from Bath, Maine. He don't know it." They said, "Well, what was it?" I said, "It was always the East Madrid Cemetery while Madrid was organize. But before that, it was called the Perham Cemetery or the Perham Stream Cemetery or the Perham Settlement Cemetery." They said, "Well, how do you know that?" I said, "Because I have a map of it," and I showed them. It says, "The map plan for the cemetery on the Plains field," not the Plains cemetery. Just above it, it says, "Perham Settlement Cemetery." They said, "Well, we didn't know that." I said, "Did you know that in the cemetery, there is a Swedish trapper buried in [the] 1690s?" They said, "What?" I says, "Yeah." I said, "Well, that's the story that's been told through the families, through the generations." They said, "1690s?" I said, "Yeah." They said, "Well, when was the cemetery made?" I says, "About forty, fifty years later, they decided to make a cemetery and used him as the upper right corner." They said, "Well, how do you know all this?" I said, "Because these are handed down stories and tales and so forth." And they said, "Well, we'll get that straightened out and so forth." And then I went back to the cemetery committee, and they said, "Well, it isn't that big a cemetery

anyways, and it's full." I says, "What do you mean full? And what do you mean not that big?" They said, "It's only a thirty by forty-foot." I said, "What are you talking about? It's forty by one hundred and twenty." "What do you mean one hundred and twenty?" I said, "We donated the land to the cemetery." They said, "Well, all we know is there's supposed to be somebody buried up there, but we don't know how they're going to get because they're not there." I says, "That's my mother that's getting buried up there." That was 2017, not '19, sorry. And they said, "What do you mean donated?" I said, "Don't you have the deed?" "What deed?" I says, "This deed." And I showed them the deed, and they said, "Well, how many plots is it?" I said, "Well, the plot is four by eight, you've got ninety-one vacant plots up there." They said, "Really?" So they had to reorganize, and then I went down to the historical society again and went to another meeting. They said something about and – I said, "Well, by the way, you don't have this town map, do you?" They said, "What town map?" I says, "This one." I showed them, and there was a map showing Madrid, the town of Madrid, and showing the settlement here, over here. And where the town was, was four farms: Ezekiel Hinkley, Benjamin Hinkley, Nathaniel Hinkley, and Samuel Hinkley. That was the town. They said, "What? Where'd you get this?" I says, "From the property place down Farmington. The probate court." [They] says, "Well, when is this?" I said, "Well, according to the deeds, by going by them Hinkleys, the four brothers, I dated it between around 1825." They said, "How do you know?" I says, "Cause in 1829, one died, so he wouldn't own the land." And I said, "And the youngest one was in 1818, so between 1818 [and] 1829." So I split the difference – 1825. Cause in 1818, the youngest one was twenty-two years old. So, I figured it was somewhere around 1825. And they said, "Can we have a copy of that?" And then I went to the next meeting. They said, "Come to the next meeting." I went to the next meeting. They said, "You want to be a historian?" So I became a historian.

MG: I'm surprised it took until 2017 for you to connect with the historical society.

CH: The historical society, the one that was running it when it became disorganized – because that's when the historical society started in 2000 – was a woman that wanted her family to be the big shots of the creation of Madrid. When they found out that Miller Hinkley was the one that pushed and pushed and pushed to get it organized and that woman's ancestor denied, denied, denied – but she wanted her family to be the big shots of the town and, therefore, she didn't want to recognize anything over this way and all the history and everything. So it was lost until I got over there. And then the one that was over there, she said, "We got to get started getting the information from you and so forth and so forth." And then she died, and the other two, Ginni Robie and Cindy came as the presidents. They said, "We still got to get this information. We got to get it down." She says, "Because, as you say, you're the last in the line, and it's going to be gone."

MG: And who is the Swedish trapper?

CH: The Swedish trapper – there has always been a story around that there was a Swedish trapper that had a lean-to above Farmer Mountain, but this side of Abraham, between Abraham and Farmer Mountain. He trapped all the way from over beyond Rangeley and over beyond Kingfield. This whole area, he trapped in. He worked with the Indians and so forth on trapping and so forth. He died around 1690s, and they buried him in the fields up there. That's all I knew

about it. Well, when I went up there to investigate, there's seven gravestones, and the map that I had had fourteen graves but no markers, but they had the locations of different places they're supposed to be buried, and they had the name of the person. So what I did is I went up, and I measured in correspondence with the map to resize it and so forth. I found a sort of a little indentation there at every one of them. So I put a stone, and I put the information on it, and in that back right corner, the upper right corner, there's a great big boulder, and then there's a flat stone laying beside it, the other direction from all the other graves. I said, "I bet that's where the Swedish trapper is, that the story was." So, I put a marker on, just possibly the Swedish trapper. Well, last year, there were some workers up here helping with this new roof and so forth, Community Action. And one of them lived over in Rangeley, and the other one lived over in Kingfield. They was talking to me and [were] interested in the museum. They heard me talk about that. So they decided to start poking around [with] their friends and relatives. A month later, they come back; they still was working here. The Rangeley guy come back, and he said, "You know," he said, "I can almost corroborate that story for you." I said, "Why?" He said, "My grandfather said he had a story of a Swedish trapper that lived on the opposite side of Saddleback." I said, "Well, that kind of corroborates it." They said it, he said it was around the late 17th century, which would be 1690s. Week later, the other guy's shift comes. He come over. He says, "I got news for you." I said, "What?" He says, "My great-uncle said that there was a Swedish trapper in the late 1600s that lived on the opposite side of Abraham." I said, "Really?" So, there's two on the opposite sides of the mountains [who corroborated] that. Last month, I had a woman come up from Phillips; she dowses different cemeteries to find grave sites. She hit that three times [in] different directions. And she says it is laying opposite direction than the others.

MG: Why would it be doing that?

CH: Well, when they buried him, they buried him along the edges of the woods. Well, when they made the cemetery, they put the gate up here, and they laid all – put the bodies this way. So he was always the other angle. And she says it is laying in the opposite angle than the others are.

MG: Interesting.

CH: And she hit it three times. Three different directions, she hit it. So that's three possible connections to my story.

MG: Definitely. What are the other efforts of the Madrid Historical Society? What are you guys trying to do, accomplish, and put together?

CH: What they're trying to do – what they do is they're a source for people to come and see if they can find any family records of any information and so forth. But what they want to do is get the information that I've got down and archived. Because they used to have one that did that – archive it and all the knowledge, but she passed on. They said they wished they had somebody like you to interview her so they could pull the stuff out of her brain. But they wanted to get this information down so that they have the record because all they had record of was Madrid was 1806, 1807, it got started, and now I've got to 1690s history. So, they want to get this stuff documented down so that they have it, too.

MG: Well, is there anything we're missing about your family history or your life story up to this point? We'll talk about the town and the area tomorrow.

CH: Yeah. The only other thing is the way that I feel about this land. It's open to everybody. It's for every– God made the land for everybody's use. Working with nature is – the thing I put on my parents' grave. I put a natural stone just like the rest of them. And I put on the grave on my father's side of the sign: "He was born on the land. He lived on the land. He worshiped the land. He's back to the land." On my mother's side, I put, "She came to the land. She lived with the man. She loved the land. She's with the man." And under that, I put – well, on top, it says, sixt generation – what is the word?

MG: Descendant?

CH: Not descendant. Starts with a C, I know. It means conservation. The word is custodian. And then the sayings – then underneath *"*In Memoriam*"* – from the seventh.

MG: And where are they buried?

CH: They're buried in the cemetery up here. That Swedish Trapper. Swedish Trapper is in the upper right corner. My parents are in the lower right corner.

MG: You mentioned there's plenty more plots.

CH: There is the seven gravestones, and the dowser found all seven of them at the location. She found all the other fourteen that I put a rock on, and she thinks she's found four others that's not marked yet. So I got to do some more research and try and find it. But it's not on the map that I had.

MG: Is the historical society a place you can go and visit? A brick-and-mortar office?

CH: Yeah, it's the old schoolhouse in the town of Madrid. The schoolhouse that they had for the village over there. You have to visit it by appointment. You have to call the co-presidents, one of them, and they'll open it up, and you can do research, or you can talk to me, and I can open it up, too. [laughter] I've got all the keys. So a lot of times, I go over there and do some research and to corroborate something that the historian has told me about.

MG: Neat. I wonder if we could put all of this into a book someday.

CH: Yeah, well, that's what the archaeological historian was hoping that they'd do with his report. Put it into a book.

MG: Yeah. And what was the purpose of his visit and that extensive survey?

CH: He did it for the aspect of the – virtually the cooperation between the Indians and the white people and the agricultural and cultural aspects of why people came to settle here. It's more for

the record of the farm industry part of it – use of the land. Not the people themselves. It's the use of the land and how they cooperated and so forth. It's still going on. He's still in the process. Mainly, we're trying to open up the – find the exact place of the cellar because I've got the picture of the house outside and inside of every room and now cellar. So that's what we're going by, and we think we've found the edge of the cellar, so now we've got to do the excavating round. But the reason is cause that's a unique cellar because it's not like most cellars. Most cellars are a square rectangle like that. That is horseshoe-shaped. It's horseshoe-shaped. In the center of the horseshoe is two stone walls about two feet high. They're sixteen inches thick. And on top of that is two hardwood, sixteen by sixteen beams laying right on top of a lengthwise wall. Then across the other way, back and forth, to each beam, is eight by eight beams. Then on top of that is a massive flat rock, and they built this chimney for the house on that. So they had a cavity underneath the chimney. The chimney, like this house here, had three fireplaces and a Dutch oven in the bottom of it. So, you can see the length of this area here. That whole area is the bottom of the chimney. It goes from wall to wall to wall to wall.

MG: Wow.

CH: That's a lot of weight. And that had a well in the cellar, too.

MG: And where is that located?

CH: About, just about where we started digging, right next to the gate. That is supposedly, I think, the corner of the house – as much as I can remember. Because I remember the first part of that barn falling down towards me when I was a little kid. I watched the whole building fall down. When they decided to dismantle the main house, they had a guy come with a skidder, and he said all he got to do is lock onto the corner, pull the corner post out, and they'll all fall down. So he made a hole, went around with a cable – the corner post – and he started pulling, and the whole house moved. Never tipped whatsoever. He says, "That ain't coming down that way." They had to get two excavators to break it down.

MG: Oh my gosh.

CH: That's how built it was.

MG: Yeah. They used to do that. They used to move houses, and it would be a big event.

CH: Yeah. Well, this house here, it isn't built like the framework that they do now. You might have a four-by-four beam going down here, and right beside you, you might have a ten by two beam going part-way down. And then the six-by-six beam going catty corner like that. [laughter] So, this house is almost two-hundred years old, and it's standing for two-hundred years, it has got to be built.

MG: Yeah. Well built. Can you say a little bit about when the museum started and what one could find in there?

CH: The museum started in 2016 because I had the stuff all here all the time. It was stuff handed down through the family and what was left in the blacksmith shop, and what was handed from the old neighborhood to my family. I decided to get it all undercover and keep it. I just looked at it and said, "It shouldn't be just for my enjoyment. I bet a lot of people would enjoy it." So I decided to make a sort of museum out of it. It's stuff that's, as I said, handed down through and all the stuff that is, most of the stuff in there I have used cause my father taught me how to use it cause he was taught by his father and so forth. And there's a trip hay rake that most people see. They're out on the lawns; they're all metal. This one is all wood-framed and wood-wheeled. There is a hay tedder, which a lot of people don't know what that is because – they mow the grass down now and they break the grass up and bale it and put it in them plastic wraps and so forth. They used to have to mow the hay down one day, and then they had to go around in the morning and throw it into the air so the dew would dry it quicker. They couldn't put it in the same day because it wasn't dry. And I've got the British Brown Bess musket trigger guard that we found in the excavation of the cellar across the road of the Thomas Pickard house that we think was Thomas Pickard that he used in the War of 1812. Then I've got another one in there that everybody gets tickled on. I call it the swing pole. My mother called it – well, my mother called it a swing pole. I call it the pre-mower. What it is, is a pole. You take a crowbar, you stick it in the ground, then you take this – it's a wooden pole, long pole, that's got a spring attachment on the bottom. You put the spring attachment on the crowbar, and then you hook your animal to the pole, and they go around feeding. And then you can pull it up and move it over, so he can do the lawn. They get tickled about that. And then I've got a sleigh heater, which is a heater – they light charcoal bricks, put it into the container, and put the container under the sleigh seat. And then you have your blanket so you can keep warm. I have a pie plate that you didn't see yet. It's got a knob in the center, and there's a little metal tray, flat scoop that goes, you put into it. Then you put your pie crust in and then make your pie. Then you can slice it, and you can pick this up and have your slice and then put it back down and slide it under the other slices. And a pot pie plate hook. They use gloves to reach in to get a pie. Now you have to put a silicone glove on. You reach in the oven and get the pie. This was two pieces of wood, and it's got wireframing on the outside. You just reach in, clamp onto the pie plate and pull it out. That's a few things. There's quite a few things in there. I know the history of everything in there – when it was made, when it was purchased, and how it was used.

MG: Do school groups come here?

CH: Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust in 2018 sent down a whole busload of kids to learn from me. They had to divide into four groups. There were twelve in each group. There was a whole busload. Some took one trail, some took the other trail, some took another trail, and another one in a museum; they rotated. And I've had four of them kids come with their parents later on to see the museum – not the trail – the museum. And the archeologist historian has gone and investigated cause he's got all the diggings that we got, all the stuff we dug up. But he said he's gone to a lot of the farm museums around the state and in New England, and he says this is almost one of the best ones organized for the simple fact that the person knows what the stuff is and how it was used.

MG: What's the name again of the archeologist historian?

CH: Stephen.

MG: Sorry to put you on the spot.

CH: Scharoun.

MG: Stephen Scharoun. That sounds familiar. Yes.

CH: Well, I had to think a minute because I'm in contact with Stephen Rauch that owns the property that has the Indian Trail on it. So I almost said Stephen Rauch instead of Stephen Scharoun.

MG: It must be hard to keep track.

CH: Yeah.

MG: You've got enough to keep in your head. Well, is there anything else that we haven't covered today that we should cover in terms of family history or your life story?

CH: No, just the fact that what I do with the trail and the history is what my parents have done and every generation, [which] is try to keep the information going and get it out to people.

MG: Before your parents passed, did they tell you that this was important to keep it going?

CH: My mother and my father didn't, but my mother did hear from my grandmother, that died before – Carrie Wing – before born. She told me that Carrie told her I'm the last and the history will be gone before she died. And my mother said, "No, you're not, your son is." And that's what she told me. So there was knowledge that it was getting lost.

MG: Yeah. Well, I think we're doing our best to preserve as much as we can.

CH: Hopefully.

MG: And I'm so impressed with you, your memory, and the stories you've shared with me today.

CH: Hopefully, but you get it before I get Alzheimer's. Hopefully, I won't get Alzheimer's.

MG: I don't think that's going to happen. Although they do say that you lose what's recent, not what's in the past.

CH: I know that's one thing that – I listened to the old folks. A lot of times you can find a history of the past when they're getting senile because they recalled something way back that you want to put into the history.

MG: Well, the sun's starting to go down. We've been talking for a while and taking up a lot of your time. But I just want to thank you so much for the time you spent with me today.

CH: Yep. Well, I thank you for coming.

MG: This has been such a treat, and I'm looking forward to part two tomorrow. We'll talk about the area and its history.

CH: Yep.

MG: All right. Well, thank you so much.

CH: Yeah, well, thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------
Reviewed by Molly Graham 3/20/2023
Reviewed by Carson Hinkley 3/25/2023
Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/29/2023