

Ken: So, uh, anyway, uh, I'm here to talk to you about cedar. You're Charlie, how do you say your name?

CM: Maugham.

Ken: Maugham?

CM: Yeah, M A U G H A M

Ken: Maugham. OK. And here we are talking out at your house, on a pretty cool morning. And you said that there used to be

CM: a cedar yard here.

Ken: A cedar yard.

CM: 1935.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Before they build Buchanan

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: and it come a big rain and washed the cedar all away. They had cedar almost into Austin, it was such a rain.

Ken: Oh, uh-huh. Washed it right into the river here?

CM: It washed it everyplace.

Ken: Who ran that cedar yard? Who, who owned it?

CM: A fellow name of Reed.

Ken: Reed.

CM: Yeah

Ken: Uh-huh. Do you know his first name?

CM: No. I don't.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: I was about ten years old, I was born down on the Pedernales River.

Ken: You were?

CM: Um-hum

Ken: On the other side of the, of the

CM: Way down where Hippie Hollow used to be.

Ken: (laugh).

CM: You know where that is?

Ken: I do. Uh-huh. I'm from Austin, yeah.

CM: I was born down there.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Doctor Ed Manning, he used to live up here, he'd come down there in horse and buggy ____.

Ken: I see.

CM: That was many years ago.

Ken: What year were you born in?

CM: 1933.

Ken: '33.

CM: Um-hum

Ken: Your parents, uh, where did they come from?

CM: They were _____. My mother come from Ft. Worth. My Daddy was born down there on the 'old home place

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: My dad, my uncle, my other uncle, and another uncle. There was four boys.

Ken: Uh-huh. What did they do for a living?

CM: They farmed. And they, uh, burned coal kiln Did you ever see a coal kiln?

Ken: No.

CM: It's cedar cuttin' blocks, bout like this. They put 'em in a hole and they get 'em a burning and cover 'em up.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And then when the coal die out they got that big coals and put 'em in sacks. They'd take it down to Austin and sold it for forty cents a pound.

Ken: Forty cents a pound.

CM: Uh-huh. For coal. And them old smoothing irons, had them little winders on the side

Ken: Yeah

CM: You put the coal in that and put a little lighter fluid or coal oil

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: and slap a match. And _____

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: _____

Ken: I see. What years would that have been in, the '20s?

CM: Yeah, it was back in the '20s.

Ken: So they would take the cedar, big ole' cedar blocks, you said

CM: Yeah, cedar blocks, tore the bark off 'em

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh

CM: And put it in the hole, and put a little coal oil on it, and get it a' burning.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And leave it like that a couple days. They'd have old _____.

Ken: Old what?

CM: _____

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: When you get a big sack, a lot of 'em have four or five sacks Take it in and sell it for forty cents a pound, ___ a sack.

Ken: Uh-huh. So a sack would, just one little sack would weigh, weigh about a pound. Or did they get big 'ole gunny sacks?

CM: Big 'ole, like a corn sack.

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh

CM: _____

Ken: Would they, would they carry 'em in a wagon?

CM: Yeah, back in the horse and buggy day.

Ken: Back in the horse and buggy

CM: I'll tell you

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Back in Model T's

Ken: Uh-huh Yeah.

CM: (laugh)

Ken: So that was, uh, so they were cutting cedar early on, then?

CM: Oh, yes. And over here on highway 281, at the intersection there, back this way, Jared Nobels had a cedar yard.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: A big cedar yard.

Ken: Yes

CM: He got old and he finally sold it out. Another cedar yard was higher up. In fact that's where the Home Depot and out through there. Frank Jay had a big cedar yard.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And up there where the gas tank used to be. Do you remember the gas tank that used to be on the hill?

Ken: Yes, uh-huh

CM: Well, he had one up in there and bought cedar

Ken: That's three yards.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: And, uh, did Dick Turner have a yard here?

CM: Huh?

Ken: Dick Turner? Does that ring a bell?

CM: He might-of had.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And the next cedar yard used to be out here on highway 281, out there, just go to where that little station is right there

Ken: Yes

CM: On the other side, fella name of Callahan. Had a chair factory here and he went into the cedar business, I think, too.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Boy there used to be a lot of cedar choppers around here

Ken: Where did they live?

CM: They lived in little tents in the cedar brakes.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And they'd get up early and cut the cedar.

Ken: Did they live down in here too? I heard they used to live down ...

CM: Yeah, yeah, there used to be a bunch of 'em in there.

Ken: Did they have little houses they lived in?

CM: They lived in tents.

Ken: They lived in tents.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Did the tents have floors?

CM: Dirt floors.

Ken: Dirt floots

CM: Dirt floors, yeah. A lot of 'em had these little fold-up cots, you know.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: ____

Ken: Was it mostly men, or was it families too?

CM: Well, a lot of em were women. Rugged ..

Ken: Some of them women were what?

CM: Rugged.

Ken: Rugged! (laugh)

CM: Man they were stout!

Ken: Stout women, huh!

CM: Oh, hell yeah, in the cedar brake!

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: They could chop more cedar, some of 'em can, than the man.

Ken: With an axe.

CM: With an axe. You lug them cedars up them canyons and stuff, where them cedar grow a little tall.

Ken: Yeah

CM: You'd get two posts out of one tree

Ken: Two seven foot posts?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: And those women could carry that post?

CM: Oh, yeah. They were strong, man!

Ken: I mean, not even cut, fourteen feet long? They could carry that?

CM: They carried eight foot.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: _____. A lot of 'em were out there to help their husbands. They'd cook them a dinner.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And they'd cook 'em brown beans and potatoes and stuff like that.

Ken: Yeah. So did, now did you cut cedar with an axe yourself?

CM: Yes sir! I cut for my uncle, Sid Mays. He used to live right over there. Me and my daddy and brother Willie

Ken: Yeah

CM: We went to the cedar brakes. And we'd cut, my dad and my uncle would get a load in my truck and hauled 'em in and we stay there and cut until late in the evening

Ken: I see. What time would you go out in the morning?

CM: Oh, we'd go out early. About six o'clock.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Earlier the better.

Ken: Yes. And they would, they would come in with their load, at, uh, what time would they be coming in?

CM: Oh, they'd come in about ten o'clock

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: with a load.

Ken: And your, and you guys would stay out there 'till

CM: till later on

Ken: Maybe two o'clock?

CM: About five.

Ken: Man!

CM: That was back in the winter time.

Ken: Oh, uh-huh

CM: When it wasn't bad.

Ken: How 'bout in the summer time.

CM: Oh

Ken: Would you quit mid day?

CM: Huh?

Ken: Would you quit mid day in the summertime?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: Oh, yeah, you'd quit early.

Ken: How many, how many posts would you have in a load?

CM: Well, I'd have about fifty dollars worth.

Ken: Uh-huh. That, what, back in the ' , what years was that in? Fifty dollars worth?

CM: Well, that was back in the early '50s.

Ken: Uh-huh, um-hum

CM: The yard fours – it was forty cents apiece.

Ken: A four inch

CM: Four inch top.

Ken: Yeah, um-hum

CM: Forty cents.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And the, the bigger posts, six inch, was fifty cents.

Ken: Uh-huh. How 'bout the, uh, what's the smallest post that you could

CM: Yard stays?

Ken: Yeah

CM: Yard stays was four cents.

Ken: That's just the branches off the cedar?

CM: Well that's a little 'old pole about like that

Ken: Yeah

CM: And

Ken: So, when you cut a post, you're gona, are you gona start by trimming off the stays?

CM: Not really, but just the limbs.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Your stays were little 'old, saplings

Ken: Oh, I see. They're not the limbs off the big cedar.

CM: No. No.

Ken: I see.

CM: They're not big enough.

Ken: What, what do you do with those limbs?

CM: You just cut 'em off and leave 'em out there and they got somebody to come pile 'em up

Ken: I see

CM: burn 'em

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Ranchers do

Ken: So you'd trim that tree up as far as you could and then you cut it off at the base?

CM: We cut it off and lay it down then you'd get down where you could clean it up.

Ken: I see, uh-huh. You'd do the trimmin' after it was down.

CM: Yeah

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: You could ___ it better.

Ken: When do you, uh, was both sides, do you have a double bit axe?

CM: Yes

Ken: Was both sides of the axe equally sharp?

CM: Oh, yeah. I kept mine sharp all of the time.

Ken: How long did it take to, to sharpen it?

CM: About two minutes.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Had one of them big 'old files picked that thing up and that log, give it three or four ___

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: On both sides. But that thing was razor sharp.

Ken: Hum! Did you ever cut yourself?

CM: Yeah, many a time.

Ken: Where did you hit, where did you cut yourself?

CM: I cut my wrist up there one time, right in there where the scar, when I was sharpening my axe and the file slipped and ____ the axe.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: That's one touch and boy it will cut the hell out of ya.

Ken: Um!

CM: Yes.

Ken: I've heard of people cutting their foot too, in a

CM: Oh, yeah. Until it come out with these chainsaws.

Ken: Yeah. Did you cut much with the chainsaw later on?

CM: I never did run one.

Ken: What did you do when the, when the chainsaw came on. Were you still in the cedar business?

CM: Yeah, we'd still cut cedar with an axe.

Ken: When was the last year you cut with an axe? Or when'd you stop cutting, I guess, is the

CM: Back in '85.

Ken: You were still cuttin' it with an axe in 1985?

CM: '85

Ken: '85

CM: Uh-huh

Ken: You were still cutting with an axe in 1985.

CM: Yeah. You know where the Longhorn Cavern is, right there?

Ken: Yeah

CM: Back in there, a canyon back in there, about three miles back in there. That was the purdiest cedar you ever laid your eyes on. Some of 'em was tall enough to get two posts out of 'em.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And that, we just went down that creek and layed 'em down.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: It don't take long to get a load.

Ken: Uh-huh. With two, two posts per log

CM: Per limb.

Ken: Is that cedar still there, or is it all gone now?

CM: Now, most of it's still there and there ain't no demand for it now. 'Cause they come out with iron posts.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: And creosote posts.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: So the farmers all went to the iron post, which don't burn no more.

Ken: Um-hum, yeah. I'd love to see some of that virgin cedar. Is there any, is it, is it, uh, could you see it from the road? Or do you have to get off, get back in there, on private land?

CM: Well

Ken: I've never seen a cedar tree like that tall, you know?

CM: Huh?

Ken: I've never seen that virgin cedar, you know. I've heard about it

CM: Yeah. Well it grows just where the water flows during the rainy season

Ken: Yeah. So it's down in the draws.

CM: Yeah. And that's where it gets the prettiest.

Ken: How do you get it out of those draws?

CM: Carry it out on your back.

Ken: Oh my gosh! Now, would you, would you, one post at a time?

CM: One post at a time. And you'd wash your hands in coal oil to get the cedar wax off.

Ken: Oh, it must have been all over you!

CM: Oh, yeah.

Ken: What about your hair. Did it get in you hair?

CM: No, I always had a cap on.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: You'd have a pair of gloves and about two loadings, They'd be so sticky you couldn't hardly cut 'em.

Ken: (laugh)

CM: black. See this?

Ken: Yeah.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: It smells good though.

CM: Oh, yes.

Ken: Do you miss that cuttin' cedar?

CM: No. No _____. That was in my youth years, you know, when I was growing up.

Ken: Yeah

CM: And I got out of the cedar business and went to pickin' a little cotton. You ever picked any cotton?

Ken: No.

CM: That's a hard job too.

Ken: Is it harder than cuttin' cedar?

CM: Well it's done over all day.

Ken: Yeah

CM: (laugh)

Ken: Where were you picking cotton?

CM: Well, we'd pick cotton at Spicewood

Ken: Uh

CM: A feller had a big farm down there. Had about forty acres in cotton.

Ken: Huh

CM: And the cotton was forty cents a pound back in them days

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: A hundred pounds cotton bring you forty dollars. And you had to get at it to get that much.

Ken: How much would you get for pickin it?

CM: Forty cents a sack

Ken: Oh, uh-huh

CM: A big sack about ten foot long

Ken: Yeah

CM: full, and you'd pick it up and weight it. And then write it down and you'd get so much.

Ken: How much could you make in a day pickin' cotton?

CM: Well you wouldn't make about a hundred dollars.

Ken: A hundred dollars a day? One, one person?

CM: Uh, no, it was me and my brother

Ken: The two of ya?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Fifty dollars each?

CM: Um-hum

Ken: Now how does that compare with when you were cuttin' cedar. Were you making more money cutting cedar?

CM: Well, yeah. Hell, you can cut, make more money cuttin' that cedar than you did that cotton pickin.

Ken: Uh-huh. Why'd you switch to cotton?

CM: Well, the cedar was beginning to slack off, you know

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: 'Cause back in then, that's when the farmers, ranchers quit buying

CM002

CM: buying cedar posts, you know, that's what drove the cedar brake cutters away

Ken: I see

CM: 'Cause they come out with these iron posts and all that other stuff.

Ken: What year do you think those iron posts started taking over, t posts? About 1960, would that be, or '65? '70?

CM: 1960.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Huh. So, you, you and your, your, you were saying, yall went out in the brakes and your, was it your father, or your uncle?

CM: Yeah, my dad, my Willie, and my uncle

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: and my cousin. Four of us out there.

Ken: Uh-huh. Two of you would go in and take, take a load in?

CM: My dad and my uncle

Ken: 'Cause they're older? They couldn't cut as much as yall?

CM: They were older, you know.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: And this other one, we'd stay out there, one, two'd cut and the other one'd be start carrying out and put it where you could get to it.

Ken: Uh-huh. What were you carrying? What kind of truck were you using?

CM: And old International truck. Flatbed.

Ken: Uh-huh. How far would you have to, cuttin' down in those draws, how far would you have to carry?

CM: Purty near to that pickup back yonder

Ken: Uh-huh. You'd have to carry 'em that far?

CM: Carry up there to the edge of the road where they could get to 'em.

Ken: That's seventy five yards out there.

CM: Yeah, it is.

Ken: So how old was your dad and your uncle when they were doing that?

CM: My dad, he was about (long pause) I bet my dad was about fifty.

Ken: So you, how old were you at that time?

CM: About nine.

Ken: Nine years old?

CM: Um-hum

Ken: That's when you started cuttin' cedar – at nine? I hadn't heard that – you must have been a pretty large nine year old.

CM: Yeah, I was. I was husky. I could lay that cedar down, man.

Ken: I can't, that's hard to believe. I, I'm just thinking of my ten year old grandson who I was just with. And he's a little old kid like that, you know. I, I can't imagine him even swinging an axe, you know.

CM: (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) It's hard to believe.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Well I guess Marble Falls must have been one of the real centers of the cedar business.

CM: It was. It sure was.

Ken: So you had four or five yards here. And how many people are you thinking were cutting cedar in the heyday?

CM: Well, everybody that lived here.

Ken: Everybody that lived here cut cedar?

CM: Yep. The only way they had to make a living.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Cut cedar.

Ken: So they didn't do too much farming, huh?

CM: Well, they had a lot of farms but a lot of 'em didn't make any cotton, you know, when the dry spell

Ken: Yeah

CM: need water on it

Ken: Yeah

CM: It didn't make and

Ken: Yeah

CM: But dependable work was cedar brakes

Ken: Yeah. What's interesting – you're talking about your, your, I guess it's your father, was burning the charcoal

CM: yeah

Ken: 'Cause that's back before, that's back before you could really haul those posts all the way into town on a, on a buggy.

CM: Yeah. Well, see, back then there was demand for coal, you know.

Ken: Yeah

CM: They had a lot of them irons.

Ken: Yeah

CM: Put it into one side

Ken: Yeah

CM: and take the top off and you'd add a little bottom and you put it down on there and pull up on the latches on the top, open the window and _____

Ken: Yeah

CM: And light a match and that old iron would _____ and iron your cloths.

Ken: That was the best charcoal there was, the cedar, right?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: And then they turned to, to cuttin' the posts, the post demand got really big, I guess, because people started fencing off their properties.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: So that, the posts, and, uh, yeah. Yeah. You ever ship any posts out?

CM: No. When the cedar brakes around here, they had trailer trucks come in and hauled it to Oklahoma, Kansas, and all over the world. They had that old bare land and they need fence posts.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And they come in here and haul it out.

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. Huh. So, did you know a lot of the uh, I mean, I, you knew a lot of, not just your family, but a lot of the other cutters too, I imagine.

CM: Oh, yeah.

Ken: What did yall do for fun? Did yall have any parties and, uh, dances, and

CM: Yeah, down at the old home place we did. Dad built a new house and we made some peach brandy stuff and it was strong

Ken: (laugh)

CM: one sip'd knock you out!

Ken: (laugh)

CM: (laugh) Yeah we used to have an old square dance down at the home place.

Ken: Uh-huh. Well how 'bout here in Marble Falls. On a Saturday night. What would, if everybody here cut cedar all week, they must have been really ready for having a good time.

CM: Well, there wadn't ... the town was dry back in them days. A little place way out the called Round Mountain

Ken: Yep

CM: That's where the beer, that's where they had to go way out there to get beer because this was a dry county.

Ken: Uh-huh. So did a lot of people go out there?

CM: A lot of people'd go out there – get drunk, some of 'em had to stay out there.

Ken: Uh-huh (laugh)

CM: Because they couldn't drive

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah. How, how 'bout, uh, did they ever brew any moonshine here, in the

CM: No. They'd go up there and drink beer out there and bring it into town and a colored lady lived up on the hill, she'd buy a case of it and she'd sell it.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: A dollar a bottle.

Ken: A dollar a bottle!

CM: Yes

Ken: That's a lot of money back then.

CM: Oh, yeah, but she's bootleggin'.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: You'd take it on the tub and she'd go out there and sit down on it.

Ken: (laugh)

CM: Old lady, colored lady, she weighed five hundred pounds.

Ken: (laugh)

CM: You get up and move something you move that!

Ken: (laugh). A dollar a bottle!

CM: Yeah

Ken: And that's when you were making, you said, how much were you making a day, in the, cuttin' the cedar?

CM: I was making fifty dollars

Ken: Did you say fifty dollars?

CM: Yep. About fifty dollars.

Ken: Fifteen?

CM: Fifty dollars.

Ken: Fifty dollars.

CM: Yeah

Ken: That's a lot of money.

CM: Back in them days.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: That's when a loaf of bread was a nickel.

Ken: Yeah. 'Cause you're talking about the 1940s or '50s?

CM: Yeah, uh-huh

Ken: Well, that's more than, that's more than you could make if you had a job at a hardware store or something.

CM: Yeah. Yeah, they only paid probably fifty cents a day back then.

Ken: Yeah.

CM: ____

Ken: So the cedar cutters had more money than most people?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: What'd they, what would they, what would you spend it on?

CM: Well you'd go to the store and buy a what you needed

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: A little butter and brown beans and cabbage

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh

CM: Stuff like that.

Ken: When you went out to the brakes and cut all day, what'd you have for lunch?

CM: Well my aunt went with us and she'd have brown beans and fried potatoes, and corn on the cob, and

Ken: Sounds good!

CM: And we'd get up a lil ol campfire and that's what she'd be

Ken: She'd be the cook for yall, huh?

CM: Yeah, she'd cook.

Ken: That sounds like a deal.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Did yall have a garden? At that time?

CM: Yeah, everybody had a lil ole patch of something or the other

Ken: Well, these people that lived in tents down here, did they, did they have gar, did they own their land

CM: No, they just lived in tents

Ken: They just lived here, huh?

CM: Yeah

Ken: It's OK to have a garden and stuff and living here and nobody bothers you?

CM: Naw, there wadn't nobody bothering.

Ken: Was there, uh, did a lot of people go to the same church? Was church a big deal on Sunday?

CM: They had a camp meeting back in the old days

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: They'd have one place, everybody in the neighborhood round in there come to that back in the horse and buggy days.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: They called it a chapel

Ken: Yeah

CM: They'd build a thing about twenty feet long with posts and they'd put the posts on top and make the shade and they'd stand 'em on their back and they'd have wooden benches

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And the preacher set out there and preach to 'em

Ken: Yeah. How 'bout later on in the 1940s. Did the people living down here, did they go to church mostly?

CM: Yeah, a lot of 'em back then, when the horse and buggy

Ken: Uh-huh. But back in, more recent times, in the 1950s, I guess, what my question is, uh, were they church going people for the most part?

CM: Some of 'em did.

Ken: Some did and some didn't?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Uh-huh. How 'bout school? How much, how much schoolin', did you stop schoolin' when you were nine years old? And start cuttin' cedar?

CM: Yeah.

Ken: What grade did you get through?

CM: I got through the fourth grade.

Ken: Uh-huh. But you could, you're able to read and write, and stuff like that?

CM: Yeah, I, uh, I worked, after I got older, twenty three years old I started working for the city.

Ken: What did you for the city?

CM: Well, weed eating, out there in the graveyard, and out patching roads,

Ken: Uh-huh. What did you get paid then?

CM: Oh, about thirty five dollars a week.

Ken: Thirty five dollars a week.

CM: Yeah

Ken: And that's after you cut cedar

CM: Huh?

Ken: That's after you cut cedar.

CM: We'd gotten out of the cedar brakes altogehter

Ken: That's what I meant. You had gotten out of the cedar brakes

CM: Yeah.

Ken: If you could make so much money cuttin' cedar why would you want to go work for the city? Is it just too hard to cut cedar?

CM: Well, back them days the cedar brakes was beginning to die out.

Ken: Oh, it was.

CM: That's when iron posts come out.

Ken: Oh, OK. You're talking about 1960s or so.

CM: yeah

Ken: You said you were twenty three. So that, you were born in 1933? Yeah, that'd be, 43, 53 – '56.
1956

CM: Yeah

Ken: 1956 would be when you started that. Yeah. So that was already playing out in the mid 1950s – the cedar brakes were.

CM: Yeah

Ken: OK. And the iron posts were coming in.

CM: Iron posts

Ken: Yeah

CM: Creosote posts

Ken: Yeah

CM: Boy them creosote posts were something. They would weigh like a piece of steel, with the creosote stuff in 'em

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: You handled 'em all day and then oil would be soaked in your hands, and be burning.

Ken: They'd be burning, the oil, huh

CM: Yeah. Like them old railroad ties

Ken: Yeah

CM: Ooh!

Ken: Yeah

CM: You'd be smellin' them for days (laugh)

Ken: Oh, I know. Yeah. Huh. How many, I wonder how many people lived in Marble Falls back then. It was pretty small, wasn't it?

CM: Yes, it was. When I moved here 1948, that's a good while

Ken: Um-hum

CM: That's a two lane road

Ken: Um-hum

CM: Up and down highway 281.

Ken: Um-hum

CM: Just a two lane road.

Ken: The lake was here then.

CM: Oh, yeah

Ken: In '48

CM: Yeah, the lake's been there a long time.

Ken: Yeah

CM: We lived down there at the old home place and my dad and my uncle would come up here, we're down in about where the ...

Ken: I'm gona get out of the sun.

CM: Or you can go over in that nice shade place over there.

Ken: There you go. That's better.

CM: My dad and uncle would come up here and they had a ferry boat down here in the lake. You'd go across on it, in those days. Back then, I'd lay down, two cars, or two horses and wagon, and they'd go across on the other side and they'd go down for a dollar a load.

Ken: I see, when did they build the bridge?

CM: 1935.

Ken: OK

CM: That's when they built Buchanan Dam.

Ken: Uh-huh. And the, and the bridge across the lake here was 1935 too?

CM: Yes sir.

Ken: OK

CM: That's the reason they're putting up a new one down there

Ken: Oh, OK. Yeah.

CM: And they'd get in that old blue rock. It's the hardest thing there is.

Ken: Hum.

CM: Next thing to granite. And that's the reason it'd taken them so long because when they went down in there, they like'd to never got it deep enough. The more they went the deeper the rock got.

Ken: Hum

CM: And the old bridge down there was, got down about, uh, got about three foot and they poured the concrete. Because there wasn't no need 'cause ___ that blue rock.

Ken: Um-hum

CM: Back in them days they didn't have jackhammers.

Ken: Um-hum. Um!

CM: But it stayed there a long time.

Ken: Yeah

CM003

CM: It come a rain back in the early '50s and the water in this lake, I mean all these creeks and stuff was way out there. And the water in that lake was right onto the floor of that river bridge.

Ken: That's something.

CM: It was a lot of water.

Ken: Yeah. Yep. Do you remember the drought of the 1950s?

CM: Oh, yeah. That's when we moved down there and lived by the depot.

Ken: Um-hum

CM: Back when Eisenhower was President, I lived in a boxcar down there, shoveling corn with a number two scoop.

Ken: Shoveling coal?

CM: Corn.

Ken: Oh, into the boxcars?

CM: Well I was shoveling it, they had these grinder deals

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Went that end into a truck and you'd keep that grinder going and it wouldn't be long and you'd have a truck load and they took it out and go on

Ken: OK

CM: And another truck'd come up there and you'd do the same thing.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: For three dollars an hour.

Ken: Three dollars an hour.

CM: Yeah

Ken: That's pretty good pay back in the fifties.

CM: Yeah.

Ken: Is that right, in the '50s?

CM: Yeah

Ken: That's, that's pretty good money.

CM: Yeah. But a lot of sweating in that

Ken: Oh, yeah, yeah, you bet

CM: (laugh)

Ken: Yeah, that's uh, 'cause I remember, in, in the 1960s, I would, all I could make, you know, working in the restaurants and stuff like that, you know, cook, or dishwasher, or whatever, I worked in the service station. A dollar twenty five. That's all I ever made, is a dollar twenty five.

CM: Um-hum. Yeah.

Ken: I went up to Washington State working the fields one summer 'cause I could make three dollars an hour.

CM: Um-hum, um-hum. That's pretty good.

Ken: Yeah, that was good salary back then.

CM: That's my son.

Ken: That's your son?

CM: Um-hum.

Ken: What does he do?

CM: Well, he's in the spraying business and he's got a lawn service, and he does a little bit of everything.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: That's the reason all of them lawn mowers are right there.

Ken: Oh, OK. He repairs them?

CM: No, they just, he uses different mowers at different times

Ken: Yeah. This is mighty nice down here.

CM: Yeah, I love it down here.

Ken: You'd really, you know, you would think you were in the country. You know, you feel like you're in the middle

CM: Back then when I lived here it was in the country.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: That big old Mesquite tree out there, a monster

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: I had it cut down because it was dragging, I had it in my house

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: And all that through there ___ the mesquite trees and stuff ___ 'em down

Ken: Yes. It's just, it's just as pleasant out here and being inside air conditioning.

CM: Yep. When we bought this down here there was eighteen lots across the road over there, them six lots. Six lots through here and back in there. We owned all of it. My dad some them down there and then when my dad died my mother didn't want to take care of the lots, so she just sold 'em.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: That chopper flying over (other noise)

Pause in taping... talking to son

Ken: So, uh, he's talking about those mountain people, you know, in West Virginia, and stuff like that. Now, I don't know about, is your, uh, a lot of the folks that came to this part of Texas came from that area.

CM: Yeah

Ken: They were Scotch Irish. And, uh, and they had a kind of a reputation as being pretty rough, pretty rough people too.

CM: Well, the Indian

Ken: Indian?

CM: Blackfoot.

Ken: Who?

CM: The Blackfoot Indian.

Ken: You are?

CM: My daddy was.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: My daddy's mama, she was a hundred and fourteen years old when I was six years old. And I was scared by her because her hair hung down to the ground. And when she died she was a hundred and fourteen years old.

Ken: That's amazing. She was an Indian?

CM: She was an Indian.

Ken: That's amazing. How did he meet her?

CM: Oh, that was my daddy's daddy who died.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Back in the M___ family. ___

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: She scared me every time I seen her with that long black hair. She had a big tumor on the side of her neck, like that. When she died she was buried at the home place.

Ken: Wow. Um, well, I mean, some of the stories that I've heard about the Austin groups of cedar choppers are very similar to what your son was just talking about.

CM: Uh-huh

Ken: You know, you just did not go back in the hills west of Austin without an invitation.

CM: Oh, yeah.

Ken: Now, it was because there were some pretty rough characters back there.

CM: Oh, Yeah. Back in them days the Indians camped out in there.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: They'd scalp ya.

Ken: Well, I'm now, I'm moving back into the, you now, the times when you were working in the cedar brakes and stuff. Were some of those characters pretty rough too?

CM: Some of these cedar cutters were.

Ken: Yeah, 'cause I've heard they were pretty rough.

CM: Yeah. Some of them women were just as tough as a damn man.

Ken: Uh-huh. Were there lots of fights?

CM: Well, you'd be on the ground before you could get up You would say one word to 'em and boy if they didn't like it they'd put you down.

Ken: So, uh, they, they got insulted pretty easily?

CM: Oh, yeah. You had to talk nice to 'em.

Ken: What kind of thing would make them mad? What would you, what would you say?

CM: That I was gona spend the night with them, or something like that.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: they'd think you gonna get to em

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: They didn't want that.

Ken: What about the men, what about the men on the, I heard there would be lots of fights and stuff like that on a Saturday night.

CM: Oh, yeah

Ken: from drinking too much.

CM: Drinking too much and flirting with his wife.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Would lead to a ____ fight.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Just bat an eye at one of 'em, you'd be on the ground.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: You don't do that.

Ken: (laugh) Do they carry knives and stuff like that, some of 'em?

CM: Knives bout like that.

Ken: Eight inches long? Pretty long!

CM: Yeah! It don't take much to kill you if he stab you.

Ken: Yeah. I heard of

CM: They've got that going on in Austin right now.

Ken: Yeah. You ever heard of anybody ever using the cedar axe as a weapon?

CM: Oh, yeah. A hatchet too

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: Take that hatchet and cut you on the arm and knock you in the head. Take your money and go on.

Ken: So, did people carry a hatchet, in addition to a cedar axe, did you use a hatchet for the little stuff?

CM: No. They always used an axe.

Ken: OK. Yeah

CM: ____ carried a hatchet.

Ken: Yeah. So how many years did you, did you work in the brakes?

CM: About three years.

Ken: Oh, OK. You said you were nine when you started.

CM: Yeah

Ken: So, did you quit when you were twelve?

CM: Cuttin cedar?

Ken: Yeah

CM: Oh, I was about fourteen or fifteen.

Ken: Oh, OK. And you have a brother named Willie?

CM: Yeah, Willie. He lives on Avenue T, but he's in bad health.

Ken: Uh-huh

CM: He used to do the lawnmower work, cleaned em up. He'd work on motors and

Ken: Yeah

CM: One time it weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. He got up to four hundred and then he went down to nothing. He's just skin and bones now

Ken: Oh, that's too bad.

CM: No, I hate to go see him because he – make you cry because he's just about ready to go

Ken: Uh-huh. Yeah

CM: He wore a size fifty overalls. A fifty pair of britches. That's pretty damn big.

Ken: Wow, yeah. Well, Charlie, I'm gona go ahead and call it a day, unless you've got some stories to tell me.

CM: Oh, that's all I know.

Ken: (laugh)