

Lee McKinnerney 1

Ken: So, I always like to start by saying who, what day it is, what is it? The twenty-third of May? 2013.

Lee: Today is the twenty second of May, 2013. Your memory is not too good (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) You're right! I told you that. I'm sitting here with Lee McKinnerney, uh, in his home, in Georgetown, Texas. And we're gona talk about his growing up and his father, and, uh, anything else he remembers about those, and he's got a good memory.

Lee: I don't know if that is fortunate or unfortunate. (laugh) I, I can remember just little things that I'll just get you started on. Uh, the first thing that my father gave me, that I remember, as a gift, when, uh, when, uh, I went out and was going to the cedar brake when I was three years old was a single bladed axe. The reason they gave me a single bladed axe was so I wouldn't cut with it and bounce off the side of my head, 'cause cedar is very, has a lot of knots in it

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: The smaller ones will tend to bounce, you know.

Ken: Right

Lee: You know. You dig around in it and it won't bounce at you so much. But, when I was little I might get hit in the head. I was cutting staves when I was four years old

Ken: Four years old!

Lee: Uh-huh, yeah.

Ken: You know, a parent today wouldn't even give a child

Lee: An axe

Ken: much less a knife, or any, anything sharp.

Lee: Yeah, and he taught me how to sharpen it, keep it sharp. Not hit in the dirt, you know, and how to sharpen it when it did get dull. And, uh, then he would cut as many as three hundred posts a day, four inches or better, on a daily basis. And all the other, all the guys around him would cut maybe two, two-fifty

Ken: That's a lot!

Lee: And, uh, but, when he got his, the saw, he went up to five hundred a day. He could do more than that with a saw, all fifty-sixty pounds

Ken: OK

Lee: And he, he carried that sucker around, I'll tell you that. If anything killed your back the worst, that did. Because he bought it, in his younger years, had, uh, had his spine busted. So, uh, his brother was shorter, my Uncle Jim. He was, uh, about, oh Daddy was about six foot one. He was probably about only five three, or five four. And so when they would take them posts off, they always hauled their own posts, and so did my Uncle, that 's all he did was haul, he didn't really ever cut it. Uh, well he did when he was younger but as he got older he was independent trucking. But, my Uncle would cut his quicker than my dad because of his longer swing, and his would hit faster and his would be on top of my Dad's back before he could finish his swing. It happened to him several times.

Ken: Huh!

Lee: It just happens, you know. You don't do it on purpose.

Ken: So they're both cutting the same tree?

Lee: No. They're cutting, the put the staves to hold the posts on.

Ken: Got you, yes

Lee: And you'd cut the staves, not all of 'em come off at one time.

Ken: I see

Lee: You get the hell out of the way. If you cut

Ken: I've got you

Lee: You can't pull 'em out. It's too much weight

Ken: Right. So you actually cut 'em with an axe?

Lee: Yes

Ken: I did not know that.

Lee: And, uh, that was just the quick way to get ... Rather than take it all down. They have to throw em one at a time.

Ken: Right

Lee: You know, might be two, or three thousand posts on

Ken: Right. What kind of truck did they have?

Lee: Well, there was, my Uncle had diesels always. Pretty much always. My dad, he wouldn't have no "nasty smelling old diesel!" He always had a gasoline rig, uh, that, you know, he would have, a two-speed ___ on the transmission to give the power, you know, and he'd usually have a four or five speed transmission because it wasn't, this wasn't a fifteen speed transmission years

Ken: Right

Lee: They were lucky to have a four or five speed

Ken: Right. An old flatbed truck?

Lee: Actually we had one of those for the brakes. We had a six-by, and old Army six-by. I don't know if you know what that is.

Ken: Not really

Lee: Well, all six wheels, there's one on the front, and two on either side of the back, and all six wheels pull

Ken: OK

Lee: And so you'd go over it, with that big 'ole thing. You don't turn it over, and so that was what we used in the bottom of the hollow, it had a big old flat bed on it, and that's what you brought in the posts every day from the brake to the yard. The yard, we had a place where you stack all the posts. Now Camp Wood is one great big yard back in the day.

Ken: Right

Lee: That's where all the yards were. Where other guys put their posts. But it was kind-of at the bottom of the mountain, you know

Ken: Yes

Lee: Not all the way like Uvalde, but

Ken: right, and yall would cut up in that area?

Lee: Well, Daddy cut from Camp Wood all the way up to Rock Springs

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Across the divide and all the way down, uh, probably over past Kerrville, uh, over close to New Braunfels and then back this direction, back down to the divide all the way to Uvalde again. Anywhere where there was cedar to be had, and that people would need to it cut off, he would go in and cut it off, you know, they didn't charge anything, he just cut the posts.

Ken: Yes

Lee: You know

Ken: They wouldn't pay him anything either, huh?

Lee: No, they, they didn't, no, they didn't pay him. His pay was ____

Ken: the posts

Lee: yes

Ken: right

Lee: which made everybody very happy because he got down to the point where all they had to do was come through with a dozer and take the roots out.

Ken: Yes

Lee: And they couldn't do that the trees up there where they could, but they do it today, but they didn't back then. Didn't have big enough dozers.

Ken: Is that right?

Lee: Or ones that had cabs, that were covered, so you didn't get beat to hell

Ken: exactly, that makes sense. There would be a lot of burning to do if you had to burn all of that cedar.

Lee: Today they don't burn it. Today they shred it.

Ken: Oh, that's right

Lee: They use it as mulch.

Ken: Right

Lee: Especially, I can take you to a place outside of town where they did just that. All the cedar they, they cut down what they could and pushed down, and cut down with saws, and then they came in with a shredder and shredded it, just like they literally shredded it.

Ken: I'd like to see one of those shredders. They are bigger than your average

Lee: Well, yeah. And they take anything, I mean, any size, you know, big 'ole shredder and they just, just the whole place is covered with cedar, uh

Ken: Right

Lee: And it will be, probably it will, that way it kilt anything, Won't be no weeds, you know, nothing, because nothing will grow through cedar.

Ken: Unt-uh

Lee: I mean, the only thing that will grow, is like there, that big, my Daddy would kill for that tree right there, uh, cedar tree. I don't think you've ever probably seen one that big, straight up

Ken: Oh, yeah, I've seen 'em that big. Oh, yeah. Look at that post! That is a, what, twenty-foot?

Lee: Oh, easy

Ken: Twelve-inch

Lee: Twenty-five foot. It's probably about, well they would call that about a twenty

Ken: Uh-huh. That'd be worth some money today.

Lee: It was worth money back then. 'Cause that would have been a telephone pole.

Ken: Uh-huh, yeah

Lee: and one would have lived on a ranch forever.

Ken: Yeah

Lee: I mean, you put that baby in the ground and you forget about it. You're looking at a fifty to a hundred year life.

Ken: Right. So, who'd your Dad cut with?

Lee: Actually he didn't cut with anybody. He had a gang, mostly of, at first, in the early fifties, it was Braceros, which were uh, visaed Mexican workers

Ken: Yes

Lee: OK. And then they decided, in the mid fifties, they decided, "oh, no, we can't have that." Too many of 'em are staying, you know. And so they just stopped the program in on all that

Ken: Right. Even _____. But he cut himself, as well.

Lee: Oh, absolutely. He cut, he never slowed down. It's just they cut too

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Of course he outdid them two to one, on the average day. But, he still had 'em out there, they were out there working and they were the ones, they were his mules. They were the ones who carried 'em out, and put em on the truck, you know, and all that kind of stuff. And, uh, he also always had a little bobtail, you know, that, uh, usually was on the back of a Chevrolet or a GMC truck that he got from the railroad because they, you know, he bought the ones that they'd, you know, retired. And he got it at the auction and he got it pretty cheap. You know, back in them days you might pay a hundred dollars for one.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: You know, but then he would change, take the bed off, put a flat bed on it, beef up the springs

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: I know cause I got to do a lot of this, OK?

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And, uh, and then he had a truck that could haul cedar. You know, and, uh, you know, not real fast but then he wasn't in a big hurry.

Ken: How many, how many Mexicans did he have working for him?

Lee: Generally he kept a gang of four to six. Not any more than that. He, he, not that he could, now, this was back again, we're going back before I was born, in WWII, He actually ran a gang of men removing the ties from the railroads for the, it was a government contract. And he could get sugar, and he could get gas, and he could get, uh, what else did they have

Ken: Tires

Lee: Tires. He could get all of 'em because he was a government contractor. And all his stamps

Ken: Was he taking up that railroad that went through Camp Wood?

Lee: He did.

Ken: What did they do with those ties? Those were cedar, I believe.

Lee: Well, yeah, they probably were and I don't know exactly what he did with them. I'm sure we had a lot of 'em around the place, you know, around our barns and around you know because he bought, the place we lived in Uvalde was from my grandmother, my mother's mother and dad, is who he bought that place from.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And it was twenty-eight acres and then we had about another twenty-five acres of bottom land that was not habitable but it was next to the railroad. We had a ninety-nine year lease

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: We had about fifty-five acres that we ran on as kids. And, part of it was hills. I mean, like a rocky tar, you know, and we couldn't grow anything up there but cactus and rattlesnakes if you wanted to. (laugh) We had a few, not too many cedars would grow up their either, but they did have a few.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Uh, and, uh, but then, we had, uh, had it fenced off, we had it cross fenced, so we'd have that area for the horses, uh, and then we'd have another area for, uh, we had, really the bigger area for the horses, because they had to have a lot of room, yeah, but then we had areas for, our cattle, sometimes they'd be in there together, but usually not, they'd be in separate pens, they'd drop to the one here to feed it for a while, then they'd move to another and then we grew feed in another, and we had one that

was down right on the, on a slough That's where I learned swim – Cooks Slough . It was just a small little irrigation ditch, these sloughs. It was there, and that's where I learned to swim, dog paddling right there in the Cooks Slough Along with the water moccasins,

Ken: Sure, yeah

Lee: They didn't bother us, we didn't bother them. All you did was step on one and yank your tail and he's alright. He wouldn't bite you . Now if you were to happen to get in there and they had been somebody ____ you would die because they bit anything that hits the water, but we never got, we never went in that time of year. It was always when it got hotter.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: You know, and they they were really irrigating but that's when we could go in because there would be a lot of water. The rest of the year it wasn't unless it rained

Ken: So, tell me about the times, the early days, back far as you can remember.

Lee: Well, I could tell you one of the first things that I can recall is, uh, when I was probably, uh, uh, man, I go all the way back, it's real hard to say the first, because I remember getting a Lionel train, I remember getting, when I was four years old, my little brother was, you know, little over two and I remember, uh, them packing us all up and about when I was five and put us in the back of their semi, my Dad's trailer, they had an area that was cordoned off, we had all the furniture it in was moved to Arizona because of my health. Because the doctors couldn't figure out, I had something wrong, they couldn't figure out what it was. I kept, you know, running a fever, kept having, you know, problems, and they just took a blood test after blood test and just couldn't figure it out. Went up there and thought it might help. It did help. So we stayed there about six months in Showlow Arizona when he cut cedar up above there. And, uh, and then we moved back to our home there in Uvalde, uh, because it didn't help any. And I know, now looking back, I always had to clear my throat all the time, all the – I know what it was, even though the doctor back then couldn't identify it. It was a small tinge of Rheumatic Fever is what I had. I still also have a heart arythmia and have all my life, and that would also be typical of having had that particular disease. It's not anything that's necessarily fatal, I guess it could be if you get too excited, (laugh) Or eat the wrong food, you know, those are two ways you could make it go crazy, and so, but anyway, I remember that and I can remember him walking up the hill , in Showlow that was going straight up, I mean, you know, we lived in a place that was right next to the, the sheriff's house, and he had a bunch of horses. And they would bring every day their leftovers from the day before, they picked up all the, uh, twinkies, and, you know, cupcakes, to give to the horses. Shoot – we'd take them things and eat them. They just as good as --- shoot, they were only a day old! (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: They'd only leave em back then a day, and the rest of 'em they threw away. Take em off the shelves. And shoot, we loved em you know. And the thing about it is that I always noticed that the creek

behind us was always foamy. Guess why? That's were everything, all the urine and everything went from, they just drained it in the river.

Ken: So, tell me about your memories about the cedar.

Lee: Well, the cedar, Even there, when we was there in Arizona, for instance, we were up and were cutting the cedar up in amongst the pines because the cedar was there too. And we would haul it out and unfortunately, on the way back, when we left there, my dad was bringing a load of cedar back with him, on the way back from Arizona ___ his younger brother was driving the truck, and my mother's younger brother was following in another one. And, well, my, his younger brother went off the road, and the damned thing was upside down on him, and pouring gas all over him, and then, um, my mother's brother was trying to get back there too, ___ other cars, because it was real slick, from running into him, and they hit him and killed him too. They both died, right there.

Ken: Hum

Lee: Yep. And, that was in nineteen fifty one.

Ken: That's terrible. You were just like four years old

Lee: Three

Ken: three years old

Lee: Yeah. So, I remember that.

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Lee: I guess I might have been 3 or 4. It might have been '51 or '52. I know then my grandmother got \$5,000 from my, both grandmothers got \$5000 because they were both in the, uh, Army. They were both on leave from Korea

Ken: Huh

Lee: This was during their leave

Ken: That's a shame.

Lee: And both got killed. And, so, my grandmother built a house that my sister -- my grandmother lived there, then my mother lived there, then, now, my older sister lives in in La Pryor Texas.

Ken: Oh

Lee: Its just one of those things. (phone rings) – can you stop it?

Ken: sure

Lee: We, I can't remember after that. My dad would take me to the cedar brake with him. And, of course, I cut with him all the time. He always had us along – us kids, my sister and myself as burros you know, take them posts down there and get 'em to the truck, you know. Didn't have to load 'em on, had get down there to the truck would come through there and we'd put 'em on the truck

Ken: So, your truck was down below and the cutting up on the hill?

Lee: You'd cut up on the side of the hill and that way you have a way to get it down to the truck

Ken: Right

Lee: It's easier. They'll slide.

Ken: Right

Lee: You pitch, end over end and they'll go down like this

Ken: Right

Lee: You know, so, it's much easier – in fact, in the Hill Country in Texas there's not a whole lot of flat land.

Ken: No

Lee: Now, when we got over and moved on around and went around to it, around to, uh, oh, Green ___ or, there's one right on top of the mesa, that was a mesa, very flat, you know

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: You know, those, you got ta, you just literally have to drag it or carry it, or whatever you can do. And I can remember having so much, uh, wax on my hands, it would not come off. And that's what people, you know, you smell like a cedar chopper.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: And, you know, I can smell a cedar chopper a thousand miles a way, now, 'cause I, from, that's the problem with his hands Can't get it off. It doesn't wash off. It has to wear off, as the skin replaces itself it will go away.

Ken: Did they use coal oil and stuff like that sometimes?

Lee: Oh, they used everything they could, you know, your gasoline to wash their hands

Ken: Yeah

Lee: It don't make any differnece. It's still here. You could wash maybe a little bit off the top, get the sticky maybe off of it, but you still smell there – cause it goes under your skin and just, it kind-of puts those brown, you know, I, you know

Ken: What proportion of the folks that were living in that area were, were cedar choppers?

Lee: Very few.

Ken: Very few?

Lee: My dad was probably the only one in Uvalde that was actually, uh, that I know of in Uvalde, of course, my, uh, after a few years my, uh, Uncle Jim and his family moved from Camp Wood

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Well, he had a yard in Camp Wood, his house there. And that's where my Dad would always bring his cedar

Ken: I see

Lee: And when he moved from there to Uvalde, he no longer had yard. And so then he had to start doing, make other arrangements for yards, and, he, when we cut out in Bracketville we worked for an old boy that was from Uvalde that, uh, O.C. Henderson, that, uh, where O.C. charged him, though. He charged him a penny or two, depending on the size of the post, per post, you know, to cut off the land, you know. He wasn't like everybody else. O.C was very rich, very influential

Ken: I've heard of the name

Lee: Sure, if you look in the annals you'll see O.C. Henderson

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Uvalde, you know, ___ there. Anyway, and, so, he got, my Dad got crosswise with him, ended up going to the pen for five years

Ken: When was that?

Lee: Good Lord, uh, let's see, he got out when I was a junior in high school. So, that would have been in '63, so he was there from like '58 to '63.

Ken: What cause, for what cause?

Lee: Uh, for grand theft. In Uvalde County, uh, they blow everything up out of proportion, and then, he, he tried to make amends with the old man, he bought, what he would do, he would buy cattle at auction, write the check, ___ the check, basically, didn't have the money, but then go to another auction the next day and sell 'em and then cover it. Because it should have taken a week, back in those days, even two or three days later, 'cause it was auctions from different places, different times. Well, he had one of those that didn't go right. So he got, ___ the check too, you know, even back then, even though it wasn't a check, you'd just a draft

Ken: Yeah

Lee: But still, I mean, in Uvalde County that was a no-no.

Ken: That was it? That was the cause? A bad check

Lee: A bad check and, and, O.C., uh, accused him of stealing from him. Uh, on those posts. He couldn't have proved it though, no damn way. But the point of the matter was, the old man said he wasn't paying him like he should be and so, between the two, oh, then what happened, was the old man went a flight, leaving Uvalde County with bunch of _____, they gonna do all they could do to hang him. And in his mind. You have to understand the way he thought. He had a third grade education, you know

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Not a dummy, but, still, you know, third grade education. And so he went on the lamb he took us through, it would have been Nebraska, Arkansas, and, uh, and then the last one was in Montana, that, uh, he went up there, but they finally captured him because he broke his arm and he was going for medical treatment the second round, and somebody recognized him and they arrested him and he was on America's Ten Most Wanted FBI, ten most wanted, just because

Ken: Yeah

Lee: That's how strong Uvalde County is, getting stuff put, back in that day. He was on the Post Office, you know, you know how they used to post 'em in the Post Office?

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Yeah, he made the

Ken: That's something

Lee: Yeah, and, yeah

Ken: So, they arrested him up there, you had, yall had to come back down

Lee: Mom and I and my little brother was only three of us went up there and we got to load up every, _____, back of a pick-up truck and stuff the rest of it in the car, and put the car behind the tow, and tow that sucker from Montana to Uvalde, TX.

Ken: You think, uh, maybe the reason they treated him so bad was because he was a cedar chopper? Was there a bunch of, was there prejudice?

Lee: They were afraid of him.

Ken: Tell me about that

Lee: OK. I will. He, my father was bi-polar.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And, he was the nicest guy in the world, as long as he was not drinking

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Uh, but if he got to drinking a beer, and you pissed him off, you gona get hurt. I mean, he would knock you down. When you got up, he'd knock you down again. And he'd s spent many a weekend in jail. You know, from, getting in a fight in the bar. Somebody says something they should not have said. Called him an S.O.B., just anything.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: It was the wrong thing to do when you're drunk – with you're drinking. Because, I mean, he couldn't, and I, and nobody, they were afraid of him because he'd hurt 'em. And he didn't care how many there were.

Ken: He's pretty big, right? He's

Lee: Six foot one.

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Weighed Two-twenty

Ken: And probably was very strong from cutting cedar

Lee: Oh! shit! There wasn't nobody close. My younger brother cut with him about two, three years after I went on to the navy and, shit, all he did all the time, what they did for recreation was fight!

Ken: That is --- yes! I've heard that, in Junction, as well.

Lee: This is Uvalde, and he did it even at UT. And he, go to the games, out, you know, between A&M, and then get A&M be fighting in the dad-gum places at A&M because somebody said something about UT.

Ken: That was your younger brother

Lee: Yeah

Ken: So, he inherited, you think this is genetic, or do you think it's just

Lee: Oh, we,---- yes, it's genetic! Oh, absolutely (emphasis) genetic! I mean, I'm bi-polar. My brother's bi-polar. I think all my sisters are. They won't admit it. You know, but they are. Uh, you don't want to back us in a corner. Make us mad. You gona get hurt. We'll comeout. And, it doesn't even ____.

Ken: Do you think any of that is the Scots Irish roots?

Lee: I have, I dare say she does. It's that, plus Indian

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Go on he warpath, you know, kind of people. I think they were bi-polar. And I do believe that, I've heard that we have a lot of Cherokee Indian floating in our blood, from both sides of the family, my grandmother ____, her, her, there was, uh, her grandmother was an Edwards, you know, but she married somebody that was part Indian. And, my, my, uh, 'cause my grandmother had the darkest, most beautiful black hair down to the middle of her back, and her, she always had that, that nice, you know, patina, finish on her skin, always.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: You know, and, uh, and every night, a hundred strokes on this side, and then flip it over the other side, and a hundred strokes on that side. Every night. And, in the day, in a bun. Every day. That's the way it is.

Ken: So, that was your, that was your Daddy's mom?

Lee: No, my mothers's mother. My Daddy's mother was, Ma, we called her, uh, and, uh, she was a Mooney, and her Daddy was a little, he lived to be 99, little short, rotund, fellow, that either smoked or chewed a cigar every day of his adult life 'till he died. She wouldn't let him smoke 'em after he got about 95, and all he'd do is chew on 'em. You know, chew, spit it out, chew, spit it out, you know. Uh, and uh, yeah, he was 99, uh, and she was 93 ½, when she died, his daughter, and she had other sisters, but I think they didn't live quite as long. They, they were in their 80's

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: She had two other sisters. Uh, but they were half Cherokee. He had picked him up a squaw.

Ken: The Mooney was half Cherokee?

Lee: Right, because he was one of those that came over. He was original, he was actually working on the railroad, so to speak. He came over for that purpose, whereas my daddy's daddy did not. He came over, at, uh, probably as a farmer

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: He went up in Indiana, you know, ____ Uh, ____, and, uh, the boys were all farmers, you know, that moved down to San Saba County, TX. If you go there there's all kinds of McKinnerney's over there. Not too many of 'em were cedar choppers.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: They were all farmers.

Ken: Basically what period would, did they move there?

Lee: I would say probably, uh, in the twenties.

Ken: OK

Lee: You know, I, we've seen several different renditions and I don't know if any of 'em are totally correct, uh, about, my dad's dad was Henry McKinnerney, and his dad, father's name was, um, John , and he has a son name John, and a son named Toad, uh, he has a son named ____, they called him "Toad". He had a nice spread on the Colorado River over here in San Saba, well, actually, Richland Springs, 'cause it doesn't run through San Saba (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) I know that area.

Lee: Yeah, uh, and they intermarried into all, I mean, you go over there you see McKinnerey, McKinnerney Real Estate, McKinnerney this McKinnerney that, you know. They're cousins, but they're only half-cousins.

Ken: How did your dad get into cutting cedar?

Lee: Well what happened was whenever his dad deserted his mother and himself and the rest of the kids, uh, he was supporting the family at age ten, picking cotton, and, uh, she remarried Jake Mooney. No kin to her daddy. But Jake Mooney, and he was a cedar chopper. And that's what got my father into being a cedar chopper. And I'm sure his younger brother, Jim, also was a cedar chopper

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: And I'm sure his, his younger brother, Roland, was also. No, that was my cousin, uh, it's been so long, he died when I was just itty bitty. You know, uh, he was a twin but his sister died at birth. So there was only five of 'em that survived. And he has two more sisters, one of which I know is passed away. She lived with, outside San Antone, the other one is still alive and still in Washington State.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: But, we, we, that's how he got into it. And that's how he learned the trade and once you learned a trade back in those days, well, you know, and there were always a bunch of em that worked, they always worked in gangs and crews, and so forth, kind-of, back in those days, you know

Ken: That would have been in the, uh, '40s?

Lee: Oh, in late thirties.

Ken: Yeah. Thirties, that's when the demand for the posts took off

Lee: Absolutely. Absolutely, Right after the Great Depression

Ken: The government had a program. Did your dad ever talk about cuttin' with, cuttin' cedar vs. picking cotton?

Lee: He just said he did it for one day, he hated it, as long as he had to, he didn't pick no more cotton.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Oh, he'd much rather cut the cedar, it's shady. Shady out there where you cut that cedar. It ain't shady in that damn cotton field!

Ken: Yeah

Lee: All it is is hot, and hotter, and more hot, and that shit's getting in your collar, and getting all over you. I don't know if you've ever picked cotton, but it's not

Ken: I have not

Lee: You won't want too, OK. Just take my word on that.

Ken: Yeah, I believe it.

Lee: Nowadays they have cotton pickers. You don't have to. (laugh)

Ken: Right, right

Lee: Or cotton ____

Ken: He started cutting cedar, probably

Lee: Probably, I would say, probably he was a little older, he was probably, uh, eleven or twelve, because, you know, it took her a while to transition, uh, you know, to find, you know Jake as a suitor, and, uh, then he gets moving on, I'm sure they probably moved to the cedar brake, I don't know all the particulars because Daddy didn't talk about it too much. But, uh, they moved to the cedar

Ken: They would move their home into that area?

Lee: Oh, they moved out, no, my daddy, when he was cutting cedar, lived in a tent. I lived there many, many a summer.

Ken: OK

Lee: In a tent. A log down between two trees, a tarp over it, flap___ come in, make the doors. And be sure to check out the shoes when you get out there in the morning because there's gona be a scorpion in it.

Ken: You had, did you put a floor, wood floor, down?

Lee: Nooooo

Ken: So yall did that so you didn't have to go all the way back home.

Lee: Yeah

Ken: You'd be right there, at the place of work

Lee: Yeah, I mean, he'd work out there all week long, maybe go home on the weekend, you know. For a bath and a shave and then back out there again.

Ken: Man! You did that until – how old were you?

Lee: Well, ____

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Lee: I wasn't that terribly old, fortunately, Well unfortunately, he, I was only like ten when he went off on the lamb, OK

Ken: Um-hum, um-hum

Lee: And so we followed him for about a year, you know, to different places, we'd go then come back, go and come back, and then finally went to Montana and was gona live there, beautiful place, we were, well, Silver City, Montana, back where their only currency was silver dollars.

Ken: Um!

Lee: My mother saved a bunch of 'em, and got 'em all stolen in San Antonio. she must have had a fortune in those!

Ken: Um

Lee: We're talking about those all seventeen and eighteen hundreds. Goll, somebody just ----swish, they knew exactly what they were after and they didn't get anything else, and it weighed about seventy-five to a hundred pounds.

Ken: Oh! Dear! That was unfortunate.

Lee: All pure silver. Pretty much not pure you know

Ken: Right

Lee: But there it was, they had to have something other than silver to make it hard, but, you know

Ken: So, when your daddy got out of prison, did he go back, what did he do then?

Lee: No, at that point, uh, he didn't really, I think, it broke his spirit, you know. And, uh, he had all his teeth replaced, while he was in there because he had phyrreha, he never took care, he didn't brush his teeth. You know, if you don't brush your teeth you're gona loose your teeth. That's why everybody lost their teeth when they were young, I guess. It was because that

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Hygiene, what's that? You know

Ken: Yeah

Lee: And he had no, his teeth was itty-bitty because he was a grinder. He would bite at night and grind his teeth. I was too, I am too, but I've learned to control it, you know, you have to identify a problem, and a problem, you know ____, but anyway, and here's a part, that I guess that maybe you need to hear, that maybe you haven't heard from anybody but being bi-polar it was not uncommon for him to get drunk, come home, and start hitting my mother. My mother would grab her baseball bat and hit him right back. And, uh, you know, usually, he didn't never really get the best of her, you know, and she would just fight him just like he was fighting her. And, uh, she had gained a lot of weight after my youngest brother was born because of some medical complication, and of course, then my dad would call her "the fat mama", that's what he called my mother. We didn't appreciate that a hell of a lot, but it was a case that she couldn't do anything about, plus, she loved sugar. She'd eat the sweets because she just loved em. She made it, she cooked it for everybody, she was the best there was at it. And, I mean, everybody loved my mother's cakes and pies, you know. Because she knew how to do those very well. But my father was a very sadistic man. He loved, he would say, he'd give me five dollars to eat, uh, a raw jalapena of course I'd do it.

Ken: Sure, yeah

Lee: But, man, it would take a week to get over the burn.

Ken: Uh

Lee: Because back then, you know

Ken: Right, they weren't TAM

Lee: It would just tickle him to death to see you in pain from something, you know, that he

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: He just, he was sadistic. It was just, you know, and, uh, he did, uh, he caught two guys at one time trying to steal our, our cow out of our pen, we had a pen with a Brama bull, couple of bulls in there, and they were trying to steal our bulls because they were good breeding stock. And he caught 'em and he beat 'em so bad one of 'em died within twenty four hours. The other one, I think, still lives around town.

Ken: Um!

Lee: He could kill, it wadnt a problem, but back then that was the way it went, that was the law

Ken: That's right. That could have actually influenced the law, they could have been sort of out to get him, find something to get him on

Lee: They'd been trying for years, but they were afraid of him, so they wouldn't and, you know, they were afraid of my mother. They needed to be. You know, I remember Deputy Insley, he became Sheriff

later, Uh, he was, deputy sheriff under Chief, uh Yearly, was the Sheriff when my dad was going through these days, and he ended up in the jail and let my mother bring down pots of beans, and things like that for him to eat because everybody loved my mother's cooking, no matter what it was, she, and so my daddy was in there and she'd take him things to eat because they didn't have the service they have today where they bring food in, I mean, they didn't eat, you know. because they were in jail. You know, bread and water, that's basically all the jail furnished, the rest you had to bring, so, but, anyway, that was not an uncommon thing, you know, on the weekend for him to get thrown in jail, and whatever, they had to take him food down there, he'd get out on Monday, once he sobered up they let him back out and just, all they could get him for was disturbing the peace. You know, and, uh, but when that happened, that was, that was, oh, that was, I don't, I don't even, I think it had happened even before I was born.

Ken: Um

Lee: And so, they had probably been trying to get him for years and years and years

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: I was going to tell you about it, that Insley came to the door and Mom and Dad has a little row and he'd come out there and say "I understand you have" and he was gona come and he grabbed the screen door and yanked on it and it was locked, and my mother said he was gona come in and take the gun from my mother. And my mother said "but, you know, if you come through the door I'm gona blow you up and I ___ got it. I suggest you stay out there." And he said "Yes 'mam, I don't need to come in." and he went on back to town.

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: And I was right there.

Ken: Yeah. How old were you?

Lee: At that time I was probably six, seven years old. And that wasn't the only time, I mean, they were, the police were afraid of him because they knew he was so strong.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: They couldn't handle him. And they would have had to shoot him

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: You know, and they weren't gona do that because of, you know, sumptem that they didn't do back in those days

Ken: Yea

Lee: And, uh, but I'm sure that there's some bones out in them there hills. They crossed my old man at the wrong time. But nobody never knows what happened to 'em. No doubt in my mind.

Ken: You know --- I talked to, there's still a bunch of cedar chopping going on in Junction.

Lee: Sure

Ken: Pretty near to Junction

Lee: Sure, I mean, you cut, those

Ken: Yeah, and I, I talked to a guy named Olan Raley, he's got a saw shop, now, there

Lee: Um-hum

Ken: And, um, he said, you know, it wasn't, back when he was a kid, eighteen, or whatever, he said it wasn't uncommon on a Saturday night in Junction to look around and there'd be three fights going on at the same time

Lee: Um-hum, I don't doubt it

Ken: Yeah. He said, you know, if you, you ought to read this book by Jim Webb. He is a senator from Virginia. He's Scots Irish, called "Born Fighting"

Lee: Um-hum

Ken: You'd love it.

Lee: I think that's probably, I, my brother was that way. I was, I consider myself a lover and not fighter. The only time you're gona get me to fight is if you force me to. And if you force me to I know how to defend myself. And I'm gona win.

Ken: Yeah.

Lee: It's a state of mind

Ken: My father was, had that sort-of same anger that would just pop out, you know

Lee: Yeah, and my brother does it all the time

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And I do occasionally, but I've learned how to control it to the degree that it's just, I might say, make a comment, and my wife will, you know, "you don't need to beat me" and I'd say, I used to _____ when I was younger, and I learned, by the time I was thirty, not to drink liquor 'cause then I could not control myself. I can drink beer all night long. No problem.

Ken: Yeah

Lee: _____ control everything . Drink liquor. I couldn't remember getting home, now, being photographic memory and you're out and having a few drinks and you get home and don't remember how you got there, it's time to do something

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: That's what I did

Ken: Um-um

Lee: I said "I lived in Dallas, TX And I would come from north to out west where I lived, uh, and not know how I got there. Fortunately, generally it would be at one, two-o'clock in the morning and there weren't too many people on the road. But, I did that by memory and I was not conscious. (slap)

Ken: Um! Yeah

Lee: Good thing I had a good memory (laugh)

Ken: So what happened to your dad when he gets out of prison? What did he do?

Lee: Well, he actually started, uh, piddling around. I don't think he really ever went back to, he did go back to cedar chopping for two or three years with my younger brother. And, uh, uh

Ken: Your younger brother cut cedar?

Lee: Yeah, at that time. I left for the Navy

Ken: for the Navy, right

Lee: and my younger brother was two years behind me in school. So those last two years he did go cut cedar and my younger brother was his number one helper 'cause he's young and strong and, you know, so that's what he did on the weekends, but then my daddy gave him a car, gave him a car to drive, and nice, you know, he had a nice Corvair with, even had (laugh) bar in the middle of it you know that's the kinds of things they did back in those days

Ken: Yeah

Lee: _____ had the rear end engine you know, had the room

Ken: Yeah

Lee: One of them fancy little Corvairs

Ken: Yeah, I remember those

Lee: Yeah, air-cooled engines, you know

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Run like a rabbit ____, But that's the way we went everywhere, you know, my first car after he got out, I was, like I said, I was a junior, going into my senior year, and he got me, I know I must have been a senior, because he got to me, got me a new car right after he got out, and he got me, uh, a sixty-five Mustang

Ken: Is that right! That's your new car!

Lee: Brand new

Ken: Where did he get the money to do that?

Lee: He went down and said "I want to buy this car" and they didn't tell him "no.". ____ Ford. They knew him, worked with him all their life, they didn't say no. 'cause they knew that they were gona get their money, they always had.

Ken: Uh-huh. Well, that was a nice thing to do.

Lee: Yeah, I think they were afraid of him

Ken: A ____

Lee: (laugh)

Ken: Yeah ____ usually ____

Lee: And you know what else he did? About nine months later one of my friends, older guy that ran around all the time, was the big loud mouth, had, him and his brother, uh, cousin, had gone over dancing over, uh, to, uh, Guadalupe, one of the places out, Kerrville, somewhere, and, uh, they, on the way back they flipped their Mustang, and, he wasn't driving, but he was six foot four, uh, his name was Mitchell, Paul Mitchell, and his head went out in the car rolled on his head and killed him, and my dad would not let me keep that car. Went down and traded it, and I had a 289 3-speed

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Manual, no air, no nothing, just an AM radio, that's way it was back then, and so, he got me a Mercury _____. It wasn't the Cyclone, but it might well have been. It had the 390 engine, but it was a 3-speed on the column, well let me tell ya, it would do one hundred and forty miles an hour, stock.

Ken: Hum

Lee: Enough that I kept it there quite often

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: Uh, well back then there wasn't anybody on the highway

Ken: Yeah, you could go fast

Lee: You get on the highway ___ kill ya

Ken: Yea

Lee: I mean, I drive from Uvalde to Pearsall, in pouring down rain, in that Mustang, I remember, I was working over there and coming back home, in pouring down rain, and doing eighty-five, ninety miles an hour. And those hairpin turns between, there is a little bitty road when you go out of Pearsall proper. It was back then. It was hairpin turns the whole way. You slow down, hit it hard going in

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: (laugh) You know, but, that's a way of life. My dad was probably the only one back in the day, it was cutting cedar, a big ole Lincoln V-12, he'd run that sucker, and something happened, I can't remember what it was, I think he'd sold it to his brother or something, and he didn't make the payment, and they came to get it and his brother ran the damn thing off the side of the mountain

Ken: Hum!

Lee: They got it but it was not worth having

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: (laugh) I'm serious! And, uh, things like that, I mean, it was not uncommon. They always had nice cars, I mean, you know, they paid their money. that's one thing about cedar chopping back in the day was it was fruitful because nobody else wanted to do it. And so, you got paid well for your wear

Ken: Isn't that something! Yea

Lee: And, uh, I mean, he paid us every time, he paid me every time, I mean, anything we did we got paid. He wasn't, you know, that's the way he did business

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: If I did it, I got paid for it

Ken: That is --- well, he sounds like a generous man, and a

Lee: He was a generous man

Ken: A larger than life character

Lee: He was, but on the same token he was, he had, he had the black side, uh, because I think that comes with the nature of it. They came from the Scots Irish, I think. As much as anything. Because they all did it back then. They fought all the time, you know, it was just something they did. You know, with their hands

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And the old man cheated a little bit. He had a big 'ol Case knife about that long, he wore it open, he'd just put it in his hand, give him something (slap) you know, it'd be like have brass knuckles, but they're not on top.

Ken: Right

Lee: You know

Ken: I wonder if just being that strong makes you more likely to get in a fight. Do you know?

Lee: No

Ken: Do you remember feeling,

Lee: No

Ken: No?

Lee: I think it's just a total 100% compulsion from someone pushing you too far out of your comfort zone

Ken: Maybe, or how 'bout this, what about people are gona call you a cedar chopper, or do something like that

Lee: That wouldn't bother him in the least.

Ken: It wouldn't?

Lee: _____

Ken: OK

Lee: I mean, it didn't bother Dad

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh

Lee: he was proud of what he did. And he had a hat he wore, the cedar choppers, out there too, the old hat, he always wore, he'd go to town, he'd put on his new one

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: You know, when he come in he'd take a bath and clean up and

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: He was quite a lady's man. The women just swooned over him. 'cause I mean six foot one, a couple, two-twenty, I mean, you know, you're pretty, I mean, and not out of shape. The only thing he had, like everybody did, just like I do, was a little bit of a beer belly, just because, you know, he always

drank beer all, always, I went to the bars with him, I was, I think my earliest memory is about two years of age sitting at a bar, I could even take you to the bar today, it's still there, and, uh, having Jax beer.

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: 'Cause my daddy bought me and sat down on the stool and I sat there and drank that beer

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: and I've been drinking beer ever since. Uh, I went through a period I didn't, you know, in school, and so forth, I didn't do it, I didn't drink until about nineteen years old, got in the Navy, and when I made E-4, the guys said, we've got to celebrate, you know, and so, then I started drinking again. Over at the, in Navy, if you were eighteen, uh, you could drink on base all you wanted

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Anywhere in the world, which I did

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: you know. I had to quit drinking vodka when I was overseas because it was eating up my stomach

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Lee: ___ peptic ulcer, that's more than I want to know (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: So, that's it. I quit drinking vodka, so, people don't realize that clear liquors will do that to ya, eats up your stomach. Not your brain up here, but your stomach

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: And so, ___ something better than that dark stuff that rye whisky and that (laugh). And Kentucky Bourbon and that (laugh) all them blends, and all that good stuff, that's what gets up here, you know, if you don't remember, you're kind-of fuzzy

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: I never get fuzzy. Beer will never do it to me. Ever! And people don't understand that you have to – there are some things that aren't meant for the body to have. And, liquor is one of 'em cause there's too much sugar. And what hurts you is the sugar. And, if you realize that, and you quit imbibing all that sugar you won't have all the problems that people have today, I do believe that.

Ken: You know, a lot of the cedar choppers here ... I grew up in west Austin

Lee: Yeah, we saw a few of 'em

Ken: Uh-huh, and, uh, a lot of them brewed moonshine

Lee: Oh, yeah, back then

Ken: absolutely

Lee: in a brake because nobody else would go back there

Ken: yeah. And, uh, so, that didn't happen so much around Uvalde, I take it

Lee: No! no, no. Old man didn't drink whiskey until he got probably in his late fifties he, because his back was so bad, he had so much pain, wasn't anything that would kill it, he would take Valium and use, uh, vodka and, uh, uh, orange juice – the only way he could drink it, because he couldn't stand the taste of it, but all he could taste was the orange juice that way and that's ____ and, of course, that'd give him some relief for his back. And I do, I understand, I have that same problem. We are fortunate today we have products, you know, that will allow us to get some relief. I was supposed to tell my lawyer about that ___ if you have any problems with your back, and aches and pains

Ken: I don't have problems like that

Lee: Then get you some Perform. You can buy it over to that drugstore – Walgreen's

Ken: Oh, you can?

Lee: It will be right next to icy hot. Be right next to it. On the counter. Icy Hot is the one that, you know, has a little, kind-of a flame on it, you know. And some ice up here on top. It's just a, you know, they have, this will be right there, it will say P E R F O R M, and I'll promise you, you just, you get the roll, or you can get the salve.

Ken: Oh, it's a cream.

Lee: It's a salve, not cream

Ken: All right

Lee: OK. And it does absorb into the skin

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: you know and it goes away, then it goes right in the skin. But what it is, it is a nerve inhibitor. It kills the nerves that send the message to the brain that it hurts. And, so, consequently you feel no pain.

Ken: That's good

Lee: Oh That's the first time I got to sleep in thirty-five years!

Ken: Great! Thank you for

Lee: And I take ten five-hundred Vicadin before I go to bed every night. And that still didn't do the trick. But that stuff, --- and, mine has lasted for two or three days. I haven't had to put it back on

Ken: Oh, good deal!

Lee: And so, so, I'm saying to you that that, you know, if you've got back problems, get it. But anyway -- I'm not trying to sell a product.

Ken: sounds good

Lee: I'm just --- a testimonial because ever since I had that wreck, uh, I've had the back pains you know. And, I'm sure, my father had 'em every day, because, I mean, and he'd sit in the truck and drive for fifteen, twenty hours

Ken: um-hum

Lee: I'd go with him. When I was four years old he was taking me to Kansas, Nebraska with him.

Ken: Yall delivering cedar?

Lee: We were delivering cedar, bringing back hay.

Ken: OK

Lee: And we would sit on this hay, and sit on the side of the road, and the kids would be out there selling that hay That's why we did it. We'd bring back a little and we'd sell the hay

Ken: When you delivered the cedar, you would take it up to, just sit it on the side of the road too, or go to a rancher

Lee: a rancher

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: and we'd deliver and then, usually, the only time he would ever take me to a movie, when we were on a long trip, is if he had to wait till the next day to get his check, or get his money

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: He went to the bank to get his cash, you know, I mean

Ken: Right

Lee: That's the way you had to do it back then, you know. And, so, I remember we were in Garden City, Kansas, and he actually took me to a movie, Sunday afternoon, 'cause he didn't, he, we had to spend the night, so, uh, and that was the only time in my life he ever took me to a movie, by himself. Just me and him, you know, and we were out, and, uh, I don't remember what we saw, because it just , wasn't that important, the important thing was he took me to the movie.

Ken: Right, right

Lee: Yes

Ken: Did yall sleep in a motel?

Lee: Oh yeah, yeah. And we would, and, uh, if we stayed overnight, and, uh, but a lot of times we would, uh, just, when he would get tired, he'd pull to the side of the road and he'd, uh, crawl down underneath where it was cool, and sleep.

Ken: I talked to folks, somebody had slept on the top because of the rattlesnakes.

Lee: Oh, he wasn't worried about rattlesnakes. ___ you don't bother them.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Every day we'd come back to camp, when we left in the morning, to go cut cedar, you know, we wouldn't necessarily be right at the camp. We would be, maybe, a half a mile. We'd have to walk to where we were gonna cut. And, uh, we would put on a iron skillet and we'd put our potatoes and our steak and whatever they had in there, and, and water, and let it simmer for three or four hours. ___ we'd have the fire, built up early in the morning, have the coals, and just let it sit there and simmer for four hours. Guess what! Rattlesnakes like the smell of cooking meat. Every day when we got back we had to kill a rattlesnake. Every day! (emphasis)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: I wadnt just every other day --- it was EVERY day!

Ken: How would you kill it?

Lee: Oh,

Ken: use your axe?

Lee: Just chop it's head off, you know, or ___ get him by the tail and pop his head.

Ken: I have not seen that.

Lee: Like an idiot, but, yeah! I saw him do it. Pop that head right off. When he, when you feel it pop real hard, you know, it just takes the head off. Because it's the only weak point on their body is the head. It is the smallest, little tiny pointy head

Ken: Yeah

Lee: the rest of 'em is muscle! Just pure muscle!

Ken: So yall would get, bring all your food up there for the whole week?

Lee: Oh, yeah! In fact, we, you know how we kept it refrigerated?

Ken: No

Lee: We had a five gallon milk bucket. You know, back, those, I've got one sitting right out there

Ken: Yeah

Lee: That, that old rusty one. Uh, and, we would put all our things in like, if we had butter, or had lard, or we had even sugar, everything, that ____, we'd put it in there and we literally put it over in the ____ . We always, we camped by a spring, a little creek, spring fed and we'd just literally submerge it and put a rock on top of it.

Ken: OK

Lee: And that stayed about forty degrees. You couldn't ask for a better refrigerator!

Ken: That's great.

Lee: Didn't have any ants getting in your, you know, your stuff

Ken: Could you do that today? I mean, you know, the weather has changed too much out there, hasn't it?

Lee: But the, the springs are still there

Ken: Are they still flowing?

Lee: Oh, yeah. _____

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: This is as deep as you could get, and it's where they began, and it's up at the head of the, uh, canyons, between Leakey and Camp Wood is Reagan Wells. And, if you have never been there you

Ken: You call it Rain ____

Lee: R H E

Ken: Reagan Wells

Lee: Reagan Wells, yeah, and above Reagan Wells, about forty miles, is the Lee Ranch. And we were all on Lee Ranch at the top of those divides and that's where they got their water was from spring fed and they would run PVC all the way down to the house because it was downhill. And, and he could put it into a tank and then pump it so they'd had pressure.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And that's what they built after that cistern, made out of concrete, they would go into it, you know, they would pump it into the house so they'd have it for water.

Ken: I think I sort-of know that country, most, I drove up the road out of Leakey

Lee: Yeah, actually out of Uvalde, and you're going toward Leakey, but before you get there, right before you come to the first river crossing you go right down the side of it, which is the Dry Frio River. you go right down the side and just keep on, it winds around down through the little creek there, it's probably all dry now – it the Dry Frio -- and, but when you get out to where I was at, you're going to be completely dry down here, but by the time you went forty, fifty miles further up the stream there, we had water all the time. And then we had to ford the river every time to go over the main, um, ranch house and had to ford it one more time to get to the big bosses house, Mr. Lee's house.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Robert E. Lee. He was, he was a nephew of Robert E. Lee but he didn't want anybody to know it. He was an oil man out of Houston – because ___ lost (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: He was not used to losing (laugh) They had a really nice place up there, that, that, I, as a youngster, oh, a little older, my sister got married to, uh, her husband there. He was Assistant Foreman of the ranch. His daddy was the Foreman and he was the Assistant Foreman. And they actually built their house on the west prong of it, and their water came from a spring out at the top of the pump.

Ken: Hum

Lee: Yeah. It was always a little waterfall right past their house there. They used to put, uh, gasoline in the water and light it, just to watch it at night

Ken: Oh That's extravagant. (laugh)

Lee: It, it would burn out, but As long as you light it it doesn't hurt anything

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Uh, but it is very pretty at night 'cause of that falls, 'cause it drops ____ Just a beautiful display of fire coming across that thing

Ken: So, did yall start cutting early in the day,

Lee: Yeah, he started, I mean, you know, you started, uh, ,like seven. We got up at probably five thirty, uh, daddy would fix breakfast, you know, uh, he didn't have to fix everything, get it everything ready for the meal

Ken: Did yall have eggs and stuff, I take it

Lee: oh always took eggs, we ate eggs, always

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: yeah an egg has been a staple because we had our own eggs. We have forty, fifty chickens

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: We had cattle, we had hogs, I mean we had, oh, half a dozen to a dozen pigs at any one time. We had, uh, probably ten, fifteen head of cattle, uh, couple of bulls, uh, one, at least one milk cow at any given time, that had a calf on her all the time, so she'd give milk all the time. So, anybody, if one had two, we'd take it off and put it on her, let the other one feed one, so she'd keep putting out the milk. So we had – she put out about two gallons of milk a day that we were taking and we would use the cream to make the butter, we had to churn up the butter

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: and, uh, yeah, all those things. We made our own ice cream

Ken: Took meat up there too, and

Lee: Oh, up there, yeah, we take -- the meat we didn't have to worry about too much. We need it, we'd just kill it, you know, we were out in the middle of nowhere. You know you need a deer, you shoot a

Ken: deer

Lee: Yeah, uh-huh. He didn't do that too much. He usually, the Mexicans would catch an armadillo and then skin it, then we'd have maybe the armadillo meat, you know

Ken: ____

Lee: Beans, you know, and we always had tortillas. My dad made tortillas and --- because tortillas keep, you know, he'd just make 'em one time and then you've got a stack of 'em and you can keep 'em all, you want 'em warmed up you'd throw 'em on the coals

Ken: Um-mum

Lee: flip 'em over. Nice warm bread, kind of like a pita, almost

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Yeah, and, uh, and that's what we used for bread, I mean, you know, beans in the middle of it, rolled up

Ken: Yeah. Come back at noon and eat your whatever

Lee: Usually it was, it was, irish stew, let's face it, is what it turned out to be, when we put all that stuff together, all cooked up in water, and it's gona be Irish stew. And, and, so, I cook some killer Irish stew, but I use venison.

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: I don't mess with beef – it tastes so much better with venison, you know, and I do it today. In fact, I'm the cook of the family

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Now, because I, I always watched my mother, I was always, you know, fascinated about the food, and, so, that's one of the things that I do, I love to do.

Ken: I do love venison myself, I'm out now

Lee: Are you?

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Yeah, yeah. I'd be happy to give you a packet so you won't leave completely empty handed

Ken: Oh, no!

Lee: I don't mind, I don't hunt. I, I don't shoot deer, but I do love to eat them.

Ken: How do you get the venison?

Lee: My friends

Ken: Oh

Lee: And, uh, they love my cooking. And, so, they donate the venison to me so that I make them venison dishes and I take them, uh, venison dishes, part of it.

Ken: That's very nice

Lee: And, uh, and they love the food. They just, of course, they are in their late seventies. I think he'll be seventy nine in December and she's not far behind. And, uh, uh, she's an excellent cook, but she would rather me cook the ____ (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: But, uh, no, uh, they're just friends out here, In fact is funny. He, he sold motor homes with me. And he quit selling motor homes because he couldn't stand all the old people, of course he was already sixty five! (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: "I just can't stand there in all these old people!" He was sixty-five (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: But he quit because of it. We, always have these rallys come in

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: you know, where the all bring their RVs, and they sit, they get on our showroom floor and "clack-clack-clack" he couldn't even think, you know

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: And all they do is ____, they never buy anything

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And he just hated it, he just hated it. He just, finally he, the last one just broke the camel's back and he went and sold ____ boxes for a while, and he got tired of that, and now all he does is just deliver, uh, Green Sheet

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Once a week

Ken: When you guys came back for lunch, did you go back out again?

Lee: Oh, absolutely!

Ken: Yeah, again, in the afternoon

Lee: Usually we'd come in and have lunch, uh, probably take a little nap, you know

Ken: Yeah

Lee: After that, uh, and then he'd get up, uh, maybe have a little, uh, dessert, you know, he always brought the, uh, cans of uh fruit. You know, mixed fruit, these lil ol

Ken: Yeah

Lee: We have a can of that and then we'd head back, got to get as much of the heavy syrup, you know. You know, lots of energy, and then here we go again, until it got dark. And then we'd be back again. And, uh, yeah, we slept on cots inside the tent, one on either side, and, uh, he, you'd always put your boots on the floor – we wore brogans in those days, kind-of high top

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: And, uh, but every morning, before you put 'em on, 'cause I know one morning I didn't and I found out why I do it. I got hit on the end of the toes, you know

LeeMck5

Lee: Uh, man that hurt, there aint nothing that hurts like that either (laugh), but that was not uncommon. One place we were at they had a house we could stay in, you know, and old stone house, it was out there forever. Oh, shit, it was full of 'em.

Ken: Oh

Lee: Oh, good God! You know, I mean, they coming out of the walls like (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: I stayed there one night and I said I won't stay there no more , you can stay here if you want to, I ain't staying in there (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: I mean it was terrible. I mean, it, you'd think you'd fire up the fire they'd run. Here they come. They want to get warm too! (laugh)

Ken: ____

Lee: Yeah, but, anyway, and, and, my mother, when I was young, she would be out there with us, carrying them posts out of there. The whole family would go. We'd go in the, after a while he'd borrow an old dump truck and we went to the river many times and filled that on a Sunday afternoon, park it there and back it in so you could load that dump truck up with river rock and then come up and put it on the driveway. And we did that several times

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And, we, as youngsters, when I was probably eight or nine years old, we were building a fence in Reagan Wells was, uh, I don't, they didn't do it – we did it. The kids. He put us out there. We built, we dug the holes in the rock with a tap bar

Ken: Right, right

Lee: We didn't have no drill

Ken: Oh I know

Lee: And, uh, and we built, I built, there were four of us, five of us at the time, uh, the older sister already married, but we built a mile of fence across the most rugged country you ever saw.

Ken: That's a, that's a feat.

Lee: For kids, I mean, you know, and the oldest one of us was probably fifteen

Ken: Yeah

Lee: you know, we're out there building a damn fence.

Ken: ____

Lee: And he's out cutting cedar while we're building fence

Ken: You were ten, probably, something like that

Lee: Oh, younger than that, eight or nine

Ken: wow

Lee: Yeah. I mean, yeah, it's hard to remember the ages back then, because you didn't have the things to reference. Now, now you can tell exactly when, all the way back, because I had the songs, I could remember the date and the year, you know, I remember all the songs, all the, I also have voice memory

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: That's unexcelled. I could hear a song and tell you who it is. And I've done that too. If I've heard it two or three times

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Its there, I mean, I don't care if it thirty years later, you know, somebody's voice when I hear it on the telephone, I know, I know it's them

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: You know, and I just ____ voice recognition. It's cool and you always ____ but I also remember when I was in Hong Kong, as a young sailor, and I had the topside watch. I was an E-4, and I was watching the ship, you know, at night, basically. Junior officer of the deck, you know. And, uh, I heard a pop. Went to investigate what it was, couldn't see anything. We had a submarine that was ____ next to us because they couldn't go into port so we had to anchor out and they anchored by us so they could use us as a way to get to the jetty, because you can't get on and off a submarine too easy.

Ken: Yeah

Lee: And, so, uh, and, and so I walked, I walked over on the submarine and there it was. The guy had come back, he'd just come on board fifteen, five minutes before, and, uh, because I'd walked him aboard, you know, and, uh, he had taken the watch from the guy that was topside, that was common practice, coming back off of liberty, take topside watch, and then go and get some coffee, and then come back up and then you go down

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: When you take the watch you get it all.

Ken: Um hum

Lee: Forty-five with, loaded Forty-five or a ____ In the chamber

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Uh, he used it.

Ken: Huh!

Lee: His wife had just threatened to divorce him and he blew the back of his head off and I found him.

Ken: Oh

Lee: We stayed an extra week in Hong Kong because I had to be there for the court of inquiry. Just because I was the one that discovered him. And it was obvious, because the gun didn't fall off. It fell right on the submarine, you know _____. It was sad because his wife, he was over there doing his duty, in Vietnam, and those guys take off six months at a time, they're on fast attack. And, uh, tell's him that she's gona divorce him and he's in Hong Kong.

Ken: Hum. You know, that's sad

Lee: Anyway, uh, back on the cedar choppers. It was always, uh, something that, you know, they, we all had to cut contribute. You know, we all did it. It wasn't just daddy, he didn't just go out and make a living and come home

Ken: Yeah

Lee: As soon as we got big enough to do something, we got to do something useful

Ken: Yeah

Lee: you know, so we all worked all of our lives, we wasn't sitting around

Ken: Right

Lee: we didn't have all the other things that maybe some of the other kids had, you know, the park and the beach, you know. I never went to Garner State Park until after I was in the Navy. I never went. I was always working. Even -- when daddy went back to work chopping cedar. I was there with my mother running the Dairy Delight, and going to college

Ken: Yet you stayed in school.

Lee: I didn't graduate though. I graduated from high school

Ken: from high school, even that, that's, a lot of these kids I've talked to,

Lee: my mother just was not gona have it any other way. But, all my sister, all my sisters did not, but they all got their, well except my oldest sister, they all got their GED

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: But my older sister never, then she didn't live long, she died when she was twenty. From electrocution. At home. and her two daughters were in the house, but she had told them to stay in the house and they never came outside. Had they had walked up there it would have killed them too. 'cause she was making a current, completing a circuit from the bottom of a shorted-out water cooler, and the copper pipe over here, and she was standing in water.

Ken: Um

Lee: Just burnt her everywhere the skin cut touched, it was black. She was, if any, anybody, you know, would have, it would have got them too, if they stepped in the water

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: He had to, had to get back off and knock her aloose to stop the electricity flow.

Ken: You've had a lot of tragedies in your family.

Lee: Unfortunately

Ken: Yeah

Lee: But, you, uh, my son was killed seven years ago

Ken: I'm very sorry about that

Lee: Yeah, yesterday, seven years ago, uh, yeah, drunk. Ran all over him in Austin, TX and got away scot free Didn't go to jail. He spent three or four hours in jail until the attorney got him out, ____, and then, uh, he had State Farm – he had one point two five million dollars in State Farm Insurance, and they made damn sure that my son looked like a little

Ken: Hum

Lee: So, yeah.

Ken: I'm very sorry about that

Lee: And he was, you know, obviously drinking, and the guy who hit my son did not stop – did not stop to render aid, and went down to a service station and then called, ____ and bullshit on his seat he has his cell phone. He had to drive down, he went to the service station to get the beer bottles out of his truck

Ken: Huh!

Lee: _____

Ken: That's horrible!

Lee: I know. But, you know, we tried, we went ahead and sued him. He got away with that too, because State Farm wasn't going to pay out 1.25 million dollars

Ken: Hum

Lee: But if it had been in Williamson County, he would be doing five to ten right now. Well, he may be out by now. But, uh, guarantee, but, not -- Austin is a very liberal county. In case you don't know that.

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: You live in Austin?

Ken: I grew up in Austin

Lee: Ah, so you know.

Ken: (laugh) Yeah

Lee: Yeah, but anyway, but that's because of all the influx of young people all the time, constantly. And they never go away. They come here and they find that they love it

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: They don't want to go back to that old place they used to live, this one's better

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: Uh, but, no, but, I mean, I guess it was an enigma, to a degree. But they didn't mess with us a whole lot because we pretty much were clannish, just like you should be

Ken: Um-hum

Lee: Uh, and we took care of one another, if one had a problem the others would be right there to cover their defense. That's like, we were ___ my brother and I were doing the cooking because mother would take a little nap, and, uh, we had a bunch of these guys come back ___, they'd been drinking, you know, and this one was the stud football player, you know, the one with all built up, you know, and, uh, and the other three guys were buddies of his, and, so, they'd ordered a bunch of food and ordered some pie. I had both hands full of food and was walking over to the table and this little short son-of-a-bitch stood up and hit me as hard as he could, all that happened was that he knocked all the food up. I almost fell down because there was a little, freezer there that was right about that high, but I didn't -- I caught my balance -- but before I could get to him my brother was on him, and we whopped his ass so bad, it took him a week to get the nerve to come see my mother because he was so black and blue (laugh)

Ken: (laugh)

Lee: Then he had to come and apologize to my mother because otherwise he wasn't going to ever come back in our place again again. We ___ you know. ____

Ken: Yeah

Lee: I mean, there was no reason to hit me. I didn't do anything to him. I was just doing my damn job – working my ass off.

Ken: You was strong

Lee: He resented ..

Ken: You were a nerd but you weren't a weak nerd.

Lee: Oh, no. No. And he found that out

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And never again did we ever have anymore problems with those guys again! Ever!

Ken: Yeah

Lee: And he was 'bout ta, I mean, the toughest, you know, the one that worked out all the time, he was all that. He found out he wasn't so fucking tough. You don't have to have all that bulk

Ken: Yeah

Lee: You know. The sinew was much more valuable in that direction, than bulk

Ken: right

Lee: you haven't never seen a big Irish fighter, they are all small, swarthy kind-of-guys, they're just, you know, they don't never give up. They keep on keep on. You hit 'em, knock em do wn, they get up, you've hit 'em knock em down again, they're still gona get back up

Ken: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Lee: Till they just can't get up no more. That's just the nature of the breast. But I think the majority of all, you know, it's just that he had to turn it to that direction, cedar chopping. And I think he was probably one of the premier cedar choppers of his day

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: And had that not happened to him

Ken: What was his name?

Lee: George Felton McKinnerney.

Ken: George Felton McKinnerney.

Lee: Went by Bud

Ken: Uh-huh

Lee: Everybody knew him as Bud Of course, the reason he was Bud is because he was the oldest brother, so they couldn't say brother so they'd say Bud when he was young. And so he got that nickname of Bud

Ken: Uh-huh. And Felton is probably an Irish name as well.

Lee: I have no doubt in my mind.

Ken: Yeah

Lee: Yeah, my sons, the oldest is Justin Lee, and the second Kevin Roy. They got my name, but _____. Both of 'em are Irish names.

Ken: This -- I'm going to stop recording now because I might be running out of time.

Lee: OK