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WILLIAN & HELEN TRUDEAU

Mr. and Mrs. Trudeau live on the Wikwemikong Reserve, Manitoulin Island, where they have raised 12 children. Mrs. Trudeau attended school but Mr. Trudeau is entirely self-educated. He has worked as a lumberman, fishing guide and commercial fisherman.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mrs. Trudeau's adoption and schooling.
- Mr. Trudeau's childhood on the farm including maple sugar making.
- Work in lumber camps, as fishing guide, and as commercial fisherman.

Helen: Well, in the first place, when my dad died I was only two months old, they said. I don't know anything about it. But they tell me. And then they didn't have any welfare in those days and my mother couldn't get any mother's allowance. I guess it was hard to get it in those days. I don't know what.... That's all I know. And she was working, you know.

Bill: Mother's allowance wasn't there at the time.

Helen: Working for somebody around here. All the people were poor. All she could get was maybe flour, bread, or lard, something like that. Or a little piece of meat. There was no money, not like these days, you know. When somebody comes and works for you, you pay them money. But at that time it wasn't like that. So my mother had to give me away. And she was on her way to Rabbit Island, holding me in her arms. Not in a carriage or riding on a buggy or something like that. So she was on her way to Rabbit Island and I know that lady, (Ojibway) from West Bay to (Ojibway).

Ernest: David Minosquay, an old man?

Helen: No, (Ojibway), his last name.

Bill: Shagonos(?) (Ojibway).

Helen: Shagonos, oh.

Ernest: Oh, and his sister, Roy. That was Bill Roy's uncle.

Helen: (Ojibway)

Ernest: Oh.

Helen: So she got so tired to eat, walking, holding me in her arms, and she was thirsty. So she stopped. The farm wasn't far up here (Ojibway).

Bill: About half a mile up the hill.

Helen: Yeah, it could be about half a mile. There was a little farm there. They had cows and cattle and sheep. (Ojibway). Well, (Ojibway) because they had a child and she died. And it was a little girl baby (Ojibway). So this woman said, "I don't know. I'll have to tell my boss." She meant her husband. Because the husband was working out somewhere. And he was a very good worker, this man I'm talking about. (Ojibway) Well,

he got home in the evening after work and this woman, (Ojibway) she tells her husband. The husband says, "Why not." So they went right down. We were living with somebody down the hill down there, way down here. I don't know. (Ojibway).

Bill: (Ojibway).

Helen: You know Pelletier's restaurant, eh?

Ernest: Yeah.

Helen: Yeah, a little further down. The road used to run there. (Ojibway) I guess my mother was staying with her sister, (Ojibway). I think they were the ones that were living there. (Ojibway) My adopted mother, she was to tell me, I was sitting on a high chair. (Ojibway) I was eating fried potatoes or warmed up potatoes or something like that.

(Ojibway) Then I was adopted. They made the papers in the legal way, (Ojibway).

Well, sometime after, I had to go to school. I did go to school here for a few days and just for making my first communion. To learn my catechism, I guess. And then this woman... I know she loved me very much, Liza, my adopted mother. (Ojibway) So she put me in Spanish school, in the residential school. That's where I was for five years. So this is where I get to talk about the way it used to be in that boarding school, in that residential school. They made us work there. They showed us how to work, to do your work well. If you don't do it well, you do it over again. Like making the halls, make shiny floors, dusting, cleaning the toilets, everything. The laundry. You just helped out with the laundry; it was a steam laundry that they had at the girls' school. And the boys used to bring their clothes there, maybe two of them. They would bring the loads. Their socks, all their clothing.

Tony: From the boys' school at Spanish?

Helen: From the boys' school, yeah. That was across the road. Oh, that was not very close. It wasn't far either, but just across the way. You know where the church is, eh? And where that school used to be, did you ever see that? Well, that school was burned down sometimes this last winter. Well, after the washing is done with the boys' school, then we did the mending, the darning. They show us how and how to make them neat, you know. You have to do your darning very well. That's what we learned from there. Well, as the girls grew bigger - like maybe they're about sixteen or fifteen - they work in the kitchen, help out with the kitchen work. And all the girls

that could work, we used to line up. I don't know how many lines we were, about ten in a line anyway. There was about a hundred and twenty of us in that school. And there was one of the sisters there that showed that girl what to do. That goes for the week. You do that every day. That's the way we were raised up.

Christine: Did you wear uniforms?

Helen: Yes.

Christine: What did you wear?

Helen: Well, we had our aprons when we were not in school, you know. And we had those dresses, not all alike. Not really uniforms. I wouldn't say they were uniforms. I don't think so.

Bill: But you wore all the same dresses.

Helen: The same shoes, I know. They used to be something like the ones he's wearing. (chuckles) Work boots.

Bill: You can have a look at them, what I'm wearing.

Helen: They were something like this; they were in black. Well, we didn't mind, you know. But we were happy to come home on vacation. And we never, (chuckles) we never were allowed to come home, like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, all the year.

Ernest: They used an expression when I was in the army, "Oh, your mother wears army boots." (chuckles)

Helen: And we would leave here. We used to go by boat, you know. And there used to be another big boat, a big red boat. That's where the boys used to have their ride.

Tony: And you'd go by boat, too?

Helen: We went by boat, too.

Tony: And what was that like?

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Bill: That was some sort of a motor boat.

Helen: Yeah, it had a cabin, you know. That boat that we....

Bill: And that motor boat towed the big red boat where the boys are, you know.

Helen: That's where the boys were.

Ernest: But the girls were in the other, like a motor.

Helen: Yeah.

Christine: How long would it take to get there from here?

Helen: Not very long I don't think, maybe two hours?

Ernest: Oh, I don't think so.

Helen: Well, maybe, I wouldn't know because I was only a child.

Bill: Usually at least eight or nine hours.

Ernest: Oh yeah, that's right.

Bill: Yeah, to go around this point here and all the way up the channel, you know.

Helen: I remember one time we got stranded because of the storm. There was a heavy rain and I guess it was too windy. We had to stop in Little Current. And I think we stayed at a school or something. Just what, I can't remember. We slept on the floor. We were given something to....

Ernest: (Ojibway) and I heard the remains of that boat are around the yard here, as well.

Bill: Yeah, it's still there.

Christine: Would you stop to pick up children at other places along the way?

Helen: Yes.

Christine: Where would it stop?

Helen: West Bay. There was some from West Bay. I think they had to get to Little Current, I think.

Bill: I believe they brought them down to Little Current.

Ernest: Yeah.

Helen: And in Birch Island.

Bill: Birch Island, from Birch Island. That's why they stopped there, for every trip they make, coming back and going out.

Helen: And I guess that was, it...

Bill: To unload and load, you know. And the people who was responsible for the children, they come and picked them up there. They know ahead of time when they're coming in and going out. And the people from West Bay - and some of them are from, oh, what they call that other reserve at the far edge.

Ernest: Sheshegwaning.

Bill: Sheshegwaning, yeah. There is some kids that come in there and get on the boat at the same day, you know. So...

Helen: That would be on August 29th when they had to go back. And then we were released, I think, July 1st.

Ernest: (Inaudible).

Tony: How old were you when you first went to school over there?

Helen: I might have been about eight or nine years. Because I make my first communion here, but I made my confirmation in Spanish.

Tony: Did you go to school here apart from the learning for your...?

Helen: When I came home, I did go to school. Oh, I would say maybe just, maybe a couple of months. Because they needed me,

they needed me to help them, you know.

Tony: To help out with making money?

Christine: On the farm?

Helen: Yes. During the wintertime, that's the time I went to school. But most of the time. I'd skip school.

Bill: Well, at the time, you know, things were very different than what it is now. We didn't have any school buses running through the reserve here.

Helen: Right, yeah.

Bill: Like the kids, some of the kids had to walk maybe six or seven miles from their places where they lived to come to school.

Helen: The roads weren't plowed in those days. You had to make your own tracks in...

Bill: And the roads were not even plowed and a lot of those kids that went to school at the time missed out a lot on account of weather mostly. Bad weather. Well, they didn't come to school.

Helen: So every time when I hear about these kids, these poor kids that are thrown in the Children's Aid, that's what I think. Why don't they make a building on this island? We could keep our own kids here, right here on the island.

Ernest: That's what we're going to do.

Helen: Yeah.

Bill: I think that's about the only way they can help the kids, you know.

Helen: I've told this to Marilyn Moore at one time.

Bill: Because from past experience - them kids, the ones they had in the boarding schools at the time, you know - these were not bad kids. They had to go there on account of that going too far to school, you know. And the training they got from there, that training what they had from the school where they were, is helping them out as long as they live. They are real good workers.

Helen: They show you everything there. How to respect people, too.

Bill: They even milk the cows when they get a little bit bigger, maybe about fourteen, fifteen years old. They had to do that, you know. And they learned that very well.

Helen: They used to weigh the milk. If that milk doesn't go as far as the other one that was milking that cow last week, you'd get a good scolding. You'd have to do the same thing.

Bill: I suppose a lot of kids were brought up different them days. Like myself, I was brought up a lot different than her. That was the time when the people who have kids owned their own kids, when we were brought up. And whatever they want to do with their kids, it was their own decision, you know. Like myself. Ever since I was a kid, ever since I was able to hold the lines on the team of horses, we were plowing the fields up across the bay there. That's where I was born. About six miles from here. You have to go around the bay and away back.

Tony: You were born on a farm then?

Bill: I was born on a farm, yeah.

Tony: When was that? When were you born?

Bill: Oh, that was in 1918. And it wasn't too long, it was about, maybe eight or nine years when they moved down here to the village. And my old man built a log house just below the hill here, a little one, you know. Maybe not as big as this room here. And there was about, oh, maybe about nine kids altogether. I was the youngest of the family, of ten kids altogether. So we lived in that little house, all...

Helen: They had an upstairs where they sleep in. I guess they were all crumbled up in there. (chuckles)

Bill: And we didn't even have a bed to sleep on. We slept on the floor. With a pile of straw on the floor and a board nailed to one side so the straw wouldn't go over that. So that's where we'd jump in when you go to bed. That's when we were kids. And I didn't have much education myself. I didn't have a chance to go to school because there was always something to do. What I could do to help out with my parents, you know.

Tony: What sort of things was that?

Bill: Well, mostly on the farm. And round about this time of the year - I was just talking about it this morning when we were working back in the sugar camp.... We had a sugar camp out further where the farm is. Maybe three, three and a half miles from there. And we used to make a lot of sugar out there about this time of the year. And...

Christine: How would you do that? How do you make sugar?

Bill: Well, the first thing you have to do is to make containers for where the sap is going to run in. Then you tap the trees and you put these little containers under where you tapped the maple trees.

Ernest: Those were birch bark, eh.

Bill: You have to use birch bark when you make those baskets.

Helen: And they had those wood chips that they used to....

Tony: Why did you have to use birch bark?

Bill: Well, at the time there wasn't any of those...

Helen: Cans that they use now.

Bill: Cans what they use now. So you have to make your own. And a lot of those were leaking. When you made them you sort of cracked the birch bark. Like, birch bark is kind of easy to crack, most of it, you know. But any good birch bark wouldn't crack as easy. If you want to make this kind of a fancy thing, you have to pick out a real good birch bark to do that. And when they make those baskets, they had to check every single one of them if it's leaking. And if it is leaking, you have to patch it up. And they used some of that - I don't know what they call that thing that sticks on the spruce.

Ernest: Gum.

Bill: Gum. No, it's not. It's spruce gum.

Ernest: Spruce gum.

Bill: Yeah.

Helen: And I think they warm it up.

Bill: And they melt that in the fire, you know, like in a little can. And put a little grease in it. And they, usually they had a little stick about that long. And you'd dip that little stick in there and the gum would stick to that stick and you rub that on the cracked part of that little container and patch it up. That's how they did.

Ernest: (Ojibway) They didn't have what they called spiles today, to get this sap. (Ojibway).

Helen: Oh, the sap runner.

Bill: Well, they had a certain kind of a... I believe the blacksmiths made those. And they were kind of round at the end. Real sharp, you know. And they hammered that with an axe. Not the sharper side of the axe but on the other side. And they hammered that in the tree. And they make those sticks about, maybe about a foot long and they tried to make them the same shape as that blade you got there. And they hammered those in there. After you pulled the...

Tony: The metal out.

Bill: The metal out. Then you put the stick in there. Like maybe - mostly they used cedar.

Ernest: Cedar, oh.

Bill: Cedar or, what they call those (Ojibway), bass.

Ernest: Bass, yeah.

Bill: That's what, yeah. That's what they usually use. And we worked there for maybe about two months. And we'd tap maybe between fourteen hundred and fifteen trees altogether. And we had to haul in maybe about fifteen barrels. Fifteen barrels of sap a day, sometimes. And even more sometimes. If the sap is running real good.

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Helen: (Ojibway) three or four.

Bill: We used, no, we used thirteen kettles altogether.

Ernest: That's a big operation.

Bill: There was two rows on the fire, you know. There was thirteen altogether.

Christine: What were the kettles made from?

Bill: Mostly...

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Bill: (Ojibway). Copper.

Ernest: Oh, copper kettles.

Helen: Copper inside.

Bill: Copper kettles. We used to get them from the hardware store in Manitowaning.

Ernest: Oh, I didn't know that.

Bill: Charlie Heintz, (Ojibway). Big kettles, about this big. And these thirteen kettles that we had on there can hold a barrel and a half of water, like sap, you know. And just for once to fill them up you have to use a barrel and a half. And once that thing gets going, it keeps going day and night. The people that look after the fire and the..... Of course, the sap keeps going down when it's boiling, you know. You have to watch that very close. And one guy would do that at night and then there's another guy during the day. It keeps going every day. And we have to keep cutting wood every day to keep the fire going. You have to use a lot of fire to... you have to have a good fire to keep those pots boiling. If they don't boil,

well, the sap doesn't boil down, you know. So it's a lot of hard work. A lot of people was working there at the same time.

Christine: Would it be your whole family or other families too?

Bill: Mostly the whole family. But usually we left maybe one or two down here to look after... of course, we had other... like we always had two teams of horses. So we left a team of horses here and a few cows, sheep, pigs. They were livestock to be taken care of when we were busy back in the sugar bush, you know.

Christine: And what would you do with the sugar after it had boiled down?

Bill: Well, most of the time, my mother usually make cakes with sugar. Sometimes they were real big. Like, she uses some kind of a pan, you know. And a lot of times, they'd make brown sugar with it. They just keep on stirring it.

Helen: He means maple sugar candy, you would say.

Bill: And sugar candy. Things like that, you know. And a lot of it, we sold it up around here. And towards Killarney, like. The people that live in Killarney, they bought it. Maple sugar, you know. They didn't buy it to make any, you know, at the time. But afterwards they started making it themselves. I

suppose they didn't know where the best trees were in the first place. But after a while they got going themselves and I believe they got five camps running over there now. Sugar camps, you know.

Tony: How would you get it out of the bush after you'd boiled it down?

Bill: Well, usually we used to get some wooden barrels like, maybe about this high. They say they were about fifteen gallons each. And we'd put that syrup in there. Fill them barrels up and then bring them down on a wagon. And when we want to take them to Killarney or someplace, we would load them in the boat. It was a lot of work, but when you're doing it, you don't think that way, you know. You're always too busy to think. Always too busy doing something.

Ernest: Today, if the machine doesn't work, nobody works.

Bill: Nobody works. Yeah, it was all hard work.

Tony: So when the maple syrup season was over, that two months was over, what would you do then?

Bill: Well, usually we'd get back down here. Maybe a week, you know, and we'd start working on the farm again. Like plowing, getting ready for to put the grain, like maybe barley

or wheat, peas. Oh, they put in a lot of stuff like that, you know, back in the old days when my dad was running the farm. In fact, we didn't have to buy any flour at the time.

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Bill: (Ojibway).

Helen: (Ojibway).

Bill: We used to take wheat to the Sheguiandah mill when that Sheguiandah mill was running. And we go there with a team of horses. I don't know exactly how early in the morning we get going, you know, and we take it over there and we're back the same day, at night.

Ernest: That was run by water, that mill now. (Inaudible).

Bill: And we taking the wheat over there. And sometimes we'd take maybe a sack or two of corn, to get it chopped.

Helen: Those were ground into flour, like. Yeah, cornmeal too, yeah.

Bill: And coming back you bring in flour, shorts, and the corn is chopped too, all in the same day.

Tony: Could your family make a living off this farm? Was it enough for your family and the ten children to live off?

Bill: Well, mostly. Of course, when they had some animals the reason for why they keep those animals is for their own use. Not to sell them, you know. Like, almost everybody on the reserve here had a few animals to live on. Like, maybe two or three cows, you know. And they milked those cows every day. And they get butter from it. Buttermilk, you name it, they got it all from the cows, you know.

Helen: Yeah, we used to make our own butter.

Bill: And they had a few pigs. Everybody had a few pigs. Maybe sometimes some people had more than what they need and they give them away to the other people. They didn't sell them.

Ernest: They shared.

Bill: And they had chickens. They raised chickens, you know. And that's where they get their eggs. Or if they want to eat chicken, well they just go outside and cut his neck off and start pulling the feathers off. Then you have fresh chicken. Couldn't be any fresher than that, you know.

Tony: Most certainly couldn't.

Bill: (chuckles). So, things were a lot different than nowadays. They lived on what they had. Of course, at times

this was kind of hard for everybody. Like maybe, during the winter, mostly during the winter. And they had plenty, at least they had plenty to eat, most of them. And those who haven't had much, they can always go to the other people and sort of do some odd jobs around the house or maybe in the bush, you know. And you don't get paid any money for your work. All you get is a little bunch of this, a little bunch of that, you know. Like maybe sugar or salt, little piece of meat. You were happy with what you're getting. Very odd times a guy might give you ten cents for going out there to work for him.

I worked for people when I was a kid, when I was about seventeen years old. I used to haul wood for the people.

There were a few people here that didn't have any horses, you know. So they started to cut the stove wood early in the fall, and they just pile it up in the bush. They cut it in poles like, you know. They don't cut it in lengths for the stove. So, I had to do that. I hauled wood all day with a team of horses. And in the evening when my job is finished, you know, all I get is a sack. I don't even know what is in there. The guys just come out, you know, and throw the sack on the wagon, you know, and come home. When I get home, I take the sack and bring it in the house where the old lady is always working. I mean my mother, you know, around the table, around the kitchen. I just put the sack on the table. No money.

Ernest: But that was the acceptable. That was the...

Bill: Yeah, we have to accept that. Everybody, we were all in the same boat, you know. But things have changed a lot ever since that. And people were happy at the time, you know. I believe they didn't have much worries that we have now.

Helen: You were happy whatever you earned, you know.

Bill: Yeah.

Helen: After you worked for somebody, that's the way it was.

Bill: When I first got a job in the lumber camp, it was way back around Collins Inlet right up close to Lake Panache. That's up close to Sudbury. I went in there in the fall, early in the fall, like maybe the end of August. And I stayed there all winter. And you know how much we got working there for a month? Eighteen dollars a month. Twenty-six working days. And yet you have to get out early in the morning, before dawn

and you have to walk maybe two or three miles to get where you're working, where you have to work. And by the time you get there, it's daylight. And it's the same thing again in the evening. You have to work there until it's dark. Then you come home to the camp through the darkness, you know. Of course, there was a road that goes up there and it's easy to follow the road. So things were very different, you know, than it is now. Nowadays... I got a guy here to work when we put this extension, like this little house, you know. And I got a

guy to work for me there, to put up the bricks. And that's how much money he wanted for an hour's work. Eighteen dollars a month.

Tony: Eighteen dollars an hour, he wanted.

Bill: Yeah, eighteen dollars an hour. That's how much I got...

Tony: For a month?

Bill: For a month.

Tony: Yes.

Bill: See, that's how much difference there is now.

Tony: And you had to work a long, long day to get it.

Bill: A long day.

Tony: Yeah, what sort of work did you do when you worked in that lumber camp?

Bill: Well, in the fall we cut what they call the main road. I believe the guys who were looking after the camp look around and pick out the best spot where they are going to put in the main road. And the main road, what they call the main road is maybe about sixty feet wide. And you have to take the stumps out of it too, after you cut the tree and chop it up. So you can lift it, you know. A lot of times, you just couldn't lift those. You have to get the horses to pull them away. There was no machinery at the time. It was all horses and people. And after they cleared that out, then you'd take the stumps out. It's hard work and there is about twenty-five men working all together on that same....

Ernest: How did they get the stumps out?

Bill: We had to dig them out with a grub hoe.

Ernest: Oh.

Bill: And after you dig them out a little ways down the ground, you cut them with an axe.

Tony: Cut the roots.

Bill: Yeah, cut the roots.

Ernest: I've done that.

Bill: And in the fall, early in the fall, they would pick out the men that were supposed to cut the timber. The pine and the norway, you name it. To cut the logs up, you know. I happened to be chosen one of them. And it was three in a bunch, three men in a bunch. You use a big crosscut saw, maybe about eight

feet long. And I used to carry that, you know. Pick that crosscut saw in the morning, in the shop. And I used to drag that thing way up in the bush, you know. I had one on my shoulder and that thing was still dangling on the snow.

Ernest: It's awkward.

Bill: See, I'm only about five feet tall, a little better than five feet tall. And that thing on my shoulder is eight feet long. So, that's how we did it. That's how we worked on the... cutting logs, you know. And maybe about two weeks after the cutting starts, then they start to haul the logs out with horses. Before the snow gets too deep. So they're maybe about a week behind. Than the cutters. I mean, the ones that are pulling the logs out. So those logs don't get buried in the snow, you know. And we cut until the early part of January. Then they start to haul. Like, maybe in the end of January, they start hauling on sleighs and they'd just dump the logs in the lake, right on the ice. So, in the spring when the ice is gone, then they start the drive, river drive, you know.

Helen: (Ojibway)

Ernest: Oh yeah, that's (inaudible).

Bill: And there was a lot of work at the time. Mostly bushwork, cutting pulp, cutting logs. You always had something to do if you want to do it. But there were people who would

rather sit in the house or maybe sit in the shade outside and do nothing all day. But the people on the reserve here, they cut a lot of pulp during the winter. And in the spring, maybe around about in June, then they start peeling that pulp along the shores. During the winter they just pile it anywhere in the beach, you know. Of course, they had certain places where the roads go out and then they would pile it right there. And in the spring they start to peel that. So there is something to do. Like peeling pulp, although you don't make very much, you know, but you make something. A little bit, at least.

Tony: How much did you make doing that?

Bill: Well, if you're lucky you might have made maybe about half a dollar a day. Sometimes. Even not that much sometimes, you know. Depends.

Ernest: You had to work hard for that.

Bill: Yeah, a lot of times the bark is still sticking on the wood so you have more difficulty to take if off, you know. So a lot of times you have to use a draw, what they call a draw knife. You have to have a horse and the horse has to be a certain way and you put that four feet block of pulp wood on there. Just one stick. Then you sort of work on it. You work on that draw knife to peel it off, peel the bark off. It's a lot of hard work. It's easy to just think about it or even tell about it. But if you have to see a guy who's doing it,

then you might have a clear picture of what's happening. And your hands are sore. There are blisters all over your hands, you know. It's a hard life for us here. A real hard life all the way.

Even now, what is changed didn't help us much, you know. Like the government introduced what they call the pension plan. Even before you're old enough to get the pension, there is always something that you can depend on. If you qualify for any sort of a pension, you know, well, you're lucky. And the kids, half of our kids didn't have any allowances. But the ones that are younger, that's when the allowance came in, you know.

Tony: Family allowance you mean?

Bill: The family allowance, yeah. So they changed things around for the kids, too. Because you have to train a kid to do something, you know. Real hard, like the way we were raised.

But now, there is not much you can do about your kids because they have to go to school. Because they are getting allowance from the government, you know. If you try to keep a kid to do something for you, maybe two or three days, there will be somebody looking for him on the third day. And even if he doesn't go after this guy shows up, you know, there will be a policeman the next day. And you get pinched for that and for not letting the kid go to school. That didn't happen when we were brought up. Like myself, I might have a little better education if that was happening. I never could speak a word of English till I was maybe about twenty-four, twenty-four, twenty-five years old.

Christine: How did you learn to speak English?

Bill: Well, it's maybe a funny way to learn it, you know, but I learned it the hard way. I started to work for the white people right here on the reserve. Although I was married at the time. We got married when I was twenty years old and she was nineteen. And I went out to work places, but I didn't like going out, leaving my family back here. So I sort of tried to figure out what to do to stay here on the reserve and at the same time, earn something - although we didn't have many kids at the time.

So I came up with the idea that I should try guiding for people. Taking people out, fishing parties, you know, during the summer. So I bought a boat. And I believe the first boat I had was about twenty-four feet long. It had a little cabin on it. An inboard motor, one of those what they call the Midland Engines, a one lunger they called it. That thing, you can hear it. It's about six miles here to Whiskey Harbour, and the very first time you flipped the fly wheel when you're leaving out there in the evening, you can hear that boat all the way up here. That's how much noise that thing was making. So, I was scared of people; I was scared of white people. I was scared as hell, you know. And every time they come up, I'd

turn around and walk away. Just walk away sometimes. But when I took that job, when I started it, I had to face the people. And although I didn't speak any English but at least I understood a few words. But I just couldn't speak the language. So, anyway, I did it. And I did that for twenty-two years.

Christine: Guiding?

Bill: Guiding. And a lot of times, around about this time of the year, my...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Bill: ...bring the pike fishermen. Mostly pike, that's about all. Of course, the season doesn't open until July for bass, you know. And lots of times maybe I, maybe pick up one or two words in English. But a lot of times I didn't. And this went on for many years. And finally, maybe about fifteen years, I started to understand a little bit more and begin to speak the language a little bit. So I was a little bit better off. I might have been still doing that, but I was sick. I felt sick and I don't know what gave me the most problems. I had ulcers, I developed ulcers, you know.

Helen: He had the pressure, I guess. Thinking too much. (chuckles)

Bill: Maybe it's the people I worked for or maybe it's a combination of maybe three different areas, like. Maybe from home and the people I worked for and the fish. So I really don't know what the problem was. I just couldn't pinpoint where the problem was, you know. But anyway, I had to give it up after twenty-two years. But the money I earned when I worked for those people was gone. Mostly it lasted about two months after the job was finished. Two or three months, then it's all gone. But there is something that never disappeared, though. What I learned from the people I worked for. It's how to meet people. Now, I can just walk up to anybody and talk to him. Even though I don't speak the language very... rather bluntly, but I'm not shy or anything like that. That's what I benefit from it, for doing that, you know. And I sort of, I enjoyed that very much, you know. But the money I earned was long gone.

Tony: How much money did you earn when you took people out fishing?

Bill: Well, I took maybe about... it averaged about ten people a day in a boat. And usually when I got out, I'd tow a smaller boat behind just in case anything goes wrong with the inboard motor I had in the boat. And usually we had a little motor with it. Like a kicker, you know. So we can hook it on the little boat and tow the big boat in if anything goes wrong. And the first thing when I get out there is to anchor the boat

where the bass fishing is, and leave some people in there who want to fish for bass. That's when the bass season is open, you know. And I get maybe two or three people in the little

one and go out trolling for pike. And we sort of rotate the trips. Take different people, maybe. Take out different people in maybe two or three hours at a time, so they all have a chance to catch maybe a pike or two.

Ernest: For my curiousity, since I've got ulcers, how are your ulcers now?

Bill: There is nothing wrong with my ulcers now.

Ernest: (Ojibway)

Bill: I had an operation after I quit, maybe about three years later. And that sort of took care of that. So I didn't go back to it. I sold my boat. I had already sold my boat, my outfit, and so I didn't want to go back. I might have the same problem again. That's what I was worried about, you know. I might go and get the ulcers back again, you know. So I didn't do it anymore.

Tony: What did these people pay you, that you took out? You'd take ten people in a day, say?

Bill: Well, the guys that I worked for, I mean the tourist camp operators up around here told me that I'd be charging five dollars a day for one person. Five dollars was a lot of money at the time, you know. And I had, oh, almost every day, ten people in the boat. That's fifty dollars a day. I had to buy my gas, and by that time I had a bigger motor in the boat and I had a bigger boat. Well, the one I was using at the time was almost thirty feet long and it's got a six cylinder motor in it. And that thing was really moving if you had that throttle wide open. So, I cleared maybe about forty dollars a day after buying my gas, you know. Of course, gas was a way down at the time, too. I may have been using about twenty gallons of gas a day. Moving around, coming back in, going out. So, it averaged about forty dollars a day. There was a lot of people that wanted me to take them out for hunting, like maybe ducks during the fall and again a little bit later on for deer hunting, like, or moose. But I didn't want any part of that because by then I had already known how the people, those people that are coming up here, why they are up here. So I didn't have anything to do with that.

Tony: Why were they up here, when you say...?

Bill: Well, they were up here for vacation. So when they go out there they bring in all kinds of booze, what to drink all day. And so they have all kinds of drinks in the boat, you know. But I didn't drink any of that stuff while I was working. Although they offered that, lots of times during the day, but I didn't go for it. But after I get home sometimes, I

usually.... There may be about a bottle half full laying around the boat when they leave, and I'd bring it up to the house and drink that after my job is finished. I did drink quite heavy when I was younger. But when we had two kids... the oldest... some of them have grey hair like mine. They are older. They are getting old.

Helen: Evelyn is the oldest.

Bill: I was away from home drinking, you know, and I woke up one morning laying on the ground up the hill here and as soon as I opened my eyes I could hear the church bell ringing. I didn't know what's happening, but I can hear the bell. Maybe I wasn't wide awake at the time. So I sat there for about another half an hour and I think about what's happening, you know, what's happening to me. So I said to myself, you know... and I tried to quit drinking. I tried to do my very best to stay away from booze. And ever since that time, I did that. But there were times when I was... but not too often. But I drank a little bit, you know. Oh, maybe once a year. And finally, it must be almost ten years now, I haven't drink anything. And I don't feel like drinking anything. Except tea. (chuckles)

Christine: Can I ask you how you met each other and ended up getting married?

Bill: Well, I don't know. I don't know exactly what happened. I guess that doesn't matter to us anyway. (chuckles) We've been living together for, it will be forty-six years now in August - on the 2nd of August - since we got married.

Tony: That's a long time.

Bill: To think about it is a long time but when you live with it you know, it's not that long.

Ernest: My uncle and my Aunt Margaret just celebrated their fiftieth last fall. (Ojibway)

Tony: I wanted to ask you about going back to the guiding. When you first started going and taking people out to fish, how did you know where to take them? How did you know where the fish were?

Bill: Actually I didn't really know where the fish were. Of course, anybody knows the fish are in the water. But they are not all over the water. That's the problem; that's the main problem. Because..

(Ojibway conversation interrupts)

Bill: That's one of the main problems that everybody has. Like maybe if you want to go out fishing, somebody might tell you where to fish and what time of the year to fish there at that certain area. But if you happen to be there, maybe about an hour later then when he was there, you know.... (Ojibway)

Maybe an hour, maybe two hours later, you wouldn't catch anything. The fish is moving around quite a bit, you know. And it take me years to find out where the fish are. Like, maybe in the morning for about two hours and they move from that area to another place, you know. And there is, once you get out there, there is a hell of a lot of water out there. So you just don't know where to go. Except to try that certain area where you think they might be. In shallow water and rocky bottoms and where there is a little current running through, usually that's where the fish hang around.

Tony: But you didn't know that when you first started?

Bill: No, I didn't.

Tony: So when you took people out to fish as a guide, you didn't know really where to take them. You just took them out and hoped that you could find a place?

Bill: Well, I was out there myself, alone in a little boat before that, so, I knew at least one or two places. And from there, I tried to pick out some other ones from there. But mostly I tried the first what I know. Then try other places after that. It took me, oh, maybe about ten years at least to find out exactly where they are, when they are there. What time of the day they are there and when they move out, when they come back in again and things like that. It's very hard to find out, if you have to work on finding it out. But if you learn it from somebody who has done that already, it would be a lot easier. Like maybe if I should sit down and write a book

about it and you can read it from the book. It would be easier.

Then after I finished guiding, I had to do something else after I got better from my operation. Then I wouldn't want to tell you what I was thinking about, what I would do to make a little money, you know. (chuckles) But I didn't do it anyway.

Tony: What was it?

Bill: I wouldn't want, I wouldn't want to say.

Tony: Okay.

Bill: So I started a little commercial fishing. I bought nets, what I'm going to use for fishing, and I'm still at it now.

Tony: So you're still doing commercial fishing?

Bill: Still doing commercial fishing.

Tony: Where do you do that? Where do you go?

Bill: Up around, mostly up around this area like Smith Bay,

what they call Smith Bay, and up around Manitowaning Bay. Up around South Bay and Wikwemi Crossing, Lake Huron. Up around Lake Huron, you know. But I only fish during the summer because I fish alone. I don't have a partner. I did give it a shot at, like trying to get somebody to help me out, when I first started. But everybody has the same problem. Like the problem I had in my earlier days. They drink too much. And when you are ready to go, like maybe you have to fish up. You have to take care of what you're doing. That's the most important thing with commercial fishing. You have to take care of what you do. Look after it, you know. If you leave your nets out there two or three days, especially during the hot, summer days, the fish would rot on you. The first ones, after three days they are no good. They are too soft. And nobody doesn't want any rotten fish, you know.

Tony: Yeah.

Bill: So what I'm saying is that you have to try and keep your fish as fresh as you can. Like fish up every day. Get fresh fish every day. I think that's the best way. And that's the only way you can make a little money out of it.

Tony: What sort of a boat do you have now?

Bill: You must have seen it laying on the, right behind that old truck there.

Tony: Oh yeah, yeah.

Bill: That aluminum boat, that's about eighteen foot long.

Tony: And you go out and you take that out and how many nets do you set?

Bill: Well, last year I had about twelve altogether. But I don't pull in that many nets at any one time, you know. There is three in a bunch. I tie them, put them three all together. And three over there and three over there, you know. Because with that many nets, when they are soaking wet there is too much weight on them.

Tony: In the boat?

Bill: For that aluminum boat, you know.

Tony: Yeah.

Bill: Especially if the water gets a little rough.

Tony: What sort of fish do you catch?

Bill: Mostly whitefish. And trout, like splake, cohoe, speckled, rainbow, you name it, all kinds of trout. Not very many but at least you get a few. But mostly whitefish.

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Tony: Where do you sell them?

Bill: Well, I sell them everywhere. See, I've been doing this for a number of years now, and a lot of people know me. And they come and buy the fish right here.

Tony: Buy fresh fish. Come to the house?

Bill: Even the white people on the island here, they come all the way from Gore Bay, from Sudbury, to pick up a few fish here, fresh fish. So I never catch enough fish to go around, you know.

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Bill: I'm always short of fish. I might even have to buy some fish from somebody. Like, a lot of people would phone about how many fish they would like at that certain day. And a lot of people would come up here and leave their coolers in here with ice. And they want to hang around for maybe a couple of days someplace else and just leave their coolers right here. And I just put the fish in there, you know. So I never had any problems selling fish. Even if I catch maybe a ton a day, I sell them right away.

Tony: You just sell them just as they are, eh?

Bill: Just as they are. No, well depending what the buyer says, you know. How he wants the fish. If I had to fillet the fish, well I have to fillet them. Or some people don't want, even not to bother with gutting at least, like taking the guts out. They like them round. They can work on them better when they sort of clean them when they are round. Like scaling the fish, you know. So I try to keep them as moist as they can just so the scales don't get dried up.

Oh, there is a lot of things that you have to.... That's the very same problem I had when I started commercial fishing. Like I just told you about bass fishing out there. I didn't know the area where to fish. Even though, when I was a boy, I went out with my old man sometimes. And we didn't have anything, like maybe a kicker or anything like that. We used to row across the bay here with a boat, with a punt. We used to live down the hill and we'd leave the bay there and then he points where he wants to go, across the bay over there or over there on this side. I often wondered why he is going over there, all the way out there. This is about two miles wide and it takes times to get out there with a rowboat. And there is a lot of water that we're going... we just passed the water. That's the same water that's over there where we were going. Why not put the net right here, right in front of the house there. That's what came to my mind. But I was only a dumb kid at the time, but I didn't know it.

But after I started fishing, you know, like commercial fishing, then this all came back to my head, what my old man was doing,

where he was fishing.  I know exactly where he went because I was with him but there was another problem, I never think about it you know, what time of the year we went there, what month. You know, I never thought about that.  So, the very first thing that come up to my head is, "Well, I was out there with my old man so I'll go and set over there right now."  I had a motor, I just had to run the motor and within ten minutes I was across

the bay.  Not like the old way where we have to row a way out there.  So I set the net.  First thing in the morning, I got out there before my wife gets up in the morning.  Usually I leave here maybe about five o'clock in the morning.  So, pull the net in the boat, there is no fish.  Well, it's the same place where we set the net when I went with my old man. Although I didn't go out with him when he fishes up in the morning.  I was still in bed at the time.  But I know he was catching fish because he brings them home, you know.  So I set it again right the same place.  First thing in the morning again, I go out there, the same place.  Pull up the net, the same thing, no fish.  And this keeps going on for maybe about a week.  Maybe if I'm lucky, maybe I get one or two.

And these kind of nets we were using, we were using nylon nets. That's a very fine thread, you know.  These cotton ones that we used to use like when my old man was fishing, even if you dipped that thing now anyplace, you wouldn't catch nothing.  I don't know why, but that's what happens.  Not only the people change when everything went wrong.  That goes for the fish, too.  And the animals that live in the forest.  And even the worms that crawl on the ground.  I don't know, I don't know just exactly what happened.

Ernest:  You catch more fish with the nylon nets now?

Bill:  Oh, yeah.  If you use a nylon net and set it out someplace where the fish are, and maybe the next night you'd put that cotton net in there, you'd be lucky if you....  Maybe you got, say, maybe about fifty fish on that nylon net and you put that cotton net in there the next night.  You'd be lucky if you get one fish.

Ernest:  You know, I believe that after watching Suzuki's program about the migration of fish.  They even smell the different creeks.  They smell different, you know this was on television.

Bill:  Maybe they smell the people too, the ones that are doing the fishing.  I'll tell you another story about fishing, like I know the people.  I happened to be with those people when they were fishing.  They were fishing for pike.  And we were trolling, in the little boat.  And I was running the motor, of course, I was guiding for them.  And one guy caught a fish. The guy that sits right ahead of me got a fish.  There was the other guy a little bit up front of the boat, you know.  And this guy, he got one.  So we got him in and I put that fish on a stringer and hang him on the side of the boat.  And we didn't

move maybe about twenty feet and he got another one after we got going again. And that guy, he caught four fish in a very short time. That same guy, you know. But the other guy was sitting at the front end of the boat didn't catch any. They were fishing from the same boat and the same water.

Ernest: The same day.

Bill: The same day, the same hour, everything is the same. But this other guy was kind of surprised about that, you know. I told him, "When the guy catches this fish, a fish like this one here, when you know he's got a fish on, you bring your line in. Even if you don't have anything on there, bring it in. So you won't get all tangled up with the other line, with the fish." So, I looked at him after I took the fish off the hook and put him on the stringer, and I looked at him. I just sat there and look at him and he was looking at his bait. He was just turning it over and over and over and over. Then he sort of looked surprised, you know. So he poke his buddy there that was sitting right ahead of him. "Here," he said, "would you give me your bait so I could have a look at it?" "Why?" "Well, I just want to look at it." So he gave him the bait. And these people, they were using the same bait, the same color, the same stripes on the bait and the same size, the same width and they sort of weighed them, you know. "Well," he says, "they're about the same weight." And he kept on turning it over. "There," he says, "I see the problem now." But he didn't say what the problem was. He reached down there in the bottom of the boat where the tackle box, you know, and he took out a marker. "Now," he says, "the problem is the price on this bait." (chuckles) This guy who was catching all the fish, paid 85  for his bait." It shows on the bait, you know, that marker. "And while myself, I only paid 60  for mine. And it's the same bait but the price is different." So he had a marker in his hand. He scribbled that 60  with the marker and a little bit higher on top here, he put a dollar and five. (all chuckle) Just mark it on there. "Now," he said, "I'm going to cheat a little bit." So I asked him, "Are you ready?" "Yeah." I told him, "Throw your cast out as soon as you feel the boat start to move, you cast out towards the back end of the boat." So they did. And by God, we didn't move maybe about ten feet, he got a fish. "There," he says, "I told you I'm going to get one." So he brought it in. And that guy, he kept on catching the fish until he got his limit. Six was the limit at the time, you know. And this other guy never got another one after those four fish he got before that other one.

Ernest: Well, if you want to impress your girl friend, you don't take her to a cheap restaurant.

(all chuckle)

Bill: This actually happened, you know. I don't know whether, I doubt that the fish can see that...

Tony:  (chuckles) The price.

Bill:  The price on that, you know.  After you throw it out there, when you drag that thing, that thing is always moving. There is a lot of action on that.  But it happened.

Tony:  This is just a question I have for you because I'm kind of interested in this.  Do you find very often that when you take people out fishing, one person will catch most of the fish?

Bill:  Well, yeah, that's always the case.

Tony:  Why do you think that happens?

Bill:  Well, that could be a lot of things that can happen, you know.  A lot of people would make suggestions about it, you know.  Some people will say that the reason why you catching maybe less fish or don't catch any fish is because you don't put enough, when the collection goes around in the church, you don't put enough money in there.  Or maybe you don't think like a fish, you know.

Tony:  To read the right price. (chuckles)

Bill:  Yeah, right.  Or there are different ways of trying to figure that out but the obvious answer would be, is simply, I don't know.

Ernest:  Old George Corbierre would...(inaudible).

Bill:  But it happens, you know.

Tony:  I know that happens.

Bill:  Maybe three or four people in there with one guy will catch almost all the fish that are caught in that boat.  Maybe a little more experience or beginner's luck, I don't know.

Tony:  Just put this on...

Bill:  We used to go out there on a sailboat when people had sailboats out here.  On a sailboat, picking berries out there, up that way.  And we used to take our berries to that store there in Britt.  (Ojibway) they call them, at the general store there.  We went there almost every year for quite a while.

Tony:  You used to go out there on a sailboat?

Bill:  We used to go out there in a sailboat.

Tony:  We were talking to somebody else a day or two ago and he said that those sailboats were made here.

Ernest:  Yeah...

Bill: Most of them were.

Tony: Were they?

Bill: Yeah.

Tony: Where did the information come from to be able to build them, to be able to make them? Who taught the people here to make those boats?

Bill: I really don't know. But I used to see a lot of them. In fact, they were the only kind of boats that were here when I was a young fellow, you know. We used to go down the beach there with all those poles standing up and where the sail goes up. Them poles standing up in the boat.

Ernest: Mast.

Tony: The mast?

Bill: The mast, yeah. And there used to be a lot of those boats. Some of them had two masts. Some of them even three. I believe there was one, even yet he had three. But most of them just had the one sail. And there were maybe about twenty, twenty-five boats there at that time.

Tony: And would they all go out together when you went berry picking or...?

Bill: Well, not the same day. But most of the time the people would leave here as soon as the berries are starting to - but a lot of them would kind of hang around because they have....

Like maybe haying during the summer would kind of keep them there a little bit longer here. But most of them who hasn't got a farm, they just go as soon as the berries are ready to pick.

Ernest: Blueberries.

Bill: Sometimes maybe a little bit early, you know. But after a while maybe staying out there for about a week, the berries are starting to ripe a little more than when they first started.

Tony: How old were you when this was happening? When you were doing this? Going out in the boats?

Bill: Oh, I was about thirteen, fourteen years old. In fact, my old man had a sailboat himself and he used to use that going up around. When my old man is still busy, I took over the boat, you know. And the people out there.

Christine: Where would you go berry picking?

Bill: Well, we used to start up around Collins Inlet, where they call Collins Inlet. Like either side of Collins Inlet,

like in the channel. And up around, on the south side of it, on the outside I might say. That's up around Point Grondine. And when we started picking berries there, usually they last until about, oh, a good part of August. They are not very high, you know. They are only about this high. I mean the bushes, you know. And they get burned late in August by the time they are through, then the highbush cranberries come to ripe, a little bit further down south, like towards Bad River. Britt, and the Key Harbour, what they call Key Harbour, that's on this side of Britt. We used to do a lot of berry picking out there. Then the highbush cranberry is about that high in places, you know.

Tony: A couple of feet.

Bill: Yeah.

Ernest: (Ojibway).

Bill: (Ojibway) And when the highbush cranberries are over, when they are done, then you start picking cranberries. So there is always something to work on, to make a little money.

Tony: Did you stay away for long when you'd go off on those trips?

Bill: Oh, yeah.

Tony: How long?

Bill: Oh, at least three months.

Tony: Where did you sleep?

Bill: In a tent. We put up a tent. Some of the people sleep in the boat. Although there is no cabin on it but there is always a cover, something you can cover it up with. Just in case it rains during the night.

Tony: So you'd make a camp, eh? Would you make a camp?

Bill: No, we didn't make a camp, we just put up a tent.

Tony: That's it, then you'd take it down each day?

Bill: Yeah. If we have to move.

Ernest: Some of them stayed in the same area for a while.

Bill: Sometimes, yeah. Maybe two or three boats would stay in the same place, you know. If there was lots of berries around to pick.

Tony: How many people to a boat?

Bill: Well, depending on the size of the family. Maybe the

family who goes out there maybe might have a large family. Maybe about, seven or eight kids. And the parents. That's ten people altogether.

Tony: So each of these boats would be a family affair?

Bill: It is, very much.

Tony: Well, what did you do with all the berries you picked?

Bill: We sell them. Like what we pick up around this Collins Inlet, up around Collins Inlet and up around Point Grondine, we'd take our berries here to Killarney. That Jackman used to buy all the berries that all the people picked. And some people would bring them in here, like in Wikki (Wikwemikong),

and sell them to Manitowaning, to people in Manitowaning and up around Little Current. So you always had some place to sell them. That's when the boat was running along the shoreline you know, the, what they call that - (Ojibway), Manitou.

Ernest: Manitou, Normack.

Bill: Normack.

Helen: Algoma.

Ernest: Algoma.

Bill: Yeah, that's when the...

Ernest: Caribou.

Bill: Caribou. (Ojibway) Caribou.

Ernest: Highbou, there was a Highbou. Owen Sound transportation.

Bill: Yeah. Yeah, that boat used to run up along the shore, the north shore. Way up to the Sault (Sault St. Marie), as far as the Sault. And it comes down again with a load of stuff, like for the people that live along the shore. Now, they don't do that anymore.

Ernest: All the storekeepers on the island were supplied. There was no highway. There was no transport.

Tony: Oh, so they had a provision boat that went up and down the lake?

Bill: Right. And they would take the people and they... like these sales they have here in Little Current, livestock sales, you know. They load those livestock, like cattle, in the boat. Take them down to Owen Sound.

Ernest: We had a government dock in West Bay and there was a pen and the island farmers from Mindemoya, they would bring

their cattle, sheep. Load them on the...

Bill: Sheep, pigs, everything.

Ernest: Load them on that Caribou. And they carried passengers for pleasure. They were talking about reviving that, just for passengers, just to tour the Great Lakes.

That would be nice. I'd like to go on one. Just follow that.

He gave a talk one time in the hall. (Ojibway)

Bill: Yeah.

Ernest: And he gave some great stories. What was it, I'm trying to think of what I would like to ask him to repeat. Oh, one thing he mentioned about food, (Ojibway). He talked about how they used to preserve food. If you left meat on the floor, it would... as long as it was hanging... (Ojibway).

Bill: Well, in the old days when we were brought up, even after we got married when we had a family of our own, I used to go out and shoot a deer anytime across the bay. There was a lot of deer at the time, you know, and it was easy to get meat. Like deer meat or rabbits or birds. Like maybe partridge. It was easy. And all you had to do was to get out there and shoot them. And...

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

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