

Interview with Paul "Poof" Tardif

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At the Berlin and Coos County Historical Society, Berlin, New Hampshire

Interviewer: Ken Turino

Crew: Josh Silveira

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Q: We start this out by asking everyone to say their name and then to spell their last name.

0:08 – PT: My name is Paul Tardiff, T A R D I F F.

Q: Paul you were born here in Berlin?

0:18 –PT: I was. I was born and raised in Berlin. Born here on June 9th, 1945 on the west part of Berlin and lived here all my life except for a stint in college and a tour of Vietnam with the United States Army. Other than that I have been here all my life.

Q: So, let me ask you this, you have got a colorful nickname. Can you tell us about that?

0:54 – PT: I do! Yes I can. My nickname is Poof, P O O F. Now it is strange because I have an older brother and for some reason he never picked up that nickname. Now I say the reason he didn't pick it up because it was my father's nickname. My father graduated the president of the class of 1927 in Berlin High School and when I look in the yearbook I can see that he had that nickname then and of course I do remember all of the men calling him Poof. He worked in the mill. He was an electrician in the mill here in Berlin. We never questioned him how he got that name. My father passed away actually thirty-nine years ago today in the mill and after he passed away it was funny because we questioned them about the name. Now the reason we questioned them about the name was because when I was first or second grade the young kids used to say "my father or my mother says your father's name is poof" and they kept saying it and it stuck with me. So, that is how I got the name. Now the how did the name develop is funny because I asked an uncle of mine, a brother-in-law of my father, who knew him from years years ago back in the twenties and he said my father got that nickname because my father was a great hunter, a great outdoorsman, and every time we would come back to camp or he would come back to town or he would go to the mill and they asked him "well, how did hunting go?" Well, he said, "I was out in the woods" and he would put his hands up and he would go "Poof, I either missed him or I got him" and

“poof” this or “poof” that and he picked up the nick name. Now he had that nickname like I said when he was in high school. So, at some point in high school he must have picked it up. I don’t know if he had it but as the years went on and the young kids knew that was my father’s name I picked it up and I never regretted it at all. As a matter of fact there are many people in Berlin that know me as Poof and do not know my real name. So that is the story of Poof. (laughs)

Q: And it sounds like it came from as you said from hunting. Did hunting and fishing and the outdoors play a big part of growing up and in your life?

3:26 – PT: It most certainly did and I still do both of them; fish, hunt recreation. I hunt, I fish I enjoy the outdoors, I four-wheel, I snowmobile. I used to snowshoe, but my knees tell me I can’t. I just enjoy being in the outdoors. I have a place up in Thirteen Mile Woods which is about twenty-two miles from here, my own place, and I raised my kids in there and now I have grandkids that come up with me. So, I have always found the outdoors to be a great great place for children. You know they are going to travel. My kids are gone now. They come back occasionally but they are seeing the rest of the country, but I showed them what I thought was very important parts, just the outdoors. Now my father did the same thing with me. I can remember going hunting with him and he was very careful. When I was five, six years old myself, my brother, my sisters didn’t want to go, and just enjoy the woods. He had a camp in the 1930’s and by the time I was born I used to go with him. I just enjoyed everything about the outdoors and still do. I am not alone. There are quite a lot of people in Berlin that still do the same thing too because of where we are situated up here you know in the mountains. Let’s enjoy it you know? Yes I do. I still enjoy it and I will always.

(Pause for technical adjustment)

Q: We were hearing from Jackie (Nadeau) before you came about her experiences growing up and going to camp and she went virtually all summer from the day after school. So, it might be interesting to hear from a guy. Did you do that? What was your summer experience with camp?

5:23 – PT: I did. My mother’s parents had a camp at an area in Errol, New Hampshire called Akers Pond and as a young kid through my teens every summer we would go there. My father also had a camp in the woods we called hunting camp, but we spent our summers up at Akers Pond which many of Berlin’s people have done. Not only Akers Pond but Success Pond, the areas around here families went to. That is where I spent a lot of my summers learning to swim, and going from there fishing and just enjoying it. It wasn’t a long ride and many Berlin people went up there and spent their vacations so it was almost like being home because you were with the locals. There are quite a few places around here that people do that.

Q: Can you describe, give us a day in your life at camp in the summer?

6:27 – PT: A day of my life at camp in the summer. First of all it was getting up and having breakfast and seeing if the day was great because either we are going to go swimming and spend the whole day swimming or hiking around in the woods, getting in the boat and going out on the pond Pickerel fishing. I used to Pickerel fish with a spinning rod and I also Pickerel fished with a long bamboo pole that had salt pork at the end of the line and dangled it and the Pickerel used to run through the, skim through the water to get it. I used to do that. There were times when we went up there to Akers Pond that my father still worked so he would travel every day, but once his vacation started then we would go with my dad on a trip of all day fishing, or all day berrying, which I really didn't like but my father and my uncle could pick berries, blueberries, raspberries, I have never seen people pick berries like that. As a matter of fact, they went one day and came back and they had buckets of blueberries and my mother and my aunt said "what are we going to do with all of these berries?" and my father said "hold on." They emptied the tool box in the back of the car and had filled that with berries also. Actually frozen berries got mushy and stuff like that but at night I looked forward to blueberry dumplings, blueberries and milk, blueberries in the morning with my cereal. Like I said, many people in the North Country did the same thing. So, that was a day in there. My friends would be up there. I would have cousins that came from Michigan. I couldn't wait for them to come and we would get together and we would go swimming and like I said hiking and bicycling all in that little area and the days just went right by. It was great.

Q: Were you up there for the Fourth Of July or were you in town?

8:36 – PT: Probably up there. If it was a weekend we would be up there for the Fourth Of July.

Q: Anything special?

8:43 – PT: Nothing special you know. A little bit of fireworks but not like today. Today they have fireworks demonstrations in that town. We didn't have them back then, but if we could get our hands on some fireworks and firecrackers we did. The parents were very cautious about that you know. They didn't want us to get hurt. We were able to get fireworks. Most of them came from the Province of Quebec, so some how they were brought over the line illegally and we would get our hands on them and we loved firing firecrackers. I tried to do them one at a time but some people would just light the whole thing off and I would say now there that is all gone you know what I am saying? That is what we did, swimming and recreation and cookouts and homemade ice cream. I can remember as a young kid my father had a machine that used ice and I can't remember completely. My sisters and my brother are older than me would know, and they would turn this machine and we couldn't wait as young kids to get some of that ice cream and it was great, great great ice cream, homemade.

Q: Did you get to lick the dasher?

9:50 – PT: I don't remember that if we got to lick the dasher but we had our fill of ice cream as it was you know.

Q: You mentioned hunting camp. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

10:00 – PT: Yes, hunting camp was different than vacation camp. Our hunting camp my father had built in 1945 was off of a dirt road in the middle of Thirteen Mile woods and it was a place where you went to more in the fall OK or more in the winter time to snowshoe or to ski. Once they started with snowmobiles that was a great area and it still is one of the top areas. Hunting camp we would get our things together by the end of September so we could spend October and November, get the wood ready at the hunting camp, and make sure the stove was ready. So, we would go on weekends to hunting camp and spend the weekends up there hunting, walking through the woods, had trails that we had made, spotted, and we would do that mostly in October and November. Like I said by the time winter came in the early sixties snowmobiling had started and we enjoyed it up there at the same time. I eventually went on thirty-five, thirty-six years ago and built my own camp two miles away but in the same area. I spend all my time up there now. I spend all my time up there summer and winter that I can because the recreation is great.

Q: It sounds like a great experience.

11:26 – PT: It is great and I think it is great for...I never, I might have had a few people come and visit that said "how can you stay here?" Well I don't stay there per se all week. You know two or three days. Most people say "what a beautiful place, how quiet it is". It just...and to get out on the porch and look at the stars. I mean I had guys that would come hunting with me who were from New York. They were friends of my brother-in-law and brothers of my brother-in-law. They were right from the city and their experience of stepping out on a deck and seeing the stars was great. They said to me "you know Poof, you can step out on a street in New York but you don't see the stars, and this is so beautiful." One of them still comes up. He is in his seventies and he still comes up.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit about, you have studied a lot about the history or you have written about the history of Berlin. I would like to know a little bit about what you think the role of the river has been for the history of this town, this city. What is its place?

12:41 – PT: The river is the number one factor why Berlin became Berlin. The settlers came up here from Maine in the Shelburne area and walked along the river and found that this spot in Berlin, what they called the beginning of the falls which is over by Heritage Park and where it drops from there through Berlin is two hundred (200) feet. There is no place in New England, no river in New England that has the power of the

Androscoggin for those two hundred (200) feet. It also drops four hundred feet (400) in six miles starting at the height of the falls, the beginning of the falls. So, that one section, that one mile section or so that drops through Berlin two hundred (200) feet the pioneers figured out you know there is power there. It was time to use it. Although they were here for thirty-five, forty years when technology came about and when the railroad came to Berlin, another factor, the river started to get its use. The headwaters for the Androscoggin River are a hundred miles from Berlin. They go up way up into the state of Maine. As a matter of fact there is one final area up in Maine where once you go over the mountain and the water goes down it goes to the St. Lawrence, tributaries of the St. Lawrence. The other way are tributaries to the Androscoggin. Now the Androscoggin River itself only starts in Errol, but all the water that comes into it through the lakes from New Hampshire and Maine all come to that area. So, when they decided that they were going to try to build a saw mill and use the power of the Androscoggin River ok that was one thing. They got that saw mill built in the 1850's and the next thing was how are we going to get that wood to the saw mills? Well, we have a river ok and all that softwood, all those long logs to make lumber all were put in the water and they were brought down the river to Berlin. So, two factors; it was the transportation for the logs and it was power to run the saw mill and that was just the start because going from the 1850s to the 1900s there became five and six mills on that river and they were all put in that area that I said dropped two hundred (200) feet except for one of the mills the Cascade Mills which is still here. That still has power too. Every one of those mills utilized the power of the river. Now I read back in the history when these mills, all these paper mills and saw mills were operating and Berlin was booming they were only using twenty (20) percent of the power that that river was producing. That is how powerful the river was. It had pitches and turns and drops and the pioneers that came here and the engineers that came here later on used all of that. So, yes the Androscoggin River was a very very big factor and it is still in use now for power, electrical power, but it is not used anymore for bringing the logs down. That is the way the transportation was. That all stopped in 1964. They stopped the logs from coming down the river and they went to modern technology to trucks, but the remnants of all that logging is still there by people come up and see the boom piers on the river. They ask all the time. I have researched that for them. I have told them the stories about it and unless you want to hear more of those stories we could go on because that river had so much to do with Berlin and it still can to this day and it is my belief produce a lot more for this city.

Q: I would love to hear a few of the stories.

17:35 – PT: Well it is the...first of all the loggers, talking about the loggers they all left you know in November and they would travel up into the woods up into areas as I said that were almost a hundred (100) miles away. All along the waterways, the lakes and that area and they would spend all winter long cutting wood. All that wood was headed for Berlin. Now they spent all winter long six days a week working very hard piling all that

wood either near a water or on a lake, anywhere where they could get it into the water. They did that all winter long. At one point at one time, at one point in time there were six thousand men working in the woods along with the thousands of men that were working in the mills. Now by the time April came and all the logs were piled on the lakes or alongside the river, the melting snows brought all the water up and as the water came up the wood would be put in the brooks, brought to a lake, pulled across the lake by boats, brought to another lake, sometimes four lakes it would cross before it got to the Androscoggin River. This is where the famous river driver came in because it was his job, ok, to get those logs moving. When I used to teach I used to tell the kids a little story about Berlin. Now, just remember or just imagine that you put a note in a bottle and put a cork in it and you threw it in the ocean and wanted it to go somewhere. Now just imagine doing that way up in the woods in the spring time in some little brook and you want that bottle to come to Berlin because you know the water comes to Berlin. Now you are going to throw that bottle in but you gotta drive it down. It is going to get stuck along the way. It is going to get stuck and it is going to be in the bend of a brook. You are going to have to move it, and move it, and move it and then eventually you will get it across the lake and eventually into the river and it will float down so that your friend someday will find it here in Berlin coming down the river. That is one bottle. Imagine thousands and thousands of cords of wood that these men had to do the same thing with and bring to Berlin. They had to get them down a brook. They had to get them in a lake. They had to get them to the river and they would jam up and they would have to get on these logs and they would have to struggle to get these jams undone. They used dynamite. They used shear muscle. They used on their feet, on their feet they had spiked boots which looked like this (holds up a boot). They wore these boots so they wouldn't fall. Those men worked hard. Many, and I want to say eighty percent of those men, could not swim. So when they fell they were in danger. When they fell the logs would come over them. Many men were saved, but many lives were lost. It was a tough job, but that was their job. They utilized the river, the river to bring all that wood. They are gone. Those men that did that, they went when we stopped bringing logs down the river, so they are like the cowboy. He doesn't exist anymore the cowboy. If you want to see a cowboy well they will have to act as a cowboy. If you want to see a river driver they would have to act as one, so those days are gone. It was all because of the river that these things were made. It was their job. Some of them did two jobs. They worked in the woods and they worked in the rivers. So, it was hard work but they brought all of that stuff to Berlin, to the men that worked in the mills and made it boom. We had all of the natural resources. We still do, we just don't have the mills for it anymore.

Q: That lasted until 1964?

22:16 – PT: 1964 was the, in November of '64, was the last year or the last time that logs came down the river and were put in piles to be utilized by the mill. The rest now all comes down with trucks, or did come down with trucks, to the mills.

Q: I am going to jump around here and ask you a couple of other questions. You were for years a teacher?

22:44 – PT: I did. I taught in Berlin. I worked from 1971 to 1982. I had a shop where I taught small engines, a little bit of welding. I worked with at-risk kids and kids. I had kids that just took these shops in seventh, eighth, ninth grade level. I also coached. I coached JV hockey, because I was a hockey player at one time, for three years, and I did girls softball, high school softball, for nine years being beaten twice in the state championship game which I never won, but I enjoyed doing anyway. Then I left teaching and came back about sixteen years later and taught for ten more years and worked with at-risk kids, kids that had a hard time in school. I really enjoyed being with them. They were tough, they were stressful but somebody had to work with them. As a matter of fact just this year one of them had graduated and told me that was the best thing he ever did was to come into my class and follow the rules and those are the good things that you like to hear. Yes, I taught twenty-one years total and just retired this past year.

Q: In that time of teaching did you see a lot of changes in the schools?

24:18 – PT: I did. What I saw changes in the schools were changes in the way that some of the parents think. Parents have to be behind the teachers and they have to help us with their kids and believe me there are many parents that do. But, it just seems sometimes that they will send them to school and not even worry. That it is our job to do everything with them, and it isn't. Our job is to do the best that we can to teach them. To teach them right from wrong when they are in the lower grades, but we need to be backed up by the parents too. I think that those are some of the things that are going to have to turn back to the older days where when or if you had detention in school and you go home you just don't go home and play a video game. You are going to go home and get reprimanded also, because if you don't then what is the sense. It is tough for the teacher. It makes it a lot tougher on the teacher for sure. That is what I did at school. I worked with the at-risk kids. I taught them science, English, math, social studies and we did well. We did well, but there was a decision made to cut the program and I was old enough so I just retired.

Q: Another question I wanted to ask you. You mentioned your military service?

26:04 – PT: I did.

Q: Why don't you tell us a little bit about that? I am also really interested to know, I mean that was a contentious time in our country's history.

26:17 – PT: It was.

Q: I am interested to know what it was like in Berlin, how people reacted and your experience.

26:24 – PT: I can tell you that I served in the US Army from 1966 to 1969, actually about two and a half years, and those were the turbulent years in the Sixties. The Turbulent Sixties they called it. There were many many Berlin boys and even girls that were serving in the service and Vietnam of course was the number one for ten years. For ten years it consumed most of our lives, but one thing I can say is that the City of Berlin supported its soldiers. It was a small town. I can remember after serving in Vietnam coming home and leaving the state of Washington and ending up in Chicago and if you remember those years in Chicago you weren't safe as a soldier. You wanted to take your uniform off and put civilian clothes on because it was dangerous. Fights would break out and everything. I could see it. I could see it happening in the airport and I just couldn't wait to get on to get back to Berlin. When I came back to Berlin my family, my friends, all of them were waiting for me at the airport right here in Berlin and it told me that I didn't go over there for nothing. I had support, and I am sure there are many small towns in America that did the same thing. Berlin was just like that. So, that was my experience. Of course there's a lot more experiences in the service than that but that was my experience about Berlin and dealing with Berlin and being in the service.

Q: It sounds like obviously you were supported by people here. There must have been people who were against the war too here in Berlin.

28:24 – PT: I am sure there was. As a matter of fact I remember my mother, back Vietnam war we had reel to reel tapes and we would send little reel to reel tapes and I remember my sister I believe, my father and mother would go to Mass every Sunday and pray for me and everything and my sister said there was one of the Priests would preach against the war and it really annoyed my father because his son is over there and also many other fathers whose children were over there. My sister said he didn't go to church to hear that. It's not what he wanted to hear. He went to church to pray, to pray for me you know him and my mother and my father was very easy going but she said at the end of the Mass when you walked out of Mass and the Priest was standing there you know saying hi to you, my father stopped and told him "My son is in Vietnam and I don't want to hear that again." I don't know what happened there but my father was not one to say things like that but my sister told me that is what he said. He said "you support them, I am supporting them. Give those kids a chance". That was the only thing that I heard negative about Berlin because most everybody else was in support of the troops that were there.

Q: You must have had other friends who served?

29:59 – PT: I did. I had other friends that served, friends that died from Berlin and their names are on The Wall. That is the way it is. It still goes on today. It a sad thing but I am truly an American and freedom to me there is no such thing better than freedom and some people just, I don't know, just don't get it but I do believe me. Especially when I am in the outdoors like I said and enjoying what I want to enjoy and I can do it.

Q: That is great. That is great. Before you went in to the service, did you go into the service right from high school?

30:51 – PT: No I didn't. I had gone to school for a while then I left school and went into the service and came back from the service and got a degree in engineering and then I had to...when I got into teaching it took me another six years of credits to get the teaching degree so that is the way I did it. I got into it that way. Although there were many that left high school and went right into the service. That's what their choice was. It wasn't mine.

Q: you said your father worked in the mills?

31:24 – PT: That is right.

Q: What did he do?

31:26 – PT: My father my uncles, like many Berlinites the whole families worked in the mill. There were...I have written stories about a father and maybe eight or nine of his sons all working at the same time in that mill and making a good living. Just remember that the men that worked in the mills and the women that worked in the mills in Berlin during its heyday made good money. As good if not better money than anywhere in the state and had a good living, made a good living. My father started working in the mills, as a matter of fact, my father went to the University of New Hampshire in 1927. By 1929 the stock market crashed. He had to come home. He couldn't stay in college. He had to come home and help the family so he went to work around 1929 in the mills. He became an electrical foreman and spent many of his days in that mill. I can remember the phone ringing; they needed my father, they needed my father, to fix this to fix that. On July 22nd, 1970 at the age of sixty-two years old he decided he was going to stay a little longer in the mill maybe until he was sixty-five. Well, he passed away in that mill from a heart attack. Of course the mill, like many mills, lost a lot of men. A lot of men died in these mills here in Berlin by accidents or by stress. In the early days before we had OSHA so many men got killed in the mills. I have written about them. Every week you would read about men getting killed or seriously injured in the mills. I remember writing a story one time about the Burgess Mill, which is long gone now, and a man e-mailed me, a man that had graduated from Berlin High in 1929 and worked in the mill but was retired and lived in New York and told me that was the most dangerous of the mills. Because of its chemicals it was the most dangerous of the mills to work in. Now, I never worked in the Burgess Mill and maybe there are some men that could tell you

that it wasn't dangerous, but in the early Thirties it was very dangerous. There were accidents that took three and four people at a time and left children homeless, women there alone to take care of their kids. So, it was a very dangerous mill that Burgess Mill because of the chemicals they used in there in the paper industry there. That I was told many times when I would write about it and read about it.

Q: what do you consider the heyday of the mills?

34:14 – PT: Well by 1920 there were mills two miles, almost a mile and a half along either side of the river and logging was going on in all parts of Maine and New Hampshire to supply these mills. So, you know from the 1920s until up through the late Sixties the mills did well. Even during the Depression, even during the Depression it seems like the mills in Berlin survived more than other companies did. For what reason I am not quite sure, but in the Thirties they re-organized and there was three, four thousand men working in these mills. At one time there was different paper mills. Up until 1930 we had the International Paper Mill in Berlin and they went down. Then the Brown Company took over. So, the heyday I would say for at least forty years from the 20s to the 60s were the heydays of the mills. Until in 1980 the Brown Company got out of it and sold, and once they sold every company that would buy would sell off the land that they bought with it. Now just remember that the Brown Company when the Brown's first took over bought all the land North of Berlin, into Maine, almost everything they could get their hands on that they could feed into the river. They didn't have to pay for their product; they only had to pay for the labor. So, they had land the size of the state of Rhode Island, that much land. So, they were just smart, great workers. They were great business men. They were great for the community and they definitely when they left, when they were out of it, when the Brown Company was out of it and other companies started to buy in the mills started to go downhill because of the land. They would buy everything and they would sell off pieces of land to make their money. Now whoever owns the paper mill doesn't own any land and all we have left now is the Cascade Mill that employs I would say around a hundred and eighty (180) men. When we had mill after mill down the way, eight hundred men here, six hundred men there, seven hundred men there, you know we had four thousand people working, three thousand people working in the mills. So, those were the heydays you know of the mills and once they started almost thirty years ago they started going downhill. And, I can tell you of a mill worker from those times could really give you a good story on that.

Q: What did you see, I mean you were here, you were in the schools, what did you see as the mills closed the effect on Berlin and the town?

37:41 – PT: Well it affected everything. It affected the businesses. Every time a department would close or...you know it started with the loggers. Their job was to get the wood to the mills. The men, there were men that owned all kinds of equipment. Equipment is like you know skidders and pulp trucks. You are talking big payments to

pay for these vehicles to keep them up and when the mills started closing and they didn't have any wood to bring to the mills they started losing their jobs. They had money to spend and they would spend it in the North Country here. Berlin on Friday nights was so booming all of the businesses down town that you couldn't even walk down the sidewalk. You had to step out onto Main Street because there were so many people shopping out there at all the different businesses. As the mills started to close the businesses started to close which is a normal thing. Less people living here, less people going to school here so let's cut this program or let's cut that program. So, those are the effects that took place when the mills started closing. I can remember going to watch them blow the stacks and it rained. We were thousands of us standing in a constant rain and the stacks would go down and I am sure there were some men that worked in the mills that had tears in their eyes when these stacks went down because that is where they made their living. It is a sad thing those mills going, but you know the paper industry is dying and so they knew it. Now Berlin is trying to build up. We are trying to do something and of course the City fathers that is their job and with the help of local people. Like I said, every time something would go another business would go because they depended on the mills. I am surprised how some of these machine shops have lived through this because I know that they thrived on the mills. Anything that needed to be made for the paper machines or parts of the mills these machine shops would make them here in town, and you know they are still surviving. They must be doing other projects for sure. Somebody that would work in one of these shops could tell you but they are surviving.

Q: How many of them are there?

40:32 – PT: There is one, two on the East side, there is three that I know of. There is the Berlin Foundry, there is E.M. Cross and there is The Alpine and they all seem to be doing a pretty good business. They did a so much better business when the mills were running but they still survived.

Q: For someone steeped in history and you lived through a lot of it, these tough times for the city, what do you see for the future of Berlin?

41:07 – PT: Well, I don't get political. The minute I get political somebody will call me, but Berlin is not going to die. There is hard working people up here and somewhere along the line the economy is going to change. We definitely need road improvements OK. We are just out of the way here in Berlin. We are just like a step to the side. You take a town like Littleton and you are going to say (Route) 93 goes through it, it has got to help it. We need road improvements and we have the state prison here now we have the federal prison. I am not against these projects because they bring jobs. They bring good paying jobs and they bringing people that are going to buy houses. It is a step in the right direction but we also need to diversify. We need other businesses. There is talks of casinos. I am neither pro nor con on either one, but I think in time something will come.

They definitely want to use the tourist industry. Well, it gets pretty tough in the middle of the winter up here. People don't understand it you know. You can have some awful long days in the middle of the winter her you know I mean. There is no tourism in the middle of storms you know what I am saying, but we do definitely live in a beautiful area and we have certainly got to harness where we live. All through history that I have read and written about, the 1800's it is always the same talk in the newspapers every once in a while about the area we live in. Let's utilize it, the mountains, the rivers, the lakes, we just live in a splendid area. For some reason we still have not found the niche yet for some reason and I don't know why and I can't answer that but these places are out there to use. In the early days they had the grand hotels in the area. People would come to visit in the mountains so I don't know. They are working and they are working hard at it. It is the area we live you know we are isolated up here, but we are not alone in this country doing things like that.

Q: One of the things we ask people about is, knowing what this project is as you do, what do you want to see preserved about Berlin's history in the last hundred years/ What do we need to preserve?

43:57 – PT: we definitely need to preserve all the mill activity, the sporting activity. We are rich in sports history. We are rich in the working history, the labor history, and all the unions that used to be here. They have got to be preserved and every time I write I preserve one. Each time that I put out a book that is preserved. So, those are things that have to be preserved. Also, you know the history of what happened to the paper business. Everything that has gone on right from the start to you know up to a climax and down has to be preserved as far as I am concerned you know. All the people that have lived here all of the different nationalities that have come and gone they all contributed to this city and every one of them they have to be preserved, they have to be talked about, what they contributed. For example, I mean the Norwegians were one of the first people here. They came with the saw mill in 1852. I know Berlin is a French town and at one point was mostly French, but the Norwegians were here first, the Yankees and the Norwegians and then the French came and they had their own little area up there called Norwegian Village. They worked in the saw mills and they came here because they knew about the woods. Norway, Sweden, Denmark they lived in the woods up in there in the mountains and when they got here and they looked around it looked like home to them. So, they would write home. Come to the United States. Come to Berlin, New Hampshire. It is a great area. With them they brought the skiing, all of the things that went along with skiing. I still firmly believe that and you will never convince me otherwise skiing in this country started right in that Norwegian Village. The first skis were made there, jumping started there and it just spread out because there were other parts of the country that didn't even exist in the 1850s. So, these people brought this with them. The Germans, the French, the French brought so many other things with them; the hockey. Hockey has been embedded in here, but you know boxing in the Twenties and

the Thirties was a great big sport, baseball. There are a lot of sports in Berlin that I write about; those have got to be preserved. All of the nationalities, they all had their own spots but then they mixed. They produced other people and more generations. You can go to a Frenchman now and he can bring you back to a grandfather that is Norwegian or a grandmother that is Italian. That is a normal procedure once people say well hey Lets' mix you know. Berlin had that mixture. It had that mixture for many many years. We can't forget it and we have to keep its history.

Q: We are right there with you. You mentioned the labor history and not too many people have been able to articulate the unions, the importance. We know that there were some strikes; we have talked to some people who were involved in the union in some of the mills. Could you just mention something briefly about, since you know the history?

47:46 – PT: Well, once the mills started to boom and you can read about it in the papers, I had previously mentioned that many men died in these mills, and when they died they had nothing. There was no benefit for their offspring or for their wives or their relatives. By the late 1800's and early 1900's they joined forces. Unions came in. They had all kinds of unions. They had unions for every part of the mill. They were good for them at the time. They were good. They helped the people. They helped the workers. They helped them get money. They helped them take care of themselves after accidents. That is how these unions came in, and the Browns hired the best people that they could to make the company go. Besides the unions being here the Brown hired some of the top engineers in the world. A little story to tell you. They had a research department that was number one in the country here. The buildings still stand. Anything that had to do with the pulp and paper business, anything, they would patent right here in Berlin. Some of these men went off on their own. One of the little inventions that I always talk about took place right here in Berlin in 1922. A man by the name of Hiram Farrand as a matter of fact worked for the Brown Company, was an engineer. He was brought in from another area. Mr. Brown just knew the right men to hire you know. Besides dealing with his labor unions he also had top brass, lived right near the area here and besides working there worked on his own and this is what he invented and I am going to show you first hand. It is hard for people to realize it (Takes out and opens a tape measure); invented in Berlin. This wasn't made in Berlin. This was made by Stanley Rule, but the forerunner of this tape measure was invented by a man hired by the Brown Company to work in the pulp and paper business and I have a picture of the forerunner thanks to the Moffett House here. With this, after he invented this, he created his own business here in Berlin and he had a factory. It was called Farrand Rapid Rule OK, and this is what it looked like, just like this (holds up Rapid Rule), invented here in Berlin, the forerunner to the Stanley Rule. For eight years the company was in Berlin until 1930 or 1931, he sold it, all of his patents to Stanley Rule. You say to yourself huh, what does it do? The same thing as the other rule (demonstrates). The Farrand Rapid Rule. If you look at the back of

this it says "patented 1922, Berlin, New Hampshire." A lot of people don't know that. That is because of all of the engineers the smart men that Brown had. Remember that when Mr. Brown was here him and his sons ran the greatest paper mills in the world, so they had great men working for them. They had patents on the nibroc towel or cream crisp, but this one is the one that when I show it to the kids they just don't believe it; invented in Berlin New Hampshire, the forerunner to the Stanley Rule, all because of the great engineers that they had. But, somebody had to protect the men that worked in the mills and that was the unions. I don't believe the engineers were part of the union but I am sure they all got along, but they needed protection. Now I am not saying that the union helped them later on in years as they wanted more and more money but they certainly did help them in the early years.

Q: I would like to ask you if you have any stories that you really think that we should capture on this documentary.

52:44 – PT: I do. I do have a story, I have a story of going to deer camp. I tell most of the people this. Actually this story starts me off with telling the history of Berlin. People ask me how did I become interested in the history of Berlin and I tell them well it was from an uncle of mine, my father's older brother who was born in 1903, who we have a picture of here in the Moffett House. Besides working in the mills he was a professional boxer like many other men. I mean top boxers. They were great. They were invited to go to Philadelphia it is just that they were here locally and I mean I even have letters from these places in Philadelphia that I had copied from my cousin for my uncle to go there. Anyway, he was a character. Besides working in the mill, besides boxing, he like many o f the others drank quite a bit too. They were colorful men. So, when I was young and I used to go hunting with my father I couldn't wait for them to have a couple of drinks they called, I can't remember what they called them, whiskey and water, there was a name for it. They would come back from hunting, we would get supper ready and they would sit down and they would have a little drink. In French it was called en scou and all of a sudden my uncle would have another one and he would start talking. He would start talking like I was with him in the Twenties. Well he would say "don't you remember what's his name?" and I would say "No, I don't remember those guys I wasn't around!" "What do you mean you don't remember him?" and he told me the story of Dan Bossie. Now Dan Bossie was reputed to be one of the best river drivers that came out of the Androscoggin River area. As a little boy my uncle would say when he was talking with us he would say "well I remember when I was visiting my aunt on School Street and she owned a two story building and I was sitting down on the porch and during the summer time when the logs weren't coming down the river Dan Bossie stayed upstairs. He rented that." I says "well what made him so famous?" Of course my uncle would get going after another drink and he would say "Famous? There is nothing he couldn't do on a log!" he says. "He was unbelievable!" He says "This one day while I was sitting down on the porch and I was young, maybe ten years old, and I wasn't

drinking when I was ten!" he said. "These three men were coming up the street and they were drinking and they were looking for Dan Bossie. The language was all French. They were swearing and I was getting scared and all of a sudden I heard the door open upstairs and I could see between the cracks of the porch this man come out wearing his spiked boots (holds up spiked boot) and I looked at him and I heard him say in French 'You looking for Dan Bossie? I will be right down!'" Now he is telling me this story at camp and I don't believe anything he is saying, but remember that is what got me going anyway. So they approached the house and all of a sudden my Uncle said he looked upstairs and he said he saw Dan Bossie put his hand on the railing and jump right over the railing, jump right down in front of him and land on the grass, and he said "are you looking for Dan Bosie? I am right here. What do you want?" So, as the men approached Dan Bossie did a cartwheel, and I said "What do you mean he did a cartwheel?" "He did a cartwheel! You know what a cartwheel is!" that is the way he would say it, and when he finished his cartwheel the man in the middle got both feet in the face (holds up spiked boot) and I says "what!" and he says "Yes!" and I was scared and that man in the middle dropped and the other two went and grabbed him and ran off and then Dan Bossie came back upstairs. "You don't know Dan Bossie?!" he said. I go "well no, I don't know him, I am too young." "He was quite a guy" he said. "We used to go stand by the bridge where all the logs were piled four or five hundred of us and they would get jammed. Who did they get? They got Dan Bossie." I said "Well, what did he do?" "He would climb up the log piles the long logs and he would find the one that was jammed and he had a small stick about this long (gestures with hands) and a piece of dynamite wrapped around the other end of it with a short fuse". I said "what do you mean a short fuse?" Of course as he drank "A short fuse! You don't have a long fuse because if a long fuse goes out you have to go back and check it!" So I said "oh. Ok." So he would go up with a long fuse, put that in the right spot, light the fuse on the piece of dynamite and they would watch him run down the log pile, never miss a step. The explosion would take place and the logs would come in the river. Then he would go to the next pile that was jammed and do the same thing. He said "we used to watch him do that a lot. He was amazing, never missed. He used to ride the logs like they were unbelievable." But he had a problem. He had a drinking problem too my uncle said. So, I go "no, you know it can't be." He says " you know when I was a little kid" he said " I used to walk with my father who I never knew. Downtown in Berlin was wooden sidewalks and all you could hear all you could hear on the sidewalks were (grabs the spiked boot and hits the floor with it to simulate walking) the men that were in town that worked on the rivers with their spiked boots." He said they were all chewed up, the sidewalks, and every once in a while he said you would come across a man that would be walking with my dad and it looked like the man when he was young had the chicken pox and my grandfather would tell them no, that is how they fought. They fought with those boots and those were the scars from the, the pick marks from the boots. He said those men worked in the river, they worked with their legs and they

fought with their legs and he says Dan Bossie was one of them, one of many. I said “oh, I am supposed to believe that story!?” But you know, My father was sitting right along beside me and he only had one drink and he says “That is the truth son.” So later on in years when I decided I wanted to research some history, I went and started to research it and he did exist this Dan Bossie and there are stories about him and he did these things. So, it really got me going and I said “Wow, if those things happened there must have been other men like that in town.” So, I got completely involved about eleven years ago in doing the history of Berlin and I haven’t stopped. (laughs)

Q: We are going to encourage you to keep going!

TAPE 2 of 2

Q: My question is being a lover of history, teacher of history you told us about the reasons why we need to preserve, what we need to preserve, can you tell me a little bit about why the Berlin Historical Society is important?

0:20 – PT: Well I am going to go back to the first book I wrote back in 2003 I believe. My first signing was here and it was supposedly going to be from eleven to four. So my wife and I showed up around ten thirty and the minute we showed up there were people at the door. So, I signed from ten thirty until five o’clock. So, it was great and I talked with them in between signing a book which I didn’t have much time about boy, the people really love the history of Berlin. Look how many have come here for a signing! When they came here for a signing, the people that worked here took them around the Moffett House to show them what we have here and they were thrilled and they were all saying what a great idea. What a great place to preserve the history of Berlin and any other history that happens in Berlin. What a place for it to be right here in town. It just seems like I was just talking with Walter Nadeau outside that I write the story in a column every week Once Upon A Berlin Time and it stirs somebody up. Somebody will come here either to buy a book or to check out the place and everybody that comes here says “this is amazing! I can’t believe Berlin had this much history.” So it shows and it proves that this historical society is well worth its weight in gold, guaranteed.

Q: any other stories that we should know that we are not asking? We are really interested in life in the twentieth century. You filled in lots of great gaps. You obviously have a million stories.

2:42 – PT: I do. I could talk here for a long time!

Q (Ken): This is your chance for right now, our last question. If not that is OK. If we think of anything else we will be back at least a few more times.

Q (Josh): I have a question actually. You talked about the river and you talked about the mills and the social climate here and the upheavals. You mentioned the Browns. Can you elaborate on the Browns like how pivotal were they to the history?

3:13 – PT: OK. The original owners of the sawmill in Berlin were Winslow and Company and about let's see about thirteen or fourteen years later they had come out of Portland Maine, W. W. Brown was in Portland and one of the owners said "would you be interested in purchasing part of the saw mill we have in Berlin, New Hampshire?" So, I believe he sent a nephew over here, his sons weren't old enough yet, to check things out and he bought into it. After buying into it he bought the rest of the people out eventually, changed the name to Berlin Mills Company. By then his sons, of which he had many, were old enough, because W.W. lived in Portland, to come here. That they did. They came here in the 1890s and helped run the mills. They lived in Berlin. They raised their children in Berlin. They were married to prominent ladies. O. B. Brown, one of the sons, was married to the daughter of the second in command to Robert E. Lee of the Confederacy. Met her, I don't know exactly where he met her, married her in Georgia and then came up here with her. She spent her life here with him and she is buried here. Not only did they run the mills they were so involved with the city. They became involved in different committees. The women, the wives helped in social affairs, they helped with people that were poor, started the Red Cross in Berlin. They became both men, both sons and their wives became school board member and heads of the school board and eventually one of the Browns, O.B. I believe, became the head of the state school board. They did a lot for the people of Berlin. They were well loved. They weren't owners that were mean. They might have had somebody that didn't like them, everybody does, but everything they did they did for the City of Berlin, besides produce the jobs that we had. So, once W. W. Brown's kids got old enough they came and they lived here. One would run the woods operations, the business operations another one, and then one would run the mills. They all like I said were married and had their children here. They have all gone. There are remnants of the family somewhere in the area, but they have gone and of course the mills are gone, but that is how the Browns developed this city. They didn't just do it with manufacturing; they did it with other means. They knew a hundred and something years ago how to deal with people, so they were great.

Q (Ken): Perfect. Thank you so much.

6:35 – PT: Ok. All right.