



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARLENE AND "PETE" (KEITH) HARTFORD

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KEITH LUDDEN

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GOULDSBORO, ME

TRANSCRIBER: SHANNON HARRINGTON

Reviewed by Keith Ludden

KEITH LUDDEN: Let us do a little housekeeping first. It is Sunday, July 31. We are talking to Arlene Hartford and...

ARLENE HARTFORD: Pete.

KL: Pete...

PETE HARTFORD: Pete. Well, it's Keith but I don't go by, nobody would know who it was if you said Keith.

KL: Okay. Hartford, and we are in Gouldsboro. Arlene, can you tell me what year you were born, do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

AH: 1938.

KL: 1938.

AH: No, I'm not ashamed of it.

KL: Okay and Pete, what year were you born?

PH: Thirty-five.

KL: 1935. So, you were both were born in some of those hard times?

AH: Oh yes.

PH: Yes.

KL: Can you tell me about that a little bit?

AH: Well, you mean working?

KL: Well, yes. You would have been children then, I guess, right?

PH: Yes.

AH: Yes. We were kind of brought up in poor situations. Yes. We went to work very early.

KL: How early? When did you go to work?

AH: Well, I started babysitting when I was probably twelve. But then you always had to go blueberrying and you had to get your clothes for school. He did the same thing as I did. Blueberrying, strawberrying.

KL: Tell me about blueberrying.

AH: Oh, I hate to be reminded of it because I hated it so bad. It (was) really hot. We had to do if we wanted to work and wear clothes to school. My mother was the boss then. She was trying to bring up three children working in the sardine factory. It was quite hard on her.

KL: How old were you when you started blueberrying?

AH: Oh, right around twelve or thirteen. Raking blueberries is very hard. Hot.

KL: Can you describe it for me?

AH: Well, you take a rake and hopefully they'll be some blueberries in front of you. [Laughter]

PH: I've seen it when there wasn't too many.

AH: They line them off in like strips with twine and you go down, rake blueberries and put them in a basket and lug them in and winnow them and put them in boxes.

KL: You winnow them you said?

PH: Yes.

AH: They have a winnowing machine that blows the debris out.

PH: Right on the field.

AH: Turn around, go back out and do it again.

PH: Fill her up again.

AH: You might make ten dollars a day, you might make fifteen, I don't know. That was back then. That was a lot of money. Then in the fall of the year we went to Aroostook County and worked picking up potatoes.

KL: So, you worked in the potato harvest?

AH: No. Well I worked, picking up the potatoes right out of the ground. No, they didn't have no harvest where we were. At that time.

PH: They didn't have any then when we started but we are all harvesters now up there.

KL: You did it by hand, the hard way?

AH: Put it in the baskets, and lift it up in the barrel. Being as short as I am, that was quite a challenge. [Laughter]

PH: Just like Ron.

KL: You said your mother worked for the cannery?

AH: She worked at Addison, Maine in the sardine factory. That is what she knew. She had brought up three children by doing it.

KL: What do you remember about her coming home from the cannery?

AH: I knew that she was very tired. Back then you had to process cooked fish, so they had to do them up before they come home. Sometimes she would get home at one o'clock in the morning. Then, turn around and go back to work around six. But now we process fish. Don't have them cooked.

PH: Yes, but now they do it different because they can keep them, without having to do them all up. They can put them in a freezer or cooler or something. Back then, they didn't though. They just packed whatever they caught that day, brought in. They packed them all before they went home.

KL: That would have been in the forties?

AH: No, that was actually in the early fifties because I worked there. She probably did in the forties.

PH: Oh yes.

AH: I mean, she worked, as far as I'm concerned, she worked a long time before I actually grew up and left to work. So, yes, probably was back in the forties when she was working. She died in 1960. She was fifty-two years old.

KL: What was your first job in the cannery?

AH: Cutting fish. Putting them in cans.

PH: Weren't you packing?

AH: Yes, packing fish.

KL: Were you pretty fast?

AH: I was average. I wasn't what you call a fast-fast packer and I wasn't a slow packer. I was average. Yes, I did my part. [Laughter] I liked when we used to cut fish with scissors although I've gotten quite a few cuts, but I liked it better that way.

KL: You cut your hands sometimes?

AH: Oh yes.

PH: I've seen them get some bad cuts, with them scissors.

AH: Oh yea, had some bad ones.

KL: How would you cut your fingers with scissors?

AH: You snip the heads off, or something. You might get you finger instead of right along the head and tail, oh yes. Very easy. You have them done up with tape, but you still cut right through. Your scissors are very sharp when you're cutting fish.

KL: Did you always tape your fingers?

PH: Oh yes.

AH: Yes. Everybody taped them. It kind of slows it up a little bit, even though it doesn't always help a lot but it still slows it up a little bit by getting cut. We have had some good cuts, oh yes.

KL: What was your job at the cannery?

PH: Well, most anything.

KL: Pardon me?

PH: I mostly (did) maintenance. That and I drove truck for them. Pickup truck and go deliver and pick up stuff for what they needed to work with. Most all the time. About all I ever done.

AH: Speak up a little bit, hun. He drove a fish truck, too. Started out driving fish truck going to Canada.

PH: Yes, I've driven a truck. I've hauled fish out of Canada and everything. But that was way back in the seventies. When I hauled fish out of there.

KL: You hauled fish?

PH: Out of Canada, yes.

KL: In a truck or?

PH: Oh yes, in a tank. A tank truck.

KL: I have not heard about that.

PH: Tractor trailer. Hauling them out of there. Got back down here to this factory so they could manufacture them out.

AH: Pack them up.

PH: They could pack them up for. One year there, they had a big, what do they call that, Stinson had a government, the fishing part. Those big fish part oval cans.

AH: Oh yes.

PH: That was for the government. Army, whatever.

KL: You packed a lot of fish for the troops during world war two?

PH: Well yes, that was in the fifties when they were doing that.

KL: Oh, okay.

AH: I didn't.

PH: Yes, you did.

AH: Did I?

PH: The seventies, I meant. In the seventies.

AH: I was going to say not in the fifties, in the seventies we did, yes. The oval cans, they were about this big.

PH: They had a contact for the government. The old Stinson canning company to pack so many cases of sardines for them, for the government. That's why they were in them big oval cans it was what they wanted them in.

AH: They were, oh, probably that big and that thick right through. You only get, three or four in a can. But I liked that.

PH: But you had to cut their heads off, didn't you, and then their tails off, and then take the...

AH: Well, take the guts out of them and kind of slit them like that.

PH: Slit them right up the belly with scissors and cut the head off and the tail and put them in the can. But the real good sardines were years ago they were anywhere from eight to twenty fish in the can. Then you had something. They're slashed into the, the fish packing around here weren't that great anyway I never thought. They weren't that good eating. Not like they used to be.

AH: Most of them were frozen.

PH: Yes, had a lot of frozen fish. They froze them before they canned them. I didn't think that they came out that great. Somebody must have because they bought them. Somebody bought them.

KL: What was it like working in the factory?

AH: It was like what?

KL: What was it like working in the factory?

AH: I liked it. I enjoyed working in the sardine factory, I mean, I liked my friends and I liked the job. The last of it I didn't pack fish. I sat in what they called a switch gate operator and I was on QC, so I'd inspect them mostly. That's what I'm good at doing actually.

KL: You were a switch gate operator?

AH: Yes.

KL: What does that entail?

AH: Well, it's hard to explain what a switch gate operator is. When they come down through after they're packed they come down through on belts.

KL: The fish do?

AH: No, well the cans.

PH: The cans. After they have been packed.

AH: Yes. When they come down through, I had to make sure that, when they come down through maybe on five belts, so they might come down on two or three, so you had to switch the gates. But it was mostly inspection. I had an easy job I sat. I went on QC quite a few years because I got done packing.

KL: How many years did you work in the cannery?

AH: Well, if I hadn't taken off for a couple of years, a year here, and a year there, just two years, I would have been there forty-four years.

KL: That's quite a while.

AH: Yes it is a very long time. People had been there longer than I have but they took their time off too.

KL: Did you ever get to the point, "Oh my goodness I can't look at another sardine?"

AH: Oh yes, more times than I'm glad to count now. "Oh if I see another fish, I'm going to upchuck." [Laughter] Yes, that happens, it sure does. It's just like anything you get tired of it.

KL: What did you like about the job?

AH: Mostly being with a bunch of good friends. That was, I think that was the best part of it. I had great bosses. They used me good. I didn't have any problems. Except getting up in the morning about four. [Laughter]

KL: You worked some pretty long hours?

AH: Oh we have worked some long hours, yes. Sometimes we worked he had to work to finish up on the fish and we worked from 6 o'clock until past seven o'clock at night. But that didn't happen very often. Not very often.

PH: No.

AH: They just wanted to get them done on a Friday night so we would stay and do them sometimes.

PH: So they wouldn't have to go back in Saturday morning.



AH: But they always asked us if we wanted to stay or come back in Saturday morning.

KL: How did you know when you needed to come in?

AH: We always went in the same time in the morning or they would call. On call. They would call us with what time if the fish didn't get in, like until 9 o'clock in the morning. They would call us and tell us what time the fish were going to be in. They kept us up to date. They didn't want to lose us. They wanted us to come in. "We are going to work at nine o'clock or ten o'clock," something like that. That's how we knew.

KL: Some kind of phone tree or something like that?

AH: Pardon?

KL: Was there some kind of phone tree or something like that?

PH: Well you used to have to call in sometimes, didn't you?

AH: Not very often.

PH: Well I mean they didn't...

AH: The last of it we did call.

PH: The last of it they didn't call you like they used to.

AH: Yes, the last of it they didn't call us.

PH: (There) used to be and on call. A woman or two different women use to call all the packers. Part of them in this area and part down east where there used to...

AH: They did away with that because they didn't want to pay them the money to do that

PH: They didn't want to pay the money for the people to do that. Don't make much sense but...

AH: Like maybe an hour or two hours a day, they didn't want to pay them that.

KL: Did they blow a whistle sometimes too?

PH: No.

AH: They did that years and years ago. That was way back years ago. No, we didn't have no whistles. No. They called us for quite a few years and like I said we were on call, will call, and then we, the last of it, after Bumble Bee took over, we had to call. Yes, so they wouldn't have to pay the... They got very very... awful lot a difference between the time I started for Stinson's then the last of it.

KL: Now, there was a fire in 1968. Can you tell me about that?

AH: In fact, we were living in Prospect Harbor right on the hill there. Where we would look right down over and we could see it. We were in bed and we all these lights flashing outside. We went out and when we looked out we saw it was all in flames. We could see the...

PH: We could sit right in our house and watch it.

AH: Our windows started to shaking. Every time soybean oil, they had those barrels of soy bean oil, and when they would explode they would rattle our windows. You could it see right over the water and just... Terrible. I mean it wasn't fun to watch. But they built it back.

KL: What was it like the next morning?

AH: Devastating.

PH: We just, everything was gone. Burned.

AH: Everything was gone. Devastating. A terrible terrible thing.

PH: I went down there the next morning and the owners were there. Charlie Stinson. They tried getting in, and then they were talking then. Then someone said, "What are you going to do Charile?" He said, "We are going to build her back." Just like that.

AH: Stinson's was all for the people.

PH: People.

AH: It wasn't about money, it was about the people and that's why I liked Stinson so much better than most. People today, it's about the money. Stinson wasn't.

KL: Everybody seemed to get along with him pretty well.

AH: They're great people.

KL: I had a nice conversation with Charlie.

PH: So great.

PH: I used to like the old man, the old Cal. [Laughter] The old man, I used to work on his car, you see, and he said to me one day, “Do you want to still take care of my car, Pete?” I said, “Yeah, of course I do.” He said, “Well, you’re the only man that I know of that can handle a big Cadillac.” [Laughter] I had a day when he said that. That is the way he was.

KL: I understand that you could hear Calvin coming down the hallway.

PH: Oh yes, oh yes. Just a humming.

AH: Just a humming.

One day, somebody said to him, “Cal, how are you doing?” “Oh, pretty good.” He said, “How many you got working for you now Cal?” Cal, humming along, stops for a second and says, “Bout half.”

KL: About half? [Laughter]

PH: Yes. That’s kind of how he was, you know what I mean?

AH: Then you ask him if you could get a job. He said...

KL: Did he have a particular tune that he hummed?

PH: I don’t know what it was, I think he was just a humming. I don’t know. Yes, somebody says, “Can I get a job, Cal?” Cal would say, “Can you carry a cigarette in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other?” The guy says, “Well, sure!” Cal says, “Well, you got a job.” [Laughter]

AH: He’s friendly when he started.

PH: He’s a nice old fella. Nice old guy. [Laughter]

AH: When he first started he stood on a little box and he said he put fish in the can. I got all kinds of newspaper clippings but I... About what he told about and everything. I kept them all right where they are.

PH: This place never was as good after they sold out the old Stinson’s. But it was pretty good when Dick Klingerman bought it. I liked it better than I did of course than when the Canadians took over. I forget the whole work, far as I was concerned. I never. I didn’t like it. I didn’t like it the same. I worked there just the same but, I just didn’t care for it like I used to.

KL: Now did the boats come in with sardines just about any time?

AH: Oh yes.

PH: Oh yes. Yes, there were a lot of them.

AH: That used to be enjoyable. Watching them come in and unload the fish. So, it was kind of exciting. We could go down to the wharf and watch them when they unloaded the fish. It was so nice and cool and calm. Just so great.

KL: How did they unload the fish?

AH: They pumped them out in a... He knows more about it than I do as far as pumping.

PH: They would just pump them right out of the boat sometimes. We had a pump there too. Two pumped fish. But they had some of the boats, the bigger boats, had their own pump.

AH: They put them right on the hose.

PH: Pump fish. Pumped it right into.

AH: It's a great big hose. They pumped them right into the...

PH: Pump it right into that hole,

AH: The factory...

PH: Right into the factory itself...

AH: Into tanks.

PH: Holding tanks.

KL: Must have been something to watch.

PH: Yes.

AH: It was. It was interesting, it sure was, yes.

PH: One time, we were putting in fish in there in the tank room and the pipe blew apart and I will tell you, that was a mess.

KL: What happened?

PH: The pipe blew apart, and the fish came out all over everything. [Laughter] It was a mess, I'll tell you.

AH: We had one time they came in this is how fresh they were, they called them fresh. Us girls went out into the tank room, what they called the tank room, where the fish were pumped into the tanks. They were still swimming.

PH: All dried off though, because they were the ones they caught right in the

AH: They are the ones they caught right over there.

PH: In the cove there.

AH: They come up on the belt and and they were still...

PH: Flip...

AH: Flopping but I wouldn't, I wouldn't.

KL: That's pretty fresh I guess.

AH: Yes.

PH: But it was. There was good fish back in those days. They had a good taste to them. Now [inaudible]

KL: Now were they still using the weirs when you worked there?

PH: Not the last end of it.

AH: No, not the last end of it.

PH: No, no. They used to. That's used up.

KL: When did they stop using the weirs?

PH: Oh god, I had been, ten years or more, twenty years probably. Probably twenty. Yes.

AH: Yes.

PH: Possibly fifteen, twenty.

AH: Because they haven't scouted with a plane for a long time.

PH: No, no they don't do that anymore.

KL: A couple of people have told me about how they used planes.

PH: Yes, they used to but now they don't.

KL: How did that work?

AH: Just scouting.

PH: See, they just flew around and from up there, they told me, I never was up there, but they said you could look right down and see the fish right down on the water, if you were up very high.

AH: Then they called in boats.

PH: Then they would call a boat in there. Well sometimes they used to try to drive them into a weir, you know what I mean, and then close the weir off. They didn't do that much. They used to, years ago. But not the last few years around here. They gave up that ware fishing a long time ago. You know here, I don't know what they did, they might have still done some, near Canada they still do some. I think they still do.

KL: You had several labels that you used?

AH: Yes, they packed them under three or four different labels. I don't know, about more than that.

PH: Yes, about four or five, six or something.

KL: One of them was Beach Cliff?

PH: That was the main one.

AH: That was the main one. That one went all under Stinson's.

PH: Yes.

AH: When Stinson's had it, it was Beachcliff.

PH: Well there were some other ones when it was back under a different name.

AH: I can't remember half of it.

PH: Yes, well I can't either. There were so many different brands. Admiral was one. Admiral. You remember that? There were a lot of different ones. But when they stopped packing fish in real mustard, never tasted good again. Because they used to make...

AH: Powdered.

PH: Powdered mustard. The last end of it. See they used to get their mustard out of Eastport The Raye's mustard mill down there. I hauled mustard out a good many a times. That was good mustard for actual soft fish.

AH: You probably have heard of Raye's anyway because he works out of Augusta. One of them. He's in politics.

PH: Yes. He's still there.

AH: What's His Name...

PH: Kevin.

AH: Kevin.

PH: Kevin Ray.

AH: Kevin Ray.

PH: You ever heard of him? You must have. Well, his...

AH: His family...

PH: His people owned a mustard mill down there, or something, I really don't know which ones.

KL: Now I understand why that mustard operation is there. What it is used for.

PH: Can you imagine how much mustard they must have made because think about every sardine factory in this area must have bought that mustard off of them and that was the only place they could get it. They must have made mustard right steady. It was good stuff too.

KL: How did you put the mustard in the sardines?

AH: That goes in the sealing room. What they call the sealing room, before they had these machines that go around these cans. Go around and they just...

KL: Machines did it?

PH: Yes, they had it.

AH: Did they label it sometimes?

Not when I, they always had the same machines when I worked there.

PH: Well, they had the mustard, but they had...

AH: They had great big round bins up there.

PH: Yes. Up overhead and it dripped in there. So much at a time.

AH: Lot of different parts of an operation.

KL: Yes. What was the inside of the factory like? I have never been inside.

AH: Before or after? [Laughter] Lately or recently or for what

KL: While you worked there.

AH: I worked there in both times. The first time, that they, when you cut fish with the scissors. They had tables. There were usually two to a table, one on each side and they had two belts. Like right here. You stand like this then you had two belts. One was the can belt and one was the fish belt. You pulled the fish out onto the table like this. Then you picked the cans off whatever you wanted them and cut them and put them in. Then you had a hole right here where the chum went down and that had a belt. That went right out into the what they called the tank room. So, you had actually three belts, can belt chum belt, fish belt. Then when you got that done you just pulled some more fish. That was some good times.

PH: That was when they were doing it by scissors.

AH: I liked that better. You could, I don't smoke now but back then when we did smoke, we could just smoke anywhere we wanted to. We could go down to the next table down and have a cigarette and stand there and talk with the packer.

PH: They never said anything them days.

AH: I mean that is the way that it was. But now you don't smoke anywhere near anywhere.

PH: You aren't even supposed to smoke within fifteen feet of the door.



AH: We don't smoke now.

PH: Of the door of the building. That doesn't make sense to me but I don't smoke either now, but I used to. I never could see why you had to stay fifteen feet from the building because...

AH: If you are outdoors...

PH: Outdoors, what the heck?

AH: I don't see. That's got nothing to do with the fish factory now.

PH: No, well, they're all that way now everywhere.

KL: Yes.

PH: Every place is that way.

KL: Now there was part of the building they called Little Russia?

AH: The what?

KL: There was a part of the building that they called Little Russia. Does that ring? Maybe that was before your time. I heard some people talk about one end of the building being called Little Russia.

PH: Little Russia? I've heard that but I don't know what it...

AH: I've heard that but it must have been a long time ago.

PH: I don't know what it was about.

KL: Okay. Maybe it was quite a while ago.

AH: Must have been before my time.

PH: Well see...

AH: Do you know what it consisted of?

KL: No, I do not. I was just curious about it. Whether anybody had an explanation for it. Nobody really knows why it was called Little Russia.

PH: I've heard that but I don't know what it was about.

AH: No, I don't know.

KL: I have to ask you about one other story. I have heard a story about somebody's tie being nailed to the floor.

PH: Tie?

KL: Yes.

PH: Well I don't doubt that they used to do all kinds of stuff.

AH: That group was (inaudible) enough. I know they—it wasn't with the night watchman or something, was it?

KL: I know they stole his boots one time. He went to sleep on the job and they took his boots.

[Laughter]

PH: One guy down there, I didn't see it, but he used to take his lunch to work with him. He had a metal lunch box. One of them old metal lunch boxes that they used to have. Somebody took his food out and nailed his bucket to the floor. He never used to stop when he grabbed his lunchbox, he grabbed that lunchbox like that, by the handle and took off and he only had just the handle. [Laughter] They nailed it right to the floor.

AH: Oh dear. Yes, they used to do a lot of things...

PH: Lot of...

AH: Good thing that they had a lot of good natured people.

PH: Long time. Oh yes. A long time ago.

KL: Yes, I might have been a little upset about that.

PH: Yes, well, he probably was a little.

AH: Yes. He probably was.

PH: Didn't do much good.

AH: Didn't do much good. He couldn't prove who done it, that's all. [Laughter]

PH: Oh yes.

KL: Now, in my reading, one of the things that I noticed was there were quite a few fires in some of these canneries. Was there a reason for that?

PH: No. No I don't believe so. This one down here, it wouldn't take much to start a fire going in them old factories, like they used to be, they were all wooden floors.

AH: I don't think that they actually ever found what caused it.

PH: There was plenty of oil in the floors that had gone into the floors and if you ever got a fire started you'd never put it out. Just like the wood burns, like any kind of wood.

AH: They did get a lot of files out of the offices. The offices were brand new. Well not brand new but they were a lot newer than the factory itself. I didn't work in that factory. I worked at, there was a little store that I worked in. Stinson store. and I used to have to take files and stuff down to the factory there, down at the office after I got through in the store at night. That's new. I never worked in that old factory. He didn't either.

KL: The one that before 1968?

AH: Yes.

PH: Yes.

AH: See we only moved down, we moved down...

PH: That was two story. Three story.

AH: We moved down here in 1967, right?

PH: Six or seven.

AH: Sally was two years old.

PH: I started working down in town there in town there in sixty-six. Gouldsboro.

AH: But we have, but we've lived here ever since sixty-seven. We're Downeasters.

PH: Yes. [Laughter]

KL: Now did I ask you where you were born?

AH: Nope.

KL: Oh, I'm sorry.

AH: I was born in Harrington.

KL: And you were born in...

PH: Columbia Falls.

KL: Columbia Falls?

AH: Right next door.

PH: Yes.

KL: Okay.

AH: Yes. We moved to Ellsworth then we moved back here. [Laughter]

KL: So you're Downeasters, huh?

AH: Oh yes. We're Downeasters.

PH: I worked with an old guy in Ellsworth and you know what he always told me? He said, "Them Downeasters," he said, "You can tell them, but you can't tell them much." [Laughter] I thought was pretty cute. He always said that.

AH: Sounds like a remark from those in Chevrolet.

PH: Yes.

KL: Why do you think, you know there used to be I think that at one time there were about seventy-five canneries up and down the coast. Why do you think so many of them died out?

AH: I don't know.

PH: Well, because they couldn't get the fish to operate on, I don't believe, you know what I mean?

AH: I was going to say I think that it was mostly that.

PH: Because down in Eastport and Lubec there used to be like four factories in Lubec and four in Eastport. All up and down the coast are factories. Matter of fact, Stinson's one time there had, he owned like twelve factories. They told him that they sad now, I don't know if this was true, but they said that they stopped him from buying the factories, Cal, because he would have a monopoly on it you see what I mean? Like anything else you can monopolize.

AH: One in Bath. One in Belfast.

PH: Yes. But they were...

AH: That was the last two.

PH: There were two factories down in the Southwest Harbor.

AH: Yes.

PH: That is just a real small place Southwest Harbor.

KL: So was it overfishing? Did...

PH: I don't think at that time, no. I don't think they even thought about that. Of course, partly why they closed this factory down here, was because the government got in there, and they wouldn't let them catch only so many herring. That's all there was to it. Simple as that. They said they couldn't operate on the amount of herring that we were getting, that they could have, you see what I mean? But whether that was [true], I don't know. I don't know. The thing blew up down here went to heck just the minute that Black Harbor got over here and got in and hooked up with Bumble Bee. You see, why would they want us packing fish here in the United States if they are right next door, Canada. They pack fish there every day. They have three times bigger. For soldiers they got here, even. Why would they want us packing fish if they could do it all? You know what I mean? Bumble Bee doesn't pack any fish. None. Themselves. They buy all that stuff from overseas and stuff. Your sardines. No more. That was a bad thing when the United States, we don't, nobody packs the fish in this country anymore. Nobody. Nowhere that I know of. None on this east coast and I don't think on the west coast either. It comes from Norway and Germany and all of those different countries. That ruined us.

KL: Were you still working at the plant when it closed?

AH: I was sitting at my little space.

KL: Tell me about that last day.

PH: All those women were just crying.

AH: I don't know, just like... Well, I don't know, it was leaving your second home I guess. I guess that's how you describe it. After all those years, I mean forty some odd years. How would you feel? Someone comes in and tells you that we're going to be done. You haven't got a job.

PH: One or two or three of those women had packed for fifty or fifty two years. Can you imagine it? A long time at one job.

AH: Well, Myrtress was there longer than I was even though she took some time off too which they didn't take it off her severance pay. They did me, they shorted me. [Laughter] That's the way I've described it. It was like a second home.

PH: Most of the women looked forward to going to work every morning down there it was just something that they got used to.

[cell phone rings]

AH: Ah, that sounds like a cell phone. Sounds like a siren.

AH: That's what Ryan's cell phone, my goodness you can hear that thing, I'm deaf but boy you can hear that one all over the place! I don't know what the heck it plays, but oh Lord! But he has to have it because he is on his motorcycle a lot and so he has to have it loud.

KL: Yes.

AH: No, the day they told us that they were having a meeting. Peter told us that they were having a meeting in the warehouse, we knew what was coming but it still was quite a jolt. Then, the Governor, well, I'm not going to get into that. Governor. Promises, promises. We'll just let that slide.

PH: Well they promised something that they can't come across with, that's for sure.

AH: But there were a lot of tears shed that day.

KL: I imagine so.

AH: Very much. But we're going back and find out, see what it's like. He's working there now.

KL: You are going back?

AH: Yes. Oh yes. I've been trying anyway. (I have) been retired two years. At my age, I should stay at home but I'm not going to. I'm not satisfied sitting around doing what I'm doing. Too much of this. (pats stomach) [Laughter]

PH: And computers huh?

KL: I sit in front of mine too much sometimes.

AH: I got him into it and now I probably shouldn't have. He didn't even know how to turn one on until he retired. But we own play games mostly. Read what other people have put on there. But it gives us something to talk about and of course we love baseball. We watch baseball every night.

KL: What was Prospect Harbor like during the forties and fifties?

AH: I have no idea. See I didn't come from here. No, I don't know.

KL: Okay.

AH: Not the slightest idea.

PH: We moved down here in sixty-six. Five, six, or something. I worked down in the garage down here first before we moved down here.

AH: Yes. The first time he came down here he worked in a mechanic garage. It's a post office now.

PH: Yes.

AH: That's when he first came down. I didn't work when I first came down here. I had a little one that I stayed home with. Then when she started school, I started to work, and I have worked ever since.

PH: You remember when you started in sixty-seven, you remember what time of year it was?

AH: We moved down here in April.

PH: No, I mean when did you start working down at the store, Stinson's store?

AH: Oh I didn't work down there for, oh it's probably sixty-seven I think it was.

PH: I know that but...

AH: But I don't know what time of year it was.

PH: Oh.

KL: I'm not sure I quite understand the store. It was part of the factory?

AH: No.

PH: Yes, it was part of the factory.

AH: It was part of the factory but it sat all by itself.

KL: And what was its purpose?

AH: Mostly for the factory people...

PH: People that worked there .

AH: Factory people for sandwiches...

KL: Oh, okay.

AH: Hot dogs. Soda.

PH: People that worked there.

AH: We sold sardines out of there, and I mean we really pushed some sardines out through there. Out of staters and everybody came through. We sold what they called dents or sardines, good sardines. We pushed a lot of sardines out of that store. Now you can't do it.

KL: So tourists came through...

AH: Oh yes.

KL: And bought the sardines. Was that in the sixties?

AH: Yes. That is when I worked there in sixty-seven. I worked there sixty-seven, sixty-eight. I worked there quite a few years.

PH: Then you went back down to the factory which was a part of it anyways.

AH: Then they closed up the store and then they burned it.

KL: They burned it?

AH: Yes. That was a sad day.



PH: I helped burn it. I had the front-end loader there and pushed it in.

AH: Yes.

KL: When was that?

PH: Oh, I don't know.

AH: I should write all the stuff down.

PH: Been gone quite a while.

AH: Been gone at least five years or that, or more.

PH: Oh yes. More than that I would think. Been a long time.

AH: Was it when Klingerman's still owned that, didn't he?

PH: Yes. No. Klingerman's

AH: Or was it after Blacks?

PH: No, I think Klingerman. When Dick's still owned it.

AH: That's one big factory, that Black's Harbor.

KL: And where is that?

AH: Canada.

KL: Canada?

PH: Yes, down in Black's Harbor.

AH: Yes, Black's Harbor, that's where it is. It's Connor Brothers. Big outfit. Big business.

AH: Us girls got together one time and got a bus driver. We called ahead and wanted to know if we could get a tour of the factory. That was a great day too. Some of our friends. There were six or seven us. We all went down there and went on tour and went out to dinner. We had a good time.

KL: A bus man's holiday, huh?

AH: Yes. [Laughter]

PH: I've been through that factory down there two or three times.

AH: Boy, that's a big place.

PH: With the boss. My boss. I still say that's why we haven't got a factory here. Just on account of that.

KL: Competition from Black Harbor?

PH: Oh yes. We couldn't even stand to be in competition with them. They're too big. Too big. Of course Bumble Bee owned us, supposedly but I don't know. They hooked up with...

AH: Now they don't have any more Bumble Bee. They sold out.

PH: Bumble Bee sold out, I think. Somebody said. Oh that was a multimillion dollar outfit right there. Holy mackerel. That's a big outfit, Bumble Bee.

AH: I don't think you even see any sardines except from foreign countries anymore. I really don't.

PH: Sardines they're not really fit to eat, the last ones they were packing here. I don't think anyway. They didn't taste like they did years ago when they... just the way they were. For one thing, here's what happened to your sardines around here. They started hauling sardines in a boat or in a truck or anything, in fresh water. Ice, well, ice. Then when it melted and of course, you have fresh water, and you're hauling fish in it. It's been in salt the water and it ruined them. They didn't taste good after that, because they weren't allowed to put salt in it.

AH: Salt.

PH: Years ago when I first started hauling fish, we used to put the salt right to them. In those trucks and tankers, we were hauling them in. The tankers.

AH: It kept them hard.

PH: You put so many fish in and then you put eight, ten, twenty bags of salt in there. Then another layer of fish, and then another layer of salt. That's how, you got them when you're hauling, I was hauling them from Canada. When we got them up here, they were just as hard as a rock like they would be if they had just come out of the water. Once you put fresh water in them, you're ruining them. Never been any good since. They never taste good either.

AH: No.

PH: You have to have salt in anything to make it taste anywhere near right I believe. Well, I know so. That's what ruined it.

KL: You can't use the salt now?

PH: No. What they did is they signed that thing there to not to.

AH: Healthwise, of course you can't use salt.

PH: Sodium. That thing, years ago signed that, not to put any more amount, (you can) use a little bit of salt, I suppose. Nothing... That's what happened to your fish around here though, sardines.

AH: They used to have the cutter, the cutting machines in the tank room instead of cutting them after we got done packing fish. They had cutting machines and they'd cut the sardines, or they would cut steaks, fish steaks. When they came in, I mean, if they were in salt, why they were nice and hard. But after they wouldn't do that, had to be fresh fish. They come in, they were all soft and that's why you had floppy fish to put in the cans. I mean they weren't, it's all soft. That's not good.

PH: You can't put saltwater fish into a bunch of fresh water because you just ruin the fish. That's what you do. They know that, I don't know why they...

AH: They knew it but the government just did away with the salt because of health reasons.

KL: Did you see a lot of technological changes in the factory while you were working there? Changes in technology?

AH: A little. Not a great lot, but a little.

PH: No.

AH: Not too much.

PH: Just that salt thing I ever noticed, not any real [changes other than that].

AH: Between the salt and the mustard.

PH: Yes, that mustard there.

KL: Is that the powdered mustard, you mean?

AH: Yes.

PH: That stuff is no good.

AH: That was terrible.

PH: But I heard around, I think that Bumble Bee owned the powdered mustard part of it, in Maine. So of course, why would they not use it. Cheaper, wasn't it? It would be cheaper if you owned the plant that makes it.

AH: We had a lot of, like the hot pepper and hot chilis and Louisiana hot sauce, and tomato paste and all that stuff to put in the (fish.) They had a lot of varieties.

KL: Different varieties?

AH: Yes, they did have a lot of varieties. Water and soybean.

PH: Soybean oil was a big thing in (inaudible) over the years.

KL: What seemed to sell the best?

AH: I think the mustard and oil.

PH: Mustard and soybean, mustard and oil, I think, over the years.

AH: Well, of course that was that was all they put them in at one time was just the oil and the mustard. This come in a lot later in years so, the hot chilis and habanero, and all that rest of that sauce. That came in a lot later in years, I mean, the hot chili and habanero and all the rest of that sauce. That came in later years. I know when back years ago and they all had, all it was, just mustard and soybean. So, that's about the only change I watched.

KL: Is there anything that I am overlooking that you want to point out to me that I might not be thinking about?

PH: This is one of the cans. Beach Cliff here.

KL: You got these for a souvenir?

PH: No.

AH: No, no. I've got the last two cans that they packed. Everybody got the last two cans that were packed.

PH: I have cans. Here's a can.

AH: No I still got those.

PH: I used to get a lot of these and a lot of people wanted mustard sardines. We were allowed two cans a day. Of course, you wouldn't eat all of that.

AH: We used to be allowed any time you wanted.

PH: Nobody wanted them stupid things at the last end of it because they didn't taste very good, I don't think. I know they didn't.

AH: Did anybody on your interviews show you the book that they got at the end of the era?

KL: I think Lela showed me that.

AH: Oh yes, she probably did. That was the end of an era.

PH: That's too bad. An end of an era, (inaudible) right there. Got to get my fingernail cutter out.

AH: Oh dear. No I don't know of anything...

KL: You have been very generous with your time. I appreciate you taking the time for me. I will let you have the rest of your Sunday evening here. (Laughter)

AH: We have had quite a few people that wanted interviews. It's the same thing over and over. It's sad but I guess we have to move on.

PH: There's a guy that came down here, he's from Massachusetts, he's doing the same thing as you somewhat. I don't know what his name is, you? The little fella.

AH: No, I can't remember.

KL: Redmond?

PH: Him and his wife, I don't know.

KL: I think I know who you mean.

PH: He has a camera.

AH: I just let him...

KL: Yes, I met him seems like a good guy.

AH: Yes when he came here I just turned him over to him. I didn't have anything do with that. At that time, I didn't want to talk about it so I just told him to go ahead with my husband because I couldn't hear good anyways. So he did, but...

KL: I would like to see if I can get a photo you if that's alright?

AH: Yes, okay.

END OF INTERVIEW