

Interview with Leo Doucette  
Big Bay, Michigan  
24 April 1981

START OF INTERVIEW

SIDE 1

Interviewer (I): April 24 of '81, at approximately 1 o'clock. Leo, you were born in what part of Canada.

Leo Doucette (LD): In New Brunswick, Canada. .

I: That's just good.

LD: You want the town?

I: Yeah, why don't you give me the town.

LD: Petit-Rocher.

I: What about the town? Do you remember anything? How old were you when you lived there?

LD: I was little, I lived with my grandfather. I lived on a farm.

I: Lived on a farm. And you moved from there when you were?

LD: I might have been 7 years old, I forgot now. \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Okay. Why did your family move to Big Bay?

LD: We didn't move right here, right away. We went into Ontario.

I: And how long did you spend there?

LD: Oh two to three years. Not terrible. Then we went back to New Brunswick and we left New Brunswick and we came to Big Bay.

I: Okay.

LD: And we went back on the \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Oh. Why did you dad move to Big Bay?

LD: For work.

I: There was lumber, lumber work up here.

LD: Yeah. My uncle, he came here first and he sent for my dad, got him the job.

I: Did you father like it here?

LD: Oh yes. He had to go back because my mother was sick. We stayed here 9 months the first time, then we went back and she died carrying us. A year or two we came back, maybe three years until we came back and we stayed.

I: So you lived in Big Bay then, or you have lived in Big Bay off and on since approximately what time? When you came out of Canada, was about 19...?

LD: '21 or '22 I'm not sure.

I: 1921 or '22. And you've lived off and on in Big Bay since then?

LD: Well we went back to Canada, then we came back. I'm not sure if it was '24 or '25 then, but it was a year, two or three years there.

I: And your father, when he came from Canada the first time and then the second time, he worked for whom?

LD: I don't really remember. There was two companies, the Lakenfan (?) Lumber Company and the Brunswick. So I don't, I'm not sure. I know the Lakenfan are \_\_\_\_\_, bush wrangling and the Brunswick Lumber company. I'm not sure about the last one. It was the last one, he worked for Ford too.

I: He did? How long did, did he die here in Big Bay? Did he retire?

LD: He died in Crystal Falls.

I: Oh he did? So he worked right up until retirement here in Big Bay?

LD: Yeah.

I: Did he ever tell you what he felt working for the lumber companies or working for Ford? Did he ever tell you?

LD: Yes. No, he didn't say anything about them, it's just he had to work and they were in town, he had a family. But he liked and you know hey he had to work. He worked in the car shop, for both those companies.

I: Oh he was a mechanic then? He didn't work as a lumber man?

LD: Oh no, he worked in the \_\_\_\_\_, they hauled logs and someone had to fix them railroad cars. Then for Ford he worked lights in the middle, like a mill light.

I: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

LD: I had 2, 1 of them I don't remember.

I: He died when he was young? How old when he died? What was his age? Was he young?

LD: He died when he was born.

I: And you have one more?

LD: One sister.

I: One sister. Okay, what can you tell me about your sister? She did not leave Canada?

LD: No, she never left Canada. She went into Ontario with us, but I was in Ontario \_\_\_\_\_ in town. My father was working the railroad, that's all I remember. I had new \_\_\_\_\_. The next time we went through, my step mother then, \_\_\_\_\_the restroom in the depot, the depot restroom. She died in there too. Then we came back, my second step mother \_\_\_\_\_.

I: And that was about 1920?

LD: That should have been 1924, '35.

I: And you were how old?

LD: Probably almost 11.

I: So you were getting, you were about 11 years old. Were you going to school yet?

LD: I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in Canada. \_\_\_\_\_so when I came here, I think I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade here.

I: How did you like it?

LD: \_\_\_\_\_.

I: How did you like going to school?

LD: Nobody likes to go to school. [Laughter].

I: What was the school like? What was it like?

LD: It was a two story wooden building, and it burned down.

I: Here in Big Bay?

LD: Yeah.

I: What do you recall about it? What do you recall about going to school?

LD: Well I went to \_\_\_\_\_ to begin. And I had nice teachers.

I: Would you do it all over again?

LD: I wanted to take the \_\_\_\_\_. I played basketball, we went out of town to play basketball. I was only in 8<sup>th</sup> grade when I was on a team.

I: What did you like about school? What did you like about going to school?

LD: To tell you the truth, I didn't like anything about school.

I: What did you dislike most about going to school?

LD: I liked to go outside.

I: So you went to Big Bay School here then from what grade to what grade?

LD: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

I: And then you went to?

LD: To John D. in Marquette.

I: John D. Pierce?

LD: For one year, John D. Pierce in Marquette.

I: Why did you leave? Why did you leave John D. Pierce? Can I ask? Or would you rather not say?

LD: I wasn't doing too good there and I didn't want to go to school. \_\_\_\_\_.

I: It wasn't worth your time huh.

LD: Really I wanted to work.

I: When you did quit school then you were about what? 15, 16 years old?

LD: Oh I was much older because I was old you know when I started here. Really I was older than most students that went, and I was behind.

I: So you were a little bit older.

LD: I would say I was two or three years older than the regular ones in the school.

I: What was the, was it harder going to school then they you think it is now? What do you think? Do you think it was harder and in what ways? Do you think it was harder going to school then it is now? How did you get to school when you went to school at Pierce? You had to do what do by bus?

LD: By bus.

I: What was it like?

LD: Well it wasn't a very nice school bus, I just hated how we had to get up so early to take that bus and wait. I couldn't do anything athletics like basketball that were after school because I had to go when the bus went.

I: That's true. So basically the people of Big Bay, the students were kind of left out, much like they are today. It shows that things haven't changed a lot.

LD: That's interesting. I wanted to play basketball but I couldn't.

I: When you left school then you were about what 16, or 18 do we want to say that?

LD: Oh yeah that sounds about right.

I: You were about 18. What did you do? What was your first part time job? Let me go back, I think we may have to go back a little bit here. What was your first part time job that you can recall? What was it like?

LD: I think the first job I had, I worked on the railroads out to the camps. I worked around our vacation times.

I: How old were you?

LD: I must have been something like 17 or 18.

I: So it was before you left school then?

LD: Yeah. I think it was during vacation time that I worked here, during the summer. That was the first job I had.

I: What was your first full time job? You just left school now, you're about 18 years old now and you're going for your first full time employment.

LD: Let me see. The first one that I can remember, that was not during the summer, was I worked on that \_\_\_\_\_ camp.

I: What was it like?

LD: I liked it.

I: You did? Let's get in onto Big Bay then and some of your employments, some of the jobs that you had here. And the first one we're going to come to is Henry Ford, I think.

LD: That was the first one I had.

I: How did you get hired there?

LD: \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Had to pull some strings like they do nowadays?

LD: No, I worked for a contract. It was \_\_\_\_\_. I don't know, I don't remember how I got it.

I: I know you have to pull some strings nowadays.

LD: There was no strings. They were hiring people.

I: Did you build Henry Ford's house at the Huron Mountain Club? You mentioned, I think you before, that logs were coming in. The logs allowed for this huge lawn? Can you tell me about that?

LD: When building that thing, and a lot of man work till 12 o'clock at night on the beach

AUDIO BECOMES UNRECOGNIZABLE