

Nobel Shadduck
Narrator

Adam Nelson
Interviewer

July 16, 1991
Annandale, Minnesota

AN: This is Adam Nelson, an oral history intern with the Minnesota Historical Society, interviewing Mr. Nobel Shadduck at his Annandale, Minnesota home. [Taping interruption.]

NS: —weakly, that his parents thought that he was going to die, so they gave him to his grandparents, and he always lived with his grandparents, right down the road here about nine miles.

He made up his mind at an early date that he wasn't going to be a champion in the muscle market, and so he started out to get an education. He graduated as a valedictorian in the St. Cloud Normal, which is now—and I think there were eighteen in his class. We've got some of the old history up here.

Then he wanted to take medicine, but they didn't have any medical school at the university yet, and so he took pharmacy. Then he took law. He knew all of Shakespeare's poems by heart. He could recite them. We knew he taught Greek and Latin, and he could tell you the derivations. I have never seen anybody like him since. But he was kind of sickly and not very strong, and he was only five feet four inches high. So, I had to take over the work and did his part.

Okay, you go ahead.

AN: My first question here has to do with how your father started the Shadduck Family Resort and how that came to be.

NS: As I say, my dad was not a very strong person, and he'd got quite an extensive education going to St. Cloud Normal and later the Detroit School of Law, and also had taken pharmacy before there was a Department of Medicine at Minnesota. Then when he was in between times, he was teaching and usually principals of small schools, Barnum, Rush City, and so forth.

He met my mother at Rush City. She was also a daughter of a territorial pioneer, eleven kids in the family. Back in the 1870 period, nearly all of them graduated from college. She did. I don't know how she got down there or why, but she went to Valparaiso University in Indiana. She and my father were married in 1897.

Now, long before that, in, I think, 1873, my dad had—there was an Indian trail up here from Clearwater to this Clearwater Lake, but it was known as Big Lake at that time. When I was a boy, this was always called Big Lake. But there was a Big Lake town later established in the area of the village of Clearwater, and so it changed and they started calling this Clearwater Lake, and I guess that was really the name of it anyway.

But they got married, and they had planned to—or Dad, when he came up here in 1873 with an old horse and walked around this area and made up his mind he'd buy the land between Cedar Lake and Clearwater Lake if he ever had the chance. He was very saving, and that was the thing that started our family off successfully. If he got \$20 a month or \$30 a month teaching school, he usually had to pay board of \$10 a month, so then he'd work out the board by doing the chores. Then he got \$5 a month extra, maybe, for cutting the wood for the school. So he only allotted himself about \$5 a month, and he saved the rest of it.

So he paid \$900 for this place in 1897, and it consisted of about thirty acres, about six, seven hundred feet on Cedar Lake and twice that much on Clearwater Lake. There was a hotel that had been built by a man named Miller in the 1870s, because they were sure that the railroad, when constructed, would come between Clearwater and Cedar Lake. But railroad land speculators bought the land at different places and had towns established about every six miles where they bought the land, and they didn't pay any attention to where the local people thought the road would be.

So we had this old house, hotel house. I've got a lot of pictures of it. We had nine bedrooms in the house, besides the kitchen and what we called dining room and office building and parlor and so forth. Of course, my dad didn't have any income, and he wasn't willing to teach school, so they had to make it on the resort business. And so he started building cottages. There may have been a couple of cottages before, the way he bought it. I don't know. But, anyway, he bought six little cottages, and two of them were doubles; that is, a different living room. My mother did the cooking, and that's the way the thing was run.

AN: From whom did you buy the land, or did your father buy the land?

NS: My father bought the land in 1897 from John Miller.

You want me to just—you just kind of prompt me wherever you want me to go in.

AN: That was terrific. That was good. My next question is where did most of the resorters come from, and how long did they stay?

NS: Well, our resorters might be divided into two groups, and I don't know how they got that way, but about half of them came from Minneapolis and possibly St. Paul. The others came from Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska, and Kansas City. I suppose they got to talking with each other, and those who came from out of state recommended them to each other, because I know there

was no advertising or anything like that.

AN: Did they come up in groups of families or just one family alone?

NS: Usually the ones from Nebraska and Kansas knew each other, but maybe that was from their meeting here. I don't know. But the Minneapolis ones, for instance, I remember a few of the names. Finkelstein and Reuben, two Jewish fellows that owned several of the theaters in Minneapolis, were always up here in the summer. There was another fellow named Helgeson, and he was a lawyer. His friend Walso, they were always here in the summer. There was a fellow named Charles Curtis that was here from Minneapolis.

From out of state, there was an old Captain McDowell. I always remember him. He was a Civil War veteran. Then there were some Varneys, from Broken Bow, Nebraska, and they were always here. But almost all of it was quite a big thing when somebody drove a car up here, and everybody was quite excited about that. I can remember Walso had a Detroit, a car named Detroit. Now, there's another car named Detroiter, but this was a Detroit.

Of course, the roads were bad, and right down about 100 feet, 200 feet, maybe, from our mailbox was a place where there was always a chuckhole. One night Walso was driving along, and his car got in a chuckhole, and I think he broke an axle. The car was right there and had to be—and anyway, the whole resort people gathered around there. I remember him saying— well, he was only going about 15, 20 miles an hour and somebody in the background saying, well, the damn fool should know that that car should never be driven 20 miles an hour. [Laughter]

AN: Oh wow. Just too fast.

How long did they stay at Shadduck's Resort?

NS: I think that most of them—there may have been some shorter, and I know that Curtis and so forth used to come up from Minneapolis and only stay a few days sometimes, but he'd come back several times. But usually they were here for two weeks, and sometimes the people from Nebraska and Kansas, usually I think they were here two weeks or a month.

AN: How did they spend their time? Did they do a lot of sleeping and resting and fishing?

NS: No, no, it was all fishing.

AN: Fishing, fishing.

NS: It was fishing, and then we played horseshoe. Then we had an old pump organ, and at night they gathered around the organ and somebody played and they sang songs. That was a regular daily occurrence. That's about it. Everybody went out on the lake in the morning. We had as many as twelve and might have been fourteen flat-bottom boats.

There was an old Civil War veteran named Cap Allen here that attached himself to our resort. They had to pay him extra. Dad didn't pay him, but the resorters had to pay him. He had a big sailboat. I've got pictures of it down there. He had all the fishing spots marked out. Not marked, but he knew where they were. So they'd go out, and they'd catch maybe fifty, seventy-five fish. Maybe not quite that many.

I could tell you about how the resort was run, if you're interested in that.

AN: Certainly.

NS: Dad had to pay darn close attention to the costs, because board and room for adults was \$14 a week. It may have been half that for the kids. I'm not certain. But, anyway, he had it all figured out that we'd have one meal each week of roast chicken. That took the old hens and the roosters. We had several hundreds of them. Then one chicken would feed about four people, but then we had two meals a week of fried chicken. That was young chickens, which maybe ten weeks old or something like that. But in those days we had a lot of chickens, but they didn't handle them like they do now. The hens just run off and made their nests in the woods, and it was my job from when I was about three years old on, to try to find their nests and see that some skunk or something didn't catch them. So I went around, and maybe I could find six nests, maybe ten nests, off in the woods.

Then the hen had to get off of her eggs. She'd lay about a dozen eggs and then she'd sit on them. Then they hatched. I may be wrong on this, but I think it was three weeks they had to sit on them. I've forgotten now, either two or three weeks they sat on them, and I kind of knew when each, when they were going to hatch out. So I'd stick around as a little kid and watch them hatch. Then as soon as they were dry, the mother hen would, "Cluck, cluck, cluck," she'd go, and the little chicks would follow her. She'd, "Cluck, cluck, cluck," and she'd come right up to the house with her brood of chickens.

She knew she'd get fed, so Mother always had food there, and we'd scatter it out. We had corn. We used to grind the corn up for the little chickens, who in no time at all were picking up and eating this ground corn we kind of call cornmeal today, but it wasn't ground that fine. It was just kind of cracked corn. So we had a big corncrib full of corn and a pan of water. Then the chickens from then on hung right around the back door.

But my involvement with the chickens was chiefly killing them, cutting off their heads. I suppose I was seven or eight years old or so when that job fell to me, because nobody seemed to like it. But I had a big block of wood about maybe eighteen inches in diameter, and I had two nails nailed in one end of it, one side of it, nails about inch and a half apart. Then I'd have to catch the chickens, and I did that with a big landing net. I had to catch them and put them in a gunnysack. You couldn't get over six chickens in a gunnysack, and you'd tie it up. They wouldn't smother, but they didn't look very happy when you started taking them out. Then you'd chop off their

heads.

The most we'd have at the resort would be about forty people, I think, and that was usually about twenty, twenty-five, so it only took maybe five, six old hens and roosters. **Roosters** were special ones because the hens could still lay some eggs if you kept them over winter, but the roosters couldn't do anything but fertilize the eggs. So you'd keep some of the young ones.

Well, anyway, I had to kill all these chickens. You'd grab them out of the gunnysack and then tie the sack back up, and chop, chop, chop, and chop their head off and throw them around. You got all spattered with blood. [Laughter] Then I'd have to go down to the creek or lake and wash off. In those days there wasn't such a thing as a bathhouse, except for changing your clothes when you went swimming.

Then that took care of three meals a week. These were suppers, evening meal. We call it dinner, although we never heard of that word at the time. And three meals came from the fish.

Well, I often tell people, or they often make remarks behind my back and so forth, that I do things too fast and don't do a good job. Of course, if I am going to be truthful about it, I'll have to say that they're absolutely right. I think I got that way from fish-cleaning, because back of our motel, the well was outside, of course, a little ways from the back kitchen door. By the other side of the well was what we called a tool house, where it would be just a junk parlor, as we know it today.

There they had an old flat-bottom boat overturned. About everybody got done fishing and came in by twelve, one o'clock. Then the damn fish were all ready to—I had to clean them. We tried to encourage the people to just keep the walleyes and the sunfish and crappies. We had a different crappy here then than they've got now. It was a great big one. He weighed about two pounds. He was a big black fellow. They'd always catch a few of those and catch the walleyes. Nobody wanted to fish northerns, which we called snakes at that time, because if you caught them, they were hard to get off of your hook. So most people just took and twisted their head and broke their neck and threw them back in. Now we call them northerns for some reason. They were called pickerel or snakes at that time.

Well, anyway, I maybe had thirty-five, forty fish, and I just dumped them out on the flat-bottom boat and separated the walleyes from the sunfish and crappies and bass. I had an old pair of pliers with long handles. I'd grab a fish by the head, and I had a currycomb they used to curry horses with. I scraped about a half a dozen times, maybe, on each side, turned them over and did the same thing on the other side, and got most of the scales off. Then I had an ax and a chopping block, and I kind of squared the fish up. One blow would take off the back fin, another blow the tail, and another blow the fin on the belly. Then you cut off a double piece, the thin belly skin, and then you cut the head off, and there you had your fish.

You took your thumb and did one big scoop with that and got most of the guts out and then threw

them in a pail of water. I got so I don't think I averaged more than a half a minute or maybe fifteen seconds a fish. I could clean a fish, because if I wanted to get any time for myself, time I had to go swimming and play with the kids, why, I had to do work fast.

Then the walleyes, they were a different matter. The scales were on them so tough that you can't scrape them off with a currycomb, so you had to skin them. You made about the same cuts with an ax, and then you cut around the head. You took and grabbed the corner of the skin up at the top of the head by the neck on one side and just ripped it right off. You did pretty good that way. But that was the only way to do it fast, because you couldn't scale them. So maybe I'd clean my thirty-five or forty fish in maybe, well, certainly not over a half hour.

Then I always had some fish—there was some people that would want to be taking some home, or keeping them to take home, and so I had to put those in the icehouse and lay them flat on the ice. They were all strung on a stringer. First, you had to do what we called gut and gill you. You jerked the gills and flipped the belly up and tore off the lower fin up by the head and laid them flat on the ice. Then they cover them with about a foot of sawdust, and they stayed. They'd keep for quite a while.

Then I had to pick up the heads and guts that the chickens and cats—they usually had about fifteen, twenty cats, and 100 chickens, grabbing and running off with everything. When you cleaned the fish, then you just threw it on the ground. I had to pick up what of those I could find, and then I could go swimming.

There was one exception, though. We had a rule if you got a northern over ten pounds, and they got them sometimes a couple of them would come in in one day, but mother insisted that I had to clean those too, and do a much more careful job. I had to even cut out the backbone with a knife, because you get all the scales off of them, and mother roasted those, stuffed them just like you do a turkey at Thanksgiving. Well, that takes care of the chickens and the fish.

The hired girls, I remember, always sat on a platform about fifteen, twenty feet from me, maybe, and took my fish out of the bucket of cold water I had, and they finished cleaning them. I know they always wondered why somebody didn't make me do a better job. [Laughter]

That's where the food came from, as far as the principal food.

Of course, the rest of it, Dad, as quick as he could, started buying farms. He never bought a good farm, but cheap ones. Somebody'd go broke someplace. So we usually paid six, seven hundred dollars for a farm. Then we'd get —Dad's method of getting a renter, was to—he'd ask them if they went to church. If they went to church, then he figured they'd be all right as a renter. [Laughter]

Then we got a share of the crop, and we always got some wheat. We hauled the wheat up to Fair Haven, which was about, I suppose, eight miles. We didn't have a good wagon. We hauled it with

a buggy. We hauled about, I think it was, eight two-bushel sacks full of wheat. We hauled that up there and then they ground it. We had more coming back than we had going up, because the bran was one of the products. Unless Dad could make a deal where they bought the bran, we brought the bran back with the flour. The flour amounted to, I don't know, five, six hundred pounds of flour we had, and that's what we used to bake. Mother used to bake bread and like that.

But then the damn garden—that was the thing that was the worst. We started the garden in the house with seeds, tomatoes, cabbage, peppers, and eggplant sitting around from February on in the house, and kept warm, and so forth. Then we got them planted in the garden. We had a garden, about two acres.

AN: A big garden.

NS: Well, you had to feed the resorters, and they had to have vegetables. So you planted every damn thing you could think of and some things that I'd never thought of. We had also rows of fruit trees about thirty, forty feet apart, covered about a third or maybe half of the garden. There was a garden in between the fruit trees.

Of course, you had a lot of—people used to be very enthusiastic. I remember talk about how good the food was that my mother prepared. They had sweet corn and squash and everything you could think of, onions and cabbage and peppers and tomatoes and string beans. Hell of a lot of string beans. They have a bean now that doesn't have the string on them, but there used to be a string. Then you picked the beans and you had to jerk that off of the stem down towards the far end of the bean. You had to get that out or they weren't so good eating. Then you cut them up in pieces and boiled them.

Then, of course, we had to have cows. Sometimes we had six, but usually about four. Of course, each cow produced a calf, so we had those around. Dad was always too tight to own a bull.

We had big flat pans, and the milk was poured in these big flat pans, probably a dozen of them. Then the cream was skimmed off in the morning. In those days, I don't remember people drinking milk. Maybe they did. I know that if you messed around in the manure up to your ankles, you didn't have much of an appetite for milk, and I never tasted milk until years later. I got down to the university and they had it in bottles and so forth.

About the only thing we bought—we churned the butter with an old circular churn. I could tell you all about that, because that fell to me to do. It usually took—the very fastest you could get butter was about twenty minutes. Usually it was twenty-two to twenty-five minutes just turning that churn. You couldn't turn it too fast; you had to turn it at a certain rate where the stuff sloshed around inside.

For years, my mother's butter was preferred in town, so we traded the butter for coffee, sugar, and tea and whatever else we needed, probably salt and pepper. That was about the way the food—of

course, Dad did have to buy—he did buy roast beef or sometimes pork. Not very often. Usually roast beef for the Sunday dinner. There were three meals of chicken and three meals of fish and one meal of roast beef or, once in a while, pork. I don't even remember ham, except ham from the pig I raised.

Turn it off a minute. [Taping interruption.]

NS: ...I guess about \$300,000 renovating their hotel. It's a big deal now, people coming from all over.

You don't smoke these?

AN: Oh, no, thanks.

NS: So I had a notion to take you in there this noon, but it's more comfortable here. [Lights cigarette.]

We had my—well, they all claimed they were my relatives. I don't know what the hell they were, or not, but some minimal family connection. We had them here Sunday, and they went and I took them to Pioneer Park and then they went to their hotel.

The thing was quite impressive. I didn't help much, very minimal, but they tried to tie it into a period when it was being operated. They've done a good job, and it's just been sold to a big shot, and he's trying to add his touch to it, too, and they've changed the restaurant. A pretty good deal, if you ever have the chance to stop there.

AN: How large is it? How many rooms?

NS: I think there's fourteen rooms. I'll tell you a little joke about it. I remember some of the bedrooms in our so-called hotel, and you saw the picture down there of Cap Allen with all those fish and the fellow with him. There was a fellow named "Spike" Bucher. His name was C.A. Bucher, and he was a salesman for Geiterman Brothers, who were early clothing manufacturers here. I suppose he was six feet six or something like that. He said the room Fred gave him was so damn small that he had to stick his feet out the window and the chickens roosted on them. [Laughter] That might be worthwhile putting in.

AN: Yes, that's got to be in there.

NS: But you learned to work as a kid, and that's what so many people—in fact, you've got a guy working down there. Do you know Jim Ruhl, by any chance? I'm his godfather. His dad is one of my best friends, and he stayed here last year with us. His education, he said, he had to take the seventh grade three times. [Laughter] But I think he's probably one of the smartest guys that I've ever known. Any problem to solve, he could solve it. You've got to think and combine all your

experience, just like he did.

For instance, I've gone out—this lake has practically ruined to fishing now, except for sunfish and like that and they aren't very big. But I remember one day it was about hot like this, hotter than hell, where you wouldn't expect the walleyes to bite. They were having some kind of—he was working across the lake, in charge of their dock and boats and fish and so forth, something like I did as a kid on a minor scale. He says, with a whole mob of people around, he says, "Well, let's go out and try it."

So he cranked up the motor, and we went out. He had every place marked by certain trees, background, and a certain angle from everything. So we stopped, and I was going to let the anchor down, and he didn't let me have anything to do with that. He had a pulley arrangement where he could lower and raise the anchor from the back of the boat. So he maneuvered around and then he let the anchor down real gentle. There was some weeds there you could see under water. He'd say, "Now, let your bait down right there." So I let the bait down, and I had a bite in just a minute.

I pulled up a nice walleye. So he said, "Now put it back." So I did, and got another one. Two of them within five minutes, anyway. Jeez, I thought this was a hell of a good place to fish. So what did he do? He pulled the anchor and says, "Those are the only two fish there," and then goes on to another spot.

He taught himself to play the piano by watching the keys on a player piano go down, see. He moved to Las Vegas, and for years he played piano in a pizza parlor out there. They paid him pretty good, and he got the job of—well, he got drinking heavy, and his wife got drinking worse than he did, and that's the reason they kind of got the hell out of here. The doctor told her that she'd be dead in six months if she kept on, so that kind of shocked her. That brought them to Las Vegas. He got a job as an electrician. Well, he figured everything out in his head, and within six months or so, he was head electrician for University of Las Vegas. He put in, I think, twenty years and retired, so he's on a pretty good pension.

The Navy tried to run a submarine up the Sacramento River out of San Francisco Bay, and they got it stuck in the mud and they abandoned it. Well, he said, "Hell." So he bought two or three thousand—he figured it all out—toy balloons, and he attached that to a string around this submarine, and he raised the submarine. Submarine cost 5 million dollars, and the Navy had abandoned it, see.

So I said, "What did you get out of it?"

"Oh," he says, "I got a nice set of tools." [Laughter]

He also had lost a leg in the war, a motorcycle accident. I suppose he was drunk or something. I write to him every week, or try to. He got paralyzed about three months ago and is paralyzed

from the waist down, so I try to keep his spirits up by writing to him. In my book, that "To Survive" book, I wrote about him and also about another man.

My mother died when I was sixteen, and I took off by myself as a prospector. [Laughter] I discovered—I thought I was a millionaire when I was seventeen years old. I found a vein about this wide. It was about twenty miles south of the Canadian line and about five miles from Idaho in the corner of Montana up there. You know, it looks like solid silver or something, but there's only one other vein in the world, and I think that's in Africa someplace. It's almost the same stuff as stainless steel. I've got some of it over in the pioneer crack over there. They've tried to mine it commercially, but it just don't pay. It can make stainless steel.

When my mother died, there was a family named Griffith that kind of adopted me. Mr. Griffith had come over from Poland with his parents when he was a little kid. The family gets real mad at me when I say he came from Poland. They claim he was a German, and that's supposed to be a big thing over being a—being a German is supposed to be a lot better than a Pole. Well, hell, that damned boundary shifted back and forth, and half the time Poland was part of Germany and all, back and forth. But this man started out when he was about eight years old cleaning the spittoons in a bank, and he ended up as president of the bank.

So there's a couple of stories. I'll take a sip of coffee if you ask me what questions you want.

AN: You were talking about the hired girls that you had at the resort. Then also in your book you mention a resort guide.

NS: Yes, that's Cap Allen.

AN: Did you have any other hired help?

NS: Dad, as I have described him, was very penurious, and we always got some of these kids. He got them and paid them \$50 for the summer, June, July, and August, see. But he got them from—I don't know how it was, but they were kids that had been in trouble in north Minneapolis.

I remember one of them, Raymond Faschingbauer, who was later—I think he killed a cop, and they sentenced him. Don't put that down, though. But we always had them. Those guys were goof-offs, and they just did what minimal, what somebody forced them to do, so to speak. They were supposedly kept busy in the garden, but they didn't.

I knew what had to be done, and I jumped into it and tried to get it done. It was kind of a family affair, you know. From the time I was maybe four years old, three or four years old, I knew the whole operation was to make the thing pay some way. And it did.

My dad kept a diary, and I can show you a copy of that. Do you want to see a copy of that?

AN: Sure.

NS: I'll show you the original. He kept the temperature, see. "January 1st, 1912, High 7 below, Low 20 below, winds westerly, a very cold day. A few teams with hogs to market by. My family all sick with cold and influenza. Just able to drag around and do chores."

Oh, yes, there's the farms.

AN: The Robbinsdale farm doesn't have a sold next to it. Is that significant?

NS: Yes. I inherited the damn thing, and they'd run a sewer by there. There was several thousand dollars a year assessment on it. I inherited that, and made Dad deponent, and so it's all built up to nice homes now. Are you familiar at all with Robbinsdale?

AN: I just know vaguely where it is.

NS: Well, there's a couple lakes there, and, of course, Dad always got on the lakes. That runs down to Ryan Lake. I've got that all translated and gave a copy to my boys so they'd have it. It might be a historical thing of some value. I don't know.

AN: I bet the Society would be interested in maybe seeing a copy. I'll tell them you have it.

NS: Well, it's not a full diary. He just kept it in the winter for three or four months when we weren't busy, see.

AN: That relates to one of my questions about what your mom and dad did in the winter.

NS: Well, we tried to keep warm, I think that was the main thing. [Laughter] Milk the cows and cut the wood, and I had the job of—well, I went to—see, in that book it does tell about going to country school, don't it?

AN: Yes.

NS: That about covers that, I guess. Well, go ahead and ask me anything you want to, and I'll see.

AN: I was also curious to find out how the resort secured new clientele year after year. I mean, the people came back.

NS: Just word of mouth, so far as I know, yes. We had a card. I guess I've got some of that someplace. We had a postcard with our name on it and Shadduck's Resort and a picture of the lake. It was registered as Sunset Park Farm. We still own it all here, except the part on Cedar Lake. I sold that off.

AN: Then would you write to your resorters during the winter with these cards?

NS: I don't think so. That there was no promotion, I'm sure. There was just word of mouth when somebody'd write. We'd get a lot of letters and they all had to be answered. They'd reserve August 1st to August 15th, or something like that, and a certain cottage after they'd been here.

I remember the first car to be driven from, I think it was Kansas City. Somebody drove a Cadillac, and I'd never heard of the name of it. I remember how we looked it and looked it and looked it over, and a lot of description of the roads through Iowa and stuff like that and how they got stuck, and if you were going that way, go some other way, and something like that. But I think it took them maybe two weeks or something to drive up here. It was considered quite a big deal, I know, yes.

AN: Did they come with children and the whole family then, or just two people?

NS: I'm uncertain about that. I think it was a family, yes. But most of those people, you know, they had to be in so-called upper class.

Oh, yes, there was a guy named Ned Burroughs. He was from somewheres down there. He bought the first boat with a motor in it, and he built a boathouse down here and put the boat in that. He later went out to California and bought 160 acres, which is now Hollywood. [Laughter] I never did get back to see him, but it was his son we corresponded with, and he kept urging us to come on out and spend the winter with him or something. But you get stuck here, and I was practicing law at that time, and never did get to see him. But I imagine he was plenty well-to-do, I don't know.

AN: Were the cabins of different sizes?

NS: It was pretty much the same size. I'm thinking now of the size. I think they would be about sixteen-by-twenty, and then the double ones were about sixteen-by-thirty-six or something like that. But there were no heating or cooking arrangements in the cabins. They had to eat at the resort. Most of them, in those days, had a trunk. They didn't have suitcases. They brought a lot of junk with them.

Most of the fishing was done with bamboo poles. There was some. I remember this Varney was out with his folks, and he had a steel pole and a rod. Tommy Varney, he was about my age. He'd never fished, and they baited his pole with a minnow and got it all ready for him. They said, "Well, throw her in." He threw the whole pole and everything in. [Laughter] A lot of little incidents. We were kidding around about that.

Did I tell you about how I got my first gun?

AN: No.

NS: Well, it was the same Tommy Varney, and this Cap Allen had two sons and they were motherless. I think she'd died, probably, or maybe they were divorced, I don't know. But anyway, Harry Allen was the younger of the two, and he was probably six, eight years older than I was. The kids then, there was none of this stuff about songbirds and so forth. So he claimed he was shooting, he called them chippybirds. He was shooting the chippybirds, and Tommy Varney was a little ways away trying to catch a frog. He shot, and the bullet cut the hair right off from Varney's head.

Allen had a .22 Hamilton single-shot rifle. I don't know where he got it, but I remember that the *Minneapolis Daily New* used to give one of these Hamilton .22s away if you got twenty subscriptions or something like that. They cost \$2.18 in the Montgomery Ward catalog. Then they later raised the price to \$2.41. I kept track of those things. So, anyway, Dad took the gun away from him.

So Dad took the gun and threw it in the lake, threw it as far as he could. Well, I figured about how far he could throw it, although I wasn't present, but I knew it was out there someplace. So for days and days I swam back and forth under water. I must have known how to swim when I was three or four years old, I don't know. But I finally found the darn gun all right. Of course, there was much bad talk about guns and kids and shooting and so forth. So I kept that gun in a hollow basswood log down by the—well, it's right down here where I kept it. So that was my gun for several years.

The neighbors in those days—we never had any—but they raised turkeys and they all ran wild. The neighbors' turkeys would all get together, and there'd be maybe fifty, seventy-five turkeys. So I used to take my .22 and sneak off in the woods and try to shoot the turkeys. I never got one, but I had a good experience, still, hunting for turkeys.

Well, if you want to turn this thing on and ask me something specific, or you're making notes, is that's enough?

AN: One of my other questions is related to what you were talking about there, about your childhood friends and things like that. Most of them you spent a lot of time in the woods with your dog and your pig and all that. I was wondering what it was like to be a young kid on a resort. You did have a lot of work to do.

NS: Well, I'll remember one thing. I loved to swim, and so that's the reason I cleaned the fish so fast, so I can go down and swim. Now, this you wouldn't believe. Probably shouldn't be repeated anyway. But the resorters all had kids, maybe fifteen, twenty kids in there. Parents would be sitting around on shore, splashing around someplace. We used to take the little kids and hold them under water and see the bubbles come up. [Laughter]

AN: Oh, no. Oh, no. Then they'd come up and scream?

NS: Well, not scream. They'd spit and cough and choke and so forth. But they never got drowned. [Laughter]

AN: That's terrible. These poor kids.

NS: There wasn't any—turn that thing off a minute and I'll tell you. [Taping interruption.]

AN: Most of the rest of my questions have to do with the rest of the history of the Shaddock Family Resort. While your Dad was still in control of the resort, you went on to school then and got your education?

NS: Yes. If you want a little outline of that, my dad, who had spent all his time in education, you might say, he said, "No." He said, "You be a carpenter or a bricklayer," he said. This was about World War I days, see. He said, "You learn to do something with your hands." He says, "Education don't pay. That's just foolishness." He said, "You learn." He says, "I'll pay your tuition at Dunwoody."

Well, I had learned someplace that there was such a thing as a forest ranger, and I decided at the time I was ten years old that I was going to be a forest ranger. I got through high school when I was sixteen, and it was kind of a fluke because I'd gone to country school and only—

Let me back up. Usually in November we were kept home and Dad taught us. Well, as I said someplace else and wrote down, that I think I knew more about Herodotus when I was ten years old than the average college graduate does today. I had to learn the multiplication tables up to twenty-five, and I can still recite them, too, if you want them. [Laughter] That really is something that everybody should know, at least the square, because you can figure faster than they do with one of these computers now.

Anyway, then when the snow began to go off in the spring, about maybe the first of April we went back, and school lasted until about May 15th or something and then we got out.

Well, anyway, the school district was ultimately consolidated when I was about twelve years old. No, ten. Our country school district was consolidated with Annandale, and we had to go to Annandale School. Well, I'd been to Annandale quite a few times, maybe a dozen times, I don't know. Maybe only five or six, I don't know. But I was very shy as to other people. I think Dad drove us in with the old buggy and told us, "Well, go in and go to school."

As it happened this way, kids were playing on the grounds, and when they finally rung the school bell, I think it was maybe nine o'clock, why, everybody rushed inside. I didn't know where to go, so I just went into the first room that was right in the door and sat down. I hadn't been there very long. I think it was the same day when some teacher came in. I figured I should be about the third grade or something. She says, "Anybody in here that belongs in the fifth grade?" Well, I knew I

didn't belong in that grade.

Then in a little while, another teacher came in and says, "Anybody in here belong in the seventh grade?" I didn't say anything. So it went on.

The town furnished the books, so we didn't have to bring our own books. It went on for maybe a month, and then somebody got a hold of the country school records and sent them in to Annandale. It was quite obvious that I belonged in the fourth grade, I guess it was, or third.

So the teacher, when she discovered this, asked if I'd gone to country school, to be sure I was identified right. I said, "Yes." So she excused herself from the class and went up to the professor's office, the guy that was the superintendent of schools, and showed him my entrance exam. So she came back, and she says, "You're supposed to go up and see the superintendent of schools." Well, I thought I must have done something terrible. I didn't know. So I started to cry to beat hell. I went up there and I was crying so bad that he couldn't examine me very closely.

So he went down and got her and brought the teacher up. Mrs. Belden, I remember. So they got out of me that those are my records from the country school, and I kept blubbering around. Mrs. Belden said, "Why don't you just leave him there. He's doing just as good as the rest of them." [Laughter] So I skipped two or three grades. So that's the reason I got kind of a head start over some of the others.

I started at the university. Well, I got through high school, and Dad had said that he wouldn't pay anything for college since I had determined that I was going to take forestry. So I got a job with this Griffith family that I've mentioned, who kind of helped me out after my mother died. They said that they were remodeling their house over on Cedar Lake, which is just a little ways from our property over there. So I got a job mixing cement. Well, I was a—what do you call it? A mud-slinger for the mason, so we had to put in foundations and walks and built a couple fireplaces. Look at that wall. I can lay that up today. There's what I learned right then. I didn't, as a matter of fact. I was busy and another guy did it.

But that was the reason for me getting a good start. I got thirty-six cents an hour, and then I got a job—a fellow had a sawmill and he had to have five barrels of water pumped each day for running the sawmill. I had to pump that with a cistern pump. It pumped fast, but it took quite a little bit. Then I got a job furnishing all the minnows to Muir's Resort over on Cedar Lake. They said they'd pay me \$30 a month if they never run out of minnows. I caught the minnows. My mother carried a kerosene lamp, and I caught the minnows at night up in the creek up here.

I had over \$400, \$440, I think it was, saved to start the university that year. I went down the last couple weeks in September, just before school started. I got a job with a superintendent of Randall School, who had charge of the Wright County Fair Booth at the State Fair. I went down there and I got a job selling ballpoint pens during time off. I'll give you a copy of that other book if you'll send it back to me, because it tells all about that, how I got different jobs. I got so I sold

potato-peelers and Goodyear cement. I'd take over half hours or when the guy had gone to lunch, see, and he's the salesman there. So I had enough money to go to school on.

I'll tell you, going to school, the real trouble came when I was going to night law school, because, well, after the Depression began to come on, the first thing it hits is the building trades. This was in '28. But I was selling automobiles, and then I was working at Fort Bragg, California. I was selling automobiles and I had saved \$10,000. I won some big deal.

I was married to my first wife at that time, and in 1930 I averaged about thirty cars a month. But by the time 1930 came along, I went three months without selling a car. You couldn't give them away out there. Everything was closed and your cars were coming back that I'd financed.

So I came back here, drove a '29 Ford Coupe back here, and I put all my securities—I was still worth about 3,000, three or 4,000 dollars—put them in the bank here. They were supposed to pay you \$200 a month deposit to my account. So they paid \$200 the first month, and next month come the first of the month I wrote checks for quite a bit, a lot of little checks. All the checks come back, and the bank went broke. If you think that wasn't a root-hog-and-die scheme. [Taping interruption. Lunch break.]

NS: Well, I think I've had a pretty interesting life, don't you?

AN: Oh, I do. When you think back to what it was like, having the resorters come every summer and living the life on a summer resort and everything like that, how is that? Obviously it's vastly different than the resort experience today anywhere. What do you think made Shadduck's such a special place?

NS: Well, there were two other resorts on the lake here. The only thing that made this a success was my dad's management and my mother doing all the cooking, you know, a hell of a job.

AN: Would people have been able to come from town and eat your mom's cooking?

NS: No.

AN: That would have been a super deal. I'll bet they were jealous of the resorters getting to eat it.

NS: No, nobody ever came from town.

But there's one interesting thing, right up the line here, there was the Murray Institute that was kind of a resort, but it was for drunks or alcoholics, and you had to take the cure. The way they cured people was they mixed whiskey in your butter and your coffee and your scrambled eggs and then the potatoes, mashed potatoes. You couldn't get one taste of anything but what it had whiskey in it. So by the time you did thirty days of that, you never wanted to see another sip of whiskey.

AN: Did people just come there or go to that place voluntarily?

NS: No. I don't know. Maybe they did. We never had anything to do with them.

But across the lake, there was Long Horse Resort. Then it became Two Ls Resort. Then Beaches Resort. Now Beaches sold out to Camp Friendship.

AN: Yes, I saw that sign. What is Camp Friendship? What do they do there?

NS: Retarded folks.

AN: When did the homes start to come to the lake? Were the homes that are around the lake now, were those there when Shadduck's Resort was—

NS: No. There was one other place, I think. But many of these people around the lake, I could name five or six of them, were people would want to find a piece of property, and they'd leave it to Dad to find it, quite a lot of them, around the lake. Then we went out of the business in 1918, and we sold off the cottages.

AN: While the people were at the resort, while they were spending their two weeks at the resort, would they go into Annandale?

NS: No.

AN: How long would it have taken them to get there?

NS: Well, most of them came on the train. Dad hauled them out or back in the old buggy. I don't think any of them ever went. I don't remember any occasion of anybody ever going to town. They just stayed.

AN: Everything they needed was right here.

NS: Yes. They come, most of them, I suppose, from towns and glad to get away from them.

AN: Yes, oh, yes. That's one of the key attractions to a nice resort. You don't have to deal with the town.

We've certainly covered everything that I had. I was talking to my grandfather, who grew up in Maple Lake.

NS: Is that right.

AN: Yes.

NS: What was his name?

AN: His name is Elmer Nelson. Elmer C. Nelson. Now, why can't I remember his father's name? I can't remember his father's name. But he was saying that he knew the Planer family when he was there.

NS: They live right up the hill there, see. You can see their house from our place.

AN: They were farmers?

NS: Yes. Their house was built in 1876, I think it was. See, we didn't get here until—we were kind of latecomers in '97. Some of the Ransoms came, I think when it was still a territory, 1857 or something like that. Arthur Ransom is long dead. I was executor of his will and a good friend of his. Arthur told me about helping build Ransom's house. They had a sawmill down here on our creek, just up the road from the bridge right here, 200 feet. He told me about hauling logs down there to saw the lumber for Planers' house. I think it was 1876, he told me.

What did your dad or grandfather do in Maple Lake? Was he a farmer or what?

AN: His father was a blacksmith in Maple Lake, and that would have been around that, around the nineties. Nelson was his name. So that's what my great-grandfather did. He was a blacksmith. I suppose he would have been the only blacksmith in Maple Lake.

NS: Yes, one in each town. But I'm kind of surprised because Maple Lake is almost solid Irish. I suppose there was a sprinkling, but at one time since I've been back here—see, I was away twenty-five years for a time until I came back here. After I was back here, there was 85 percent of the kids in the public schools were Catholic. Are you Catholic?

AN: No.

NS: Yes, it was quite a few Swede Catholics, because of inter-marriage, you know.

AN: No, he was a Swedish Lutheran.

NS: Yes, and there was no Swedish Lutheran Church.

AN: I wonder where they went.

NS: They probably didn't go to church.

AN: Actually, they probably did, I think, but I don't know where.

NS: There was a Lutheran church just out of town. In fact, even today the Baptists finally got a church on the outskirts started in Maple Lake. But Annandale has two Lutheran churches, a what they call a Free Church, I don't know what breed of cat that is, and a Methodist Church, and a Catholic Church. But, you see, we've got five Protestant churches and one Catholic church.

It's kind of a funny thing. When I practiced in Minneapolis, I was a junior partner, but one of my partners was Neil Cronin. Neil Cronin was Catholic. By the way, he came from Nebraska, too, and he had been city attorney for Minneapolis and then finally went into private practice with another guy named Mitchell. I was with them.

The Catholic bishop said that they had to build a parochial school. Of course, you know, come up with the money. So there were two delegations of Catholic people. Knowing that Cronin, who was a big attorney for the Catholic Church in St. Paul. What's the top guy, archbishop or bishop or something? He was attorney for him. Two delegations, not knowing each other, but both of them came up to me and made appointments at night where nobody'd see them, and so forth, and wanted me to keep them from building the parochial school because they said, "Well, we got the public school. The taxes pay for that. Now, here, what, we'll get stuck for all this?"

But the bishop says, "No, there'll be a parochial school there," and that was it.

AN: Did it have many students, the parochial school they built?

NS: Oh, hell, no. They make them pay for it and send the kids there.

AN: How far away was your country school when you were a kid?

NS: We measured. I don't think it was much over a mile. I lived across the creek here. The old house was up there.

AN: Want some cake?

NS: I don't, no. It's good cake, though.

AN: Yes.

NS: Unless I get out and get some exercise, I haven't got any appetite.

AN: What were the names of the families with the other resorts, the other two resorts on the lake?

NS: In 1854, it was a family named Richmond Smith, I think. Anyway, he was married into the Longworth family. They owned the property on the other side of the lake over here. As early as

1854, he had a hunting camp, hunted deer up here. People came from I don't know where, possibly from Minneapolis. But it's existed there ever since. It's been through a succession of ownerships.

AN: That's Camp Friendship now? The Longworths?

NS: Yes, yes. Yes.

AN: There was another one, too?

NS: Well, Murray Institute. Those are the only ones.

AN: Did his hunting camp just operate in the summer? Did he have like deer hunting in the—

NS: I can't tell you that. I had the old entire history of that in good form over at Pioneer Park, and I can't find it now. I think somebody stole it, because I intended to—see, one time we advertised in Annandale, seventeen resorts—twenty-six lakes and seventeen resorts, I think it was. Maybe it was the little reverse of that.

So it was after Minnetonka, this was the next area. Then about when they got a road up to Brainerd, why then they started going up there.

Yes, see, my son got the house down here. Maybe you can see it through. Bob's up in Alaska fishing this week.

AN: What does he do?

NS: Well, I'll tell you something.

AN: He fishes in Alaska.

NS: Well, I'll tell you, and this is bragging, I suppose. But my oldest boy is an adopted boy, and he's a—I was very fortunate. He's a mechanic from hell. He invented the coffeemakers, these cream—he got married as soon as he got out of high school, and when he was twenty years old, he was foreman in that aircraft factory at San Diego. Then they found out, North American Air Aviation, or what was it, and he had charge of wiring the bombers. It was the most complicated crap in the world, you know. But they found out he was only twenty years old, and the boss people down in New York said, "Nope, nope, no foremen under"—well, then he came back here, and he worked for this Cornelius Company. They made him factory superintendent, and then he quit because he said, "You don't have any friends. If you're the boss people, you don't have any friends."

Now he's running the—he's kind of nuts. As a financial man, he's kind of nuts, but he's got—

well, it's his man that's painting the house here now. What the hell is it? Bob and John, I brought them up the same way I did. I never gave them anything. Do you know what it cost me for nineteen years of college? Hundred and seventy-three dollars. Well, that isn't exactly true, because I got a—

They were taught to work and work like hell. Well, right there, the kids were making maple syrup when I think Bob was only three. He said, "Just go tree to tree and fall down, tree to tree and fall down." He'd fall down in the snow. They made maple syrup and sold it, see. So I gave them a pickup truck and a chainsaw, and I'd match Bob with that little chainsaw with anybody in Minnesota. He made application to go to Harvard and they wrote back and, "Now, how much help do you need?" Bob wrote back and told them he didn't need any help. He could cut ten cords of wood a day. I guess they thought we were too well off, they wouldn't admit him to Harvard.

AN: So their kids went to Harvard? Who went to Harvard?

NS: No, he didn't go. I say, they must have thought he was too well off, when he told them he didn't need any help, he could make his own. Well, I built all this house, and they helped me. He built his house. Bob can lay blocks as fast anybody in the country, and he's got a couple hundred thousand dollar house down there. Do you know what it cost me for this house? I built it. Eighteen thousand dollars is all I've got into this, as far as cash is concerned.

AN: Wow. But you've got a lot of beautiful wood in there. Wood walls everywhere.

NS: That's the trouble today. In fact I've just written an article. I haven't got it. If you know how to work, you know, you don't need all this largesse from everybody to get along. They all talk about how much it costs to go to college and so forth. My kids, Jim worked as a plumber. Bob graduated near the top of his law class. John went, after two years here, he went to Berkeley, and he graduated at the top of his class or very close to it.

AN: Where did John go to law school?

NS: Berkeley, University of California-Berkeley. He first took economics, and then he had this job of teaching mountain climbing and skiing. He got to be instructor, and they paid him, you know. The way John made his money was just sheer thinking. He figured Berkeley is the top school, you know. He figured that many of the professors had been siphoned off to Yale or Brown or Harvard or someplace from California. Are you familiar with Berkeley at all?

AN: Oh, yes.

NS: Well, you know, it's a little half-mile flat and then you go up in the hills. So he figured that many of them would have bought property in contemplation of building a house and they wouldn't have sold it. So he spent nearly two years searching the records in Alameda County, and he came up with seventeen, maybe more than that, lots that were owned by absentee owners. So

he wrote to all of them and said, "Now, here, if you want to sell your lot, I'll buy it under these circumstances. I'll pay you a down payment, maybe a few hundred dollars to show my good faith, but you'll have to wait until I get the permits to build."

It's very difficult there, now, to get building permits because they have all kinds of, not only, earthquake-proof things, but all of the other stuff. I think he had seventeen places tied up. He did everything, including the wiring and the plumbing and the electricity. Did it all himself. Then he built a cement boat, and he was going to sail it to the Philippines. I don't know if he sunk it or what happened to that.

But, anyway, he'd build one house at a time, see. But it'd take months or years to get these permits. So he got these and he built only, I think, five or six houses. Now the last one he's got that he's trying to sell now, we just talked to him last night, is priced at \$975,000. He's moved over to, if you're familiar with Berkeley, you know where the Golden Gate Bridge is. Now, what's that peninsula that runs out just the other side of it? My wife can tell you. There's a big peninsula that runs out into San Francisco Bay. Now John is the biggest owner of property on San Francisco Bay.

You know, there's a lot of money there, and we don't realize it here in the Middle West. But the next house John is going to build, he's going to build it on a million-dollar lot. Can you imagine that? But he's got a cinch on it, but they've got a lot of politics. My kids never do anything crooked, but he has to get somebody elected to the council that will allow more building permits over there. They only allow one at a time or something.

So, but the way he figured it, there isn't enough water, see, in northern California. So John, I don't know whether he's concluded that deal, but he licked the thing by making arrangements to buy a desalination ship down in Southern California and move it up. He can take the water out of the Bay and pump it into these lots, and so they can't complain about that.

Yes, I'm pretty proud of my kids, but, yes, I don't give myself any credit. I think it was my grandfather or my father. Well, my grandfather, my father's father, owned a ship down on Lake Erie, and he was doing very well with the, I don't know, sailing ships, transporting stuff. That was before there wasn't any motorized ships. Then he got financing for, I don't know if it was two or three, I got it in the house there, the names of the ships and everything, someplace. But they all blew together in a big storm and burned. So he just loaded the family. There was no such thing as a bankruptcy or anything then. He loaded them all in a covered wagon and started west. That's how we happened to be located here.

AN: That's amazing.

NS: Yes, interesting at least. Yes, we've lost our—well, you know, you just don't have to make the decisions and do the tough things that the pioneers had to do. It's just gone, that's all. They had to do what they had to do. That's about the size of it. Yes, yes, yes. It's an interesting world.

You lived in California for a while, did you?

AN: No, I have a cousin who is a student at Berkeley now and a friend who is a graduate student at Berkeley now.

NS: Well, Berkeley, is I think a school that would compare with most any school.

AN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They have probably more of the best graduate programs than any other school. It's a super school. Really good.

NS: Yes. Well, when I got through the university here, the law school, see, I was out six years and then I came back and took law. When I got through here, it was in the Depression, of course, in 1933. Some of the top students got jobs at \$50 a month. I started out on my own.

I don't know whether you understand this or not, but where a contract is signed, covers the loan agreement. Most of the money for California to build many of the business structures and so forth came from the East, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts. Some sizable amount, which I was surprised, that came from Arizona.

Now, whether or not those mortgages, which were signed back in that country, whether those mortgages could enforce a deficiency judgment depends upon the law of that state where they were signed, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut. I can give you a copy of that if you want to read it.

John researched and wrote an article, which was the longest article which ever appeared in the *Berkeley Law Review*, diagnosing each one of these laws of each one of these states and how they could obtain a deficiency judgment in a foreclosure or mortgage in California, see. So when this article appeared, hell, they were trying to hire him from all over. He could have started out at \$70,000 a year. And he may go back and teach again. I don't know. I don't see any purpose in accumulating more than you need to get along well and get everything you want, so I keep telling him. Bob, too.

Bob, with a couple of partners, he owns the Maple Lake Airport and the St. Cloud Airport. He owns, alone, the Chevrolet agency here. He's CEO, you know what that is, don't you, of Jerry's Markets. So he gets \$150,000 a year salary there. So he flies around in his personal airplane, a Cessna 95, which costs over a hundred thousand. He's got a BMW and two Cadillacs just sitting down there. That's too much. Yes, yes. If you want to do something in this rough old world, just get in and dig. That's all you need to do.

Did you take museumology or something in school?

AN: No. History. Lots of history. Lots of history.

NS: Well, the best thing for me, I ended up in a ranger group in China. I saw quite a few little dirty things and so forth. It was so bad, and I got hurt some myself. I made up my mind if I ever got out of that alive, I'm not going to have any damn thing bother me at all. So, I tried cases here for forty years, I guess, and it never bothered me. Other guys get excited or something. Bullshit. It's nothing. Just dollars and people, and it don't make any difference. But you see a few people get butchered and killed and so forth, you kind of change.

AN: Thank you for all the terrific stories.

NS: I'm always pleased to relate my experiences, for whatever they're worth.

AN: They're worth a lot.

NS: They're worth a lot to me, but I don't know if they're worth anything to anybody else or not.

AN: Oh, they are, they are. Thank you so much.

Minnesota Resort Industry Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society