

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Peter Bowers and Bill Arnold

Date of Interview: August 6, 2010

Location of Interview: Randolph, New Hampshire

Interviewer: Mark Madison

Brief Summary of Interview: Peter Bowers and Bill Arnold both worked for the Randolph Mountain Club as caretakers at the age of sixteen, a position normally held by college students or older. They talk about being friends at a young age and how they got the job as caretakers for the Club. They speak of what their duties were, hiking the trails, and some of the fun experiences they had. They mention the worst jobs they had to do, the scariest experiences they had, what they did for fun, what they ate and whether working for the RMC influenced their careers. Bill also mention the riot of 1979 in which a bunch of students were at the RMC drinking and how the state police, Forest Service and RMC all went up to take care of the situation. Peter and Bill still remain friends to this day and seem to have really enjoyed the time they spent at the Randolph Mountain Club.

Mark: Well the easiest question we start with is first to have each say and spell your name. And this is for the transcriptionist.

Peter: Okay.

Mark: So she can recognize your voice and knows how to spell the name right.

Peter: Okay.

Mark: Let's start with you Peter, if that's okay.

Peter: Peter, P E T E R. Bowers, B O W E R S.

Mark: Bill.

Bill: I'm Bill Arnold, B I L L A R N O L D.

Mark: Okay and today's August 6, 2010 we're in Randolph, New Hampshire; Steve Chase and Mark Madison doing an oral history.

Peter or Bill: And all things.

Mark: And (unclear) for the Randolph Mountain Club and the other easy, quick question is, both of you, where and when were you born?

Peter: New York City, 1947.

Mark: Okay.

Bill: I was born in Medford, Massachusetts in 1946.

Mark: Okay, and maybe a brief synopsis of where you went to school.

Peter: I grew mostly in Connecticut and then went to college in up state New York.

Steve: Okay, where in Connecticut?

Peter: We lived in Bristol, West Hartford, Old Greenwich in which point I went to prep school up in Lakeville and then kind of left and spent the rest of my career in New York.

Steve: Yeah I'm from Simsbury.

Peter: Okay, yeah.

Mark: Bill.

Bill: I was born in Medford and we moved to Cincinnati when I was three so I grew up mostly in Cincinnati, went to school in Cincinnati and Dayton and a little bit in Niagara Falls, New York and then a little bit of college at Paul Smith's in the Adirondacks. And then ended up back here, always came here in the summers.

Mark: Okay.

Peter: Right.

Bill: Back here, that's the connection yeah.

Mark: And what do you both do now?

Peter: I'm retired.

Mark: Okay. And what you'd do before you retire?

Peter: Public schools, teacher to superintendent.

Mark: Okay. Bill.

Bill: Whatever you need done.

[Laughing]

Mark: Would you care to be more specific, I know that's (unclear).

Peter: It's a little more (unclear).

Bill: I live here in Randolph, I caretake a bunch of the summer homes. I have a license for water pumps so I do water pumps all over the northern part of the state. Today I was mowing lawns all over the place, I was fixing the dam right behind you.

Mark: We saw, this morning yeah.

Bill: So you know I just sort of fix things all over town.

Mark: Okay. How did you guys come to work with the RMC?

Peter: Well I was trying to figure out, I think you, you'd always come up here, I was probably seven or eight so it was probably 1950 when I first started coming up. I think.

Bill: Not if you were seven or eight.

Peter: Well that's true, (unclear) so it '54, '55. A mind is a terrible thing to lose. And we just sort of became friends and just carried that relationship on for a long time, you

know, and played around on the trails; it was different back then, you know, I watch my grandchildren (unclear)...

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: ...we get free rein of the place. We would live, lived on the hill, my parents rented and just take off for the day and jump right in.

Bill: Walk anywhere you wanted yeah. I, I'd been coming since the summer before I was born and, and Peter's right, back, back then, I think is still true to a certain amount but not as much, that certainly before we sixteen and could drive that if we wanted to get anywhere we'd just walk and there's, as everybody knows, there's quite a network of trails through the town and you know from valley to the hill and back again and visiting friends and you were always sort of hiking, you really didn't know you were but if you weren't consciously going out for a hike you were at least hiking down the trails to visit somebody. And...

Peter: Up and down Grassy Lane.

Bill: Oh yeah, oh yeah all over the place. (Peter saying something at same time.) We were just going all the time.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And yeah and really our parents sort of didn't know it (talking at same time) they had know idea I'm not sure, I don't know, maybe they cared or maybe they didn't, I don't know. Well we got to be, I don't know fourteen, fifteen then we were allowed to go up to Crag Camp. Maybe not alone but with a group, with two or three of us...

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: ...no adults and then, that was a big leap right there.

Peter: To me it's pretty amazing you think of thirteen, fourteen years old being, you know, pack your lunch, your meals, and just drop you off at the trail and...

Bill: Be back sometime.

Peter: Be back sometime.

Bill: A couple days or whatever.

Peter: Yeah, yeah. You know just have all of this all just to yourself. I know my son wouldn't let my grandchildren let loose like that.

Mark: Times are different.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. And it was always made very clear, at least the RMC tried to make it very clear that the caretaker of the camps was a caretaker and not a babysitter and that they were responsible for the buildings not for the kids and that pretty much held true, you know. But...

Peter: I was just thinking we didn't, I mean forget cell phones there weren't even radios.

Bill: No, no, no we tried various kinds of CB radios and things but they didn't really work very well and the communication was that when you got up there, just to make; so your parents would know that you were there at nine o'clock right? Nine o'clock at night you'd take all your flashlights everybody and go out the porch and flash the valley with your lights and they'd be down, they'd go down to **Kenyon's** field or someplace with the car and flash the headlights and then everybody knew everybody was okay.

Peter: At least at that point.

Bill: At least until nine o'clock. (Unclear) cloudy night then I guess they just sort of assumed that we were okay.

Peter: I forgot about the flashing of the cars.

Bill: And you'd always lose track of the time and, you know, go running out there.

Peter: And you'd start seeing these lights in the valley flashing and oh...

Bill: Yeah, and you never knew quite which one was the right one but.

Peter: Somebody's parent was curious.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. And sometimes we'd go out with a Coleman lantern and (unclear).

Peter: I guess they were desperate when they hired us.

[Talking at same time]

Mark: I don't have to ask the questions you guys just running right through them, that's good.

Bill: Well I, the way...

Steve: I'll be back.

Bill: My understanding was that the summer in 1962 Ash Campbell was the caretaker.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And we had spent a lot of time up there just, you know, hanging out but we helped cut firewood and clean and you know I think we generally kind of...

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: ...helped out. And he was originally going to be coming back for the summer of 1963 and I guess it more or less the last minute, I don't know April or May or something, he changed his mind and so the RMC was stuck looking for caretaker. And I guess, I think Ash sort of was a way to bale out, you know, they said "Well who would you suggest?" And he said "How about Peter and Bill." And we were both just sixteen years old, so we were young, we were young.

Peter: This was usually a college position.

Bill: Yeah.

Mark: Everybody else we've interviewed was (unclear).

Bill: And—so, and there'd always been just one caretaker up there. And so I guess what they decided to do was figured well two 16 years old are, maybe they're as good as a 32 year old I don't know but, but they decided to hire both of us. And I think the shutterbug around town was there's some (unclear) about the whole thing. And we, I don't think we were perfect by any means but we did okay.

Peter: But you know cuz at that time you were in charge of four camps, although they didn't, there was no money involved other than volunteering contributions, they had kitty.

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: We sort of had to check Gray Knob everyday as I remember running over there.

Bill: Yeah, yeah checked Gray Knob and The Perch, not quite (unclear, some speaking at same time).

Peter: The Log Cabin was sort of a disaster.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. And I can remember we got paid twenty dollars a week.

Peter: Well they took the salary and split it in half.

Bill: Right, they split the job (unclear, speaking at same time.)

Peter: I think it was 35, they raised it to 40 and gave us each...

Bill: Did they?

Peter: ... gave us each 20, something like that.

Bill: But I, you know, I didn't care about that.

Peter: Oh know.

Bill: I mean back then, and this is another thing that's changed, back then when you were a caretaker at Crag Camp you were at the top of the ladder. That was just about as good as life could ever be for anybody I mean all of our friends, you know, I don't know that it's pretty hard to put into words just how important that...

Peter: It was really responsible.

Bill: It was very responsible cuz, yeah it was, it was a really big deal to be the caretaker, especially at 16.

Peter: Yeah

Mark: You set a new precedent.

Bill: Yeah so and then the summer after that I guess they hired Chris Campbell and John Free and that's when they first did two. They had two caretakers and one at Crag and Gray Knob.

Peter: Right, right. I guess from then on it was two. And then I think probably the big deal was when they actually started charging and you had that whole financial (unclear)...

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: ... that, we would always try to hit people up for money but...

Bill: They had a **kitty**, they had a metal box bolted to the wall and a sign and I could probably almost tell you where that sign is that said "Please fed the **kitty**." And part of our job was to sort of politely suggest that people donate money and I can't remember, there was sort of amount that they were expected to donate, a dollar, two dollars something like that.

Mark: Did most of them donate?

Bill: Oh yeah, I think most of them did.

Peter: The biggest problem was the summer camps, who rather than spend money at the AMC huts would drag twelve kids up there and not want, or more, and not want to contribute to (unclear). I think, did they put some limits on it...

Bill: Oh yeah, yeah well no, not that summer but I, later on as I became Camps director I put in a limit of ten and that's still for the most part it works but we still, we had a group up there last week that had twelve for camp week and you know and we had a group (unclear) of ten for a while and then they, and then they learned well we're just send ten people to Crag and ten people to Gray Knob.

Peter: Right.

Bill: And, but then they'd just be taking over two camps and they all just sort of end up in the same place anyway.

Peter: But at least they pay now.

Bill: Oh yeah they pay.

Mark: So did they, they do anything special because you guys were so young as caretakers, did they check up on you more or?

Peter: I think (unclear) Peggy Grant was up a lot more than she (unclear), wasn't she (unclear).

Bill: Well no, you're probably right. I think (name) was the president.

Peter: Right.

Bill: And back then president did the hiring.

Peter: Right.

Bill: And Peggy Grant was (unclear).

Peter: I think somebody came up once a week just to make, and it was kind of like I remember this inspection thing.

Bill: Oh yeah.

Peter: Make sure it was swept up and clean and neat.

Bill: At least once a week. They just call and have lunch and (unclear). And the Gray Knob was quite a, quite a mess I remember then too it was really more than we could handle, we tried and (unclear) they, the I think in the records they say repairs were done in '64 but they really started doing work in '63 when we were there.

Peter: I mean it was just (unclear) pine sticks with moss (unclear) that's what the cabin (unclear)...

Bill: Some moss, some moss.

Peter: You could actually see right through.

Bill: Oh yeah a lot of critters running and the roof was all leaky and you know so on and so forth. So.

Peter: Strange that it turned into a winterized, year round camp.

Bill: Well yeah and I can remember the discussion back then was they were thinking about insulating one of the cabins and they decided that Gray Knob was more protected and so they did that. And then years later in '76 we started with winter caretakers and, and...

Peter: Right.

Bill: ...and well has gradually tightened up quite a bit.

[Someone saying "Hello" and Bill responds "Hi"]

Bill: And then we went on from there.

Mark: Did you guys have a favorite path or hike around the camp?

Peter: You know I went up today, I went up to **Saunders Bridge** and came across the Cliffway and went out to a bog ledge and then came down the Amphibrach.

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: And I was trying to think how many miles or hours I must have spent in my lifetime on the Amphibrach cuz that's the way you went up, the Amphibrach to the Spur Trail.

Bill: That was before the highway was put in.

Peter: Yeah, yeah.

[Speaking at same time]

Peter: Cuz the mules were there.

Bill: Yes the AMC had mules there.

Peter: The donkey **(unclear)**.

Bill: Pass the mules. I can remember you collecting the apples from the apple trees and making apple pies **(unclear)** wood stove at Crag.

Peter: Well that was the other thing, people didn't really have camp stoves or gas stoves.

Bill: No.

Peter: Pretty much all the cooking (unclear) monster woodstove.

Bill: We ate a lot of cold food.

Peter: But it was nice on a rainy, dreary day (unclear) that thing up.

Bill: You spent half the day just get it going cuz the wood was always wet. But that's all right.

Peter: But it was worth it and you know we'd bake an apple pie or something like that, it was kind of nice. And remember the worst was the outhouse duty. I read...

[Speaking at same time]

Bill: And you know they're still going through that.

Peter: ...somewhere yeah (chucking) internal (unclear).

Bill: Now they call it compositing.

Peter: Somewhere, I don't know if it was some magazine that done an article about the White Mountains and they stated that the Crag outhouse had the most spectacular view in the mountains and it did.

Bill: It really did, oh it really did, it really did.

Peter: It was gorgeous.

Bill: It's hanging right off King Ravine and it had a window in it and you looked right out over King Ravine and it was, it was beautiful.

Peter: But not being in the green time, **trash was the can pit**, you just...

Bill: Oh yeah.

Peter: ...went 50 feet from the cabin and just threw it over the edge of the, you know...

Bill: And why would ever do anything else.

Peter: Why would you.

Bill: That's just, you know.

Peter: And the material from the outhouse collected underneath it and one of the caretaker jobs was it had to be...

Bill: Sort of...

Peter: ...shoveled over to the side, that was pretty nasty job. You put a shovel on the end of a long pole and one person's dumping lime...

Bill: Yeah you used chlorinated lime back then.

[Speaking at same time]

Peter: The old days.

Mark: Well that ties into a series of questions we have here. What was the worst part of your job? (Chuckling) You may have described it already.

Bill: Well that's it, that was probably it.

[Talking at same time]

Bill: I worked two other summers up there (unclear) '67, no '68 and '69 I worked up there but even then we were still doing toilets so I would say, yeah shoveling out the toilets and packing, you know, they don't pack loads the way they do. They don't pack loads now the way they use to and I, I mean, that was certainly the packing was certainly the hardest work but oh that was just mind over matter...

Peter: Well we were responsible for filling the wood shed.

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: And that was all hand tools, we had a big two-man bucksaw and those crazy little bow saws with the wooden (unclear).

Bill: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Peter: (Unclear).

Bill: Cut it and split it. Yeah because there was a woodshed that was expected to provide wood for the winter for people using it in the winter and there were, I don't think by Christmas it was pretty well used up.

Peter: It's mostly hunters from my understanding.

Bill: Well that's what they use to say, I don't know why anybody would even hunt up there.

Mark: And that was your job to fill it up.

Bill: Well yeah it's part of the summer job was to fill that.

Mark: That must have taken a big chunk of the summer.

Bill: Well you pick away a little bit here and a little bit there and you get, you get people like we were when we were younger up there 14, 15 years old well, you know, you put them to work you know hanging around not doing anything all day, split some firewood.

Peter: Right.

Bill: So yeah you could get other people to help out but ultimately it was the caretaker's job.

Mark: What was the best part of your job, as caretaker?

Bill: Well I don't know.

Peter: I still in my mind sometimes will flash on a beautiful day, like this morning, everybody's left, it's 9 o'clock the sink was right there with glass windows overlooking the ravine and it was just a wonderful place just to be you know, I mean you're there in the mountains you're there by yourself, kind of cleaning up the camp and trying to figure out what you're going to do with you day, you have...

Bill: Split firewood.

Peter: Yeah split firewood, go for a hike.

Bill: Yeah, yeah, yeah. As long you kept places clean and neat and people happy and sort of kept picking away at the whatever jobs you had to do for the summer, then if you wanted to take a day or half a day and go for a hike that was fine and that's still true.

Peter: Oh yeah, yeah.

Bill: Cuz part of the job was knowing the area, knowing the trails.

Mark: Right.

Bill: I can remember a nasty job of creosoting the porch.

Peter: Oh the creosote, jeesh.

Bill: As I recall, I think Karl, I think **Freedman Odom** came up for a day and a bunch of volunteers and they rebuilt the porch but it was left for us to creosote it after; back then all your wood treatment was creosote, you wouldn't dream of using now. But somehow I think we flipped a coin and you ended up getting the top, which is just go on and brush it on...

Peter: Drip on.

Bill: ..I was the one underneath and you know like this and getting drip and of course that stuff would burn and we didn't know, you know, we didn't know. You go in and wash off...

Peter: Clean off with gasoline.

[Laughing]

Bill: So I can always remember doing that.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And always wondering about that coin toss.

Peter: Well, I still have that coin. Did **Freedman** come up when we were working there and spend a couple nights and terrorize some campers, where do I remember that story from?

Bill: Yeah cuz they were doing work at Gray Knob.

Peter: Oh okay.

Bill: But they were staying with us at, at Crag.

Peter: Right.

Bill: Oh yeah it was **Freedman and Ernest, Ernest Simpson**.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: **Freedman** did a lot of the work on the camps back in the '60's, repairs and things, and he was quite a carpenter, lived just up the road here. And oh yeah when it was bedtime, it was bedtime. He demanded that he had fresh meat, beef every night, you know, so somebody would have to come up every other day. And beer, he'd have one beer every night, you know, and he'd always play casino; some of this might be getting onto to when I was up there later on. But he'd always play casino and he'd always loose and so ever, who ever was partner would just loose too so we'd take turns. But yeah Freedmen was there and he'd get up like at 5 o'clock.

Peter: Right.

Bill: And walk around with a frying pan and of course when he was up it was time for everybody to be up so that was that.

Peter: Time for breakfast.

Bill: Time for breakfast, bacon and eggs.

Peter: Right.

Bill: Yeah.

[Mark laughing]

Mark: So he terrorized the campers cuz they didn't go to bed?

Bill: Well, they (speaking at same time) ...

Peter: You know, little kids they'd be (making noises), "Shut up in there!" You know and that was it.

Bill: And that was it, oh yeah, yeah. I mean he carried a lot more weight then a couple of 16 years old.

Peter: Nobody paid attention to us.

Bill: No, no.

Mark: What were the, the guests like when you guys were up there as caretakers?

Bill: Well it's quite a wide range. For the most part I think...

Peter: I don't remember ever really having trouble with anybody...

Bill: No.

Peter: ...maybe I just didn't notice.

Bill: No, I mean camp (unclear) but you know that was just the volume (unclear).

Peter: Right.

Bill: I don't know what you have (unclear). I don't recall trouble really but I mean people; back then, you know, everybody was expected to clean up after themselves and they always did; you always (unclear) afterward and find a couple of old socks on a bunk or something.

Peter: Oh yeah.

Bill: But...

Mark: Were they surprised to see two 16 year olds caretaking up there?

Bill: I don't recall (unclear, some speaking at same time) they might have been but they didn't say anything.

[Some speaking at same time.]

Mark: ...too it in stride.

Bill: Yeah, I mean you had, it seems like you have a lot more people just from Randolph that were coming up then...

Peter: Well I don't...

Bill: ...then and now, of course they knew us and...

Peter: Well the Club looked a lot smaller, there wasn't the kind of...

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Peter: ...you know it wasn't that well known.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. And the mountains in general (unclear) in the, later in the '60's and into the '70's and '80's is when things just exploded for the RMC and for everybody.

Mark: What did you guys eat? Not that many 16-year-old boys are accomplished cooks.

Bill: Well you made those apple pies.

Mark: Well you couldn't have lived on apple pies.

Bill: We did pretty well, well of course you know I think it still holds true, it's sort of a long caretakers tradition that you'll eat anything. So people always carry, not always, but often carry up more food than they use...

Peter: Right.

Bill: ...so they leave it behind. So and then it's left, you know, to take. And even if they're sort of (unclear), if they're sitting there eating supper and they're really not polishing it off, it's sort of...

Peter: Well a lot of times they'd offer.

Bill: Well yeah.

Peter: If you look hungry enough and your tongue's hanging out.

[Laughing, some talking at same time.]

Peter: ... "would you like some?" "Sure."

Bill: That was; I remember doing rice with, with a...

Peter: Hamburger and rice.

Bill: ...hamburger and rice, yeah Lipton dinners and hamburger with tuna fish I mean rice with tuna fish, yeah and stuff like that. And pancakes in the breakfast...

Peter: Pancakes in the morning, eggs. Bacon, remember bacon that came in the can.

Bill: Oh yeah.

Peter: It wasn't refrigerated, bacon came in like a, you know, soup can wrapped up like this and it had like; if you took a side of bacon and smashed it...

Mark: Yeah there's one reason you couldn't do that.

Peter: ...and rolled it up and stuffed it in can and canned it and it would just keep forever so you'd open the can and you just eat it then.

Bill: You open the can and unroll it and separate the slices.

Peter: Unroll it and separate the slices.

[Speaking at same time, unclear]

Bill: Yeah I forgot about that.

Mark: And cooked it up, it was raw bacon.

Bill: And powdered milk.

Peter: Powdered milk.

Bill: Carination powdered milk yeah, powdered hot chocolate and stuff.

Peter: I hadn't thought that, what we ate.

Bill: I think we ate anything.

Peter: Peanut butter, I remember large cans of peanut butter.

Bill: Yeah peanut butter, peanut butter and jelly and yeah.

Peter: Commercial cans of peanut butter.

Bill: And you kept food that's, you know (unclear), sort of long gone but there use to be a little spring just a hundred feet out towards, on the Gray Knob trail. There's a little, some rocks and a little spring that you keep your food in. You had various kinds of metal boxes or something that you sort of put it in.

Peter: It would stay pretty refrigerated.

Bill: It would stay, yeah. You get later into August and it sort of dried out but for the most part it was all you had.

Peter: Right.

Bill: You could keep butter and cheese.

Peter: And then there was the, there was a shower remember they had a natural...

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: ...shower.

Bill: Yeah down in the woods.

Peter: Down in the woods and you know like a box.

Mark: Was that the one with the copper water tank hooked to a hose? Cuz...

Bill: No.

Mark: ...the guy we had up here talked about hooking up the first shower in the...

Bill: That could be...

Mark: ...50's.

Bill: There was the remains of...

Peter: (Unclear) stove.

Bill: ...yeah there (was or wasn't) a hot water tank on the stove. There was the remains of a water tower that was probably gone by '63 but I can remember it from earlier years. At some point there was a water tower up there and it provided storage for the water and the pressure...

Mark: Yeah that was...

Bill: ...and it probably got warmed up.

Mark: ...that's what he used for the shower.

Bill: Yeah I don't know who that was.

Peter: We would just take a shower in the afternoon cuz usually there wasn't anybody during the day.

Bill: Well the pipe...

Peter: Warmed up in the sun.

Bill: By '63 they had the black plastic pipe, (unclear) had brought that up around '59 or '60 and so yeah if we were the only ones there on a warm summer day, I can remember filling up some pitchers with water so if people came through they could have something to drink.

Peter: Right.

Bill: But you put a little note "Don't run the facet." And then all that whole length of pipe, and the spring's quite a ways off.

Peter: It was.

Bill: That'll be, that'll be nice and warm by the end of the day and you could rinse off, pretty well.

Mark: What you guys do for fun?

Peter: That was it.

Mark: [Laughing] Took a shower.

Peter: Sounds crazy, no I mean...[Speaking at same time]

Bill: There was a lot of young girls in that first summer. I remember...

Peter: But the job was fun.

Bill: Just, just being there, just having the job was fun that was it. We had the organ then, people would come up, play the organ we would sing and carry on. I don't; we ran up, we were up and down from the valley a lot more then they do now. We go up and down every couple days...

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: ...really be packing loads or just come down to something going on here or get food or whatever.

Peter: Thinking about that energy today when I was, **aw man**.

Bill: Yeah and we were using the new Spur Trail which **(name?)** had cut and that's since been closed but that was steeper but a little bit shorter. And it avoided crossing, you go

up to **Amphibrach** and now you crossover (**unclear**) and back again and that avoided the two crossings. But that was (some speaking at same time) it was steep and I mean it was just, from day one it was an erosion problem.

Peter: I don't ever remember though being bothered physically by the job, I mean running up and down the mountain packing stuff.

Bill: Yeah, I mean...

Peter: You get tired packing.

Bill: You get tired but yeah, we were young.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And I mean, I mean I can't imagine the kind of shape we were in and we didn't really think of it but...

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: ...I mean yeah just running up and down. And I, I got, at least in the later years I would, if I didn't have a pack I could get up there in less than an hour pretty regularly and come down and not much more than half an hour.

Peter: Right.

Bill: Just pounding your knees.

Peter: Swinging off trees.

Bill: Oh yeah.

Peter: Yeah there was the whole thing about how fast you could get down.

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: Do you think John (name?) had the record?

Bill: I think he did for a while...

Peter: Twenty minutes.

Bill: ...like twenty, yeah twenty, twenty-two something like that.

Peter: But it was a mile shorter cuz you didn't have to go all the way over there, you just (unclear).

Bill: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Peter: ...a few more (unclear). But still.

Bill: Well even; no now they start it at (name) lodge.

Peter: Yeah that's true, I forgot about that.

Bill: Yeah.

Mark: Do you guys have any wildlife experiences?

Peter: Red squirrels.

Bill: Red squirrels and porcupines, sometimes.

Peter: Porcupines yeah.

Bill: Yeah squirrels were the biggest problems. The cabins were not nearly as tight as they are now and I can remember sort of tolerating them for awhile. And you could lie in bed, of course you didn't have your own bunk room the way did, like they do now. We slept out in the front main room on a couch or bed. And you could lie there in bed and hear them run across the shelves and knock off the pots and pans.

Peter: Oh yeah and they'd run right across the rafters over here.

Bill: Oh yeah, yeah. And I can remember one morning waking up and there was a squirrel sitting on my head. At which point I think that's when it became war, that they were really getting out of hand and so we, then we started killing them and you could smack them with a broom.

Peter: I think I got, we had a pellet gun too as I remember.

Bill: Might have had a pellet gun and we might of used some rat traps.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: But I liked to just sit there on a quiet day and watch them come in the door. And you'd get up and slam the door and chase them around the house, around the building with a broom, which is pretty fair because there's a lot of holes in the walls so if they can find a hole to get out then they were safe and if they didn't then. And I, I would, we; what I would do is cut the tails off and hang them from a string on the porch rafter...

Peter: That's right.

Bill: And throw the body into the ravine and after a while I think somebody complained.

Peter: Yeah we had quite a collection of tails.

Bill: But they were...

Mark: Didn't feel like it was working to keep them away either.

Bill: NOOO, they say you kill one and you get a whole bunch that come to the funeral home. No, (unclear) squirrels were always the problem; the porcupines too would be chewing up the cabin.

Mark: They're a little harder to control with a broom.

Bill: Well they were, well yeah with a broom but back then you just find the place they were chewing and you put some creosote on it and they'd move onto another corner but eventually discouraged them. They use to like to chew on the toilet seats.

Peter: Right.

Bill: (unclear).

Peter: Well anyplace that humans left perspiration or salt (speaking at same time).

Mark: Did your time as caretakers affect your future careers or lifestyles?

Peter: Well kept coming and hiking in the mountains I guess, I mean.

Bill: It definitely did, yeah.

[Peter and Bill saying "Yeah" back and forth]

Peter: Bill's been here the whole time, he never left. I've been in and out but, I'm here.

Bill: Yeah.

Mark: You came back for this.

Peter: I came back for this.

Bill: It definitely did with me because I, I sort of worked, I worked that summer in '63 and then worked I sort of filled in (unclear) through the '60s and came back in '68 and '69 and well I worked for AMC in the winters and...

Peter: And the Forest Service.

Bill: And then the Forest Service in the '70's. And so, you know, I worked for the Forest Service for years.

Peter: Bill's being modest about one thing that the caretakers at Crag were like the top of the heap. He actually, I think had the, THE famous job which was a Forest Service ridge runner.

Bill: Oh yeah.

Peter: Which was the guy that...

Bill: I can remember the...

[Speaking at same time]

Bill: ...the ridge runner that came through I think when we were working together, was Warren Broadhead.

Peter: Warren Broadhead.

Bill: Used to call him Breadhead.

Peter: Yep.

Bill: And he was, he was yeah I think he was in the early '60's, he'd come through and...

Peter: That was a...

[Speaking at same time]

Peter: ...that was a uniform job.

Bill: Yeah that's right, and a badge.

Peter: Your job was to hike around Mt. Washington to Mt. Madison just back and forth.

Bill: Just go out and hike around.

Peter: Yeah just hike around and talk to people.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. So yeah I would say definitely that first summer influence my life for many years.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And I'm still here.

Peter: Right, right.

Mark: What was your most dangerous or frightening experience? I think waking up with the squirrel on your head.

Bill: That was a little agitating.

Peter: We'd do foolish things. I remember one foolish thing I did that summer, I had a coil of rope and I don't know you were, you were, for some reason I think your dad might have been up there, you were at Crag and I was in the valley and I decided I would go up to—oh Dome Rock. And then I went over the side of Dome Rock, sort of liked repealed down and then climbed up the other side, went down King Ravine and then came up the landslide at Crag.

Bill: (unclear), yeah.

Peter: And I've, I've never been so exhausted in my life and it was like a really incredible, foolish thing to do but your 16, that's how...

Bill: Yeah.

Peter: There's nothing that's too foolish to do.

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Peter: But other than that, there wasn't a lot of trouble you could get; you could get yourself into trouble but I don't think...

Bill: Yeah you could've burned the place down or something but we didn't, we didn't.

Peter: I mean some of the storms up there, you know,...

Bill: Oh yeah some of the storms (unclear) Crag Camp's an incredible place to be in a thunderstorm, always has. I would say that, I don't know if we did some rescues that summer, might've gone out after a couple of people but...

Peter: Lost up above.

Bill: Yeah but I certainly got into search and rescue after that with AMC and then the RMC and the Forest Service for years and years and some of those certainly could be dangerous.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: When your out on a rescue you tend to sort of push yourself further than you would than if you're just out for a nice hike in the woods. But yeah I was also going to say the, the slide below Crag Camp, which now is...

Peter: It's gone.

Bill: ...long gone.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: It's all grown right in.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: Came down in a hurricane Carol when, I don't know '56 or whenever that was in the '50's and I was here, I remember I was a kid during that hurricane. And of course the

mountains were in the clouds but you could hear a rumbling all day long and the next day it cleared off and there's this big scar right below Crag Camp...

Peter: Right below the camp.

Bill: ...yeah, yeah well right from the camp (unclear).

Peter: Right.

Bill: Right on down.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And then in, after that the way, I mean obviously the best way to go was on the trail but you could go down through that landslide and connect with the King Ravine trail down at the bottom and I can remember doing that and I think back it was, a lot of it was just bare open ledges with some loose rock on it and you could take, a really a pretty good fall. And you'd start to slide and you'd grab a branch and maybe it would hold you and maybe not.

Peter: It was all loose dirt.

Bill: Oh it was all loose and, and we used; I don't, I guess I must have gone up it.

Peter: (Unclear).

Bill: Yeah, yeah I must have gone up it a few times but I came down it a lot.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: It was fast, there's no doubt about that. And you'd tear up or pants or shorts on the way down.

Peter: Yeah (unclear) all that steep elevation, you were done.

Bill: Just (unclear) and just walk out that was it, yeah.

Mark: Do you guys have any advice to future people working on the mountains?

Bill: Well I would recommend it. I, I would...

Mark: That's your advice?

Bill: ..I mean if you ever have a chance to work; any, any job around the mountains (unclear) should, there should be some job (unclear) but most anything with AMC or RMC I would recommend it and I, I, to anyone. It really, it really is, for a young person, it really is a life changing experience.

Peter: I think that's true.

Bill: And I, and I think, I can't imagine that you could have that, that job and not come out of it for the better.

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: You know. You'll certainly gonna take, get responsibility, you're gonna see things that you would never see otherwise, you're gonna to meet people you would never meet otherwise. So as I say I worked for AMC too and that and that would hold true; AMC huts, of course, are different.

Peter: Right.

Bill: But it's the same, same idea. You're in the mountains and...

Peter: Yeah.

Bill: And you learn to work hard, you know.

Peter: Oh yeah but you know I never really thought about it, it's not like oh this is, you know other than shoveling out the toilet, this is a lousy job. But for the most part you just did it, I mean.

Bill: You just did it.

Peter: It was part of the work, just did the work.

Mark: Is there anything about your experiences you guys want to share that I didn't ask the right question to illicit? Which is very likely.

Bill: Well I could go on with mountain stories forever but I; while I was mowing next door (unclear) Lodge the other day and the, the, one of the trail crew was asking me he said he heard about a riot that had been up at Gray Knob in the '70's.

Peter: Oh yeah.

Bill: And, yeah, and I was like; he asked me if I knew anything about it I said, "Oh yeah I know all about it." In 1979 there was a group, a big group maybe 20, 25 kids, wasn't an organized group but it was a group, from Western Mass. that went up to, well to Gray Knob, to the RMC camps in general. And they had a lot of booze, A LOT OF BOOZE. And of course that was before we had radios and so we didn't know anything about it until the caretaker, caretaker had no control over the situation. He sent a note down with a hiker passing by just, and the note said something like "Cabin taken over by kids. Send

help!” Or something like that. And the hiker gave it to Gordon Lowe and of course Gordon Lowe was like, I’m not sure how it all evolved, but he called either the RMC or the police or all, everybody.

Peter: Everybody.

Bill: Yeah everybody. And we got together, my house, and the state, the Fish and Game, and I knew all, I knew; I basically knew all the Fish and Game people and the state police and Forest Service, I worked around the mountains long enough by then. And Fish and Game; state police said it was up to Fish and Game to take care of because it was in the mountains but Fish and Game was saying the state police, it’s a state police problem because it was a law enforcement thing. And then they were both trying to say it was up to the RMC, the RMC had no authority so what it, it all, anyway it all ended up we decided everybody was going to go up. And we left the bottom about 11:00 at night and we had state police with police dogs and Fish and Game, and I could name names if I thought long enough, and myself, the Forest Service, several RMC people, even a couple AMC people that had worked for the RMC the knew the way and...

Peter: That must have been quite a crowd.

[Laughing]

Mark: Doing a (unclear) up there.

Bill: Must have had about 15 when we started up and it was decided I was going to lead, cuz I knew the way, everybody knew the way but I, I don’t know. So that was fine and we started up just the bottom of Lowe’s path and I was, I knew it was going to be a long night and I couldn’t see that it was a big hurry so I set a pretty slow pace. And one of the, one of the policemen said “This is pretty slow, we’re never going to get there.” Well you know I’ve been hiking all summer long in the Forest Service and I can go faster. We got as far as the log cabin and three of the state policemen, two of them were throwing up by

then and the third one was looking pretty peaked. And there were a couple of the kids from this group that were already there at the Log Cabin so they decided that maybe these kids needed some supervision so they bailed out on us. And we went on up and we got, we got to Gray Knob, we got up to the (unclear) right, just outside the cabin and sort of gathered and came up with a plan and plan was the that police were going to go in first and see what was going on. Of course we got to the cabin by now it's, I don't know, two or three in the morning and everybody's asleep.

Peter: And hung-over.

Bill: Yeah, yeah and they were *really* asleep. And went in and the first trooper went in, there was some poor guy that I guess wasn't part of the group that was asleep on the floor right, cuz people would sleep on the floor, you know, went in "State Police. Get up." And the guy, poor guy had a bad stutter he was like "(saying something, stutter type)." And the trooper finally gave up on him and he went and he yelled upstairs and yelled "State Police" you know "We're taking over. Come down one at a time." You know (unclear) with your hands up but come down one at a time. And the first kid, I don't know I can't use the exact words he used but it wasn't real complementary to the whole situation. And the trooper by then had had, you probably know the...

Steve: Is this Mike Prattsburgh?

Bill: This is the, the riot at '79. Yeah. And the trooper had enough so he basically reached up there and grabbed the first body he could get and dragged it down the, well they weren't steps they were just ladder (makes noise) down the ladder, past the police dogs (making growling, dog noises) you know, out the door and then the first whoever was out there would grabbed the body and slapped those nylon handcuffs on them before anybody knew what was happening and in about, holy smokes, ten minutes we had them all lined up right outside there. And they were all, they were all still drunk and there were guys and there were girls and the guys were all (makes noise). And the girls were getting the guys, they'd get up stirred up and "You gonna take that from him?" And the,

and then the guys were all (making aggressive guy noises), you know and then the police would start yelling and the dogs would be barking, you know, and we were all just like “Whoa! This is a show!” And finally we got everything calmed down and one of the guys, I guess some of the group was still over at Crag Camp and one of the guys in the group and left something there and wanted to be able to go get it. So we said “Okay.” And one of the Fish and Game officers and I started over to Crag Camp with him and we just got down to the, just below Gray Knob in the swampy place there and he started getting real mouthy with us. And we said “That’s it, we’re not going to Crag.” So we turned around, came back just up to Gray Knob and we were walking right along next to the wall there and this guy took a swing at the, at the Game Warden, Fish and Game officer; took a swing at him and which is pretty dumb, you know, these guys have guns, you know. And took a swing at him and I grabbed the kid and pinned him up against the wall of the cabin by one arm and he was like sort of swinging at me. And everybody else was like just around the corner in the yard...

Steve: You were Forest Service then, right?

Bill: I was Forest Service, yeah. And everybody else was around the corner but it was dark they didn’t know what had happened. So the Game Warden yelled “Hey we need some help over here.” Well Mike Palchat came right around the corner, he was with us from RMC. Came around the corner, grabbed the other guys arm, the other guys arm so we had him pinned up, everything’s okay. The next guy around the corner was Peter Roberts, a state trooper and a big maglite, big flashlight and took off and the first body he saw was Mike Pelchat’s and he just clobbered him right over the head with the maglite. Blood all over the place and (unclear) “Wrong guy, wrong guy!” [Everyone laughing] And the guy we’re holding, you know, we dropped him and he bolted and oh man what a show! And anyway we finally got them all calmed down, we marched them down Lowe’s pass with handcuffs on—got down to Lowe’s store at just at sunrise in the morning and said “Okay empty your packs.” And there’s like, there’s a picture, it was in the papers of like this mountain of liquor bottles in the parking lot of Lowe’s and, and all the kids standing there. And they, I don’t think they charged them with much I think

some underage drinking and stuff but that was about it. But the aftermath to the whole thing was about oh five or six or maybe ten years ago I was on a school trip, my wife's the school nurse in Gorham, and we went on a school trip up to Mizpah Hut with a bunch of Gorham school kids and we were chaperones which was a great trip, it was wonderful for them. But the trooper that had hit Mike with a flashlight had long since retired and was working up at Mizpah Hut, Peter Roberts, and he was certainly in his fifties maybe even sixty by then but working with all these young kids and having the time of his life and it was in the fall. And he knew me and he came up to me after supper and he said "Do you remember that night up at Gray Knob?" "Oh yeah I remember." [Everyone laughing] He said "Who was it that I hit with a flashlight?" I said "Well it was Mike Pelchat." He said "Well I thought it was him. I've always felt really badly about that." And I said "Mike" you know "I know Mike, he's okay and I'm sure he doesn't carry a grudge." But Peter Roberts, I'm sure everybody that was there remember that night. Cuz it's one of those night you started up and you knew it was going to be one that would go down in history, you would of known just what was going to happen but this little, you hope this would be recorded someday.

Mark: Yes

Peter: It's amazing that more of those types of situations haven't happened.

Bill: Well...

Peter: When you think about it.

Bill: ...so much of that depends on the caretaker.

Steve: Did you guys say, did you tell him how it started?

Bill: Yeah, they sent a note down.

Steve: The caretaker swung an axe.

Bill: Well.

Steve: He said, "You will stop!"

Bill: Yeah, no I didn't get into that, yeah. And that didn't work real well.

Steve: No.

Bill: He ended up sending a note down. Yeah, he sent a note down saying, "Send help!"
Yeah.

[Laughing]

Bill: It was one of those things I, you know, I'm not sure I can even tell you who the caretaker was.

Steve: It was Mike **Bracket?**

Bill: (makes noise)

Steve: I thought.

Bill: I don't think it was. Are you sure?

Steve: Really. I...

Bill: I, I, well...

Steve: That's who I thought it was.

Bill: ...I don't know how we'd check on that. I would've thought that Mike, I knew that Mike **Bracket** had worked there. I thought that he was one of the guys that went up with us that night cuz he was working for AMC by then, but I don't know. I'll try to research that.

Steve: Yeah.

Bill: Somehow.

Steve: I may be wrong.

Bill: Yeah.

Steve: **(unclear)**.

Bill: Yeah, I'm not real sure.

Mark: Well that's a good one to go out on cuz we'd get your best story and.

Steve: Well I told Mark how you, how I **(unclear)** my friends...

Mark: I gotta stop because we're out of tape.

Bill: Okay.

