Wisc.

DELL CHASE

CORNELL, WISCONSIN

"Back in 1899 when I was a sapling of 15 years I decided to become a rough and tumble lumberjack, so I hit for the tall timber. I went to a small station about four miles away and bought my first railroad ticket to Cameron Junction and my first train ride began right there. From Cameron Junction I went to Bruce, Wisconsin and got my first lumberjack job with the Arpon Lumber Company. What a man I was! I weighed about 110 pounds but I doubt if a box car could carry me.

"At Bruce I met an old friend of the family, Emil Johnston, a camp foreman, but I had been assigned to a smaller camp under a man named Noel Forcier. I soon learned that he was a foreman by name but not by nature. This camp was about 4½ miles west of Kennan, Wisconsin on the Soo Line. I did not like Mr. Forcier so I jumped my job, in those days you never quit, you jumped a job. When I told Forcier I was leaving he said, "Well, keed, I can't give you your time." And right there's where the fight started. A friend of mine, a Dane, Alex Ormsby, took it up with me and I saw my first knock down and drag out fight, but I got my time and so did six out of ten men in the camp. The hard-boiled foreman got a real trimming and a few days later lost his time.

"I went up to Emil Johnston's camp east of Kennan, near

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Princeton, Wisconsin, and put in the winter. I started in as a bull cook - that's the guy that gets wood and water for the cook, takes care of the bunk house such as getting wood, water, and sweeps and scrubs the floor. Each man was his own chamber maid. The bull cook had the barns to look after - keep them clean, keep the teamsters' lanterns full of oil, clean the globes, and haul dinners out in the woods. There is no such a thing as a noon hour in the woods. The men sit on poles around the fire to eat their dinner. Those were the days!

"The second winter I left Chippewa October 16, and went 41 miles north to Two Harbors, Minn. We cut white pine this winter. What timber! Two and a half logs to the thousand feet. Well, to start this winter - "Dennie" Cheeseman and I met a man named L.L. McPherson, a very fine man, about the best lumberman I ever met. He took us to Duluth and then to Two Harbors then 41 miles on foot, this was nothing in those days.

We left Two Harbors at "four bells" in the morning. At one we ate our cold lunch on the bank of the beautiful little Spring Creek and were we famished! One hour for rest and then the trail once more. Arriving at camp at 9 p.m. leg weary and foot sore, our thirty pound pack felt like 400 pounds. The camps were used the previous winter and all we had to do was to eat a much needed warm supper of fried bacon, hot tomatoes and soda crackers.

The next morning we hit the job, cutting roads through the beautiful white pine. About two weeks later Mr. McPherson bought

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four fine horses at a sales stable in Duluth. He chose me out of forty men to go to Duluth and bring them in. So back over the 41 miles I went all alone. I got a train out of Two Harbor at 11 p.m. Friday and arrived in Duluth at 12:30 the next morning, twenty long hard hours. The next morning I started for camp; had dinner at Knife River and spent the night at Two Harbors. There I saw a horrible fight. I saw the most feared man in the state - "Kill-Dee" was his name. He picked a fight with a Mr. Roch of Chicago Bay. Kill-Dee was an outlaw, well known in that part of the country. In this case he had borrowed ten dollars from Roch about two hours before and came back to get more, and so the trouble started. I was standing at the end of the bar in the Commercial Hotel, sipping a cold glass of beer after my two long hard days. Roch stalled off as long as possible and then the fight was on. Up and down and over and around the bar and Kill-Dee reaching for his gun, which he finally got. Tried twice for the kill but failed each time. Roch, a very skillful man, got the gun. He knew it was now or never, so he finished the job with a bullet between the eyes of Kill-Dee. The first shot Roch fired went over the bar among the bottles, the second went through the floor and lodged near the hip of a girl on a

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second floor. The third got the villain right between the eyes.

Three o'clock Sunday morning found me feeding my four fine horses. Chub and Shorty weighed 3400 pounds as a team, Baldy and Dange 3200. In an hour I was on my way over the 41 mile trail to camp. Lunch at Spring Creek once more, a very tired kid. From there on things were not so good. Just after leaving the Creek, Baldy went lame in the left front foot. I investigated and found a snag which I pulled out with my jackknife. Then I built a fire, got some pine pitch and by dumping some beans out of a small can I heated the pitch and plugged the holes. I lost about an hour here. I hit the trail once more for camp, getting in at 3 in the morning. Such things made the lumberjack tough and ready to fight at the wink of the eye.

After 48 hours of much neede rest I was put to skidding up the winter's wood using the two teams one-half day each until they were hardened to work. Then I was put to toting hay, grain, and all camp supplies from Two Harbors, even drunk and fighting lumberjacks. Sometimes to stop the fighting on the load I would put my four-horse whip in play and when that eight foot lash began to cut button holes in their hides, mostly around the seat of their pants, it wasn't so funny.

"One day shortly before Christmas I got orders from the boss,

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sometimes called the "Sneak-of-the-diggins!" to take the horses to the blacksmith shop and get them ready for the ice load. That meant heavy sharp shoes for the animals and twin neck yokes. My four babies were to be taken away from me and I had the blues. They were to be given to some older log hauler. I got up next morning, fed, curried and brushed my four pets with a sinking heart and more so when I heard Joe Fox say to "Tunk Kapplon, "I bet you two to one that I get the colts this morning." I could scarcely eat my breakfast, at the same time I knew that older men were entitled to the best teams. After breakfast all teamsters were at the barns, there were three of them. We now had six four horse sleigh teams, nine skidding teams, three loading teams, three decking teams, and one four horse team for the water tank.

I was getting uneasy when in walked Mr. McPherson and the camp foreman, Ray Dalton, and began giving teams to teamsters. Big Bill Fox was the first on the list. He got four horses owned by Bill Ackley of Chippewa Falls. Then came Tom Brick, Bill Foster, Dave Wakes, Bill Ackley, and last of all Mr. McPherson turned to me with that big happy smile of his and said, "Keep your colts and learn the logging business. " I was the happiest boy in the world and Bill Fox was the maddest. He cursed and threw his cap on the floor and jumped on it; he could have whipped half the

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State of Minnesota, but he didn't say anything about Wisconsin. I saw Mr. McPherson's pleasant smile turn to a hard grin. He walked up to Fox and said in his gentle way, "Bill, the job is yours if you want it; if not you may pack your turkey." Bill packed his turkey and went down river.

"Many times during the winter Mr. McPherson would drive to and from the landing with me and would tell of his earlier experiences. Things went well until about the last week in February. We had to go down a bad hill that was nearly a mile long. There were three men stationed along the down grade to check the heavy loads by putting burnt sand in the ruts as the teamsters saw fit. There was a slight grade to come down and a slight incline before hitting the big hill. If we hit this just right we could stop on the top of the hill to see if everything was all right. The men stationed along the hill carried the sand on one arm and had their other hand on the lead horse's mane. If things were not all right the teams could not stop at the top of the big hill, but went on over, this seldom happened, however. On this occasion I came in with an empty sleigh on a new branch road that hadn't been traveled before. I did not like the looks of the road, it didn't feel as if it would carry a full load. I gave orders to the loader for a three quarter load. The foreman appeared on the scene when the

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loading was in process and gave orders for a full load asking the top loader if he were "sky-bound" (so high he couldn't go farther). "Chiny" the top loader said it was orders from the teamster, but he got orders from the foreman to put on a full load. I arrived on the scene about the time the load was finished and demanding the reason for the full load was told that the foreman had ordered it. I said, "O.K. the horses belong to McPherson and this load is going out if it takes me all night." I hooked on and asked the logging teamster to stay with me, which I did. Going a short distance the load broke through. We blocked and lined this load for more than one-half mile to the main road, but we left the branch in poor shape, it had to be built up the next day before it could be used again. It was seven in the evening and a light snow was falling. I knew I was going over the top and I began shouting, "Sand!" but when I came over, there were no lights in sight. Time was short but you have no idea what can go through your head in a pinch. One thing I did think of was a turn at the foot of the hill and a few logs that rolled off the top of the load as we went around at a brisk trot, but I stuck to my horses and brought them through O.K. During the course of the day around 4,000 feet of logs would always fall off at this turn, but on this particular trip I spilled about

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