

Bert Pfeifer
Narrator

Amy K. Rieger
Interviewer

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Rieger: Like I said, let's just start out then. You were born, when?

Pfeifer: May 11, 1915.

Rieger: Just checking to make sure you weren't fibbing when you told me that before!

Pfeifer: O.K. In Everest, ND, which is about 5 miles south of Castleton, 20 miles west of Fargo, on the prairie.

Rieger: Over where they're getting the flooding.

Pfeifer: Yes, that's where it's flooding now. And anyway, it was a rented farm and the owner of the farm was Langer. His son ended up to be governor of North Dakota and in the U.S. Senate in Washington. As I was growing up, why it probably wasn't quite so bad, but in my teen years it was the dust bowl, you know, and of course none of the kids really stayed on the farms out there so I left home real early and in 1932 came up to Itasca Park and to my great uncle, which would be Wegmann, and worked for him at the store. Either had that choice or go into a CC [Civilian Conservation Corp] camp at one time.

Rieger: O.K. So you grew up in North Dakota. Had you visited Itasca at any time before then?

Pfeifer: Once I think, about in 19...early 1920's, and I can't remember much about that. I wasn't very old at the time. In an old Model-T, drove all the way up. It took all day [laughter]!

Rieger: I bet! I bet it wasn't very comfortable. Of course it's so flat that way!

Pfeifer: No, not after you got in Minnesota. So anyway, I knew what it was like.

Rieger: You came in 1932, because you had a job waiting for you? Had you contacted Wegmanns?

Pfeifer: Not really, except that he needed help in the store and he said that some of us kids could come up and work for him.

Rieger: Was it just you, by yourself?

Pfeifer: At the time, yes. I had a younger brother that worked there afterwards too, with me at the same time, about 1940 or something like that, and then he enlisted in the army before the war started and then he hadn't been back there since and of course in the meantime Wegmann died in 1941.

Rieger: Can you describe a little bit your first impressions of Itasca and the area?

Pfeifer: Well, it was a lot different than the prairie [laughter]!

Rieger: I bet it was a shock.

Pfeifer: Yes. Because there you could see for 20-30 miles, see all your neighbors. Once I got here, it just had the feeling like you were locked up because you couldn't see anything but trees.

Rieger: How long did it take you to get over that feeling?

Pfeifer: Well, I couldn't say. It wore off after a while.

Rieger: Did you stay right on the Wegmann farm?

Pfeifer: Lived right with them as a family. Right.

Rieger: What did your duties include at first? What did they have you doing?

Pfeifer: Well, just about everything because he had cattle. We had to milk the cows and take care of the milk, which was bottled and sold in the store. We had to put up hay for those cattle in the summertime. And then in the store during the day. Of course he had the general country store with the lunch room and soda fountain and everything that goes along with it.

Rieger: So by that time it was the large structure?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: The one in the pictures?

Pfeifer: Right. Yes. The one that the state bought the property after he died and then it was moved out of there.

Rieger: Just back to the cattle thing. You said they bottled the milk to sell right in the store. Did they bottle it right there or did they send it somewhere?

Pfeifer: No, it was bottled right there. There wasn't any pasteurization [laughter]. No, it was just raw milk.

Rieger: Right.

Pfeifer: And of course some of it was separated and then we sold cream, too.

Rieger: Butter, too, I imagine?

Pfeifer: No.

Rieger: No butter.

Pfeifer: We didn't make butter, no.

Rieger: Too much work.

Pfeifer: Not enough, not enough cream I should say.

Rieger: About how many cattle did they have, do you remember?

Pfeifer: About four. We milked about four, most of the time.

Rieger: So, is there any way you can describe a typical day working for the Wegmanns and living with them?

Pfeifer: He was pretty much on time, so everything started about six in the morning. We had to get up at six, and by the time we got through with the cattle and everything, we had breakfast and ate right with them, and then down to the store and clean up the store and get ready for the opening. About 7:30 he'd open the door. Campers start coming in, people driving by. Then everything perishable was packed with ice, ice cream and all the coolers for the milk and pop and so forth, so we had to do all of that first thing in the morning, too. Then the store was kept open in the evening until about nine-ten o'clock. So it was a long day.

Rieger: And you were there the whole day?

Pfeifer: The whole day, that's right, except when we'd take turns going up to the house to eat. And back to the store again.

Rieger: How many people were there working there?

Pfeifer: In the wintertime there was only about two of us, but in the summertime he had extra help,

he had about four probably, or something like that. On Sundays, busy days, weekends, he would call in different ones to help, by the day.

Rieger: You mentioned the ice. I just wanted to ask quickly, was this after you had to get the ice from the lake. I mean, had you got the electric ice maker or did you have to go get it from the lake?

Pfeifer: We had to put it up in wintertime. Of course, that was a job, too.

Rieger: I imagine. Were you a part of that?

Pfeifer: That's right. We had to put it up.

Rieger: Can you describe that. I've heard and read a little bit about it.

Pfeifer: We sawed it by hand. It was a long saw with a handle on one end, and then just keep sawing you know, and then some would saw lengthwise and the other one crosswise and the blocks would float to one end and then we'd pull them out. To start, we used a team of horses and a sled to haul them. Then afterwards he had a fairly good pickup, so we hauled them in the pickup. It wasn't quite as bad as monkeying with horses. Then you had to pack them in the ice house with saw dust around the edge. The ice house held 660 cakes, and that would last for the summer then. And then of course we also sold ice to the tourists too, and they'd come with their little iceboxes about 6 inches square or something like that, they can use a chunk of ice, so we had to split them in chunks to fit their little iceboxes. Got 10 cents a chunk for that.

Rieger: About how big was a cake?

Pfeifer: 18 x 18.

Rieger: That's a lot of ice.

Pfeifer: They were enough, all right, and it varied in thickness. By the time we got through cutting ice, we'd work at it about a week. We also put up ice for Parkview Resort, too. It would take about a week to put it all up.

Rieger: About a how many person job was this?

Pfeifer: Just two of us.

Rieger: You and Wegmann?

Pfeifer: No, Wegmann never done any of this work.

Rieger: Oh, really.

Pfeifer: Not while I was there. In the early days, of course, he did too, you know.

Rieger: But by that time he was the boss.

Pfeifer: The first was a fellow by the name of Francis Traun that worked there, and he worked there before I did several years. Then the two of us would put it up. Then the last years it was my brother, Joe, and I.

Rieger: How long did that last, having to go get the ice from the lake? Through the existence of the store, I imagine.

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. That was all the time I worked there until Wegmann died. The only electricity he had was a 32 volt light plant and we didn't have any electrical refrigeration. So everything was ice.

Rieger: Wow, that's something.

[**Note:** Mr. Pfeifer also had to help put up wood. In a hand-written addition to the transcript he writes:

All the buildings were heated entirely with wood. [They were] all built fairly good but no insulation. The big store took loads to keep the furnace fired and the cook stove in the house was used every day, winter and summer. [The] chicken coup also had a stove, we fired during cold weather [and] a tank heater to keep livestock water from freezing.

In early winter we would cut popple trees with axes, 15 to 25 lengths, I'd guess thirty cords or so, then haul to the yard with [a] team of horses and sleigh. He would hire someone with a saw rig to help us saw into stove block length, 2 days work. Then we had to split by hand to stove size and pile in rows to dry for [the] next heating season. Kitchen stove fired all year, took lots of fine splitting.

At one point, Mr. Pfeifer recalls the upstairs heater starting a fire that he and the housekeeper had to put out by filling buckets full of water and "slinging" them up the stairs.]

Pfeifer: In the early days, like I said, when they first homesteaded there, lots of them homesteaded there to farm and they couldn't farm, and even Wegmann, in the early days, would take the team and a hay rack and drive to North Dakota to work in the harvest fields during the summer and make a few dollars. Then he'd bring back a little grain with him or something, may be my grandmother out there would give him a couple of chickens or something and some grain that he'd bring back.

Rieger: So you had met him and everything before coming in 1932.

Pfeifer: Not really, no. Because my grandparents in North Dakota, they were about 30 miles from

where we lived, so we didn't get there very often either, and I never got there when he was ever out there working. That was before my time.

Rieger: Did Johanna come with him?

Pfeifer: No, she stayed, all by herself which wasn't very good either because it was wild.

Rieger: Right. She was a brave lady. Can you describe a little bit about Theodore and Johanna, what kind of people were they?

Pfeifer: They were good people. Of course, they homesteaded there in 1893. I don't know actually what his intentions were, probably farming to start with and then of course the tourists started coming so they started the store, and the post office he had, too. That's about what it amounted to. The last years after he built that big store, he lived mostly at the store. He would sleep up there during the night because on account of breaking in or something, to kind of protect the place. They had an adopted son...I never knew him. He died in France in World War I.

Rieger: Was that Johnny?

Pfeifer: Johnny.

Rieger: He was adopted. I didn't know that.

Pfeifer: Yes. They didn't have any children of their own.

Rieger: Was he [Wegmann] a stickler? You said he had his regular routine-you were up by six-was that his personality?

Pfeifer: That's right. He was real strict.

Rieger: Did you ever get in trouble from him?

Pfeifer: No, not really. Not really, no. He was easy going that way. He'd tell you what to do all right and you done it [laughs]. But no, no, there were no problems that way and with her either. They were real good to us that way.

Rieger: How about the store itself? You mentioned a couple of times that they had the soda fountain and everything. Can you describe that, the interior, or just the whole store in general a little bit?

Pfeifer: Well, there were the old fashioned counters. I don't know, there's still some of them

around. This Kringley that has this place right north of the Park now has bought some of the fixtures.

Rieger: I've heard of him, yes. And he donated some for the Centennial.

Pfeifer: Right, for the old replica store that they put up there. And anyway, they had little glass windows in the front. You could put the samples, things that were in the drawers behind, beans, dried beans and things like that. There was the roll of wrapping paper that you'd tear off and wrap the things. There was everything in the store from nails to clothing to hardware, cooking utensil, quite a few of those for campers, quite a few tin ones, tin plates, tin cups, and things like that the campers would use, and lots of things like that. And then of course the lunch room, that was something different. In those days it was hamburgers and ice cream cones and malts. About what we sold there. We didn't have potato chips or french fries.

Rieger: Who did most of the cooking?

Pfeifer: As we took the orders then we'd go and fix it.

Rieger: Really! You, yourself?

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: You didn't have a short-order cook back there?

Pfeifer: No. The way that the order usually fix their own. And then, of course, there was the candy case, cigars, not so many cigarettes in those days, there were some you know, but a lot of cigars we sold.

Rieger: Now, I heard one story about, I don't even know who was saying this, I think he was in one of the Pageants, he was a boy scout. They went down to Wegmann's during their breaks intending to you know buy some treats, and I think a couple of them wanted to buy some fresh fruit, but Mr. Wegmann would not let these little boys buy the fresh fruit because he said that was for the tourists. Do you remember anything of that sort?

Pfeifer: No, I can't recall anything like that.

Rieger: I was just curious. I guess it makes sense. I don't know.

Pfeifer: I don't know why he would have. As far as he was concerned I would think they'd have been tourists, too, so I don't know why he would have made something like that. He was good to some of the old timers there. In the wintertime, like at Christmas time, he would pack up big boxes of groceries and things to take to some of these poorer bachelors living in the area.

Rieger: Oh, wow.

Pfeifer: Fix up Christmas baskets for them, boxes.

Rieger: I heard another little comment I would like you to comment on. I was talking to another older woman, very old, in her 90's, and she mentioned that when she was a child they'd go down to Wegmann's and she thought that the candy was a little bit more expensive, that the prices were may be a little bit more expensive than you would get anywhere else. Do you think that's a fair statement?

Pfeifer: Well, I imagine that it was higher priced than it was in the drugstore in town or someplace, that's right.

Rieger: Because it was a tourist [area].

Pfeifer: That's right. Actually, he kept the same prices pretty much year round whether there were tourists or whatever.

Rieger: He didn't jack them up like a lot of places do now?

Pfeifer: No. They were kept about the same.

Rieger: Someone mentioned that they thought Mrs. Wegmann was very frugal, something about cutting a hot dog in half to even a scale out or something.

Pfeifer: She was close, that's right.

Rieger: Do you have any idea why? Just practice from when they were homesteading?

Pfeifer: I imagine immigrants, you know, they had it tough when they were kids. And she was real saving, that's right. It was true.

Rieger: Good. I have a second opinion on that one. I didn't want to start an argument or anything. You worked there [at the store] for how many years? Until it closed?

Pfeifer: Until he died, that's right. The store was run for a short time afterwards, I think until about the end of the war. It was leased out to somebody. I worked until he died in 1941, October 1941.

Rieger: Was there a lot of traffic coming through there, with tourists and residents? Can you describe that at all?

Pfeifer: Even in the Depression years there was always tourists there. The campgrounds would be

full from early until late in the fall.

Rieger: Even during the Depression?

Pfeifer: Right.

Rieger: So he probably did pretty well in the Depression compared to some of the other ones that were way down in the dust bowl.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Can you guess on why people would go, even though there was a depression on?

Pfeifer: Well, there were people that could afford it in those days, too. They didn't have air conditioning like they have today and lots of them come up for cooler weather in the summer. They'd come up from Iowa, Nebraska, Omaha, and places like that and probably stay two-three months in the campgrounds.

Rieger: Really.

Pfeifer: More or less retired people or somebody like that.

Rieger: Can you even guess at how much it was? You know, three months camping now, I think it would get a little, not expensive, but a little costly. About how much was it?

Pfeifer: I don't think they paid anything for camping at that time. No, I don't think there was anything. It didn't cost them anymore to live there than it did at home.

Rieger: Right. Did you find a lot coming back summer after summer?

Pfeifer: Right, yes. Some people have been coming for years, since camping started. I remember one old fellow from Iowa. I thought he was old already but then he brought his mother all the time and stayed for a couple months or so [laughter]. Just to get away from hot Iowa. Some of them had allergies, too, you know. They thought it was better up here.

Rieger: I've heard that before. As a matter of fact, that's why my great grandmother and great grandfather started homesteading up here, because they both had health problems. It was either Dakota or up North and they chose North.

Pfeifer: And then of course when they had those Pageants, why those Sundays or weekends were really something. I don't know how many thousands of people that would come to one of those.

Rieger: Can you describe that a little bit more? I mean I've read brief things.

Pfeifer: Wegmann had that field there and he opened that up and let them park in there and then even between the store and that place he put up a little stand and sold ice cream and pop and things like that there, too.

Rieger: He sounds like quite the entrepreneur.

Pfeifer: You wouldn't believe how many people were there. And then he had the gas pumps at the store and when it was time to go, when the Pageant let out, they were just lined up there to get gas, and you'd fill one car after another. You didn't have time to go in and put the money in the register. You had a pocket full of money.

Rieger: Did you have to help park cars at all?

Pfeifer: No. They had some, I don't remember, some of the park guys helped with that and kind of told them where to go and that. I don't remember how many Pageants they had during the summer, there weren't too many. I still don't know where all the people came from in those days! They put the old cars that they had and that, but they made it, someway.

Rieger: Did you have any contact with the people in the Pageants?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. Harold Searls was the director and we knew him real good, he'd come in all the time.

Rieger: What type of person was he?

Pfeifer: Well, I think he'd been a school teacher at one time and he was a real nice fellow. I think he must have put on a pretty good program because of the way he attracted the people. And then of course the Indians that were in the Pageant, they lived right there in tents next to the pageant ground. Every evening they would come on up to the museum area and put on a little pow wow, then the campers would toss in their nickels and pennies. Sometimes they would come right in front of the store and pow wow, and Wegmann would give them something, too, give them treats. And they'd come in and buy different things. There was one time that an older Indian lady, died down there. They undoubtedly built the rough box of their own down at the place in the park, and they come to the store and bought material to line the rough box, the casket that she's buried in. I still remember that.

Rieger: Did they bury her in the Park somewhere?

Pfeifer: I'm not sure where she was buried. When we worked there in those days we didn't have a car, so we didn't hardly get anyplace except by walking, so we never got out of the store during the

day while we were working. We never had time to go out anyplace either, so it was after work in the evening at night when we walked down to Headwaters Inn. They stayed open later, so we'd go down there and have soft drinks or something, ice cream with them you know.

Rieger: That's down towards the North Entrance?

Pfeifer: Where the North Entrance is now. They had the Headwaters Inn Resort there.

Rieger: That was sort of my next question. While you were working long days at Wegmann's, did you go out to have fun at all? Was there any opportunity to go to a town, or to go dancing?

Pfeifer: After work, which was late [laughs].

Rieger: Ten o'clock at night! How about on weekends? Did you work weekends, too?

Pfeifer: We worked 7 days a week all the month through.

Rieger: Did he pay you?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes.

Rieger: About how much did you get, do you remember?

Pfeifer: I think when I started out I think it was a dollar a day and board and room.

Rieger: Did you get a raise by the time you were done?

Pfeifer: Little raises, yes, not much you know. I still worked there after we got married, too. Got married in 1939. The first summer Alice, my wife, worked there, too. Both of us worked there.

Rieger: The summer of '39?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: What did she do?

Pfeifer: She just worked in the store. Mostly lunch room and in the groceries, that too.

Rieger: So if you didn't get to go out and do much, were you able to save some money?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. We saved a little. That's right. There wasn't too much chance to spend it otherwise and then of course once a week we had to go to Bemidji and pick up groceries.

Rieger: Supplies for the store?

Pfeifer: Right. So I'd take the pickup and he'd have the orders all made up and we'd stop at the different wholesale houses, Armour and Company, the meats, the ice cream, and also had to take his deposit into the bank and deposit that for him.

Rieger: Excuse me. I imagine that would be quite a bit of cash. Was it? He kept it right there in the store until you went to Bemidji?

Pfeifer: Right.

Rieger: Did he have a safe of any kind?

Pfeifer: Yes, he had a safe. He'd have the deposit all made out, the checks, which weren't many, it was mostly cash in those days because the tourists paid with cash.

Rieger: No credit cards back then!

Pfeifer: And very few personal checks.

Rieger: When you went into Bemidji, was that basically a full day trip?

Pfeifer: Oh, no. You were back by noon.

Rieger: He told you to be back by then!

Pfeifer: [laughs] That's right. No, it wasn't a day's trip. That was all summer long. In the wintertime, I didn't have to go so often, probably every two-three weeks or something like that.

Rieger: Were you able to drive in with the pickup then?

Pfeifer: Oh yes. No, not on my own business, no.

Rieger: So that was just...

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[Begin Side 2, Tape 1]

Pfeifer: ...to town, too, sometimes. His eyesight was very poor. He'd drive a little bit around the home but he didn't drive to town anymore. We'd have to drive his car for him, take him to town.

Rieger: So he had a pickup and a car?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes.

Rieger: But you guys weren't allowed to use [them]?

Pfeifer: Not for our personal use, no.

Rieger: O.K.

Pfeifer: He had a garage underneath the store. We'd drive in from the back into the basement, so he had a warm garage for his car in wintertime. There was room for the car and the pickup both down there.

Rieger: Wow. That sounds like quite the set up! You know, I was stuck in my head that it was that cabin that's there now. I never [realized] until you showed me the pictures and I started thinking about it that it got to be that big of an operation.

Pfeifer: In those days it was a big store, that's right. And modern, for being out in the country like that.

Rieger: Right. Right. A garage underneath...Gee.

Pfeifer: There were more park people that lived there all winter, too, then. And now they're scattered all over, but at the time quite a few lived in the park and the ranger station.

Rieger: So you had a lot of contact with them, then, in the winter?

Pfeifer: Yes. Oh, yes.

Rieger: Would the statement that the Wegmann store at the time was sort of a center place, is that a fair statement, do you think?

Pfeifer: Yes, I think it was. Like the District Forester from Bemidji, Jack Hubbard, he used to come in once in a while. They'd always come to the store, him and Frank Pugh. Jack Hubbard was a pretty good storyteller.

Rieger: Oh, really.

Pfeifer: And, of course, Frank was too. So there was a lot there, even in the wintertime, with the Park people. And then when the camps come in, well the foremen and their families lived around

the area, too, so there was quite a bit of that.

Rieger: Is there anything else you want to say about the Wegmann store? We can go back to that if I think of some other things, otherwise, you've mentioned the other resorts and places that were around the area. Can you describe any of those, there was the Headwaters, the Parkview. How much contact was there, or was there any rivalry at all between any of those?

Pfeifer: Not really. They all got along pretty good. One would tell the other one if they had openings. They had the local telephone system so they could call back and forth. Like I say in the depression years there were four, I should say three. There were Sauers, Headwaters Inn, and Parkview Resort. All kept busy.

Rieger: And they did a good business during the Depression?

Pfeifer: That's right. Sauers also had a little store up there. At the time I was there they also had the post office. Wegmann didn't have the postoffice while I was there. That was at Sauers.

Rieger: Do you remember when he had discontinued that?

Pfeifer: No...There was Schneiders that had the Parkview Resort that were my relatives also. He was the brother to Mrs. Wegmann. But in the wintertime they would lock up and either go to St. Paul for a while and then down to Texas. Heinzelman's, who had the Headwaters Inn Resort, would do the same thing. They wouldn't be there in the wintertime.

Rieger: So the Wegmanns were the only ones that were there in the winter.

Pfeifer: Wegmanns and then Sauers

Rieger: O.K. And Sauers. Did your family ever come out and visit you? Did they get the chance?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. Even my grandmother, Mrs. Wegmann's sister, worked in the store a couple summers, too. She mostly helped behind the candy counter and small things like that. Kept her eyes open [laughs].

Rieger: What was her name?

Pfeifer: Mary Mergner.

Rieger: That was Mary Mergner, O.K. And your mother's name was also Mary?

Pfeifer: Mary, that's right.

Rieger: There's a lot of Marys! What did you mean "Keep her eyes open?" Was there shoplifting?

Pfeifer: Yes, a little bit. That's what Mr. Wegmann would always say that my grandmother made her wages just keeping her eyes open.

Rieger: What would happen if they caught people?

Pfeifer: They never really caught anybody, but they would miss things. Then I don't know if you want to know anything about the Park when it first started up and that?

Rieger: Sure, we can do that now. I definitely want to discuss that, the Park. Why don't we go to the CCC's briefly, if that's O.K., because you had mentioned a little bit before that they would come, the foreman and stuff, in the winter once the camps got there in '33, and that started up right after you got there, so that might be a good place to sort of segue-way into and there's still the Wegmann connection.

Pfeifer: I still don't remember what year it was when they first came.

Rieger: I think it was 1933. That's when the whole national program began, and I think Itasca got one of the first ones.

Pfeifer: One of the first ones, yes. I can still remember when the first truckload came in [chuckles].

Rieger: Can you describe that?

Pfeifer: The Captain had to get out first. It was just military, you know, so he had his pistol strapped on his belt just like he was in the army.

Rieger: Do you remember who that was?

Pfeifer: Captain Biggs. I think it was B-I-G-G-S. Captain Biggs. They were all Kansas boys, the first bunch that came in. They had a really good brogue, a southern brogue.

Rieger: I suppose they were a little shocked, too, by the trees, or that many trees.

Pfeifer: They probably were. At least it was green here, you know, even in the dust bowl days, but Kansas was terrible. The dust would drift just like snow here in wintertime, or anyplace in wintertime. Even when I was a little kid out in North Dakota I can remember that the dust would be so thick that you just couldn't see, had to have lights on. You couldn't stand it outside like with working with horses, there was all horses in those days, they couldn't face the wind and the dust, the dirt that came. Just black as night sometimes. So I suppose it was quite a difference for them

when they first come up here and saw everything at least green. It was still dry some but nothing like there. When they first came, [there were] no buildings. The first forty acres belonged to Earl Lange, who was Superintendent at the Park and is where Alvin Katzenmeyer now lives. They set up tents and next lumber come in and they started tacking their barracks and mess hall and everything together. Then there was some kind of a dispute that the Park Superintendent couldn't own any land that was occupied by them so they moved right into the Park itself. But while they were living there at the camp they had to come around kind of a corner to get to the store at Wegmann's and I remember yet that Captain Biggs wanted to cut a road right across his place, Wegmann's place, right directly through the store. He wouldn't let them [laughs]. Anyway, they moved into the Park, and then I can't remember what year it was either, there were different groups would come in there. There was a North Dakota group in there for a while after the Kansas boys left. Some of the Kansas boys stayed because they got to be leaders and that and they stayed and some of them married local girls. Then the VC's came in, which was altogether different because they were veterans from World War I. There was lots of talented guys in that bunch.

Rieger: I bet. Yes, the Forest Inn crew. That's an incredible building.

Pfeifer: Yes, they put up that.

Rieger: Do you remember when the National leader, [Robert] Frechner, Roosevelt appointed him as the CCC Coordinator, when he came to Itasca? I know there's a plaque, it's now up in Pine Ridge I think, and it commemorates his [visit].

Pfeifer: No, I don't remember that part, no.

Rieger: O.K. I was just wondering, because there's a plaque up there now saying that he came here and that it was put up by the VCC.

Pfeifer: No, I can't remember anything about that. But there was a different one. This plaque down at Chamber's Creek, did you ever see that one?

Rieger: Yes.

Pfeifer: Gilfillan, wasn't it?

Rieger: Yes, Gilfillan. I know what your talking about.

Pfeifer: I remember that. Wegmann was there, too, when they dedicated that one, and Sauers, Wegmann and Sauers and Gilfillan. There was a picture of that there, too.

Rieger: Yes, you showed me the pictures. Did you have a lot of contact with the CCC guys? Did a lot of them come in?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. Before they had their canteens of their own they'd come for their candy. I think we sold beer at that time too, so some of them would buy beer to drink.

Rieger: Yes, because I think prohibition was out in what, '33?

Pfeifer: '33 probably or shortly after Roosevelt was [elected].

Rieger: How were they?

Pfeifer: They were good.

Rieger: Were they rambunctious?

Pfeifer: Not really. We never had any problem with them at the store. Some places, I guess, they'd get into town probably they'd do a little more. But no, they were real good. Of course Wegmann was strict and they knew that from the beginning. They couldn't get by with anything there [laughs].

Rieger: Did they usually come around in the evenings most every evening, or at certain times?

Pfeifer: Right. After their supper they'd walk out. Of course they had to walk too.

Rieger: Right. From, '33 to about '41, you basically saw that whole development that they just transformed Itasca.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Can you comment on that?

Pfeifer: They really done a lot of work and the new buildings they put up and ice and they also cleaned up the roads, the roadways, and the Park really looked neat when they were there. All the trails too, there are many trails in the Park, that they used to open up where they could get back probably if there would be a fire someplace you know, and planted a lot of trees. They would plant a lot of them in the wintertime. They would take them from a plantation someplace and may be there were a tree ten-twelve feet high or something like that, and then in the fall they would dig a trench around it, and leave a bulb, and then they'd come around in the wintertime and they would break that off on the bottom and then slide them up onto the dump truck one at a time and haul them, and set them down in a place that they probably dug out before it had froze up. And then the road, which is the Wilderness Drive now, that goes up past our place, was just a grass trail at first when I bought the place when we lived there. Then the WPA [Works Progress Administration] built it all by hand. They cut the hills down a little bit and filled in the swamps with wheelbarrows

and picks.

Rieger: So that was the WPA and not the [CCC].

Pfeifer: That was the WPA that done that. And they had a camp at Squaw Lake. They're the ones that built that stretch of road.

Rieger: Was that the Transient Relief Camp that was up there then?

Pfeifer: That's right. They called it the Transient camp.

Rieger: That was part of the WPA, O.K. Did any of those guys come down?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes.

Rieger: Were they a lot different than the CCC boys?

Pfeifer: Right. Lots of them were real educated people, too, because there was doctors, lawyers and everything, and some of them were alcoholics, had lost everything and ended up in a camp like that. There was a lot of talent there, too.

Rieger: Wow, quite a spread of people.

Pfeifer: Some of them were a little more rowdy than the CC boys. They were older and they'd been alcoholics, and still were you know. They liked their booze.

Rieger: Did Wegmann get after them?

Pfeifer: No, not really, because we never sold booze there. We sold beer and never really had any problems.

Rieger: No hard liquor?

Pfeifer: No. No hard liquor. But anyway, some of them would come and sit there and they behaved. They'd probably sit there half of the afternoon drinking beer. But no problems with them.

Rieger: Did they seem to get along O.K. with the CCC boys?

Pfeifer: They were far enough apart, and like I say, nobody had cars. The only way they could get around was to walk. They got along O.K. with them then. Different part of the Park, they were a few miles apart.

Rieger: Yes. That helps too, I imagine.

Pfeifer: Right.

Rieger: What do you think was the most important contribution of the CCC or the WPA in Itasca, or the couple of things that were the most important contributions?

Pfeifer: Well, I think it was some of the buildings they put up. At the time you know, the Park was just developing and they put up some nice buildings. And then the cleanup, which I thought was real good for fire and that was a lot safer to have it cleaned up.

Rieger: What did you think about their work down on the Headwaters? It's amazing how transformed that area is, "improving the Headwaters." It looks great now. It looks sort of like you would expect may be the Mississippi to come out.

Pfeifer: The way they fixed it up is more naturally the way it was to start with, because when they logged, they landed logs in the lake and then as the logs went out in the spring with the water when they opened up the dam, it tore out the banks of the river and made it kind of a swamp land. So I think that was a good thing that they firmed up the banks and made it a stream through there again like it is.

Rieger: An amazing piece of technology and an engineering feat.

Pfeifer: I think that was a good thing. At least the people can get up to it now and that it's a clean little stream that runs and it isn't just all bog like it was tore up before from logging.

Rieger: Speaking of logging, as long as you mentioned it. Do you remember any of the logging activities? Well, I suppose you weren't there until '32 so it was gone by then.

Pfeifer: There wasn't any more big logging jobs or anything around. There was just the little individual sawmills, and they'd cut a few truckloads of pulpwood here and there. But the big logging was over with.

Rieger: Did you ever come into contact with any of the old loggers that were up there that had anything to say about the changes?

Pfeifer: No, not really. I don't think we ever talked about it. That was a little bit outside of the Park, probable up at Mallard, and that area about north of the Park about 5-6 miles, where some of these fellows ended up, that stayed after the logging days. We didn't get to communicate much with them.

Rieger: Did Mr. Wegmann ever comment on his experiences?

Pfeifer: In the early days a lot of the early settlers would cut hay. Then they would sell it to the loggers for their horses. Outside of that, I don't really remember him ever talking much about the logging days. Even before 1895, I think most of it had been logged off before, because I showed you that picture you know, where he's sitting there in 1895 and there's a couple of scraggly trees that you see

Rieger: Right. The reason I asked [is] because I've run across a couple of things. John Dobie says the heyday of logging was between 1900-1920, even as far up as 1920.

Pfeifer: There was always some logging, but the big timber was mostly gone by that time.

Rieger: Do you ever remember hearing the name Mary Gibbs?

Pfeifer: Yes, I remember the name but I can't remember what it's about anymore. Oh, she's the one that stopped the opening of the dam?

Rieger: Yes, she was appointed as Park Manager for several months after her father had died. They'd built the dam on the outlet and she went down there to try to get the dam out because it was raising the lake level.

Pfeifer: I remember them talking about it but of course that was before my time.

Rieger: Right. I was just wondering if that was an issue at all while you were there, or memories that were still [lingering].

Pfeifer: Well, the biggest issue was about the feud that happened in the early days. They were still talking about that.

Rieger: They were still talking about the McMullen-Rust feud?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: How long did that go on then?

Pfeifer: Well, they were just talking about [it]. It was quite serious for a while I guess.

Rieger: Was Wegmann on any side?

Pfeifer: He was on Bill McMullen's side.

Rieger: O.K. I seem to remember a story, was it him, about oranges.

Pfeifer: Oh, they'd sent some fruit up from Texas that one time?

Rieger: Yes.

Pfeifer: Heinzelman was it? Of course, Mrs. Heinzelman was a Rust.

Rieger: There's so many inter-connections up there.

Pfeifer: There really are. And lots of them I've kind of forgotten about too, until you start talking about them again. Bill McMullen, he was a bachelor, an Irishman, and he was kind of a gruff, rough guy the way Wegmann explained him. And then when that girl died he said, "That place for the cemetery is good enough for me, it should be good enough for anybody else, too." He had to be the second one buried in there.

Rieger: Boy, I bet he didn't expect that!

Pfeifer: I don't think so.

Rieger: No. Bam.

Pfeifer: But he had a little farm there and even right south of where Wegmann's store used to set, I remember Wegmann talking about it, it was planted trees already when I first came there, but he had a corn field in there. It's sure changed a lot now.

Rieger: Yes. It's real hard to even visualized sometimes, you know where the road used to go right between where the picnic ground is now.

Pfeifer: Just in front of the Browner Inn. It used to also drive through the University. That was where it went when I first came up there. The CC's are the ones who rebuilt the road then, coming straight from the University up to the Park Headquarters, in through that area, changed the road. But it was forty miles to Park Rapids by wagon trail, about thirty miles road, and how many times they had to go around all the low areas, you know, and cross the rivers at certain places, the creeks.

Rieger: It'd be quite a bumpy ride!

Pfeifer: I think so.

Rieger: Yes, I was talking to a women last week, Hazel Luschen as a matter of fact, who's 96, and she remembers when she was a kid, they would go from her house to the Park in their wagon and it wasn't a good wagon or a buggy, it was a lumber wagon. It's just amazing.

Pfeifer: Yes, about their only transportation.

Rieger: Yes, really. Now, when the canteens came to the camps, did that cut down on a lot of Wegmann's business from the CCC?

Pfeifer: Not really. No, they would still come in there and then of course I had some friends, we made some friends, they'd always come around and we'd hang out together and probably go out in the evening together.

Rieger: After work.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: The CCC's had their recreation, some organized baseball or basketball, did you ever go to see any?

Pfeifer: No, I never got a chance to play in that, but we used to go to church down there. Once in a while they had church services. We'd get to that once in a while.

Rieger: Right in the camps?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: Other than that, where did people go for religious services? Was the Catholic church there yet?

Pfeifer: No, there wasn't any Catholic church close. The closest one was Two Inlets. There was Lutheran Churches, though.

Rieger: Right around in the area?

Pfeifer: Sell Lake, about six miles north of the Park. They started a church quite early there.

Rieger: O.K. So people usually went up there?

Pfeifer: The area right at the Park there, Wegmanns and Schneiders and Sauers, none of them ever went to church.

Rieger: Oh, they didn't.

Pfeifer: No. I think most of them were Catholic to start with and there wasn't any Catholic church there. Further north were Scandinavians and they were Lutherans and they built the Lutheran

Church, and of course the Catholics didn't go up there.

Rieger: O.K. I imagined it would be, especially in the early days, very difficult, if there was anything, any religious services what-so-ever. Even to get to it would be difficult.

Pfeifer: Right. Even in the early days before they had the church, the Lutheran church there, the minister used to come around and stay at places over night and have a little service Sunday morning or something like that, at one of the houses. Yes, it was hard in those days. It was quite a change from getting out of the cities, you know, and that's where they came from. Most of them came from St. Paul, Sauers, Schneiders, Wegmanns, Heinzelmans I not sure.

Rieger: Did they know each other from St. Paul?

Pfeifer: Sauers and Wegmann did, because Sauers come up here actually before Wegmann, but he didn't stay. He's the one who told Wegmann about it.

Rieger: O.K. But Wegmann was the one who ended up with the big store there.

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: St. Paul.

Pfeifer: Right. And of course when they came up there, nobody thought of tourists at the time either, so it didn't make any difference where you homesteaded, just so you had some land. As far as being on a lake or anything, in those days didn't mean anything either. I don't know how come, Bill McMullen was there before Wegmann, how come he took that spot, I don't know either.

Rieger: I don't know. I read that he was considered the first permanent resident because he was there when it became a park. What about politics. Did any of them get into politics, make their feelings known?

Pfeifer: They sure did!

Rieger: Did they? Can you describe any of that?

Pfeifer: Well, not really. No, they all were interested in the elections and everything. They'd always go to vote.

Rieger: Where was the nearest place to vote?

Pfeifer: That was Itasca. They didn't really have a town hall in those days, but they had the clerk's place, which was Art Morton at that time, and he had a little log house there that they used for

town...

[End side two, tape 1]

[Begin side one, tape 2]

Rieger: ...supporting Roosevelt?

Pfeifer: No, not all of them. Wegmann was pretty much conservative. Some of them may have been. I think a lot of them were for Roosevelt at the time because it was the Depression and the drought at the same time, so things were tough all over. They thought a change like that, he probably had some good ideas and some of them were good, turned out to be good.

Rieger: I suppose they thought it was worth a shot.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Sort of like Bill Clinton I think, I don't know!

Pfeifer: But in the early days they used to have some pretty hot times up there at the town elections, too.

Rieger: Did they really?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes.

Rieger: Just arguing?

Pfeifer: Yes, over different things. That was kind of before I was up there. It was kind of settled by that time. No, Wegmanns always had to go up and vote, it was town election and then general election, and of course I couldn't to start with, wasn't old enough. But they were interested in the government and that.

Rieger: I guess we'll move on a little bit, move forward. We can always come back to anything that I didn't get. You said 1939 was an important year for you. You got married and you also bought the cabin area.

Pfeifer: Bought the land, the property as a place to live. That's right, yes. Alice was a school teacher, too, you know.

Rieger: She was a resident of the area?

Pfeifer: No, she was originally from Detroit Lakes. Her first year was up there in 1932 and 1933 and she taught school about six miles north of the Park. That was her first school. I didn't get to know her at that time yet. I can't remember when we did. We did go together three-four years. There was one summer then afterwards, she got a job to work in the store, and that's how I got to know her better then. Then we started going together.

Rieger: But you don't remember what year it was she worked in the store?

Pfeifer: No. That's a long time ago, too, you know!

Rieger: That's really incredible that she was up there teaching some of the smaller, early schools. Are there any stories or anything you can describe about her experiences?

Pfeifer: Well, they were just like the rest of the country schools. The early days there were four little rural schools just in Itasca township there. The average of every township would have about four schools, a school at every corner. Of course, there was people living all over at that time. It had all been opened up to homestead and lots of them had big families. When they had these little country schools it was all 8 grades, and some of the older kids would be pretty big by that time, too, because some of them probably didn't get started in time or something, so they were bigger than the teachers usually. They got along good though and I think they learned a lot in those schools because the little ones would be sitting there when the older ones would be up in their class giving their lessons, and they'd be sitting there all ears and taking it all in. I think they learned real good. At least they come out of those schools they could read and write.

Rieger: Right. You'd think it would be may be confusing but I think your exactly right.

Pfeifer: My wife Alice wasn't very large. She only weighed about 110 pounds, but she had control of those kids and they had respect for her. Didn't have any problems with them.

Rieger: Was there a living quarters at the school or did she live with the...?

Pfeifer: No, she had to board with one of the neighbors, which was usually a school board member probably or something, somebody who had a little extra room or something. They had to pay board and room and then walk to school, build their fire in wintertime. She taught then up until the time we were married. She was still teaching in 1939 when we got married in January. She finished out that term and then she come to work for Wegmanns that summer too. And then a year later our first daughter was born, so she didn't work anymore after that [chuckles].

Rieger: No, that would keep her pretty busy.

Pfeifer: Until during the War, when the shortage of teachers again and that, she taught for three-

four years again. Two of those schools she taught in are in Bagley here now.

Rieger: That's what you were mentioning.

Pfeifer: One is at the Historical Society quarters and the other one is just a storage building in town.

Rieger: That's really amazing.

Pfeifer: Those cabins, a couple of them had been started there when we bought the place so that first summer there were so many tourists looking for places everyday, so we bought a few sheets, pots and pans, a few dishes and stuff.

Rieger: Did you buy the cabins intending that's what you were going to do with it?

Pfeifer: No. We just bought it as a place to live.

Rieger: From Dallas Savage, is that who it was?

Pfeifer: Right. We started looking around there and I thought, well, the yard looked pretty nice and rolly. It wasn't on the lake, but there were so many people who were looking for places to stay, we decided to start in and then we gradually kept building up. We really didn't get started until after the War, because the War come and then there wasn't any tourists for several years because there wasn't gas or tires. So it was at a standstill until after the War and then we started up again and built more cabins and got it to the way it is today.

Rieger: Just speaking of the War briefly, were there any rumblings of it? Did people talk about it in '39 when Britain got into it? I know there was talk about how the country should stay out of it or go into it, stay out, go in...What was the atmosphere in this area, the Itasca area?

Pfeifer: They were real interested. Wegmann was really interested in news like that. He had his radio and boy he'd sit there and he'd listen to all those news reports. We were younger and didn't pay that much attention to it, but he knew what it was like over there, about Hitler and that and he didn't like it. He was real interested in when Hitler took over these countries before the War actually started, before we were in it. He didn't like anything that was going on at all.

Rieger: Did he let his opinions [be known]?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes.

Rieger: Was he pretty outspoken?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: That's the impression I've gotten.

Pfeifer: Yes, he wasn't afraid to talk.

Rieger: So then you had two years, well, less than two years before the War started for America, since you had bought the cabins. Right away you had a lot of tourists coming in?

Pfeifer: Right. And then after the War when we started up again and we built more cabins and that, there were days we'd turn away fifteen-twenty cars. There was that many people looking for places to stay.

Rieger: Good investment.

Pfeifer: In those days there were hardly any reservations. People just started out on vacation and went, looking for a place. Today it's a lot different. You have very few drive-ins today. It's all reservations now, but not in those days.

Rieger: Did you stay around in Itasca during the War years?

Pfeifer: Yes. After Wegmann died we didn't have much money or anything and just enough to get a long with, and what were we going to do? The logging started to pick up, the pulp wood and that, so I got a job with Willard Naramore, helped him on his saw mill. And then, of course, we had to sign up for the draft, and I had one of the last numbers in the county, so I wasn't called up right away, and of course I was married before that and had started a family, so I was never called until towards the end. I was down to Fort Snelling and passed my physical. They gave me six months to clean up my logging, because I had a little saw mill at the time and I was doing some logging and cutting pulp, and they gave me six months for that. During that time, did Japan surrender first, after they bombed the way they did?

Rieger: No, Hitler [Germany] was defeated first.

Pfeifer: Was he? Well anyway, one was defeated first anyway, and then they come along, they weren't going to take anybody over thirty, and I had a birthday of thirty, and the one had surrendered, so I never did have to go. But otherwise, I was all set to go. Like I say, I had one of the last numbers in the County, wasn't called up until towards the end, and then I was in logging and pulpwood which was kind of critical at that time, too. It was considered a war project.

Rieger: Were there a lot of war activities up in the Itasca area, like watching for air raids or blackout people. Did you have a blackout here?

Pfeifer: They did in the county, right.

Rieger: Were you involved in any of that aspect of it?

Pfeifer: No. No. We had gas rationing and all of that, and tires. I had one extra tire I remember, and we were supposed to turn in extra tires, so I turned it in, and towards the end you know, we had everything to patch tires [laughs].

Rieger: Right. You see some of the tractors, pictures of them, just going without any of the rubber.

Pfeifer: Of course, a lot of them didn't have rubber tires in those days. They just had steel ones. That's about the way we were driving some of the cars, too. We couldn't buy tires. Alice was so mad when I turned that one in [laughs].

Rieger: You're an honest American! Mr. Wegmann died in 1940 or '41?

Pfeifer: '41 I think it was.

Rieger: '41. Was there a large funeral for him?

Pfeifer: Well, there was quite a few, that's right. He was healthy otherwise, except he had a rupture and it strangulated, it twisted or something, and he was in terrible pain. They took him into Park Rapids to the hospital and he had his surgery and come out of it real good. Then he got pneumonia and that's what he died from. If it had been today, he'd never gotten pneumonia or they would have had something for it right away, but in those days...

Rieger: So it was a pretty big shock then.

Pfeifer: Yes, it was, yes. Because otherwise he was in pretty good physical condition.

Rieger: Were there any dignitaries there?

Pfeifer: Well, all of the Forest Service and those, yes. They were all there. The evening before he died we were into see him, my wife and I, and he couldn't talk any more, he had pneumonia so bad. There was something he wanted to tell me though. He just hung on to my hand and the tears just come to his eyes, and he tried to talk, and he just couldn't tell me what he wanted to say. It was kind of a shock that he went.

Rieger: That's too bad.

Pfeifer: So anyway, we got our place going and then I worked part time for the park after the War, when they were remodeling and doing different things.

Rieger: Now how did you get into that? You were struggling to get your place going. Did they approach you, or did you approach them?

Pfeifer: I can't remember. They'd hire part time and that and that's how I got kind of started, went down there and asked them for a job and got a good job. I got to be pretty handy with carpenter work and that so this Ralph Welte, he helped me get a civil service carpenter...

Rieger: Certificate?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: Can you describe him at all?

Pfeifer: Ralph Welte? Yes, he was real interested in the Park and what they were doing and wanted to see things get done and improved, because during the War it kind of went down hill because it wasn't operating and there wasn't any help or anything, so things kind of got behind a little bit. Tourist industry was really booming, so he wanted to get things going in the Park. Remodeled, that's what he did then.

Rieger: Was he a pretty good guy?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. He wasn't really around that much see because he was in the St. Paul office. Then they had different programs...youth organizations, and you'd have these groups of kids and they'd give them summer work or something.

Rieger: O.K. Sort of like what they have now. What is it, MCC? There's some kids working in the Park now.

Pfeifer: MYC, or something like that, yes, right. Well, I was in charge of several of those groups too.

Rieger: Oh. How did that go?

Pfeifer: That went pretty good. I always got along good with the kids and we done cleanup in the wintertime, brushing and that, and painting buildings. There's some of them around the Park there yet that worked for me under that, Steve Smith, who has the bicycles now, Pete Forbes. I was in charge of some of those groups for a while too.

Rieger: When were you first hired? Was it right after 1945?

Pfeifer: I can't remember now. It's probably in the fifties. I never did get a permanent, steady job there, so then this opening came at the University and then I switched down there, operational

maintenance mechanic there [door].

Rieger: This is very fascinating. Let's just discuss, before we go into when you were at the Biological station, a little bit more about your activities actually in the Park.

Pfeifer: Well, that was all at the University where I worked then. I liked that job real good. It was a good place to work. They were doing a lot of expanding and remodeling at the time I was in there, so I done a lot of that work for them. At least I got the health insurance, which we didn't have before.

Rieger: Was that more of a full time thing then?

Pfeifer: That was full time, right.

Rieger: And you were hired there...?

Pfeifer: I can't remember what year I started. I worked there about...pretty close to 15 years, 12, 15 years, something like that.

Rieger: 1949, does that sound right?

Pfeifer: Oh, no, no, no. It was long after that.

Rieger: O.K. I was writing some notes on the Hodson book, and they said, I have a quote: "provided the manager with expert assistance in station operation and rehabilitation activities." And then they said you started at the station from 1949.

Pfeifer: Oh, I worked part time there, too. That's right. O.K. There you got it. But I forget the year I started full time, but anyway, I retired in...

Rieger: Well, you were still there as of 1977, according to these people.

Pfeifer: Fifteen years ago I retired, whatever that is. That's a while, too, you know [laughs]. And of course all those years when I worked there I was building up the place, too, so I worked weekends, evenings. In the fall I had to drain the waters, take care of the swimming pool, drain that and get that ready for winter, take it part way down. Then in the spring I'd turn the water on again and hope you didn't have leaks, which I was lucky, never had problems. There's a lot of water lines around too, because the cabins are quite scattered you know, and I put them in, I put them in to drain, and they all drained.

Rieger: So basically it was a lot of just keeping it up and running, maintenance wise?

Pfeifer: Right. Alice, my wife, she done the work and had a girl to help her. Our two daughters

stayed with us until they were through college and they'd come back in the summertime and help with the cabins and then we put them both through college at the University of Minnesota.

Rieger: Pat is one of your daughters.

Pfeifer: Right. And Judy. They were ten years apart, so we got lots of help out of them [laughs].

Rieger: Now is Pat older?

Pfeifer: No. Judy is the oldest. Judy was born in '40 and Pat was born in '50. They both graduated from high school at 17 and then four years of college, so they were with us for a long time. And then after that we'd hire a girl in the summertime, would help Alice.

Rieger: Can you describe some of the people from the Biological Station that you dealt with?

Pfeifer: Well, the first Resident Manager when I started working there, in fact he was there in 1932 when I first come up, was Walt Nelson. I knew him from when he'd come into the store from when I worked there. He's still living. He's 101 now.

Rieger: Where's he living at?

Pfeifer: At Alexandria.

Rieger: Were the people at the U of M Station nice people? How were the kids. Did you have to deal with a lot of them?

Pfeifer: The students? I never got to deal much with them except fix a few little things for them when they'd break or need repairs or something like that in the shop. They'd come with them and we'd fix them up and take care of them. But otherwise we didn't really have that much to do with them because they weren't there for that long a time. They'd have their classes and they kept them really busy. Lots of them, when they come up here, were going to have these summer courses, they thought it would be a nice vacation. They'd bring their fishing tackle and all that a long, but it never got used [laughs].

Rieger: It was a busy time.

Pfeifer: That's right. They really kept a going. They had a special project usually, whether it was a certain bird or a mouse or some darn thing, and they'd spend hours and days just on that one thing, day and night. No, we didn't have much to do with them. About the only ones were the Resident Manager. At the time I started a new one started in with me, was Wetzels, Lou Wetzels. He was a guy that had been around, originally from Kansas City. At one time he had owned a resort and he had been a policeman at one time already, so he was pretty well seen the knocks of the world. He

was real good to work for though. He'd get you anything and he could talk to these professors down in the Cities and these guys that were kind of the head of the College, he'd get everything he'd ask for. So that was a good job down there.

Rieger: You had a good experience at University Station?

Pfeifer: That's right, yes. I really enjoyed those years working there. Got to know lots of the professors and teachers.

Rieger: Do you remember, I don't even know when they had the fire that burned down the cabin, is that before you were there?

Pfeifer: That was before I worked there, right.

Rieger: O.K.

Pfeifer: Several years before.

Rieger: Do you remember hearing about that when you were in the Park?

Pfeifer: Yes, I just heard about it, that was it, that they had a fire down there and one of the cabins burned.

Rieger: So otherwise your work in the Park was just basically the same, some carpentry? You said you worked with Carl Johnson I believe, on Brower Inn. Any other particular events or activities that you did in regards to that?

Pfeifer: No, not really. Carl and I done a lot of work, just the two of us working together, at different projects. At the time I don't think the Manager was too schooled in building and that, so Carl, he would figure out lots of things that had to be done and just tell him he was going to do this or that.

Rieger: O.K. So you didn't have to deal with...

Pfeifer: Pretty much like on his own.

Rieger: And that worked for him?

Pfeifer: Yes.

Rieger: How about any of the other Park personnel, from the time that you went to Wegmann's in 1932. Can you describe any of the characters? First of all, Frank Pugh, with the Division of

Forestry. I read the paper. Is there anything you can add to the paper, or things you don't agree with in that paper?

Pfeifer: No, I think that's a good article on him that his grandson has wrote up.

Rieger: He was really that well liked?

Pfeifer: Yes, he was well liked by everybody. He was down-to-earth. Come up on his own, you know.

Rieger: Yes. It was fascinating to read about him. An interesting, interesting man.

Pfeifer: There aren't people like that around anymore. Now they all come out of the University.

Rieger: How about some of the other Park Managers that you've dealt with in the years?

Pfeifer: Well, there was lots of them. There are some of them I've even forgot. They would change quite often because it was kind of a political deal for a while.

Rieger: I was going to ask about the politics. Did you see the politics that were going on between, say Forestry and Parks when it came?

Pfeifer: No. Except I think it was about the time just before World War II and the politics got into it more or less. Before that it was kind of quiet, and then they started getting into it, so we had several different Park Managers, Superintendents they called them at that time.

Rieger: Can you describe them? Were they fairly big guys? Were there ups and downs?

Pfeifer: Well, kind of up and down I would say, because some of them didn't have qualifications and didn't realize what kind of a job it was. It was just kind of a political job. I don't know, if it was for the good or the bad.

Rieger: O.K. I have a list of them.

Pfeifer: The first one I remember when I come up there was Earl Lange...

[End side one, tape 2]

[Begin side two, tape 2]

Pfeifer: ...[Andie Peterson] didn't really know too much about the Park, I don't think, before he got the job. His wife also worked there in the office and I think she done more than he did [laughs]. She was real good. She kept the books and the payrolls and kept the Park going.

Rieger: How about Waino Kontola? Did you know him?

Pfeifer: Not so much. I didn't really work for him. I was down there, I think, worked there at the time, but he didn't say much. **Rieger:** How about any of the CCC foremen, like George Wilson or any of those characters? Do you remember anyone in particular that stuck out in your brain as good or bad?

Pfeifer: The foremen, you mean, of the CC camps?

Rieger: Yes.

Pfeifer: Well, they were guys that come up on their own, most of them, like George Wilson. They called him "Haywire Wilson."

Rieger: Why'd they call him "Haywire Wilson?"

Pfeifer: I think he could patch anything with haywire [laughs]! Then there was John Korth, that was a foreman in the Park. He was a good carpenter and he was also real fussy about people. He done a lot of good for the Park. He was one of the early settlers up here, too. Had that first house on the Mississippi.

Rieger: Oh, really.

Pfeifer: Between the Headwaters Inn and the Headwaters. So we knew him really good, he was our closest neighbor, when we first got married. So we used to play cards over there many times with them. Some of the other people that worked in the Park, like Eddie Halberg, Clarence Norby. In those days I think we associated more with our neighbors, because we were that far from town and the shows. We done a lot of card playing with all these neighbors.

Rieger: The ones who lived in the Park at the time?

Pfeifer: That's right. Halbergs and Johnsons and Bergquists and Norbys and all those.

Rieger: So was it a pretty close-knit community would you say?

Pfeifer: Yes, at that time it was. That's right. And then the church was built up there right before the War, the Catholic Church. There used to be quite a few of them that belonged there at the time and they even had a ladies aid and that. Quite a few belonged to that.

Rieger: Do you remember when the Church was being built?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. I even helped a little on that.

Rieger: That's a neat little church. I've been meaning to go in there.

Pfeifer: This old Priest built it by himself practically. At the time then during the War, it started right before the war, and then during the war he couldn't buy lumber so he'd buy an old building someplace and tear it down, patch it up. The side walls there, the studdings, it's a high ceiling in there too, they're probably 12-15 feet or something like that. I don't think there's a one in there that's at full length. They're spliced.

Rieger: That's amazing.

Pfeifer: But it's still standing. Even if it was just scarp lumber that it was built of.

Rieger: I like churches. I sort of like to see them and go in them. When you got going after the war with your little resort and cabins, have you noticed a large change in the clientele, and even from when you were at Wegmann's, and Park visitors. Is there a change in people, their attitudes, what they expected in the Park? Can you comment on anything like that?

Pfeifer: Not really, except I think the people that come up here to the Park area are more families. They're not out for party vacations you might say and carousing and things like that. It's stayed that way. The people we have today at the resort yet are the same way. They are families and we don't have any problems with them.

Rieger: Do you still get a lot of long-time annual visitors?

Pfeifer: Yes. We have the third generation, fourth probably, coming back. I get out there quite often. Every time I go out there there's people that have been there before that I get to visit with again. There was one there that came in 1946, I think, from southern Minnesota, and he hadn't been back until last year, that would be '92, and of course I wasn't there anymore but my daughter was, and he called to see if the place was there yet. Later then he called again and made a reservation, and he come driving back in an old car, antique car, a 1914 Model T Ford. He hadn't been back since 1946 and he ended up in the same cabin that he'd been in before with his wife!

Rieger: Boy, I bet he was shocked by some of the changes.

Pfeifer: He probably was. So I was out there and he took me for a ride in this old car then.

Rieger: Neat! Did you know John Dobie?

Pfeifer: No. I didn't really know him. I probably met him or that, but I never had an acquaintance with him. Some of those things are good in his book, but there's some things that I don't agree on.

Rieger: Really. Can you comment on any of those, because I just read it a couple of weeks ago when I was doing a little bit of research on the Park?

Pfeifer: Well, years ago, even when we first started there, the Park wasn't very cooperative with any of us, and didn't like to really have us around. And even Wegmann's store, too. So anyway, when the Park bought Wegmann's place, I don't know how they arrived at the price they paid for it, it was practically a steal because they bought it for \$11,000, 160 acres and all the buildings, the store, his house, the barn and all the buildings. In the Depression years when Wegmann was still living, before the War, he had been offered as high as \$40,000. And they bought it for \$11,000. Then they thought it was kind of a disgrace, a building that close to the Park, so they sold it out. It ended up that the store was moved but then there was an oil shed that was right next to the store. It was kind of hid behind juniper trees and it was on the back side, and it was about 3 feet between that and the store, but the same porch come around the front you know and you kept the oil in there and some other supplies that could be kept for the store. That ended up at the Park at the boat landing and the boat man even had to live in it several years. When it sat at Wegmann's it was a disgrace to the Park! So anyway, those first years the Park didn't really like to have anybody in competition with them.

Rieger: That's interesting.

Pfeifer: I think these last years have kind of changed a little bit.

Rieger: Well, I know we've gone over the two hours, I promised it wouldn't be more that about 2 hours, so may be I'll turn the tape off. I would like to thank you for these two hours.

Pfeifer: It was nice.

[End interview]

[Interview-Session Two-8/20/93]

Rieger: First of all, just a little bit on the Wegmanns. We covered quite a bit about you working at the Wegmann store when we talked before, but I was just wondering if you remembered, first of all, any of the prices at the Wegmann store. How much did things generally cost there?

Pfeifer: That's Depression prices and they were down. Probably a small package of crackers was a dime, soda crackers. Pop was a nickel a bottle. Ice cream cones a nickel. Pop all came in glass bottles at that time. I still don't know how anybody could make any money on it on either end of it.

Rieger: I suppose they didn't recycle.

Pfeifer: Oh, sure they did.

Rieger: Did they have the deposits?

Pfeifer: Yes. They come in wooden crates, twenty-four to a crate. You had to put them back in there, you had to keep your brands separate, you know, for the different bottling companies. They'd take them back, have to sanitize the bottles again, refill them, haul them back again, all for a nickel a bottle we'd get for them!

Rieger: Did you bring them back when you went to Bemidji?

Pfeifer: No, they had trucks coming around. There was different trucks. The same way with the beer. There was Grain Belt Beer, different kinds of beer, too, then. There was Glueks and Yoergs beer [Note: Mr. Pfeifer adds Hamms Beer and Grain Belt to the list.]. The Yoergs beer was made in St. Paul and Mrs. Wegmann, before she was married, she worked for Yoergs Brewery.

Rieger: Really. Boy, that's going back a ways. Yoergs?

Pfeifer: That's spelt with a Y-O-E-R-G-S, I think. Yoergs, Yoergs beer. And of course, she would push the Yoergs beer in the store [laughs].

Rieger: Gee, I didn't know that.

Pfeifer: And of course gasoline, what was it, fifteen cents a gallon or something like that? Fifteen-eighteen cents. We didn't have automatic pumps like they have today. The first one we had had a crank and we had to crank it up. Then we got the one that had the push-pull handle on the side, which was a big improvement because that crank was a man killer.

Rieger: I bet! Where were the gas tanks? Were they underground?

Pfeifer: They were underground, right. Underground tanks.

Rieger: Did they take those out when they moved the whole store?

Pfeifer: I would imagine that they were moved, too.

Rieger: He had quite an operation up there it sounds like.

Pfeifer: Hamburgers I think were a dime. Sodas were the same thing, ten or fifteen cents for an ice cream soda. And sundaes. So you had to dip a lot of ice cream to get a dollar's worth! Then when the Pageants were on, those were really busy days. We'd go through probably forty gallons of ice cream, I think 8 of these five gallon containers.

Rieger: That's a lot of ice cream.

Pfeifer: That's a lot of ice cream to dip out. Most of it was dipped out in nickel cones, too, you know.

Rieger: Did the prices remain the same?

Pfeifer: Same thing, nickel a cone. The same way with pop. It would be probably hundreds of cases a day we'd sell, and beer the same way. [Note: Mr. Pfeifer remembers that beer cost five cents a bottle as well.] I remember beer once, after the Pageant was over, the people come rushing in for a cold drink or something wet, you know, and we'd be putting the beer in one end of the cooler and taking it out the other side and selling it. Just rinsing it through the cold water! Of course, it came out of the basement, so it wasn't that warm to start with. It was O.K.

Rieger: Busy times.

Pfeifer: Those were busy days, that's right. Wegmann was a pretty shrewd businessman. He knew how to work things. Of course, there was a lot of planning too, because you had to get all the bread for the buns and everything ordered ahead of time and delivered. It was quite a job, and he done real good.

Rieger: He must have. On the Pageant line again, we talked a little bit about the Pageants before, too. You were never in any of the Pageants?

Pfeifer: No.

Rieger: You were too busy working at the store.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Did you ever have a chance to see the Pageants?

Pfeifer: Never did.

Rieger: Because you were working.

Pfeifer: That was the busiest time. Boy, you couldn't take that time off! So I never got to see one. But them Indians would always come up there dressed up, you know, and put on Pow Wows in front of the store and things like that, in the evenings during the week, so we got to see a lot of that, you know. Their headdresses, and all their feathers and stuff, you know.

Rieger: Well, good. You saw part of it.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: I was just going to ask about when they had the Pageants going on, they had the buffalo stockades up there, the elk pens and pastures. Do you remember when that was up there?

Pfeifer: That's right. They were in the area where Brower Inn is now. The elk pens were towards the lake and the buffalo were on the other side of the road. They may have been on the lake side to start with, but anyway they ended up on the opposite side of the road of the lake. The buffalo pen run, I think [the] pasture fence went right out into the lake at the time and then they had a fence so they couldn't swim over it out in the deeper water. So they had access to the lake.

Rieger: O.K. Was there any conflicts with those at all, or was it a pretty popular attraction?

Pfeifer: It was real good. That's right. The people really enjoyed the animals. They'd always ask for the elk pens or the deer or whatever was in the pens. Then Wegmann, of course, always had a pair of deer. She'd have fawns every year so then lots of people would want to go up there and they could pet them and hold them, you know. He would really enjoy that.

Rieger: I understand that he was quite thoroughly against having a deer hunting season or anything of that nature when there were so many deer in the Park that there was talk about "what are we going to do with the deer problem." Do you remember any of that controversy?

Pfeifer: No, he thought of it. I don't think he was really against it. He knew something had to be done to thin out the deer because he fed them there in the wintertime, in front of the store, and there'd be sometimes a hundred deer out there.

Rieger: That's a lot of deer.

Pfeifer: He'd buy corn for them all the time, and then he had this stand he had built for the Pageants where he sold extra stuff and things, pop and that. He put hay in there in the wintertime and then had sort of a manger there and he'd keep putting the fresh hay in there, nice second and third cutting alfalfa and they'd eat the hay there, too. Lots of deer. And sometimes when the snow was deep they had a path across the lake and when he'd call them and feed them in the evening, you could watch them come. They'd come single file, just like a herd of cattle.

[**Note:** Mr. Pfeifer points out that Wegmann was a game warden:

I'm not sure of the exact years, as it was before I worked there. Wegmann was game warden for 24 years, being the Park was a game reserve with lots of deer. All the local game wardens, Custer Smith, Park Rapids, Charlie Masoner, Bemidji, Mel Holt, Bagley, Al Gordon, Mahnomen, would patrol the area regularly and stop at the store to visit and talk over old encounters. It kept the local poachers on the alert.]

Rieger: You could actually call them?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. They'd get used to your voice. I fed them for quite a few years at my place, too, back of the garage. I'd go out there and call and they'd just come from all directions. They get to know your voice.

Rieger: That's something.

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. When they get hungry they get desperate.

Rieger: I suppose, yes. But you don't think that he was opposed to a hunting season?

Pfeifer: No, I don't think he really was. Of course, he never lived to see when they did open up that year. I think it was '46.

Rieger: Something like that. Late forties.

Pfeifer: He died in '41 so he never saw it. The park had feeding programs, probably not the Park, the Game and Fish or whatever, and they chopped up alfalfa and they'd put it in these bins scattered around. The deer would be so hungry when they came up there, starved already, that they would die right along side the feeders, they just couldn't make it. That was one of the best things that happened [deer hunting season], too, because small pine had no chance for coming up and making it. One example was right across the road from our place. When we first lived there it was pretty near solid jack pine. There was some norway red pine scattered in, but I think it probably had come up after it was logged originally. So they were probably mature and about the time they should've been cut, although a lot of them were smaller, too, not that big. But we had an ice storm and it took acres and acres, would just flatten them. They'd go down just like when you set up dominos and

they'd go down, you could hear it. One would snap and just keep snapping as they'd keep falling, you know. It sounded just terrible. It was just pretty near a roar like, so they had several saw mills in there to clean them up afterwards.

Rieger: Is that when you worked at the saw mill for Hemmerich?

Pfeifer: No. I was still working at Wegmann's at the time. This was in '39. It was probably the winter between '39 and '40. The Park, Forest Service, never done any reforestation, didn't plant the thing back in there and the deer were so thick that nothing come back. It's still that way today. There's acres and acres, probably ten-fifteen-twenty acres in one spot that's just nothing. That's just what had happened. And then when they took the deer out, had the season, thinned them out, if you notice along the road going from the cabins to the Headwaters, on the private side of the road, after you get through that swell in the road, there's all small jack pine in there. That was all logged off just as slick and clean, there wasn't a tree left there. This is all natural reproduction now, and that was after the deer were thinned out, so it's just proved there, you know, that it will come back again if it just has a chance.

Rieger: I understand they're having a little bit of problems again because there's lots of deer in the Park. What are you going to do?

Pfeifer: They learn these restricted areas, too, you know, and they just hide out in there. In certain areas there's too many of them. Up around the cabins we have lots of little jack pine that come up there, too, and they would just clean them out, they just couldn't make it.

Rieger: When did you work at the sawmill?

Pfeifer: Well, that was in the forties. The first thing after Wegmann died why I didn't work there anymore. I got a job for Willard Naramore who had a sawmill just east of the cabins, where this year had been cut off a bit, so there wasn't a tree standing. I got a job there. Never worked that much in the woods before, but I pegged away at it.

Rieger: What did some of your duties include?

Pfeifer: Well, I cut some trees with a bow saw. We didn't have power saws in those days. Then I helped him on the mill, lumber mill. I didn't operate the saw at that time. I took the lumber from the saw and stacked it, slabs, throw them in the pile. In those days everything was done by hand. There wasn't much power tools. I'd keep picking up jobs like that, that didn't last all the time either, you know. Then I started doing carpenter work. I think it was in the late forties I even helped Roy Hemmerich after a storm went through the Park once. Went out there, there was two of us, we had the two man cross cut saws and we cleaned up and cut up a lot of big red pine.

Rieger: But only ones that were down?

Pfeifer: Down, dead and down was the only thing you could take. He done a real good job and kept the dead stuff kind of cleaned up in the Park. He worked practically the whole Park, too. He had a nice big team of horses that he'd do the skidding with. He'd haul them in the truck in the morning, haul them out in the woods, and unload them and do the work with them. Sometimes the snow was so deep that it was hard for him to walk around to stalk all these trees, so he'd take one of these horses and ride horseback, check out and map out there just where there were a tree here and there. Because they were scattered. There wasn't just like going in and clear cutting and logging. He just took the dead and the down. He had a fellow working for him by the name of Charlie Bolduc and he was short. I think probably he wasn't much over five feet, short legs. So when the snow was deep he would toss his tools in the snow and then he would crawl through the snow to his tools, toss them again to get to the next tree, you know, because in those years, I don't know, we don't seem to have snow like that anymore, probably four feet deep out there in the level, just up to your waist, probably.

Rieger: Wow.

Pfeifer: And then I think probably in the fifties sometime, Frances Traun worked for Roy in the wintertime. He had a farm right north of the Park, milked some cows, he'd milk his cows and get out there and work all day in the woods with Roy. I think he worked two-three winters for him. One spring when they sawed, he took a bunch of lumber in trade for wages. He kept it for a year, stacked it up nice in his yard. It was real nice, big boards, 2 x 10's, 16 feet long and things like that. Then he had me build his house for him, so that house, every board in it, is from the Park. It's still standing, it's a nice house today. If you notice, it's kind of blue right north of the Park about a half a mile north of Gustafson's there. Traun lives there, David Traun. Then in turn, he had too much lumber, so part of my wages he give me lumber, so the floor joints in the house I built in '62 or '63, I think or something like that, that's Park lumber, too. So there was a lot of bartering went on in those days.

Rieger: Keep it all right in the area. Did you work with Alvin Katzenmeyer?

Pfeifer: Not very much. I think probably he worked a little bit at Roy's mill one time when I was working there, too. He worked some for Willard Naramore, too, off and on, probably not when I was working there because I was doing a lot of carpenter work in those days, too, between jobs. Take whatever you could get to make a dollar.

Rieger: Going back to Wegmanns a little bit. I was just curious why he had you go to Bemidji for supplies instead of Park Rapids, which was a little closer.

Pfeifer: Park Rapids didn't have any wholesale [companies]. Bemidji had the grocery wholesale, meat wholesale. Some things he did buy out of Park Rapids, like there was a bottling company there where he bought some of his pop. And then there was an ice cream company, a small one, it wasn't Bridgeman or anything like that. They had the best ice cream, and he'd always order ice cream from there. In those days, the mail route was a star route and they could haul freight, too, so

sometimes they had pickups and they would haul anything anybody ordered the day before and they would go around town in the afternoon after they got in with their mail and pick up all these things, car parts or any thing like that, tires. Wegmann would order his ice cream from there so they'd bring the ice cream out, too. It come in these tall, five gallon metal cans and then there was an insulated thick canvas bag they would slip that in, so it would be froze yet when they bring it out there. Gutzler Ice Cream company.

Rieger: What was it?

Pfeifer: Gutzler.

Rieger: Gutzler, O.K.

Pfeifer: Kind of a funny name for ice cream!

Rieger: Yes.

Pfeifer: That was the best ice cream. Then we'd also pick up ice cream in Bemidji, too, from David Parks, I think they were at Bemidji at the time. Every trip we'd make in the summer time.

Rieger: I was just curious because I didn't know if he had problems in Park Rapids or...

Pfeifer: No, there was no wholesale [companies] there. Of course, in the wintertime we didn't sell ice cream. Got along without it, I guess.

[**Note:** In another addition to the transcript, Mr. Pfeifer points out that:

In Bemidji there were two wholesale companies, Nash Finch and Gamble Robinson for a full line of groceries, fresh fruit, and vegetables. For fresh meat, bacon, sausage, etc., Armour Meat Co. Manchester Biscuit Co. of Fargo had a salesman make the rounds taking orders, then their truck would deliver [them]. Cookies would come in about 12x12x8 boxes. A rack in the store held twelve and we had glass hinged covers that fit each box. Cookies sold for 25 to 30 cents per pound. Hardware was ordered from Farwell, Ozman, & Kirck of St. Paul and shipped rail freight to Park Rapids. Customers never helped themselves as they asked for groceries. We would take it off the shelves, bag and weigh the bulk goods, and get milk, meat, cheese, etc. from the cooler.

There was also some recycling. We would save all cardboard boxes, return them and I think got two cents each, round, wooden banana crates, twenty-five cents.

Mr. Pfeifer remembers that in the summer, bananas would be shipped to them complete on the stock. They had a pulley system in the store to hang the bananas by the stock in the corner.]

Rieger: Well, not many people eat ice cream in the winter.

Pfeifer: In those days!

Rieger: Yes, in those days. Just a little bit about Mrs. Wegmann's health. I understand towards the last several years she was bedridden a lot of the time, had someone take care of her.

Pfeifer: They took care of her. She wasn't really bedridden but she had, I suppose today they call it Alzheimers. She'd be forgetful and hard to get along with, should I say. That was coming on for many years, too. The last years she helped in the store she was kind of the same way. She'd forget things, but she still wanted to be involved.

Rieger: That's too bad.

Pfeifer: Yes. As I say, after he died her brother and his wife stayed there and took care of her, Charlie Schneider. Charlie and Gertie. Gertie was real good to her and Gertie had been a housekeeper there before. It was Charlie Schneider's second wife. Before they were married she had been housekeeper. All those years that I ever worked there they always had a housekeeper, summer and winter both. She never really done much cooking. She would watch, she was real penny pinching, how they cooked, but she never really done any cooking.

Rieger: I suppose after all the homesteading and having to do all the hard work herself she figured, well, what the heck.

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Time to relax a little. Focus on other things. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about living and working with the Wegmanns?

Pfeifer: I think probably we talked about most of it before. Everybody would have to get up early in the morning. And then Wegmann, I don't know if I told you this before, he was real interested in sports, baseball. He had a good radio and he'd have to sit there every afternoon and listen to the ball game.

Rieger: Any particular team?

Pfeifer: He had one in the Cities, I think, was it the Senators, I can't remember what team it was at that time. It was before the Twins, anyway. He would listen to that ball game and I don't know if I told you this before, but anyway, Wegmann lived here in the store and a quarter of a mile up the road lived Frank Pugh. Today, there's a baseball pitcher by the name of Wegmann that's pitching for Milwaukee, and there's a pitcher by the name of Pugh that's pitching for Cincinnati [laughs]! Both names aren't too common, you know.

Rieger: That's a curious coincidence.

Pfeifer: Yes, it is. He would always listen to that ball game in the afternoon.

Rieger: Neat. I did remember one thing, just to get this clear in my mind. Was the store a separate building than where you and the Wegmanns lived?

Pfeifer: That's right. There was a house there, too. The house was sort of joined, kind of a breeze way between this tumble down log one that's standing there now. The house was just east of there. I think the basement is probably still part of it, remains of it. Yes, so that's where the housekeeper and Mrs. Wegmann stayed all the time, and where we slept. In the summertime, this old store that sits there, that was our bunkhouse, we slept in there. We had cots and slept in there in the summertime.

Rieger: Oh, really. Because it was cooler?

Pfeifer: Right.

Rieger: O.K. So they were separate buildings. What type of house did they have? I've seen pictures of the store.

Pfeifer: It's similar to all these houses that were built in those days. It was a two story in one part. Over the kitchen I think was only one story and it had an attic above that. It had one, two, three...three bedrooms upstairs, one downstairs, the living room and then the kitchen area, pantry, the old ones had a pantry. So it was a fairly nice house. It's sure funny. They had a whole set of farm building, too, a nice hip-roof barn, garage, four stall garage where he kept machinery and things. He had a buggy shed, he had a chicken coup, a shop, woodshed. And anyway, the state sold all these buildings. The store was sold to Pattens, they moved that to Schneider's Resort. The house was sold to Father Frauling, the Priest that built this St. Catherine's church up there, and he moved it up there and fixed it all over, built on to it even.

Rieger: Is that the one that burned?

Pfeifer: I was getting to that.

Rieger: O.K. I'm sorry.

Pfeifer: The barn Alvin Katzenmeyer bought that. It was moved to Katzenmeyer's, of course. And they all ended up burning. The barn at Katzenmeyer's burned, the house at the church burned, the store, it wasn't supposed to burn, I guess. I don't know if it was deliberately set, but anyway in the last years it was sold to somebody and they were tearing it down, going to salvage lumber and that, but I think they give up. All three of those larger buildings burned then.

Rieger: That's strange.

Pfeifer: Yes, it is. The one at the church, the house, I think, there was a real strong electrical storm that night and I think that's where the fire started, it was where the fuse boxes were in the house. I think lightening come and started that one. I don't remember how the barn burned at Katzenmeyers, whether kids were playing with matches in the hay or something. It's funny. They were all big buildings, too.

Rieger: When you were mentioning putting up ice for yourself, the Wegmanns, and also didn't you say you did it for Schneiders, too, is that correct?

Pfeifer: That's right.

Rieger: Did you help put it up for the Park at all? They had the ice house in the campgrounds.

Pfeifer: No, I never done any of that. The first year I was up there I did help for the University, packed the ice in there. I didn't do any of the cutting on the lake, but you had to straighten it up and shave it off smooth on top. If it didn't fit perfect you had to work those shavings and snow down in so there weren't any air. Everything was solid. If air got in there that would thaw the ice, so you had to get it as good as you could. But then there was one year that Bill Hemmerich took the job of putting up the ice for the CC camp. It was let out on bids. He had a truck and that's probably about all he had of his own equipment, an ice shoot probably, and didn't have anybody to saw the ice for him, so he come to Wegmann and my brother Joe and I were both there that winter. We had to go out and do the sawing for him, saw the ice. I forget how many cakes that was, but that was a job! I don't know if I told you how these saws were, they were a saw about five feet long or something like that and then the handle was crossways on it and you worked it with both hands. One would saw a straight line down. Of course, you had to mark the ice in squares first to start with, with a board, and then we had a scratch tool, you'd scratch a line so you'd saw down that line. Then the other one would keep sawing the blocks off, keep lopping them off. You'd saw probably twenty-three in that strip. I think when he was doing it he'd keep up hauling right away with the truck, then you had to help him load the truck. He had a shoot that went down into the water with a little gas motor on the end and an elevator and we'd push them under that shoot and it would bring them right up there. Now wait a minute. He didn't have that at the time. He had ice tong and a rope and a car he would use. He didn't have that elevator yet, that was later [laughs]. He had the shoot, and then he'd use the car, back and forth with the car. That was on the other side of the truck, see, the rope went over the truck.

[End side one, tape 1]

[Begin side two, tape 1]

Rieger: ...from where the car was going back and forth as well, right?

Pfeifer: That's right. They would plow it and keep a road open. But when we cut for Wegmann,

we didn't have any power tools or anything. We had to clear the snow off with shovels and that was a job, too, to clear that all off, get down to the ice. When we cut for Wegmann, we'd probably cut a row of these, I think probably about 20 in a row, then we'd have to pull them out of the water because they would start freezing a rim around and then they wouldn't fit good in the ice house. So you had to take them out of the water and drag them a ways away so they couldn't freeze down on to the ice when it come time to haul them. If you'd get too many piled up close to the open water it would pressure the ice down and then the water would come up on top of the ice.

Rieger: It wasn't as easy as it would appear, then, just to cut the ice and get it off.

Pfeifer: No, there was a lot of work to it. You'd have to watch the thickness of the ice. By keeping the snow off, we'd keep it off earlier, whenever you'd get a heavy snow go out there and clear it off, and your ice would freeze faster under the part where there wasn't any snow. Around Christmas and New Year's time was ice cutting time. It'd be about the right thickness of the ice then.

Rieger: All right, so you didn't cut ice for the campground store that they had. Do you remember that, though?

Pfeifer: That was the Park crew themselves.

Rieger: The Park crew.

Pfeifer: Yes. They had the crew there and they'd have to cut the ice, cut wood because they furnished wood for the cabins and the campers at that time, picnic grounds.

Rieger: Do you remember Elon Cary at all?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. He's still living, too, in Park Rapids. Did you see him yet?

Rieger: No, I'm supposed to be going to talk to him next week. He was mentioning that he worked there and they'd ring the bell in the morning for you to come buy ice if you wanted, or wood.

Pfeifer: Yes. They'd ring the bell and that was ice time. I remember him real well.

Rieger: Let's talk a little bit about the development of your cabins. Last time we were talking I just felt like we had to sort of rush over some of that because it was getting towards the time to leave. Can you go over that again? I know you said you bought it not intending to start up a resort.

Pfeifer: No. Just as a place to live. It was only 40 acres at the time. It had been pretty much cut off before that time, too, except the yard area there were red pines and they were too small so they were left. Alice, the first year she was working at Wegmann's also, we were both working there.

But those cabins, the extra ones sat there, both of them because we stayed at Wegmann's, we lived with them that summer. Then we bought a few furnishings and sheets because there was people everyday looking for cabins and there was none available, everything was filled up. We started renting them that way. The next year Alice was home and she took care of them a little better.

Rieger: Had you built your house by this time?

Pfeifer: Oh, no. We lived in one of the cabins to start with. Then the log cabin, did I tell you, sat down the road about an eighth of a mile, was a little tavern for the WPA guys. They had the camp at Squaw Lake, so that was a little tavern there. Dallas Savage, the fellow I bought it, was the one who built it and was operating it. After I bought it, I think the first summer I rented it out to a guy, too, and he run it as a tavern, didn't work out very good. Then I moved it into the yard and made it into a cabin.

Rieger: That must have been quite a job to move that.

Pfeifer: Well, we raised it up and put some skids underneath it. I talked to the park guys, we were really friendly with the Park crew, Eddie Halberg and Clarence Norby and a bunch of us down there at that time, Fox Erickson, they brought the old CAT that they had and pulled it in the yard for me. I don't know what kind of deal we made, but that's the way we got it moved. It didn't cost that much, but we got it in there. Turned it into a cabin, it's still standing today.

Rieger: So at this point, how many buildings were there?

Pfeifer: Well, that was the second cabin then, and then I built two more just before the War, two small ones, so there were four.

Rieger: Four cabins and then the cabin that you were living in?

Pfeifer: Yes, that was the fifth one. Well, then the War came along and there was no tourists for several years there so the place just kind of sat, the cabins, I mean, sat. We still lived in the one cabin. I think it was in '48 then I built a little bigger place across the yard and we moved in there. Then we used the one we left for a cabin. Of course, there were tourists back at that time again. In '63 I built the larger house and we moved in there and vacated this other one, turned into a cabin. My brother came back from the service, and the first winter he stayed with us and there wasn't much room in the cabin we had, we had Judy, our oldest daughter, so he put up a little building for a garage, kept his car in there and he had a stove in there, so he had a cot set up in there, so he slept in there, too. That was set about where the swimming pool is today. After he left, I didn't know what I was going to do with that, I just really didn't like it there, so I moved it in back of the first cabin we lived in and made it into a cabin, so that was an extra cabin. That's just the way we kept adding on.

Rieger: Yes, the evolution. How many buildings are up there now?

Pfeifer: There are ten cabins, and a house and a garage, and the big steel storage building, the old ice house is still there, and a little lumber shed that I built, and a laundry building. So there's quite a few buildings there now.

Rieger: You said before that your wife and daughters sort of had to be in charge of it because you were working down at University Station.

Pfeifer: That's right. I always had an outside job. In the spring of the year, getting things ready and probably doing some remodeling and that, I'd work nights and evenings. Get the things in shape again. In, I think it was '61, I put in the swimming pool. I think I was the first swimming pool in northern Minnesota [laughs]. It's still in use today, no problems with it. It's been a good thing. In those days, why, it seemed like there were more families with children and it was really used. Lots of kids even learned to swim there while they were there in the cabins for a week or two.

Rieger: How did you develop [the] reservation system. How did that come about?

Pfeifer: The early years it was pretty near all drive-ins and we'd keep them full. There were some year I don't think there was a cabin sat empty from Memorial Day until Labor Day, there was that many drive-ins. As time went on, though, it became different, reservations then, and today it's practically all reservations and very few drive-ins.

Rieger: But you just do that right there, from the office?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. Alice would handle the book and the telephone all the time, keep that straight, deposits.

Rieger: Did you ever sell any supplies?

Pfeifer: Not a thing. No. Nothing. Not even a bottle of pop or a bottle of milk.

Rieger: That makes it easier that way.

Pfeifer: That's right. We didn't have anything to monkey with. Wegmann's, when I worked there, we had the boats, too, at that time. They were these heavy old wooden boats. We kept the oars at the store and the boats were in the lake right below the museum there in the area and we had a bunch of docks we had to keep up.

Rieger: As part of the Wegmann complex?

Pfeifer: That's right. He owned the boats and rented the boats. I don't remember if he ever paid anything to the State at that time. It was 25 cents an hour or whatever, and they'd come and rent the boat. We'd have to give them the oars and they'd take them down and take the boat out by themselves. In the spring of the year we had to get all those boats ready. We had to scrape them,

repaint them, get them in the water and soak them up so they wouldn't leak. In the fall of the year take them out again. They had a storage building, short of a shelter. We'd have to stack them up in there then.

Rieger: I didn't know that, hadn't heard that before. You learn something new everyday! It's a small world, let me tell you. My grandparents, a couple that they know actually, very good friends, Bev and Joe Cunningham, who have been coming to [Bert's Cabins].

Pfeifer: Cunninghams? Yes, they were there this summer.

Rieger: I talked to them shortly after they got back from this summer.

Pfeifer: Old Joe Cunningham, is it? The old grandpa?

Rieger: Yes, so that was interesting. What a small world.

Pfeifer: Yes. They have been coming there for many, many years. I didn't get to see him this time. The day I was out there he was taking a nap, but his wife, she's quite a talker.

Rieger: Oh, yes.

Pfeifer: So I had a good visit with her.

Rieger: Yes, they are real good friends of my grandparents. They live four blocks away, something like that.

Pfeifer: You run into lots of things like this. People know one another from back someplace. Every time you go someplace you seem to run into somebody who's been around your area or something like that. One time we were in Prescott, Arizona, in the wintertime, and we were packing up the car, getting ready to move on. There was a fellow out there, he was also packing up, talking to him and where he was from, I forget where he was from now, and he looked at my license. "Oh, you're from Minnesota," he says. "I was up there one time at a CC camp." He'd been into the CC camp at the Park! So I probably saw him many years before.

Rieger: Yes, because you said that you've had lots of people come back year after year and when I heard that they had been coming back to your place, I thought I should go talk to them.

Pfeifer: Every time I go out there there's somebody there who's been there before. Sometimes now I think it's down in the third generation, probably were there on their honeymoon, now their grandchildren.

Rieger: Bev and Joe were saying they had three cabins this time. They want to keep coming back. Can you comment on any differences between the visitors you have, that stay at your cabins, and

some of the Park visitors? Is there a difference?

Pfeifer: No, I think not. I think maybe the campers seem to be a different bunch, but no, they're pretty much the same. Some of them years ago have probably stayed at the Park and they stay at our place now. Some of them stayed at our place and probably go to the Park now. It's the same kind of people.

Rieger: I was just curious to know if there was any difference between people that would go to a private place...

Pfeifer: Or to the state. Not really I don't think. And then of course, the Park don't have housekeeping at any of their lodge cabins, and so many people prefer a place where they have at least a refrigerator and stove they can cook a little meal on and keep a few cool things in the refrigerator.

Rieger: Is there anything else you would like to say about the development of your industry there, Bert's Cabins, a tradition now.

Pfeifer: Well, it was just kind of a sideline to start with. That's pretty much what it ended up, but it was a struggle though. There was never really much money made at the prices we got in those days, either, you know. Today it's a bigger business and rates have really gone up. Years ago the Park used to be so far below private resorts in the area. We had to stay in line with them. Now it seems like the Park is finally decided they got to raise their rates and make a little money, too, or at least break even, so that has really helped the private ones around there, too.

Rieger: Has there ever been any problems between yourself and the Park, since you are right there in the Park?

Pfeifer: In the early days they resented us. That's right. They didn't seem to like anybody in competition with them.

Rieger: Any attempts to buy you out?

Pfeifer: Well, not right away. But like for signing and that, you couldn't put up your own sign and they were lax in putting up a sign for you. You had to really keep at them. You can probably see that there were Headwaters Inn and Sauers and Parkview Resort and our place, Bert's Cabins, Bert's Cabins is the only one that was stubborn enough to stick it out [laughs]! The rest of them are all gone. So it was a problem for all of them, because the Park didn't do much cooperating with them in the early days. But they are a little better now. After my wife died, which is going to be six years ago now in December, I ran it for a couple of years and then I didn't know for sure what I was going to do. I was thinking of selling it, too. The Park did hire an appraiser and come in there. They wanted to buy it real bad. They don't want it really to get into anybody's else's hands, or to get commercialized...a carnival atmosphere or something like that. They did appraise it. They give me

a good price for it, an offer I mean, and I still didn't know. I didn't really need it, the money part of it. I talked to my youngest daughter and my oldest daughter and they thought it should stay probably in the family yet. My oldest daughter kind of talked the youngest one into taking it over. So that's what it is today.

Rieger: Is there any agreement or anything as to what is going to happen to it in the future?

Pfeifer: No. I do have a letter from the state that I could have sold it to anybody I wanted to. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what the state would do with it if they did get a hold of it.

Rieger: Yes, I was just wondering that, too.

Pfeifer: I asked one of them once, I don't remember which one it was, Deboer or one of those, and he said, "Maybe we'll turn it into a group camp or something."

[door]

Pfeifer: Well, I guess we finished that.

Rieger: Yes, I think so. They thought maybe they'd turn it into a group camp?

Pfeifer: That's right. But maybe it would turn out like the rest of the places they bought, just bulldoze down the buildings.

Rieger: Yes, remove the buildings, or then they burn down. Who knows. That's certainly an institution there now, though. You've been there so long.

Pfeifer: Of course, we've added on to it, too, you know. At one time we owned 280 acres in there, and it's still 240.

Rieger: 240 now.

Pfeifer: I sold forty acres to a private guy, through Keith [Butler], and he in turn I think sold it to the Park. At least that's what I heard. I think ours is the only private property that is left along that road there. They probably wanted it so they could have control of everything.

Rieger: Have you ever had any other conflicts, personal or professional, with any park management or anything of that nature? Whether it was with Andie Peterson, or Waino Kontola, or John Herhuskey, or...

Pfeifer: No, I always got along pretty good with them, except one time, I don't know if you want this on there, _____ [Note: Mr. Pfeifer would like the names left out of this particular section]

was there and they got some kind of program going where they got a bunch of young kids and they were supposed to clean up along the road sides. So they were out there with machetes and axes and whatever. They weren't doing a very good job, either. Anyway, they got just west of my cabins there and I walked out there in the evenings and there was little red pine trees growing on the road bank and they were starting to cut them down because they were supposed to cut it back so far. That's one thing they were trying to raise in the Park, or grow in the Park, were reproduction of red pine. So the next day I went in to see _____ and he wasn't feeling very good, I guess. I told him I thought when they had one of these programs they should have one of the Park guys out there with them and show them how to cut and what to cut. He told me to get the heck out of there [laughs]! I had a few words with him, told to leave anyways.

Rieger: But generally it has been O.K.?

Pfeifer: Oh, yes. They've been pretty good, yes. Then he started complaining about, there was a time when _____ was having arthritis problems, he was assistant manager, and he wasn't keeping up very good or something, and he started complaining about all the work he had to do then.

Rieger: Must have caught him on a bad day.

Pfeifer: Must have! But I don't think I said anything out of the way. I just told him I thought they should have a guy out there to tell them because I said they're starting to cut these red pine and that's what you want to grow here. So they quit anyway, didn't cut anymore.

Rieger: I've heard from a couple of other people that they weren't sure how the youth groups were working out.

Pfeifer: No, I tell you it was never like the CCs for some reason or another.

[telephone]

Rieger: Can you comment on any resentment, if there was any, between the Park and the local residents, especially in the early years? I understand that there was some bitter feelings because often the Park would not hire a lot of local people. Is that a fair statement?

Pfeifer: Well, I don't know. In the early days I think they hired more local people. Then it got to be the union in there and then that had to go through other processes of hiring, Civil Service. A lot of local people couldn't make it through that set up. No, in the early days all the old guys like when I first come up here that were working in the Park were all local guys. Except the Superintendent, who was usually somebody from some other place.

Rieger: That was a political appointment for a long time anyway.

Pfeifer: Right. Andie Peterson, of course, was there the longest, I think. He was there a long time.

And then there's quite a few after him.

Rieger: But you don't recall any conflict what-so-ever between the Park and the local community?

Pfeifer: No, not until the union got in and Civil Service. No, before that it seemed like there were several at the University, they done a lot of building down there in my first years and it was practically all local people, like, you talk to Roy Wallin, his dad worked down there also and all the neighbors up north of the Park, Bergquists and Holums, and Bourcy, just everybody from local. The Park was pretty much the same way until they got to be Civil Service. The Forest Service were looking for college graduates, too, then after going through Forestry school they had to get them a job someplace [laughs].

Rieger: That's not easy to do!

Pfeifer: You probably know as much as the other person or probably more but you don't have that college education so you can't get the job. That's the way it's turned out with a lot of the technical jobs in the Forest Service, and I suppose in the Park System too. I don't really know too much about it because they didn't have this Regional Office in the early days like they have now in Bemidji. I don't know how many are sitting in there and I don't know what they do. It's the same thing here in welfare department, Bagley. They have a big new building they put up here for them. I drive through there once in a while, just to see what's going on, and the sign there says the employees park in the back in the parking lot, there's probably twenty-five employees cars there and then in the front there's probably one car doing business. I don't know what they all do but shuffle papers.

Rieger: Bureaucracy, right?

Pfeifer: And they can't say they are out working on a job anyplace because their cars are there and then the county has, I think they have two kind of van-like things that they use for going around like that, and a car or two, and they were in the garage, so they weren't out with them, either! So some time after I get up nerve enough to go inside and see what's going on.

Rieger: How about any problems or conflicts between the Park and the Forestry Station, the University Station?

Pfeifer: Well, there was a few little things that they done, some of the professors down at the University didn't like. There was a little trouble sometimes but years ago the Forestry and the Park used to be together, then they split them up and there was a little friction there.

Rieger: Can you describe any particular instances?

Pfeifer: No, not really. There were different things, probably, about reforestation and things like

that. One blame it on to the other, lots of that going on.

Rieger: Let's talk a little bit, and we've talked about this before, about Park Development and the things that you've witnessed. Were you there when they were putting in the Park telephone line and then when they took it out? I just think that was sort of an interesting system there.

Pfeifer: Yes. They had the Forest Service telephone line and then there was a local telephone company, the settler system the north edge of the Park, Wegmanns, Heinzelmans, Sauers and all those. They had the switchboard at the Park Headquarters. You had to call through there to get into a different line. Like when you wanted to get out of that local one into the Forest Service line or Park Rapids or someplace. That was a little problem for a few years. I was too far off at the cabins there to get this local one in there, so Frank Pugh give me a fire warden job, or had me as a fire warden or something and then they put a telephone in there and hooked one to the Forester's line. So that was our first telephone, was on the Forest Service line. [Note: Mr. Pfeifer writes that, "My brother Joe tells me the Park had very little telephone lines, even all the way to Park Rapids was built and maintained by the Forest Service.]

Rieger: That was handy.

Pfeifer: That's right. But then if I wanted to call one of the neighbors, I had to call the Park office. I forget if it was a nickel a call or something like that. There was a little charge. I don't remember just how much it was, it wasn't much. Sometimes they had some operators there that didn't want to be bothered, weren't very friendly! But we made it. It was a big change when Bell telephone came in there and we all got on the same line and we finally got a decent system.

Rieger: Do you remember what year that was?

Pfeifer: No, I don't remember. I wouldn't guess. Twenty-twenty-five years ago, whatever. I can't remember for sure. It was the same thing when I first came up there with the electricity. They park had their own power plant, Wegmann had his own 32 volt plant and then of course the REA came in and took care of the Park, but then Wegmann didn't sign up right away for that.

Rieger: Why didn't he sign up?

Pfeifer: I'm not sure why he didn't want that. Worried about changing his motors and different things. They were all 32 volt and he had to go up to 110. So he never was on that, and of course he died before that was put in there.

[End side two, tape 1]

[Begin side one, tape 2]

Pfeifer: ...I was a little bit too far away for the REA, too. John Korth owned a mile along there that they had to get right-of-way from him, because they had to build in too, and he was a little bit

leery of that too, didn't really like it. So I had my own power plant to start with. Right after World War II I bought a generator, that was 110 volt, and wired the cabins and everything. Didn't have enough power for refrigeration, though, for refrigerators, so we just had mostly lights. I'd run that in the evening, they'd have lights, and then we'd wait until you think everyone's in bed or something, 11-11:30 or something like that, then flick them if there's somebody up yet and they knew the lights were going to go out, so you'd turn off the generator. There were no batteries you see, it was just straight from the generator. Finally, Korth said they could put the line there. The last half mile up to my place was pretty heavy timber right along the edge of the road, so he cut most of that himself, cut the right-of-way through there and let them build the line. That was a big help to get the REA in there and I think that was in 1950.

Rieger: It takes a while to get things up there where there's heavy woods. That's a big job.

Pfeifer: I was the only one back there for a mile and a half or something like that and that's a long ways to build in. Today they won't build in that far. You'd have to pay for it. But at that time I didn't have to pay for it, either. They built it. We used a lot of power there because we put everything in refrigerators and put electric stoves in the cabins and water systems, which we didn't have before.

Rieger: What did you use before? A well, or hauling water?

Pfeifer: Carry it up, hand pump. We had a couple of them. So that was a big help when we got that power in there. When they tarred the road, the Park didn't really like those REA poles setting along the road either, so they buried the cable, took down the poles.

Rieger: What were your feelings when they decided to tar that road?

Pfeifer: Oh, that was the best thing they could have ever done. It was just terrible. You never saw such a terrible road. It was a torture test for new cars [laughs]! And it was so dusty. In amongst the trees, trees on each side, the dust would just hang there. You couldn't drive a quarter of a mile behind another car because of the dust. The material on the road was just the natural stuff. It wasn't like a gravel or a class-5 they call it now that has some clay with it and packs down and don't make so much dust. And rocks! It's terrible. Nobody would enjoy the drive. They'd come up as far as our place and make a U-turn in the yard and out they'd go. So I told Alice at one time that I should put a turn toll. Have it on the north side of a tree and they'd come in and they wouldn't see it and then when they'd drive out, why, turn around toll! Hundreds everyday would turn around in there. That's as far as they wanted to take that drive. Your trees were in the same shape along the road. They were just coated with dust, dirty. Now your trees are nice and bright, the leaves and that. It's the best thing they could have done. I wouldn't have liked to seen them go in there and make a highway out of it. They didn't grade it up or anything. They just used the old road bed that was there. Some places they had to fix a little bit and put a little bit of extra fill and that, but they didn't cut trees or widen it.

Rieger: Right. That's a nice little road.

Pfeifer: Makes a nice drive through there.

Rieger: Every once in a while for lunch I'll drive around it, look at the scenery.

Pfeifer: That's the best thing they could've done. You can at least enjoy it now, see something too, your trees are clean.

Rieger: Were there any other park developments that you saw through the years that you really thought were good or they made a mistake? Anything that you can think of?

Pfeifer: No, not really. Getting back to tarring that road, there was a lot of local people that were opposed to it.

Rieger: Why is that?

Pfeifer: I don't know. I don't know why, but there was a lot of opposition to it. I got into arguments with quite a few of them [laughs]. That was a waste of money, see, nobody living back there. It isn't going to benefit anybody. But if you have tourists you have to think about both a little bit, too, you know. When they moved the campgrounds there was a lot of people didn't like that when they first moved it. The only campgrounds used to be across the store from Wegmann's, all the way down through there to the Headwaters. The first years there's many people never come back. They wouldn't take that Bear Paw campground stuck back there in the woods. There's a lot of people that didn't like it.

Rieger: That's interesting because I was talking to some people that have been coming there for thirty-forty years. They love it. I suppose people just don't like change.

Pfeifer: Didn't like the change, no.

Rieger: How about when they put in Pine Ridge, where the CCC camp was?

Pfeifer: Well, lots of people didn't like that either because it was kind of open and not by the lake, and of course that's what they want, by the lake. No, they didn't like that, but it's worked in now so those people have forgotten, different people are coming back and get along pretty good there. But it was the same way like down at Patton Resort. Oines put in a little trailer court there and campground and it's right next to the park but he couldn't get them in there. They wouldn't stay there. He'd get a few of the overrun on the weekend and that's all.

Rieger: That's interesting. Did you have much contact at all with any of the folks down at Douglas Lodge and Forest Inn?

Pfeifer: Well, yes. There was Mel Luschen that worked there for years, we knew him and the

family real good. But as far as their extra summer help, I never got to know too many of them good.

Rieger: Was there any feelings of competition between the lodge with their cabins and you and yours?

Pfeifer: No. Those people were usually pretty good, the ones that worked down there in the summertime. A couple of the later ones anyway.

Rieger: Did you have any opportunity to meet or know Judge Hella? He was Director of Parks and Recreation.

Pfeifer: He used to come up a lot, yes. In the CC days he started. I knew him fairly good.

Rieger: Can you describe him at all?

Pfeifer: No, that's so many years ago now. It's just that I knew him and he would come into the store.

Rieger: How about Sid Rommel, the Forester?

Pfeifer: Sid Rommel, I knew him and the girls. I think they had two daughters, Lucretia I think was one of them. But he wasn't here that long. He was transferred out, I think. How come you mentioned him?

Rieger: Well, I know he's in Grand Rapids.

Pfeifer: Is he still there?

Rieger: Yes. I got his name from Elizabeth Smith, as a matter of fact, who I guess worked at Wegmann's, too. What was her maiden name [Luhman]? She lives in Bemidji now. She worked as a housekeeper very briefly, a couple of months, towards the end, for Mrs. Wegmann.

Pfeifer: You don't remember her maiden name?

Rieger: I can't remember her maiden name. What was it?

Pfeifer: It wasn't Johnson?

Rieger: It could have been. Anyway, she mentioned his name. She married George Smith. She worked in 1941, right towards the end is when she worked at the Wegmann house, and then she worked for a little bit at the Lange store.

Pfeifer: No, it probably wasn't Johnson. Wouldn't know who that was.

Rieger: But anyway, she mentioned Sid Rommel.

Pfeifer: No, there's been quite a few of them there, too. There was a bookkeeper there by the name of Ted Crofoot.

Rieger: Ted Crofoot?

Pfeifer: He was the bookkeeper more or less for the Forest Service at the Ranger Station. He had married a girl from Bemidji, I forget her name now. They were sponsors at our wedding. Ted Crofoot. He left there shortly afterwards then, lost contact with him. He was a barber, too, I think by trade and I think he ended up in the Cities someplace barbering.

Rieger: [pause] Is there anything else that you'd like to go over that maybe I haven't brought up?

Pfeifer: No, I don't really know now.

Rieger: We've talked about quite a bit.

Pfeifer: I was thinking of something here a bit ago and it slipped my mind again now. I think it was something to do about the help... I can't think of it right now.

Rieger: Well, maybe it will come to you. Any last comments reflecting on your life in and around the Park?

Pfeifer: Well, we enjoyed living there. It was a good place to raise a family. In those days it seemed like there was more families there than today, and of course that was before T.V. and all that come in. We done a lot of visiting, card playing with neighbors and that. It was real enjoyable. I always thought we had a good life there.

Rieger: The Park itself. Do you see it heading in a good direction? What's your opinion on the development of Itasca, it's future development?

Pfeifer: I think they are a little lax on a lot of their planning. They let things go too far before they start thinking about it and then they have to have a plan, which probably takes another ten years. It's just like with reforestation. They should be doing more of that and they should be cutting more of that old popple out of there and let it come back by itself like that one plot right across from Grandpa's Barn. The sign there says "Aspen regeneration." They cut off this old popple, I don't know if you've noticed it, but it's come up just as thick as, up there at 15 feet already. That's only 3-4-5 years ago they done that. And they should be doing more of that in the Park. It will come back. They don't have to have pine all over. There's nothing wrong with popple. They're utilizing that for everything now, this chipboard they're making. You don't need that expensive pine for

everything. So that's one thing...You go across the road from my place and it's just all mature trees standing there dead, half of them are down and it's a fire hazard to start with. There's places right across there, too, where there's smaller red pine grown in amongst the jack pine, the few jack pine that are left, and huge popple just crowding them out. If they'd have gone in there even 20 years ago, 10 years ago, they'd have a real nice stand of red pine in there now. But they're not very good at that. I think a lot of it probably had to do with the friction between Forest Service and the Park, two different bosses.

Rieger: Is there anything else you'd like to say before we turn the recorder off?

Pfeifer: No, I don't think of anything right now. It's been nice talking with you.

Rieger: It's been wonderful. I thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.

Pfeifer: I kind of enjoyed this. It's just like I said of that Joyce Patten that I sat here for four hours all day. She was more part of it too, you know, so we had things in common that we could talk about where with you I can't think of things, you don't know...

Rieger: Oh, yes, what should I ask! But I thank you and the Park thanks you. This really helps.

Pfeifer: You've been good.

[End interview]