

[Page 5 - From Visits with Alfred P. MacKay of Big Harbour Island](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 66](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1994/6/1

wood was heavy. When the pulp mill in Hawkesbury started (1956) , it was all 8-foot wood. And then more machinery came. It came to porters in the woods--cutting it and let it lay, and this machine would pick it up. 'Cause I mean, it'd be a big heavy log--you couldn't lift it. Eight feet long. Three or four hours of it--it'd kill you. (That's where the machinery came in, because of the heavier wood?) The porters, they went in the woods, they'd take out 8 cords to a load. And they'd pick it up in the woods, and they'd pile it nice when they came out. Ready for the other truck that's going to take it away. If you hire, he charges you quite a bit a cord to do it. But it's worth it. There was no pulping when I was a real kid. I went to school, you know. But I remember, I had a bull calf and I took out wood with him. I trained him to go. because I heard about oxen. (He wasn't a real ox.) No. He wasn't--I didn't follow up on him. But when he was young, he would pull. He'd pull a good-size tree. If I could get him to the woods--he was balky in that, but he was willing to come home. I could tie on anything! Alfred laughs. He'd come back. (So before pulp, you were working in the woods.) Yes, yes. We cut pit timber for the mines then. They used pit timber for going underground, to hold the land up (the roof of the mine). There was every length and dimension you could need. There were 12-foot booms, and 14-foot and 16-footers. Eight-foot props, 6-foot props. And then there were--they called them "ties"--5 feet long. And you hewed the two sides of them, made them flat. And they had little railroad tracks for those trolleys that ran down in the pits. And they used those for to put the rails on.... I worked three years in the woods here, with a piece of steel company land. My Beatrice and Alfred MacKay on their wedding day next-door neighbour was with me. And we hauled it to the shore and loaded it on vessels. Went by sailing vessels to the steel plant. (Did you do that work alone, too?) Oh, yes, you were alone in the pit timber. The pulp, too. The pit timber would have been alone. Unless those fellows--yes, there were fellows on a big scale, too. They'd buy a piece of woods, and they'd put two or three fellows in it, to cut it, see. At so much a day. (How would you get the job to cut pit timber? Would someone come around with an order?) No, you'd have to know to look for it. The last few years, we went to Sydney --went into the steel company's office down there. And they'd give you a contract. Well-connected. With friends in high places. AIR CANADA ' OitNova