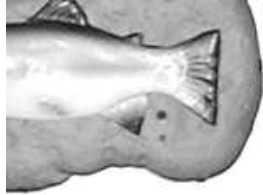


Fred Tribe



Fred Tribe May 2007



Retired sawmill owner

Fred Tribe - Busy as usual at age ninety-five

Retired sawmill owner - fascinated by nature

by Robert LaFrance (2007)

Fred Tribe is just about as well known as anyone who ever came from Perth, Andover, or Perth-Andover and on December 20th the retired businessman and very unretired naturalist celebrated his 95th birthday with no sign of a slowdown in his daily activities. These days he makes his meals, makes his bed and sometimes makes his own bread instead of making wooden barrels and making lumber out of logs but he has other activities as well to keep him busy.

"I do quite a bit of walking, snowshoeing - when there's snow - and gardening in the summertime," he said during an interview last Friday morning. "I look for birds and still enjoy nature." On Dec. 22 he, naturalist colleague Murray Watters and other birders conducted the 2006 bird count which he was about to record. Over his many years as a naturalist, for which he is best known, he is proudest of the fact that he was the first to find the endangered plant Furbish's Lousewort growing along the St. John River in New Brunswick. The fact that the plant grew along the river stopped the building of a hydro project in north eastern Maine, the Dickie Lincoln Dam. For his conservation work Fred Tribe received in 2005 a Stewardship Award from the Province of New Brunswick and has been honoured many other times.

Over the years Fred Tribe has received dozens of awards for his volunteer work, his work as a naturalist, his community efforts, his years as an Anglican Church lay preacher, and in other areas. He served on Perth-Andover village council from 1969 to 1974, he is a past member of the Victoria County CVA Board, the Perth-Andover Public Library, past chairman of the Tobique Branch Fish and Game Protective Association and past District Governor of the Northwest Branch of the NB Fish and Game Protective Association, to name only a small number of his endeavours.

Last Friday, in his Victoria Street apartment in Perth-Andover, Fred Tribe settled back in his cushioned wooden chair made from birds eye maple sawn in his own mill that used to operate on the Andover side, and described some of his earlier days, first as a

boy growing up in St. Leonards Hastings in East Surrey, southern England, and later in New Brunswick.

"I was nine years old when we came from England," he began. "We came across the Atlantic on a Cunard liner called the Carmania and landed in Halifax. We left England on the first day of June 1921 and came into Halifax harbour on the 9th of June just as the sun was going down." There was his war veteran father, his mother, his brother Leonard and his baby sister Hilda. His father, George Albert Tribe, whom Fred described as 'an old soldier', saw service in the British Army Cavalry under Queen Victoria in the Boer War, in India and in the First World War. Fred's mother, the former Emily Eliza Brooman of Tunbridge Wells, was the daughter of a restaurant owner and George Tribe delivered milk to restaurants.

The Soldiers' Settlement Board, run by England and Canada, purchased a 129-acre farm at Lower Knoxford, near Centreville, for the family. "If you were a 'returned man' and you wanted to farm they would purchase a farm, pay cash, you had twenty years to pay it back at very low interest. In the summer of 1922 we bought the old farm in Knoxford from a family named Orchard and my nephew David still owns it.

"It was mixed farming, all horses in those days, and half or more of the farm was just to feed the horses - hay and oats. We lived off the cattle - milked them by hand, hand-turned the cream separator, churned by hand, and my mother traded butter for groceries at the farmers' store in Centreville. That's how we lived."

To get to the farm near Centreville the family had gone from Halifax to Saint John by train, lived in a hotel there for months and went by train to Centreville. "We got to Centreville in the middle of the night," Fred Tribe remembered. "It was the end of line back in those days. From there we got on an old double wagon pulled by a team over gravel roads. Mother sat on the high seat with the baby in arms.

Netting Shrimp

Born December 20, 1911, Fred Tribe attended Tower Road School in St. Leonards Hastings which is located in the Brighton area near the Strait of Dover and the English

Channel. Close to a thousand students attended the school that was located close to the site of the famous Battle of Hastings which took place in 1066 and saw England taken over by the Normans.

"There's a beautiful beach there," Fred Tribe remembered. "When dad was in the army, mother took us boys out to the beach and we caught shrimp in small nets. We'd put them on the sandy bottom when tide was out and mother would cook the shrimp we netted."

As a lad he already had an interest in wildlife, especially birds. In his Perth-Andover apartment in 2007 are dozens of carved wooden birds that he had whittled and painted. Shelves are lined with them and they are on tables and other furniture. There's a Northern Great Horned Owl and a Saw-Whet Owl among all the loons and other birds. . "I was always interested in birds," he said. "One day my old (maternal) grandmother took us into her sitting room and said: "You look around and if you see something you'd like to have you can have it. I took a framed picture of an English Blackbird which is very similar to the American Robin and I still have it."

Fred Tribe took to the Lower Knoxford farm and its unfamiliar Canadian birds although the mile walk to school during the winters was sometimes brutal. He and his brother and other boys would work on farms until fall, and then attend school all winter. "We would bring the cows up from pasture, put them in the barn, milk them, take milk in to separate it, harness horses feed them - all before breakfast - and any spare time we had we could clean stables. That was our life."

Fred Tribe as a young man worked for fifty cents a day for a Knoxford farmer and the next year (1935) worked for another, better off neighbour. "I told him I wanted a dollar a day which was \$26 a month but we settled on twenty-five."

Later on he learned hardwood log tallying and grading, a detailed job, at a Juniper mill and in 1946 bought his own mill. "It was a steam mill I bought from Cronkhite and Wilkins the other side of Woodstock. I moved it up here and set it up. I planned to just make potato barrels because nobody was making them up here but later I went into other lumber. It was a complete barrel mill with cylinder saw that put the curve in the barrel staves."

In Juniper he married Myrtle Hoyt and later hired her relatives to work in his Andover mill. Farmers were getting three dollars a cord for hardwood slabwood but he started paying them a dollar an 8-foot log. "I could sell a 6x8 railroad tie for \$1.64 and the boards I managed to get were profit," he said. A word of mouth deal with a New York company saw them send him \$1000 so he could buy more logs. "The Wayne Lumber Co. advanced me \$1000. They made maple heels for women's high-heel shoes. They said 'how much money do you need? We'll send you \$1000 right up and when you need more let us know. You trusted people back in those days."

Over the years six Tribe children were born - Pat (O'Brien, of Perth-Andover), Irvin (Bathurst), Stanley (Dalhousie), Sterling (NB), Connie (BC), and Janice (Limestone, Me.). Myrtle Tribe died in 1997 of cancer and two years later Fred Tribe moved to his present apartment on the Perth side of the river. His sawmill had burned down years before.

He related another example of changed times. In 1946 he had wanted land for that mill and went to a Janet Curry who owned a 13-acre lot. "She said go measure off what you need and make me an offer. Frank Till (after whom Till Road is named) had two acres and so I measured off eleven. I said how about five hundred dollars and she said how about six hundred? You make out the deed and I'll sign it. I made out my own deed and everything. Times were different."

At the peak of production the Tribe mill was making 22,000 barrels a year, but these days the mill is gone, his house is gone (moved to Summerfield) and the greenhouses he had nearby are gone, but Fred Tribe at 95 continues to be busy and interested in nature, his beloved birds, and his world. He is a familiar sight to Perth-Andover area residents as he looks at birds, flowers, and the world around him.

Fred Tribe died May 20, 2010 at the age of 98.