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**FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT  
LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978**

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SUBJECT: Ishpeming Iron Mining Stories

SOURCE: Walt Arsenault, December 9, 1975

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Michael Loukinen

I: Walt Arsenault has been a miner virtually all his life and we're going to talk first about his own personal history and then we're going to shift into the history of mining as he's known it and what it's like to be underground and perhaps some history of the Ishpeming area.

Brief family biographical data: Walt's father was named Joe Arsenault and was born in 1874, and died in 1956. He was 82 years old at the time. His mother was Anna Raiche (a German name). She was born in 1873 and died in 1966. Both were from Quebec Province in the Village of Rumasky at the Pic Parish. There were six brothers in the family and two were already born in Quebec...no, I'm sorry, all were born in Champion, Michigan. Edwin was the oldest and he was born in 1886 and he died in 1959; Earl was the next one and he was born in 1888 and he died in 1975; Walt was born in 1902; Jim was born in 1904; brother Gene was born in 1907 and Joe was born in 1910. One brother died in infancy, he was between Earl and Walter.

Okay, you mentioned your father came here when he was about twelve years old. That would make it 1886 when he came here. Where did he come first?

R: Chassell...or Humbolt.

I: Why did he leave Quebec?

R: Well, his folks or his father was here and a bunch of brothers and they had came on ahead. They were all lumberjacks or axe men. They cut cordwood for the mines.

Stop in tape

I: Okay, you were telling me about your dad coming here.

R: Oh yeah, he came and had brothers here in advance and they sent for

my dad and then his sister and they came by the way of Port Huron through Chicago. Right away he said he ate his first banana in Chicago and it made him sick.

I: Didn't like that, eh?

R: No, they thought it would be good but he never saw one before. And he came into Humbolt where they were staying then where the rest of his relations and brothers were cutting cordwood for the mines.

I: What do you imagine Humbolt would be like at the time?

R: Well, it was a thriving mining town...it's a ghost town now, but the Humbolt Mine was running then pretty good and then four miles west of that at Champion they had their mines running there and evidently Dad and them they went into Champion and he stayed there until he died. He worked in the Champion mine...he worked in the Rock House there and had steam crushers them days to crush the ore until that shut down and that was about 1913 and then he worked for the railroad until he retired.

I: What was the town of Humbolt like then? What kind of people were there?

R: Well, there was mostly Finnish, few Italians, Canadian-French, English and there was a hotel and depot and school, store, Post Office and it was quite thriving.

I: Did all the different ethnic groups get along with one another or were there skermishes every now and then?

R: Well, there were skermishes and Thomas Edison even come up there later to try a method of mining like they're using now, the pelletizing, the method they're using now and through the lack of funds or not enough knowledge, that fell through. That was at Humbolt.

I: So he was that far advanced at that time.

R: Yeah, but it didn't...either funds or interest, whatever it could have been...the reason there I just don't remember...just stories my dad told me.

I: In the early days were all the different people speaking their native languages?

R: Most of them, yes; in fact some of the old timers after living here forty years, they couldn't hardly speak English. My grandmother never learned a word of English and she ran a hotel...railroad hotel in Champion and my grandfather, of course, he was a tote-teamster. Hauled supplies to Cyrus McCormick and that group from Chicago

up to White Deer Lake where they had a summer resort; he learned to say a few words. It was funny to hear him talk when he really had it.

I: Okay, well can you briefly describe Edwin's personal history, you know, just where he went to school and what he did and where he went?

R: That's my oldest brother?

I:

R: Well Ed, he went to the Champion School. He never went through high school and he's worked for the railroad, Western Union, served in the Navy in World War I and worked underground at different occupations throughout his life. He was married and had one son. His son is living at Champion at the present time.

I: Who did he marry?

R: He married a girl called Laura Libbey and she died a number of years ago.

I: Un hum, and Earl?

R: Earl, he started off...he didn't finish high school either and then he left Champion and went to Minnesota and he worked there in the open pits as a breakman for the Oliver Rhiney Mining Company, a subsidiary of U. S. Steel and he worked there many years; he came back and he put a hitch in Detroit in the automobile factories and then he went into a business of his own, he ran motels and summer resorts and gas stations, that line of work until he retired and lived in Claire where he died.

I: Did he marry?

R: He was married and had no children but they adopted a daughter.

I: Who did he marry?

R: He married Lucille Gay originally from Michigamme but he met and married here in Eveleth, Minnesota.

I: Okay, we'll go through your younger brothers and then come back to you. Jim?

R: Jim has married and has four children.

I: Where did he grow up? All of you grow up.

R: In Champion.

I: In Champion.

- R: Jim also didn't finish high school and now is living in Pinconning. His wife is still living...he married Rose LaBin from Champion.
- I: What line of work did he go into?
- R: Jim started off as a teamster in the logging industry and then when the horses were a thing of the past, he went in as a truck driver hauling logs and then he went into heavy equipment operator and he's retired now.
- I: And Gene?
- R: Gene he was practically all his life in the mines. He worked first in the copper mines in Calumet and then he worked at Cleveland-Cliff the majority of his working years.
- I: And he's still working?
- R: He's retired.
- I: Living in...?
- R: He lives in Ishpeming and he spends his winter in Florida. He married a girl or woman called Eleanor Chipman.
- I: Okay, and.
- R: She was a local girl
- I: And Joe?
- R: Joe married later in life and he married a girl from Ontonagon.
- I: And Joe is living...?
- R: Joe is retired and living in Champion.
- I: Un huh, and what line of work did he go into?
- R: Joe was a heavy-equipment operator.
- I: Okay, all right, let's go back to your boyhood. Where did you go to school?
- R: Champion
- I: What was the name of the school there?
- R: Champion High School...I never went through high school, I completed eight grades.
- I: Was this a one-room schoolhouse operation?

- R: Oh no, we had a pretty nice school up there; in fact it's still there and it's called since they consolidated with the west end of the county, it's called the Middle School now and it's elementary.
- I: Un hum, you were living right in town then.
- R: We lived right in Champion close to the railroad where my dad worked.
- I: Okay, what do you remember of the town in those early days when you grew up? I know that's kind of a big question, but just sort of...
- R: Well, the town was a dying town. The mine had closed in 1913 and my dad told me that at one time Champion had a population of four thousand and now it was down to about seven hundred.
- I: And you were only about, oh, fifteen or so at the time.
- R: Well yeah, thirteen years old...I was only eleven when the mine shut down but I remember well. There was nothing to do when we were kids. We never had the things they got now. We had to make our own games and go down by the railroad tracks and play "duck-on-a-rock". I don't know if anybody knows anything about that any more.
- I: I'm afraid you'll have to tell us...what's "duck-on-a-rock"?
- R: "Duck-on-a-rock" is you'd place a stone, small stone on a bigger stone and each one of you, whoever was playing in the game, was armed with each a rock fist sized and the idea was that you were the keeper and idea was to throw that rock and knock that one off and run like to base and back again and that goal keeper or whatever you want to call him..he got hit in the shins many times before...you know, he had to have so many outs before he could pull out of that. That was "duck-on-a-rock". And then we'd try to play baseball in cow pastures and make our own bats out of a piece of wood and use store string and try to get a ball made. There was nothing else to do...we had no...and a pair of skis in the winter time.
- I: You'd make your own baseball?
- R: Yeah, with store string and provided you find a cork for the center and wind the store string around there until you got it baseball-sized and kind of knit it in there and get a few clouts on it and pretty soon strings is coming out...start to unravel and sew it up again. That was the childhood days and then we had plenty of time after the chores were done to go fishing in the summer, go swimming and in the wintertime we could hunt.
- I: What kind of chores did you have to do? Did you have a farm?

- R: Well it wasn't no...we never had a farm, we lived in town; but them days my dad's wages were pretty small and with a family of six growing boys, he hadda...we hadda have a garden and a hayfield and a potato field and we hadda have a cow and pig and chickens in order to get enough food to supply the family.
- I: And in those days, families had that sort of thing right in town.
- R: Right in town...the cows ran loose and the garden, you fenced the garden to keep the chickens out and the chickens ran all over everybody's...on your own land...all over your yards, you know. And the garden, you hadda fence the garden so the chickens wouldn't get into the garden. And then you'd hunt for rabbits, partridge, deer in season.
- I: In those days, it was very serious hunting, wasn't it, hunting because it meant food.
- R: Well, it helped a lot. It helped the variety, you know, well like we had chicken every Sunday because we had chickens. And say like in the fall we'd butcher, sometimes it'd be a beef or all the time one or two pigs...well then we'd get rabbits and probably venison and that would help out. Then we'd have our harvest of winter potatoes and enough hay and stuff in to feed the cow and we always ate...although we wore patches on our clothes, we ate.
- I: Do you remember when you got your first buck?
- R: Yes, and I remember when I missed my first buck. I had a 351 automatic rifle and I saw this buck across a wide marsh, almost out of sight and I started to shoot at it and the deer got dazed or didn't know where he was going...somebody had shot at him from another area and instead of keep going, he turned around a came right to me and in the meantime, I had injected another clip into the...another clip into my rifle and the deer stopped between two small spruce trees but the sun was shining against them and every time I tried to get a site on him it was like a big halo around him and so I shot and it missed him and went right beside him. Then the deer kept trotting and he came within fifty feet of me and I was up on a knoll and he stopped down there again and I tried to shoot and the gun wouldn't shoot no more. That second clip that I put in there had a faulty spring and wasn't pushing the shell into the chamber. That was the one I missed. But after that, I had better luck. I never was a great deer hunter, but I had a couple, you know.
- I: What was it like going to school back in those days?
- R: Well, you never had your gymnasium and physical education like you've got now. When it rained we had a basement below the school that was in the old school and it was full of slivers and iron pipe or iron posts or columns to hold the rest of the school up and any games you invented you played outside. That's all there was to

that and they had a basketball team and they had a little rivalry them days in Champion, Republic and Michegamme and that was about all there was to that and then when they built the new school, the old one burnt down,...

I: When did that burn down?

R: Oh, I don't recall...I'll tell you, I was going into the eighth grade...it was quite awhile back...in the twenties, early twenties. Sometime around four and eighteen...or 1918.

I: I think if you started when you were five years old, it would be around 1915. Depends on when you started school.

R: Well, I took two years in one grade if that means anything.

I: Well then it would be 1916.

R: Yeah, right around in that area. And then they built the new high school and I never went back.

I: Tell me a little bit about this basketball rivalry. Was basketball a big thing then?

R: That's all there was and they weren't rigged up like they are now, with the jackets...just basketball trunks and a shirt. You bought your own tennis shoes and the school furnished the basketball... and the coaches were anybody who wanted to coach that was on the teaching staff. So there was that rivalry from them three towns in the west end of the county.

I: Would a lot of the community attend the games?

R: Oh yes, that was a big rivalry. They were out for blood when they played.

I: You remember any specific games?

R: Well there was a lot of them. I couldn't pin one because they were all...

I: Okay, after you finished high school...

R: I didn't go to high school.

I: After you finished school?

R: Well, I left home...I didn't finish the eighth grade, to get back to that and I wasn't sixteen and I wasn't gonna go back to school; so to avoid going to school and getting into trouble, I took the St. Paul passenger train and I went to Iron River, Michigan. And the train go in there about eleven o'clock at night and I slept in an alcove, I guess you call it...you know in a store, it was raining and the next day I woke up there, the storekeeper woke me up and

asked me what I was doing there and I told him I was tired and got in out of the rain. He asked me if I was hungry and I said "Yes," so he gave me a lunch and he had a bunch of hides down in the basement, cowhides that needed salting and said that if I wanted to earn a dollar I could do that. So I went down in that basement with a barrel of salt and salted all these old hides that was full of maggots and everything else. I was wondering then if I quit school too early (chuckle). But then I got around...I had some cousins there that lived in Iron River and got involved then with the railroad and got working around the roundhouse there in the coal shed...

I: hat railroad was this that you were working for?

R In Iron River there's that...at Stambaugh there they have that roundhouse and coal yard or rock yard and a coal dock...Northwestern, Chicago Northwestern.

kinds of work were you doing there?

R: Well first, I went help coaling engines. My cousin I had there, he had a contract to coal all them switch engines and freight engines and ore engines and passenger engines; coal them up and he just had a contract so much a ton. Well, I'd earn my keep helping them there like swinging buckets from the car over to tender the locomotive and then I got a little bit acquainted there and the roundhouse foreman give me a job sanding and that I thought was a big deal... was a sandhouse there and you had kind of a charcoal burner in there that you dry the sand with, you know, there was a big heap of sand in a covered building and you dried that sand and hauled it up in them (?) on top of them steam locomotives and kept them sand dunes filled because every time wet weather, use sand on the rails to get traction. And then after that, went to work on the section then for the same...

I: hat year are we at about now?

In the twenties

hum.

R: About 1920...and I worked on the railroad there a little while as a section hand at the the mines swinging track and that on stock piles they were loading.

ou mean you were repairing these track?

R: Yeah, well see when the ore is stock piled during the winter, well then when the steam shovel came to load it and it got too far away for the shovel to reach it, then you hadda swing them tracks over closer to the ore pile and they had a crew of men there just

building that. And then from there I went.

I: You got married somewhere along the line here. Were you married yet?

R: No, I didn't get married for quite awhile. I was real young then, remember, I started I wasn't sixteen yet.

I: That's right

R: So I went from there then, I went in the lumbercamps up at Park Siding, that's up near Sidnaw on the St. Paul...the siding is on the St. Paul Railroad. I worked there that winter and it got so cold I pertnear froze there...it got as low as forty below and was pretty hard to take. And then I went back to Iron River and I got a job underground at the Roger Mine. That was the wettest mine I ever worked in.

I: What was it like down there? This is the first time you're underground, right?

R: Yeah, first mine I went underground.

I: What was that like?

R: That was wet, the raizes and all that. The water would be pouring in there like a falls. You could hear it all over the mine. Had ditches to handle the water to the pump stations...if you stepped in them, you'd be up to your waist in water. That was real wet and I stayed there that...the rest of that winter.

I: You were wet a lot down there?

R: Well, you had...you were dressed in oil clothes.

I: What are oil clothes?

R: They were a type of a raingear; but they were called oil...like probably you heard about them something like the fishermen wore on the ocean or on the lakes them days. They wore them...the pants type and then you wore two oilers, that would be the coats that'd be knee length...put two of them on...and then you hadda wear a felt liner over your head and then two...a double rain hat or oiler hats that we used to call them shriners...they were broad rimmed and the water would be just pouring on you and if you were shoveling or mucking, what we called mucking the iron ore...when down there it was a miner helper there...we were drifting...that was a miner's helper and contract. Every time you'd go to shovel in the car, all that down your arms, cold. I toughed it out until summer and then I went to the Baltic Mine then in Iron River but a different

location. This was an ideal mine. It was dry and I went in there as a miner helper and I kind of liked it there; but being young I didn't stay there long.

I: About what year was this now?

R: This was about 1920 or 1921.

I: Un hum

R: Then I went to Detroit and worked for Fischer Body. Started off as a press helper and then I got...

I: Where were you living in Detroit?

R: Well, that would be on St. Andrine close to Grand Blvd...about seven or eight blocks from over that...

I: What was that like down there in those days?

R: Well, it was...it wasn't as bad as it is now, I know; but it was... oh I don't know, you kept in your own neighborhood that's all; but you could go downtown in safety.

I: Ever go around that Woodrow Wilson area?

R: Oh yeah.

I: Supposed to be a lot of Copper Country people...

R: Copper Country area there, yeah. That was close to where I lived up near the Woodward Avenue, up and around.

I: Do you remember any of that area? Any of the bars in that area?

R: Well, I've forgotten now. There was a lot...in fact it was prohibition days when I was there.

I: Oh!

R: There was a lot of blind pigs, but they were pretty open. There was no trouble getting anything of that kind.

I: So how long were you in Detroit?

R: Oh approximately maybe seven years

I: Oh, that long?

R: I worked for Fischer Body and started as a press helper

and then went to die operator in the press room and then I went as a die setter and then I got an idea, probably, I wanted to go work in camps, lumber camps. And I quit my job there and came up to King Lake.

I: What inspired you to come back up here?

R: Just an idea I wanted to work in the lumber camps. I'd done a little of that before, you know. In them days a lumber camp was a lumber camp yet, you know. It wasn't like it is now. There isn't anymore lumber camps. Everybody travels from home and it's highly mechanized...machinery and what they use now and them days was the crosscut saw and the horses; and then in the later...about thattime they were little experimenting with tractors to haul.

I: What year is this about?

R: Pardon?

I: What year is this about?

R: Oh, that would be again '22...oh no, wait awhile.

I: No, you were there for seven years.

R: That's right, this was about '27 because the winter of '27, I think...'28, if I'm right, that's when I came and I worked a few months up at Parent Lake...or at King Lake and then it got so cold that I quit that and I heard that the copper mines were hot in Laurium and I thought that was the place to go and that's when I went to Calumet.

I: Okay, tell me a little bit about this lumber camp.

R: Well, it was.

I: You said that they were camps then, well what was it like at this particular camp?

R: Well, they were all about the same. One thing about the camps, you always could get lodging there and a supper and a breakfast whether there was work or not; but them days there was pertnear always work no matter what camp you went to. Well say I'd come to like the camp at King Lake and I hit there about four o'clock in the afternoon, well you're in the woods then, you know and you can't turn out a man in the winter, so, you know, that was the rule of the game. Well then he'd get his supper then there and he'd get a bunk and get breakfast; and then in the morning the foreman would come into the men's camp or the bunkhouse and he'd ask if there were any sawyers or loaders or teamsters, whatever was needed, and if someone wanted the job, whatever they had, well they'd get up

and they'd just sign up to work. And those that just came for the nights' lodging and breakfast and supper, well they'd pull out. Well, that way you all them camps got (?).

I: You had these transients?

R: Yeah, that was it see. Lot of them just went round from camp to camp just getting fed and a place to sleep with never an intention of working; but still they couldn't throw them out.

I: Oh, there were quite a few of these guys.

R: Oh yes! And they're the ones who would louse up these camps. They'd get lousy. Well then every Sunday, we had this great big box stove in the men's camp and a big boiler of water up on top of that and all the working lumberjacks there boiled their clothes all day Sunday and dry them every Sunday. At the end of the week you were lousy again; but that was the order of the day. Nobody thought too much of that; that was life, you know, that's the way it was. Most of the camps fed good, had good meals and they payed, well most of the days I worked in the camps, the pay would average around fifty, fifty-five, sixty dollars a month...sixty-five. The teamster and the toploader were rated the highest paid and probably making sixty-five.

I: Is something taken out of this for Ford?

R: No, that would be clear and the room, you can't count that much... a bunkhouse, you know; and was down...like there'd be a top loader, teamster, and then there'd be the swampers...swamper was the lowest paid, and there was a road mōnkey, we used to call them chickadees...they used horses them days and they used to ice them roads to haul heavy loads. Naturally when the horses do their job there, that would almost get stuck on that and these men hadda go down and keep the ice road clean...you know, keep it in shape to road the logs that they were hauling. Used to take some awful big loads with a team of horses.

I: That's right. Was this mostly pine here that you were talking about?

R: Well, it was just after the pine. I remember the pine days as a kid. Well, they took a lot of pine out and drove the Pecheke River into Lake Michagamme where the beach is now and they loaded their logs with a steam loader, where they boomed them in from the river to the Champion beach.

I: Un hum

R: And then the steam loader loaded them on flatcars...well, they weren't flat cars, they were called Russell cars them days. They

were just cars with bunks on them and chains and they'd load them up. And I remember that well. We used to go down there, after school run down there, was about a couple miles, mile and a half, and go up to the cook camp, there was a landing camp they used to call that and the cook had molasses cookies and stuff like that and he'd always give us one. So we'd walk about three miles for that lunch and thought nothing of it. I'll always remember that.

I: That must have been something to see that! Those big pine logs coming out.

R: We had...one time they loaded some logs at Champion beach there, and they weren't loaded right. They were extended out too long and they had sidetracked them at Champion. They were transferring from the South-Shore Railroad...South Shore Railroad would load them at the beach and then they were transferred to the South Shore and I imagine that was going to Iron Mountain or wherever it was, to the big sawmills. Sawmills I don't remember much. They they'd butt them logs; instead of unloading that, they'd butt 'em and then just shorten them up so they would be the right length between the couplings, you know, on the cars. I remember we had one (?), it must have been a good six feet across and about that thick, you know, I'd say about two-feet thick when they had butted for that log and I think there was room for all of us. We used that for chopping block to chop our wood on. And I think the whole family could fit around that one. They were big pine. And I remember the drives.

Do you remember the river drives?

Oh yes!

I: Men actually riding them

Yes, and they were pretty catty. They were pretty good on their feet. They all wore these cogs, you know, iron pegs driven into their shoes, and I'll tell you, that was nice to watch. But it was a dangerous job especially when they'd get a jamb and those logs would jam and pile up what you'd say, "ski-high" and there was one log that was doing it all and they had to go and break that key and that man took his life in his hands to get out there and sometimes they couldn't get at it and they'd have to dynamite. Of course, that was a little safer. They'd put a charge of dynamite amongst them logs where they thought was doing the...the key log that was jamming and they'd light the fuse and they could go and walk away from it...get in safely.

I Did you ever watch a guy die doing that?

R: Never!

I: But you heard of them eh?

Oh yes. In the olden days you'd hear that. In fact, my dad, he worked awhile in the lumber camps at Pequaming at Pt. Abbey and he come home with I think twenty-one stitches in his head. They were cutting hemlock and them days hemlock was using the bark and then they'd peel the hemlock for tanning and hemlock is awful brittle and one limb of the tree was coming down he was sawing logs; and when that tree was coming down hit another tree and a big limb come down and got him on the head. But there was a lot of casualties in the olden days.

I: Do you remember any old doctors around the area?

R: Oh yes.

I: They had some colorful doctors?

R: Oh we had one of the best

I: Who was that?

R: Dr. Van Riper...just died here a few years ago.

Tell me what you remember about him?

R: Well, he was one of the most humane men that ever lived. He was a real country doctor. He came from Niles, Michigan; but he came to Champion as a young man as a company doctor them days, the mines were running yet. In fact, I think, he was the most of our family he delivered us in Champion. And he was a doctor that never kept books.

I: Little different than our current money makers.

R: Oh you bet, never kept a book.

Wasn't a business to him, was it?

R: No, nope! He was a humanitarian. You would go there...I remember one time I got kicked. I worked a summer at Chassell on the Sturgeon River for the Houghton Lumber Company on the Sturgeon River...yeah, for the Houghton Lumber Company and they were springing out their horses there and we were feeding them and getting them in shape for summer logging and I got kicked there Sunday noon while we were feeding them and I was knocked unconscious from 11:30 Sunday noon until about 7 o'clock Sunday evening and then when I was able to come home to Champion, I went to Dr. Van and they wouldn't pay me compensation or anything, hospitalization or anything, they said I was under age...I wasn't eighteen yet, that short period yet, that was the summertime and old Dr. Van, it didn't worry him a bit. Took care of that.

I: He used to take care of the lumberjacks in the area?

R: Oh, anybody. He was also the railroad doctor, mining doctor for the whole Western end...mine, lumberjacks, anything. And he had this...in the olden days of the horse and cutter or buggy and then after that he was a great Buick man. Always liked to have a Buick and in anykind of weather he'd go out. I remember a friend of ours in Diwright, his wife had pneumonia and Diwright must be eight-ten miles from Champion and I don't know how many trips Dr. Van made there, this was in the winter to take care of his wife and Sulo, the husband told me, he said he kept waiting for a bill, kept waiting for a bill for his wife...he was know as a real pneumonia doctor, one of the best them days for pneumonia; so he finally went up and saw Dr. Van and he said, "Well, how much do I owe you Doc? I've been waiting for a bill." Well he said, "Sulo, I don't know. How many trips did I make Sulo over to your place?" So Sulo said, "You must have made eight or nine anyway." And he brought the medicine, you never had to go to the drugstore with a prescription. Old Doc Van he'd bring it. So he said, "Twelve dollars"...didn't have that notebook or nothing..."Twelve dollars will be all right." Well, figure that out. Them were the days, you know. And old Doc Van, he pulled teeth or anything and he was all around.

I: Ever work on animals too?

R: No, not that I ever heard too much. They had a vet around there that used to live in Republic.

I: When he died it must have been quite a funeral.

Not too much.

I: Really? The people forgot him?

R: Well, not that but a lot of people thought there'd be a lot of other people there that didn't show up, you know.

I: Everyone thought the same thing.

R: Yeah, figured the wheels...the Marquette County "Wheels" would be there more or less; but they didn't show up at all...from what I've heard. I didn't go for that reason myself...otherwise I'd a went. And see, he has a son Charles that he's a doctor, that is he invented...maybe you heard about that speech defect, you know, used to stutter.

I: Un huh

R: He figured out a plan or a way to...he wrote a book on that, Charles, did you ever read that?

I: How to cure it...no I haven't.

R: Charles Van Riper...I think they teach that at Northern. His text book is there.

I: Un hum.

R: He's down in Lower Michigan somewhere. Of course, he's no more a young man now.

I: Okay, now back to your own history where you're just now going to the Copper Country. We did a little sidetrack on the...

R: Yeah, when I got too cold at the lumber camp, I went up to Calumet.

I: It's cold up there too.

R: Well, underground was warm...ninety degrees maybe. My brother-in-law Gene and I, we went up there together but we had an uncle that was there running pumps in Red Jacket Shaft, so we had a place to go to and he help us get a job there and we started to work there.

I: This, again, is in 1927-'28.

R: That would be the winter of '27-'28.

I: Okay.

R: That's when I came from Detroit, around that era. Then we worked down on the bottom of No. 12 and we used to travel...by living in Calumet you could travel through the Red Jacket Shaft and down on the eightieth level you'd take a crosscut there, a crosscut where you could ride into bottom of No. 7 which was called A Shaft... that's a sub-shaft down there.

I: So you traveled underground.

R: Yeah and that was a couple miles across there. Well, if you came down No. 12 that was in Laurium back on Mine Street, back of Rambyltown and then you could get to the eightieth level there too but that shaft went down on an incline thirty-seven degrees...and then you'd cross over to A Shaft and then this was a sub-shaft like it started from the eightieth...well, it was only a continuation of No. 7...it got too far to hoist directly to surface, you know; then they started from the eightieth and they went down to the ninety-sixth level and eighty, eighty-one, eighty-two and eighty-three were the production levels. All the levels below that were for...developing levels and that mine was bottomed at 9,620 feet counting the twenty-footskip-fit...ninety-six levels. There's a hundred feet between levels or up there they call that lifts.

I: How did you like copper mining?

R: Well, it was hard work and hot...ninety degrees. You worked stripped to the belt with a sash wound around you to catch sweat. It was warm...air, you know, the depth of the mine and lot of

timber down there helped to generate heat

I: Was the air foul?

R: Well, not too bad...not that you could smell it or anything; but it was hot. They're dry mines, you know. Not much dripping of water there...very very little.

I: Was it dangerous?

R: Well yes, there was quite a few killed down there when I was there. We were only a small crew working there. We worked there until 1932 when the copper price went...when the bottom fell out of copper and I guess they were only getting about five cents a pound and then they quit all the bottom then and pulled everything up and hoisted the surface...but otherwise there's a lot of copper down there yet; but you'd have to go down a mile, straight down, before you'd hit the copper-bearing rock again. Above that it's mined, see, that's in the conglomerate load in Caumet. It's all mass copper. I was in the crosscut there or drift going as...what they used to call C Shaft...walking through there...it was open for the other shaft and you could take your mining hat off anywhere and throw it up against that drift wall and had that mass copper sticking out all over and that was the ninety-first level. Now I doubt if they even knew if that was that vein was left. That goes out under Lake Superior towards the lake shore...that's the way she dips...that thirty-seven degrees.

I: .ot of copper under there still?

R: I think so.

I: It's just that it's kind of costly getting it out when it's down so deep.

R: Yeah, if it's scarce enough, they'll go down and get it

I: So then in around '33, you left the Copper Country, right?

R: No...

I: No?

No, '32 I was layed off. I was three years without work...well, I got married.

I: Where were you in those years...those were Depression years?

R: I got married up there

I: Times were hard, you got married.

R: Well, we had two children when I got layed off too...two young ones.

Un huh.

R: Marilyn and Evelyn. When I got layed off in 1933 - '32, see we were working parttime and our pay I remember now, I guess, was 3.85 or something a day...\$3.85 a day...and we were working three days a week. So that gives you an idea how big your pay check was at the end of two weeks and that went on for a couple years. See, they didn't shut that down until 1932...the Depression started... the crash was in 1929. So we hung on and hung on and of any little surplus you had in order to live when it came you were almost broke...well I was. Two small children and the last one, no the third one wasn't born yet; but I was layed off on the first of May and Bob, the third one, he was born on the twenty-seventh of May. Well my paycheck then when I got to settle up thirty-five dollars for them two weeks. I remember the mining captain called me in the office and he said, "No matter what you owe or who you owe, keep this money. Don't spend it for nothing because it'll be a long time before you see cash again." And he was right! 1935 when I went back to work for C & H then firing in Lake Linden for the power plant. Fired there for five years and then I went out for Phelps-Dodge in Arizona and stayed there a year. Didn't like it from the day I got there, but I figured as long as I made the break, I might as well have the family come down and look at the country...we could always get back. We stayed there a year and then we came up to Ishpeming here and times were tight then, this was 1941; and was hard to get work. Through the help of Dr. Van again, he helped me get a job. I got desperate. I was getting up in the morning and make all the rounds in Ishpeming...different shaft offices, the employment office...

End of Side 1

I: You mentioned that you were making all these different rounds...

R: Oh yeah.

I: The employment house and so on. How did you finally come to get the job then?

R: Well then finally I went again and seen Dr. Van and he said, "Have patience," he said, "You're the next one." And sure enough, the next day I got a card in the mail from Brig Sundburger, he was the Employment Manager here in Ishpeming, for Cleveland-Cliff to come down for an examination and then I was put on that first job that I put up on the Champion stock pile. That was a pile of iron ore got left there since that mine shut down...the Champion mine in 1913; and they made a...put tracks in there to get it out in World War I and they didn't think it was worth it, they thought the pile was low grade and that it wasn't what they wanted, so

when World War II was approaching, they figured that...this Charlie Staggie, the Superintendent of the Cliff Shaft, he figured he could run that pile through and it would be good by washing it and then have belts there and have rock pickers, you know, pick the rock out as the ore came down from that pile, you know, to the belts and then haul it down to Champion, to what we call downtown and load it...they built a ramp there...and load it into ore cars and ship to Marquette to go by boat. Well, I got onto that and come to find out that washing it made it worse than ever...everything looked like mud, you know, it was dirty. That pile had been there, you know, from maybe 1913 when the mine shut down. So they stopped using water and put it on dry and then we were six or seven men on two belts and we had hoppers beside us. What we thought looked like a rock, we each had a hammer, and if we'd see rock in it we roll it with what we called the rockbin and if it looked like good ore, we'd let it go down to the ore bin. Well, they made one cut in that pile right across...this was a long big stock pile and they made one cut right across.

How big was this this pile?

R: How big was the pile? Oh, roughly maybe six-seven hundred feet. Oh, I don't know, maybe twenty-five feet high, roughly and wide, well, maybe fifty-feet at the base.

I: Un

R: They made that one cut across it...they had a gasoline power shovel there loading into trucks. The trucks would bring it to the dump and that would come down through shoots and there was a guy up there feeding the belts so that the ore would run slowly so that we could pick the rocks out. So they got that cut and they went back and started on another cut, and that ore was almost pure. I mean by pure, shipping ore without no picking at all and to me it looks like that pile was doctored when they shut her down and the records were lost; but what I mean by doctored, see, is when they seen that that pile wasn't sold and to hold down the taxes on it by the companies, they poured a whole bunch of rock on top of it, you know, kind of camafloaged it, looked like a real poor grade of iron ore; but it wasn't, it was good ore...it was running in the fifties...fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven percent and they were shipping then...they shipped it all in one summer and part of another. Then we came down...well winter came then, and of course that couldn't run in the winter...we had an old boss there used to be Master Mechanic at Republic Mine, he was an old man, by the name of George Thompson and he came with us one day, he said, "No," he said, "We're for United Fund Drive," he said. "And Mr. Elliot (that's the mine manager) said that he expects a donation from everybody working for the company." And the old fellow said, "Now you fellows don't forget you fellows are out of work here, you know, pretty soon now, and we stop this belt on

account of winter," he said. "I'll advise yous to donate like the rest and it'll help you get a job for the winter." Well naturally everybody donated and out of the whole crew, only two of us got a a job out of it. So, that's what you call high pressure salesmen in Old Thompson's spot. And I came in the barn then on shift shaft and worked that winter then on the timber gang, spring we went up back to Champion and finished that job, and come over here and was an old pit here back of the Brown, what they call the Brownstone or the (?)...

What year is this now?

R: That would be '43 already...'43. No, '42, see, '41 was the year it was running. Well, it's in that time anyway and that was an old pit that they had...well Settlement Mine it was called...and they had dumped poor-rock, what they call poor-rock...too lean to go for ore, and somebody had beendown there looking at it and they thought it was pretty good stuff, so they got an idea that if they do the same with that, use a hi-line, youknow, use a drag-line, and go down there and pull it out of that pit and drop it up there and then we had these scrapers pull that out ona slide and the guys could pick the rock out of that and then pull her ahead to where we had trucks parked and that and we had a ramp there and load the cars. That didn't prove to be very good. We worked at it there... we were lucky if we could get a carload a day, you know, there was a crew of men there plus then the contractor, he had the contract to haul it with the trucks and had to put...Lindberg was the contractor, and he hadda take it out of the pit, put it where we could get it and I was running one of the scrappers...the tuggers, you know, pull that over onto the slide and spread it out and then when they're through picking, pull it into the truck. The truck is loaded and then go and dump it in the cars and it got worse as we got going on it. It really got full of sand and dirt, you know, for the years, you know, in the pit. Everything going in there. Then they stayed...we quit then that fall, was already fall...went back in there in the spring again just a short while. Always remember Elliott was the manager then and he'd come there and look at it and you'd watch him go away shake his head like this, you know, until he was out of sight, disgusted with the job. So, they shut that down then, it wasn't paying. We had a little note of interest there, one of the Lindbergs was there one day and I asked him, I said, "What would you give us if we loaded two railroad cars in one day?" You see, he was paid by the tonage, see, and he'd want lot of it out.

I Who was he? Which one?

Lindberg, now what the heck was his first name? I know him well... Walter, I remember that...Walter Lindberg. I says, "Hey Walt, what you give us if we load two cars in one day." He says, "You load two cars in one day," he says, "I'll buy yous a case of beer." We were about twelve men then there, so that evened out to two bottles a piece. I said, "Okay," youknow, we were just kidding, you know. Well, darned if we didn't get two cars. Sure enough quitting time, Lindberg came with his pickup and a case of beer and it was quitting

time so we sat around and we each had two bottles of beer. Well the next day, Walt came around again and I said, "What would you give us Walt (chuckle), if we got three cars in one day?" "If you got three cars in one day," he says, "I'd buy yous a case of beer, a fifth of whiskey or else a case of beer and each a pastie." "Yeah, okay." And I'll be darned, we were gonna make it. We got just the third car top leveled, just hadda put the heap on it and the LS & I, they were doing the switching there, they went off the track and we couldn't load no more and the day was over. After that, we were lucky to get a car a day. Then they shut it down.

I: Had the old motivation there, eh?

R: Well, I was only kidding, youknow, just having fun. Well, that was one of the jobs; and then from there then I went back into the barn and then I stayed there until 1960.

I: Boy, that's quite a hitch then, isn't it

R: Yeah, well at the barn, well the recession came; but they layed everybody off back to twenty-five years and I didn't have it...I had about...no, back to twenty years because there was one guy ahead of me. I was chopped off right there. Like Brud Argel, he was next to me on the higher...more time than I had.

I: How do you spell his name?

R: Brud...well, that was anickname B-r-u-d...Argel, A-r-g-e-l.

I: Un hum.

R: And he went to work, not in the barn, but he was layed off from there, but he went over Mather was running yet, sinking shaft, I think. Well, I was layed off...that was the first of January.

I: What year now?

R: 1960.

I: Un hum.

R: Well, then I was home six months...every time...by that time they these open pits were going and they were hiring guys that had less seniority than I did; so and I'd go over there and I'd ask them about it...

Cut in tape.

R: ...Greenwood. Well, he said, "I'll tell you Walt," he said, "You're on the underground list." He showed me a list there and there was eighteen men on it all slated for underground when there was an

opening. And he said, "We're keeping you for underground, that's why you're not being called into the pits." Well, I didn't think too much of that but I didn't say nothing. So, on the first of July I was called to go to the Mather B Mine and I put in five years there. See, the Cliff Shaft where the barn we used to call, that was a hard ore mine. That was big vast open stopes...(?)... you know, voids and dug out for years and years. That mine ran just short of a hundred years. Well, then I went over to the Mather B...well that was a hematite, soft ore. The barn, we called that hard hematite because you had to drill every pound of that at the barn. Every pound had to be drilled and blasted; but at the Mather B, they had a what they called a block system of mining or a caving system. See, they'd get under a block of ore and they'd drift underneath it and that would be like the main drift and that's where the motor trains or the motors and the cars could come and load. Then they'd put up a transfer drift up above that and then they'd put crosscuts every so many feet into the body of ore and that's all timbered with steel. That's heavy, that mine. Big double-eights, we used to call 'em, steel beams, you know, welded together. First they'd put them a distance apart, but then they'd keep...they'd have to keep that up, you know, steady. It was expensive mining, but they must make money...they're still running. Well then there'd be what they call...that would be the stopes scraping then...stope-scraper man. Well, that was a little hazzardous...that's what I was doing there then. But then you had the mills were so many feet apart and the miners would put what they called long-hole drilling...they'd shoot holes up there, drill holes, you know, twenty-thirty feet or whatever they figured it took and then made a hole, you know, fanned them out and they'd load that with explosives and they'd blast. Well that left then like, you know, a cavern or an open space. Well then the weight of that then, she'd start caving in herself...didn't have to mine no more. That stuff would keep dropping and you had all these mills here, you know, spaced with stoppers on them, you know, to keep them from running and the boss would come and take so many cars a night out of this mill and so many out of that and so many out of that and you were supposed to do that and then block that mill again and go to whatever mill he said...that's to even it up, you know, to draw about the same amount of ore from each one. Well, that would cave in chunks the size of a house sometimes and block that up. Well, then you had to use like a...well like a clothes pole, you know, long slimpole or in later years they had like sticks, you know, like furring or two-by-two or wood, you know, long; and you'd put a (?) under that and you'd stick it up in there and, of course, you were blasting with electricity, put the cap in and then you had a little blaster; back out of the road and then you'd blast. Sometimes you'd pound on that one chunk all night and get nothing out of it. And then once you get that going, then she'd run again, you know, finer dirt. Well then pretty soon when that'd be played out, you'd get to the rock, well then the rock would start to come down. Well, then that gets to be pretty lean

ore, but that's perfect...that's like gravel then. It's not like gravel, it's like...looks a little bit like iron ore, but there's no weight to it or nothing.

I: That should be pretty dangerous for a miner there with all that stuff falling, hey?

R: Well, that's off from it...that's away from you. You're under-cover under these crosscuts, you know, steel crosscuts where they got all that steel timber. But we were in one place there, I remember one night, I forget just what contract that was, and that was a big area. And all at once she came down and you'd swear that ten boxes of dynamite went off with the report and the crush when the whole thing let go and I don't know how big of an opening there was up there. Sometimes you look up them mills you can't see nothing but black, you know, with your light.

I: Oh, it's so high up

R: It's gone so high, see and she quit dropping for awhile. Then as a rule they leave that go then and a few days you come back there and that's filled up again, you know, it evidently fills up when it caves in see, by herself.

I: But it doesn't cave in while you're working there.

R: Well, it does. You hear that lapping like this...one time there in particular, like I said, she dropped and there must have been an awful big opening up there. Before she dropped, you could walk in them mills, them drifts, them crosscut drifts, you call 'em, standing upright and when that dropped and made that report like the ten boxes of powder went off and a gush of wind, you hadda go on your hands and knees almost stumped way down to get in there. She had dropped that she had pressured that steel down to within three or four feet of the bottom, you know, of the bottom of the drift or the crosscut.

I: That's heavy

R: But still, yeah, that's settling all the time. Sometimes they'd come in to where you're working with the motors, they're rubbing on steel. First thing you'd know in an hour and another trip, they can't get in at all...she's settled that much and pushed that steel, you know, bent it that no clearance for the motor cars, ore cars to come through. Well, then they get some timber repairmen, they burn a piece off and keep her going for that night and then if it got too bad, then they got repairmen come in and put new stuff in there and dig it out and that and that was a wet dirty mine...gassy, smoke...blasting all the time, you can imagine, with them bombs going off to keep them mills running, you know, trying to break them chunks with one blast after another. She'd clear up

and then a half hour after...they had fans at this mine, I showed you, Mather A. Well, I was working at the next one. They shut this one down and operated the other one; but they're getting ore from this one but it's going up through Mather B. This one is called Mather A. They're still mining it...there's real good ore in there and that mine is about a half mile deep...oh, maybe more. Barnam was the first mine I worked at, that was a half a mile deep. She went down to the fifteenth level and that's where the pump station at bottom level. I put in pertnear twenty years in the Barnam. That was a good mine. The air was good. They were telling me that there was about thirty miles of track in that Barnam...like streets under the City of Ishpeming. This is all undermined. They're even talking now maybe they be using the water supply from that mine. Filled up with water now, she's been shut down a few years...supposed to be played out; but I was told then by the geologists, below the fifteenth level off on an angle, there's a soft hemitite down there. I don't know how they would mine that... if they would sink another shaft further away...get down to that. Only time will tell, I suppose, how much they need iron.

#### Stop in tape

- I: Okay, Walt you were telling me about there was a certain period when a lot of Finns went out to Arizona to try to make a go of it inthe mines. When was this?
- R: That was after oh '40? At Phelp's-Dodge then werelooking for miners. Copper up there started to pick up and they came...had an agent come up from Jerome, Arizona to Calumet and he hired anybody who wanted to go out to Arizona. And there was a lot of unemployment in Calumet yet in 1940, lot of men. But I was working, but I just took a notion and with another partner I had there in the boilerhouse there, Henry Paulson, that we'll go out there. And we quit our jobs in Lake Linden and went out to Arizona. Well, we got hired out...
- I: How'd you get out there?
- R: We drove out in a 1937 model V-8 Ford. Took us a number of days to get there and I'll never forget it. We stayed, I think the last night when we got into Arizona, at a place called Williams, Arizona. We left there bright and early. Henry had his wife and a small son with him...baby...little boy. And was all the while going there...this was early spring...we left in April, I think it was...and we had more or less winter clothes with us, winter jackets and it was cold even at Williams, Arizona, that night and then when we went the next day through Flagstaff and then we dropped down in the Verdie Valley I guess they call it, and it started to warm up down in the desert like there; but I had shedded my jacket and I was plenty warm and Henry he was nervous and excited, he left his on and halfway up the mountain from Clarksdale to Arizona up the mountainside was a gas station there

partway up. When we got up as far as that gas station, Hank's... Henry's car was boiling like mad, you know, climbing this mountain. And he stopped there and out of the station came an old westerner with a big hat on and the first thing he done was grab a hose and open the valve and he started squirting the car through the radiator; and Henry was fit to be tied. He thought his car was gonna be ruined, you know. He babied that...it was one of them light V-8's...well, it didn't go more than forty-five miles an hour, that was his cruising speed and when he saw this old gas station guy put the hose to it...that old fellow told him, he said "Don't worry...don't worry," he said, "I do this every day... I do this every day." And then we asked him, we could see up the peak of the mountain where we were going a big letter J painted right in the peak of the mountain or whitewash or whatever it was, Jerome...J and I hadda look up like that and how we gonna get up there. He said, "They go up there every day." Okay, and Henry had his heavy jacket on yet and he was sweating. So we finally got to the top or into Jerome and stopped at a gas station there to get some kind of directions. Henry had abrother there that got there shortly before that, Emil Paulson. And as it was, Emil's kids were there kind of waiting for us. They knew just where we'd pop out when we come up into Jerome and then the gas station guy said, "Mr. Riordan," he was the guy that came and hired up in Calumet, "was worrying about yous...weren't you supposed to be here two or three days ago?" "No," we said, "we left when we were supposed to, there must have been a mix up." But he said, "Mr. Riordan wants you to go right down as soon as you get here, right to the office and report that you're here and that everything is all right...they were worried, they wondered what happened to us." So we went down to...the kids brought us where the brother lived Elmer...or Emil his name was. So, we're sweating there, high altitude, you know. Well, that afternoon we went down to the employment office. He told us, he said, "You gotta go for a physical," he said, "but you better take it easy for a couple of days," he said, "and get acclimated here a bit." So we waited a couple days and went to the mine office or the hospital there and got examined and went to work. But I didn't like it up there. Poor place to raise a family...and they were racial yet, quite a bit, you know, like the Mexicans, they were I think almost a majority and the school, we had our three kids with us, they were young and they went to school there and the playgrounds were divided. One side for the Mexican children to play in and one side for the whites. Same for the swimming pools...they had community swimming pools...one for the Mexicans, one for the whites.

- I: Well, how many Finns would you say were around there?
- R: Pardon...Finns?
- I: How many Finns?

R: Oh, not that many. I wouldn't...rough guess? If there were a hundred, that's close enough, I guess.

I: Lot of people of French-Canadian background?

R:

I: So there weren't many miners there anyway from Calumet here

R: Well, there were miners mostly that came from Calumet. See, we all came in a group almost.

About how many altogether would you say?

R: Well, I couldn't...I never got the figures on that; but I wouldn't say not much more than a hundred. There are a few families out there yet that's retired and living out there around there from what I understand. A lot came back...some went out to California.

I: You didn't like it there though.

R: No. Poor place to raise a family.

I: What was it like? Were there spats between the Mexicans and the Finns?

R: No...no, but the Mexicans, they were...they liked to make it hard for you if they could. You know, they'd squeal underground, you know, that there was rules...you're not allowed to leave when the shift was over any powder that was left over should be brought back to the magazine...and by accident if you left a stick or two hanging in the timber in the bag and they'd report that right away. They couldn't wait 'til the boss come around that we left that there, you know, things like that; but they got along with them. There was no trouble there with them.

I: What did the people out west think of these Copper Country miners

R: Well our landlady or apartment owner there, Baldwin, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Baldwin...he had a...he was retired. He had been a dispatcher for the Santa Fe Railroad when he was working and before that he told me he was a...well in fact he proved that he was a first baseman and played with the Cincinnati Reds. And she told us, she said, "The west was never violent until the Copper Country bunch came down there."

I What would these guys do?

R: They were hard drinkers. Not all, but the majority. Never had no money for all the Depression years. Went there, they tried to catch up I guess. Put 'em in the cooler overnight, pay a fine...not all

of them but some were pretty regular customers. I forget their name now. I know one, I remember him, Cussy Jones. I think he's back in Calumet living or is he out there yet, I don't know. But every Saturday night before his family came down there, he'd sleep in the jail. He had a little...what do you call a dome there, a little jail. Pay a fine and old Cussy would come to work Monday morning. (chuckle) And the police there, they'd travel two together in these taverns and see a drunk or anybody drunk in there, they'd say "Well, you go home now. That's enough, get home." And they'd come back and within a half hour if you weren't gone, they'd run you in. That's the way they operated and they were all ready with the tear gas. Soon as a little disturbance started, they'd use tear gas.

I: They didn't play around at all. Were these police Mexicans or

R: No, white policemen

I: Westerners, eh.

R: They wore kacki uniforms there on account of the sun, I guess... the blue would fade or something. They were dressed kacki. Had one judge there, I forget his name now, he was supposed to have been one of the first judges in that whole western district...he was in the 80's then. So I forget now just what he was, but anyway I heard that different times...the oldest judge they had from California or in that section of the country.

I: Do you recall his name?

R: I forget his name. I knew it then.

I: You ever see him before?

R: No, no I was more the law-abiding.

I: Well,.

R: But I did go there once, I hadda few brews and I didn't care to walk home...down the mountain side and I did have a sore ankle. It wasn't all a fib. And I went in there and I asked them if they could get the police car and give me a ride home...my ankle, I was limping. Sure, got out and took me home..."Any time your family or you, day or night, need any help, call us." Well, I thanked them for it, but the few brews I had give me that courage otherwise I wouldn't have the nerve to go in there. But I saw that old judge. He was an old old man then, but he was still in business. And the Mexicans they'd come in the white saloons and the whites would go in their saloons and there was no...you had to be looking for trouble if you wanted trouble. That's the way I looked at it. I went in Mexican joints...nobody bothered me.

- I: Well, throughout your lifetime, you've been worked in the camps, in the mines and that, what about strikes...labor problems?
- R: Well, the biggest strike...the only time I was unionized was when. I think in...well, 1946 we had a major strike here in Ishpeming. I forget how long that lasted, maybe six months or something.
- I: Can you recall.
- R: Well, the companies they threatened that they were gonna pull the pumps out, they were gonna shut the whole thing down and be a ghost town and all that propoganda and the union would come back, well they can't take it with them. It's here, you know, the iron. Stuff like that and then the company started to try to get the call back to work, you know. The union wanted twenty-five cents an hour and the company come out with an offer...ten cents an hour, take it or leave it; if you don't want it we're pulling the pumps. We're through. Well, then all the supervisors, they're the bosses and all of them, went around from house to house... come on to work tomorrow or that's it. Ten cents an hour or otherwise...well a lot of more B.S. into it, you know. I never went back then, I didn't. Well so some went back and well that's when the comotion started...heavy picketing and monkeying around there.
- I: You mean these supervisors would come to find out where each man stood.
- R: Well, they knew where you lived and they'd come to your house or wherever they'd meet you and tell you, "Tomorrow the mines are opening..." to come back to work. That's it now...if you don't, you're out of a job...you're through, that's all. And lot of them old timers believed them, you know; so that went pretty good for two or three days and then they shut her down again. Shortly after that they settled it...the union twenty-five cents an hour. Well, there were cars dumped over and strike breakers...I remember there were some...(chuckle) even fixed that truck like an armoured car with planks and peep holes to try to run the picket line to go to the Mather Mine.
- I: The company was behind them?
- R: Yeah, well of course they were pushing...they wanted them guys.. that's one way they try to break the strike, see. One of the superintendents here, his father I guess had been superintendent at the Gay Mills during the 1913 Copper Strike.
- I: Who was this? Or would you prefer not to.
- R: Well, maybe not.

I: Okay

R: He made the crack, he said, "My father helped break the strike in the Copper Country in 1913, and he's gonna do the same thing here. Well, that started a lot of...I think they dumped him car and all up here too up here on Second Street when we went out here, he was living up there. And one of the strikers got shot in the foot out in West Ishpeming.

I: Who was he?

R: Huh?

I: Do you remember him?

R: I think his name was Rousseau...an Italian...I never knew him. Well I knew him by sight, I guess.

It would probably help if you knew the superintendent

R: Huh?

I: It would probably help if you knew the superintendent for someone who years from now might want to write this up.

R: Well, the superintendent at Mather A was Haller. I forget it was H. J. Haller or something like that. That was one of them, but there were many of them. Every mine had a superintendent. At our mine where I was working was Charlie Staggle. He's still living. He's old. And at the Negaunee Mine was a fellow called Moulton. Elliot was the general manager.

And all these guys would go around from house to house.

R: Not them, that would be the big wheels. That would be the foremen and shift bosses and mining captains and second captains and what have you that went around.

I: Guys who were in touch with the men.

R: Yeah.

I: So the union won the strike though. Well how did they get the other guys that were going back to work to hold out on the strike?

R: By picketing...mass picketing.

I: Was it pretty heated at times there?

R: Oh yeah; but not no physical, you know. Nobody was trying to hurt anybody in particular, it was just the idea what you doing that for, you know.

I: Do you recall when the Copper Country strike was on?

R: I remember..

I: And what was going on here?

R: Well, I was a kid. I remember the National Guard going through Champion to Copper Country on strike duty. But in 1913 I was maybe about eleven years old. To get back here to this strike at the B(?) Mine, they serve an injunction then, you know, on the Union Secretary, you know, like present local officials and there was one up in Champion, I know him well, Baker..Clarence Baker, his nickname was K.O. Baker and he was on the...one of the officers in that local. Well, when they had this back-to-work movement... see there were several companies here then. Now it's all one company; but then there was several companies and had this back-to-work movement, well his wife chased him to work. He was working at the Blue(?) Mine. "You gotta go to work!" Took his dinner pail and went. He got to the mine and they wouldn't let him go down because there was an injunction served on them guys that was officers of the union. Well, there was poor Clarence caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Laughter!

R: That's when the women got something to say to them!

I: I bet he got razed about that for the rest of his life, hey.

R: Well, I don't know. Not too much I guess. I saw him here not long ago. He wound up...that mine shut down...Ford first owned the Blue(?) mine and then they sold it to the North Range Mining Company...that's out of business now too. North Range owned that Blue..(?) Mine and the Mary Charlotte at Negaunee at that time. So they...but Ford opened that mine...started it...Henry Ford of Ford Motor Company.

I: What other companies were mining here?

R: Well, Republic Steel ran the Cambria Mines or North Range...in the end it was just the final two was the North Range and CCI. North Range played out.

I: When did it play out?

R: Oh, I don't know. Five - six years ago, I guess. I don't know exactly the year. But they ran their last mine, I guess, was the Champion. They opened that Champion Mine after all them years. That shut down in 1913 and was say maybe ten years ago and more they opened that mine. And must have took quite an amount of iron out of there again and they finally closed it down; but it was a...

North Range was a company that ran on a shoestring anyway...small outfit Archibald was at the head of that, I guess. That's all there is around here now; but Cleveland-Cliff, they're tied up with many companies. They're operators...they're the Ford Motor Company at the Humbolt Mine and they're in with Inland Steel and Armco and Uni-Canadian...what do you call that...Sault-Ontario, they're in with that...lot of different ones...Harvester.

I: To go back, what was it like watching the National Guard come through during the 1913 strike?

R: Well, being eleven years old, it was something that you remembered. I remember they were going baggage cars, you know, the baggage car open...they had stopped in Champion, of course, that was a railroad point, you know, they had a stop there for orders and that. I remember them guys sitting in them baggage cars, you know, them big doors open...on the floor there with their feet hanging out, all in uniform.

I: What kind of rumors were you getting down here...down here in Champion about what was going on in the Copper Country?

R: Well, the newspaper, that's about all and then naturally, I don't know how much truth they got out through the papers because they were all corporate papers, you know. That was the trouble, everybody was on C & H's side and they were wrong in a lot of things, you know, in Calumet & Hecla up there. They shore were! I heard a lot of stories there from the real old timers when I worked in the Calumet...that was involved in that strike.

I: Like what?

R: Oh, like having...importing gunmen, nothing but thugs, you know, up there...trouble makers and scabbs, strike breakers, low morals, you know, worthless. There was a lot of that. Never, you know, never get anything in the papers. Anything the editorials the paper'd write up would be all against the union strikers, and everything was for the company.

I: Were...did miners try to come down here to get a job in the iron mines at all?

R: Well, I wouldn't remember that.

I: Well, were they blackballed?

No, well they could have been. I don't remember that part, that's too far gone. I remember in later years then during the Depression, C&H bought this Ropes Gold Mine here in Northern Ishpeming. We weren't too far from that today. And C & H got that and opened it up for exploration. There's gold down there. And I remember then I was out of work then...that was between '32 and '35 and I went to

the office up in Calumet, put in my name to get a job here. And the employment up there, he told me, he said, "You're...there's nine thousand names on the list and you're the last one." That's the chance I had of getting into that...of getting a job up here. But that didn't last long and they gave that up.

I: Well, throughout your work experience, you must have run into some real unique characters.

R: Oh there was lot of them if I could think of them.

I: Let's start about back in Champion there.

R: kids?

I: Un hum, who were the town characters?

R: Oh, we had them there too, you know...town drunkard like you read about.

I: Recall them.

R: Well, I can't just think...there was different ones and was so many years ago. See Champion was quite a lumberjack town too when I was a kid...lot of lumberjacks there you know...they'd come down in the spring and fall.

I: Did the lumberjacks and the miners used to have it out every now and then?

R: No...the lumberjacks fight amongst themselves and the miners, the Finns and the Italians used to have it out. They claim in Gwinn on Saturday night, you'd see an Italian going down the street playing an accordian with a shotgun strapped to his shoulder. (Laughter!) I don't know how true that is, but they couldn't see eye to eye. And what was the trouble...you know what was the trouble with that French and Italian and...nobody could talk English and you hear somebody talking in their own language and they'd say, "Well, that son-of-a-gun is talking about us. We're gonna put a stop to that," you know that's what was the...when people started to understand one another, there was no more trouble. That was your trouble. You know, well see, we had it in school. When we were kids, the Finn kids, they talked Finn. Well, you got some kind of an idea if they're talking Finn, they must be talking about you. But you don't see that no more. They talked Finn in school, I mean in the playgrounds and all that. And the French that spoke French, they spoke French. So I imagine there were some things said.

Were there any scuffles you recall between the groups?

R: Oh yeah, like in Champion when we were kids, the school was half

way...see Champion is in two parts like Champion and Beacon. They had two Post Offices. There was one up in Beacon and one down in Champion. Now it's all one, Champion; but half way up there was the boundary line you'd call up the hill to Beacon, that's where the school was. Well the center of that school yard or lot there, whatever you'd call it, the entrance going up to the school was on a hill top...that was the boundary line. If you got caught up on the other...there without reinforcements on Beacon side, you were gonna get your clock cleaned and vice versa. If they got caught on the downtown, used to call that uptown and downtown them days...if you were on the downtown side and you never had enough reinforcements, you were gonna get bruised up a little bit.

I: Who was on the different sides uptown and downtown?

R: Well, downtown was mostly French and the Swedes. Uptown was all Finns and a few English...a few English too uptown.

I Oh! Did the French and the Swedes help each other out against the Finns...

R: Oh yeah, downtown that didn't make no difference what you was. You could have been Finn living downtown, that was all right.

I: Were there a couple?

R: Oh yeah, they had Finns. We had farmers there and that. There was...how would you say that, your race or your nationality didn't mean nothing. Was just uptown and downtown, youknow, that's the way that worked. And then at Fish Lake, I guess that's on the map that's called Lake Addey...that's quite a summer resort lake now. That's about a mile and a half this side of Champion...west of Champion or east of Champion. Well, when we were kids there were no camps or nothing there. That was wild yet. Well, we had what we called a half-way rivalry then. That's...well did you notice when you came up here today you saw that sign that says Humbolt. Well, that was called Hubolt now but in my days that was half way down further west a couple miles...that was Humbolt where the mines were. And this area was called Half-Way. But now they got the Humbolt sign there so that's in Humbolt Township. Well, there was rivalry then at that lake...we each had our own beach there. Well in fact, there was three beaches. The uptown kids were up on the further end and we were on the south shore for the downtown kids and on the...what would be the east shore was the half-way kids. Well, don't get caught over there.

I: Did you ever get caught?

R: Oh yeah, we was always looking for a little excitement, you know. Sure! And then if they got...that was a brawl, but long as you

mind your own business, you stay where you belong.

Stop in tape

I: All right, let's talk about some characters.

R: Well, that brings to mind...I've known a lot of them, but I've forgot a lot of them. But one buy in particular when I was up in Calumet, a fellow called Alec Duhame...his nickname was Towin and he was on a different shift but we both changed in the same dry in the Red Jacket Shaft up in Calumet. And he was going down, dressing up to go down in the mine and I was up undressing to go wash to go home. Well, I was working the night shift and Towin was cussing over there, you know, bitching about things and the lad changing next to him said, "Well, what's the matter Towin? What you bitching about?" "Bitching!" He said, "They call this God's country," he said, "It might have been, but he left here a long time ago."

End of Side 2

I: This is Part II of the taped interview with Walt Arsenault and we're going to continue with the discussion of this same character.

R: Well, this Towin, Duhame or Alec...we figured he was a little mental disturbed, so they sent him to Newberry to be looked at there at the insane asylum there in Newberry, you know. They examined Towin and they found out there was nothing wrong with him so they give him papers saying so that he was not insane or anything like that. It was left at that and Towin came home and he started working and he got into some kind of an argument there with a guy there and the guy told him, he said, "Go on Towin, you're nuts!" Towin said, "Listen here," he said. "I've got papers to prove that I'm not," he said, "Have you?"

Laughter!

R: So Towin was right again

I: How do you spell this guy's name?

R: D-u-h-a-m-e I guess...Duhame, something like that.

I: And his first name was...

Alec

T: Alec? Recall anything else about him?

Well, he was working one time at the flooring mill, hardwood flooring mill that we got here in Ishpeming...I guess it's called the

Robin's Flooring Mill; and he put a...in them days it was a nickel for a bottle of Coke or pop...and he put a nickel in the machine and nothing came out. So he broke the machine and retrieved his nickel. Towin got fired.

I: Where was he from originally?

R: Champion...I was brought up with him.

I: French-Canadian...his parents were also from Quebec?

R: Yeah, I imagine they were. I don't know exactly where they were from. They were no relation.

I: Is he still around?

R: Yeah, he lives in Champion. In fact, that's his daughter where they got the pasties...Beverly.

I: Do you recall anything else about this man?

R: Well, there was a lot of things. Well one of them, I don't know whether you want it on tape, but he...

I: Put it on!

R: He had a garden back in Champion. He had his own chickens and they were going into his garden. So I met him there on the road one day and was talking to him and he said, "You know," he said, "I got an invention in mind," he said, "And I think it's gonna work." I said, "Well, what you want an invention for...for what?" "Well," he said, "To keep the chickens out of my garden!" Well I said, "What kind of an invention that gonna be?" "Well," he said, "I'm gonna fix up a little outfit with a spring that I'll tie a spring under each of my chicken's feet," you know, with a spring, "and every time they go to stop, that won't let them stop, see, the spring will...and they'll walk right across the garden."

I: It'll bounce their feet up.

R: Yeah, they won't step in the garden. "Yeah," I said, "That sounds interesting." I said, "What you gonna call that, Towin?" And he said, "The Walkaways". (Laughter) And that was the end of that one.

I: The idea was that it'd keep the chickens walking all the time

R: Yeah, they can't stop see.

I: Can't lay eggs or anything.

- R: No, they keep going. (Laughter) But that was his idea. Another time I met him, oh sometime I'll go downtown here and he says "Hi, Walt!" And I said, "Well hello Alec. How are you?" He said, "You still living in Ishpeming?" "Yeah!" "I wouldn't live here for any money" he said. "Why not?" He said, "You worked in the Barnum Mine," he said, "The Cliff Shaft," he said, "You know this city is all undermined...this town." "Yes," I said, "They left a mass of pillars down there to hold up." "Ah, don't make no difference," he said, "Someday this whole town is going down." He said, "When that happens," he said, "I want to be on the edge looking down!" Laughter! Old Town...oh there are a lot of other stories I can't think of. He was a character...there's a guy never drank not to amount to anything and he was lucky. Nobody else could get a job, Town would get one anytime. I don't know what made that.
- I: He just had a knack for being there at the right time, hey.
- R: Right time and well, he'd get a job.
- I: What about another character?
- R: Well, there's a lot of them that I don't recall now; but there was a lot of them.
- I: What about old Ed Loukinen?
- R: Old Father Loukinen...Old Grandpa Loukinen...
- I: Yeah, L-o-u-k-i-n-e-n.
- R: Yeah, I knew him. I got along good with the old man.
- I: What was that old man like?
- R: He wasn't bad. I got along good with him. Some people said that he was hard to get along with, but I stayed...like I told you, I stayed at the farm house there, you know. Got pretty chummy with the old man.
- I: Do you remember anything about him?
- R: Well, a lot of time we were discussing...he was down there by the lake shore, you know, on the old farm place. Ben lives there now, hey?
- I: Un hum
- R: Well, he was gonna try to drain that bottom out there. He was gonna plant some kind of a marsh hay or something that would still be good for feed in that, you know, and same time help dry that up. I never did know how that come out; but that was his idea. But he was well read up. Talking about things...that's quite a

few years ago. This is in the early 30's and was talking then, you know, what I thought of the Communist government in Russia... you know, that stood then I don't know how many years. Like I told him, "Far as I know, anything that stands that long, there must be something to it, you know." He was pretty well read up. I always remember one time...wasn't anything legal...

That's all right.

R: Your dad and I were...I went up there, was Depression days, and I coaxed your dad to come and go and set a net at Sturgeon Point there on Portage Lake. So we went and set the net and the next morning the lake was rough...the channel; and well, I put the pressure on Martin, your dad, and come over there and Martin said, "It's pretty rough Walt." He said, "Pretty hard to raise a net from that kind of stuff." "Oh, we can do it." Well, we wanted to curiosity, you know, see what was in that net. So your dad said "Okay, let's go." We jumped in the rowboat and we rowed out there and we raised the net. And it was cold...it was fall and it was freezing on the shores, you know, in them cattails and that and my hands froze right away and he was trying to handle the boat, you know, to raise that net and my job was to pull the fish off while I was ripping the net. He said, "Hold on," you dad, "Wail awhile, Walt, the rate you're going we won't have no net left here...you're ripping it all up." "Well gee, Martin, I don't know." And them suckers would get caught in there, you know, they wrap themselves in the bag, you know, it's almost impossible to get them out... you know, they twirl themselves in there and they're like in a bag in the net. Well your dad said, "Well, you try to handle the boat." Well, I never was an oarsman or boatman..."I'll try," I said. Well, I was up on the shore in them waves, you know, trying to keep a straight line, you know, to handle the boat to keep the nets so we could reset it. Well finally your dad said, "Well, never mind," he said to me, "Well pick it up and take the fish out of it and that's it. We head for home." We couldn't go back home through the channel, it was too rough so we cut across...you know where Princess Point is there?

T Yes.

here Billy Loukinen's school house?

Old Man Heideman had his property...

In there...do you remember there was a like you look through there you could see the lake through an old road. We come across there, you know, the waves was you could handle the boat and we got off there and we had a...oh, we had some nice pike in there, eight, nine, seven pounders...you know, big ones, and we had one rainbow in there...beautiful, it was five pounds. We weighed it after we got home and that one, it would have missed that net if

it would have went six inches over more; but he went in there. And I was thinking about your Gramma...gee that's gonna be delicious when she fixes that rainbow up. Got over there, you know, and right away the old man he seen that...boy I can see his whiskers...he had a moustache you know, that kind of went up, you know.

I: Curled up on the ends.

R: Yeah, oh man he took that fish and he cut it all up and he salted it and we had the head and the tail and boiled it. He had that for beautiful salt fish, you know, he loved that. He salted the...

I: He grabbed that one right away, huh.

R: Oh, right away. The rest he didn't care. But they were big pike They're good, you know, them big pike. The bones are big in them.

I: Well, tell me about these Depression days on Princess Point. What else was going on there?

R: Well, nothing besides monkeying around.

I: You working in the camp there?

R: No

I: No logging.

R: Well yeah, for awhile there my father-in-law, Lillian's folks father and a fellow called Charlie Parcello, where Holman's live now, where Axel lives now, there were six forties up there. They had bought that from Heideman...the Heideman you're talking about, the pastor or minister; and they logged that...they took the Spruce and pulpwood out of it. Then after that or was it before that, Lillian's dad and a fellow called Makela, he was a store owner over there up in Laurium on Hecla Street or on top of Calumet hill...that's Hecla there...no Lake Linden Avenue.

I: Yeah.

R: He had a store there and they went back in Big Traverse Bay and cut the pulp there, Spruce, beautiful Spruce; and I worked there. I cut their logging road for them. I followed an old pine road, you know, that logged pine years ago...and I brushed that out for them and I got a dollar for every hundred feet and you know, figured that strip about twelve feet wide and chop everything down.

I: That's working.

- R: Hundred feet one buck...well, there was no money, you know, and I had a Model T and we traveled...our gas was about ten cents a gallon then I guess and I think on a ten-gallon tank I could run there five...or a week, you know, from Lake Linden to Big Traverse Bay with my Model T and the rest was clear profit. Well then when it came winter, they had horses that hauled that to Traverse Bay and they hired a big Holt tractor, caterpillar from John Messner and old loggin sleighs. The loggin sleighs were kind of dry rotten and they had a lot of trouble and they started to haul that then from Big Traverse to Lake Linden and put it on the banks of Torch Lake and that spring they thrown that in the water and then the bargg-or skows picked it up and hauled it wherever it was going. And that was all peeled.
- I: What years were this?
- R: That would be like 1933 or '34
- I: Wasn't there a big load of wood lost too?
- R: A what?
- I: They tried setting up a boom and a storm came and just blew it all out to...out in the middle of the lake?
- R: Oh, I don't remember that.
- I: Back in those years?
- R: That pulp they had cut at Princess Point, that was thrown in the water too and then loaded on; but I never heard they had too much trouble with that. But then the Big Traverse Bay, then well, the company of Messner furnished a tractor driver and that run on two shifts. See, had seven of them big loggin sleighs and they held about six or seven cords of four-foot-peeled Spruce. There were two tiers on them big sleds and that was like frozen herring and that road was a plowed road, you know, and the tractor drew a V-plow and that was an awful rough road. And we had a train, I think it was seven of them sleds each holding about seven cords. Big sleighs, you know, loggin sleighs. You'd go a little ways and you'd have to stop and bump all of that pulp back on, it wanted to slide off, you know and bump that off and then we'd be going and all at once maybe...it always happened it would be one of the middle sleighs...a beam would break or a bunk on a sleigh would break, you know, dry rotted. Well then you hadda go in that deep snow with the tractor and knock every...you know, trample your snow down and switch that thing out of there. It would take hours and couple that train up again and go to...you know, go on to Lake Linden. Well them trips, it would take...the quickest we ever made it was in eight hours and it would be seventeen and eighteen hours, one trip. And I got paid a dollar a trip. Well, say we got in well say seven o'clock tonight or, yeah, I say I got in, you know, in the afternoon and you add seven hours to that and then you go back to that sawmill office where the old sawmill

used to be there in that bay in Lake Linden, you know, going out towards Princess Point...used to be a sawmill there on the right on the lakeshore.

I: Yeah.

R: Well had an office there and that mill was still up but it wasn't operating. So they had a watchman there. Well I'd go in there and I'd wait there, you know, figuring they should be back in eight hours or seven...used to go after seven hours to make sure it'd be on time. Then you'd wait. Now if you had to wait there sometimes eight to ten hours longer before that thing would come laying around that floor behind the stove, you know, in the winter time. Then they'd come and they'd bring their load down to the landing to the lake shore and they'd bring her back in the tractor shed and we'd grease that up and we'd start off. Then on the way back, we had to stop on the top of the Gay hill, if you're familiar with that and we had to put snugs on the runners, you know, chains around the runners so that load wouldn't push that tractor in the snow or run over it, you know. For like using...that'd be used like breaks, you know...tie a chain.

What were these snugs, just chain?

Chain, yeah, on the runners and that would drag, you know, and kind of hold that back otherwise that tractor'd never handle it, you know. That's quite a train behind it. Well, to be on the safe side, I'd go and I'd put them snugs on and had a lantern, kerosene lantern, and then I'd run behind the loads to the bottom of the hill just the tractor operator stayed in the cab, you know, in case something went wrong that there wouldn't be two of us in there, you know...could get killed possibly, you know, if that thing didn't stop.

I: Sure.

...didn't hold back, well that's the way that went for dollar a trip.

I: What about old violating stories back in the Depression years.

Violating, oh yeah.

You must have shot a couple deer back there.

Oh yeah, they did a little violating in the Depression days, get a little meat; but that was all in fun.

I Can you recall any of those nights?

Well, I don't know if I want to go into that.

Go ahead everyone did that. That was the way of life in those

R: No, not too much. I remember shining one night in the car and come by Jack Pon(?)'s camp...he had a shack there, that's in Princess Point...along side the road across from (?) and he had an outside toilet there with tarpaper covered and them tarpaper nails, you know, that shiny washer-like, you know, so the nail wouldn't pull through the paper. You ever see that?

I: Oh yeah

R: They're about that big around and the nail went through that and you nail your tarpaper down with that and then the wind and that couldn't...

I: ..rip it off.

R: ...couldn't rip it off. Well I told my partner, "Stop, stop! There's a big one over there," I said. The light was showing on them...

On those washers.

Laughter!

R: We'd had a few drinks, of course, and we backed up, you know... to the whatayoucallum there and..."That's no deer, that's whata-youcallum's toilet." Laughter!

I: Good thing you didn't shoot holes in his roof

I: Good thing you didn't shoot holes in his roof.

R: Well, I got razed about that. Oh, had little incidents like that. Fishing the same way, violating. Netting was violating, but we didn't do it to make money, just, you know, something to eat.

I: 'o survive

R: Help to keep things going, yeah. Nothing was spoiled or done for, you know, to waste. But that was all right. Oh, we had a lot of little adventures. Them days you could get a...moonshine...that was the prohibition days then, and moonshine was, oh I don't know, it was from dollar a quart on up and times were so tight, there was a neighbor lad living next to me, young fellow like I was, just not married too long...Bill Bouviar, his name was. I guess he'd living yet.

I: How's that name spelled?

- R: Bouviar...that's the same thing as Kennedy's wife there...same name as that I guess. And we tried to figure out how to scrape up a quarter between the two of us, two married men with families to go and buy a half a pint of moonshine. Was that time...I often laughed about that. That's the way it was.
- I: That's difficult for me to even understand, you know
- R: That's true. Them Depression days were tough. Want to go in that a little bit?
- I: Sure!
- R: Well, I can tell you something about the Copper Country maybe you never heard. That was Depression days when I was around...I was there. They used to issue...the government used to issue flour... you know, one thing about Depression days, it was not only a few that was not working, everybody was not working. Everybody was in the same boat. That's what made it so good, you know, there was no...and the government issued flour and all that flour came in sacks, fifty pound sacks with a red cross printed right on 'em, you know, and they, of course, issued that, see. And in Lake Linden, Pat Trainer was the Superintendent of the School in Lake Linden and he was in charge, he was one of them. Well see, we were a family of four. We were entitled to a hundred pounds a month and we were only getting fifty and they claim up in them shaft houses, them old abandoned mines up in Keweenaw County, somebody had been walking around there looking around nosing and they looked down the shaft and all you could see was them Red Cross bags, you know, been thrown in there and caught onto spikes and timber and ripped open and just hanging there...flour was thrown away by them people who was handling that, see. And that came out. Lot of that stuff was going on.
- Why would people do that?
- R: Well, all I can see is they were gonna try to make you spend your last penny that was to get you to go to your grocery stores and buy something, see.
- So there was that kind of profiteering...destroying the supplies to make a little more money on the little...
- R: Well to get back again to who started this, Bridgeman and Russell had a creamery in Chassell or in Hancock and they were a big outfit. They made butter and made everything. So one of the girls that was working at Bridgeman and Russell, she come out and she said that she was unwrapping relief butter. We had butter in the pound bricks with the relief wrapper on it, you know, or a plastic and she was unwrapping that at the creamery. Well, started to look into that... "Oh yeah," they said, "Yes, they had bought a carload from the relief office in Houghton because it was gone ransid and they had

sold it to Brigman and Russell," that was their story, "for ten cents a pound to be reprocessed." That was a lot of bunk, see. They didn't want to put it like on the market. And then they used to give like pork, you know, like salt pork, hams...and I think bacon too and that, and I think each family according to the size was allotted so much of this, so much of that. Well, then they had the storekeepers handling that at the meat markets. Well, if you were a good friend of that market, you'd get choice, you know; and if you wasn't, you'd get what was left, you know, not very choice pieces. And the same with everything else. I found out after there was attics in them storekeepers and clerks that was loaded with flour and everything else. They had the first choice, you know, weren't entitled to it even. All of that was boiling. Then they had us traveling miles in an open truck in the winter. You know, we went as far as from Lake Linden to the top of Snake River Hill...work on Highway 41 in the ditch, you know...open trucks in the wintertime. Well, you get in the back of one of them. Well then, there was a complaint made about that, well then they found that if you hadda go more than twenty-five miles, I think, then they hadda enclose that truck. All they did then was put a box around it...was like we were sitting in a van when they hadda haul you that distance. But then the people started to grumble. Well, the Communists got in there a little bit. They were in Hancock, you know. They were up there building a hanger building in Laurium and that was done by relief workers, you know, you hadda work out your relief like one week a month for whatever relief you got; and they were working at that and these Communists came there and made a little trouble...pull a scaffold down and men were on it and well that made good for the Gazette, you know, and all that. Well then we decided that we didn't want no part of that but we didn't want...we weren't satisfied with what we had, so up in Lake Linden our group, Hubbell and Lake Linden bunch, we had a meeting what we called a Rose Bowl. Up on top of them gulley's there in Lake Linden, out on the edge of town there, you know on your left as you're going into Lake Linden from Houghton, them gulleys, they went on top of that and capped two of them and put and filled this gulley, you know, there's a gully here...except the tops of these two, they were gulleys like this, going like a range back there, and fill in that one and have a big flat surface there and that was gonna be the athletic field for the Lake Linden-Hubbell Schools. So that's where it got the name of the Rose Bowl. So we had a mass meeting up there, all of us, pertnear everybody.

Who was us now?

T: ho was up there? Not individuals, but just the unemployed?

Yeah, the people on relief, you know.

I Finns, French-Canadians...

R: Oh yeah, everything...you were all one them days, there was no such as thing as...it didn't make no difference what you are, you know. You were one of us, that's all.

I: Ah, because you're in the same hard times.

We're all in the same boat. So, we went up there and had a meeting figuring we wanted some rights and so we put out a petition, but a circular petition. You know, it didn't matter where you signed on that, you never knew who the first one to sign that. You know, they couldn't pick out like the ring leaders...still knew enough, you know. Well then when we got that, everybody signed the petition and they we made a what would you call that, a fourteen point...a program, fourteen demands what we wanted. So then we picked out two...

I: Can you recall some of these demands? That would be useful if you could.

R: Well, I think I can remember them. Then that was brought to Houghton, a fellow called Rahan was the administrator for all that district and he was a sharpy because during that...before that there was some big floods in the Ohio Valley and Cincinnati and that and he administrated the relief program down there.

I: How do you spell this Rahan name? Is that R-a-h-n?

R: R-a-h-a-n or something like that, I forget; but he was the administrator and he was a sharpy lawyer.

I: What year is this would you say?

R: Oh, gotta get back to '33 or '34, in them years see...because I went back to work in '35.

I: Okay.

R: So we picked out, I remember, Ed Paulson...he's living around Detroit yet and he's retired, and another lad, I forget his name, Gedda, I guess, we picked them two for delegates with these fourteen points. And I remember some of the fourteen points...the relief office in Lake Linden was in the City Hall in Lake Linden. That was upstairs. You went up there on top of the hallway was just a small area, you know, hallway and there was the office relief door closed. Well, you went up there and a lot of people would be waiting for an interview, looking for a clothing order or you know, something extra or something; and they'd keep that door closed and maybe they might call one in. Well there were old people up there and everything. No benches, no chairs, no nothing.

There you are standing on one leg and then the other one.

I Some real old people too

R: Oh yes. Then they'd get tired, disgusted...they'd go and that was their game, see. Well, that was one of the points.

I: Oh, they intentionally tried to make it hard.

R: That's right, to discourage/<sup>you</sup>from waiting there, get rid of you. Well, that was one of the points. Well, they won on that one because then they had put benches up there and when they were not interviewing anybody in that relief office, that door is to be open because half of the time they were in there with their feet on the desk doing nothing, see, making out they were interviewing. So that was one point. And another point like in my case, I was entitled to a hundred pounds of flour and I only got fifty and I got raised to a hundred pounds; and I was paying rent, of course it wasn't much rent, but the relief was supposed to pay that. Well, we won that and I was entitled for milk for the children which we weren't getting and we got that; but, you know, we got part of it but not all of it because I remember when that Paulson and this other lad come back from that meeting with Rahan, I said, "Well, how did you make out?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "We got in there and when we come out we don't know what we said or what he said." He talked them out of everything...he was pretty sharp. But they were afraid it was almost boiling up there that there could be a little trouble coming up and they'd done so much crooked work that they were hiding and they didn't want that to happen so they gave a lot of them demands which was rightfully ours in the first place. That's the way it was supposed to have been, but they were holding back. So, and I remember then I went to...when I found out they'd pay my rent, Benedict was in charge of that...he was the Geologist there, Benedict in Lake Linden. I went to him and I told him, I said, "According to this I'm entitled to rent." "Where are you renting?" I said, "I'm renting from Raleigh (?)." I said, "We live in the front part of a house and Raleigh and his wife live in the back part." He said, "How much you paying rent?" I said, "Five dollars a month." "Too much," he said, "Too much, three dollars and fifty cents." Told Tillie, that was his secretary in there..."Three fifty." And Raleigh, you know my landlord, he was such a believer, you know, that was like them big shots were like gods to him, you know, he was that type of a person. So I went back, you know, and I said, "Well here Raleigh, I got the rent money for you; but Mr. Benedict said three dollars a fifty cents is enough for this house." "Oh! All right!" So I had my rent paid then, three fifty a month, you know, that when things were cheap. We lived in a company house though, one thing about that; we had a seven room house in Lake Linden owned by C & H, you know, Calumet and Hecla. We paid seven dollars a month rent.

I: Who all was living in this house? I mean how many people?

Just our...well, it was a double house.

I: Oh!

R: But regardless, you only paid a dollar a room. And the other side of us was a family called McDonalds; but in this we had a garage, we had a nice lawn, cherry tree growing out there. Down in the bottom of the gulley had a beautiful garden, water piped down there.. Lake Superior water, wasn't paying no water, no rent, just my utilities. That's why we were working. And I remember our two kids, Marilyn and...maybe the three of them...had one Bob...had their tonsils taken out at the C & H Hospital. They ran it then, you know, the company hospital. Was seven dollars a piece...tonsils, adenoids and Evelyn come home and she hemoraged and we brought her back and she stayed in the hospital a couple days and she come home and she was allright. And the total bill to us was twenty-one dollars. Compare that with now. So in a way...and coal, we bought it through the company at \$5.40 a ton and the wages were about...I think I was getting \$4.60 when I was firing in the boilerhouse a day; but still you just about...you couldn't save. At that time, we had a family of five...couldn't save anything. But then the C & H give us what was equal to fifty stock...you know, fifty shares...the dividend with some every three months. Sometimes it'd be \$12.50, sometimes was extra good and be \$25.00. That's all we were able to save because we didn't have that figured out in the budget. That was like extra, we put that in the bank. That was your...that's how tight. That's, well 10/41 when we left there. And the doctor was free and all medicine was free. Go down to the clinic...well they were great for aspirin.

I: Where was the clinic then?

In Lake Linden right in the same office where the museum is today. That was the mine office or mill office there and there was two three doctors down there and a pharmacy, nurse. You go there sick or anything..."I don't feel good doctor, I got this...I got that," well, give you a handful of aspirin. He didn't say this but that's the way I understood it, "If you ain't dead in three days, come back." You'd go home and take them aspirins; but nevertheless, they took care of you. Lot better than it is now. You saw a doctor when you wanted one and he came night or day. Nowadays you gotta sweat to get...no doctor I think will ever come anymore to your home.

I Remarkable thing I notice when I listen to people of your generation talk about the Depression is there were some nice aspects of it. I mean, you think back and you recall that everyone was in the same boat and there were some good times at the same time.

R: Well, for that reason. See, you couldn't shun one another...you couldn't put on this act, you know, well I'm better than he is... he's poor, he ain't got nothing, he's on relief. Everybody was on relief, so you were all in the same boat. I remember we had neighbor there, I guess Lillian remembers that good as I do, old French people called Paquette's and they had a radio. Well, we couldn't afford a radio yet them days. But Leo had a little radio and he was great for that National Music, you know, that hillbilly folk country and western and he used to get it every Saturday night over in Nashville and he always wanted us to come there, see. Leo was hard of hearing, very hard of hearing so he'd have that radio set up right by him here and he'd have that volume all the way up and he'd be going with one foot (thumping) listening. That went on until twelve o'clock. When we left there our ears were ringing. (Laughter) But that was a Saturday night ritual, gonna listen to the barn dance. Ah, that's what they used to call it, the barn dance...WLS I guess it was or something like that. Oh I'll have to tell you too, after the Roosevelt's...or they signed up, you could have beer, Bosch Brewery started up in Houghton, we were all looking forward to that, drinking real beer again. So it was gonna be out for the Fourth of July would be the first sale, you know, the public would be ready, so Leo and his brother Joe and I and this Bill Houviar and their wives and families arranged for a Fourth of July picnic and we bought a case of jumbos couple days, you know, before the Fourth and brought that down in Leo's basement and we'd long and look at that, Leo and I, those twelve bottles. Well finally we..."Well, do you think Joe and Bill would notice that if we tried one?" "I don't think so," you know, going between us two...so we opened one and we drank it. Oh we thought that was good and put the cork back on the empty bottle and put it back in the case. So the beer was young though, raw. We went up and had our picnic and we drank that and we all got the runs...it wasn't aged enough. So that was the eye opener.

Laughter!

That was the good old days. There was good times then. Everybody was more...everybody was friendlier, you'd visit, you know, you couldn't run a car or nothing like that, but you'd do a lot of visiting. Spend the evening there or people'd come over to your place. Even remember when we went camping...no license, you couldn't afford a car license. Leo had...not Leo but Raleigh had a pickup truck, little Chevrolet...no license, of course, got no money to buy a license plate; but we went up in Keweenaw, him and a family called Marvin Jacksons...they had about seven, eight or nine kids...pick thimble berries; tent and all, we jumped in Raleigh's truck but Marvin had some kind of an old car that he brought his family in; but I think Lillian and I, Sue (Raleigh's wife) we went in the pickup, didn't we? No, we had our own car too, the Model T yet, didn't we? So we all go up to Eagle River and Marvin Jackson's father was sheriff of Keweenaw County then; so we camped there and so one day...this was young people, you

know, with little children and then bigger ones camped, tent. Well, we'd all picked berries every day the men folks and the bigger kids; but one woman, one of the wives stayed at the camp and when she was at the camp she'd cook up her thimble berries and make jam, you know, for what we had picked and mind the kids, the little ones that couldn't go and pick. And then the next day there'd be another wife do the same thing. Well then, of course, when you get a crew, I don't know...Jacksons, did they have nine? They had a bunch of them anyway; but pretty soon nighttime they'd have to go toilet, you know; first thing you couldn't step out of the tent unless you were in it up to your ankles. (Laughter!) We had to move the tent. Remember that. Them were part of the Depression days. Oh yeah, Lillian and I were up there by one of the picking blueberries or huckleberries...picking these thimble berries and she come a running out and looked at her leg, you know...them days you never wore pants or I mean slacks or like they do now...always dresses. You never thought of a woman in anything but a dress. She come out of there and her leg was full of porcupine quills. In that brush, you know, in the thimble berries, she must have run into either a dead one or a live one, but her leg was full of quills; but I pulled them right away. Never had a chance to get...they were still hooked into the stocking. But that was one of the highlights.

You're talking about the Depression, Walt, you're supposed to be talking about the mining.

o no! This is the best...

No, I don't like him to talk about that...about the Depression and all that.

top in tape.

R: ...the Depression, I was sharp enough then, I knew what was going on. Not much you could do about it; but they were...they were enough to make you a Democrat the way they handled it. And then when Roosevelt became President, it was like...and he didn't do nothing only he made the people feel better. He raised the Social Security a little bit. Do you know while during the Depression...

R1: Not Social Security, we didn't have it then.

No, but I mean they raised the relief. We were getting ten dollars a month...twelve dollars, and as soon as Roosevelt went in, we got nineteen dollars and seventy cents because I remember that exactly a month. Well, that was a big raise, you know, from twelve. When we got layed off at the mine, that's before they even had any Federal help, C & H put out a relief but you hadda work a week at it. It was either around the mines on the surface cleaning up and that...and we wound up at Albion, the Nurses Association of Calumet and Laurium, they...an old cemetery that was left go, and

all the monuments were pushed over or the most of them...the fence was gone and all grewed up in underbrush, you know, a regular jungle there, well that was a good idea. They took that and they had us...C & H I imagine was paying...but they paid us off at the rate...well I don't know, we got twelve...ten dollars a month and food order...two dollars in cash to pay your utility bill, that's your light bill, you know, twelve dollars. And we worked a week for that...physical labor. And this cemetery, we brushed that. Cut all the brush, stood tombstones up, cleaned it up and built a fence around it. Well, that was something worthwhile; but at the mine you hadda go and work around them shafts cleaning up and doing that and a hungry boss bossing you as if you were well fed. You gotta just understand that when we were on that relief after that when the State took it over or the Federal Government, then we were under the County. County took charge...put you to work. Hadda go and work you week every month.

I: When was this now

R: Right after the...that'd be like in the same period, shortly after the C & H then, you know, when the Government took it over well then C & H didn't have that anymore; but then you hadda go and work for the County. That's when they built all them WPA roads. But this is before WPA time. I never was on that because I went back to work in 1935. I was layed off three years I didn't work.. '32 to '35.

I: WPA came in this period after...

R: After, yeah. We had CWA, I was in on that.

I: What was that?

R: That was the Civilian Work Administration.

I: What kind of jobs did you work there?

R: Well, that was the Rose Bowl.

I: Oh!

R: And I was blasting up there, me and Ed Paulson. We got about sixty or seventy cents an hour which was a big deal. I made enough money then that I bought a brand new suit. I never had no suits or nothing. Everything was worn out by then. And I bought a Stiltson suit from Montgomery Wards...twelve dollars? Ten dollars...ten bucks. The best suit I ever had, a brown one...in them days. A beautiful suit and wore like iron called a Stiltson. I'll always remember that. So that was part of the Depression. Well, then when you were working for the County, if you ever go back through there, you know where the County Shed is in Houghton

or Ripley

I: Yes

R: Right across where they store all their plows, you know, you see that when you go by; well that was a big hill there. So in order to make sure to keep you working, they didn't believe you hadda work no matter if it was worthless work, they made us move that hill. Shovel that into big seven-yard Walter Trucks by hand and you hadda loosen it with picks and there was that in front of you laying around that shop shovels, you know, motorized equipment that could load that up in no time and they had four of them trucks lined up there and all they hadda do was go across the road to the lakeshore by the sheds and dump that on the lakeshore; and there was always two-three trucks waiting for us. And there were in there and as soon you'd stop to straighten up your back, there was a boss there, County boss called Jack Gerrard, a big bullheaded German, and he'd come walking towards you. Well, I'll always remember him, he had these breeches, you know, and a pair of leather boots up here, you know...and there you were half fed. The food you had wasn't enough. You fed your kids, you know, and made sure your children ate. Well then the parents they had, well like let's say you weren't eating right. You weren't in no physical condition to do a hard days labor in the first place because you couldn't take it. Guys dropped dead and I heard in Marquette County working on them same kind of jobs. It was worse here or just as bad in Marquette County from what I understand after I got back. So and this Gerrard, he was a...oh, they were telling while I was there they were working back of Red Ridge, back at the Beacon up there canal and one young lad there, I guess he was from Quincy, got into an arguement with the boss or something, this Jack Gerrard, and Jack Gerrard left him. The rest got back in the truck and went back to Houghton and Hancock and left the kid out there. Was the youngest lad on that, working his relief out. Well, the kid called up Winkler, he was the County Engineer. Well, Winkler had brains enough to know that you can't do that; so Winkler went and got that one with his own car out to the Red Ridge and picked up this lad and brought him home and he had fired him, of course, "You're through!" "You're fired!" Well, Winkler said, "Don't listen to that." He said, "You come back to work the next morning." So the kid came and I guess Gerrard must have got a little bawling out so he was fuming. So when the lad came, he was standing in the garage, big shop doors there and the kid come by and he was, you know...

I: Rolling up his sleeves as if he was ready to fight?

R: Yeah, bluff, you know; and the kid thought he was gonna jump him and the kid jumped him. Well, of course, there was people there right away, they stopped it, you know. And then there was a fellow called Bob Reynolds, he was assistant to Winkler, and a fellow called Bill Kaiser. And he was telling me and I was on the Lake Linden then and he come by, I knew him well and he come over and

he said, "I pertnear seen Jack Gerrard get his clock cleaned," but he said, "I came too soon." He said, "I hadda stop it." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Up on Quincy Hill," he said, "They were going at it," but he said if he'd a known, he would have turned his back. He would have let Gerrard take a beating.

End of Side 1

(Note: Side 2 was unused...completely blank)

We're still in the old Depression days, I don't know much more about that.

What were the Communists and Socialists up to? You mentioned briefly...the Communists and Socialists.

R: Well, there was a little bit of that, not too much. They showed up around Hancock. Didn't last too long.

I: Snake River area there were a few, weren't there?

R: Well, I never knew too much about that. Although I don't know, I never heard about that because when we were hanging around there Depression days when I used to be over at Princess Point, there was a...your uncle, Alfred...your dad's brother. Quite a ball player and he was playing on that Snake River team, the Robins I guess they used to call them. I used to go up there...I didn't see nothing wrong with the people there.

No...no, they were just normal people, they just had a few different...

R: I just meant...what I meant was no talk or no agitating or nothing like that.

I: Un

R They weren't too bad in the U.P.

Stop in tape.

R: ..name some, can recall some too. Buckskin Jones.

I Tell me a little bit about Buckskin Jones

R: ...Sixday King, Hambone Smith, Walkin Daley

I: Let's go through a few of these...what about Buckskin Jones? Who was he?

R: I got to know him the last drive on the Sturgeon River the year I

got kicked in Chassell there. I drove the river and it was a mixed drive that year...the Houghton Lumber Company and Wooster Lumber Company from Chassell drove their logs down together.

I: What year?

R: Oh, that's the year I got kicked...I wasn't eighteen. About seventeen years old then so was it 1919?

I: Okay

R: That'd be about

I: You got kicked, what do you mean?

R: This scar here, I got kicked by a horse. Didn't we talk about that?

I: Oh no, let's go through this one

R: Well, this here Houghton Lumber Company, you know, they had their mill in Ripley and I forget now who were the owners of that's name... that'll come to me, I suppose. But anyway, they had this big farm on the Sturgeon River...I forget how many forties...beautiful flat land.

I: Where was this located on the Sturgeon?

R: Just up from the highway a mile or so.

I: From 41?

R: Yeah, on that flat...it's flat there. No rocks...I remember the farm kid that was there, he had to go the railroad track to get a little rocks to use his slingshot; you know, that beautiful flat and rockless. Yeah, they had...see this Houghton Lumber Company had this farm...I think it was seven forties, you know, seven forties...

I: What side of the Sturgeon, north or south?

R: Well, if you're going west when you're heading for Chassell...no, you're going north then ain't you?

I: Un hum.

R: Be the west...west of the highway. You know when you come down Snake River Hill...

I: Yeah

R: On your left

- I: Okay, south side of the river...west side of the highway.
- R: That would be it, yeah.
- I: ll right, okay
- R: And they had their logging them days back of old Beaver...Donkin they call that now, and they had about...oh, I don't know...twenty-two teams of horses, see and they logged all winter. Well, of course, in the spring them horses would be run down, tired and almost played out. Well, they brought them up to this farm and it was our job, me and the farm manager's son, Albert Whipple, was to take care of them horses. Feed them up every...we had fed them. We used to have a feed there called the Peerless Horse Feed, that was rich in molasses and alfalfa and corn, could almost chew it like tobacco it had that much molasses in it and had oats, fed the best, you know. Whatever horse was responding the most got less and those that wasn't got more and then we had to exercise them horses too, see. And this farm was all big tractor and machinery but all operated with horses; you know, like it would use four horses instead of...and three horses, you know, instead of one or two and then only work them half a day and take them into the barn and harness up another set of horses and go to work the rest of the day. Just not work them too much, but exercise them...keep them in shape and feed them well. Well then, this is in the spring and they wanted them ready for summer logging, see; them horses had to go back to work in them logging camps again.
- I: They'd really work those horses, wouldn't they
- R: Yeah, well it'd all depend on the teamster. Good teamster would take care of his horses...poor one wouldn't, you know, there was a difference. So then we hadda...this was a Sunday noon at 11:30 and both of us went to feed the horses. We were two young lads...like I said, I was about seventeen. And that day before in this barn stall there was a...one horse, well he'd lay down and he'd push the stall over and that was a new barn with a new basswood floor and I put a cleat against that to hold so the stall wouldn't push out...a cleat, you know, a piece of two-by-four. Well then we were monkeying around there feeding and I was dressed up and I used to put on a clean overall jacket especially to go and feed Sunday. We were in there and Albert my partner, he was filling the feed pails and he'd tell me what horse to bring them to. Well, this one he had made an extra special and he told me to bring the horse down the barn. And I said, "Like heck, I'm gonna give it to mine." I had a favorite team that I used to drive and like. "I'm gonna give it to Moose." When I turned in there, you know, laughing and playing that was the trouble, I stumbled on that cleat and my other foot slipped on this wet new floor and I fell on the back of the horse and the oat pail hit the horse in the front shoulder; you know, it flew. Well, that horse startled and when he come up he got me here and they still had their winter shoes on yet.

Kicked you right in the side of the head.

R: Right here, yeah, below the temple

I: Very close to the temple, hum.

R: And then when the corps...he had winter shoes on yet with them big sharp corps and then when that slid down, it caught me in the neck and pulled some skin off then caught the collar of my jacket and shirt and ripped that off. Then I fell there inbetween the horses legs unconscious. Well, that horse...just to show you that he wasn't mean...he knew I was under him and he wouldn't step on me. He kept his leg up...held his hind leg up instead of tramping on me and finishing me off by being trampled on.

I: He was a good horse, hey!

R: Yeah.

Well, he was your favorite horse too.

R: Scared too...he was startled too

I: Was this your favorite horse?

Yeah, him and I had a strawberry roan and Moose was a black horse.

I: What kind of a horse was it? One of those enormous work horses?

R: Oh yeah, they were them Belgians and then my partner pulled me out from his legs and dragged me outside and let me down and sat against the barn and he started to cry, you know, his nerves were shot; and I guess they noticed that then from the farm house and they came out there and that was the first day that that road was open. They used to flood that, the river would go over its bank and in a certain period in the spring you couldn't use that piece of road, you know, that is by motor car or automobile. But this day, they had a son that worked for Houghton County called Spenser and this Bob Reynolds I was telling you about that was assistant engineer, they both came out there...Whipple's had a Hudson, seven passenger, to get that ready for driving, you know in the spring. And by that then I was be able to Bob Reynold's car, they brought me to Chassell to the Doctor Wilson there and sewed me up and brought me back to the farm house and I woke up and the daughter was there, Eleanor. She was from L'Anse...she was married, this girl. And I looked up in a strange bedroom, they had put me like in the guest room, you know, all bandaged up and I didn't know what was wrong. I thought maybe I was on a bat or something, what the heck, where am I. "Oh," she says, "You're all right Walter, you're here. How do you feel?" I said, "I'm all right, nothing wrong with me. What are you doing in here?" And I couldn't connect, what she doing in my room. "Well," she said, "I just come to see how

you are." And I got to looking and gosh, all I could see was the end of my nose. This was all like jelly here quivering.

I: On the side of your head?

R: Yeah, so I said, "Oh, what happened?" She said, "You got kicked." "Oh!" She said, "Would you like to have your mother come up?" "No," I said, "I'm all right, I'll be all right." "No, well," she says, "She's here now." She had come then meantime by train, see. "If she's here, okay." And then she brought me, after I was able to get up, she brought me back to Champion and old Dr. Van took care of me then. So I tried to collect then, hospital or company to pay for that, nope...not of age...shouldn't have been hired. If I'd have gone after that, I would have gotten the farm manager in trouble. He hired me out of friendship...I knew that family, see. They formerly lived in Champion...and seen I wasn't...that was three weeks I didn't work and I went back and I drove the same team and worked again.

I: For only three weeks you were off. Well, who contracted this drive.

R: Pardon?

I: Who was the contractor for this drive...Woods boss...the logger?

R: You mean Buckskin Joe, well that would have been Wooster Lumber Company and the Houghton Lumber Company. They were floating their logs down together.

I: Tell me a little bit about Buckskin Joe

R: Well, he was a Frenchman...part Indian, I imagine...his coloring would show that. Squatty...he was strong built, barrel type, you know and happy go lucky. All lumber jacks are pertnear all that way. They were a good bunch of fellows only they worked hard and they drank hard.

I: What do you remember about Buckskin Joe?

R: Well, not too much. I never really socialized with him or anything like that. No, I met him through that.

I: What was he known for?

R: He was a river hog...a driver, you know, driving logs. They called them river hogs.

I: Did he wear buckskins?

R: No, I think his color is where he got that name...his coloring...he was dark, you know.

I: Did you happen to know his real name ever

R: No.

I: What about some of those other guys? while back you mentioned a lot of nicknames.

R: Well, there was another guy when I was up at Parent Lake, King... I got to know him. An old lumberjack he was a teamster and he was called Six-day King and I never did ask how he got that name, but I figured maybe he only stayed six days, you know, wherever he worked...Six-day King. But we got pretty chummy and I'll always remember that because there was a preacher from Stevenson down here near Menominee had a...Peppinger was doing the jobbing for them and the contracting, cutting this timber and when it came time to tramp down them roads...you know what I mean by tramping?

I: Oh yeah.

R: When you go through the whole logging roads and pack that snow down by feet, you know. Them days it was like that, you know, all over the width so it'll freeze and they had sent about fifty men from Stevenson.

Just to do that?

R: Yeah, well we had about...I forget...it was either seven or nine miles of logging roads. Them logs were hauled down from Vermilac. So when they come timed in, that was too much crew after that road was trampled...there was nothing to do but lay off and being only a young lad, I was the first one...you know, one of them to get the axe. I went up there and Peppinger said, "Well, after dinner I don't think we'll need you anymore Walter." Felt bad, you know, I was young and figured I was a lumberjack, you know, and that was a bad mark to be layed off...that you're no good if they can't keep you in the lumber camp...felt kind of bad. So I went back into the men's camp, you know, the bunkhouse and King, he was sitting there yet...

Six-day.

Six-day King...he could tell I suppose I must have been down and out, you know, an awful look on my face. He asked me, "Well, what's the trouble Walt?" "Oh," I said, "I got sacked." "Who did that?" "Well," I said, "Peppinger when I come out of the cook camp after dinner. Told me I was through." "Wait a minute." He wheeled her out...he packed a lot of weight in that camp, this Six-day King. He was one of them lumberjacks from, you know, from way back. So that was the end of that. Pretty soon Peppinger came back into the camp..."Hey Walt," he said, "I made a mistake. I didn't mean to lay you off." He said, "You keep on going." Well,

Six-day King went and gave him the business. "What the heck you laying him off for. I need him for the water tanks. See, King went on the night shift there...we hadda ice them roads with the water tanks. That was quite a job too. You're a conductor when you do that...you're a conductor on a water tank. That was something, cold winter nights and you'd have these water holes, they were spaced so far apart either an old beaver damm or something and these tanks, oh maybe we'll say a hundred barrels or water they'd hold. Well, the barrel you carried with you on the tank and slide...you let that slide down in this water hole and in the bottom of the barrel you had an iron handle on it under that, you know, on a hinge like. Take her down and you'd raise her up like that and then the team would pull that barrel up and dump into the tank...you know, a hundred barrels or until your tank was full. Then there was two teams of horses on that tank...it was a big tank and start off. Well, when you get to the where you had iced already...

I: This was for icing the track, right?

R: Icing the road, yeah...for the haul...ice roads to haul logs on.

I: What year was this...1919 as you said?

R: About in that there, yeah. Well, then when you'd get there when it'd get pretty close there where we just got this strip we got through on, the teamster would holler, "Pull the plugs!" Well the idea then was to pull them plugs as fast as you can. There was big cedar plugs and the tank had holes in it, you know...two inch holes here and there, you know, in order to ice the ruts where the runners went and then what they used to call the comb like this...spray out there.

I: Out on the sides.

R: Yeah, and the idea to be a good conductor, you hadda pull them fast because...get them all going pertnear at once, see. Well, some of them tanks you hadda lay on your stomach ontop of them with a hay hook and on top of these plugs you had a hole drilled through them with a bunch of haywire to make grips, you know, handles and you get in there and you'd pull them out and if you'd hit a rough spot, phewsh, you'd get a bath and soon as it would hit you, it'd freeze right on you. You were like a zombie walking around.

I: You didn't even get wet almost

R: NO...well it could, you were dressed to begin with. Soo wool, you know, heavy woolen underwear, then Soo wool pants and Soo wool shirts.

I: When you say Soo Wool, what does that mean?

R: Well, there used to be a woolen mill in Sault Ste. Marie called the Soo Mills and that was a big thing them days. Soo wool was a big, you know...in fact I think I got a pair of pants yet, Soo Wool pants somewhere in the attic.

I: I heard...we'll just go off on just a short tangent, that you can't get those thick woolen pants anymore.

No. I got a pair of thick ones upstairs. They're good if you're hunting deer and you're stump watcher. Put them on and you'll stay warm...they're thick like that.

Quarter inch thick..

R: Oh, I don't know, I guess an eighth of an inch. They were all wool. There were different grades, some poor and some better and then you'd get that phewsh...

A wave would hit you and you'd be frozen instantly.

R: Yeah...not all the time, but sometimes you'd hit a little dip somewhere and she'd...

I: Well, how did Six-pack score all this weight with the woods foreman?

R: What?

I: How did Six-pack have so much influence with the boss?

Oh, you mean Six-day King?

I: Yeah Six-pack, I'm sorry

Well, being an old lumberjack and a first-class teamster

I: The guy was really good, huh?

R: He was good, yeah. I mean he was an asset on a crew, God!

Six-day, right...I called him Six-pack. Maybe he was named Six-day because he liked six packs.

R: I'll tell you a story about that. I don't know, I think it's true because it was told to me as being true, happened at Sidnaw. Them days the lumberjacks had what we used to call a hospital card that was good at St. Mary's Hospital in Marquette. That's General Hospital South now in Marquette. Well, for that hospital card you paid so many dollars a year that if you were injured or anything, you could be brought there and you know, your hospitalization would be paid. It was an insurance of a type just for lumberjacks which was a very good one. And I think he spent three months there that time; but this was after the breakup in the spring, you know, and

the camps gotta stop because everything is breaking up, you know, turning into water and mud and you can't do nothing in the woods. Well, all the camps shut down and that's almost pertnear...in them days there was many camps...this was up at Sidnaw. Well, up at Sidnaw there was a railroad jungle there, a hobo jungle, you know, by the tracks. Well, every year when the camps would break up they'd meet there all these lumberjacks from different camps and that'd wind up too in brawls and fights and, you know, every camp had their own bull, bull of the woods. Well, this King when he was drinking he was mean and dirty mouthed. I can give him credit for that. He was ornery and there was a big guy there called Herman Steaful. And he was a big...

I: What's that lastname again?

R: Steaful...Steffel or Steaful...Steaful I guess

I: S-t-e-a-f-u-l...something like that?

R: Yeah, shoot that's close to the way it sounds and he was as timid as a big St. Bernard dog, you know, he was a big huge man but easy going. And King started at him. There, you know, then the camp cooks are there and they got a big iron pot, used to have, like that...

I: Big kettle?

R: Big kettle and a bonfire and the cooks had made a mulligan there, a stew and gallons of moonshine and made out a hi-ho party there. Well, King got oiled up and he started after this Steaful or Herman and Herman come and tell him, he said, "King, you lay off of me. Cut that out!" Oh, and he got braver and braver, you know. Pretty soon Herman told him, he said, "If you don't cut it out Kind," he said, "I'm gonna throw you in that mulligan pot." And that was grease and everything else. King kept it up. He picked him up bodily and sat him in that and burnt him so bad he was three months or six months or whatever it was, in St. Mary's.

I: Head first or...

Huh?

Was he put in head first?

Oh no, sat in it. You know, picked up like this...you know, boiling grease.

I: Burned his ass, hey.

That's right.

I: And his back and legs probably.

R: Well, that was...they'd didn't play too easy. But it was his own fault, he looked for it; and this happened all winter long.

Where was Six-day from?

I don't know. You never knew where them guys came from. They never told you. You never knew their history or nothing and I never knew him by anyother name but Six-day King. There was another guy there I knew a little bit, his name was Walkin Daley and he was a great walker. I guess that's why he got that name, big raw-boned fellow.

I: What was he like?

R: He was an ordinary old-time dyed-in-the-wool lumberjack

You ever get the chance to know him?

R: A little bit, yeah. I worked in the same lumbercamp. I always remember too up at this Parent Lake Camp, I always think of that once in awhile, we had a piece cutter there, you know, cut by the piece...contract work...piece makers, that's what they called them then. Name was Shanstine...was a German bachelor, I never heard if he'd ever been married, but he was getting up there, you know, in age...not too young; and he was a guy that would even go out on Sunday to earn that one dollar to pay for that day's board... go Sunday and cut enough timber, you know, posts or ties or pulp-wood to earn one dollar that would pay his board for the seventh day, see. Then patch...soon as we'd come in after supper, there'd be old Shanstine patching his clothes...needle and patch...and he'd patch and patch and all winter long. Well, when he'd go down in the spring, he'd be gone maybe a week or a little more, he'd come back broke and he used to make good money, he was a good piece maker them days and all new clothes. Start the same thing again and patch and patch; but this time he went down and was around Berglund, I guess or Merriweather and he come back to the came and we were all talking there and Shanstine he said, "I was..." he talked broken English-German and he said, "I was never so surprised in my life when I walked into the cabin. There was Lizzie Gonya sittin down in or layin down in the bunk smoking a crooked-stem pipe." I thought he was gonna say naked or something, but all Lizzie Gonya was doing was "smoking a crooked-stem pipe." Laughter! When you're young you figure you're gonna get something good to hear, you know.

Laughter!

R: But he thought that was awful. He said, "When I walked into the cabin, there was Lizzie Gonya laying down in the bunk smoking a crooked-stem pipe." Laughter Oh yeah, there was lots of them

timers.

I How about a couple more of those jacks.

h I don't know. I suppose after you're gone, they'll come along...

I: Yeah, I know that.

R: ...by the hundreds after that.

I: The problem is we want to think of them now

R: It was a lot of fun. They fed good in most of them camps. I had an enormous appetite when I worked in the lumber camps; but sometimes in a camp when the crew was that big and the serving facilities, you know, were limited, well then you might have a second table and in some camps even a third table. You know what I mean by that...certain bunch would eat at the first table, then they'd serve again then what they called the second tables, second serving, you know, different crew coming in. Well, in order to get pie... more than one piece of pie, I'd wait til the last table as hungry as I was because at the first table the pies were made figured one piece per man, you know. So if you took two pieces, you might make somebody short if everybody took a piece of pie and that wouldn't etiquitte in the logging camp; but then if you'd wait until the second table and everybody's just about through eatin, all the pie that's left there, you can eat it all if you want. The cook would be happy and you were good then for three - four pieces of pie or as many as you could eat, see. And I'll tell you another thing about a lumberjack, as rough as they were, when they went into that dining room, they were washed up and their hair combed slick right to a tee; and when you sat at that table, there wasn't a word mentioned and if you didn't say "Pass the potatoes," you know, nobody'd listen...say "Pass the potatoes, please." "Pass the meat, please." And that was the rule. And they were washed up and hair combed and boy, perfect gentlemen. No chattering at the table and everything...if you didn't say "Please," you never got nothing...nobody served you. Nope, you hadda say, "Pass the bread please." There's one thing about a lumberjack, he was neat and clean.

Did everyone have their own place to sit?

No...no; but after you...after the crew was reasonably small and together a long time, you pertnear sat always in the same places. You know, nothing would be said if somebody else got in there.

I: Tell me a little more about this hobo junction in Kenton.

R: Where?

Kenton.

R: Sidnaw

Sidnaw rather

The jungle

I: Yeah, the jungle.

Well, every junction on the railroad where two railroads met, you'd find one of them jungles.

Where were some others?

R: Oh Champion had one up here, different places like that.

I: There'd be a lot of jacks there?

In the breakups...rest of the year it'd be them traveling hobos. Lot of them in the olden days, you know.

I: Traveling hobos?

On the railroad.

I: Did you ever know any?

I've seen them, yeah. Never knew any personally. Yeah, there was lot of them them days.

Think of a couple more jacks. They're a special kind of a man, you know. They're very honest, the very lot of them.

Yeah, and they're so easy...they're gullible. I remember even in Lake Linden there when Boniface-Goreman logged there around Lake Linden, they had that mill going yet at the head of the lake there in Lake Linden, you know, the sawmill. And I happened to be one time when Heinz had a tavern in Lake Linden and I was in there. The lumberjacks had all come down for spring breakup or for spring and a well heeled, and I was in there one day when Bill Boniface, he was the walking boss for that outfit, come in and I heard him tell the bartender..."Take it away from them." He said, "I don't care how you do it," he said, "We need them back in the camps," That's when them poor buggers, you know, they always want to buy, you know, buy for the bar, you know they're freaked. They'll spend four-five hundred in them days in a week. But they were robbed of most of that. Now say, okay, one will come in...they're all buying a drink, "What'll you have?" They serve you the bloody best, you know, no matter if maybe them days it'd be fifty cents a drink or something...they'd put maybe twenty dollars down, no change back.

After they were broke, they went back to the camp. I remember one time there after we came back from Arizona during that time when I was looking for work with this company here, CCI. My brother ran a gas station, that's the one that died here this summer, last summer. Ran a Standard Oil station there in Champion on US 41 by the railroad tracks there and what you call...Boniface, the same outfit, were logging back north of Humbolt and they had a whole bunch of Swede lumberjacks there. Lot of them...piece makers, sawyers and all that. Well they'd come down with a stake, you know, three - four- five hundred dollars and had that saloon them years and they'd blow all that and then Boniface would come down with a truck and go in the saloon gather them all up and throw a couple of cases of beer in the truck and haul them all back to the camp. He'd let 'em sober up the following day and the following day they'd go to work. I was at my brother's gas station one morning and they had come down, a bunch of them, and they wanted to go to Michigamme...that's the only place you could get package liquor and they wanted my brother to drive them and he was busy. He told me, he said, "Why don't you take them Walt," he said, "They'll pay you for that." I had a Desota then. Yeah, I said, I'll do that...so there was about four of them and they jumped on and we went to Sundstrums was selling package liquor in Michigamme... I don't know how much whiskey they bought...cases of it. Loaded the car down with beer and whiskey and wine and a few bottles of rubbing alcohol. I asked them, 'I said-you know as soon as we got out of Michigamme they asked me to stop and open up already and started to take a few slugs...and I asked them, I said, "Yous got money...you got a few cases of good whiskey, you got beer, you got wine, what's the idea of that rubbing alcohol?" Oh, well he said, "In the morning when you get up you're sick and," he said, "You mix some of that rubbing alcohol with wine and you drink a glass of that and that brace you up right away." (Done with mock Swedish accent)...that was their eye opener...I imagine. I remember one day of the same year, I was in front of my brother's gas station sitting down and there was a big Swede there, yeah I knew him well too name of Oli Peterson, and he was going by on the track talking to himself and right in front of the gas station he stopped and put his hand in his pocket and took it out and little change and motioned with his finger..."Yust fifteen cents and I'm sick like a dog." Put the fifteen cents back in his pocket and kept going up the track..."Yust fifteen cents and I'm sick like a dog." See, he was on the end of his money then. Nothing else to do but go back to the camp and sober up.

I: Lot of these lumbercamp owners had their own store too and they got the money back that way.

Well, not in my time. In the camp themself they had what they called a van, used to call that the van and you could buy mitts there and tobacco and stuff like that. Went in there and then they took that off your pay.

I: What kind of medicines did they use back then?

R: Hinkley's Bone Linament...(chuckle)...used that good on horses and humans.

I: What was that like? Was that strong?

R: Yeah, kind of a pain killer, I guess. That was the medicine. I don't remember such a thing as aspirin them days.

I: What did you do for a cold?

R: Used to drink a little bit of that linament, I guess. Soften it up a little bit with...some used to put it...a few drops of that on a sugar lump put that in your mouth. Another one was mix it with hot water a little bit. To tell you the truth, I never seen many lumberjacks with a cold. I don't recall anybody hacking and coughing in lumber camp. They were tough. To tell you the truth, I don't, you know, recall anybody being sick with a cold in the lumber camp them days. I don't know why. Maybe nobody had it to carry the germ around. They were all healthy and in good shape.

I: Were in pretty good shape, hard as a rock

R: Oh yeah.

I: You ever swing a crosscut?

R: Oh yeah

Tell me a little bit about that

R: Well, up at Parent...not Parent Lake but King Lake, I went over there with an older French-Canadian...he was an old-time lumberjack called Antwine Burnette and he was a guy that could fix a saw, you know, sharpen it right to the...perfect and we went up there and old Antwine...I went with him. Both of us were looking for a job and went up to this camp at King Lake and that was run to by Charlie Peppinger and he knew Antwine; but he knew me too but Antwine was really the prize he wanted, you know, he was a first-class lumberjack. So, he give us a job sawing and we made money...for them days...we got twenty-five cents a log sawing hardwood and every log was about twelve inches, small timber, you know and they were long and hardly any...just branches on the top. We sure made it there...for them days. I forget how many we'd saw a day, but we'd make ten bucks anyway. Well then when we got through with that well Antwine, well he was an all around lumberjack...he was a wood butcher too.

I: What's that?

- R: A wood butcher, you know, they can make sleigh runners and neck yokes and anything out of wood, you know. You know, they can take a piece of wood and make that into...
- I: Un hum.
- R: That's what they call a wood butcher. Well then I went down on the landing then and I was top loader and it got so bloody cold. That's the time I went up to Calumet. On them landings you're always cold. They were always built on a straight piece of track and you get up on them railroad cars boy in that wind...burns you, cuts right through you, you know, that's the coldest spot. When you're in a lumber in the woods that ain't bad like out there. You know, you're protected from the woods, from the timber...protected from the wind, I mean. That's when I went to Calumet that I pertnear froze to death...and worked in the hot mines.
- I: There's a special knack to swinging that crosscut though, isn't there.
- R: Well yeah, yeah you don't push on it for one thing and you don't bear down on it. You just pull the rhythm, that's the thing. And the saw gotta be in shape. Nobody like that old Antwine...he could fix that saw it'd be pull worms out like that, you know.
- I: Seven - eight inch worms?
- R: Un hum.
- I: And that was it, right, to pull one of those long narrow strips out.
- R: Yeah, gotta know, you know, get the touch to that...get the right gauge and teeth even...and by the way the saw quit working good, right away go to the stump...you had a bottle of kerosene and file, saw a notch in the stump, you don't turn the saw upsidedown, sit her in there and old Antwine with the little bag with the tools in it to touch that saw. Go back again.
- I: Who's the toughest jack you've ever met? You said that every camp had its own bull...
- R: Yeah, but they weren't...I worked lot of places where lot of them were bullies there and if you'd turn on them, they'd run; but not all of them. I remember I was a kid when they used to have them when they were cutting pine in Champion...north of Champion and around Champion. Them lumberjacks would come in, boy and they'd have some free-for-all or I mean real battle royals with corp boots and stomp each other's face. I'll tell you, that's when two camp bullies, you know, from a different camp and they were gonna find

who was the best man. There was a dragged out fight.

I You ever seen one of those?

... ..

I Who was fighting

Oh, I don't remember. Them days, you know, lumberjacks were common. But I do remember well, they had a warehouse in Champion and had mules to haul that up to the logging camps up on the Huron Bay grade of the Pechecke...two team mules, you know, four mules pulling this wagon...big heavy wagon...and on there they had a spring-pole seat. You know, two poles coming up on each side of the wagon like made out of iron-wood, we called them, and then a seat built on that. And a teamster sat in the middle and there was a box on each side...one box was feed for the mules and the other side was his lunch. Say them guys...and then they'd load that up...they'd haul hay, oats, supplies, food, you know, up to these camps steady, to those big camps they had up there. Well, them lumberjacks, them teamsters when they'd leave Champion, they'd be drunk, you know, drinking right to time to pull out for the camps with the supplies. Well naturally when they got up there, the next day they couldn't eat, they were sick but the cook still give them that big lunch. And us kids would wait after school, that's about the time they'd be getting in around four o'clock...we'd be waiting down at the warehouse and soon as they'd come in jump up on that big spring seat and dig into that lunch. Boy, we used to enjoy that.

laughter!

They couldn't eat...they're too sick to eat, see, from the drinking they'd done before...the day before. And they'd haul with mules. Used to be a song, I forget now ago, but this is one they used to say...Going up. Camel Hill coming down, going up Camel Hill coming down...well that kind of sounds funny and I didn't figure that out until later. It's coming down like they used to, you know, coming down that means coming back and that's when they climbed Camel Hill. See, Going up Camel Hill coming down...you understand?

I Un hum. What was the rest of that song?

R: I forgot...lot of things I should have kept. There's one in particular, I don't know if I ever told you this one about the Frenchman in Lake Superior?

I: No...no, you haven't.

R: Well, I forget just how it goes. I only know a verse of it that I can remember...You'll never drown on Lake Superior so long as you stay on shore...The night she's black like one Tom cat and the wind she blew some more...And you'll never drown on Lake Superior

so long as you stay on shore. And that goes on and on and on and I ain't got it.

I: I've heard

I've told that.

I think my grandfather told me that too.

R: I'll tell you one who would tell you more about it and I really got a kick out of it was Art...no Eddie Palo. He remembers that during the Depression days and I knew more of it then. And he not long ago asked me if I still remembered that...You'll never drown on Lake Superior so long as you stay on shore.

I: Used to hear the acks saying that or someone else?

R: No, that was...I don't remember where I ever picked that up the first time. But it was an old poem, you know, goes on and on.

I: Do you recall anyother verses or songs

R: No, well they're all forgotten. Suppose them days you didn't think they were worthwhile memorizing or keeping. They call....Like all this antique stuff now. I've thrown away stuff that'd be worth hundreds of dollars now.

That's right.

seless to us then.

I: What bout mining?

R: Well, it's a...

I: What's it like to spend all that time underground?

That kind of a life that you wouldn't want your children to be doing. You know what I mean? You wouldn't want a son to follow your foot tracks, although a lot of them do, they make good money down there. It's a rough...and it's a funny thing about mining. Once you start to work underground especially years ago or like ...I don't know if it's like that now, but you were always afraid of getting...if you were layed off, what could you do. Wouldn't be nothing I could do on surface. You had that funny feeling like that.

I: That you...

R: That the only place I could make my living was underground...a feeling like that.

I: You kind of got sucked into it that way.

- R: Yeah, you get into it and it seems that you gotta stay there. It's rough...like the Barnum mine, that was a dry mine; but it was a cold mine. You hadda dress up there in winter clothes to work even in the summer...cold all the time.
- I: So, if you had to do it all over again, you'd try to stay on the surface?
- R: Well, I always thought of that, but if I had to live my life over, I certainly wouldn't follow the same footsteps right from the beginning (chuckle). I see a lot of mistakes I've made...lots of mistakes. I've had chances but when you're young, you know, you don't know anything or any better. I had a lot of chances. You figure, ahck...you know, I once turned down a job that paid five cents more than a job that I could have got something big out of it and that was at Fischer Body in Detroit when I was running a hi-lift. You know, that's one of them like a fork-lift...electric, run by electricity. And I used to go from the Press Room to the Die-Making Department with dies, bringing them back and forth, testing them and all that. And that manager of that plant, he coaxed and he coaxed and he coaxed me and there was five cents different an hour from what I was getting running that hi-lift than what I would have got paid as a apprentice and learned the die making trade. There was one thing that I...there was one boner that I pulled when I didn't take that because them days the tool and die maker was tops and I think it is yet. But a lot of things like that. You don't know any better. To really tell you the truth, you don't know anything until after you're thirty-five. You're going around like a chicken with your head cut off.
- I: Kind of like in a dream...not really quite
- R: Well, you don't care or nothing. You know, no purpose...then all at once it'll come to you well what's this all about, where you going, you know, hold on here...better take inventory see what's cooking. I was thirty-five years old before...
- End of Side 1
- I: The Gousin Jacks were good ones for singing, weren't they'
- R: Yeah, they were pretty good like old Joe Holze there, he'd get around on Christmas Eve at different bars and sing carols and for a guy that stutters, he was pretty good...there'd be a group. He was kind of a character. We were down on the fifteenth, he was a pumpman on the fifteenth level...I was picking samples them days and then at the shaft there was a little shack we stayed in or he did with two big light bulbs and when you hadda wait for skipp for the motors to dump their cars, sometimes they'd be hung up above you and sometimes you'd get awhile down there...hadda wait for the skipp to come down and Joe used to like the company. You know, all alone, you know, pumpman down there and he'd come out and talk and shoot the bull there with the guys. And he was telling us about

St. George...that was a big English Society and the Sons of St. George were having a convention in Houghton and he stutters, you know..."G-g-g-George," when he'd get excited; and he said they went into a sporting place, you know, and they were all sitting around, said there was benches all around and pretty soon a fight started in there. And the Madame came down the steps with a big revolver, Joe said, on her arm like that and wanted everybody out. But, he said, when this fight started, Joe said, we all got up and stood on the benches. When he got up there was a low roof in that little shack they were in and he hit the top of his forehead on the...he got two shiners out of it. Laughter! He said the Madame came down with the gun and said "Everybody," you know stuttering, "To get out, clear the place, but you can stay and you can stay..." of course Joe was one that could stay, you know. One of the motormen there started to laugh...he didn't know Joe and started to burst out laughing because of the way he was stuttering...he couldn't help it, you know, if he didn't know...and enthused about telling his story...and when that motor went, Joe was still there yet and he turned around and he said, "What nationality is that Communist anyway." He got mad at him for laughing. They claim Joe Holze and another English guy or Cousin Jack were hunting...they were strangers to each other, you know, and they met hunting out in the woods...they pertnear was gonna shoot each other. Both of them stuttered. Both of them thought one was making fun of the other. Joe would say something... F-f-f-f-f-...and the other one Hm-m-m-m-m, and they thought the one was trying, you know, fun the other one. (Laughter!) There pertnear was a shooting out there.

Laughter!

R: Another time Joe was in Blackie Nels Bar on Division Street and there was a fight started there and Blackie was gonna come out and throw this guy out and that guy started, you know, to fight with Blackie. And Joe was gonna give Blackie a hand and swung with a haymaker...he missed the guy and got Blackie right between the two eyes. (Laughter)...he floored him. And he was telling me that, he was gonna help Blackie and he knocked him cold...Well, you could tell the atmosphere in the mine payday, like kids, lot of 'em in the cage coming up they'd be happy like last day of school when you're going to grammar school or elementary. They're happy and gibberish...payday. Well, lot of them guys wouldn't last...payday wouldn't last until next payday, you know. Towards the end was eating oatmeal, I guess. That's the way they were. We had one guy there, Pug Hewitt. He'd go up in Liberty Loan and borrow twenty dollars. You know and they said, "Where's your wife? You're gonna need two signatures." I guess, from the way I heard it. "Well, she's sick." Well he said, "You take the form and you take it home and you have her sign it and then come back." See, that was between-the-payday loan. So Pug went downstairs, he signed his wife's name and came up and got the twenty dollars. Nothing...nobody, Pug would pay that back...his wife wouldn't know nothing about it. Pug was a little bit crosseyed. Pug used to

be a pugilist, that's where he got the name Pug.

I: Oh!

R: He wasn't a very big guy, lightweight; but he had experience there. He looked crosseyed and we were working down there in the mine and there was a new guy, I forget who he was now...he didn't stay therelong, and was in the chain gang...chain gang is the guy that does the maintenance, you know, the heavy work...putting things together, you know, heavy iron work, chain gang. So they had himoil something and this guy was gonna hold the moil, see like this...that's like a chisel. And Pug was gonna strike at it with the sledge and Pug being crosseyed, the guy looked at him and he said, "Are you gonna hit where you're looking?" Pug said, "You're damn right I am." "Well," he said, "Somebody else can hold this!" Laughter! You know, he's looking crosseyed but he was looking the other way. Yeah, a lot of little incidents down there that's forgotten. Barnam was a good mine. Well not in the later years when they started to push things along. You know, before that used to be a miner and a helper and they used to use a tripod to drill with a big machine and they never had the new-type bit that they use now then, that was a big bit and a miner had a helper... or they were called a chucker. Well then everything was fine then. Real good place to work...it was that good that you were raring to go to work in the morning...fun time down there, you know. Then after awhile they went to one man jackleg they call it, that's a leg that works on a hydraulic, you know, like a telescope; and a small machine on top of that one man can handle easy...one man can carry it around easy. And then they had that new Carsight bit with a much smaller hole and used smaller powder, smaller dynamite for the same results. All them and then it got different. Wasn't the same mine anymore. Everybody was looking to make money. That was about the best place you ever could get as far as working underground was the Barnam. The air was good only it was cold but you could dress for the occasion.

I: Do you recall any disasters in the mine?

R: h yeah...not this one

I: What was one of the worst ones that you...

R: Well, there wasn't what you'd call a group of any kind in our mine. One guy would be killed at a time, you know, I mean. I know one guy that I worked with Angie Tassin, he went down the shaft. Prentice broke while he was standing on it and he went down and I don't know where they found him. Somewhere down at the bottom. But that was quick.

I: How far did he fall?

R: I don't remember...before he got...he fell onto another prentice

See them prentice, the shaft goes down verticle and every certain distance they got a cutout here like a platform and then you go down a little bit some more and then on this side will be the same thing. The idea of that is if any rock or anything...ore falls, it'll bounce into them, you know, instead of going down the shaft.

I: All the way, yeah.

R: Yeah, well they were cleaning them, see, that fills up with dirt in time and his partner was yet in the cage and this Angie stepped out there and when he stepped on it it was rotten and just that added weight or something, and she let go and all he let was just one little hoot out of him, that's all. It was quick. He knew he was going, that's all. That was one of them...and then there was different ones. One of them there, whole side of the pillar caved in and buried him there.

I: Who was he?

R: Some Finnish guy...I forget their names now. He was up there barrowing along side this pillar and he happened to hit the key and the whole side come down on him. Use the long ladders up there, you know and she came burying him under tons of iron ore. Couple days they got him out of there...pulling that off, scraping and blasting. Accidents like that. It was a pretty safe mine. I guess disaster in the mines in Hector in 1926 when they all got it but one man escaped that mine alive.

I: Tell me a little about that?

R: Well about fifty out at the Barns in Hector ...(?)...was about eleven thirty or somewhere about and they blasted dinner time and they hit an underground lake. That mine was three levels deep, first, second and third level. They busted into this underground lake and I think within ten minutes that mine...that water was within ninety feet of surface up in the shaft.

I: They just drowned instantly.

R: And this one guy, he's alive yet today. A fellow called Wills, a young man. And him and his partner, they were on the first level and they heard some commotion and they knew things wasn't right...they head for the ladder road. His partner got knocked off of the ladders and Wills made it. I forget how many feet he had climbed in ten minutes...I mean, you never could do it natural. He had had help from the pressure or something.

I: Was it this instance when the water was...

R: Oh yeah.

I: ...was filling up?

R: Oh yeah, fast.

The other guy was knocked off by the water?

R: His partner?

I:

R: Yeah, the water and air pressure or whatever because that shaft filled up with water right away, see. Within ninety feet of surface I guess.

T: and how far down was it when it <sup>was</sup> hit, about?

R: Well, they figured at the third level.

far down, how many feet about?

R: Oh, I don't know...not too far down because a boulder...there was a boulder shoved up, a surface boulder into that shafthouse. That was ninety feet from surface. That boulder was that size that it couldn't go through the first or second level, the opening wasn't big enough. .the third level. So that rock came down all around pushed through that level to the shaft and then up in the shaft within ninety feet of surface and they figured they estimated that rock at ten ton about. That's the pressure that was down there.

I:

R: And that swamp...when that caved in the swamp caved in and I was working then for the Michigan-Wisconsin Power Company was putting an electric line from Humbolt to Michigamme and I was working for a contractor from Escanaba that was putting in that line...poles and wire, you know. And we went to Champion to eat our dinner and on the way back we stopped...there used to be a garage in Humbolt ...and we stopped there, generally stopped there to have a bottle of pop or something and then we got the news then that the Barns in Hector had caved in. So we went back to work and we worked a couple hours ...we took a contract like, you know, do so much and then take a ride out there to Barns in Hector. It's only a few miles west of here. And they had a real speed wagon there, company truck that we drove...and we got there and they had the shaft roped off. We took a walk through where the cave was, that swamp was still caving...big tall Spruce trees, you know, maybe sixty feet long be standing there and all at once, pshew... disappear. And they had a raft tied there to the what you'd call the shore and pumps on that and they were trying to pump that. That was just like if you were trying to siphon it out with a straw because that was a big area already...plus the mine being full and they had a guy on there, I think they used to call him

Monkey Malvasio and he was running them pumps on that raft and he was even taking a chance. I wouldn't want to be on that raft because there might have been some suction...maybe that shore where he was tied up to that raft, you know, with cables to trees and that could have been caved in too.

I: He could have gone right down bob, you mean?

R: What?

I: He could have gone down with it?

R: Yeah, he could have went down.

I: How far down did that go?

R: Hadda go to third level because that's where the bottom of the mine, that's where the opening was big enough for that surface rock to come around through, you know, the opening. And while I was there, there was a neighbor of ours in Champion, a fellow called Pete DeRouchers, he was pump man on day shift and he was the pumphouse station was on the third level and there was a fellow called Johnson, I think his name was, he had relieved him at three o'clock pump man. And I met him there and I asked him.. that pumphouse was supposed to have been built that if the third level would have got flooded, you still could go in from the second level through the top of that down into the pump see. See, you could seal yourself off down there. That level could be flooded but still the pumphouse wouldn't. And I asked old Johnson, "What do you think of Pete? Do you think he's living down there yet?" He said, "No, I know if I was down there I know I wouldn't." He said, "That pumphouse went like a cracker box." That pressure...and then there was seven bodies come out of that mine. The captain and the mining inspector and a few others, I forget their name. Hill, I guess, was the mining inspector and the captain was called Tibbit and he had a brother that just started that quit the job as security guard at the Marquette Prison, worked a half a day and he got left down there. Started that morning.

I: Who was the survivor?

R: Wills

I: Oh, that young guy you were talking about.

R: Yeah...his hair turned grey the next day, white. You know

I: From the shock.

R: Yeah...well then how them guys got...they got the bodies, then

there was a drift going over to the Morris Mine, you know. Well, when that pressure came down, them guys got washed down that drift...

I: How far away is the Morris Mine?

R: Oh...oh I couldn't tell you exactly. Let's say, not very far... say quarter of a mile more or less, you know, just for the round figure; but they got washed through. In the meantime, the rest of the debris and all that came and plugged that drift like a dam and that held the water back. It dammed itself, you know, timber and all that debris came and blocked that opening, you know, drift was half the size of this room rounded off. Was like a tunnel.

I: So they got packed in there

R: No...no, that stopped...that jammed up behind them. They were washed through. Then there's some more and the debris and all that came and then it plugged and held back all that water back in the mine that caved in and these bodies were washed out here. So when they went down through the Morris Mine to go down to see what was happening down there, well they found these bodies and they were so badly battered up from what I understood, they only could identify them...like the captain he smoked a pipe and his teeth were notched and they laid them bodies on the dry floor with a hose and washed them off. They took an awful beating, you know, thrown around there like leaves. There was seven...I think there was fifty-two men working and the rest are down there yet. They sealed the shaft and made a cemetery out of it. That was 1926.

I: Very sad time here when that happened in a town that size

I think if I remember right, that made a hundred and twenty-five orphans and I forget how many widows. And there's a story, I imagine it could be true that I heard many times after...there was a Finnish guy living in Ishpeming working at that mine day shift and he had been out drinking the night before and he woke up that morning pretty sick but his wife too, packed his dinner bucket and go to work..."If you're man enough to drink and get drunk, well go to work!" So he took his dinner pail and instead of going to work he went into a blind pig, stayed there the rest of the day and he didn't even know the mine had caved in. Like it'd be quitting time, he come back home. Wife opened the door and she passed out. She thought he was dead in the Barns & Hector. That's a story I heard a few times. Could be.

I: Sure

R: Because I done the same thing. I went to work once in my life at the Barnam and I never went to work. I stayed in my car and I went by a lake and I parked on the shore and I went to bed...

slept in the car. So that could be. That saves a lot of wrangling when you do it that way...chuckle. Yeah, that was the worst one. Few years back here on Highway 41 just after you leave here going down there...well maybe now you won't see that, but you look in the yard there right off the highway there a big pipe coming out of the ground like this and then there's an elbow on it. I forget the name of the people now that live there. He died now, the man but they were two old people. They woke up in the morning and their front yard was gone. Pshew! Mine shaft had caved in and they didn't even know it was there. That must be a nice feeling when you get up in the morning and look out your window and no yard...chuckle...big hole. So they capped that, filled it in and capped it and they put that pipe. I don't know if that pipe is for vent or why or what the idea of that, but that's there. That's only a couple years ago when that went. That was only a couple years ago when part of a street in Negaunee went down and the guy pertnear went into it...but I don't know what made him stop but you know there was no street, no road no more...big hole when that caved in.

I: That could happen.

R: That's just a short while ago.

I You know, around here too.

R: Well not so apt to in the Ishpeming area because it's a different style of mining, you know. See, like under this mine it's mined out...million of tons of iron ore come out from under Ishpeming but they leave pillars underneath there, big massive pillars that hold up the ground...here and there on every level. All engineered, you know and it's holding the burden up. It settles here...you walk down these sidewalks here sober and you think...anybody looking at you would think you're drunk...ups and downs and...chuckle...settling.

If there were ever an earthquake here, it'd be pretty shakey though.

R: Hum?

I If there were ever an earthquake here, it'd be mighty sad.

R: That's be like Towin said, eh? I want to be on the outside looking down!

I: o you remember anymore songs?

R: No

I: Some old mining songs...they'd really be good o get down

I wouldn't know any of that, they're gone too. That's the trouble. That's the trouble. I never was a singer, you know; but I used to like to hear a good song.

I: Henry told me you'd know a lot of them.

R: Oh, I've forgotten them. You forget. I used to speak pretty good French, and that's gone. I could get along little bit, but I... it'd take some doing to get that. Nobody to talk with, you can't... you forget that. Have a hard time now to make a sentence and make sense out of it, you know. But when we were being raised, French was spoken in the home. You go down to your grandfolks, your grandparents, French. Same with the Finnish families in them days, you know, you had a good chance to learn the native tongue, see. Not no more. Won't be long and there won't be a kid around that can talk Finn unless he specialized, you know, in learning it. Either French or any nationality because it's not spoken in the home, not as much as it used to. You go to the churches, they got Finnish churches and Finnish sermons. Couple more years they won't be nobody that don't understand anything but English. They'll all speak English. In the olden days when I was a kid like in Champion, that was pretty well populated with French people. I was raised a Catholic. Priest hadda know how to talk French to give a sermon in French. Lot of the people didn't understand English.

Were you up in the Copper Country when the Apostolic Church had that split?

Yeah, well they had different splits.

T: That big one between the Heideman and the....

R: Yeah.

I: Do you remember anything about that?

R: Well, not any more...when they split and they built that church in Laurium?

I: Un hum.

R: Well, that was just a power grab as far as I know. Certain cliques, you know what I mean.

Yeah, I do. I just wondered if you could recall and tell me a bit of what was going on then.

Well, not any more. You know I used to, at one time I was talking and I think there was ten different Finnish churches in Calumet and Laurium. There was no need of that, you know. Every one had a different idea and there you go one church, one big church would have been enough.

Stop in tape

I: When you think back at it all now, what do you think? Was it worth it?

R: Oh yes.

I: It was pretty rough in the Depression days and growing up in the Copper Country.

R: Yeah, but it was...it was an experience. That's almost like being a soldier in combat and come out of it all right. You know, as long as you get back.

I: Produced a rugged kind of people up here too, you know.

R: What?

I: It produced a rugged kind of people...different than city people.

R: Yeah, well the Upper Peninsula people...I remember in Detroit how you hadda say you were from the Upper Peninsula and you had a job where everybody else was turned down because they were better workers. There's a good work force in the U.P. Used to be...I don't know what it's coming to now. But they'd hire the UP man before anybody else. Go there and tell them I'm from the Upper Peninsula and you got a job.

I: Employers knew that.

R: Take these lads from up here that been cutting pulp and striving for a living. They know how to work and they know how to put in eight hours too, you know, surprising. But, things have changed like everything else. Well I went through the horse and buggy days and now back to jets. Quite a span.

in tape.

R: Used to be a lot of rivalry up there. I don't know what the heck wound them people up.

I: Between Nistemens and Tourvars? difficult to hear exact names

R: Well all of them mixed up there was a rivalry somewhere.

of Side 2