

**TAPE 1 SIDE A**

**Interview with Louis LaJeunesse**  
**607 W. Hampton**  
**Marquette, MI 49855**

**DATE: April 9, 1994**

**Interviewer: Mary Tippett Andes**

INT: If you can give me your name, and your date and place of birth.

LJ: I'm Louie LaJeunesse, I'm kind of nervous.

INT: When were you born?

LJ: I was born 1914, and my birthday is 23rd of June.

INT: Where were you born?

LJ: I was born in Chocolay Township.

INT: In West Branch. And what is your middle name, Louie?

LJ: Tревil.

INT: Can you spell that for me?

LJ: No.

INT: No. O.k. we'll get that later. Now were you born at home or in a hospital?

LJ: I was born at home. We had those midwives them days. There was lots of that those days.

INT: Can you tell me where you went to school and how long you went to school?

LJ: It was in West Branch Township I went to school I went to the 8th grade. Kinda what they went in the country schools.

INT: Can you tell me why you only went to school till the 8th grade?

LJ: Because that's as far as they went in the 8th grade, then we had to work the farms, and we couldn't get to go to high school in town, because is was about 20 miles to town. From the farming country, so it was hard for all the kids, there was a lot of kids that just went to the 8th grade, some of them finished high school when they got married.

INT: Can you tell me what your parents names are, your mothers maiden name, and tell me what their nationality was?

LJ: My mothers maiden name was B. R. St. Amour, and my dads name was Joe Lajeunesse. They were French, we were all French. My parents came from Canada, years ago they come up here to Chocolay Township.

INT: Did they ever tell you why they decided to move from Canada, just for my curiosity?

LJ: They moved here from Canada, because there was a lot of people moving around those days. Lots of people done that, they figured they had to come and start farms and homesteads and they had to clear so much on those homesteads every year in order hold their rights on it, I think it was an acre a year, to, for the farming countries to claim that homestead, they could get as much as they want. We had almost a couple hundred acres and that was all hardwood, lots of timber, so there was a lot of timber to work with. As they cleared we cleared more then an acre, because on the end we had about a 175 foot acres, farms and we used to plant a lot of everything and we had it all we used to blast all the stumps to make the farm, and all the timber we, we sold the timber. In the wintertime it all went to Cleveland Cliffs bought most of it, long stuff, haul it away from 28, it was the year 1928. We've been hauling timber,

INT: You finished 8th grade, and you worked on the farm and you helped to harvest timber, how long did you do that, until what age?

LJ: I helped a good 10 years me and my older brother. Most of the timber went into the mines, and we had tie cuts that went to North Western.

INT: Can you tell me real quick what a tie cut is?

LJ: A tie cut is a square, 8ft. tie cuts went for railroad ties, and all the bigger timber went for the Cleveland Cliffs, and lots of the bigger, longer timber up to 9 feet long, went to Athens mine, and Bunker Hill was smaller stuff and the Maas, we hauled to the Maas lots. Different mines up there for a good 10 years then went for, my dad carried on from there a good 20 years I guess, I spent about 10 years in the woods. Then I got finally got a job in '42 for the Cleveland Cliffs and then I went into I started in the Negaunee Mine and then when the Mather A opened up we were transferred over there. They was putting all steel there. So it was a brand new ball game we had to go into. So we had to go to school for acetylene torches and burn all steel when preparing, putting all kinds of steel together, you know and many kinds of steel we worked with and we had to go to school for that. It was a great experience, to me it was.

INT: I want to back up just a little bit Louie, do you remember how much when you were providing the timbers for the mine, how much you would get paid, was it paid by the foot, or how was that done, did you cut the timbers to a certain size, before you sold the wood to the mine, or did they cut it to the size they needed?

LJ: In like the timber days we used to cut it the size that they wanted, that was 9 feet long and what they call the switch ties was about 19 feet long and used to use some awful heavy timber, especially the Athens, they wanted all the bigger stuff they could get because it was all hematite, it was all heavy, it wouldn't last too long, because it was such pressure on it and it would last a couple three weeks a timber like that it would bust open, crack and so forth.

INT: What is your understanding of why the timber would break and crack in three weeks time?

LJ: I think the timber would crack because it was heavy and it seemed to be the heat down there the heat and water or something would make it go, I think it was more heavy, it was pressure on it, it had to go.

INT: Do you think maybe it because the ore was quite soft?

LJ: Yeh, I think it was the ore was quite soft, and the hematite was moved all the time and the pressure all the time, so when one of those timbers would go they would have to replace it.

INT: Do you remember, you mentioned the length of each piece but do you know the diameter or what the dimensions would of been around it?

LJ: The timber went all the way to 17" true, and down where it wasn't too heavy from their about 16-17" and down to around 8" was the smallest they took.

INT: Do you remember what you got paid by the foot for the timbers?

LJ: We got so much a timber regardless if it was big or down to 8".

INT: Do you know what that amount was for each timber?

LJ: It ran about \$1.50 a piece those days, and

INT: Lets talk a little bit about, you said you started working at the Negaunee Mine, can you tell me you said it was maybe 1942, and I'm wondering if you recall what it was like the first couple days you worked at the mine?

LJ: The Negaunee Mine, 1942 I started in the Negaunee Mine and I got to be a timber hoister and I was listening to all those blasts going, and it kind of shut me up at first, it took about six months before I got used to it, but they put me with other people working and they says don't get nervous its just a blast. It still would shake you up, first you know the motors would be coming in free pass they must of traveled 30 miles an hour down there, I believe.

INT: Can you tell me a little more specifically what a motor is?

LJ: There all electric motors can't use nothing but gas its all electric and air operate in the mine which is no gas involved at all.

INT: The motors what were used to push the cars and things?

LJ: The motors were to push the cars and they must of had maybe 10 cars in the Negaunee Mine but there were different kind of cars that we used in the other mines, they were smaller.

INT: Can we talk a little bit about the blasting, you said it was a little bit nerve racking, can you tell me what it was, what happened when there was a blast, what was it that shook you up a little bit, was it noise, a lot of rumbling, a lot of shaking, what was it that was bothersome to you?

LJ: When the blast used to go off, then the whole mine shaft was rumbling, and it must of been all the way to 20 holes small like this, they were all 8 foot holes and

INT: I guess what I'm kind of wondering is, let me ask you another question, you had until this time worked outside all the time, harvesting timber and things like that, then you changed to working underground. Did you have a real strong sense of being aware that you were quite a distance underground, did it feel a little confining to you?

LJ: When I first went down it was quite a ways down, it was something like a elevator in the building they call them cages, took about 50 men down at a time and they went so fast that you didn't notice, you were down there before you knew it and then you got down there and went into the places it was, after your down there for a while you never noticed it, after you got used to the place underground just like you didn't notice it from being down there or up, you got used to it it was just like another job, it was interesting.

INT: You said you had to hoist timber, what was the name of that job that you had?

LJ: Well hoisting timber was supplying timber for the off the levels into the contracts we were a couple guys so we done that for about a year and then we one day the captain, the boss says about time you go mining now, I said I don't know I could try it. So I started after a year and been mining every since.

INT: You said you had to hoist the timbers into a contracts, whats a contract?

LJ: A contract is where you do your drifting and your blasting and it runs long drifts up to 175 feet long with 28 foot centers then they put all them mills in there and thats where they scrap the dirt down and you keep going ahead of the drifts then you cone them out.

INT: Whats coning?

LJ: Them are called mills every 28 foot centers, on both sides theirs a milled one right across from one another then they cone like a they fan it out until they drill it out in a cone

like a fan out then they blast that and that makes a mill and the dirt would come from those mills and their right across from each other, they run them about 175 feet deep, 150 what ever, what they surveyed then they pulled where the ore is, then you scrape, when you get done with that then you scrape the dirt in the hoppers

INT: You said you had been hoisting timber for about a year, then you had the job of being a miner, can you describe what you had to do?

LJ: When I went mining thats what we did we mostly put drifts in. Then cone them out and for he scraper mess??? could scrape dirt. (counter 208)

INT: You were a miner, then your job description was miner for how long?

LJ: All together I had about 36 1/2 years and all but 4 years of that I didn't go mining, I was transferred to a power plant at Eagle Mill, thats when the mine kind of slacked up there a little bit and went on the D9 and worked on the stock piles and moved the track over for the electric shovel, we used to push the railroad cars down, up to 18, the 90 tonners when they were loaded and we used to push them down to the heights, that was my job and then scrape the pellets off the shovel when so they could pick them up. Worked on the roads and took care of two miles to the carp to the big pumps that would be running for the pellet plant in the wintertime there was almost 8 feet of snow there, 60s. Had to keep that all open around the plant with a big dozer, I stayed there about almost 4 years then when the B started again hiring miners I went back to the B and finished off there.

INT: I'd like to get a little bit about, you said that you worked at several different mines, so you were at the Negaunee Mine first, for about how long?

LJ: I must of been there about going on 10 years roughly, and then the Mather A was ready go then and thats when I transferred to the Mather A.

INT: So you went to the Mather A when it first opened, and that would of been what year?

LJ: Yeh, when it first opened, and I stayed there until it was all finished and then transferred to the B then.

INT: Do you remember when approximately the Mather A closed, or how many years did you work at the Mather A?

LJ: I think between the Mather A and the Negaunee Mine I had 18 years there. Between the two. While I was at the Mather A they asked me if I wanted to put a drift, help go in a with a dang??? (counter 253) in put a drift from the Mather A to the B that was on the 13th level or the 12th level. That was going on 15 degrees and there was a five men crew on there and we drilled 10 foot holes there, about 60 holes it was 25 feet wide and at least 10 feet high and we drove that almost 3800 feet which was lacking 300 feet from 3800 feet and that was going down on a 15 degree and they had a belt going down there that was 36"

wide, steel stands were 2 feet apart all brand new, the belt was 3/4 inch type all one piece belt.

INT: And what was that belt for, was it for conveying ore?

LJ: That belt was for conveying ore to the, right from down there they had all the hoppers in and there was places with a lot of ore that was hidden, we would run into rock once in a while there was a lot of ore down there, then we had a little car that went down along side of it that was a like a trolley car was running on a cable, track on the side to get down there, and then they had a big hoist up there, an electric hoist there I don't know how many horsepower that was to run that belt, it had to be pretty powerful anything, there was a man up there all the time and there was a dispatcher up there and all that, we could talk back and forth. We was in there 5 years putting that drift in. We used to blast 60 holes, made a blast a day and there were all delays, were all timed from one up to 60. Our center holes would go first and we would work around it. We'd all go, they were all timed. It was interesting.

INT: Any idea how long it took to drill one hole, you said you did one blast a day, thats a lot of preparation time to do one blast, isn't it?

LJ: Yeh, we used to drill one blast a day, it was a lot of drilling, but there were powerful machines, they were all 90s machines on there and it wasn't too bad, they had a lot of power, running all by air.

INT: Did you notice when you went from the Negaunee Mine to the Mather A, you said that the Mather A was a brand new mine, are there any specific differences that stand out in your mind that made this Mather A different from the Negaunee Mine?

LJ: Yeh, going to the Mather A was a lot different, it was more modern and everything was different. Thats where they started to go for more safety's. We went into the steel more or less, and we had to learn, we went to school, I don't know, a day a week I guess it was, for all the acetylene equipment and stuff, the oxygen and acetylene they teach you how to shut it off and how to burn and all that stuff and how to turn them on and get your pressure. New steel was nice to burn but when it got rusty a little bit, you had to take a pick and get all the rust off before it would burn good, stuff like that, I learned a lot of stuff, a lot of safety's.

INT: Do you remember any specific safety things that were new at the Mather A at that time?

LJ: Dinner??? there was a lot of safety things, mostly everything went from home, lawnmowers, cooking eggs in your frying pan, and don't run sanders or anything without having glasses on. I still do that when I work in my shop. I just carry on that safety all my life, what they learnt me, I thought it was great, even from a lawnmower and all that stuff, all the safety's you could think of they brought them up. I carry most of them I watch that pretty close.

INT: Thats really good. Can we talk a little bit about the routine that you had every day in the mine, I know that you would report for work, did you have to punch a timeclock, I understand the men had to change clothes, did you have lockers to put your clothes in, all that, can you give me a little run through of what happened from the time you got to work until you went underground?

LJ: When we went to work we put our clean clothes in our lockers, then we put our work clothes on again and then we'd go down and then we'd come back up at 8 hours, 8 hours was collar to collar, and they make sure they get you up, then we'd take a shower and we would put our clean clothes on again and we would head for home. When I first started in the Mine that was the Negaunee Mine more or less there was always somebody waiting there with a basket of pasty's and that was interesting, that wasn't hard to take for 50 cents. We used to get a pasty for 50 cents. And they'd make sure they be there, and the guys would be out buying the pasties. It was really good after a days work.

INT: So when you bought a pasty, you would eat that after you finished a days work, did you eat underground at all?

LJ: Underground, we would have just a few sandwiches, and a bottle of coffee, you couldn't carry any glass jugs, you'd bust them all the time, when we go down in the cage, its pretty packed in there, they didn't want no glass jugs anyway, some one would probably cut themselves on them, they use plastic jugs more or less, thats what they used for water. They took thermos and dinner pails down there.

INT: When you started working at the mine, any of the mines, did you have to join a union?

LJ: Yeh, like the union come in, there was no union when I started in '42. It started I think in late '43 I think there was a union, got started and then there was some heavy strikes there come on after, but everything leveled off pretty good according to the times, and then the union got in there and then the wages started going up a little bit and the benefits, which was great.

**End of Side 1 Tape 1**

## Begin Side 2 Tape 1

INT: Lets talk about Louie, what you remember what your income was, during the time that you worked at the Negaunee Mine and then approximately what it was at the Mather A?

LJ: When I worked at the Negaunee Mine our wages run around every two weeks about \$45, and we even built a house on it a two bedroom and lumber wasn't very high I think it was \$17 a thousand. 2 x 4 you'd get them for 60-70 cents so we done quite a bit with our money at that, we didn't buy no new cars but

INT: I think we'll get into the question of building houses and things like that in another part of this interview but for now we'll go back and back track too about when you stopped working at the Mather A and what you did then?

LJ: I got a job, then I went to, when I was laid off, from the Mather A then I went for Union National Bank they had a lot of remodeling, like doing carpenter work and all that stuff and painting about 90 houses to take care so I worked about 6 days a week on that, then when Eagle Mill started up, there was an opening there, that's when I went to Eagle Mills from the Mather A, after three years I was laid off then I went there.

INT: You worked at the Mather A for three years, or you were laid off for three years?

LJ: I was laid off a couple years, a good couple years, then I went to the

INT: Now Louie can you tell me of the approximate year you started at Eagle Mills and how long you worked there and where you went after that?

LJ: I think it was the 60's I started at Eagle Mills, I stayed there almost 4 years

INT: Can you tell me when you started at the Mather B?

LJ: When I started at the Mather B, It had to be 64 or 65 someplace in there when I started at the Mather B. It was the same kind of work as I done quite a bit at the Mather A, all steel work and drifting and we drilled long holes up to 125 feet and those were long holes in the slopes.

INT: Can you tell me what a slope is?

LJ: A slope is a, it caves in, as it keeps coming down, it keeps working, and it comes down in the mills, and thats where you pull the dirt from, and your drilling on the sides of the slopes and you drill those long holes up to 125 feet, quite a few of them, and big machines and you charge them with 2 foot powder, there 2" thick and sometimes you use some kind of prima cord when theres long holes and a cap, one stick of powder and you put all this, and you blow in all this prell stuff in there and its awful powerful, looks kind of like that stuff you put on your lawns. It takes a cap to make it go off, its more powerful than dynamite, and you put as many holes you need there to go around, when you blast that, tons



and tons of dirt comes down and goes into the mills, and they got a brand new supply again of ore, to pull and tug that drains dry and you do it again if you have too. Them slopes you can never see how deep or how high they are, cause you can shine a light up there you just can't see no ceiling or nothing its really strange sometime when you look at it.

INT: Lets look at what you can see underground, do you have a light on your helmet and is there other electric wiring underground or is the only light you have is what's on your hat?

LJ: We have electric lights on our helmet, and we carry a battery that weighs about 2 lbs and its good for about 8 hours or more. But we have lights in the drifts, there just like electric lights like we have at home, the main lines are all lit up.

INT: Is there separate electrical crew that would string electric power and put the lights in?

LJ: We have an electric crew on there all the time and they do all the wiring then they got all the electric boxes into the contracts and their pretty heavy loaded, I don't know how much voltage it is, but its pretty high, cause it runs 3000 horsepower motor and 1000 horsepower motors in the bigger contracts where they have to pull long drifts, all electric and its pretty powerful and its all lit up.

INT: How long did you work at the Mather B Louie, and how old were you when you retired and what year was that?

LJ: When I retired? When I took my pension I never, I got hurt in the mines I hurt my knee so I couldn't work anymore, that was in '75. I think '55 maybe it was

INT: You mentioned you hurt your knee and you stopped working at the Mather B, could you tell me how that happened?

LJ: How I hurt my knee, I was carrying, me and my partner was carrying what was called a "Bumble Bee" it was a drilling machine that weighed about 300 pounds and there was screens over the hoppers, and it looked good all the time, and we walked over several times, and when I stepped on it this one time, carrying that machine, I went right through the hopper and hurt my knee post bad??? (Counter 221) and it was one year off of work and I hurt my back and my knee.

INT: At the time that that happened can you describe how they got you out of the mine, do you remember how that chain of events went after you fell?

LJ: After I fell they took me up and I went for many treatments then I thought I could make it again but I went back to work and Dr. Williams says, I told him I can't work this way it hurts way up in my back, I don't like to be, my partner can't do my whole job, and he says well if you can't work no more take early retirement I suppose, so then I took it and left me I think I got my full pension and everything I think I got out of there, I didn't work any more I think it was '59 when I took it off.

INT: Can we think for a minute about, any, you mentioned a lot of words like the "bumble bee" can you think of any other nicknames that the miners had for any of the equipment, or for different guys that had different kinds of jobs, I mean their formal job description might of been miner, but was there a nickname for what they did, any kinds of those things can you think of?

LJ: Then we worked the earlier years at the Mather A, I worked in the rock cliff, that was on three shifts and we'd drill and blast we were driving drifts then, into rock, mostly rock three shifts and they use the conways to load. What they call conways, they were big air machines with big dippers on the front and there was a conveyor on there, with a belt and that would load into a car and you would haul it away when the car was loaded until we got all cleaned up and ready to drill again, it was part of a job we done for about two, three years, at the time that was kind of interesting too.

INT: So conway was one thing, did you have any, I know somebody told me that when they would get ready to blast they would say "Fire in the hole" and thats how other guys would know they had to stay put, can you think of any other little things like that, were there any sayings that only the miners would understand, people underground would understand?

LJ: When they blasted you'd have to tell your contracts that were close by and you had to watch that you were going to blast, that was the rules, you'd have to watch all the openings that come from anyway at all for nobody would happen to come in and walk into it, so you'd have to watch all that before you blast. To make it safety.

INT: Do you remember what it smelled like underground, was there, after all this blasting would happen, was there a sulfur smell or anything like that, or any particular odor that you remember noticing underground all the time?

LJ: When they blasted, if you went in too fast into a blast after blasting, it'd be kind of powder smell, you have to wet down, take the hose and wet down you had water there all the time and you have to wet down your dirt piles to kill the gas down knock all that down, then after the gas was gone, you turn air, or some compressed air would blow it all out of there then they had nice, they had fans most contracts would blow in there and most of the contracts would blow all that gas out then you'd go and scrape all your dirt, load it whatever you were drifting.

INT: During the time that you worked in the mines, was that considered one of the best jobs that there was around and if so, why?

LJ: The mine didn't say, everybody I talked to was supporting the, big thing in Marquette, Negaunee, Ishpeming, 100 miles or more around for business, and the college wasn't there we didn't have the air base, the mine was pretty supportive in this part of the country, several mines and mostly were the Cliff and there was a lot of other mines, the Cleveland Cliffs seemed to be the one that was operating, still operating and played big in Marquette, the LS & I docks, and LS & I railroad, we support.

INT: Can you tell me if there are any particular experiences that kind of stand out in your mind that people would be surprised to hear about that you had to do underground?

LJ: Some of the drifts when it was first started, when we were hoisting timber, me and my partner there were some drifts that weren't working no more, where all the wooden timbers was, that was mostly Negaunee Mine and them contracts, we'd have to go over from one contract to another and some of them old drifts were coming down and, gradually not fast or nothing there was always holes big enough to crawl underneath a timber just enough to fit your body, we'd take shortcut and go underneath that, of course, everybody did. We always think what if it comes down while I'm underneath and crotched under there. We'd go through there fast, we'd run through there fast. Them timbers were pretty heavy and pretty broken but just your body could go through. We used to climb from the main levels up in those contracts, some between the contracts they were way up there it was almost 300 feet climbing a ladder straight up and they had gates in there, that dropped down every about 30-40 feet for safety. But the ladders were straight up you never looked down you just keep going up, 200-300 feet straight up. All you'd see is a little light down there where the level was, if you were on the level hoisting timber, we'd talk to our partners in the contracts and there was a pipe all you had was a pipe to talk in to and it would echo, really loud, when you talked into that pipe, it would carry right through. It was interesting. When I went into the mines, when I first went in, they put me with people that come from Europe, there were Italians, Finnish and English people, we would start talking, and the Italian people I didn't understand them at all, they were there from the 1800s, I think, and they were just getting ready to get their pensions when I started, and they had their voice working with them the only way I could understand them, they talk their own nationalities but the boys would talk in English, and I learned some Italian, I learned some Finnish that way, Swedish, Norwegian, a lot of words, being that the kids, the boys would talk to them in English, that's the way I learned it, but the older people were talking their own nationality all the times, so I got to learn quite a bit.

INT: Do you have any idea during that time when there were people that spoke different languages in the mine was it like about half of the people that spoke foreign languages or was it a third, any guess on what proportion it was?

LJ: I didn't know the percentage really but I would say most of them spoke there own nationality and they carried on that way, you get used to it.

INT: Did you find, with the people with the various backgrounds, did the people who spoke Italian pretty much stick together, the people who spoke Finnish stick together or did they all mix together and try to learn how to communicate with each other?

LJ: Most of the nationalities stuck quite a bit together, the Finnish and the Italians were pretty much together, to my knowledge, the majority of the other ones were more, they talked more, you could talk to them more.

INT: Do you recall that the people who spoke the same languages were assigned together on work crews, or do you remember if they were split apart?

LJ: Most of the nationalities were put together with their own, I would say, Finnish was Finnish, and Italians were quite a bit Italians, but in later years they got mixed up more.

INT: Do you recall whether there were any divisions of kinds of jobs, did the Italians do certain kinds of jobs, the Finnish do certain kinds of jobs, or did it make any difference?

LJ: Some of them quite a bit had their own jobs, there was electricians, pipe men, and guys that fixed cars down there, maintaining too, carpenters that fixed gates, they had mostly all kinds of jobs, electricians and everything.

INT: There wasn't any kind of common knowledge for instance, the Italians always did dynamite, the Finns always did electricity, it was pretty much depended on what the persons skill was?

LJ: It was what there job was, what their skill was, lots of them liked what they were doing and they stuck to it, a miner was a miner and the other jobs they all loved there jobs, they put in a whole career that way as far as I know.

**End of Tape 1 Side 2**

## Begin Tape 2 Side 1

INT: Louie can you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters?

LJ: There were six in the family and Joe was the oldest one, and Louie, I'm Louie, I'm the next one, then I had Cora, my sisters, Florence and Laya(spelling?) and there was six in the family, Nero (Spelling?) he was the youngest, lived on the farm, we farmed pretty heavy, worked the woods in the winter time and made a lot of hay and had three teams of horses, heavy horses, that worked the farms and the woods

INT: So all the work that you did on the farm was done with horses not with tractors?

LJ: We just had one tractor that come in later years that was a fortsen (spelling?) that was the only tractor we had, when we left the farm we stopped farming, we spent about, that was a family farm, so

INT: Lets talk a little bit about, how you met your wife, what her maiden name was, how you met, and what you did, do you remember the day that you met her and what did you do for a date?

LJ: Then I was about 17 years old, then I met my wife they were living on a farm too, big farm they had about 30 head of cattle, I met her at some dances, and we went together for almost 2 years then we got married

INT: Let me ask you question besides the dances, and we need to get your wifes maiden name on tape, when you and Alice went on a date what would you do besides going dancing?

LJ: We'd go on a Saturday we'd go to a show, once a week, there wasn't too much money those days, it was back in the 30's, and Roy Rodgers was the one, our favorite those days, cowboys, Hop a long Cassidy and all those cowboys those days, that's what we looked forward to at the end of the week, once a week we'd do that, then go to the dances, country dances most of the time and we had a old car, Model A those days, which was great, it was a nice one. We could get around pretty good that way, it was about a couple years I went with her and we finally got married, that was 1934 then we had our girl then we had to look for a job then to support her there was no relief those days, just had to go to work someplace

INT: Was that when you started working in the mine then?

LJ: Then we went through the whole thirties there look for jobs like that and then there was a doctor that had a big job in Skanee, which was, he had a lot of timber, and he needed a cook, and my wife was a good cook, she was only 17 years she was coming to 18 years old, so he gave both of us a job, there was a big camp where all the men stayed there might of been 25 men, we had our own camp, our own cook camp, with a bedroom off the side, and there was a meat shanty on the other side for the meat where the meat hung. In the winter

time, she cooked for 25 men, we cooked for all that winter and she did it was hard going, money wasn't big those days, but it was a job, to make a living, anyway she would cook all the bread, I'd help her to cut the meat, she would make pies, big long tables, and we took the kid right with us, I helped her to cut all the meat, get up in the morning and help her make breakfast, had to get up about 5 o'clock in the morning, all kinds of things you had to do, feed the men. Then we, I drove a brand new truck and trailer, I'd make one trip a day to Escanaba from Skanee which about, round trip was about 375 miles. Start 7 a.m. in the morning and come back about 10p.m. at night in the winter time and hauling to the birds eye, 3600 feet on the truck and trailer which was a long day and help her too do that work and we had charge of the gas pump and all that, we stayed there that whole winter. We had a little steak going got out of there in the spring, money wasn't big but it was money.

INT: What year was that Louie, do you know?

LJ: That was back in the 37, 38.

INT: You said you had to drive 300 miles a day, were the roads paved, what kind of road conditions did you run into driving that distance every day, was that 7 days a week or just 5 days?

LJ: That was 5 days a week, we drove the mullers, and we'd come down from Skanee that was about 30 miles north of L'anse and we'd go down through the junction, through Iron Mountain then we'd go down to the road, Iron Mountain, then we'd hit Florence Wisconsin then come back on 41 through Spaulding and back to Escanaba. It made quite a long route and sometime we had to watch the weight, because you'd come by through L'anse, and you stop and put the weights on to see how heavy load you had, then we'd get into Florence, Wisconsin, they would do the same thing there, so we were caught twice, so we had to watch ourselves, there were times that I had to roll a log off because it was too heavy, they wouldn't leave you go in. It was pretty touchy that way, you had to watch your weight.

INT: Tell me what your wifes maiden name was?

LJ: My wife's maiden names was Larson, Alice Larson. They had a big farm there

INT: And whats your daughters name?

LJ: My daughters name was Phyllis.

INT: You spent the winter working on the logging camp, after that winter then, after you came back, did you come back to West Branch or Marquette what did you do then?

LJ: Then we came back to West Branch, in the spring, the break up, we had built a little house there it was 2 bedroom and a little garage and we stayed there about 4 years. We sold that from there and we moved to Beaver Grove. Then we built a house there and we had two lots there and we built the one house and finished that off. A couple years later we

started another house on the other lot, and we finished that off. We built that one too. In the meantime from when I moved there, when I made that move, that's when I started in the Negaunee Mines and worked from there and finished the houses after I got better job and making better money.

INT: So you would work a regular 8 hour work day and then you'd come home and do some construction on your house on evenings and weekends?

LJ: Yes.

INT: During the time that Phyllis was growing up, what would a typical Christmas be like, what kinds of things would she get for Christmas, and can you describe Christmas day from the time you got up in the morning or from the time you went to bed at night and got all of her things ready?

LJ: For Christmas we always had a nice tree, and always make sure we had something for our daughter that she liked and we could afford to the clothes, she always liked nice clothes, she would always go to Getzs and get her clothes, she always come first.

INT: What would be her favorite thing, do you remember any particular things, toy wise, that she liked, did she have a favorite doll or a favorite thing?

INT: We'll finish up on Christmas a bit later, first Louie tell me about your truck you had?

LJ: I was working in the mine, I picked up a two ton truck, a Dodge, then I was hauling, when I was three shifts, I'd haul cement blocks in the 8th addition, and I'd make a trip a day, in the morning, afternoon, and when I was midnight I'd make another trip and I was hauling for a cement block company and I hauled tons and tons of blocks here, when they first started the 8th addition, so I was making extra money there

INT: Would this be the 8th addition in Ishpeming?

LJ: Yes, it was the 8th addition in Ishpeming.

INT: How many years did you do that?

LJ: I did that for all one summer, and that company was in business, then I'd haul some wood around, block wood with the truck, buy it from people that was making wood, and haul it and make a little money on the side that way, it would help to pay my bills when I was building and so forth

INT: You said that all together built 4 different houses, is that right? Can you tell me a little bit about anything about the building process that you like, particularly because the home you live in now is very, very nice and it looks like you really enjoyed what you did.

LJ: Yes. The fourth house I built on 480, which was ranch that was near Briarwood, Briarwoods in there now. Those days it wasn't like it is now, you buy every thing at the hardwares, doors, windows, frames are all together. Those days you had to put everything together yourself and cut your own window frame slots, shelves, and put everything together and hardware, you had to put that all together, doors, there was nothing coming like it is today. You'd take the plumbing, the plumbing was much harder to do. Not today, all you need is a handsaw to make it. The plumbing and glue those days you got a lot of pipe and you had to do a lot of treading and all that stuff I did all that work. All the pipe

INT: How'd you have all the energy to do all this? You worked an 8 hour day and then you came home and you built, how did you keep your energy up to keep doing that all the time?

LJ: I don't know. My energy, I don't know, I just kept going I guess.

INT: Tell me is Alices cooking had anything to do with your energy level, was she a good cook, and can you tell me what your favorite things were that she made for you?

LJ: My wife, when she cooked she had all kinds of good stuff, one time when I come home from work, or in the woods, what ever I done, she always had a good supper, and if I was home around dinner, I never ate much on midnight shift, but when I worked day shift she always had a good supper waiting for me. She baked her own cakes, and her own pies and she canned quite a bit. She loved to cook. She was always doing something like that. I guess she took that from her mother, she felt good by mixing for a cake and all that stuff. It was different those days and people were more friendly and they helped one another and its not like today, things were different those days.

INT: After Alice worked that one winter cooking for the lumber people, did she work any more after that?

LJ: After she, after we came back home that spring, she always had jobs for doctors, she'd go and help them. She'd go there just about every day, different ones. After you knew one doctor they would tell one another, if they liked a person they would tell one another, and thats the way she worked, she did a lots of that job.

INT: What kinds of jobs did she do for the doctors, did she work in their offices, or their homes or what?

LJ: No she worked in their homes, like dusting, and stuff like that. Thats the kind of work she done for them.

INT: During the time that your daughter was growing up what kinds of things would do on your days off as a family?

LJ: On our days off we'd go riding, if I had a day off, we'd go riding, go to town, go shopping, walk around. We'd go for a ride, we'd go out to the Island, if it was summer time, we even had picnics always try to do something, to keep our selves happy and we made



quite a few trips. We went to Texas, we went to Amarillo, and El Paso, Texas over to Sans Fool Ground, Rio Grande, Chicago, and up around those places.

INT: Was, did you do a trip every year or every few years?

LJ: We done it just about every summer and went around like that different places.

INT: What about clubs, or anything like that, did you or Alice participate in any organizational things?

LJ: Then when I worked for the mining company we always donated to the Boy Scouts, and all the things they brought up, it took so much a month out of it, all the years I've been working there and that was what they wanted, most of the people went along with it.

INT: How about the time when your daughter was growing up and even now, was church a part of your life, was it a big part of everybodys life?

LJ: The church was, we joined the church, we were going to church before and Alice was too, she had her own church in Skandia. That was a Swedish Lutheran and I was going, I belonged to a Catholic Church then, I got confirmed Catholic then after we got married, and a year after we had the kid the girl, Phyllis, she wanted to, we got married at Messiah Lutheran and that was the old church on Ridge Street, it ain't there no more, they got the new one now on Fourth street. So she decided, she says, we got married there, she says we have to raise the girl Lutheran, how do you want to raise her, I says you raise her Messiah church, Lutheran and I says I believe in one God anyway, it makes no difference to me.

INT: Louie can you tell me about the time you did a road job?

LJ: We decided to go working for road jobs, the road there on 2, U.S. 2 from Rapid River to Manistique we went to work there and I bought a truck, brand new truck from Bell Chevrolet that was in Ishpeming, dump box, and we worked 4 years on the road jobs, we followed that road jobs and we put all the grades from Rapid River to Manistique all down through (I can't think of the name, between there anyway) I took the kid and my wife and we rented a little place along the way, there was no house trailers those days, there was always a little place to rent. So we stayed on that road job until I was finished and then the next year they paved it then we worked on that too. Hauling cement and stuff and going on the forth year we had finished that in the third year. It was somebody from Grand Rapids that had the job, there was about 40 trucks on there they had them big gas shovels then, they were from all over Detroit, Flint, with trucks, kind of a dusty job all those trucks going all that time. There was no place to take a bath, we use to go down there (I can't think of that name) Its off of Lake Michigan anyway, we used to go at night, we'd go down and swim in that lake there, it was just about the only place to take a bath, anyway on the third year we got that job completed then we went to, over there in Ishpeming and got a job there that was Surey, that big contractor was Surey. That was back in '36. That was such a hard time, it was just the trucks that was working, they had big gas shovels there. They wouldn't leave them, running them gas shovels, that jobber, that contractor there was about

600 men working there, they had to give them all jobs, there was not to much work. That was from Third street to West Ishpeming, where they finished that stretch down there where Pamida is in there now. We helped to put all that in there, that grade. They shoveled all that dirt by hand for the fills and the only thing they dug out used the machinery of course, the low spots where they could fill in the dirt and that there contractor went into the hole that time, I don't know what happened to him, but he went in the hole doing that job. Then we got all the grade in, the fill in, and then there was a couple months before the fall come, then we started to haul cement there, to cement it. So we stayed there until almost the freezing points were coming in. It was almost done, and they finished it the next year. The next one, in the meantime, they called that the NRA those days. He had some guys working, this contractor built a log house, and everybody knows about that, I guess, in Ishpeming. He built a log house up on the, its up on the hill where Pamida is now. That was built with the, with money from the workers, and on the end they took it away from him. The log house was moved and I think its up there, up the road now, past Republic some place, I think its a tavern and eating place now, if you know where that is.

**End of Tape 2 Side 1**

## Begin Tape 2 Side 2

INT: Is there anything that I should of asked you Louie, that I didn't that you'd like to talk about a little bit?

LJ: Talking about the steel in the mines, what they call double 8 steel, mostly any steel where there was hematite it was real heavy, it would bend and sways and hoops and after several months maybe some place a couple months it would bend down like a hoop, and you'd have to tear them legs outs them double 8 out. And replace new ones, they were 2 feet apart for a good half mile on some main lines and you'd have to use acetylene torches, some places was after it was set in there it was kind of rusty, try to burn that with acetylene you'd have to get all that rust off before you could cut it off and put new ones. It was really hard you'd have to make sure it was clean. So we learnt to do all that stuff as you went along. We used to put braces on legs, and on those steel legs on the double 8 steel. They used most of the steel the backs were covered with lag and stuff, but there was steady repair where there was hematite. Where you hit the hard rock they didn't use no steel, they used roof bolts, and they were about 8 feet long and use big plates that was above as your going in then they, it went in there on threads, there was big plates to hold the rock up which was very safe to run through. They had no trouble there after.

INT: I know when the tapes was stopped earlier we talked about double 8, if someone has never heard of a double 8 before, how would you define or describe for them what a double 8 is?

LJ: Talking about a double 8 steel they were about 10 feet long, 80" wide and 6", 8" one way and 6" the other way and made like a 8. It started, instead of one piece of steel, it was two pieces wrapped around it which we called a double 8 steel, which would strengthen it up pretty much, and they weighed about 350 pounds a piece and you had to be pretty strong to put it up, it took two guys all they could do to lift it up there, you didn't want it to come down on you when you lift, then you tied it up there with a brace until you get both sides that way, then there was a cap that went on there, that was a double 8 too, and that was 9' wide, so they were all bolted together, then there were straps on the side to hold them in line, which made a nice drift, as long as it wasn't too heavy. Most of the places, there was a lot of repairs, steel was a big cost, one guy told me , says theres just as much steel down here as were taking out. I don't know, theres a lot of steel alright, you start going a 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile to dump???(counter 55) this and most of the other places your using the steel, lot of steel been used.

INT: A lot of steel railroad tracks too, I bet?

LJ: Then you had your railroad tracks down there they were all steel, and one thing I wanted to talk about was the big pumps they had down there. The room was as big as, it might of been 150 feet every way and it was into solid rock and them big pistons in there, the cylinders in there was about 12" and they had three or four of them big pumps in there, and it piped in there from down inside with a, I think with at least 8-10" of pipe was pipe running in where to those big pumps were inside the mine, and it was built like a big dome

the way they drill that rock in there 150 feet floor all cement floor and it was all painted white and the big pumps must of set up there about 10 feet high where they were working and they were all painted gray, and the ceilings were all painted white and it was lit up just like a house, very clean, not a bit of oil running on the floor, nothing, it was really nice. Its amazing how they could do that underground, way down 3000 feet down.

INT: One last little, unrelated to the mine part, you told me that when you and Alice were dating you would go to the movies and I'm curious if you remember how much it would cost to go to the movies and see Roy Rodgers?

LJ: When me and Alice used to go to the movies you could go in their for .25 cents in those days, that was the main thing that the people went to, I guess the theaters was always filled up, always filled up in those days, it was the only place to go, unless there are country dances and house parties, there was a lot of house parties. And then hunt parties???(counter 90) and all that when we was, our family life me and Alice and the girl we sat with 25 people that come from town on a Sunday afternoon or whatever and then we have a accordion and guitar and have a nice picnic lunch, we'd all get together, we'd go to one anothers house that way, it was interesting, it was great pass the time away.

INT: Did you sing or dance or was the music just played and you listened or what?

LJ: They played, the kids, they played ball and around the yard and listened to the music. Past the time away.

INT: Was there ever a sing a long with the music?

LJ: Yeh, there was some of them singing, some of the ladies were singing, the girls they knew the songs,

INT: Do you remember what any of the songs were?

LJ: No I don't, not right now, no.

INT: What do you think Louie when you see you know you've worked for many many years, and you've seen a lot of changes happening in those years, what do you think about the way you felt about your job when you were working and what you see with people that are younger and raising families now about their attitudes, do you think there has been a big change, or is it still pretty much the same as you can see?

LJ: I think from those times, and the times today has changed so much its like day and night to me it is. Kids have got so good now, they can, the families, they bus them into school now, the families make sure they go to school, they got all kinds of things going on that we never had going on in those days, they got buses to take them in they can't walk to school, in the older days you didn't have nothing like that, kids have got so much that they can do and get educated now, for the way the world is today, which is good, you have to have it,

the big changes have been made, all through for many years, fifty years, has to be something like that, otherwise people wouldn't be able to survive.

INT: I think the last thing I just want to ask you about Louie, is Phyllis's children, how many children have and give me their names and what do they all do for their professions or their living?

LJ: My daughter had three boys, got married and had three boys. That's Phyllis. The oldest boy works for the state and lives in Farmington Hills, one works for General Motors, that's the youngest boy Steve, he's an architect there. And he's doing wonderful with his job. Then there's one that teaches in Grand Valley. They're all married and have good jobs. Six great grandkids, three boys and their wives, like David lives down in Grand Rapids. So he had three boys and my three grandsons of mine.

INT: What's Phyllis's husband's name?

LJ: Her husband's name was Bob Champion from Ishpeming. He had moved away from here for about 40 years they were all downstate and he worked for Ford Motor Insurance out of Dearborn. After 40 years he put 28 years for the Ford Motor Insurance and now he had an option to take his pension so they finally moved back here but the kids all live downstate so they go down and see them once in a while. They moved up here and bought a house, a brand new home, almost a brand new home in Shiras Hills. So their living up here too, they finally came back from where they started from.

**End of Tape 2 Side 2**