

Interview with Ernie Beck
Marquette, Michigan
24 May 2006
Interviewed by Russel Magnaghi

START OF INTERVIEW

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Russel Magnaghi (RM): Okay, what I'd like to do is in this interview talk about your growing up attending John D. Pierce School and your life around Northern's campus. And then you said you know a great deal about North Marquette. So I'd like to get into your memories of North Marquette and what it was like growing up here. It sounds like a very fascinating place for a young person to grow up. Okay Ernie if you don't mind I'll call you Ernie?

Ernie Beck (EB): Yeah.

RM: Could you tell us a little about, well first start out what is your birth date?

EB: January 2nd, 1918.

RM: 1918 okay. Could you tell us a little about, how did your parents settle in this area of North Marquette?

EB: That, see my dad died when I was 10 months old so I had very little communication with him you know. My mother was from Finland, she was from Finland. So was my dad. She was born there in the city they call Kouvola, and my dad was living towards the Russian border. Anyway they came here. My dad came here in 1908 I believe and my mother came here maybe 4 years later. They met here in Marquette. My mother came here and she was a housekeeper for people of wealth here in town. My dad, he came as a kiln maker for the Pioneer Iron Company. The Pioneer Iron Company, they called it the Cliff-Dow later, the iron company they smelted iron there at one time. They'd made pig iron and they'd send it from the merchandise dock at the LS&I and send it to the destination. In the time that he worked there he was a kiln maker and I know very little of him because of his death when he was just a baby.

RM: Could you give us your parent's names? First and last names?

EB: My dad's name when he came to this country to begin with, when he got to Ellis Island his name was Basterbeck [spelled phonetically].

RM: How would you spell that?

EB: And my mother's name was...it was John Basterbeck and my mother's name was Hilma Renko she came from Finland also and they met here in North Marquette. There's a lot if you look up the city directories. It seemed like my mother didn't care much to talk about what had happened over there and, it's just run along like that. One day when my dad came over to Ellis

Island he came with his brother and his brother had the same last name of course, so they splitted at Ellis Island so my uncle's name became Beck, or Baster, and my dad's name became Beck. So that's how that came about. So I'm really a Finlander, and I'll probably be till I die.

RM: Now how did your father past away?

EB: He had, what they're going through now, the chicken flu.

RM: The Spanish Influenza?

EB: Yeah, the flu combined. 1918, there was an epidemic. But, so my mother she had 4 children, I had a sister that was probably about 8 years older than I was, a brother that was 6 years older than I and I had a sister that died she was about 3 years older than I was. She died, there was a TB epidemic I forgot what year it was but she died as a young girl you know. But otherwise living here in North Marquette, we lived about a block and a half away from the Pioneer Iron Company which they always wanted to get as close as they could to their work. I remember the youngster, we'd run around in bare feet but in the summer months, there's no roads so the cinders from the casting of iron and so on, they put on the roads. So the first roads we had were cinder. So being in bare feet we had to be real careful. But it was, I think I lived a full life and I figure that it was kind of a Tom Sawyer life. But when I became 5 years old, went to John D. Pierce and my sister and my brother, my two sisters and my brother and I, we were all enrolled there. One gets in there instilled that school the rest of the family was in. Similar to the Olson family. Anyway in the kindergarten I guess, the John D. Pierce wasn't built yet and we had our classes in the Longyear building. So I started in college early, and Ms. Bates was our teacher then after they did open we got into first grade and there was a teacher by the name of Ms. Marsh. Then I was in 2nd grade with Ms. Secord and Ms. Harold and Ms. Manner and Cooley and let's see Haven. In the 12th grade we had Ms. Grizman, and then we got into assembly hall. To my estimation, but I think it's a better school than they had anywhere around here because I learned so many things that I was able to use during my life time. They taught, as far as I was concerned I was more concerned about carpentry and just manual work you know. This helped me all the way through life. I really am thankful for going to that school. As part of the school, Mr. Bottum he was a disciplinarian. If he said keep out the grass, you didn't go in the grass. If he said there is no snowballs to be thrown, there's no snowballs to be thrown. He was, but he never harmed an individual everybody really loved him because of his discipline _____. In later years, after I got out of school, getting out of school at that time really was...Italy and Ethiopia were at war at the time and you could almost see the writing on the wall what was going to happen. So I was asked by the industrial arts teacher if I would care to go to college. He said you can get into the CYO program. I said I hate to waste the governments money on something that probably of no use at all, probably get my head shot off, something like that. So anyway I decided against going to college, and I worked in different places.

RM: Now let me just, let's just go back. Could you tell us a little about 2 things? Number one, what was it like growing up? You said you were like Huck Finn on the river and what not?

EB: Well yes.

RM: What did you do as a youngster?

EB: Well, now I attended Pierce. I feel sorry for the children today because they depend on so much, what would you call it? Coaching and all this stuff. When we played a ball game all we did is take a bat and start shooting our hands up the bat whoever ended up on top was able to choose the best player. And we controlled everything ourselves. And fishing, there was never a day that I never had a fish hook in my back pocket and put it on the swamp or the river or something and break it off when you get through fishing. We'd go fishing in the river and we'd make rafts. Swim, we'd go swimming probably ten o'clock in the morning. Never bothered about noon, and today they'd can it kind of cannibalistic, but we'd eat blueberries for dinner and probably get a couple of _____ times and cook 'em in the fire and eat the muscle and stuff like this. Then it was about time to go to 7th or 8th grade. We had a tuition fee then of \$3 or so. We thought, my buddy and I, we thought we'd go, and there were couple _____ for the chemical plant then since it changed over from the iron company into a chemical plant in 1932. So we went out in the woods and cut the wood, and became pretty good at it. So we'd go out each summer, we'd come into town maybe every other week pick up some food and go out and live on our own. Of course we fished for fish there and there's streams up there galore. Few people, I don't know if any are there now even. But there was, it was really a wonderful life you know. When we wanna played basketball, we couldn't afford the basketball. Well then they came out with a ball, maybe about 7 inches in diameter that you could buy for a quarter. So we, what we did is go to a local store and pick a banana crate. Banana crates came, they were cylinder shaped, made out of wood, and they were lined with burlap inside. So we'd take that crate, it was long enough for two baskets, we'd cut in half. The burlap would be the net then see, then we'd put a couple two by fours behind the net because you have a space between the backboard and the basket. Then we'd get a couple of planks and put it up there and basketball. We'd have a ball that night, make a fire or something and play with it. And everything that we did was our own doing. Then in the winter time we'd go and, especially on the hills over here at Northern, there was a lot of big hills there, hills you could ski on. There was one they called "back hill" and that came right down, it'd be right in line with Wilkinson Avenue, it was a big hill.

RM: So that was used for skiing then? These hills.

EB: We used that for skiing.

RM: What did you call it? What was the name of the hill?

EB: The hill? We'd call it, we'd call it "back hills" because that was in the Northern property and we spent a lot of time in there. We could pick out any kind of a hill you wanted. Then around where we were talking about, were you see them _____ tucked through there. Along that area we'd have skimmers. All it was was a barrel stage out of a wine cask you know it was oak, probably run about an inch and an eighth thick. We'd put a stand on it and seat on top of that. We'd sit on that and go scooting between the trees and everything else. Sometimes you'd make skis out of them but they're really hard to manipulate. We couldn't afford anything else. In summer months as far as swimming was concerned we'd swim in the river till probably the middle of June, maybe the first of June in order to, because the water was warmer. Then you didn't dare go into the lake until maybe the 15th of June. We'd swim out to Picnic Rocks and to

get to the first rock all we had to do is roll up our pant legs up to our knees and cross, it was maybe 10 or 15 feet across there. You could wade across there. It's altogether different. Through the years then, well then we used to swim out to Picnic Rocks. But there was people, even women, they did have suits on the south side of the rock. But there was a crevice in number one rock where brush would grow. Through swam on the north side of the rock, but we never had any swimming suits. It was kind of blocked. Everybody stayed in their place and sometimes would swim across there to the second rocks there's nothing, and the third rock there was pretty good tow, sometimes we'd go through there just to get blueberries to eat. It got to be quite a chore later. I'll talk about that later, about the difference in currents in that area. But as far as life as a whole, we had some bad times later in life.

RM: Now when you were growing up, there was a streetcar line that ran out to Presque Isle?

EB: That streetcar, there was a group of real estate men and Mr. Clark, they formed a group and they asked the city if they could put a streetcar line through. This was in 1889. So the city said certainly if you can put a mono track in by 1891 you got the job. So what they did, they put the transformer station on the corner of Hawley and Presque Isle Avenue, that's the far end okay. It's exactly a mile from there to Fair Avenue. So that was their first mile of track. Then they deviated from there, they went up Third Street, or down Fair Avenue as far as Third Street, then Third Street into town, it'd turn off Hewitt Avenue, Spruce Street, Front Street, then they'd go right downtown. So they even went to where Bothwell School is at one time. There was a hotel up there, the Superior Hotel. I've got pictures of that here. As far as that hotel, it was made for hay fever patients. But then you've got antibiotics, that hotel they tore it down later. But they also went as far as, well today you'd call it where Northern Michigan, well not Northern Michigan, Detroit Northern Bank is on Washington Street.

RM: Oh really?

EB: Yes. They also went from Presque Isle Avenue, the corner of Presque Isle Avenue and Wright Street, and they went all the way to Holy Cross Cemetery. That was to take care of, also the fair, they had the fairgrounds up there, mostly for the Holy Cross Cemetery. But there was also, then the track went right down to the island. So they put a bridge across the river and went there. Most of the conductors lived right on the route, they were able to jump the street car and go to work.

RM: Weren't there a lot of, or a number of Polish people that lived down by the car barn down there or the power station? That area?

EB: Down?

RM: Down where Hawley and Presque Isle meet.

EB: They call that "the swamp." Yes there was. There was shingle mill that enticed them to come here, they were making shingles. It was the Unifer Shingle Mill Factory. Then the Brunswick colander, they were up in Big Bay but they moved to Marquette then they, and Synder also put a mill there. Before, in 1880s there was Hawley Lumber Company that was

across the street, or just on the other side of Dead River Bridge, the bridge going to the island. I remember when they, I worked at the LS&I, I worked in the carpenter shop at that time anyway, when the UP Power came in. And when UP Power came in they had to dig there and get all the sawdust and everything. And it was slabs there, two feet wide. I mean slabs often weight on a tree. Fellas go there at noontime and get them and we had a 24 foot pointer running through the _____. There was little bit of green in there but a lot of it was used for homes even at that time.

RM: How did this area develop? Was it developing for housing when you were growing up?

EB: It developed, this is funny you know, I knew, in fact I made a map of the whole area even the swamp, what they call the swamp area that was on the other side of Wright Street. Of course the swamp really is in the area between Union Street and Wright Street, that's a quagmire. I remember when they put those house in there, the low rent house, they almost lost their _____ they had a difficult time getting that job to quagmire. They found out, they covered it up with fly ash and everything to see it be usable. At one time Ford wanted to come here, that's when he went into making these station wagons, these wooden station wagons. He wanted to come in here, but they wouldn't let them come in here because he'd upset the wage market in the city of Marquette. Then it was Robbins wanted to come in here, that's the way it went then.

RM: Flooring? Robbins Flooring?

EB: Flooring mill yeah. This is their first choice here. The area developed, there was usually well from here, from Waldo Street down, I'd say maybe 65% of the people were Finnish. There was Italians and Polish people, a good mixture.

RM: Then everybody that moved here worked at this?

EB: I've never seen a more comfortable area. That's why, I've lived here now, I've lived in my home here now for 59 years. Even though the college owns the property across the street it doesn't bother me a bit. They're getting closer all the time but I'll wait till the time comes. But I wouldn't, there was a biologist from the college at one time by the name of Niemi. He was asking me where would be a good spot for a biology track, you know in the woods. I said it's right on the campus. He says where? I said across the street from my house. I said you wouldn't believe what's screwing in there, and what trees are growing in there. You can name the bear that's _____ on the floor and of course _____. You can find anything in there, there's white pine in there.

RM: Now when you were growing up did you play in there? Did you hunt or anything?

EB: No we never, well. I was real young, this area was, what would you call it? Sporadic, it was swampy in places and so on. This is why I built here because it's as dry as the beach is. Across the street from me now, at one time they planned on putting the heating plant across the street here. But there's 29 feet of muck in there in that plot, then across the street where they had the married student apartments, in 1958 they built those but they couldn't come to Center Street because there was 40 feet down to decent grounding. So that's why they didn't do anything with that. So the, put them towards the end there in that area.

RM: Well that's why you have have that parking lot there. That was not good to build in that area.

EB: At one time you know, Summit Street it went all the way as far as the library. It was one of the first streets here. I remember walking that. See, we had cows we had 6 cows. We had varied _____ and I became a cowboy at the age of 5 I believe because all you had to do was open the gate and the cows would know where to go,

RM: So you had them here in this area? The cows?

EB: Well yes. We had, we pastured our cows on the property from Third Street to Northrop Street and Trailer Avenue and College Avenue being in that area. We could have bought that whole plot for \$1000 in 1928 and those lots were, last I heard two and a half thousands a piece. Of course, I learned a lot going through there too. The city was problems with water running through there, so there was a city engineer and she said if anybody knows about this, what's going on here, let me know. I said sure there was a creek running through there. It's just all over grown, it's an underground. So they were having trouble when they dug for houses. There was a, right about maybe south of the library there was a, Pete Johnson had a 40 in there and people pastured their cows at a fee. So I'm not, the place there he had a barn and it was an artesian well, this is part of the creek. And it drained down and it was the end of Norwood Street here there was a pond there, and everybody wondered where that pond was coming from. It ends up underground over there on the corner of _____ and the bike path, right in there is a spring in the Earth, still running. That's the _____ that runs from Woodland Park up here down here to what we used to call the tar ditch, the chemical ditch. But all in all...

RM: So the water than came from up on College Avenue, and then worked its way down here.

EB: Yeah. They've got a creek name, the city commissioner didn't know anything about the area. I tried to tell him. He named it Rainy Creek, Rainy Creek is way up the river, its five miles out of town. The creek that we're talking through runs through by the high school, by the medical center, and it runs down alongside Ray Street, down to Wright Street. We used to pasture cows behind the cemetery at one time.

RM: So that would be along where the old railroad track used to be?

EB: No. This is, let's see. Where the medical center is, they had probably water west of it. And that runs through, behind some of those house.

RM: Oh yeah, there's a pond like a settling pond in there. So that was the street?

EB: At one time we had pastured cows behind the cemetery and we owed the cows, because I think Vandebloom [spelled phonetically] owned the property and we call in "Vandenbush Creek." So, that's a long time ago.

RM: It's sort of interesting as little pieces of that are left. The old streams I guess were over.

EB: That runs through, behind the high school, the picwa [spelled phonetically] used to be there at one time. The picwa and the factory. I worked there at one time too, you told me where _____ that I would have the job.

RM: Now do you remember when they started putting in the different stores on Presque Isle? Didn't they have a cooperative down here?

EB: There was the co-op store, that came...I worked in there in '37. It was, Mr. Setter [spelled phonetically] was the manager then I guess Mr. Stedling [spelled phonetically]. That must have come in the late '20s the co-op. In the, across the street from there there was a small store, just a general merchandise store. So there was nothing down the street towards Summit Street you know south. So a fellow by the name of Desjordans [spelled phonetically] he bought that store.

TAPE 1 SIDE B

EB: So that became the Avanti Flower Shop. Mr. Desjordans also, what I always called the first mini mart in Marquette. That's was where the pasty shop is now, soups and salad and that. He built that, and I think that was probably, I was nose enough to watch it build and build it, so it must have been about '27 when they built it. In that store they had a grocery store, a shoemaker shop, a gas station, and a barber shop. And there was two apartments upstairs. So up the street then farther besides Avanti there was a fellow by the name of Bernstein he had the _____ store there. He moved out of there I think about 1926, '27. Then it became a garage, I have all the names. Then Charlie Nelson had it for a while, had a slogan "bring me something I can't fix!" Even if it was a broken egg, he'd go buy another egg. So anyway, he was quite a character, quite an inventor. Then it turned into an auto parts outfits, and a radiator shop, Jehovah's Witness society.

RM: Do you remember, I've seen it mentioned in the city directory. There was an episcopal chapel on the corner of Presque Isle and Fair. I forget the name of it now, St. Thomas or something? It was a little church there? An episcopal church, like a chapel?

EB: Presque Isle and Fair?

RM: Yeah, someplace in there.

EB: I remember the foundation. In fact the foundation was reused by St. Mark's church. They build a small church there until they built the big one. St. Mark's built their church and it was complete in 1957.

RM: So before that time?

EB: Evidently there had been something there because I remember. The funny part of it is, there was a road that went through there which would have omitted the corner of Third Street and Fair Avenue. You know like a cut off. At one time Marquette probably was the only place in the United States that had three modes of transportation like on Presque Isle Avenue. The wagons

were allowed on the, wagons there were a couple of teamsters down at the end that had their horses. That was near the street car transformer station. In the center the streetcar, then the automobile traffic was on the east side. So it was kind of unusual to have three modes of transportation right there.

RM: So then most of those houses were built like in the 1920s pretty much?

EB: Yeah. In fact the basement was used by the Boy Scouts for a while.

RM: The basements?

EB: The basement portion of it, they covered it over so they could, like a little den just to get the Boy Scouts.

RM: Oh you mean where the church was?

EB: So there then was, St. Marks bought it and used that foundation to build their little chapel on.

RM: Oh.

EB: Then across the street from there, from St. Marks, there was the gas station. I'm just trying to think of who ran it, Korndyke [spelled phonetically] had it till 1935 I think.

RM: Because that station was there up until a few years ago on the corner there. You tend to forget about it once they tear it down.

EB: Yeah. Well you see Waltons [spelled phonetically] had it first then Claire Knight went in there, then Fluet [spelled phonetically] had it for a number of years. But I kind of keep track of what's going on, the overseer of North Marquette. But I enjoy it so much.

RM: Then you have, down the corner you have, what is it, the gas station on this side of the street is. Now it's falling apart but it used to be very fancy with brick and a brick chimney. Where is that, on the corner of Summit and, Norwood and Presque Isle? I can't think of the name of it now, it's still there. Not Gaffy's, Guffy's? Gas station there, across the street from the pasty shop.

EB: The cloth store was there at one time. Before the cloth store was in there...

RM: No I mean on this side of the street. I'm trying to think, Norwood...yeah Norwood and Presque Isle.

EB: Norwood and Presque Isle, there's a gas station.

RM: Yeah.

EB: That's College Gas Station.

RM: There's a College Gas Station?

EB: That was put up in 1936.

RM: But it's kind of very elaborate with a little chimney.

EB: Yeah Sydney Hogan [spelled phonetically] had maybe 4 stations in town, they were just rented out to the ones that wanted to work for him. I got a list of owners, in the first ten years there were 10 owners. And now, the last owner came there, I almost bought that place when I came out of the service. It was 1946, I went oversee to Joe _____ at the Hogan Oil Company. And I said my partner and I'd would take them over. I held that open for 3 months, and nobody wanted it and now all of a sudden everybody wants it. He says that fella that's gonna run it name is McCullough [spelled phonetically], he's got the keys and he's off on his way. But during all that time, I traded with that gas station for all these years, from '36 to 2006 now. I remember it was just nothing but a hole. So we went down to the beach and made a little sand and fill that in. It was changing owners each each.

RM: So all of this area then was filled in pretty much?

EB: I wouldn't say, there's nothing that really filled it. But after Wright Street I'd say there's hardly anything.

RM: Oh, so all of this is solid.

EB: After you on Wright Street, at one time there was no Wright Street. The way to get to the Holy Cross Cemetery was a road that came up to Center Street over to almost Wilkinson and it cut over diagonally over to Neidhart on the corner. So that was the road to the Tourist Park. Another road would take you towards the cemetery. This road that ran right to the Tourist Park went on a diagonal, a lot of people's houses right through there. I remember during the moonshine days they'd just dump their moonshine along that side of the road. It was all woods but they dumped it. The squirrels were intoxicated all the time out there.

RM: You mean the _____.

EB: We will, of course we were doing the wrong things too. We were shooting the squirrels with sling shots. We became pretty good marksmen after a while. Especially hitting drunken squirrels.

RM: So who was making the booze then? Local people?

EB: Oh, this is another thing. I lived out the _____ till I was 12 years old. The day that I realized people were being intoxicated and involved in that I really didn't know that people were supposed to walk in a straight line until I was 12 years old when I moved up in this area. So, there was so many drunks around it was terrible! They were all immigrants that never made any kind of connection.

RM: So they were just kind of lost in America?

EB: Yeah. And there was one fellow, I remember one time probably in 1928 or so there was a, on Norwood Street, there was a gathering there. There was brawling in the road and the outside there was nothing but sand. There was two fellows talking about communism and each night the crowd was getting bigger. So Charlie Murphy, an outspoken Irishman, he went up in the, came to and said ‘what’s going on here?’” to the fellas “grab your baggage and get out of here, I don’t want to see you around here again” and they never did come back. But that’s the way they worked I guess.

RM: These were Finns?

EB: Everybody was involved. It was Depression times, we were emerging and people started to wonder if they made the right move when they came here.

RM: Oh so you’re saying that a lot of this drinking was because of the Depression?

EB: Yep.

RM: Yep. Oh so you didn’t have any jobs and Cliffs didn’t?

EB: There was jobs, Cliffs-Dow they were paying such small wages. In fact when they first started to retire they’d give them \$15 a month that was just bad. So they tried to get that to be a stronger union but some of the people, you know they’ve already had their children raised and gone through school and there’s some real smart kids that came from them times.

RM: Now did the Finns that moved here, did they join the union or talk about joining the union?

EB: They didn’t have a union.

RM: No? But did they even talk about it?

EB: I guess they tried to depress it as much as possible. If you’re a union person, you didn’t get a very good job you know. Of course things have changed somewhat, but I think it’s turning towards the worse again.

RM: Were the Finnish people sort of active in unionizing if that were possible?

EB: Well you know, people came over to the Dow, or the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, just to get enough money to get away from there. There’s so many that I could name, dozens of them that have moved. They have lived in the company houses. Company housing was put up in 1904, they put 10 duplex homes up for, can you imagine, for \$12,500. They were duplex houses, two families to one.

RM: Oh, they put them all up for that?

EB: Yeah, they put them up. The highest rent I heard was \$11 a month. They weren't making much money but as soon as they were able to get enough money to get out it they did. They'd buy their homes within town here. I found a lot of this information through the city directories and families I know that lived around here, they had lived in this company, they all had lived in a company house at one time. So they had gone to farms, had big dairy farms and like the Hillcrest Dairy there for instance.

RM: Hillcrest Dairy was out on Green Garden Hill.

EB: Green Garden Hill okay, he came to this country, he went to work over here. His name was Soloman Ranta. He had a home, they just knocked it down over there on Presque Isle Avenue. He had a home there and he wanted to move out to the country. Well there was some Germans that were living on the Green Garden Hill, where Hillcrest Dairy was. So they swapped. So Soloman got what he wanted and these, there were 3 German brothers. They owned a farm up there, they came to town, they were working at the LS&I with the railroad. So it was a good swap.

RM: So then the people, the mostly immigrant, most of this area of North Marquette was made up of immigrants?

EB: Yeah.

RM: And they worked either at Cliffs Dow, or Cliffs, or the LS&I?

EB: It was mining or railroad. Some would go to the sawmills, but most of them _____ carpenter. There was a Finnish way for carpentry. In fact when I first got out of school I worked for a _____, a contractor. He wanted me to work with him and I worked with him, I remember Lydia Olson's house over there on College Avenue and different homes.

RM: So around those homes on College Avenue that the professors lived in were put up by Finnish carpenters?

EB: Probably yeah, because they had a lot of faith in them. Then there was Italians here that worked on the railroad and some of them worked at the dock.

RM: The Depetrose [spelled phonetically]?

EB: The Depeatrose, which I lived maybe a little over a block away from those people. You know it's a funny thing. The Depeatrose wanted them, their kids to stay away from our kids, but we got together anyway, we became the best buddies there were. But then I became, I was a milkman for a while then I began to know all these people, and the town. This is what got me interested in knowing the town as well as I do.

RM: The co-op then that was down here, that was Finnish?

EB: More or less, it was Finnish, just about anybody could belong to it but it was a cooperative. Just like other co-ops I guess, there was milk.

RM: Now as this the largest concentration of Finnish people in Marquette? In this area?

EB: I'd say oh yes, yes. Just as odd but, after being on _____ you could pick out... You'd find the Swedish people across Magnetic Street and the west side of 4th Street, there's a lot of Swedes in that area. Then of course the people that, the English and so on, they were right down the hill.

RM: The east side?

EB: Yep. Then there's a lot of Polish people down south in South Marquette.

RM: Now did they live across the street from the old round house and the train yards there?

EB: You mean down in South Marquette?

RM: Down in South Marquette.

EB: Oh yeah definitely, definitely. There was a lot of Polish people in that area. They turned that whole area down Fitch Street west, there was the two _____ they all worked for the railroad.

RM: And that one would have been the Soo Line?

EB: Yep. The DSS&A. They had nicknames for all the railroads I mean. They called the DSS&A "Damn Slow Service and Abuse." The LS&I was "Lazy Swedes and Irishmen."

RM: [Laughs]. The LS&I? What did they call it?

EB: "Lazy Swedes and Irishmen"

RM: Oh, okay. And those were pretty much people who worked them?

EB: Yeah. That's probably about it, it's like everything. It takes its place and all nationalities were in different crowds.

RM: So did the people here kind of they all, you had this ethnic community here, they all got together?

EB: I wouldn't say that they get together, but they...

RM: But I mean like the Finns would all be living close together and interact with each other?

EB: It's still that way you know, somewhat.

RM: Yeah.

EB: We've got Italians going to our church, we've got French going to our church now, so you know. We live in a Finnish religion, there's more Finnish Catholics in Marquette than there is Protestants I guess. Over the times, we had about 6 good buddies and I was the only one who stayed Protestant.

RM: Really? Huh.

EB: And some people go to church just to go to church. They figure it's the right thing, they probably don't know what's being preached.

RM: Speaking of Church, the St. Marks was kind of the church for the Lutherans of all of Presque Isle? Or is that not right?

EB: Not necessarily. They came from Harvey and they were downtown, all over.

RM: But it was, but even now it's kind of the Finnish church in Marquette?

EB: Yeah.

RM: I mean that was its origins?

EB: It was a Finnish element to start with okay there. So that church opened up 1957.

RM: Oh oh, so it didn't go back to this early time that you were talking about?

EB: No, no, no. We've got kind of a, well even Messiah I moved over to Messiah because I had a run in with the pastor and my daughter, she was the organist at the Messiah and it was the right thing to do. I thought it was, I'm kind of glad I did it kept the family together. My daughter's been playing, she just turned 50, she's been playing organ at church for...since she was 13.

RM: Oh my.

EB: So she's got quite a record going. But aside from that it seemed like the Finnish arm of this...they're melting in with everybody else. All nationalities are the same way. I've got some good Italian friends up there in Ishpeming and Negaunee that turned into Catholics, Catholics have turned into Protestants. But the one thing about Ishpeming and Negaunee, they're not like Marquette. At least if they know you, they know you. In Marquette this is altogether a different story. I've lived here all my life and I've yet to see a change. Jim Toriano [spelled phonetically] and I, we were discussing it one time and he says that he notices it. He says the people the Marquette think they're stuck up you know. I says I don't want you to feel that way about me because I want to be friends with everybody so.

RM: Now could you tell us a little about the, you told me about it yesterday but we'll get it on tape. The garden over at Pierce School?

EB: Well, okay. Did you know where the Pierce School lied?

RM: Mhm.

EB: Okay.

RM: We actually saw by the way, we saw a picture.

TAPE CUTS OUT ABRUPTLY

EB: Then the heating plant was right next to it.

RM: Now what did they plant? The garden was 200 by 75 feet?

EB: Well we had little plots for each grade you know.

RM: Each grade, okay.

EB: And maybe a few people you know and they'd take care of it, and they'd plant it. In school we'd maybe go out there for a half an hour and water and stuff like that. I told you, a very intelligent idea.

RM: Now what were some of the, what would they plant?

EB: Well carrots and beets and sometimes someone would grow corn, cucumbers. Anything that you could plant in a vegetable garden.

RM: Now did it have a fence around it?

EB: We had, there was a fence around it. But it wasn't to keep rabbits or things around because it was was kind of a mesh fence with 8 by 8 openings. Then on the east end, or west end, of it I'd say maybe at the most 20 feet away was the oval for the track for the football field and so on. Later on they put the tennis courts behind where the garden was, that would be north of it. That was quite a while ago. At one time when we were talking about the grounds down there on Waldo Street and Presque Isle. There was at one time tennis courts down there.

RM: On the corner of Waldo and Presque Isle?

EB: Yeah. They put the, in fact there was playground equipment there for the John D. Pierce students. Teeter totters and swings and _____ and all that stuff?

RM: And all in that area?

EB: Then they finally they put stairs there down that hill, railing and...

RM: Now could that have been the reason why that the mural went up? Because it was a playground?

EB: No, that was quite a ways away from that. It hard for me to really say.

RM: Would it have been that they playground would have been in front of the Peter White Building?

EB: Let's see the playground was...no, no. It was more or less, the laboratory building, the north building okay. From the northeast corner, just out from that, there's a playground down there it was at a different elevation.

RM: Okay, because at one time there used to be a gateway down in the corner.

EB: Yeah, they put that in there yeah.

RM: And that gateway and all that came out when they put in the parking lot.

EB: So now we'd have that, yeah I remember we used to play down there.

RM: But that wouldn't haven't have connected with the mural?

EB: No, no, no because as far as we were concerned, that hill wasn't as long as they made it. That seemed to hug the ground, I'd say the end of it if you went down Fitch Avenue straight out, maybe 100 feet the end of this hill. So they filled at lot in there. I would think of another thing now, Tom was telling me that the mosaic art or whatever it was was old. Now it could have been that old I'll tell ya because we used to bump down that hill and we ever never hit anything down there, at the bottom there was big boulders in the bottom. But as far as I was concerned, that must have been put in about the same time they landscaped that long hill there down towards, where did you call it, slightly towards the?

RM: The sundre shop.

EB: Yep. Yep.

RM: Now it seems that there's a picture about 1963 and you can see that they've put earth in there that eventually becomes that walkway, or that gradual hill that goes up there. So it looks like in 1963 they put that in, that earth. Because it's a gradual hill that's coming down.

EB: Yeah, yeah I know that.

RM: Before that time it was just hill.

EB: Well it was just a cliff really.

RM: Yeah just a cliff.

EB: And sometime you would find a decent place to ski off of there, that little bluff that was largely veered to the left. We use to cut out, we left home in college and probably go through the college then we'd take path that would right to the, what was the top of that cliff. They we'd walk out to Longyear Avenue and walk home. Down Longyear. But this is hard to, I can't remember all this. But you did dare to go around John D. Pierce building from the west end and cut through where the gardens were because Bottum had an eye on you.

RM: Oh, so you had to go in front of the college buildings?

EB: Yeah. I could talk about events that, even when I was going to high school, basketball team Ronny Thorn [spelled phonetically] and all that. That was fun.

RM: Well tell us about it.

EB: Well anyway Ronny run, Ronny became our biology teacher in 10th grade. So we'd make field trips and so on, so one time you know he was just tired. So we'd go to what we called "Arbor Woods" that was, Arbor Woods was all the way down the Center Street due north. There was 7 of us boys and 7 girls. When you got through that the girls wanted to go back. So I told Rolan [spelled phonetically] "you haven't seen anything yet." I said "you got to go across the street car tracks, then you'll see what you want to see." So we, I got them to go all the way, and we went swimming. Well I'll tell you. We had a hard time trying to cover that up. We'd came back with, you had to be back at 20 to 12, and our heads wet and everything else. And that's quite a way you know? And so we starting coming back and.

TAPE STOPS ABRUPTLY

TAPE 2 SIDE A

RM: Okay, tape 2 of the Beck interview. Continue.

EB: Anyway, this fella, he traveled back and forth from Green Garden to school and he ran back to school and got his Buick and we started coming back and the sun started shining and everything else. We came home, and came back to class as innocence as can be like nothing every happened. The best of all trips that we made were really interesting. A new coach was, we could see, the kids could see, like Jody Hookey [spelled phonetically] was the coach in Newberry. We had played in St. Ignace on a Friday and we were supposed to play in Newberry that Saturday night and we were tired already and being away from homes besides. So surely coach says "well you can use," we stopped at this high school and right away he says "you can use the gym if you want to." Naturally we all went and practiced for a while. He said "we've got it all arranged for you this afternoon." He said "you can go and wait in the legion pool parlor for a while." So what did they do? They brought us to the institution, and that's the worst thing they could have done with a bunch of kids. So we went in there and we we're going down, the foyer in there was all glass. So they were transferring some women into another area and we were in the hallway and boy, there was broken glass and everything else around. We had to get into another department there. So pointly, we were on our way out there was a women that gave

Ronny an end of shoebox, she had written a note on there. Call the _____, it was a women from Marquette. Call the army, call the militia, she said, I _____ hurt my husband and all this stuff you know were written about the black. I asked Ronny many years after, I said what did you do with it? He said "I threw it away." I said "wasn't that some visit we made?" [Laughs].

RM: So would you have to do that? You stayed overnight at the institution there or you just?

EB: We stayed overnight in St. Ignace.

RM: Oh, in St. Ignace, oh okay. Not in Newberry?

EB: We were just kids and they were talking about all the robberies that were going on there. And I still remember the name of the people, it was the Ravies [spelled phonetically] they were right across the street from the court house. I had a couple of bucks in my pocket and I never slept that night, it was scary that somebody was going to steal that 2 dollars. Even today, Ronny we joke about these things. I haven't seen him now, I wanted to see him at the last meeting they had but he wasn't there. He's living in the, spending his last days in Florida probably.

RM: Oh yeah, because his wife passed away a few years ago. Now do you see many of the people that you went to school with still around or are they gone?

EB: You want to know how many is left in my graduating class?

RM: Yeah.

EB: 3.

RM: 3?

EB: It was 26 to begin with. They've all passed away. I never thought that I would be one of the last ones.

RM: So you've had a good life then in North Marquette?

EB: Well yes. I spent 2 years in the service, but I can't say. My granddaughter came home "tell us about the war!" I says "I've never seen a gun!" They sent me to school and school and school. I went to all the aircraft schools you could think about. I went ___ school, B24 school, B17, and P47s and all these...Every time I turned around "you gotta go to school." Of course there was a name for it too because a lot of people would be on the front flight line and they hadn't had any schooling and they had to be taught what to be done. But I enjoyed it. In fact I had an A&E license just shook in front of my face. I said "no I'm going back to Marquette." Living in a wheat district in Oklahoma, I couldn't see it.

RM: Where were you stationed? Were you stationed overseas?

EB: No, in the United States.

RM: Oh.

EB: My home base for a long time was Winfield, Kansas. We had a fighter base there, P47 fighter base.

RM: So you were in air craft maintenance?

EB: Yeah I was in air craft maintenance. I was actually a crew chief. But I enjoyed it, I remember after going through all that and were ready to leave the service. But I had too many points and they sent me to _____ school in Baltimore, Maryland. So I was there and I and gone about 6 weeks, I get the schooling, but they took me out of school. They said "we gotta take you out. You got one duty to do yet." And I said "what's that?" "You gotta go down to Florida, we've got one of your old pilots waiting for you down there." I said "who's that?" They said "Colonel Hyoto. He caught wind of you when he was training pilots, he said he wants to see you there." So, I was crew chief t that point. And he pleaded with me to say. He said "you're jumping right into the fire. I said "no, but I sure like the fire." Then after I retired, oh probably, I retired in '77. In '84 I ended up in the hospital, I had bypass surgery. In 1994 I had micro biopsy, but I always belong to Heart Club here. You know just to keep people from worrying from what's happening. And that was a nice job I really liked it. And people they think a lot of you after you help them out like that. Because that's a bad time when people are going to undergo surgery.

RM: So then you raised your family, this is?

EB: Right here. I got out of the service in '46 and I built this house in '47. I built it myself, anything that was done, in fact I all the curbing in on the street in '58, had a lot of new driveways.

RM: So there was nothing out here at that time?

EB: Nothing. There was no sewer here, but we had an outhouse back here. I pleaded with the city to get the sewer in here, the water and everything. I had to do a lot of work to try to get that going. I got sick of it, just going to City Hall. But I got my message across.

RM: So then all of this area was added, especially like Longyear was built in the 1950s?

EB: Well, yeah all this here. In fact there was houses all across the street.

RM: Oh yeah, that's right.

EB: The university bought that property and they all moved out. It was good for some people because they were neck deep in debt. It got them out the door. I remember one time I think that Dwayne Swaney [spelled phonetically] bought a house here and they built the house, I remember helping him put the sidewalk in. Then he had the house moved down a couple of blocks where the university wouldn't touch him anymore. He sold the house and he came down the road.

RM: Now were you worried when the university was buying the houses that they were going to buy yours and push into here?

EB: Well, I had the house up the street here and I asked them, Mr. McClintock had something to do with it. I asked them, I knew Dave because he belonged to our breakfast club on Saturday mornings. And I asked him, I said "You want to buy a house? The university." He said "we're not touching anything on that side of the street." So we raised our kids here, and I got one boy in California, he's 55 years old now. I've got a grandson that pitches for the UCLA baseball team for 4 years. The other one is an insurance under writer. I got, my son here. He worked, he got a degree from the college for biology and he had a job offer as a water quality control over in Antigo, Wisconsin. He said "if it isn't around Marquette I don't want it." He was a really _____. But my older boy he was tattling all the time. So there's a difference in children. My grandchildren, one just got married recently and is teaching in Boulder, Colorado. She just had a child that would be my first great grandchild.

RM: So you've had a very successful life then?

EB: Yeah, as far as I'm concerned it's almost complete.

RM: Yeah, it sounds very good.

EB: I've had all I wanted and more. I was just fortunate that I got married a little later in life and I ran into a wonderful woman.

RM: And what's your wife's name?

EB: Ruth, and we've been together through thick and thin. She's from the Copper Country originally and talk to all the relatives up there, as far as I'm concerned I have no relatives whatsoever.

RM: Now are you, now was she Finnish background?

EB: Pardon?

RM: Was your wife Finnish background?

EB: Yes. But we met and that was it I guess.

RM: Well it sounds like you are a real historian of North Marquette?

EB: Oh yeah. Someday I'll relate to you about some of the other things that are around here. The Palestra for instance, there's a lot of stuff for instance, there is really quite a story about that. In fact I've got a picture of it someplace.

RM: Well you could tell us now!

EB: Yeah?

RM: About the Palestra?

EB: Well the Palestra that was bought by the city of Marquette, it was the ice area. They bought it from Laurium, and they paid \$15,000 for it and it was shipped here by rail. So when they brought it here, that was the month of June in 1921. They had to, anyway they moved it down to the, by Fair Avenue. But they had to move a couple houses. They moved them towards Presque Isle Avenue and they put it in that place there. The manager of the Palestra up in Laurium was named John McNamara [spelled phonetically], he came down with it so he ran the Palestra and also the county fairgrounds. The county fairs at one time, and the carnivals, were all held in that particular grounds where the Palestra is. From what I hear, they named it Fair Avenue because of that. So they brought the Palestra down here in the month of June and December 24th, 1921 they were ready for their first hockey game. In fact the whole hockey team from up in Laurium came down here. So they had the semi-pro hockey team there, and we used to go there. It was cold in there, there was no heat or anything but everyone seemed to enjoy it. And there was a balcony in there and you could see everything wonderfully up in the balcony. Although it might cost you a little but more to get one of those, really what you would call a "box seat."

RM: I remember the Palestra. I remember it was the first place I went to when I came here. I was taking my coat off and Richard Sonderegger, Dick Sonderegger, said "what are you doing?" "Taking my coat off!" He said "you're gonna have your coat back on, there's no heat in here!" [Laughs].

EB: [Laughs] I got the list of the managers that have done those, _____. So now they can't afford the arena they have.

Rm: They've got problemsn.

EB: Oh yeah they got problems.

RM: Anything else? Some last thing you want to say? Something that I didn't ask you about?

EB: It's hard just to think of something to remember.

RM: You'll probably think about it after I leave. [Laughs].

EB: We were kind of selective when we went any place, we didn't go beyond certain boundaries or so on which we were told to do when we were children. But after we got a little older we were all over. But I think it's been wonderful, we've had a few setbacks along the line, but the better days were much, outweigh the other.

RM: Okay, well very good thank you for the interview I appreciate it.

EB: If there's something else sometime you think about. I'll try my best to find out about this mural at the cliff.

RM: Oh yeah that mural. Because I thought it was maybe a garden, but then you cleared that up. No the garden was over at the other...

EB: Well it had to be done much later because...

RM: You don't remember it, as a kid? You don't remember anything.

EB: I wouldn't when I was kid because we'd, in fact right through the center of it from the top down we cleared that all out so we'd have a decent ride you know? Rocks and everything, heavy clay you cleared that out in order to have decent ride down the hill. But then, and then springtime you know you'd go down to the bookstore and get these penny pads. You'd see kids over there on the cliff there making little airplanes and throwing them over. Times you know. But I think that we'll make some way.

RM: Okay good, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW 1

Interview with Ernie Beck

June 6, 2006

Marquette, Michigan

START OF INTERVIEW 2

Russ Magnaghi (RM): Interview with Ernie Beck, Marquette, Michigan, June 6, 2006. Okay good afternoon Ernie. Today what we want to do is continue our interview that we started about a week ago or so and it was probably a little longer than that, and I would like to ask you some additional questions about your days at the Pierce School. Last time we had ended the interview and you had made some comments and I took some notes here, what I would like to do is ask you about them. You had mentioned last time the College Inn, a restaurant that was, could you tell us a little about that, where it was located and what happened?

Ernie Beck (EB): The College Inn was located at the corner of Kay Avenue and Presque Isle Avenue. That's on the south east corner, and-

RM: What was located there today?

EB: Just kiddy corner from the University property.

RM: Well isn't it the Gospel Tabernacle?

EB: It's the Gospel Tabernacle today. The Gospel Tabernacle probably bought that in the '30s sometime because they had been in, maybe '32 or '33 they had started a Temp Gospel

Tabernacle that was on Presque Isle Avenue near it would be between Center and Summit Street on the west side of the street where the ___ was. Then they evidently when winter came along they moved up into the College Inn area.

RM: Now who used to go to the College Inn, students, and professors?

EB: That I don't know. It seemed like, I don't imagine it could have been the students, it seemed like it seemed to be more elite people you know than students. Of course you didn't know at that time, when kids went to college at that time they were dressed, they wore suits to go to school. So it was hard to tell.

RM: But then there weren't that many places to eat around the campus there.

EB: No definitely not.

RM: Because I don't think there was anything in the buildings.

EB: No like today there is a couple places you can eat at but at that time there was a gas station there run by Clare Knight [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] he had a gas station there, that was the only thing that was right across from the main sidewalk going to the college. It seemed to me that there have been, a lot of the college traffic was coming north of the college, because I can name you dozens and dozens of kids that went to college there. Of course they were probably students, or children of the people that worked at the DOW or whatever you call it.

RM: You mean college students that lived north of the campus.

EB: It seemed to me that, and John D. Pierce students also, there was many of them so it always included with that group.

RM: Oh you were mentioning the janitor at the Pierce school, where he lived last time.

EB: He lived in the old dormitory, did you hear the dormitory, he lived in the eastern most section of it. And I imagine he was caretaker of that also as janitor. His name was Hosking.

RM: And then I have something here that there was a fellow who was a chief chemist at the DOW chemical...

EB: At the DOW Company, there was one more, there was another house, there was just one house on that block besides, and his name was Scott.

RM: Besides the dormitory.

EB: Yeah, besides the dorm. That's the only other building on that, and that was facing Presque Isle Avenue.

RM: Okay now let's see...Oh and then you were talking about the presidents. Where the presidents live, Presidents Kaye and Tape lived in a house across from the college.

EB: Across the street from the college. That was, where the, that old building there that's Lautners [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], professor Lautners [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] on

the corner. Next to it was the president's home, and I know of Munson, Pearce, and Tape living in there. So in fact President Pearce's son was a grade ahead of me in school, his name was John, and he also married a girl from Marquette, Mertle Haught [SPELLED PHONETICALLY].

RM: Now is he still alive is he around Marquette?

EB: Who John? No he's gone now, after he had his education they moved elsewhere. I was in contact with his dad for years but then I completely forgot about it you know.

RM: Okay now did the DOW chemical, did they have company housing?

EB: They had company houses. Those houses were built at the same time that the Pioneer Iron Company moved, it was the Pioneer Iron Company that started, and they had to have housing for the workers. Well most of these workers came here with the idea of getting enough money and then move out. So when it first started I remember it was, in the first house number one was of Mr. John Ollilla. That was one of the first ones. He, well to talk about the houses first, they built ten houses, they were duplexes. They built those all for 12,500 dollars. Now that's ten houses. Knowing later that they would never have enough houses they built five more and they built them on the east side of the road there, they call that Pioneer Street at that time. But I could name you many of them that have just got enough money and they moved out and they built on a farm. There was Finnish, Italian, it was a regular melting pot there at one time and then in 1932 I believe it was, when it turned into a chemical plant. So at that time, instead of having cinders around it was just acetone and some of it came in little round balls and stuff like this, kind of like a putty all that residue. So that is where Wright Street was built with to begin with, but then they tore that up later.

RM: What do you mean, they built it with this acetone?

EB: Yeah. So anyway, that company I don't think they paid much but I lived around that area for, around this area, all my life and I never I hadn't been to the gates of that place until I begin to work for the railroad then I had to go in there and inspect boxcars and stuff like this you know. So that's the first time I ever been there. My dad worked there as a kiln maker when he first came and he, I didn't see much of him because I was born January 1918 and he died November of 1918 so I've never really delved into his life, kind of curious about it but.

RM: Did he have any relatives here?

EB: No we never had any relatives, all our relatives were over in Finland. He had a brother that was living in Ironwood. They came from Finland together, my dad and my uncle and when they came to this country they came through Ellis Island their name was originally Dastrubeck [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] so finally when they came to Ellis Island they changed their name, my uncles name was Dastru [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and my dad's name was Beck, so again you see a Finlander with a name like that...

RM: Now then your father passed away from the flu epidemic 1918, what did your mother do? Did she remarry?

EB: No she, we had a little dairy business of our after that. We had a group of cows and we used to pasture them up there very near the college. It was a spears head shape property from maybe Seventh Street to Northrop Avenue, as from Fair Avenue to College Avenue that strip in there and we pastured our cows there. Although there was another pasture north of that, it was operated by Pete Johnson, and he just leased his property out to the people that had cows and when I was just a kid everybody had cows. We had, used to bottle milk.

RM: How many cows did you have?

EB: We had six.

RM: Six.

EB: So we did that and once in a while they'd call her to do domestic housework and stuff like that.

RM: So she had a regular business that you said that she bottled,

EB: More or less, it was all bottled at home.

RM: Did she make butter or anything?

EB: No, we used to get our butter from a farm route in Scandia. They used to come in a crock of five pounds.

RM: But this was her, obviously with six cows she had to be on,

EB: We learned to help when we were real young. I was pasturing those cows when I was just small, all you had to do was open the gate at home and you went over at the pasture you don't even worry about then until night and you, when you go to get the cows you go to the gate and they are waiting for you to go home. Of course the group of cows would come maybe the whole group and they know exactly where they would get off at, some would get off at Summit Street, some on Summer Street, and down our way.

RM: Now at that time where did you live?

EB: I lived on Fitch Avenue, that's 1800 Fitch.

RM: So you had all these cows then going back and forth.

EB: We had chickens also.

RM: Now did she do anything with those or just use them, selling eggs or anything?

EB: We just used them,

RM: Now did your mother keep a large garden.

EB: Oh yeah we had quite a garden.

RM: Any fruit trees, apples?

EB: You know if I had to live life over I would like to live it just the way I lived it. I am perfectly satisfied. And right as you get older things get a little tougher for you but the good days far outweigh the bad days.

RM: So this was like living out in the country then? I mean you were close to DOW but when you're out here.

EB: Well finally then a dairy man had gone to the city and they passed an ordinance not to have any cows within in the city. Expecting to get out business and our cows but we gave them to a local dairy up there in Green Garden, and we got out business and all. So in years passed and I guess I just got out of the service and the following day I get a call from the dairy which he had controlling interest. So I wouldn't have gone but the fella that was running the plant he was a good friend of mine so I went to help him out. I intended to stay there maybe a couple weeks but it lasted longer, so one day I was at the bottler and I was bottling milk and he came over to, the boss, and he said to me I gave a dog, he was a vet also, I gave a dog a shot of stick nine will you throw it in the boiler when after you leave or when you go. I told him right there I came over here to bottle milk I didn't come here to cremate dogs. He said you know I can fire you? I says go right ahead. So he did, I let everything go, there was milk all over there were broken bottles and everything else. [Laughter] He said set the machine up! I says I can't I'm fired. So finally the president or the vice president he came to me and said I understand your situation so he said but would you work another 10 days. I says for you I would work forever, I just had an axe to grind here and I figured I done a good job of it. So anyways this is all in the past and all forgotten.

RM: Now do you remember, you were a kid probably when it ran, the street car that ran down Presque Isle?

EB: Oh yes. The street cars came before my time they were, there was a group of more or less real-estate men. There was Racire [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], Enevera [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], and Carr [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], I think there was a ___ involved and they asked for a franchise street car run in Marquette. They said if you can put up one mile of track in a year you've got the franchise. So they put the transformer house up at Presque Isle and Hawley Street. So from there to Fair Avenue is exactly a mile, so I figured that's the first mile they could have put in because if they went the other way they would have to go across the river. So then they went to Fair Avenue and turned off on Fair and went to Third Street and the Third to Hewitt and downtown and it even run up to where Bothwell school was at one time because the superior hotel. That superior hotel kind of failed because anti biotic coming in to hay fever piece where it is abundant. So finally that, after that the run only went to downtown and to Baraga Avenue then it turned around and came back. But at one time it went through town and it went all the way to the brewery location, you know that's where oh probably,

RM: You mean out on Washington?

EB: Washington Street. About four blocks west of Shopko or somewhere in that area, it was a castle brewery company, it was run by Rueben [SPELLED PHONETICALLY].

RM: So the streetcar went out there?

EB: It went out there. And I got pictures of it here someplace that, where it had run to, and it ran all the way to Presque Isle. Presque Isle down there it ran across the river and then under the dock and there was, they had an island store there at the time. Let's see, Princes [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] had it for a while and then Rickards [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], it's been handed down many times since. But it was kind of an unusual ride, being able to go to the island on that street car, and I thought, to me anyway, I thought that real prompt you know. So right after the street cars were discontinued in April 15, 1935. And they brought a bus line in from Lansing, and that was a catastrophe. It cost the city so much money to, it was supposed to be self-supporting, but it cost the city so much money to try to support that. So taxis took over until such time as people began to have more cars and everything.

RM: So that was a very convenient form of transportation for you?

EB: Oh yeah, from one end of town to the other it was wonderful.

RM: Now you were going to tell me a little about, let's see, oh could you tell us a little about, you were saying you were starting to talk about it in the beginning, again what you thought that mosaic or tile is there at the base of the hill at Northern.

EB: I think that that was more of just a cliff that whole area that was facing east. That was a cliff, you could never ski on it or anything, it was a cliff. It more or less when it got farther in the woods there it became much more steeper, but in that area, at the end of that area, from where the Lydia Olson library was and down that way, towards the end of it, towards Waldo street we had a hill we used to ski down, it was called Phosberry Hill [SPELLED PHONETICALLY]. So to me after they had raised those buildings and everything it seemed to me they had to get the dirt from that someplace to fill that long hill that they have there now, that big the long slope. So I would image a lot of that is from the demolition of the college and so on and maybe there is a lot debris in there, but at the time I was more concerned, it bothered me so much when they knocked that college out, it hurt me. I remember there's a ____ in the state legislature today he says he hadn't been here for quite some time he says, Ernie, you don't mean to tell me they put up a thing like that? You know the Cohodas building, I said that's what they do. I've got some pictures of it also somewhere here.

RM: But you were saying with that mosaic you were saying that you talked to some of the people that lived there, nobody seems to have any...

EB: Any inkling of it. You see it's so out of the way, it's a half a block in the woods there. And anybody that's lived around here at any time, the last thing I remember being in that area was the veterans housing and before that tennis courts were down there, the John D. Pierce playground was down there, they had the swings and the teeter totters and ____ Bridge and all that.

RM: Now could that have been a wall or something as part of the playground for the kids.

EB: No, no.

RM: It wasn't in that area in the back?

EB: Oh no. It was quite away from the shaggy rock that was in there. And trees that were in the area. You could never slide or ski down that area it was so steep. Which by the way...

RM: You know one of the things I mentioned and you talked a little about it I'd like you take the frog pond, the frog pond, where was the frog pond on Northern...

EB: Well Northern, they had west of the Pierce building, maybe a hundred yards or so, they built an athletic field in there, and it wasn't more than 50 feet away from the gardens, the kids gardens, but this athletic field went north and south and the frog pond was at the extreme north end of that.

RM: So that would be like almost in front of Lee Hall today?

EB: Somewhere in that area yeah. Well Lee Hall is a little too far east. But it was in that area. As I was telling them before we used to be around, we would be wet going to school because of that pond because we used to play right over the hill, when we had the John D. Pierce we always had to come to the east end of school, never around the building, but of course you know how kids are.

RM: So you had to go through the main entrance of Kaye Hall?

EB: We went between the athletic field and the garden and then we went to the pond that was right at the top of the hill. In fact on top of the hill was where the Dallas Cowboys practiced one year, and that's a long time ago. My kids were real small at the time.

RM: But that was down more towards Hedgecock, where they practiced there, in front of the theatre. The Forrest Robert theatre.

EB: No it was right on top of the hill.

RM: Oh was it?

EB: Yeah they had logs around it even, I remember it was on top of the hill. In fact the tennis courts are just behind it, south of that.

RM: So this frog pond then was just kind of low lying land that was filled with water?

EB: It seemed to be, it wasn't a swamp exactly because it was all clear all the way around it, all the hills, that's high ground, real high ground. But some way or another it turned into a frog pond, it was wonderful biology class and everything, you saw frogs in there, frog eggs, pollywogs, so,

RM: So it was a big hit with the kids in Pierce School.

EB: Oh boy that was really something.

RM: Okay could you tell us maybe a little about Pierce School, going to school there, what was it like, your memories of it?

EB: I've never gone to another school, if there is any other school that was wood inside I would like to know where it is. I really enjoyed it all, it was wonderful. Teachers were so good, each teacher had, there was critic teacher of course, then they had two student teachers for each class, they split the classes of course, fifteen in each class. They usually put a maximum of 30 children in each grade, and sometimes it would be less. But that was perfectly operated I thought, and every teacher was the same, we had one that was real unusual, was in the fifth grade her name was Mrs. Cooley [SPELLED PHONETICALLY]. We had to shake hands with her when you went into her room and when you came out. Which I thought that was quite nice, at least she knew each person.

RM: Now you talked about the teachers, you said there was one teacher that played golf and used to hit the ball...

EB: This road, it was Kaye Avenue, Kaye Avenue wasn't extended at that time it stopped on the, see Anderson [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was across the street, about the edge of this property, and Ms. Griswood [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] would be there and she would purposely knock golf balls and try to get them to hit the pond, which we would watch her all the time. She was wonderful, she was concerned about our family because the other three children also when to John D. Pierce, but no and then the training I had in school as far as industrial arts is concerned with what I had there I was able to manage to get about any job I wanted. I remember even after I come back from the service I had worked for the railroad already for twelve years well we were laid off, well I went to K.I. Sawyer over there and there was a group of men there, anybody know how to ready blueprints? Nobody raised their hand so I raised my hand, I had that job for a couple of years I guess. They kept on adding more for that, but then they called me back to the railroad. But I enjoyed that, and I remember when I was in the service, I met two college graduates from Northern, it was Arnie Johnson [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], I met him at _____ Field. Then I met Milton Kelly [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], he taught me in history in John D. Pierce. He said Ernie you're just the guy I want! He said I got to have a student instructor, well what I know of it is too much you know. He said what you learned in John D. Pierce was enough. So there I was. And I've been interested in just about anything mechanical, but it's been wonderful, wonderful [TAPE CUTS OUT]

[END SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

RM: When you were growing up, especially when you were younger, was there a lot of discussion about the taste of water in Marquette that tasted like Cree [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] soap.

EB: Well, maybe there could have been, but I never tasted it, but the only time it bothered us is when we went swimming at picnic rocks. We'd always be off, number one we would have different places that we called the chute, or whatever it was, on the north side of it you could tell when the Cree [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] soap was coming though you know, you could smell it in the water. But it didn't seem to harm the water because I didn't think it really got that far, but of course maybe getting used to water like this it was okay. But the smell that was there,

that Cree [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] soap, living in this area, at first they were having a lot of trouble because of the fact that when they were burning coal and they'd go ahead and clean the flues at night and clean the flues at night with an east wind would come all over the people's clothes. That was about the only gripe I ever heard about.

RM: So you would have a fine soot thing on your house?

EB: Well no, not really that much, but it was there you could see it sometimes. But then I guess there was an ordinance passed to limit it, that you couldn't blow the flues when the wind was over the lake, you contaminate the water instead [laughter].

RM: Now did you used to, well I know I lived over in this area one time years ago, you used to on a hot warm humid day you would sometimes smell the charcoal, the smell of charcoal, was that common when you were younger from the plant?

EB: Well I think it is all in what you get used to. I've lived ___3 blocks from where I was born, and right now I've got it perfect, I've got nice woods across the street and everything else, I've got everything I wanted, the kids have a long good education, in fact their children are getting a good education, one of my oldest sons boy was picked for UCLA for four years. So he didn't want to pursue anymore after that traveling... so you see just being in Marquette they are discovered all over the country you know.

RM: Now how many children did you have, or have?

EB: I had three children, I've got seven grandchildren and one great grandchild. The one that is in Colorado now, she is at Boulder, Colorado, she is teaching there. My great granddaughter.

RM: Oh your great granddaughter is teaching?

EB: My granddaughter okay, she had a baby boy a couple of months ago.

RM: Oh so he is the great grandchild.

EB: Yeah.

RM: Now when you were growing up, did you mother speak Finnish to you at home? Did you learn Finnish?

EB: Oh I knew Finnish, I knew it from day one I think. I still know it. In fact I, when I first got out of school I was a milk man, and they were nearly all Finnish customers it was from the Coop dairy so I did bring milk there a couple years, and because I knew how to talk Finnish, I still know how to talk, there is some people around here that do and they can't really speak English and I speak with them.

RM: So was that kind of your first language when you were growing up?

EB: Let's put it this way, when we went to school we talked English, when we got home we talked Finnish.

RM: But when you first went to school you had to learn English?

EB: Yeah. And I couldn't have went to a better place I'm telling you, it was a wonderful school.

[Tape cuts out for moment and begins abruptly]

EB: Finnish and her parents are Finnish.

RM: And they were from the old country so you could speak the language when you visited?

EB: They forget about that. I don't know anything about the old country I'm not worried about it.

RM: But I mean you would speak, you could speak Finnish to them.

EB: Oh yes, I mean you get in contact with some of these 100 percent Finnish and actually we talk Finglish...

RM: Now did you remember any of the other teachers that you could make comments about that you had over there?

EB: Oh I can't say anything bad about them! They were all wonderful! And Ms. Mache [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] in the first grade, no that was kindergarten, in the first grade was Ms. Marsh [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], second grade was Ms. Secore [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], third grade was Ms. Hill [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], fourth with Mrs. Minnick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], then there was Ms. Valasnick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and I remember her because she was from Nebraska and then 5th grade was Ms. Cooley [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], Sixth grade was Ms. Haven [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], and seventh grade was Ms. Griswood [SPELLED PHONETICALLY]. And there was an older teacher there by the name of Melhintch and she would be sub teaching in the eighth grade also with others, she was a great person too. From what I heard she was involved in that fire that they had at the university I forgot what year it was, from what they said she had saved some valuable papers there and she had lost her hair and went half blind.

RM: Oh my, who was that?

EB: Melhintch.

RM: That was in 1907?

EB: That was in the eighth grade that I really became acquainted with her. Then there was, in high school, then there was Ms. Hamilton [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] she was American History, European History, Mrs. Payne [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was English, Schlieck [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was Geography and Bottom [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] algebra, advanced algebra, geometry and solid geometry. We wanted to go a little farther with that but we couldn't get enough people from college to join our classes, sometimes college students that didn't have enough credits in mathematics would come and join us in high school to complete their mathematics.

RM: Do it in kind of a background work to get up to speed.

EB: Anyway, I thought that this critic teacher and the student teacher that worked wonderful because the student teachers would do their outpost keep their grades up of course and the critic teacher was there too. To help them out. And once and while when somebody didn't show up the critic teacher would take over.

RM: Now did you say you and some photographs you wanted to show me?

EB: This bachelor's club for I don't know, a long time, and they had to break up finally because they were dying off so fast. I think I'm one of the last. And this is Steve Paul [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], he was trying to make a cartoon for the previous ___ about things that were discussed. And they all used to swim at the PIEF. And I swam there for 23 years and I just quit. Now this picture here, this is something special. There was a girl that came over to me, she never seen her dad. He went in the service and he was killed in World War II, and she never seen her dad and she said, and nobody had a picture of him. I says I'll see what I can do Donna, I says, so she says what could you do? I says I think I have a photo of him in a basketball shoot in a group of course. So I poked around and I found a picture, so I had it enlarged and made like this and she was so thankful to be able to get that picture.

RM: That was the only one that she had.

EB: Yep that was the only one that she had of her dad.

RM: Oh so this was, oh I see.

EB: When I was thirteen or fourteen years old I used to, Pierce invited me up there to where they lived on College because I was a crackerjack that would throw horseshoes, so they thought they'd try and learn how, they never did learn how the way I learned, I was taught by, at the time was a fellow by the name of Ted Ellen [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] he taught me how to throw and it really works wonderful for him. But there are picture, there's a lot of repetition pictures in there. And the bottom line,

RM: The thing was that I, in the summer before he passed away I went down to Frankenmuth and did an interview with him. And when we were talking he told me about the book the Bottom Line and so on and he wanted to get it out to friends and whatnot. I told him I said well let me get the copy and we will have copies made and all, which we did, and then we got it, I mailed and we delivered it to people around town and then he passed away a few days after that. I think he passed away early January.

EB: I told you, I used to get letters from him, it seemed to be always upbeat, all his letters you know. I remember one time him telling me that he had two wives, he said when they bury me I know I'm going to be buried between the two of them, but I don't know which one to lean my body towards. [Laughter]. Wonderful guy.

RM: So this was a group of...

EB: John D. Pierce graduates that just stuck together and we just had to break up because one of the main ones he was a teacher that ___ years, he never wanted any ___ of any kind, never missed a day of going to school, never missed a day of teaching or anything like that, never

missed a meeting, and when he passed away he says all I want put in the paper is that he died. And that's all that was in there when he passed away. Too bad somebody didn't follow up on it, but that was his desire.

RM: So this is back in '84?

EB: And then we belonged to the same Kiwanis club at the same time too. Yeah Paul he just passed away, he's got a brother here living in Marquette he lives on College Avenue. I went to school with Frank.

RM: Oh Frank Paul? Wasn't he in charge of the historical society for a while?

EB: For, yeah.

RM: I didn't know he was still around.

EB: Yeah he is living on College Avenue. He's got a sister, she is out in Iron Mountain.

RM: So you were in the class of what?

EB: '37.

RM: High school class.

EB: Yep, John D. Pierce. It's a funny thing I started school in college in the kindergarten and I graduated from Northern off the stage there in the auditorium because the John D. Pierce had no auditorium. So I went to the college of John D. Pierce [laughter].

RM: Yep. So this was the last class.

EB: And then we had a reunion in '71.

RM: And then they had one in '99.

EB: Yeah. I kept almost anything pertaining to John D. Pierce.

RM: Donkers... do you remember going to Donker's and all those places?

EB: Oh I'm afraid _____. In fact when I got out of school I was delivering milk there one time. They would always give me a ticket if I doubled parked and Mr. Donker said doubled parked give me your ticket and I'll take care of it. So I had the ticket in my mouth he would jerk it out of my mouth and say don't worry about it. So evidently it was on the city jury or something.

RM: Okay is there anything I didn't ask you? Something you want to tell me that I missed?

EB: Oh an incident we had in government class one time, my friend and I, we thought, I wonder what it is like skipping school? You know it was a hot day you know, he says let's try it. So what we going to do? So naturally we head up for the woods over there and its right where Jacobetti is today there was a saw mill there, and we thought we would go watch them run the saw mill. So we went there and we were watching them, watching them go back and forth the carriage and everything and it was shortly after 1:00 you know, and he says we better get out of here, and I

said why? I feel guilty you know, because you notice something, our government class came there and I remember Ms. Griswood [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] saying how did you kids get here, of course we had to lie we said we heard before lunch that they were going to have a field trip. [Laughter] We got caught red handed but we never missed any school.

RM: Did she know or did she believe what you told her?

EB: Oh she probably knew it [laughter] but we'd never done it before.

RM: Did you do it again?

EB: It was all fun I think. And I remember the basketball trips we used to make and I remember the first one we made to tourist all the sudden the car just wouldn't move anymore. So he get to give it the gas and it wouldn't move, he ___ the back end was disconnected the axil was broken. We hired cab then, then when Thorn [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was coach we hired that same cab to go to St. Ignas, well these cabs were different then. They had the front seat, you put two people in there, you put three people in the backseat but there was jumper seats in between, the jumper seats were actually meant for two people. So there was two seats back there so we were four there. So actually one of your rumps was on the seat but by the time we got to musing we would have to change to the other sides it was so hard you know? [Laughter].

RM: So you went by cab to St. Ignas?

EB: We went by cab all the way there.

RM: So what'd you have, pretty much the basketball team and players?

EB: There was 8 basketball players the cab driver and the coach. There was 10 of us in there. Packed in there like sardines.

RM: Were you able to move when you got to St. Ignas? [Laughter]

EB: When we got there then we, my partner and I, we stayed at a ___ courthouse and Mr. Ravey was telling about the robberies that were going on in St. Ignas so, I had a couple of bucks in my pocket you know and that was a lot of money. So anyway we, survived the night anyways, but when you played basketball at night it think they had a formula for all these people to have ___ because when we went to play basketball we might just well stay there. It was terrible, they loaded us up, in fact you could hardly move, then we got to Newberry for ___ he was waiting for us at the school. And Thorn being the main coach he thought it was real polite of him to offer us to use the gymnasium for the meantime and so yeah...he said then later on this afternoon you are going to go to the institution that's it. So that was the worst thing that could have happened. So we went over to there, I think that's the farthest that team every traveled anyway.

RM: St. Ignas.

EB: St. Ignas yeah. I guess in 1929 I guess they won a championship of sometime in '24 the whole team was North of Marquette. I been all over the country during the war, I can't tell you any place better.

RM: Especially like today.

EB: Well even in the winter. You have, of course when you are able to use the snow. My children even, I would have them ice fishing and stuff like this and skiing, it was a really educational to the kids. And my youngest boy doesn't want to do with the big city. I could tell that early in life because my oldest boy, always said let's get out of here he wanted to go to town or something, and the other one wanted to stay in the woods.

RM: Now they all attended Northern?

EB: No my youngest son attended here, and my daughter did too, but my oldest son when to Michigan Tech. So he went from there directly to California and that was in 1970 I believe.

RM: But they all then stayed, went to school in the U.P.?

EB: Yeah. Right now the grandchildren, there's two going to Paris and one when to Green Bay, one went to Western. There's one that is teaching in Boulder, she's been all over, even Germany a couple years.

RM: So you'd say you did real good, coming from North Marquette then.

EB: Oh yeah. After my advocate I've been all my life, to not pay any interest. I never ever paid any interest on anything, that's where you're money goes and you never see it again. We waited until we were able to buy it. You don't find many people doing that, I got called for credits cards just before you came! I was asking what's a credit card? [Laughter].

RM: And now you have all the problems with losing your number or getting it,

EB: Or somebody stealing it. You think that things would never get this bad.

RM: Oh that yeah things would improve.

EB: Its funny there is always somebody skating, you know?

RM: Because yeah you go about your business and don't think about it and here somebody is,

EB: You just admire what you've accomplished. I learned so many things even after getting out of school. When I was in the service I tell you, I never went overseas, but I was constantly going to school. You see I was in the air force and what I did in school did have tech orders that had to be followed and so on, we had to go and they had markup up and everything else. Air craft propellers and engines and everything else, you would take to them a part and super charges and everything like that.

[Phone rings]

EB: And so many men that ___ they got to get to the point where they needed help I helped them out to their last. Its hard to do because they've been good friends and these are things that you ___ the older people.

RM: That's good, there's a sense of community that you have.

RM: Okay well this was very good! Thank You.

[TAPE STOPS, THEN BEGINS AGAIN]

EB: You...

RM: And that's one of the few remains of this area where it was, where the original bomb site was located and yeah I don't know I brought it up using this and we had over 200 acres, 15 minutes up on Wright Street, up on Longyear property. Beautiful property, nobody knows we own it, the students, nobody. We tried to get something going, people use it I think the military science uses it.

EB: Is that on top of the hill then?

RM: What is it, down the Forestville Road. They cross over the tracks and its right there. Beautiful, you walk to the top of the hill you get a beautiful view of the lake, the city looking from the North and so on. And then the university even has property down, well down on the lake, nobody knows about that and then we have property, which is kind of rugged property there behind where the Nordic Lodge. I don't know how many acres. None of its used!

EB: You know where, there's property now where the arena is for the city, I remember when Kaye Avenue stopped at Pine Street. Kaye Avenue never went though and it was nothing but a pool of mud. An the railroad came through there and they kind of dried it up somewhat, but still you know there was about a hundred feet that would have be signed off on it but then it dropped mud and stuff like that. then at the Picnic Rocks I remember sometimes, that road never did go through at that time, the road was really meant to go to the lakeshore engine, but naturally as time went by these two rug road to get over to the picnic rocks of course there was just cooling in that area but beyond that it was terrible so, in order to get to picnic rocks you actually had to go to an automobile to go to Crescent Street and then go that way and you couldn't get any other way, there was no cutoff, like they did over there. And I still can't see that road they put to the Bell property what benefit it is to anything but to Northern. It isn't better for Northern because that's a good release for their traffic from the dome and elsewhere but I think Northern owns that property.

TAPE ENDS

END OF INTERVIEW 2