

Mr. Olink

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THE REPAIRMAN

Don Palomaki, was the son of Sol and Irjea Palomaki, has two brothers Mike and Bill as well as a sister who died when she was young. He currently works at the Empire Mine where he is a repairman. Don was born in Ishpeming, Michigan on February 2, 1952. He has a wife named Debbie and a son named Jacob.

Don started at the Empire Mine in 1974. He began as a repairman helper or a "go-fer". When he got tired of that, he began driving a production truck. Don is now a repairman. In his job, he spends most of his time replacing reducers, belts, flexing, rerubberizing items and going outside with the crew to fix items that need repair.

Don got extra points for his time in the service and his time in college. Don was in the apprentice program at the mine for two years. "That's basically where you learn your welding, how to rebuild reducers, how to line up belts, how to set gears and everything else."

Don explained that his working conditions vary saying, "Sometimes we're outside in the nice clean air but 90% of the time we're in the mill. It's dusty, greasy, and noisy." Workers have to wear their earplugs and protection. "You get your good jobs and you get your bad jobs," Don reflected. Some of the jobs as a repairman are easy and clean, but some of them

are greasy, oily, dirty, and dusty. "It all varies from day to day."

Don stated, "CCI keeps safety pretty much in mind". They have also made alot of improvements, like instead of climbing pipes to get to a job, catwalks were put in. "It's getting better all of the time."

Don said, he has a variety of types of people as co-workers. There are jumpy guys, calm guys, nervous guys, but in a whole all the co-workers are pretty good and are willing to give a helping hand even if they're not on your job. He explained, "If they're coming by they'll stop and give you a hand. All the guys at the mine are, they'll help you if ya need help and it's kind of like a camaraderie between all of the workers and all of the crews, everybody's willing to help everybody else".

Right now the steel industry is really picking up, exclaims Don. "We're the number one pellet producer in the United States".