

Rachael Haglund
Interviewing
Donald Beabechamp

me - when and where were you born?

mr.B - in Iron Mountain in 1931 November 11, Ambrose State

me - O.K. and where did you go to school?

mr.B - I went to school at Longfellow school in Foster City up to the 8th grade, and then I went to Felton High School which is now North Dickinson. It was Felton High School at that time.

me - was school pretty much the same as it is now?

mr.B - oh no, no quite a bit different

me - how was it different?

mr.B - we didn't have intercom, and we didn't have women's basketball, we didn't have football, we didn't have tennis, we didn't have track, ^(pause) we didn't have gym, you know period at that time all we had was assembly period and no gym where you could, you know, spend some time doing what you wanted to do

me - so, what did you guys do for entertainment?

mr.B - there was nothing except for whoever tried out for basketball and made the team otherwise we didn't have nothing - no baseball

me - what kind of subjects did you have?

mr.B - They had math, English at that time math was called Algebra, It wasn't called math, ~~SOAT~~ was Algebra, American History, English, spelling, ~~CPASS~~ I think ~~maths~~ about it

Mr. B - ride the bus from Felch to Hardwood see I was born in Iron Mountain, but we had moved to Hardwood when I was at the age of 3 so I spent all of my school years in Hardwood which is a little town east of Randville

~~How many~~ many kids were in your class?

Mr. B - In our class I would say probably the most would be about 18

me - What chores did you have?

Mr. B - to do ok, we were on a big farm before we went to school in the morning at the age of 6 we each had 2 cows ~~to cows~~ we had to milk by hand we had 2 cows we had to take care of feed, and clean behind them and water them like in winter time we had to bring in pails of water into the barn and at nighttime we had to do the same identify chores to do ~~for~~ we had to carry in wood because we had a wood stove for heat and for cooking and there were 14 in our family.

me - that's a pretty big family

Mr. B - ya that's 16 counting my mom and dad

me - oh that's pretty big. did you have any plans after high school?

Mr. B - no because at the age of fourteen my dad had died, he was killed in a deer hunting accident. He was only 41 years old and I was, I had just turned 13 on November 11, and the first day of deer season he was killed November 15 and then January 1, 1968 at 14 I came down with Hematic Fever and they had to rush me to St. Lukes Hospital that was St. Lukes Hospital at the time where General Worth is in Marquette, and I was in the hospital 6 weeks and they haven't given me a chance to live because it had entered my heart already ~~which~~ I was called Parvitic Fever which was very rare. ~~at that time~~ Dr. Koopersack was my doctor and he told only he had told my mother which I heard well you know that I had about 6 weeks to live, well I was in the hospital 6 weeks and I was paralyzed on my whole right side. but it affected my heart with a heart murmur

Mr. B - which would skip beats and I ~~was~~ was real real thin
real real thin and a miracle I had happened that they let
me go home in 6 weeks from St. Lukes Hospital because I
would die, and I was 14 years of age and about. I was
home 2 weeks, 2 months my mother was real religious
and she had put my bedroom down into her bedroom
so she could keep an eye on me, and I had seen my
dad come through the window he was dead
and he told me the next day I was going to be
better and when I woke up the next day, my mother
called, see I couldn't walk or nothing my meds
were brought to me I couldn't go to them and
my mother called me out to breakfast she
had felt that during the night that miracle.
So I got up and went out and had
breakfast and after 2 weeks I felt good I
was not paralyzed anymore I felt real good and
all the while that I was real sick the
Superintendent of the Felch High School would
let my buddies come to the house to visit 2 a
week for the whole day. and a lot that was
a miracle that happened because after 2 weeks
they brought me back to Marquette. to On Hooper St.
he said that I had no more heart Mr. Mr.
I had no more I wasn't paralyzed in no more
muscles what so ever so I was healthy

me - that interesting

Mr. B. - So and a that was when I was 14, at the age of 14
when the miracle had happened

me - So you didn't attend a college

Mr. B. - no I didn't the reason why was see when we had
the farm so at the age of 15 (pause) well
at the age of 16 actually I started playing the guitar
and singing down on the farm on the front porch
and at the age of 15 I had to go to school in the
morning and we had sold most of the cattle and the
livestock and the horses we had 5 riding horses plus
4 working horses and a tractor but we had
sold most of the stuff because (pause) at that time
we just could not keep up the farm no longer and
so I was offered a job entertaining 6 nights a week
professionally at the age of 15 so I entertained at
Neway at the Peabo Bar in Neway 6 nights
a week plus came home done my chores got home
about 2 or 2:30 in the morning got up at 5:00
done my all of my chores milked the cows that was
less than that was about 4 or 5 cows and went to
school and stayed in school all day and a they
teachers would help me quite a bit because they knew
what I was ~~doing~~ trying to raise to pay off
the farm, because in them days you didn't have
insurance.

mrs. - like the fathers do today you know that insurance
is paid off or your farms paid off you know they
just didn't have them in those days and so I didn't fear
ch maybe 6 months and I couldn't do it no longer so I
we sold all of our livestock and at the age of 16
I dropped out of school I went to the 11th grade or to the
beginning of 12th grade and I dropped out of school
but the superintendent still sent home homework for me
to do right at home so I still could graduate from
home, without going back to school so I had to do all
that homework every 2 weeks because we were on
the road entertaining 6 night a week and every 2 weeks
I would get so home sick no matter if it was
500 miles I used to have to come home and to the
farm and spend most of my time getting caught up
on the homework and ~~visiting~~ my mother and
my two sisters that were still left home younger than
me, then at the age of 17 I got my break to go to
Grand Ole Opry and I was with unit 9
which is the name units I up to night now they probably
have 1 up to 50 which they will take if you can
sing and play an or if you can play an instrument
and your pretty good they will put you in a unit
and build you up where you can take over your
own unit on the Grand Ole Opry so I spent 3 or 4
a half years with the Grand Ole Opry and I didn't
like being away from home so much and in them
days you didn't have the ^{big} boxes that they have
today

Mr. B - You traveled from you did an engagement in one town at 4:00 in the afternoon and then another one at 8:00 and then the next day you had to be probably ~~200~~ 300 ~~and~~ miles away to do another engagement at 4:00 and 8:00 and that went on for 16 weeks in a row and I couldn't

me - pretty busy, so what year did you graduate in

Mr. B - I graduated in 41 took me instead of four years to graduate in 41 took me about probably about 8 years because I was doing my homework at home and this was the understanding we had and they let me graduate in the class of I think 41 was 48 or 49 I'm not sure

me - Oh, do you remember any humorous things about school

Mr. B - Humorous things oh, lots of humorous things (laugh) like what I had done with my buddies

me - Yes

Mr. B - Well there was something we used to doing for a while it was the 4-H club and that was the future farmers of America it was called and they still have it today and we used to go on a 3 day camping trip with the superintendent of the school and these were the CC camps down in Ripon and we used to be able to go hunting birds & coos and one of my buddies shot a hole right through the superintendent's front pipe we used to school in them days were a lot different than they are today like I say

If you checked you in school when I went to school you got the ruler right across the fingers that's right, once you passed the teacher or if you done anything first thing you got was the ruler over the knuckles and there was nothing nobody that was ~~nothing~~ each person was equal to that teacher and if were a little slower than the next person the teacher would ask and even give you a ride home they would keep you after school and help you which today I think when there done today, through that time they at least now they have rulers and that but we didn't have rulers we had teachers that came right to the nose, right to the nose, so school in those days was not different then what they are today, we didn't have the conception like they do today, we didn't have drinking you didn't dare go to school drinking and if you got something in school took when I went to school and you went home and you told your dad you got a beating when you got home in the woods of shit like today if you do something in school the parents blame the teacher and that's right because they are not helping that teacher to discipline a child harming that teacher and then harming the child

me - Do you remember going to the doctor or dentist?

me - Yes we had well one thing we had then that we don't have now is once every the dentist would come and spend (power) 3 or 4 weeks right at the school with his whole dentist chair and the whole works and you had your teeth fixed for nothing

Mr. B - and I guess would come to school to let not let you had to pay for it you could have it paid for the dentist. You had your teeth fixed once a year and if you had to go back - oh my gosh he was there a month and you had 2 or 3 or 4 decays they were fixed before he left which was nice

me - You see what were the holidays like?

Mr. B - holidays were almost the same as they are now but the only things we could do was sleigh riding we had a sled we had and we'd go to the woods Christmas and we'd be making off like you do now we have the same thing but we couldn't go sleigh riding we had work to do and we went through location right at home splitting wood, making wood, from the woods doing our chores and when one there was always something to do so we could go sleigh riding or skating or skiing if we got our work done then we could but we had to make work to do

me - G.A. Did you ever have depression?

Mr. B - I can remember in 1929 here was a while not kind - I can remember wearing flannel to school that we had gotten from the government I can remember standing in line with my sister for turkey for Thanksgiving I ate more grapefruit than anyone on Marquette County and we ate bread and we used up all of that stuff but now days when people get these comedies they don't use up the rice they don't use up the flour

Mr. B - which is rye flour they just throw it out which they shouldnt, they should give it to somebody that could use it.

me - How old were you during the Great Depression?

Mr. B - Well I was a little the Depression was in 1929 I was born in '31 and the Depression lasted for what I would say at least ten years or more so I can remember my Dad working on a farm which they were making 27 cents an hour and I can remember all that stuff a loaf of bread was 5 cents a quarter of milk was 5 cents, 7 cents excuse me but the fact that anything money you made then was better than it is now because your dollar is only worth about 20 cents today back in those days your dollar was worth about 40 cents so that's your difference people are making better money today but food is over I would say 10 times the amount and their making exactly 10 times the amount so I would say the average the amount of money that a person brings home is what he pays for food averages back to 10 in the 1930's for a how much per hour each person makes

me - what kind of jobs were available for you as a teenager?

Mr. B - there was none.

me - none

Mr. B - There were no jobs at all

me - So you didn't work

Mr. B - all there was then was pick potatoes and pick beans

Mr. B - for different farmers and we used to get I think it was 2 cents a bag at that time

me - what was the first job that you worked?

Mr. B - well picking potatoes for a neighbor farmer and picking beans for them and work all day and probably make 77 cents

me - what are your hobbies now?

Mr. B - hobbies, well since I have been sick and that I work all winter long, a better less working, well almost any kind of ornament that you want which I never ever could make

me - when did you start playing Santa for the community?

Mr. B - Oh, in 1942 well I have been playing Santa for the Chamber of Commerce now for 4 years but I have been playing Santa for 22 years but in 1980 I was working at its camp mine and I fell 3 feet and I crushed 3 vertebrae in my back and they had to run me for 3 days and they had

Mr. B - cancer, which was fatal cancer and that's, that was
January 15, 1981 when they found cancer of the blood flow
called *mucosus fungoid cancer* and that was very rare here
was only 4/5 cases in the whole United States and
it was fatal and right now there is only 1/6 cases
a man from Houghton and since then I had cancer
of the colon which I had gotten operated on but
when they first told me I had cancer they gave
me 3 to 6 months to live (and on wood) but before
I had come down with cancer it took me 2 years to
start ~~the~~ doing what I am doing now and that
is nicksacks to keep my mind occupied and my
body busy and before I couldn't make a
square boxie you wanted it but now I can
make almost anything but and I rec'd out of
Escanaba my tapes and that Nashville back up and
and Nashville singers but I, and then a year ago this
past October I was operated on this past October
Prostic and now next Sunday I leave for Memphis
and they think that I got tumors behind my eyes
so there is a good chance that if I don't get
operated on that I will definitely go blind but
if I do have the operation there is no guarantee
but getting back to playing Santa Clause started
playing Santa Clause 22 years ago but not

Mr. B- like I have been thinking in the last 6 In the past
6 years I have more or less put the section on and I
feel like I am Santa Claus and I consider myself
one of the nicest making Santa Clauses in
Marquette County and I have letters for Santa
on W.J.P.D. for all the little boys and girls
and I love kids and I love animals ~~if~~ ~~you~~
the ~~one~~ day at a time I don't plan ~~for~~ ~~the~~
tomorrow I plan for today and what I get
done today well I just thank the good Lord
for today and I am able I thank Him for
last night and I think when somebody plans
I think that is the worst thing in the world
you never fulfill your plan ~~if~~ you live
one day at a time and you have to believe
you have to do lots of believing you have to know
the I am not a religious but don't get me wrong
I know that there is somebody by my side if there
wasn't I wouldn't be here and you wouldn't
be here and there is somebody that is more or less
guiding me and I think that a lot of the young
kids today if they stop and think what they are
doing to themselves with dope and everything and
if they start living like an animal person should and
that you live one day at a time Page 13

mr.B- because I wrote a song "we are just on a wish
in this world just passing through" and which is the
most truest that anybody could say

me- so, how long have you been singing?

mr.B- 35 years

me- that's pretty long

mr.B- I had my own T.V. show the Hall of Tamboree coed
Channel 6 in class 56, 57, 58, and 59 it was a half
hour program every Tuesday night it was called
the hall of Tamboree plus we played 6 nights a
week in bars and that bar still worked 5
days a week also.

me- did you have like a group when you did all
of this?

mr.B- yes, Don's country Serenaders, there was a ?
peice you know country, it wasn't Rock and Roll
m (laughing)

me- do you have any favorite songs?

mr.B- all the songs are my favorite because I like
country music and the reason why I say they
are all my favorite is because alot of people
spend alot of time writing these country Page 14

Mr. B. songs and every country song that you hear tells a story
either about their life or about a friend's life & you
listen to country music it's always a story. Rock
and Roll now that's different there is no story.
I'm not saying Rock and Roll is bad Rock and Roll but
some rock bands I really don't think they should
go let there kids even go see them or listen
to them there's good and bad on everything

me - Do you enjoy all the extra stuff that you do?

Mr. B. - I enjoyed life more since they told me that I had cancer which
was January 16, 1981 that I have ever in my life. Jerry & J.
mar now.

me - I guess that's just about it unless you have anything
else to say

Mr. B. - no, all I would just like to add is if you yourself
is that you take one day at a time you take care of
you health don't smoke you can drink but there
is a limit to drinking also you are an alcoholic
after so many years I don't care what he'd
done in school now tonight a student he was in
school he could be the senator or the president of
the United States well speaking of the United States how many presidents

MIB. ^(continued) Wives are alcoholics and they are smart people
but to this day their brains numb.