

Traci Maki's interview with George Maki
Interview date, December 29, 1997

Me: This is Traci Maki. Today is December 29, 1997. I am interviewing Grandpa George, George Maki, and most of this interview will be about his life when he was in the navy, and some will be about his dad from Finland.

Me: When and where were you born?

GM: I was born in Mohawk, Michigan, on January 19, 1929.

Me: Where did you live when you were a child?

GM: I lived in Mohawk, for my first 12 years.

Me: What kind of games did you play?

GM: I played hockey, baseball, football.

Me: Did you like school?

GM: Yea, I guess I liked school.

Me: Why?

GM: Well, I got to be with the other kids, and had something to do.

ME: What schools did you go to?

GM: I went to school in Mohawk, up till the 8th grade, and then I went 8th grade in West Ishpeming, and then high school, Ishpeming.

Me: What are all of your bothers and sisters names?

GM: My brother's name is Kenneth, my sister's name is Barbara.

Me: How old are they now?

GM: Kenneth is 58, and Barbara is 56.

Me: Who were your friends when you were little?

GM: Well, I had one special friend when I was little. His name was Melvin Ahonen.

Me: What kind of chores did you have to do?

GM: My chores were getting kindling into the house, so we could start the fires in the stove, because we had all wood stoves at that time. And then in the wintertime I cleaned the driveway, and shoveled the path.

Me: Did you like doing your chores?

GM: Yea, I sure did.

Me: Did you always try to get out of them?

GM: No, never did.

Me: What kind of things did you do when you were in high school?

GM: I didn't do all that much, you mean during school, I went out for the football team. I played for 3 years. Other than that I didn't do anything.

Me: When did you decide that you wanted to be in the navy?

GM: Well, when I found out that I was going to get drafted, I joined the navy.

Me: What do you mean drafted?

GM: Well, they would have drafted me into the army. Well, a couple of months after I was listed in the navy, so I decided to join the navy.

Me: What countries did you visit?

GM: I didn't do all that much traveling, the only place, up and down the east coast, from Texas to Norfolk, Virginia and then we went to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and that's about it.

Me: What was a typical day like for you while you were in the navy?

GM: Well, I was in charge of the ship's office. I was a personnel man is second class and I took care of all the service records of all the men aboard the ship.

Me: What kind of chores did you have to do when you were on the ship?

GM: Well, other than my office duties, I had to stand watch in the radio room, I was more or less a radio operator.

Me: Did you like it when you were in the navy?

GM: I liked going to different places, but other than that I didn't really care for it.

Me: What other jobs have you enjoyed that you have had?

GM: I never really enjoyed some of my jobs (laughs). I had a few when I worked in the mine, which wasn't the best place to work and I worked at the prison, which wasn't the best place to work, but it was secure.

Me: What did you like most about being in the navy?

GM: What I like most is going in the ship and going out to sea and going to different places, and different towns, that was interesting.

Me: Who was the master on your ship?

GM: My boss was the executive officer on board the ship, he was the lieutenant.

Me: Do you remember his name?

GM: Lieutenant Ashlock

Me: What can you tell me about your father when he moved here from Finland?

GM: I don't know too much about when he moved because, he was 17 years old. When he came over he came through Ellis Island in New York. Other than that I don't know too much about when he came.

Me: Do you know any of the traditions that they had there?

GM: No, I don't

Me: Do you know of any of the foods they ate?

Me: No

Me: Have you ever been to Finland?

GM: No

Me: When and where did you get married?

GM: I got married on May 16, 1963, in Ishpeming

Me: What church?

GM: The Methodist Church

Me: When did you get your first TV?

GM: I got my first TV in 1953 when I was in the service. It was a 19-inch.

Me: Was it black and white?

GM: Black and white.

Me: What kind of shoes did you watch on it?

GM: Just about anything that came on there, at that time. We didn't have the variety that you have nowadays.

Me: Did you only watch the news?

GM: No, I watched more than the news, I watched anything

Me: What is your favorite TV show?

GM: My favorite TV show was to watch a good hockey game.

Me: What was your favorite TV show when you were little?

GM: I think Gunsmoke.

Me: Why?

GM: Well, it was a western. It had a lot of action in it.

Me: What is your nationality?

GM: I'm of Finnish decent

Me: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

GM: I was in the 8th grade in the West Ishpeming School, when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Me: Do you remember what you were doing?

GM: No, I don't remember what I was doing. I just remember I was in school at the time.

Me: Describe your activities during the World Wars.

GM: During the World Wars? Well, I was still going to school, I was too young to be in the service, and I was doing anything any other teenager would be doing.

Me: Did you ever take part in any big wars?

GM: Never

Me: What is your favorite activity?

GM: My favorite activity right now?

Me: Yes

GM: Probably bowling, fishing, playing cribbage

Me: What is your favorite food?

GM: Pasty

Me: Why

GM: Why? Because it a good wholesome food

Me: What cities have you visited in your lifetime?

GM: Oh I've been to. When I was in Charleston, South Carolina, when I was in the service. I've been to Key West, Florida. I've been to Washington D.C. I've been to San Juan Puerto Rico, I've been to Chicago and Detroit.

Me: What one is your favorite?

GM: I think my favorite was Charleston, South Carolina.

Me: How come?

GM: I lived there for 3 ½ years, and I got to like to place, pretty good.

Me: What are all of the cities that you have lived in?

GM: Other than Ishpeming, I've lived in Mowhawk, Michigan, I've lived in Ishpeming, Michigan, and I've lived in Charleston South

Carolina that's the only places I've ever lived.

Me: What is your favorite holiday?

GM: My favorite holiday I guess is Christmas.

Me: Why?

GM: Well, because of all the, well you watch all the kids get all the gifts, and watch them open their presents, and, all the food that they have.

Me: Who was your favorite teacher when you were in school?

GM: My favorite teacher was John Lawry. He was my eighth grade teacher in West Ishpeming.

Me: What did he teach you?

GM: He taught us everything. He wasn't a one-subject teacher, he taught everything.

Me: Do you have a special hobby that you like to do?

GM: Bowling is my favorite.

Me: Did you ever have the dream to be something special?

GM: Not, really

Me: For how long have you been retired?

GM: I've been retired for 8 years, since 1989.

Me: What was your last job?

GM: I worked as a corrections officer at the Marquette Branch Prison.

Me: Where is your favorite place to be in the house?

GM: In the living room.

Me: Why?

GM: So I can just sit there and relax, watch TV, read

Me: What do you like to read?

GM: Mostly sports papers, and Reader's Digest stories

Me: What is your favorite movie?

GM: Anatomy of a Murder.

Me: Is it scary?

GM: No, not really

Me: What kinds of automobiles have you had during your lifetime?

GM: The first one I ever had, I had a model A. Ford model A. Then I had a 1941 Chevrolet, I had a 1951 Chevrolet, I had a 1956 Chevrolet, I had a 1961 Chevrolet, a 1963 Mercury, a 1967 Ford, a 1973, Ford, a 1971, Chevrolet, I had a 1983, Ford, and I had more, 1985 Ford and then I got a 1992 Dodge, and now I have a 1997 Chevrolet.

Me: Which one was your favorite?

GM: I think the 1992 Dodge was my favorite.

Me: Do you like cars?

GM: I like them for the fact that you have to have them to go anywhere, otherwise I'm not crazy about them.

Me: Why was your dodge your favorite?

GM: Well, I never had any problems with it, it was a good riding car, and I never had any trouble with it.

Me: Did you ever play in band at school?

GM: No, I did not.

Me: Were you ever in any after school programs?

GM: Not except for football, no. I played football for 3 years.

Me: Did you ever exceed in any of your goals for the future?

GM: Not really, (laughs)

Me: Have you ever been to a concert of some sort?

GM: Nope, I've never been to a concert.

Me: Would you have liked to have been?

GM: Not, really

Me: What kind of music do you listen to?

GM: Country Western.

Me: Why?

GM: Because I like it.

Me: What wars have you lived through?

GM: Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War.

Me: Is that all?

GM: Yes

Me: What are your thoughts and ideas on them?

GM: I don't have much thoughts about them except that I was too

young for the Second World War. The Korean War was going on while I was in the servie, but I never had to go there. When the Vietnam War was out. When your country calls, you should be ready, whoever you are.

Me: What has been the highlight of you life?

GM: (Pause) (Laughs as he repeats the question several times) The highlight of my life was when I was discharged from the service. And another one was when I got married.

Me: Why?

GM: I was glad to get out of the service, and when I got married my life started anew.