

ME: Hi this is Trevor Polkinghorne and I am about to interview Donald Beauchamp about the Iron Mining Industry.

ME: When and where were you born?

MR.B: I was born in Alpena Michigan June 11th 1924

ME: What are the names of your parents?

MR.B: My parents names are John and Janet Beauchamp.

ME: What did your parents do for a living?

MR.B: My father was a Barber for many years, and my mother was a school teacher.

ME: What are the names of your brothers and sisters?

MR.B: I have one sister living in Colrogin, Minnesota her name is Margie Carotson. I have another sister living in Illinois her name is Mary Ambrose.

ME: Are you currently married?

MR.B: Yes I am currently married, and my spouses name is Norma.

ME: What are the names of your children?

MR.B: I have five children: My oldest daughter is Denise Polkinghorne, my oldest son is John Beauchamp, My next oldest son is Gary Beauchamp, I have daughter Peggy Nault, and another daughter the baby, Mary Kay Perkins.

ME: How long have you been working in the Iron Mining Industry?

MR. B: I worked in the Iron Industry for 38 years, retiring in 1988.

ME: Why did you choose to work in the Iron industry?

MR. B: Well, two primary reasons, one, the first reason was in this area working in the mine was about the highest paying job you could get, and the other was that I loved the area, and I didn't want to move out of the area, I love to hunt and fish and I love the outdoors so that's the two primary reasons.

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+ quote parts

ME: Please name those relatives who have worked in the Iron industry?

MR. B: My grandfather Jerry Beauchamp worked in the Iron industry, and I had one uncle ~~the~~ Beauchamp that worked at the dark shaft, and I had another uncle John Hermon that worked at the matter.

ME: What are the names of the various mine or buildings you have worked in?

MR. B: Well, I started working for the Cliff Power and Light which at that time was part of the Cleveland Cliffs. And then I transferred over to the Brown Store as a Blacksmith helper. While I was at the Brown Store I got on a training program, a welding training program and I ended up a welder and I was a welder for about 15 years. And then I changed my classification to a plant repair man and I retired as a plant repair man.

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ME: Over the years what kind of duties have you performed for C.C.I.?

MR. B: Well I started out as a blacksmith helper and then I welded for many years. And then the last part of my career I was a plant repair man. And the plant repair man's job includes repairing all machinery in the mills and in the plants.

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ME: Can as much detail as possible please the main duties of your current job.

MR. B: Well, when I was a plant repair man our main duty was that if anything got broken down we had to get them fixed and fix it as fast as we could. ^{possible grade.} Because any time a line was down it was hurting production, and almost any machinery in the mills or in the plants it was our job to repair them and get them back on line.

ME: Did this job require any higher training or a better education?

MR. B: Well, you had to have a good mechanical background to work on this job. I was lucky that I had some other training and after the war I went to school for a few more years which helped me on my job. But for most of it you had to have a good mechanical background because everywhere that you worked on was of a mechanical nature. include

ME: Please describe any special machinery or equipment you use on the job.

MR. B: Well, we used a lot of tools, micrometers, depth gauges, trucks, welders, and most equipment that you will find were people working on machinery and repairing machinery. We had machinery that we would use to get to high places which were run by people who were equipment operators. But mostly it was the tools of our trade that we used. include

ME: What is the most challenging or difficult part of your job?

MR. B: I would say the most challenging or difficult part of your job is when you went to repair a piece of equipment that was keeping the line down. It was getting that piece of equipment repaired and on line as fast as you could. But also doing a good job and making sure it was going to be alright when you got through. Time was always important when you worked on a repair crew. Because when something was down it wasn't producing. And it costed time and money. So the biggest part of our job was to get it done fast and get it done right. include

ME: Thinking back over the years what was the most challenging or duties that you had to perform and please explain why

MR. B: Well, I was on a crew and I was one of the people that wasn't afraid to work in high places. And most of the time when you had high jobs to work on they were dangerous. The foreman come and ask me if he'd give me a good portener would you go work on these high jobs, they were difficult but especially in the winter time you had to be careful that you didn't slip and fall. And I performed these jobs regularly when I was on this crew for many years. *include + quote part*

ME: Over the years what have you enjoyed most about your job. *quote*

MR. B: I guess *[what I enjoyed most about my job was the challenge]* Every day was something different, like you had a different piece of equipment to repair a different job to do. We had a challenge every day; different equipment and different things to work on and I enjoyed that. *include - possible opening*

ME: What are the biggest responsibilities of your job?

MR. B: Well, the biggest responsibilities I can think of ~~is~~ doing the job and doing it right. And some of the equipment we worked on was very very expensive equipment. I can remember putting bearings in one of these machines. If the bearings didn't go in right it would cost about 15,000 to 16,000 dollars. You had to be careful that you did the job right and didn't hurt any equipment. But the biggest thing was to not hurt any equipment. *include*

ME: Can you please describe the most dangerous situations that you have been in?

MR. B: Well, I guess again I think it would be the high work I did. Working up to 90 to 100 feet in the air, we wore safety belts and we took every precaution we could. But it was dangerous you didn't make any false moves, you thought out the job well. I guess that's probably the most dangerous situations I have been in. *include + quote*

ME: Have you been involved in or witnessed any accidents?

MR. B: Yes, I almost cut my hand off one on a conveyor and I was out of work for four months. I was lucky I didn't lose my hand. But as for as witnessing accidents I was on a committee for the union called a Superintendents Safety Committee. In which if there was a fatal accident or a serious one we were called any time of the day or night to go investigate the accident. And the superintendents from each mine would get together and determine how it happened and how it wouldn't happen again. I investigated 8 fatal accidents and 6 near fatal accidents. *include - imp*

ME: Did any of your friends or relatives involved in Iron Mining ever get hurt?

MR. B: One friend that got his leg broken. And a few others had smashed hands or broken fingers but really nothing serious.

ME: Can you describe the most unique or perhaps humorous situation that you have seen in over the years?

MR. B: Well, when you put 38 years in the Iron Mining Industry I guess there's a lot of humorous stories that happened on the job. I can remember one that struck me as being sort of funny. I was working with a guy from Covington, and he had a real Covington accent and he was one of the funniest people I ever knew. So we were building a conveyor from the Mill to the Powerplant, and the foreman came out and he asked the foreman "how much money we got to finish this job. And the foreman says oh, don't worry there's plenty of money to finish this job. So he told the foreman maybe we should keep running this conveyor all the way to Morgan Heights, and then when the guys have problems we can put them on the conveyor and run them right to the Morgan Heights Sanitorium. That struck me as being real funny!"

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ME: Can you please describe your working conditions?

MR. B: Well, when I first started in the mine my working conditions weren't the best. There was a lot of dangerous situations and over the years I guess mainly through the efforts of the union, putting safety standards in our contracts and applying pressure to our congressmen and our senators to get some good strict mining laws. The things improved over the years, especially potential hazards where people worked. Everybody seemed to close their eyes to try to get their job done and not worry about what happened to the men. This has changed over the years and this is getting better.

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ME: How have safety standards changed? And what changes do you see that are yet to be made?

MR. B: Well, as I just said the safety standards have changed, and now we have government inspection crews coming into the mine regularly. A union goes around with them and they point out potentially dangerous places to work. If the inspectors see a dangerous place they will write up a ticket and tell the company to get it fixed. And if the company doesn't take care of it or waits to long they are fined by the government. So the problem is usually taken care of. There is always going to be improvements, especially in the Iron industry it's just a dangerous place to work. You have heavy equipment, moving machinery, it's just a fact that you're just going to have to improve.

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ME: How have you seen the duties of your job change over the years?

MR.B: Well, the duties of my job are, that if anything broke down or if anything needed repairs we had to do it. But I think the changes are in the better equipment had and the better tools we had to work with. Because we never had that kind of equipment when we started on the job. And actually better working conditions.

ME: Please describe what your co-workers were like.

MR.B: Well, I was very fortunate when I worked for the Cleveland Cliffs, I was lucky enough to work with well good hard working, and ^{conscientious} people. We had a job to do and we did it and we took pride in our job. Our crew we used to travel money in a pot every month. And then we would take our wives out to dinner or lunch, include

ME: Do you remember any special stories that stand out about them?

MR.B: I guess I can remember one story that sticks out. ~~A person's wife~~ in one of my coworkers wife was due to have a baby any minute. And we always came to work and tell the foreman "make sure if there a phone call you get a hold of me right away. At those times guys were jittery and scared. Of course we used to tease each other quite a bit to. But these are the things I remember. Or like when one of the kids are sick and the guys would worry about the kid, or if the kid had an operation. It seemed like we were close and we looked out for each other and we worried about each other. include

ME: During your career were you involved in any projects. Or have you implemented any new programs.

MR.B: Well, I was in the Superintendents Safety Committee and we investigated accidents. And after we investigated the accident we tried to come up with ways to prevent them. And I started implementing new programs. And being a Union Officer, their was programs that we implemented. And companies accepted some and turned down others. Sometimes you felt like if it wasn't their idea it wasn't a good idea. But in the later years the companies started to listen too the things that their employees were telling them. So finally when I was at the Eldon I used to go in about twice a month and talk to management and give them these ideas, and ask them to evaluate them. We did worked out with some good programs of safety mostly. include

ME: Have you ever ~~won~~ any awards or have been recognized for the way that you have performed your job?

MR. B: Well, yes I have. I was just showing my grandson the award I got from the United Steelworkers for saving one of my fellow employees life. I saved him by the ^{include + quote} ~~method~~. Also I had an award from the company for the same thing. And I guess one of the nicest things, when I retired. And I was respected by both the union and the company. And I tried to do my job the best I could for the union and the company.

ME: At any time have you felt like changing jobs or a career?

MR. B: Well, not really I guess I was one of those individuals that was pretty lucky. I enjoyed what it did and I enjoyed my work, and I enjoyed the people I worked with. And I enjoyed very much the job I did. So I don't think I ever thought about changing jobs.

ME: What do you think the future holds for the Tilden and Empire mines.

MR. B: Well, I think there's a good future for both mines. The company more and more now are going to the employees looking for ideas, looking for help, and this is what is going to keep these mines going. You have to have cooperation between the union, you got to have cooperation with the company. Both sides have to take a good look at things. And I think that if this happens and the company and the union can sit down and be responsible for their actions on both sides, I think there is a good future for both the Tilden and the Empire mines.

ME: What do you feel must be done in the future for CCL to remain competitive?

MR. B: Well, like I said ^{include} to keep competitive it has to be aware of the employees, the company, and the union. And everyone has to work together to try to cut costs as well as they could. Because there's a lot of competition in the iron ore industry, and you just got to try to make it the best operation they can make it. I think this will happen in pretty sure of it.

ME: What do you think has been the key to success for CCL where other companies have failed?

MR. B: Well, I think this success for CCL was their ^{include} research ^{research} plant. Years ago to start a research plant. And CCL was the leader in the pellet industry and they got off to a good start. And they were leaders in the pellet industry to start out with everybody followed. But I think the main reason was their ^{include} ~~instinct~~ to have all this research done to get the pellet industry off the ground.

ME: Looking for into the future how do you think the history will remember the C.C.D. company and its workers?

MR. B: Well, I think for one thing ^{quite} history will remember the worker as some of the best workers in the United States. I think ~~remembered~~ ^{remembered} when they first started as a company, and when they started they were not being very helpful or good to their employees, the years went on somebody probably had insight to see that if you want happy employees you have to treat your employees right. I think that C.C.D. over the years done much better as far as land ^{they} had mine. There was laws to make them clean up their messes. I guess everything is going to start working for the best.

ME: ~~How has the involvement with women changed in the iron industry?~~
MR. B: ~~Well, there's no more segregated mine. Everything is open pits. mistake in tape~~

ME: How has the involvement of women changed in the iron industry?
MR. B: I could remember the first women that worked for the C.C.D. iron companies. She worked at the Humboldt Mine. And after that we had got two or three more which was really neat we didn't know how to cope with it at first. ^{when} You see a woman trying to lift something heavy. You didn't know whether you should stop and be a gentleman and say can I help you. Or company would tell us know they have a job to do and you let them do their job and do your job. When it first started it was really enigma. And I think after now there's women working in every category of the mine. include + quote

ME: What skills do the young people of today need to develop if they plan to work for C.C.D. someday?
MR. B: Well, my thoughts on this is go to school. After you get out of high school you don't have to necessarily have to go to college. But go to a life down at northern at the Jakquet Center and learn a skill or a trade or there's plenty of job in C.C.D. for engineers, and metallurgists. Education is the key to everything as far as I'm concerned. And most of the jobs today you take if your going to be a repair man or a welder. You have to have a background, you almost have to go to some technical school and pick this stuff up. And as far as the engineering goes well, graduate from tech I'm sure there's jobs open for the C.C.D. iron company as far as engineering goes. I would say go to school and get some education. And then go out and work. include + quote

ME: In a related question, what advice could you give in general way to the students of today?

MR. B: Well, I'd ^{quite} say learn good work ethics that's very important. Learn to have responsibility on your job. Learn to do a good job and have a good attitude when you go to work. Don't have a chip on your shoulder or don't hate your foreman. Because he is giving you a job to do. Take all this into consideration because someday if you stay on a job long enough you might be the foreman. And then you start thinking back you'd remember how I hated this guy. But he was right all the time. I'm not saying that all foremen are right and a foreman like everybody else they make mistakes. But just [have good work ethic, and have pride in your work.] ^{quite}

ME: Are you now or have been a member of the steel workers union?

MR. B: I was a member of the United Steel Workers union for 38 years. I served the union. Our local unit was 4974 I served as five terms as vice president. When I was working at the Huntolt Mine I served three years as Safety Chairman, three terms as a Grievance committee Chairman. I also was a negotiator in 65, 68, 71, 74, 77, 80, and 88. I worked many jobs for the union, including distributing food when people were on strike. And getting assistance or financial assistance to the people on strike. So I had many different jobs while I was in the union. ^{include}

ME: Have you ever experienced a strike and if so how many times?

MR. B: I was just trying to think what Trevor was asking me ~~the~~ questions how I was on two strikes that were over a hundred days. I would see in my career with the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company I was on strike for at least a year out of my 38 years.

ME: How does a strike actually start?

MR. B: Well, a strike actually begins when we don't negotiate with the company. and the negotiators and the company meet and we meet. And when the company this is where it ends we were not going any further. We come back to our members and we tell them this is it. If the members aren't satisfied we take a strike vote. If the members vote to strike that's how a strike starts. It's entirely up to the members.

ME: How many employees does a strike usually involve?

MR. B: It involves all the hourly employees that worked for the Cleveland Cliffs Iron company.

ME: What is the purpose of a picket line and describe what happens there?

MR. B: Well, a picket line is set up for a reason to oversee that people that weren't supposed to be going in the mine were stopped. Now when we were on picket duty there was trucks that would come in with stuff that was already ordered for the company and we would let them go through. If a contractor was going to come in and do some work that would normally be our work the picket line was there to stop them. But it was just like we were watch dogs, watching that everything during the strike.

ME: Do you know of any interesting stories that occurred on the picket line?

MR. B: Well, not really when I was in charge of the picket line things were pretty serious. It was different all the hourly people would be on the picket line and the salary people would go into the mine. It was their right to go into the mine we never challenged it. There was no criticizing or cutting down. We tried to keep it clean and just run a good picket line.

ME: In general what is the most interesting or unique story that you can remember when the workers were on strike?

MR. B: Well, I guess this is humorous and I guess it's not too hard to tell. We were on strike for 120 days if I remember. A friend of mine his wife was pregnant during the strike, and he was down town and he ran into two old ladies that know him, and they said how did your wife have the baby yet. And he said no not yet. They said what would you like a boy or a girl. He said well to tell you the truth if this strike lasts any longer I'll sell him for a ten pound hen.

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ME: What takes place at a union meeting or rally?

MR. B: Well, at a union meeting starts right with a roll call of all the officers, and then we read the financial reports and the safety reports, and then we have an open session for people to speak and they will give you their ideas or whatever, and at a rally if you have a union rally, especially during a strike, you go there and the first thing you do is you give those people all your information, it's mostly information for our members.

ME: In your opinion why is the Steel Workers Union so important to the union?

MR. B: Well, over the years the union has been very important ~~to~~ ^{to the members,} I get a kick sometimes when sometimes people used to tell me boy I'd is a good out-fit to be working for look at the money you ~~will~~ make, What those people don't realize is the money we made is the money we stayed out on strike to get, and the union just isn't their for money, wise we really made terrific strides and the safety aspect of our contract, We made strides in our medical benefits which are very important, and strides in compensation directly through pressure on our legislators, so the union is very important just the grievance procedure alone, if somebody is treated unfairly they have the right to sign a grievance and the union takes it up and no expense to the employee, We take it right to arbitration if we have to, and then the arbitrator will give a decision if we were right or wrong according to our contracts, so its very important to the workers to have the union behind them.

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ME: How long have you been involved in the Steel Workers Union?

MR. B: Well, 25 years I was involved in some capacity I served five terms as a vice president, I was a grievance chairman, a safety chairman for many years, I was negotiator for five or six terms, and I was in Committees for both the companies and the union set down as far as safety went, so I was involved for a good 25 years.

ME: Why did you choose to get involved with the union?

MR. B: Well, I guess I'm that type of individual that instead of just sitting back and complaining about what was happening, I thought I would like to be a part of it, and I would like to be able to help or be a part of the negotiating and helping out with the safety and helping some employees with their problems or grievances, so thats the main reason.

ME: What kinds of duties have you performed for the union?

MR. B: Well, I served ~~two~~ terms as a vice president, I served three terms as a grievance chairman at the Humboldt mine, and as a safety chairman, and two terms at the Tilden mine as a Grievance Chairman, and I was a negotiator.

ME: In as much detail as possible please describe the main duties of your job in the union?

MR. B: Well, as a vice president and whenever our president was out of town I took over the meetings. I just stepped into job as a safety chairman, I oversee all the safety. I didn't at the mine whether they were safety infractions or safety ideas. Same as a grievance chairman, I had 11 people under me, that were grievance men and we met once a month, and we went over our grievances to see whether we should. Sometimes you get a grievance that wasn't a good grievance and we know we couldn't win it, because the language in the contract didn't cover it, so we would drop it. But I overruled the committee and I would make recommendations on all the grievances, and as for as negotiator well, you would just go and negotiate with the company and try to come back with the best package you can for your people, and sometimes it was hard when you saw your people on strike for over 100 days. But in the long run it payed off and every contract we gained and we gained to we were at the point now were people that work for CEC today probably have some of the best benefits in the area.

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ME: What was the most challenging or difficult part of your job in the union?

MR. B: Well, the negotiating was challenging job, it was discouraging when you would sit at that table day after day and you would see that no progress was being made. Sometimes you had to bite your tongue. And I guess the rewarding part was when you had a good grievance and you won it for an employee, I mean a good forest and working employee that the mistake of the foreman or the company taking a different look at how the contract language was, and when you come out and the arbitrator awarded agreements in your favor, and one of your employees got back pay or whatever that was really awarding for me.

include

ME: What are the biggest responsibilities of your job in the union?

MR. B: Well, again responsibility when you negotiating it's a big responsibility. You have to come back and tell them your opinion and I don't think that what their offering you is a good idea to take it but it's up to you. In the long run you have the right to accept it or reject it. But in my estimation I would say that's a poor contract and we shouldn't accept it, and sometimes that's hard to do because you know how the strike is going to hurt people, especially people with big families. But I guess if you're going to work in the pits you're going to have to take the heat, and you have to be able to make these kinds of decisions.

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ME: Please describe what you enjoy doing on your spare time?

MR. B: Well, I'm an outdoors guy, I love to hunt, I love to fish, I just love the outdoors I always have, I trap shoot, I load my own shot gun shells, I'm busy all the time and I really enjoy that, I'm out in the fresh air, I take my grand kids to camp with me and I enjoy that, and I hope I will be able to do it for a few more years.

ME: If you had to do it all over again would you make the same career choice?

MR. B: Well, I think maybe if I had to do it all over again, I think I would have continued after the war continued going to school and probably got a job a better paying job in the engineering field. Which in the long run I would have been able to give my family some better things in life. Although my family and myself we enjoyed what we had. Maybe I would have finished school and probably got a better paying job.

ME: Looking back over the years what impressions stand out the most in your mind?

MR. B: Well, you know there's a love hate thing there I guess. At the times I liked the company and times I hated the company for some things. The way they use people and the way an individual really didn't mean that much to them. And had worked hard over the years and gave most of their working life to the company, and they again the company in some ways was mostly individual people in the company. But at times the company did give breaks.

ME: Before we end the interview is there anything else you would like to add?

MR. B: Well, I guess that I would like to say that you have to remember this is dog to dog industry. The competition is fierce and the company is trying to cut corners. And you have to remember that you have to watch out for this. The End!

Excellent info.
This can be
a super story!