

Interview with Ike Wood

2-4-1987

On Early Life in Marquette

START OF INTERVIEW

(Interviewer): Okay I'm talking with Ike Wood about life in Marquette. When did you first arrive in Marquette?

(Ike Wood): I came in the Spring of '42, in March of '42. At that time the dandelions were out, I'm talking about March 10, the dandelions were out the green grass was all out. Snow was all gone, it was a beautiful spring, one of the nicest I've ever seen and we've never seen it in Marquette since.

(I): Unfortunately?

(IW): Unfortunately. [laughs] But at that time, well prior to that, I was working on a lumberjack as a timekeeper and scaler. We had a 4 year-old son who had to get into school so...

[INTERVIEW CUTS OUT AND BACK IN AT A DIFFERENT PLACE]

(IW): I talked with the driver salesman of the Marquette Sausage company that was coming into camp – provided us with our meat – asked him how work was in Marquette. He said it was pretty thin but wanted to know what I did and told him I was a salesman – a driver salesman – besides being a lumberjack, and he said, “Do you have a chauffer’s ticket?” I said, “I do have a Michigan chauffer’s license.” And he said, “You can have my job,” I said, “You’re kidding!” He said, “No, I’m not because I’m a sausage maker and I’m a bartender at night and I’m filling in because they’re short one driver. I’m losing about 25-40% of my income by driving this truck during the day when I could work less hours for more money. So you can most certainly have this job if you’re qualified for it.” And I said, “Well I am qualified for it.” And he said, “Well then go in and talk to Ella Doroghty at Marquette Sausage Company, she’s the boss and the bookkeeper and tell her I sent you. She’ll be watching for you.” So when I went in and talked to Mrs. Doroghty she agreed to put me to work and within a week we had moved to Marquette. At that time the job paid \$22.50 a week but shortly after that it went up to \$25.00 a week, which was low – you might say low-average – for those times because the first house we lived in where we provided our own heat we paid \$15.00 a month – a downstairs apartment. Soon after, we moved across the street to a heated apartment upstairs, twice as large and we had use of the attic, heated, for \$25.00 a month, but we’ve been able to do it since.

(I): Bargain basement? [both laugh]

(IW): No we didn't have the basement, we had the attic.

(I): Bargain attic!

(IW): Yeah bargain attic, yeah.

(I): Where did you finally settle down in Marquette?

(IW): We lived at 437 W. Ridge, we bought that in 1956.

(I): How about before that?

(IW): Well, from 436 Rock we went to 717 N. Third St. which was a very little business at that time, about the only business in our area was the northern dairy, across the street from us.

(I): Is that building still there?

(IW): Oh no. They took it out in, must have been the '50s.

(I): That would be near the Third Base bar there and the Frostry Treat?

(IW): I think so, mhm. The ice cream place of business there is right on the same area. So then you have the large parking space and the new restaurant back there and I guess a pizza joint or something. It was office space, Mr. Speedy was in there at one time.

(I): Was either Jack's IGA or Jim's Party Store in at that time?

(IW): No, those were all new. I beg your pardon, Jim's Party Store was there but it was a very small place, and it was Nile's at that time.

(I): Nile's Party Store or Nile's...?

(IW): Yep, Nile's Party Store. Like a neighborhood grocery but it was beer and whiskey and party.

(I): And this would have been late '40s? '46, '47?

(IW): I moved to 717 N. Third in '45 because my daughter was born there in '46. But that was about 75% residential at that time and gradually it got to oh maybe 50% business during the '60s and '70s and now it's topped that it's over 60% business now and since they put the village concept in on North Ridge St. it's going to be more and more business. In fact you have as much active business there on North Third as you have downtown Marquette now. In the early '40s all of your business was downtown on Front and Washington Streets up two blocks each way. Everything was centered in them four blocks.

(I): When you lived on Third St. there were both Third St. and Front St. both one way the way they are now?

(IW): No they were both ways. One way streets didn't go in until the late '60s around here and at that time Front St. was South and Third was North.

(I): Opposite of what they are now?

(IW): Yes it didn't work too well so they switched them. Like one guy explained when they got caught in some construction work in South Marquette trying to find the one way streets and someone asked him, "How do you get to the post office?" and Stanly drove around down here but the guy tried four or five different ways and each time he ran up against a one way street and finally he said, "You can't get there from here." [laughs] And that's the way the streets were in Marquette until they got them straightened out.

(I): They were that same way a couple summers ago.

(IW): On the construction work, that's right.

(I): What was the lower harbor ore dock like then? Was it...

(IW): Well it was very active at that time. It had the iron ore was going full blast which was most of the economy at that time and they were really shipping ore – ten, ten and a half months out of the year. Stockpiling it the rest of the time and ready for the shipping season would start in early March usually. As soon as the straights would clear, by the time Whitefish Bay was clear of ice and they could get through they were back shipping ore again.

(I): Some of the area right down actually on the waterfront by the old ore dock is almost deserted and desolate there. Can you give me an idea of what it was like back when the boats were running and was there actually a marina there for the fishing also as well as all the iron ore?

(IW): That's true. All of your fishing tugs were in there and what you're talking about is what they used to call "The Flats" and that's the original Marquette in 1849 there was about seven or eight buildings and they were all centered right down at the foot of what is now Baraga Avenue. The entire city of Marquette was right there, and then gradually started building up what is now Front Street and branching out in different areas. But Marquette started from down there where the old ore dock is. The boats used to tie up at Ganez' Rock right out just off the foot of Baraga, the bigger boats, and then they'd come in on the longboats.

(I): I know the area around Doc's corner – Front Street and Baraga I think maybe? – where the Chinese restaurant is now, there's a big building there that they've been trying to – The Rosewood? Is that the Rosewood Inn?

(IW): Yes, Rosewood Inn.

(I): Was that a pretty hopping place at that time?

(IW): Well that was the Adam's Hotel and then later on they put a bar in there, but that deteriorated over the years and now I guess the marquee on the front is ready to fall into the street there, talking about trying to get the thing torn out and they keep changing their mind about taking it out or leaving it there and trying to remodel it. I don't know what they're going to do about it though, but it's a very obsolete building.

(I): What about your neighborhood there on Third Street? Where did you shop for groceries?

(IW): Well the closest place was a little corner store, a ma and pa thing called The Hub and it was run by a man named Basil Butchco. He and his wife ran it, it was small grocery store, meats and so forth.

(I): What corner would that have been on?

(IW): Well it's either on Ohio or Michigan, I don't remember which.

(I): The building that it was in isn't there anymore?

(IW): Oh no, all that's been changed around. In fact everything in the way of business they seem to tear out about every ten years and start over again. Not always for the best, but that...

(I): For the good of change or something, I suppose.

(IW): Can't stop progress, you know, you'd just go backward.

(I): I used to live a couple of blocks over on Fourth Street and there's one house, kind of a building, on the corner of Fourth and Magnetic I think, it looks like it used to be a corner store, was that...?

(IW): I think it's on Park and, well right near Magnetic, but Park or Crescent or one of the others. It was a small grocery store owned by a family named Hokenson, they lived in the house attached to the store. In the past couple years or so that they were in business I don't think they even made enough to pay for their lights. Kids used to go in there and buy candy and one thing or another but it's been deserted for about ten years. I don't know if the people are dead or what happened, but all the merchandise is still on the shelves in there. I don't know what condition it's in after that many years, but probably not too good.

(I): Have you noticed since then, were there a lot of empty lots around town or by that point were most of the neighborhoods completely filled in especially in that Fourth – Third street area?

(IW): There wasn't too much space because it's always expanding and lots were the premium. I tried to buy, the school over by the cemetery on Seventh and Ridge, what is it, Sandy Knoll I guess they call it? I tried to buy a lot in there and Harlow Clark told me, "No that's going to be a school someday we aren't selling any part of it in parcels." And the only thing you could get in the way of lots were out in the boondocks out away from town. Everything downtown, centrally located, was taken up because all the business was centered downtown – all your churches and schools and everything were in a little tight coup you might say in about five or six blocks. Everything else was just harder to reach because you were farther away.

(I): You said you worked most of the day during those years especially, what was your daily routine like starting from the point that you got up to when you came home to spend time with the family?

(IW): Well when I worked for Marquette Sausage I didn't spend a great deal of time with the family because I was on the road 14-16 hours a day and this was five and sometimes six days a week if I had to fill in for another driver. From Marquette I went West as far as Newberry and then up into the logging country and then I'd go from Marquette South into Trenary and then up to the back roads into Munising and up into Van Mir logging camps up in that area. So the majority of my time I was on the road. But after I left Marquette Sausage I went to work then for Montgomery Ward in the sport department and

at that time I worked part-time at The Mining Journal as a photo engraver and photographer – did some photojournalism and had a little more time with the family. From Montgomery Ward I applied for a job at the prison, went in there in February '43, worked there for 35 years and while I was at the prison I continued to work as a freelance photographer in town.

(I): Where was Montgomery Ward located?

(IW): Downtown where Merrick's Ben Franklin shopping center is now, Downtown Mall they call it. Montgomery Ward had two large areas in there and I think Woolworth or Kresky's was also in there and Merrick picked those up when he bought Montgomery Ward.

(I): What did you do for entertainment?

(IW): Nothing. [laughs] Slept when I had the chance.

(I): As far as the night though, were the two movie theaters still...?

(IW): They were operating, that's true. But as years passed and TV came in obviously they had less and less of a business because TV was just taking over.

(I): They were still booming though?

(IW): At that time in the '40s, even into the '50s and early '60s they were doing good business, but I would imagine in the '60s it started to level off.

(I): What did a movie cost back in the late '40s?

(IW): We used to pay about 45, 50 cents. I guess is about, what now, \$3.50?

(I): \$4.00, \$5.00. [laughs] That wasn't just for an hour and a half, two hour movie, couldn't you pay 50 cents and sometimes go in all day?

(IW): Oh no. You'd get the same show over and over again. If you wanted to sit around in there but to what purpose, you know? Once you'd seen it you had it. But they tell the joke, "Oh in Marquette after TV came in, someone called the ___ to see what time the Matinee would be?" and a tired voice said, "What time can you make it?" I don't know if it's the truth or not.

(I): [laughs] Sounds like it very well could be. Was there anything in town when you first moved to Marquette, especially when you moved to Third Street, was there anything you can remember as far as a big news story or something fantastic that happened like a fire or someone visiting town maybe that caused quite a stir?

(IW): Well the only fire I know of happened in the winter of '38, February of '38, and about two or three stores downtown burned but it was before my time in Marquette. Other than that there was nothing that I can think of that would be unusual.

(I): You mentioned that things were always changing. Were there any landmark buildings being torn down or maybe any major ones we have no being built right around that time?

(IW): Well it's been a steady thing in Marquette. Of course downtown Marquette at one time was composed of four blocks, two on Front and two on Washington, and as the town kept moving West they kept tearing out buildings and putting in other buildings. It's a constant change, and if not buildings then parking lots. Across from the post office at one time was a big three story frame building that house McDonald's Music Store. That was torn out and they put the Dairy Queen in there. That was pulled out and they made a parking lot out of it. It's just a constant turnover, and the same thing downtown and on Washington Street. Stores have come and gone and they've changed hands and torn them out and remodeled them and changed from one type of business to another. From stores to offices and back to stores again. Then for many years to vacant stores until they got the revitalizing program going downtown and built it back up again. Which is a good thing, they've put a lot of businesses in there where they had empty buildings for a great many years.

END OF INTERVIEW