

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE ASIKAINEN  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
OCTOBER 17, 2008

SUBJECT: Northern Michigan University.

MAGNAGHI, RUSSELL M. (RMM): Ok, interview with Charlotte Asikainen. Rogers City, Michigan. October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Interview deals with her days at Northern Michigan University. Ok. Charlotte, could you tell us a little bit about your days at Northern Michigan University? You went there 1944-48. You were originally from where?

ASKAINEN, CHARLOTTE (CA): Ishpeming.

(RMM): And you planned to go to Northern to teach?

(CA): Yes. I was undecided at first. I wasn't sure if I wanted to teach or do some, or be a social worker. But I liked children, and that was my main, to do something with children. And then I decided I would stick with the teaching. And I, I did not commute. Many of the students from Ishpeming did commute, but my dad insisted that if I was going to school, I should stay in Marquette. So, we did, we stayed at a place called Kelly's, at 1020 North Front Street. And the Kelly's had a Kelly Hardware store downtown, I think, on Front Street. It cost us three dollars a week and there were two of us to a room. And there were, two, four, six, I think eight of us girls staying upstairs there. And Mrs. Kelly would have, maybe once a month or so, she would have a little gathering with us and we would have some hot chocolate, and she would make sure that we were doing well and she said that we were all good girls and there wasn't any trouble. So we got along fine, it was during the time of rationing, and my friend Barb King and I ate at Mrs. Night's boarding home for a dollar a day. But we had to bring our ration coupons, but we didn't have much meat and Barb and I were a little fussy when it came to the eating. And Mrs. Night would always say, "Well girls, you haven't eaten anything today. What would you like?" and we'd say do you have any peanut butter? "Yes, and some homemade jam." So we'd have peanut butter and jam and that would be our meal. And I didn't like milk, but I did my best to get the milk down because she thought I shouldn't drink, water was good, but I should have some milk. So I would drink a little bit of milk. But after the first semester there, we got into a different home, Mrs. Penhaligan was her name. And we liked her cooking much better. But even with the ration coupons we had little more meat with Mrs. Penhaligan. It was upstairs and there was a group of us, about ten or twelve of us. And it was just a dollar a day.

(RMM): Ok.

(CA): We were at the Penhaligan's, and we just had a great time. There were no fellows but we kept busy doing all kinds of things but when the men descended upon us at Northern everything went haywire as far as we girls were concerned. All of a sudden you could smoke on the front steps and they started to put up Quonset huts and there were guys roaming around in

the halls and we weren't accustomed to that. I think most of them were looking to see who were the best looking women that were around there. That was our concept. Well we had one dance that was scheduled. I wish I could think of her name, Vina Women.

(RMM): Carrie.

(CA): That's right, Vina Carrie. So she got all of us women together, and that time there weren't very many. There were more students at my Ishpeming High School, than there were at Northern at the time. But at any rate, we all got together, and she had a very soft voice. And she said, "Now girls," she said. "Things have changed here at Northern now that we have all these returnees from the service. And now I expect you to act like ladies, and behave like ladies. And these gentlemen are probably going to want to maybe visit or take you on a date and so forth. Remember you are a lady, and remember at this dance, do not wear anything red. Do not wear a red dress or a bright red sweater. Because," she said, "you know that excites these young men." That was our advice when we went to the dance so we did not wear anything red. And if they, we were well chaperoned at that dance, and if you were dancing too close you got a little tap on the shoulder and you had to separate a little bit and the dance went on. But we survived it all and as a result I found my husband.

(RMM): He was attending Northern?

(CA): Yes, he had been at Northern before he had went into the service. He was in the Air Force. And he came back to finish, but it was very interesting. The class that I was taking, one of them, the psych class with doctor, he was an elderly gentleman with white hair, but anyway, Ernest Manelli was a friend of my future husband and I didn't know that at the time. And we were sitting next to each other in class and he said, "How would you like to go for a cup of coffee after and we'll go down to the Snack Shack." I said well sure ok. When we left the classroom, there was another gentleman there waiting for Ernest, and it was just the three of us went down. Well the other gentleman turned out to be Hank, my husband. And so after we met, a couple of nights later, he wanted to know if I wouldn't like to go to some party at some place. I said, well, ok. And that ended up to be an almost every day occasion. And then after a year and a half, I was asked if I would like to be his wife. And my parents said, "Charlotte, your deal was that you would graduate and get your teaching certificate." I said to my dad, have no fear. We talked it over. Hank had half a year of school and I had a full year so we did. So we stayed at my mother's and dad's for a while, then we commuted, because I didn't have a car and Hank didn't have a car in those days. So we commuted, and we just had the best time. Then after the half year was over, we found a bungalow apartment, just a one room, and with kitchen priveleges. We had ninety dollars a month and we had to really watch our pennies and so we would go to this grocery store and buy bologna or something that could last, like peanut butter, and bread, and milk and stuff. And we always saved enough so Sunday evening we could afford to go to the Tip Top and we would share a grilled cheese sandwich, and then we had enough to go to the movie. And we had no car, so we walked. And that was way up past

Northern where we stayed, downtown to the Nordic theater, and back. But it was very nice. We walked to the island, it was all free.

(RMM): Where did you stay? Where did you and your husband in Marquette?

(CA): I'm trying to think. The lady worked for the chamber of commerce, she was a maiden, she had never married. But I can't remember. Interestingly enough, one of the teachers who came to Rogers City later on, Earl Bide, that came to teach, he and his wife, we didn't know that at the time, had, when we left there to move to Rogers City, they rented that room and I'm still in touch with the wife. The husband has died, but Jackie still, in fact she's going to be at the banquet I think. She was in the waves and Earl was in the service. It was just interesting.

(RMM): Now, before you go, because we are running out of time, what was the Snack Shack and where was it?

(CA): It was just about near the Palestra. Was it Palestra?

(RMM): Yeah.

(CA): It was on the corner, it was just below a coffee shop, you could get coffee and they had good donuts.

(RMM): So on the corner of Fair and (*speech inaudible*).

(CA): Yeah, right, right.

(RMM): Right in there?

(CA): Mhmm. And all the college kids used to hang out in there.

(RMM): Ok, thank you.

(CA): It was just fun.

(RMM): Ok, I wish we had more time, but whatever, even it's ten minutes, its ten minutes more than we had.

(CA): We just had a wonderful time.

(RMM): Oh, just one last question because your daughter is going to come after.

(CA): I was in the plays a lot at Northern.

(RMM): In the plays.

(CA): And sang in the choir, and in fact they wanted me to be a music major, and I changed my mind, and they wanted me to get into theater or something with a document David and she was trying to convince me to go to North Western University and major in teaching drama and that sort of thing to the youth in elementary schools. And then Hank approached me about getting married and my dad had said yes, it was fine with him if I wanted. Well then of course I changed my mind and just went into teaching. But I did a lot of my teaching with the first grade, I did a lot of it. In fact, I just had one of my first graders come over to visit me. She's a nurse in Chicago and she's visiting her family in town and she called me, could she come to visit. And she said she'd never "I'll never forget first grade and all the fun we had doing the plays and that's how I got into the plays and drama in Chicago." And she had just finished a video on what to do when (*speech inaudible*) shooting or something comes in. But she said I'll never ever forget you, we had such a good time in first grade. Well I had, Mary Lou's, she can tell you to what time we had with your kids in first grade.

MARY LOU: Oh yeah, we had great times.

(RMM): Ok, Snack Shack we got. And I'll be in touch with an agreement note for you all.

(CA): Ok, all right.