ROWE, JAY

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INTERVIEWERS: WIL SHAPTON, STATE HISTORIAN
BRIAN HODUSKI, MUSEUM CURATOR
KEWEENAW NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
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KEWEENAW NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

SHAPTON: This is Wil Shapton again talking to Jay Rowe this time, at the Calumet High School All-Class Reunion on the 20th of July, year 2000, and we'll get some of the very most basic information just to make sure everything's coming out here and we've got a record of you. Jay Rowe, currently living in Hancock?

ROWE: Right.

SHAPTON: Okay. And born 1939 in Calumet? Born here in Calumet?

ROWE: Right. Calumet.

SHAPTON: Okay. And you graduated in the class of '57. Alright. Let's start out with – well, you had some stuff you wanted to cover, I know. You said you wanted to talk about your ancestors, the very first as they came to this country, so let's just start with that, I guess.

ROWE: Yes, I'm a local historian and a genealogist and what got my interest in genealogy and local history is I had never quite realized until I was like fifty-five years old that I even had any, what my ancestors were, didn't know anything about it and of course, that got me interested in the local mining history and genealogy. But my very first ancestors, William and Mary Jean Jilbert and eight children, left Corn—they lived in Corn – near Cambourne area in Cornwall in eighteen forty-six, and they came, imagine coming over with eight children back then? On a sailing ship to Philadelphia. And then of course they took a railroad up to Albany and then the Erie Canal and then a boat to Detroit and of course up to the Soo Locks and cut around down Lake Michigan down to Milwaukee, to what's called Dodgeville, Wisconsin, the Mineral Point area and they lived down there as miners of course, I believe that's in the tin mines there in Dodgeville. Now in eighteen forty-nine, after he had been there 'course only like three years or whatever it was, the gold rush in California just depleted all the – everybody headed west, you know, with the gold rush. So what they – the mine shut there at the Diggs Mine in Dodgeville so they had to leave. So in the spring of eighteen forty-nine, they came up, I don't know how they got there, to Eagle River, and from what I can understand and put together, on the propeller ship Napoleon ended up at Daisy Farm on Isle Royale and C.C. Douglas and his wife, Ruth, were leaving on that boat. They had just spent the winter there. So what they did, they went to Isle Royale to work on, at the Siskowit Mine over there. So of course there were adult children, when I say adult, they were into teenagers and of course, my great grandfather, my great-great-grandfather, William and Mary Jean Jilbert, their last name was Jilbert, J-I-L-B-E-R-T. And of course the three men worked in the mine and the mother, Mary Jean, and children ran the boarding

house at Siskowit Mine there. There's a picture, a couple pictures of it were taken in eighteen sixty-five of that Siskowit Mine boarding house. The – C.C. Douglas and his wife were at the Ransom Mine which is at Daisy Farm and they lived in a seven-room log cabin there at Daisy Farm, and it was built for Leander Ransom who, of course, had the Ransom Mine at Daisy Farm. Well, they shut the whole works down in eighteen forty-nine so the Jilberts and the eight children of course moved up three miles and moved into an abandoned log cabin there at Daisy Farm. Now my mother happened to tell us about all of that and of course this all got verified later when we were children. The Jilberts of course worked at the Siskowit Mine. They ran the boarding house and if you look at a map of Isle Royale, you'll see right across from the Siskowit Mine and the Daisy Farm mine is, right on the lake there, it's called Jilbert's Hole. That is where the children fished for fish for the boarding house and of course their own family living at Daisy Farm there. In eighteen fifty-two, the stamping mill burned down there and of course there wasn't that much work left there so what they did is they left Isle Royale in the spring of eighteen fifty-three, walking across the ice to Eagle River. Now how I found out, I made a trip to Minnesota and visited some descendents of the children, of the eight children there, and they told me that their grandmother had told them that their great-grandmother had said how they walked for many, many, many miles on the ice, on Lake Superior.

SHAPTON: That's got to be about fifty miles or so.

ROWE: Yeah, about that.

SHAPTON: Why did they come to Eagle, you said Eagle River?

ROWE: Eagle River.

SHAPTON: Why did they come there instead of anyplace else?

ROWE: Well, there was nothing else. In eighteen fifty-three, there was only Eagle River and Eagle Harbor, Houghton hasn't even existed as a town.

SHAPTON: Okay. But they didn't know anybody there. They weren't going as relatives.

ROWE: No, they were going to work at the Cliff Mine. Okay, so, yeah, the Ransom Mine was, I just mentioned that, okay, across from Daisy Farm, and Jilbert's Hole. Another family was there at the Siskowit Mine with them was William Bawden and family from Cornwall. They had two children, and the third one was born there, called Emma Bawden in eighteen fifty-two.

SHAPTON: How do you spell that name?

ROWE: B-A-W-D-E-N. They were from Cornwall. And as I mentioned, that stamp mill building burned down in eighteen fifty-two, they came across in spring of eighteen fifty-three to the Cliff Mine. Now, one of the daughters of the Jilberts, that would be my great-grandmother's sister, met a fellow there. His name was Sampson Dauer. He was a Cornishman who came to Eagle River in eighteen fifty-two. And he was a close friend of Edmund J. Hulbert, who founded the Calumet Conglomerate and was a best friend of theirs because

he was best man at their wedding in eighteen fifty-four. So he had a history of the family tying in.

SHAPTON: So he was related somehow or connected.

ROWE: Right. So anyway, there's eight children of course, that'd be Jilberts, that were in, they lived in Eagle River in eighteen fifty-three, but they worked at Cliff Mine. And all those, they had many daughters and they all got married, which my great-grandmother was one of them. And she married a man called John James who was another Cornishman from Cornwall. He came over here when he was fourteen years old in eighteen fifty-four. He went to work for what would be the Central Mine Company. And if you ever look in Keweenaw on the sign that says in November of eighteen fifty-four, a small group of people started the Central Mine, he was one of them. He was the blaster. He set the first blast off at Central Mine.

SHAPTON: Your great-grandfather?

ROWE: My great-grandfather set the first blast of Central Mine. I have a cousin down in Detroit who has a piece of float copper from that first blast, and tagged that on there, it was a doorstop at my grandma's house. It says 'Do not throw away. From Central Mine. 1854.' Now the reason I know he was a blaster there is it said in his obituary that he set off the first blast of Central Mine and he set the last one off in eighteen ninety-eight when they shut down, so he was a forty-four year employee there of Central Mine.

SHAPTON: Long time to be in a mine.

ROWE: Right. My grandfather married one of their daughters. Ida James, her name was. Remember John James married Eliza Jean Jilbert. And my grandfather came from Cornwall, great-grandfather—my grandfather came from Cornwall in eighteen ninety-four. That's when – he was the last one to shut the lights out in Cornwall. And of course he met my grandmother and they married, and he started a dray business in Central Mine in eighteen ninety-six when they got married and that dray business is still across the street, over Rowe Moving Company? That was started in Central Mine by my grandfather, eighteen ninety-six. My brother, Ken, owns it today and my brother, Mark, runs it for him, today. Then in eighteen ninety-eight – hi Frank.

[Frank Fiala, Superintendent of the Keweenaw National Historical Park, enters the room]

FIALA: Hi, Jay.

ROWE: Then in eighteen ninety-eight, Central Mine was shutting down. He fired the last blast in the last shift there, that was in his obituary. And then John Stanton, who was a big mine owner in the Copper Country, he owned and was involved with many mines from one end of the Copper Country to the other in eighteen ninety-eight, moved him and Captain John Trevarrow to Mohawk Mine. He set off the blasts at the Mohawk Mine in eighteen ninety-eight and continued to work there until he died at the age of seventy-seven. I think that was like in nineteen sixteen.

SHAPTON: Okay.

ROWE: That was John James, his name was. Now I can sit and tell you about all these other descendents of the Jilberts. There was eight children out of there, and the descendents of the oldest Jilbert boys is the resident lighthouse keeper at the Mendota Lighthouse out here. And you'll see it's recently been in the paper about William Jilbert, that's William Jilbert the third. Anyway, he'd be like my grandmother's first cousin, something like that.

SHAPTON: Are they the same Jilberts who started the dairy?

ROWE: Nope, it's a different one. Although I don't doubt they came from Cornwall from the same areas.

SHAPTON: Before we get too far away, I want to go back. This name in Cornwall, this town where they came from, you mentioned it.

ROWE: Illogen?

SHAPTON: Yeah, how do you spell that?

ROWE: I-L-L-O-G-E-N.

SHAPTON: Okay. We have to have that on the tape and we don't need to write it down.

ROWE: Okay. Now I might – okay. They lived in Cornwall, that's near Cambourne.

Now my great-great grandmother, Mary Jean Jilbert, she was a Trevithick, and if you read about Richard Trevithick, the steam engine and the mine engineer in Cornwall, she is from that family. So I'm descended from that family.

SHAPTON: Now, when they came to America, you said they went to Wisconsin.

ROWE: They went to Wisconsin.

SHAPTON: They came there to be miners.

ROWE: Right. They were miners in Mineral Point, Dodgeville, Wisconsin.

SHAPTON: And when they moved to Isle Royale later on again –

ROWE: They were miners.

SHAPTON: To be miners. Okay. And that covers pretty much your family background?

ROWE: And a few other things. It's, you know, William Jilbert, Eilo, my great-great-grandfather, had eight kids. They lived in Cliff until it shut down in eighteen seventy and then they moved to work at the Cliff – at the Central Mine for a while and then they went to live in Eagle Harbor. And at Eagle Harbor they worked at the Copper Falls Mines so my great-great-grandfather worked at Copper Falls and he and my great-great grandmother died here in Calumet, though, and they're buried in the Schoolcraft Cemetery which is just outside of

town there and I've search, we have searched, everybody, my family is big in this family genealogy stuff and we've searched for any stones but no, it's all grown in, all of that.

SHAPTON: That's the one they're cleaning out there now.

ROWE: That's the one we're cleaning up, the Cornish Society, right.

SHAPTON: I go past there every day.

ROWE: They've done a great job there. It's a big job.

SHAPTON: My wife, I grew up here in Houghton. My wife, when we got married, she came up, she had no idea there was even a cemetery there, you know.

ROWE: Yes.

SHAPTON: Until folks started cleaning it up.

ROWE: I just talked to somebody, called me from Detroit, and they decided that I knew quite a bit about mining on Isle Royale, which I do, and it just works out that, her, there was a German couple, they came there in eighteen fifty and left there in eighteen fifty-five when they finally shut it all down, realizing mine left in eighteen fifty-three. Fitchall, I think, their name, something like that. I got it written down. But they had three children, two children born over there, one in eighteen fifty-three, and that child was named Emma, which was the same

name as Emma Bawden, so you see, there are certain ties that link things together, you know, and another one in eighteen fifty-five.

SHAPTON: Now, when they were working mostly then for the Cliff Mine, you know and all this, and of course, the Cliff is the first really successful one around here.

ROWE: Right.

SHAPTON: Did they sort of get any share of that? Was there any sense that they had, that you know of, I mean, do you have any feeling for that?

ROWE: Well, you got to understand that when they came from Isle Royale to Eagle River, which was the closest place they could have landed at, that they had to work at the Cliff because that one, remember, that was eighteen forty-nine they declared their first dividend there, and in eighteen fifty-three when they came over, it was really moving along very well so they went to work there and all their family members went to work at the Cliff, you know.

SHAPTON: When they came across the ice there, they would have had what, maybe nothing, anything they could carry.

ROWE: You better believe it.

SHAPTON: All their belongings is just what they could carry.

ROWE: I talked to a descendent of the Harveys and they said they walked it, their great-great grandparents walked across also from Isle Royale and their mother, who was the great-great grandmother was only thirteen years old and she lost three fingers. She's buried over in the Calumet cemetery, too. Right next to my Aunt Rose. That's how I met her one day. But she was telling me. So people did walk over from Isle Royale, you know.

SHAPTON: But if they started from nothing. What were the jobs they were doing there?

ROWE: Well, at the mine, I suppose, they were miners.

SHAPTON: So.

ROWE: Yeah, so there were a lot of people worked on the surface but they were actually miners there. At Isle Royale. And then at Cliff Mine, of course, they were all miners. Even at the Central Mine there, my great- my great-grandfather, John James, as well as being a blaster there, an employee there for forty-four years, he also ran the big boarding house in Central Mine. He ran it after his brother-in-law whose name is Harlowe Everett, quit running it. He ran it first and then he took it over from him. We can go on and on and on about history stuff here. I've done a lot of research on this. The Dyer family, Dyer that had Edmund J. Hulbert who stood at his, he was his best man there? They let him move right up to Rockland and worked on the what they call the Ergema plant there, and then in eighteen seventy, that family then moved to Duluth when they were opening the harbor there? Eighteen seventy, you know, Minnesota Point. And then they went on to Minnesota and he

became a very wealthy man over there, believe it or not, in the lumbering business.

SHAPTON: Okay. I do want to talk a little bit about your own experiences in the Keweenaw. You were born here in nineteen thirty-nine.

ROWE: Centennial Heights.

SHAPTON: Centennial Heights, nineteen thirty-nine. And you never worked in any of the mines?

ROWE: Oh, not at all.

SHAPTON: No?

ROWE: No. Never even gave it a thought.

SHAPTON: But then, your parents, directly, your father? What did he do?

ROWE: He owned Rowe Moving Company with his brothers here that my grandfather started in Central Mine in eighteen ninety-six.

SHAPTON: That's right, you said that. And your mother, was at home?

ROWE: My mother raised eleven children, right.

SHAPTON: Eleven children.

ROWE: Now you see, here again, now with her, her grandfather came to Central Mine to also, in eighteen sixty-six. So you see, her father was born in Allouez Mine, he worked at the Allouez Mine, he was born in eighteen seventy-nine. So they were also miners. So yes, I'd have to say all my grandparents, which I'm three-quarters Cornish and they're all miners. I'm a quarter Finn and he was a surface worker at the mine that would be Red Jacket shaft.

SHAPTON: And your mother's maiden name was Amata?

ROWE: We share the Chenoweth and Amala.

SHAPTON: Amala.

ROWE: Yeah, Amala's Finn.

SHAPTON: So she's got some Finn in her. And you had ten brothers and sisters.

ROWE: I had ten brothers and sisters here, born in Calumet.

SHAPTON: Okay. When you were growing up, we were talking to Gus earlier, in terms of the foods and stuff like that with your mother, being such an ethnic family, did you eat pasties?

ROWE: Oh yes, my mother was a good pasty maker. And she was a great chili maker, believe it or not. Those are two that were favorites with us. Yeah, we grew up, remember with eleven kids is that my mother fed us, like I say, three meals a day and our lunch meal, our lunch was just as big as everybody's supper and of course, our supper was that big. She was a great cook.

SHAPTON: Any other special foods you can remember? How about like at holidays and stuff?

ROWE: Well, holidays, let me think now. My dad always liked to get – my dad, when I was kids, he always got the, he didn't buy them at the store, my grandmother lived in Red Jacket shaft, that's where Rowe Moving Company's original, or Centennial Heights, excuse me, near Red Jacket shaft, she raised chickens there, and so chickens were our favorite.

SHAPTON: Any other ethnic customs or anything?

ROWE: Well, I can honestly say this, is that you can look at all of the Cornish and all the historical backgrounds in our family and my dad never said one thing about it.

SHAPTON: And he went to the – you went to the Lutheran, you were raised Lutheran. Which church did you go to?

ROWE: Well, first we were Methodist and then when we moved to Calumet from Centennial Heights, we lived in the Rowe Moving building which is kitty corner from Calumet Theatre, and my mother, I suppose, eleven kids, sent us over to the Norwegian Church which is just on the other corner over there, I'm president of the society for preservation of that now. And so I guess we were Norwegian Lutherans and of course, then I married, my wife is a hundred percent Swedish and Finn, you know, and so, Apostolic Lutheran and now my kids are.

SHAPTON: You talk about all these mixes of Swedish and Finnish and Cornish and Norwegian and stuff. One of the things I know that Brian is trying to track down and get a handle on is the sense of ethnic mixing, by the time that you were born, when you were growing up, do you remember any problems, was there troubles between the ethnic groups?

ROWE: Remember, I was born in nineteen thirty-nine. I can say that my mother and dad never, never, ever said anything about – I never knew there was any difference in anybody all the years I grew up. But of course as I got older then I looked back and I could say, yeah, there certainly was, you better believe it, you know. Even in nineteen thirty-nine, nineteen forty, forty-one, in that era.

SHAPTON: In terms of how?

ROWE: There was a sad – don't forget, when everybody came here, they all came in these, were in little groups. Like Central Mine was a lot of Germans and of course, Cornish were there. They were clannish as can be. And of course, you

had all the other ethnic groups, all had their, lived in different areas and they kind of hung to themselves. And of course, the religious difference even when I was a kid, was very pronounced. You don't see it today like that, now.

SHAPTON: And again, just some of your background. Well, you graduated Calumet obviously. And your wife?

ROWE: My wife, like I said, she comes from a Swedish family and they were all in, kind of the woods business. Her father was a timber cruiser for many small loggers and he was up to the day he died, I guess.

SHAPTON: Okay. How did you meet?

ROWE: How did I meet her?

SHAPTON: Yes.

ROWE: Well, she's got triplet sisters and a twin sister. So there were five girls that were a couple years apart and I was at the Hancock Teen Center and I was checking it all out and cut in on her and that was where I met her.

SHAPTON: So she grew up all around here, too, then.

ROWE: She is from here, yes she was.

SHAPTON: Okay. We covered all that, I think. Do you know, can you tell me more about, again going back to Minnesota, your great-great grandparents that first came from Cornwall?

ROWE: Yeah, William Jilbert.

SHAPTON: Right. And do you have any idea or any feelings why? I know they came to Wisconsin to mine, but why did they leave Cornwall?

ROWE: Well they already, she would be my great-great grandmother who was a Trevithick, had a sister living in Dodgeville, so you got to understand, in Cornwall in eighteen forty-six, things were starting to go south over there, you know. Starting to get tough and they had the potato famine in Ireland at the same time, so things were pretty rough over there. So they came to the United States. Now her father, who was a Trevithick, must have been pretty well off because he had a will and everything and mentioned how, because she moved to America that she wasn't going to inherit anything and that kind of thing so they must have been a little bit educated, I guess. But why they left, well, they had a sister there that lived in Dodgeville so they had somebody. I looked in the eighteen thirty-seven census and I could see her sister and her husband and their two kids in there but there was also another ten in the family, in the household but not named.

SHAPTON: This must have been a pretty big deal, though, by moving, like you said, being cut out of the will then.

ROWE: Well, they left and they had to, so.

SHAPTON: Is there anything more you can tell us about the actual work they did? I don't know how much you've looked into that. I mean, you know they were miners, they worked underground.

ROWE: They worked underground in the mine. I couldn't tell you what they did. I just know my great-grandfather was a blaster because it said in his obituary, you know.

SHAPTON: So you said it was your great-grandfather?

ROWE: John James, from Central Mine, the first employee there.

SHAPTON: After that, they started the moving business because your grandfather had the moving business.

ROWE: Now my grand – yeah, married one of his daughters, he bought a team of horses from Central Mine and then he went back and forth to Calumet and then when they got married in eighteen ninety-six, they came to Calumet and they started Rowe Moving Company which is, of course, still over there running.

SHAPTON: So they must have started with just horses and carts.

ROWE: Oh yes, you can see a few pictures of him on his bike. My brother and my sister, Judith Rowe Jarve, have pictures of him on his wagon train, his wagons and the horses and all that stuff like that.

SHAPTON: How many did he have?

ROWE: He had two sets.

SHAPTON: Two sets.

ROWE: Two sets, right. To start with, and then eventually, of course Rowe Moving Company is getting, trucks to that, too.

SHAPTON: Do you know when that was? When they got the trucks?

ROWE: Well, I would have to say it had to be in the teens, I imagine.

SHAPTON: They would have been some of the first people in the area to have automobiles then, right?

ROWE: I don't know that, but I would say he couldn't have been too far behind.

HODUSKI: Was it mostly residential moving, Jay, or commercial?

ROWE: My grandfather, it would be John Rowe, my grandfather, died in nineteen fifteen, and he had all young children, and these young children took over the

business, believe it or not, driving them horses and what they did is they went out to the Mineral Range Railroad and hauled everybody's steamer trunks, you know, to the Michigan House that was up in Calumet there. That's when he started. They basically were in just residential, right. That's what they do today, just residential over there, so nothing's changed there.

HODUSKI: Do you know if C&H subsidized, helped the miners with moving costs?

ROWE: I would say no. Not that I'm aware of. I would doubt that very much. That's kind of the last thirty years thing, I would think.

SHAPTON: Questions. Did you see a copy of this?

ROWE: Let me see.

SHAPTON: When they were asking questions about, again, when you were growing up in that, with eleven kids, you must have had a garden and things for growing food?

ROWE: My dad used to, with the farmers out in Woodland area there, he used to have them grow potatoes, well we had eleven kids, believe it or not, like you say. And he always bought meat by the half. One thing with that, we had a lot to eat when we were kids, I'll tell you, but it was all like, you know, all the potatoes were grown by the farmer and we'd go out there as kids and pick them. And the meat, of course, he'd always buy that by the half or the quarter

or whatever, and they'd, my dad and my brother-in-laws would cut it all up and package it all up and freeze it, yeah.

HODUSKI: Do you remember as a kid going to the Theatre and doing – what was life like in Calumet for kids in the forties during the war years?

ROWE: Well, I tell you what, I saw every movie that ever got played at Calumet Theatre because as a young kid, and I mean when I say young, I mean little. I used to clean the snow in front of there until I was eighteen years old so I never paid to get in but I never missed a movie. I lived just across the street.

SHAPTON: So they were showing movies then.

ROWE: Oh yes. When I look at the old movie things that are on the late shows, you know, there isn't one that I haven't seen, believe me.

SHAPTON: What kind of social activities did you have?

ROWE: Social activities when I was growing up?

SHAPTON: You said you went to the Teen Center in Hancock.

ROWE: Teen Center, yeah, I was big on the Teen Center, and of course, Bon Ton Cafe.

SHAPTON: Bon Ton? Where is that?

ROWE: Bon Ton, in Laurium, it's still over there, it's called Shawn's now, I think. My dad bought land in Sedar Bay which is just out of town here so my life kind of revolves around our cottage, you know, and it still does today, as a matter of fact. The thing I always remember is, when I was in high school is, we used to drive up from the cottage on the weekend up the town, you know, and I'd tell my mother, 'boy is it dead here.' Well, we never dreamed it'd be a lot deader than it was back then, you know. Just think how bustling it must have been at one time if it was, pretty active back in the 'fifties, as an example. My dad used to, and his brothers used to haul a lot of families out of here down to Detroit after World War Two. We used to haul Model A cars back, in the back of his truck, and would sell them for fifteen, twenty bucks a piece. I remember that real well.

SHAPTON: So the war then did affect, you think a lot of people moved out of this area during the war? Did they work for Ford down in Detroit?

ROWE: Well, you have to remember, that during the Depression, a lot of people actually moved back here, because the mines were really going downhill and pretty well ended in the Depression. A lot of people actually moved back here. The population during the Depression actually went up because the mines were actually, everybody had houses, everybody lived in houses, we had more houses than could ever get built. And I think during World War Two, which I remember World War Two real well, because I collected cans and metal for the war drive then, I don't think, I think the Depression started in the mid-twenties in the Copper Country and I think it was still here, believe it or

not, in the early 'fifties. Not much changed, boy. I can remember two of the houses, in Calumet, that I'm aware of, I know that two of them got built. They built no houses, you know, it was all you could do to sell the old ones.

SHAPTON: Did you have your own car to get around in when you were growing up?

ROWE: Well, my dad, of course, owning the moving company there, yeah, I had my first car, I probably was like, thirteen. And I always had one, I remember I was going to get my driver's license when I was sixteen. The police station was just across the street from where I was. He says, 'I know you weren't sixteen.' But you could do that in them days. Of course, my brothers, they all had cars. We had vehicles, you better believe it.

SHAPTON: So that's how you got around. These trolleys, that Gus was talking about, they were gone by then.

ROWE: They were gone by then, but the railroad tracks were still around, and I remember, Fifth Street it was all – Fifth Street all the cross-streets were all that brick that they're trying to strip it all to get to, I remember the day that they blacktopped those for the first time. Churches, yeah, I guess we went to the church that was the closest. The other thing, too, the responsibilities and chores that you had at home. Let me tell you, my brother Kenny, we're very responsible, the Rowes are, in this area, if you ever get to know all of us. And my brother, Kenny, when we were in grade school and everything. Well, on days when school was out, we headed home to the moving company over there, asked my dad what have we got to do and if he said nothing, we were

happy as can be and went off to play. So there was a sense of responsibility that was integrated and that stuff really reflects on all of our family. The Rowes are well-known in this area.

SHAPTON: Always work first and then you could play.

ROWE: Yeah, work first and did the next thing next.

HODUSKI: Was that purely family or was that somewhat the times?

ROWE: Well, let me tell you something, I graduated from Michigan Tech as a mechanical engineer. When I graduated from there, I took a bus to Milwaukee to look for a job and I remember I got a job down in Hall Company down in Milwaukee. And I remember I started work on a Monday and I went there Monday and I went there Tuesday and I took the bus because I didn't have a car at the time. And I remember it got to be Saturday, I took the bus to work, I got up there and the guard says, 'what are you doing here?' I said, 'I'm going to work.' He says, 'Well, we don't work on Saturday here.' I couldn't believe it. I went home because the Rowes all worked Saturday. We worked six days a week, everybody I knew. And I would have worked six days a week, wouldn't have thought nothing of it. But all that has changed. But that's the responsibility stuff. The Rowes were good workers. Anybody will tell you that.

SHAPTON: What kind of work were you doing when, like you said, when your brother went over there after school, just kind of lifting of things?

ROWE: Anything. We used to crate furniture. You know, people were shipping things and we used to box it up in wooden crates and of course, remember [unintelligible] so him and I knew how to clean, we were the best of experts. And generally, breaking up the ice in front of the garage and sweeping, and working on the trucks. I was just a young kid in the late 40's and I'll tell you, I knew everybody in the Copper Country who had any business because I made deliveries everywhere. All the deliveries that I was with the drivers, you know, my dad's, all the mining they were running, I'm talking stamping mills in Lake Linden, the mines here, I never bothered to even go and look inside. I would just stand around in the back and you know, no curiosity. Now it's all gone, you know.

SHAPTON: You miss it now.

ROWE: But it was all here then.

SHAPTON: Did a lot of your friends and stuff and a lot of kids your age work in the mines or lumber or anything like that?

ROWE: Everybody I knew worked.

SHAPTON: They all had jobs.

ROWE: Yeah. When I was in the 40's and 50's, yeah, everybody worked, I didn't care where it was.

SHAPTON: What kinds of things?

ROWE: Wherever you could get a job. Remember, there weren't a heck of a lot of them around. In the 40's and 50's, there weren't a lot of jobs around. Yeah, when I went to Tech, I worked for Rowe Moving Company.

HODUSKI: With your love to work, maybe you're the wrong person to ask, but what did people do for entertainment or for their leisure time, your age group?

ROWE: My age group, the kids were mostly into the teenage dancing stuff. That was real big. The big thing, too, is sports. I was big in sports in Calumet High School.

SHAPTON: What did you play?

ROWE: I played football, basketball and track, so I think sports kind of involved everybody here. I think it probably is the same way today. Nothing's really changed on that.

SHAPTON: A lot of community support.

ROWE: Pardon?

SHAPTON: A lot of community support.

ROWE: Oh back then, yeah, you better believe it. There was a lot of community support, especially, a lot of these schools here, a lot of sporting, but sporting was big, you know, everybody went to every game, you didn't miss anything so that kind of really, sporting took up, even anybody that wasn't in sports, because they followed it very close back then. They do today, too, I suppose, you know.

HODUSKI: And you said there were dances. Were these at school or were they –

ROWE: They had them at the Laurium Teen Center and then Hancock had a teen center and they haven't had those for years so I don't know what kids have been doing with their time since then. I know what I did in my time and how lucky I was and Calumet High School there, like I said, I was only thirteen years old when I went to the high school but I think there were like eight cars parked out there and one of them was mine, one was my brother's and the other was my cousin's. So I had a car so I got around, see.

HODUSKI: So you were probably popular with your buddies, then.

ROWE: Oh, you got that right. Even everybody today says, geez, I look at that and I says, I remember riding to the high school in the worst storms with you, you know, yep, packed them in. My brother in his car, packed them in.

HODUSKI: What was dating like for your age group? Were there certain dating standards in the Copper Country?

ROWE: I would have to say that I think that things were pretty strict, you know. I had a few girlfriends in high school, no two ways about that.

SHAPTON: Did you go out in groups or just the two of you?

HODUSKI: And what did dates consist of, you know, guys your age?

ROWE: Oh, going to the movie theatre, going to the dance, and the movie theatre didn't cost me nothing to get in so that was an ideal one. Take a dollar and a half and go to the movie theatre, go to a restaurant, go to the teen center, and still have a quarter left.

SHAPTON: Oh yeah? Were there chaperones at all these dances?

ROWE: Oh yeah, there were chaperones, you better believe it. They were on the ball in the 50's and 60's, well I say, 40's, 50's, I guess. 50's is my big recollection. Yeah, they were pretty strict, there are no two ways about it.

[pause]

ROWE: Yeah, I did see this, but I didn't have a chance to read it.

SHAPTON: We talked about the church a little bit but no so much the social aspects of the church. Were there activities associated with the church?

ROWE: Oh yes. At the Norwegian church on Seventh Street over there, Molly Ulseth was the, she was a piano player, singer, you name it. She was behind that

church and she had more programs going on and we were all in bad with those programs, I mean, every one, you know, growing up. I think church was kind of a center of activity, too, see in the Copper Country when I was growing up, I know it was a big thing to everyone else, too.

SHAPTON: What kind of programs, you were talking about, they were putting on.

ROWE: More singing and even sang some of my own when I was little.

SHAPTON: Pageants and those kinds of programs.

ROWE: Yeah, pageants and things like that. Oh yes, and the Sunday School classes and all the singing in Sunday School. I was at the Norwegian church, that was real big, yeah, it was a big part of my life and that's why I'm a supporter of maintaining the church from it getting tore down. We had fun, I tell you. We look back at that as... the 50's were just a magic ten years, I'll tell you. You'll never see it again in the history of the world or again prior.

HODUSKI: What was politics like when you were growing up?

ROWE: Politics when I was growing up, my dad and the whole family they were all Republican as can be because they were always self-employed all their life, see, and of course this county was Democratic, you know, and you can't win as a Republican. My uncle tried out for sheriff a couple times and didn't get a win.

HODUSKI: Was there a lot of political discussion?

ROWE: Oh yes. Let me tell me something today. I'm a very well-read individual, and I can still remember my dad's office there, kitty corner across from the Calumet Theatre, Rowe Moving's office. He managed that end of the business. We had another one down in Hancock. But I used to sit there and listen to Joe Schroeder and Johnny Sam and my dad and about three or four guys used to come down and talk politics every day and of course, as a young kid, you don't realize how you're supping that all up. And I learned an awful lot, but if I've learned anything in all of my life because I'm going to be sixty-two years old next year, but they were pretty right. I look at those Joe Schroeder and those guys, they were, talking politics, oh you better believe it, they talked politics like you wouldn't believe.

HODUSKI: Was it local, state and national?

ROWE: Everything, everything. I remember when World War Two had ended and within a few years of that, they had a prediction, he says, well, he says, we beat the Germans and we beat the Japanese and he says, just watch, when we get all done, they'll have beat us. And then after, they all came, came out to be. I'm just saying, politics, oh, I was exposed to a lot of politics, yeah. I never fell in love with it in my own older life but my opinions were their opinions, believe it or not. When I look back, they were right as rain.

HODUSKI: Do you remember some of the local issues that were important to people when you were growing up?

ROWE: Oh, local issues. There was that blacktopping of Sixth Street, blacktopping of Fifth Street, my dad had something to do with the blacktopping of Sixth Street, there, and Spruce Street, right there, that was a street that we could have collected on. I remember, that was a big discovery that they were adding one street on the end of Calumet up here. Local politics. The biggest politics were mainly the governor and the local representatives that went down to Lansing were all part-time. So we didn't have full-time that there is today. They were part-time and sometimes I live to believe that they didn't get so wrapped up in it. You make so many laws today that laws become meaningless after a fashion, you know. But that's something else. Oh yeah, it was great. Calumet High School was so great, I had so much fun here.

HODUSKI: Do you have a favorite teacher that you remember?

ROWE: Mrs. Jacka. Miss Jacka, not Mrs. Jacka, she was never married. Miss Jacka, Miss Blum, Miss Jedda, Miss Bant and Miss McLain.

HODUSKI: And how would you –

ROWE: And Miss, Mrs., Miss Sullivan –

HODUSKI: --characterize them?

ROWE: You also had Misses.

SHAPTON: And they were all women then.

ROWE: Yeah, they were all single. There were no married women in the whole bunch that I had.

SHAPTON: They were all fairly young or just didn't marry?

ROWE: Just didn't get married to my knowledge. I don't think any of them ever did. Even Miss Jedda. Yeah, she flunked me in third grade. Now figure this one out, which you can't do today. When we moved to Calumet from Centennial Heights, it was nineteen forty-three. And my brother Kenny and I had never been to school. Now Kenny, of course, is not quite two years older than me. Kenny Rowe his name is. Owns the moving company over here. But yeah, we got moved down into that building kitty corner from the Calumet Theatre, okay, and of course, my mother came into being August nineteen forty-three and what did she do? Well, school starts. So she sends me and my brother Kenny, well remember I'm just three years old. What they did, they put me in kindergarten and my brother Kenny in first grade. He never saw kindergarten. But you know, it's hard to believe. I flunked third grade. Well, it finally caught up with me, nothing wrong with that. But even when I graduated high school in nineteen fifty-seven, I think out of a hundred and twenty-three, there were only about ten younger than me yet. Where I would have been if I would have – disaster. But back then, you could do that, I guess.

HODUSKI: So what was the school day like at Calumet?

ROWE: Well, I went to Morrison School over there and the thing that always struck me there was, you know, there were good teachers, I'll tell you that. I really enjoyed them. But the thing I always remember is that when they let us out of class, and if you ever look at Morrison School, you got the, and then there's a sidewalk out to the – Seventh Street sidewalk there. And I was so proud that I was the fastest kid, you know, and they'd say, 'class dismissed,' and you'd run like crazy to see who could get to the sidewalk there. I was the fastest boy there was. But there was one girl, Janie Ojala, she could beat me, in my class. That was the downfall. I remember about that. And I could always remember my first bicycle ride with Digger Ryan, they called him, his brother owns the funeral home, Ryan Funeral Home. He gave me a ride on his bike, on the handlebars, I remember that. It was a lot of fun going to school, believe it or not. I don't remember not wanting to go to school. Except when I flunked third grade, then it was – I had to regain my self-esteem and stuff. But you didn't know what that was, what it was called, you know.

HODUSKI: Yeah. What type of games did you guys play during recess?

ROWE: During recess? We played a lot of ball. Kicked the football, I bet you I kicked more footballs on the grass at the Morrison School than the Packers today. We kicked football like you would not believe. The only thing we did is we played a lot of hockey. We'd go up to Calumet Swamp, we used to play road hockey, you know, we played, you know, that's the thing, when we were kids, and I'm talking way back, we organized everything on our own. There was no adults 'do this, do that,' we used to come up with teams, we used to go all over the place and play. We used to go out and make ice rinks on the Calumet

Dam out here. A lot of road hockey. You know, you put the little two puffs of snow there and then one of the kids would get mad at you, and he had the only puck and he'd go home and then we'd be all standing there without a puck to play with. Wasn't like today, everybody got fifty in their garage and there was only about one puck in probably a five-block area and it was owned by one kid maybe, you know. Same thing with baseball. You'd play baseball and you got mad and you'd head home, man, the game was over. In fact, one of the guys that I just saw here, I haven't seen him in forty years is at this reunion here, and I remember him taking his ball and going home to Centennial Heights and here all of us were standing there, didn't have a ball.

SHAPTON: So you were outside a fair amount of time then.

ROWE: Pardon?

SHAPTON: You were outside all the time.

ROWE: We were outside all the time. You'd never believe when we were kids, all these tall buildings in Calumet? We used to go sneak up on the top of them and jump off. I mean our mothers would turn over in their grave, five or six stories, and we'd hit the snow bank down there, crawl out. Sneak up into the attic and jump again, you know. I used to love that. Playing in Calumet Dam and out in the Swamp was our favorite. We used to hunt muskrats out there in Calumet Dam, Brett Harris and I, Lowell Rosendahl.

SHAPTON: You mentioned how important it was with your family's cabin out on Sedar Bay, you know. You were there with your family.

ROWE: Oh that was – Right. Believe it or not, when we were, when school was out, you'd head for the lake. My dad would bring us to town, remember it's only five miles. For the Fourth of July parade. And head back to the lake again. And then would Labor Day would come, we'd go back, come up and go to school.

SHAPTON: So you were out there –

ROWE: So we got kind of – you know what I mean, except that I had a car and I was heading to town, and my brother had a car and he was heading to town, my other brother had a car and we were heading to town, so we never --. We got to town, my sisters I think ended up staying.

SHAPTON: What did the family do when you were out there? Fishing, or --?

ROWE: Oh, I'm a real fisherman. My brother, Mark, and I and my sisters were real involved with Armour the fisherman, you've probably seen or read a book about him. They wrote a book about him and you know, he is just down the way from where our cottage is and we spent, god, he was a big center of our life. I'm talking about us boys and all our sisters. Right up to the day he died. I saw him the day before he died. He was like eighty-six. He was a guy that you'd go over and he'd talk about all the stories about World War Two and the Battle of the Bulge and he'd tell us all stories about all the fishing he did and

everything and I would have to say that every story he ever told us, I heard it probably a million times. But every time he told it to us, you'd listen like it was the first time. You know what I mean? He just keeps talking and you're interested, you know, and we were.

SHAPTON: If you could name one thing or a couple of things that stick in your mind from having grown up here, you know, what makes this place kind of special?

ROWE: I'll tell you what made it special. Bill Harris and I, Bob Yozanich, on Sixth Street is where we lived. The thing that's always struck me and it does, right to this day, was the mining company, of how they left the range open. You could walk out, we just walked two blocks and we're on the Calumet city limits here, and we could go anywhere. We could go fishing, we'd go, you know what I'm saying? We used to go out on Red Jacket Number Five, Tamarack Number Five, Red Jacket Mine, and Bud Olson and I and our mothers would turn over in their graves today if they ever saw us out there, like in nineteen forty-four, at four years old and five years old, looking for metal for the war effort, you know. You'd never believe some of the stuff we walked on up there. Other that just tripped out, everything was open, you know, the base plates, you know, concrete base plates, I bet you they were, you know, thirty feet down from where the base plate on those big steam engines were? Down to the – and we had little kids out there, you know. Some of the mines were even open, you know what I mean? Decided to take a little skid, you'd take a long ride down because those mines were the straight down ones at Number Five, Tamarack Number Five and Red Jacket Mine. But it was so easy, to be able to go and come and go. When I first graduated Michigan Tech, I can still

remember taking my son fishing at the beginning of the – and everything was posted, we lived in Wisconsin, well this wasn't home. That's like me, I was an engineer for ten years. I spent eighteen months at Tooley Air Force Base as an engineer, put a big diesel plant up there. I moved back here ten years ago – no, not ten years ago, I was an engineer for ten years. I moved back here and I've been here twenty-eight years, going on thirty years, yeah, I graduated Tech almost forty years ago, hard to believe. But anyway, I came back for that freedom, and you know what? It was here. Now it's going.

SHAPTON: Starting to lose some of it.

ROWE: Yep, we're losing it and I'm glad that I had been through it. No, it's that freedom.

SHAPTON: To be able to go anywhere and do anything.

ROWE: Not that there's any mischief stuff, I'm just saying that you just come and go and the mining company says, 'fine, go ahead,' you know, and boy, we did more things. You know, constructive, of course. But that was a big thing. It was the freedom, freedom, you'll never experience it except in different areas of the United States, probably in the mining areas out west or whatever, areas like this. But I don't think too many people experience what we experienced up here in that freedom. The ability to, god, when I look how we were little kids, we used to pack in our bag, cans of pork and beans and go out there past the Calumet Cemetery out here, out in the woods out there, there was a big lime kiln. We used to go in there and make a fire and cook them pork and beans,

eat them and then walk out. And fishing. Nobody ever gave me any flak about fishing on the cricks, you know what I mean? Gunn's Crick, that stuff, you know. The freedom, yeah, it's gone, believe me. I see it now every year.

SHAPTON: That was a large part of why you came back, you said?

ROWE: That's the reason I came back thirty years ago, was the freedom to be the way things were up here. And I had a good thirty years of it but boy, in the last five years I've seen her go south. But I look back at it, I enjoyed it. It's just over, that's all. It's still nice up here, I mean, don't get me wrong, I love it here. I wouldn't have come back if I didn't. But I'm big in the Cornish Society, I was president of the Cornish Society, I'm big on the historical societies, I'm big on genealogy, the history of the area, anybody wants to talk about history of any mine, who the mining captains were, this, that and everything else, whether they were good, bad or indifferent, there's quite a few people around here who were real familiar with it and I'm one of them.

HODUSKI: Did you grow up really aware of your ethnicity, that you were Cornish?

ROWE: Oh, my dad would say, 'you're a Cousin Jack,' you know, and stuff like that. That was it. My dad never said anything. I just couldn't get over how much heritage I had. I mean, how many people are, I mean, you can count them on your hands and toes how many were on Isle Royale in eighteen forty-nine or fifty-three or in the Keweenaw. And they were all miners. I never thought about my background. I always thought they were all truck drivers, you know.

That's all I ever thought about because that's all our family ever was. Well, I didn't know we were all miners.

SHAPTON: Until you started looking into it?

ROWE: Oh yeah, well, now, I'll tell you. I know where I came from. I've knocked on the – I've been in my grandpa's, great-grandfather's house in Cornwall and can't wait to go back next year and do some more. Now I'm about ten times smarter than I was four years ago when I went. When I go back, I know a lot of things I'm going to be looking for.

HODUSKI: So the other kids you grew up with weren't really aware of their ethnicity either?

ROWE: No. I would say this, I don't know why it is. People – I never was brought up with, and I think my dad, I'll have to be perfectly honest, with Rowe Moving Company, we were Cornish. My dad was a hundred percent Cornish. And I think what it is when you look back to when they were in the moving business, I think sixty-five percent of the Copper Country was Finnish. But if you ever look back at, into the history of the mines, you know, the Cornish always had the high jobs and everything else. They were here always, two generations ahead of everybody else, they were the ones who started the businesses around here. Well as a result of that, the Cornish kind of put themselves up here, you know, and of course, the backlash of the Finns, I think, and I think my dad as a result of that never, never pointed out a difference in anybody to us kids. We grew up, there was no difference in anybody. That is – I think

what it is, is from a business point of view. And as a result of that, he never, well, I'm Cornish or stuff, he never really said nothing about it. But you could understand the way it was a hundred years ago, too. My dad was born a hundred years ago. A lot of that is coming back today. Everybody, don't forget, was trying to become – they were trying to become one in this country. That's what made us grow, everybody come from all of these backgrounds and they kind of took on the English language and kind of became Englishized, if you want to call it that, see. Now today, what are we doing? We're busting the country up into who's who and this group, you know what I mean? And special ones for this, and special legislation for that, just enough to get everybody to hate each other. You know what I mean? And then we're into politics again, see.

SHAPTON: So, uh. I think we've covered a heck of a lot. We've got fifty-eight minutes on tape here.

ROWE: Okay, wow.

SHAPTON: Anything else you want to say?

ROWE: I just want to say that, you know, we've got to recover the history of this area and let it be known to our younger people and even the older ones, and re-establish how great this area is. A lot of people just have no foggy notion and once they get wrapped up in it, just like I did, don't forget, I was fifty-five years old, I didn't know anything about anything, the local history or anything. And like I said, I'll be sixty-two next year and I'll talk with the best of anybody on

who's who, who is what, where he worked, lived where, and all that, you know. And the history of this area. This area, I'll say, is what the Silicon Valley is to the United States today, this area was to this country back in the late eighteen hundreds and early nineteen hundreds. No two ways about it. This place generated one awful lot of wealth.

SHAPTON: It was a boom town.

ROWE: And I'm saying the people of this area here went on and helped the United States grow to what it is today, and that's part of the stories I'm looking at is the contributions the early immigrants made to the building of this country.

SHAPTON: Do you have any feeling, though, any sense, with your family being miners, and as Cornish miners, you know, they were at the top of a social scale, and yet not, necessarily, getting any piece of that big pie that was being carved.

ROWE: Not at all.

SHAPTON: Was there any resentment, sort of, between them and the owners?

ROWE: Not at all. I have to say this, in my family, I was never, ever, ever, ever brought up with the slightest bit of resentment to anybody. That's just my family. That's just the way they were. And I'm fortunate they were.

SHAPTON: Very good. Okay, Mr. Rowe, thank you very much for coming in.

[end of tape]

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