

William Krisch

Location: Unknown (Probably Michigamme)

Date: Unknown

Start of Interview

[There was a third person, a female who was there and mentioned a few things in the interview. Name is unknown so marked as 3 for third person]

(I) Did he start right away when the mine started up then?

(W) Pretty close then.

(I) Pretty close to that time.

(W) He was there when they were moving stuff in he went as soon as it started.

(I) Soon as it started up. So he never really worked underground then?

(W) Nope.

(I) He was just on the surface. Was your dad from Michigamme before he moved up there?

(W) Oh no we were living in --- town first on a farm about two miles...

(I) So did your dad stay on the farm or did he move into the houses?

(W) After he died we did move in.

(I) Oh I see your mom and her children...

(W) --- one of them was born January and we moved in the line didn't ---- I remember...

(I) So your mom had a small baby when your dad died then?

(W) He was not too small, my brother born in 26' my dad died in 30'.

(I) Well yeah he would have been a few years old. Did you rent one of the houses that Ford had put up?

(W) Oh yes even after we were married.

(I) Oh you rented a house up there too. I was kind of curious somebody told me that he built some permanent houses, you know then he built some what they called portable houses.

(W) Yeah there were a lot of portables.

(I) A lot of portables?

(W) There was two rows of them, there must have been at least 20 in each row.

(I) 20 in each row are they the ones that are still up there now?

(W) No they aren't. They are all torn down, I don't think they last one that was up there its down I think...No its up there behind that barn there and the mine there because my uncle has it.

(I) Oh there will still be one there?

(W) He made it into a barn.

(I) Is that right?

(W) That's part of it.

(I) Somebody told me that a lot of people took these portables and took them out to like camps, made camps out of them.

(W) They do lots of them, took them took John's Barley, I think there's one on his farm yet.

(I) Oh.

(W) What about that?

(I) There weren't any houses before Ford put them up then, that was just...

(W) There was one log house way just in just buried on the property.

(I) Was that somebody's old farmstead up there then?

(W) Well they had gardens in there but they didn't live there much. They had a guard house but I was pretty young when they made that log house.

(I) Um let's see what else was I going to ask you everything flew out of my head. I read an article that about, it's a man called E.G Muck I don't know if you remember him or not?

(W) We traded that.

(I) This article I read about him he said he owned a grocery store here in Michigamme.

(W) Just this side of where the Post Office is then there's that building, then there was another store called Christian's it was this way more yet.

(I) Ohhh and anyways he was saying in this article that he delivered to the people up in Imperial Heights.

(W) So did Christian's.

(I) Oh so did Christian's, so there never was a store up there evidently?

(W) No.

(I) No oh. Did everybody do most of their shopping in Michigamme then?

(W) Well mostly you know they deliver up there they would deliver by horse and buggy.

(I) Is that right?

(W) Yeah.

(I) I suppose...

(W) Not buggy but...

(I) Wagons.

(W) Little...

(I) Did many people have cars at that time?

(W) Well there was quite a few had cars but there were lots of that hadn't been bitten yet.

(I) So did you go school then at the school in Mount....

(W) I was out working already.

(I) You were working already that...

(W) I was in the woods. I quit early in school. I only went to 7th grade.

(I) Well...

(W) And I told my--- in the woods 30 dollars a months for boys.

(I) Which I'm sure your family needed at that time.

(W) No my dad was working.

(I) Oh he was still working then?

(W) My dad was working.

(I) Um I read an article about that Mr. Ford had sponsored a semi-pro basketball team called the Ford...

(W) The Ford Miners.

(I) Ford miners that's right! The Ford Miners and they would play all of their games up in the Imperial Mine gym.

(W) Yeah.

(I) Because it was the new school, did Michigamme not have a gym?

(W) They did have a gym in the school.

(I) Oh they did too but maybe because...

(W) This one was newer and then they were working at the mine all of them were working at the mine and they were living right there in houses.

(I) Oh the people, the men on this who were on this basketball team worked at the mine?

(W) Yeah.

(I) Ohh I thought maybe they were Michigamme people who went up there.

(W) No no they not, they were miners.

(I) I see they worked right there and...

(W) And some were in the office too, a couple of them worked in the office.

(I) I see. The way he talked in the article that it was really something to go to one of these games and it...

(W) Oh boy yeah, see that that school was built in 23' 1923 keep in mind the mine only works 10 years.

(I) Till what till 33' they closed down. So did you go to some of the games? The basketball games?

(W) Yes!

(I) I suppose a lot of people came and that was...

(W) Oh yes! Lots of Michigamme in the beginning, in the the high school after they got too, appeared they grow up in that game played their game.

(I) Oh the high school even used that gym.

(W) Michigamme students.

(I) Oh.

(W) At the end Ford had the basketball team, after Ford moved out of it, it was, yeah there were two guys that had jobs up there.

(I) So when Ford left there was still two saw mills so is that where most of the people...

(W) There was two saw mills in the same building.

(I) Two different business.

(W) And finally when he wasn't there too long.

(I) So most of the people, the men who were working for Ford worked for the saw mill after that then.

(W) No they come from Wisconsin they had timber here.

(I) Oh.

(W) And --- one of their building the --- big guy they had all of their machines in that.

(I) Did you ever work there?

(W) Yeah I worked at the saw mill.

(I) Did you? Yeah yeah. I was also reading where Mr. Ford was coming up here to visit every once in a while?

(W) Oh yeah.

(I) Were you ever...

(W) I seen him.

(I) Oh is that right?

(W) He was, he came even to the farm where we lived.

(I) Is that right?

(W) He came and looked at the fox and coyotes --- the old man take you up and the guide was a trapper before ever worked, that was the only place he ever worked in his life I think.

(I) Is that right?

(W) Trapper all the time. He had long curly hair.

(I) Is that right?

(W) You got a picture of them here don't you?

(I) Of what?

(W) Of the guys at the mine.

(I) Yeah we have a picture I don't know where to find it.

(W) My dad was in that picture and they were ----. But the other one we would have been working there giving him one.

(I) I was wondering when Mr. Ford came up to visit if you ever had a big picnic or a celebration or he just come and visit on his own?

(W) He just come just stay maybe a day or so. Mostly he'd stay in that same house with the superintendent.

(I) Oh I see he would stay with him.

(W) That's a big house.

(I) That's a big house. Which house? Is that the one when you come up the hill...

(W) It's right.

(I) Over to the right hand side. Oh that was his house.

(W) Were the...

(I) Where the superintendent. I read an article where later on Ford started the Blueberry Mine and that the superintendent of the mine from the Imperial Mine went to the Blueberry Mine and then they got a new man to come into the Imperial. so they must have only had maybe two superintendent there the whole time the mine was.

(W) Oh yeah I know the two, Richard the first one, I don't remember two of them.

(I) Was it his name Alvin Richards, something like that?

(W) Something like.

(I) Yeah I remember writing that down some place. Mr. Muck was also saying that Mr. Ford gave everybody 5\$ a day. And I was wondering if he did that up here also?

(W) Oh he they got 7\$ a day working at Imperial.

(I) 7 dollars a day! Oh

(W) Yeah.

(I) That was pretty good for those times.

(W) Oh heavens that was good money back in that day!

(I) Oh yes, oh my gosh!

(3) We rented up here and it was six dollars a month for rent.

(I) Oh is that what you paid six dollars a month?

(3) Mmm.

(I) Were you in one of the permanent homes or one of the portable homes?

(3) Permanent.

(I) A permanent home ohhh.

(W) Well he had stucco and framed yea know. We lived in both kinds.

(I) I took a ride up there Sunday and there is one house going up the hill that's still has it was brownish in color and it had little rocks on it is what it looked like to me. And I was wondering if that was one of the stucco one if they would call the stucco.

(W) Yeah.

(I) That would be it?

(W) Its right down the hill on the left and side.

(I) Yes, right.

(W) My mother owned that till the end there, we lived in there actually.

(I) Ohh that's where you lived oh yeah.

(W) We used to have a wooden house instead I remember that.

(I) Is that right?

(W) Ford miners when that saw mill running took two boards

(I) I was kind of curious cause that was the only house that had that kind of the outside and I was thinking I wonder if that is one of the original yeah know, still had the original...

(W) There's a couple of them up there but they are all redone--- my brothers son he owns one there we have been telling him telling him to get it torn down, kids are going in there fall through that basement door or something and get hurt. But he don't seem very care so. He wants to pay for somebody injured well, that's his problem he's been told about ten times.

(I) Well that's just it everybody likes to sue these days and you know you'd hate to get sued for something like that. Did the permanent houses did they have basements?

(W) Yeah.

(I) They had basements?

(W) Not all of them some did.

(I) Some did.

(W) One or two we are talking about are stucco that had a basement.

(I) That had a basement oh.

(W) That house right across from the alley there that frame there, that window was glass too.

[Pulls out a picture]

(W) This is from when we first got married. That was just 53 years ago.

(I) 53 years ago well.

(W) 50 years don't I get a trophy?

(I) You need a trophy for 50 years that's a long time!

(W) You read on them you see there three of them right in a row.

(I) 50 years of misery [Laughs] that's pretty nice, did you have a 50th wedding anniversary party?

(W) Yeah.

(I) How many children do you have?

(3) One.

(W) One girl.

(3) In Kenosha

(I) In Kenosha?

(W) She was born here.

(I) She was born in Imperial Heights?

(3) Yeah right in that home that you were just talking about.

(I) That stucco one? Did they have a doctor up there then?

(3) They had a doctor down here.

(I) Oh I see the doctor from Michigamme.

(W) Dr. C. Cock

(I) C. Cock ohh and he came up there and doctored for all the people up there too.

(W) He'd go way down to Nestoria [Spelled phonetically]

(I) Ohh my.

(W) Horse and buggy all the for many years she talked.

(I) Did by 1921 he must have had a car I suppose.

(W) Oh yeah he was the first one.

(I) He was the first one to have one. [Laughs]

(W) Old cripple guys, he had problems with his two feet and they had made up all with a special kind of shifting.

(I) A special car made for him.

(W) Yeah.

(I) That must have been quite unusual for that time.

(W) Oh yeah.

(I) I was reading one article about they said there was a Post Office up there.

(W) Up where?

(I) At Imperial Heights and I was talking to somebody else and they said they never remembered a Post Office.

(W) I never seen it. We always had to come to town for the mail.

(I) You had to come to town they didn't deliver up there?

(W) No.

(I) Oh.

(W) Now they do, for the last maybe how long have they been delivering up here? Six, seven years?

(3) Longer than that.

(W) Was it?

(3) Dorothy been there for a long time.

(W) Oh yeah Dorothy.

(3) Allison has been there for serval years

(W) Oh our next door neighbor.

(I) Oh they drive the mail rout?

(W) The rout three days.

(I) Oh my goodness!

(W) I guess if you go to the store even you get that.

(3) I think are Three Lakes, I think that's as far as they go.

(W) I didn't know for sure.

(I) Yeah?

(W) She just told it to me I never even asked her.

(I) I supposed that everybody is related. In this one article I was reading. I don't remember if it was Mr., muck or if it was someone else said oh all the outsiders lived in Imperial Heights that the town people lived in Michigamme and that the that the people Ford hired for the Imperial Heights mine who came in to work it, they lived up there. It almost sounded like these were people who hadn't lived here and they were coming from other areas to come into work there.

(W) Oh yeah there were quite a few worker something I had two uncles, dad there was quite a few Marquettes all empty they worked...

(I) So it wasn't all strangers it was a lot of town people.

(W) Yeah.

(I) Did a lot of new families come in though too?

(W) Oh there was lots of new families. First you know--- I was like the captain the 5th boss he came from Eastern --- mostly from Crystal Falls.

(I) Oh from Crystal Falls.

(W) Most of them were --- but from Crystal Falls anyways he originate there.

(I) Oh he originally came from Crystal Falls? Was there a mine up there that had closed is that why they came down here?

(W) I don't know but they had mines in Crystal Falls and Iron River there they were working the mines there.

(I) Maybe they thought well they'd get some good experienced people to come down you know that could be.

(W) Well the other one Copper I don't remember where he'd come from, one of them was a shift bosses.

(I) Did any of the local people get to be shift bosses and things like that did they get to work their way in?

(W) No.

(I) No.

(W) George Bobee [Spelled phonically] I think he come from ----

(I) Oh I know George I don't know him but... im trying to think our next door neighbor when we lived in Champion his name was Giles Bobee[Spelled phonically] I think our next door neighbor I grew up in Champion and our next door neighbor was a man named Giles Bobee and I think George Bobee was his uncle.

(W) Maybe maybe what you what you call it what was married to George's father.

(3) ---

(I) Oh um Ethel she, her dad was George Bobee?!

(W) Yes yes!

(I) I didn't know that. He was the shift boss up there. Ohh ok I know Ethel and Felix. They both passed away here. Yea yeah.

(3) Last year.

(W) Yes recently.

(W) He sister died right after, before him or after?

(3) I think she died in September and he died in October.

(I) Yeah it was real close together.

[Child come in and offers everyone cookies]

(I) Did George Bobee work up in Imperial mines?

(W) Yeah he used up there and that road that goes to the school house on the left hand side there he used that house.

(I) So he lived up there and then when the mine closed he must have moved down to Champion then. I wonder how long he worked there if he worked there the whole time or what?

(W) Well he lived there all the mine because he was shift boss.

(I) The whole time I see. That's really interesting. I was at the historical society yesterday and they had 1921 school census, it was a piece of paper and it had all the kids who lived in Spur township in 1921 and then it had their fathers name or maybe the mother's name if the dad had died and I noticed this name Wendelin Krisch.

(W) That's my dad.

(I) That's your dad and then it said William, fourteen that's you and Mini eleven and that must be your sister?

(W) Yeah.

(I) It just has the two of you listen down there.

(W) Well my brother Martin, let's see I was 19 when he was born.

(I) Is that right? You were 19 when he was born. Ohh that's quite a space between you kids uh?

(W) Yeah he was born on the farm but we moved in right away, he was born in 26' when my dad died in 30' 1930.

(I) How did you dad...

(W) He was only 4 years old.

(I) How did your dad die what was the?

(W) He got hurt.

(I) He got hurt?

(W) By the back.

(I) At the mine?

(W) Well it wasn't at the mine it was going down the hill to the outhouse see he was night watchman and he the only job he had and he had to go down there and check the pump they had punch clock in different places and there was one down there so he had to go down there, screaming from here --- tell them there are rocks there hurt his back.

(I) Oh my goodness.

(W) One leg --- when he worked he didn't stop working, he kept right on going until he couldn't go no more he used to put a rope on his leg to help his knees go up that two miles to the farm and that two miles around...carrying that leg!

(I) Oh my goodness, oh my heavens wow isn't that something? Somebody else in this day in age sure wouldn't do that would they. I think people were so much... they just did things that people today wouldn't do. Yeah know?

(W) When I was young 18 ,19 I was driving a team member and we were opening a pit there at Lake Palmer I skidded and the guy in the road on of the switch--- and turn and --- tipped over hard time those two guys they couldn't even lift it off of them the truck driver. 15 tipped over, he got drunk with it hanging in the air...

(I) [Laughs]

(W) One guy was sitting on the bed just put my leg on a chair that was when I was about 19, the lady wouldn't all of us back.

(I) I guess so.

(W) I come home and im sitting there my uncle and good friend of mine go --- 10 miles at that time I they said they were going to work that then they would come get me. [Inaudible]

(I) 10 miles?

(W) I walked then I caught fish there near the dam there. [Inaudible]

(I) Mmhm.

(W) I was fishing they come get me in the morning and they took the river out the --- catching big fish, bigger than my catching up there I was there about ten minute and then you see the cast go by there.

(I) Oh no!!

[W and I laugh]

(W) You make two --- one that's fried so that -- later ----- I talked to her anyway I was supposed to get that cast off I talked to her, says --- by the time ---

[Laughs]

(I) So he gave you the business when you came back he figured you should have kept that cast on uh?

(W) Oh yes.

[I Laughs]

(W) I didn't I talk to him said that.

End of Side one

(I) Toilets and everything?

(W) And they had dirt and then the years before Michigamme had theirs.

(I) Isn't that ohhhh. So you because Ford came up there you all had running water and electricity and inside toilet facilities.

(W) For six dollars a month.

(I) For six dollars a months isn't that something! Well did your rent go up as the years went by or did it pretty much stay the same rate?

(3) Pretty much the same rate.

(I) Yeah?

(W) They stuck with you. The portable.

(I)The portables were a little cheaper than?

(W) But they had water and toilets.

(I) They had all the...

(W) At one point that I know of --- as you go do you know where Bass Lake is? You go up the river...

(I) Oh I haven't been back in there. I haven't been back in there.

(W) There's a little lake up in there.

(I) Ohh oh.

(W) The one that I think of is that on Sorry's farm, when they bought that farm they were living there yet piece of iron mine were all cleared up and everybody living in them houses go over there in the garden and get their eggs and things.

(I) Ohh on the Sorry's farm?

(W) No it was forest land then!

(I) Oh he had bought it from Sorrays. Ohh I see!

(W) Sorry bought it from Ford he used to plant there when he was living in the house there. My folks down, he bought that piece of land from the Ford.

(I) Oh so while Ford still had the land anybody living in the Imperial Heights could go over there and plant a garden.

(W) And they had monopoly you had your own plot.

(I) Oh you all had your own plot.

(W) How much you want to plant you the bigger the family the more you land you got in your garden.

(I) Did most people go over there and plant then?

(W) Oh yeah!

(I) Yea yeah that's kind of a nice little thing for the people there, to you know raise some of their own food and help out their grocery bill a little bit.

[I and W laugh]

(W) Yeah.

(I) They liked working for him then?

(W) Oh yeah!

(I) This Mr. Muck said in his article he said that Mr. Ford liked everything to be cleaned and painted.

(W) Oh yes. They had guys painting everything, everything just as clean as can be, everything the jars the vase.

(I) Did he come in the homes and paint your homes or did he let the people there do it?

(W) Mostly outside.

(I) Mostly the outside I see.

(W) But he encouraged me to join the painting.

(I) Oh I see.

(W) What different colored.

(I) Whatever you wanted.

(W) The painters used to mix it and give it to you as much as you want or the right color for which room that you wanted. They had to keep their own thing I supposed some people didn't want them in there painting.

(I) That's true that's true. Well it sounds like he was pretty generous then evidently to the people.

(W) Oh yess!

(I) Tried to do good by them. Did anybody know that the mine was kind of slowly puttering out, did you have an idea that it might be shutting down?

(W) Oh yes! The grinding shut it down, most of the miner is that cranking make it, there were already starting to get rid of the rivers that flows into the Michigamme Lake you know that kind of the wide place there.

(I) Uh huh.

(W) They were scared that they'd lose too many men in it that's why they shut it down.

(I) Ohhh.

(W) War was another.

(I) It was getting too close to the river and they were afraid of that.

(W) Well they were under the...

(I) Oh they were a little bit under already!

(W) Yeah they didn't want to get too big of scope for a small, she start blasting and that loses the men.

(I) Yeah did you ever go into the mine yourself?

(W) Oh I was in very Mary Charlotte Cline and I had a Matter D. Oh when we put she would whine ----

(I) My grandfather worked at the Athens Mine and at the, The Negaunee Mine I guess it was called The Negaunee Mine.

(W) We lived in Negaunee when I worked at the Mary Charlotte.

(I) Oh.

(W) Yeah I worked at the Matter D used to drive.

(I) Oh your drove.

(W) There was four or five guys and we each take our turns driving.

(I) So when you retired you retired from the Matter D then?

(W) That was...

(I) Oh The Republic, ohhhh I see. Then you got to work under ground and an open pit, and experienced them all.

(W) Yeah yeah I worked at Kenosha too, American Motors for about 45 years, I was sweeper boy.

(I) Is that right?

(W) And then I got honored the midnight shift winter time there's --- and snow. That was a good place to work.

(I) You liked it there?

(W) Oh yeah!

(I) Is that how your daughter happens to live down there now in Kenosha? She met somebody there and got married?

(W) She was working herself in Detroit she married a guy from Detroit.

(I) I see.

(W) They come stay at the cabin by the lake.

(I) Oh they come and stay in the summer.

(W) Yes she just locked it up last weekend wasn't it? Dear?

(I) So your daughter is Tom's mother? No I got it mixed up.

(W) No Tom is my dad.

(3) They are cousins.

(I) Oh they are cousins I see.

(W) But they call my uncle.

(I) I was wondering I thought he kept calling him uncle.

(3) Yeah.

(W) Yeah they call me uncle. Tom's is my mother's step child.

(I) So you are more like a great uncle but he calls you uncle.

(3) Yeah but cousin too.

(W) Second cousins they are but they all call me uncle.

(3) First cousins to Tom.

(W) First cousin?

(3) Your mother and her dad are brother and sister.

(W) Oh yeah that be my mother's nephew.

(I) Well were you born and raise?

(3) Greenland, Michigan.

(I) Greenland, Michigan?! How did you come up to this country?

(3) My dad was working in the woods here.

(W) She should have stood up there.

[Everyone laughs]

(I) So your dad was working in the woods up here. Did your dad ever work in Imperial Heights?

(W) No No the first time he came was in 34' 35' he got married in 35'.

(I) I see the mine had already shut down by that time. Is that a black Labrador they sure are pretty dogs.

(W) He is old. 7 years old.

(I) Oh he's an oldie uh.

(W) Gray whiskers.

(I) They are so shinny.

(W) Rylie can hardly touch her.

(I) He's her dog.

(W) Even me one time I was going to... [Inaudible]

(I) Mmm. He's a good watch dog then he'll keep a good eye out on you guys.

(W) Well how long did you live in Tatum?

(I) Well let's see um I think we moved there in 1960 and graduated in 67'.

(3) From Champion's School?

(I) From Champion's School.

(3) What was your name then?

(I) Utoe [spelled phonetically]. My dad was the superintendent there at that time. And then my folks they just lived there until the school went into the new --- school district so then when they reorganized my folks have been both born and raised in Negaunee and all the time we lived in Champion we lived in this school house. The school had a house. Oh ill shut this off.

End of interview