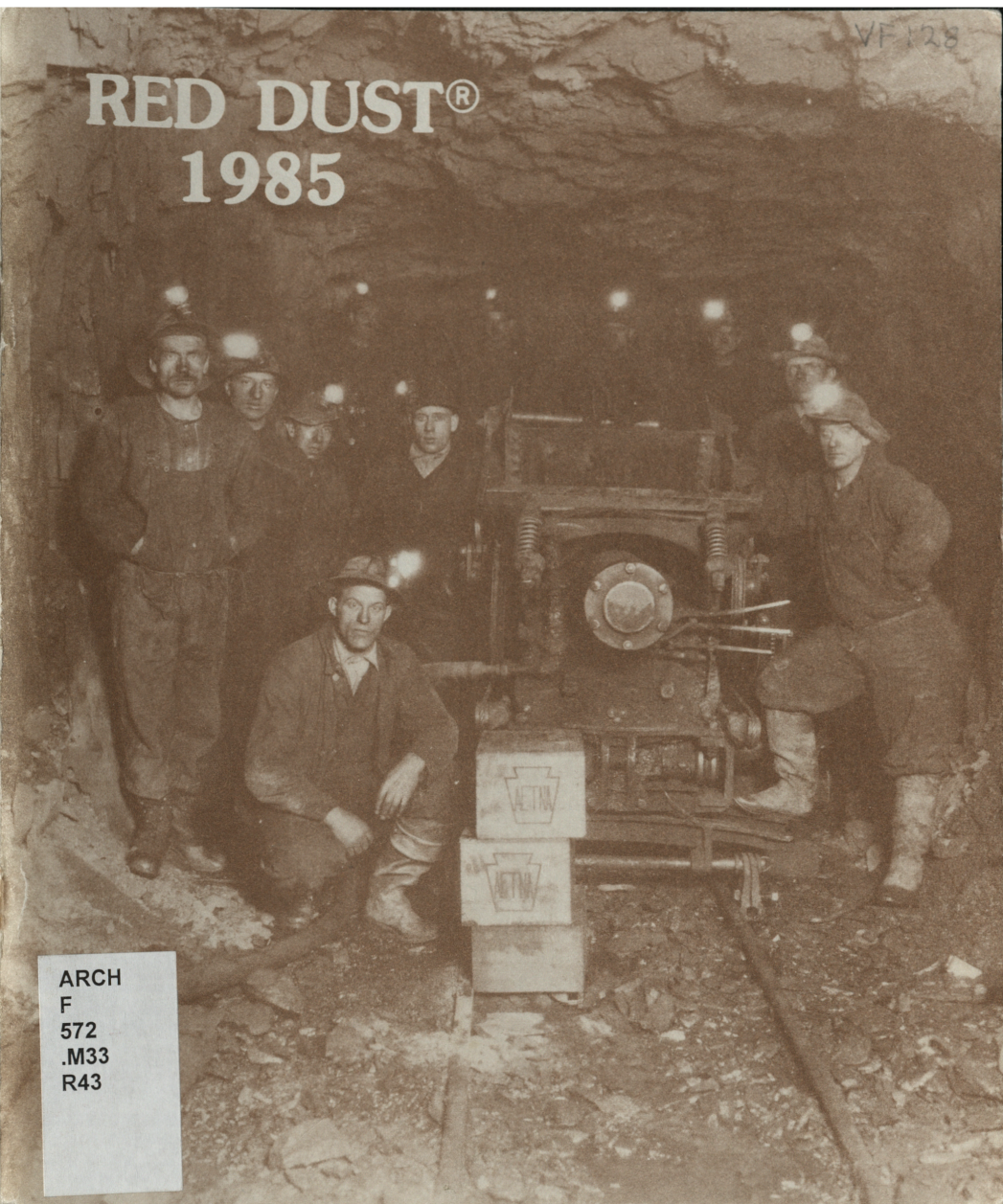


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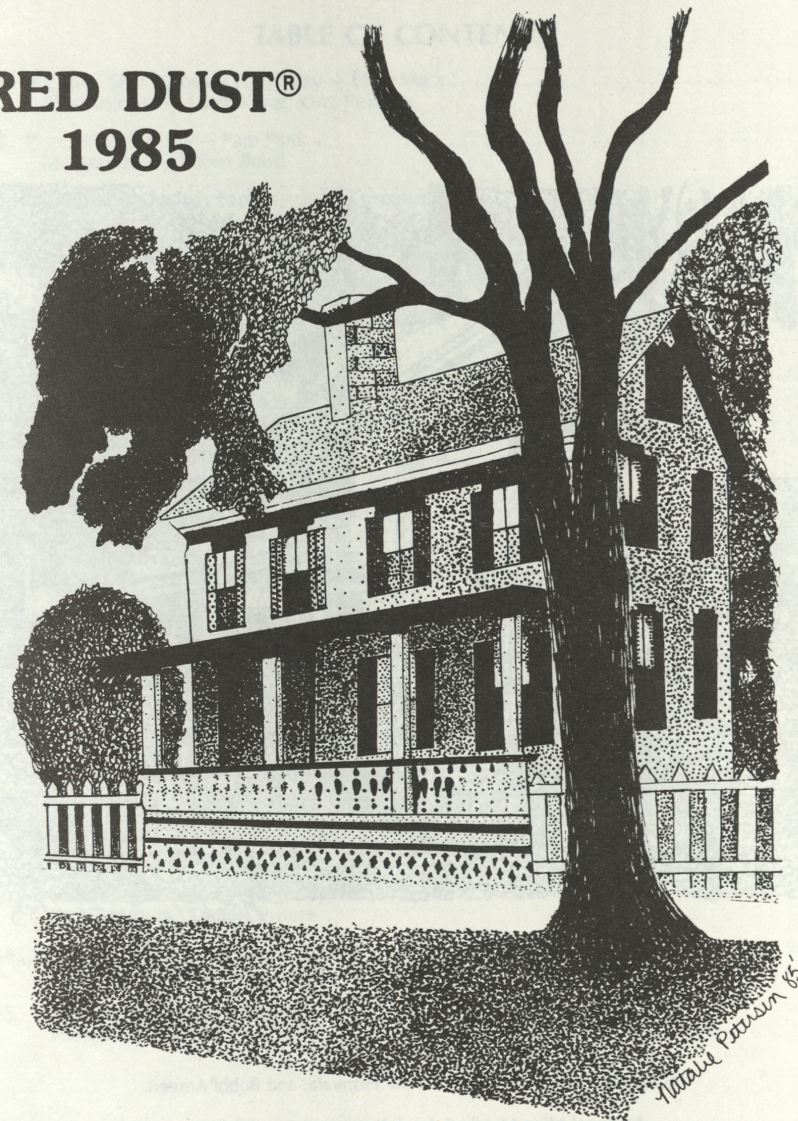
*Aaron Richards
+
Maxine
Fonksala*



COVER PHOTO: Underground at the Barnes-Hecker Mine six months before the cave-in. Mr. Mongiat, standing to the left, and Bill Tippett, kneeling in front.

Dominic -
we here at National
Mine appreciate the
project "Red Dust" and also
to education you have given
Thanks Dom.
Frank J. Fursing

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COVER PHOTO: Underground at the Barnes-Hecker Mine six months before the cave-in.
Mr. Mongiat, standing to the left, and Bill Tippet, kneeling in front.

Your support and
professional advice in the
formulation of Red Dust '85
was appreciated.

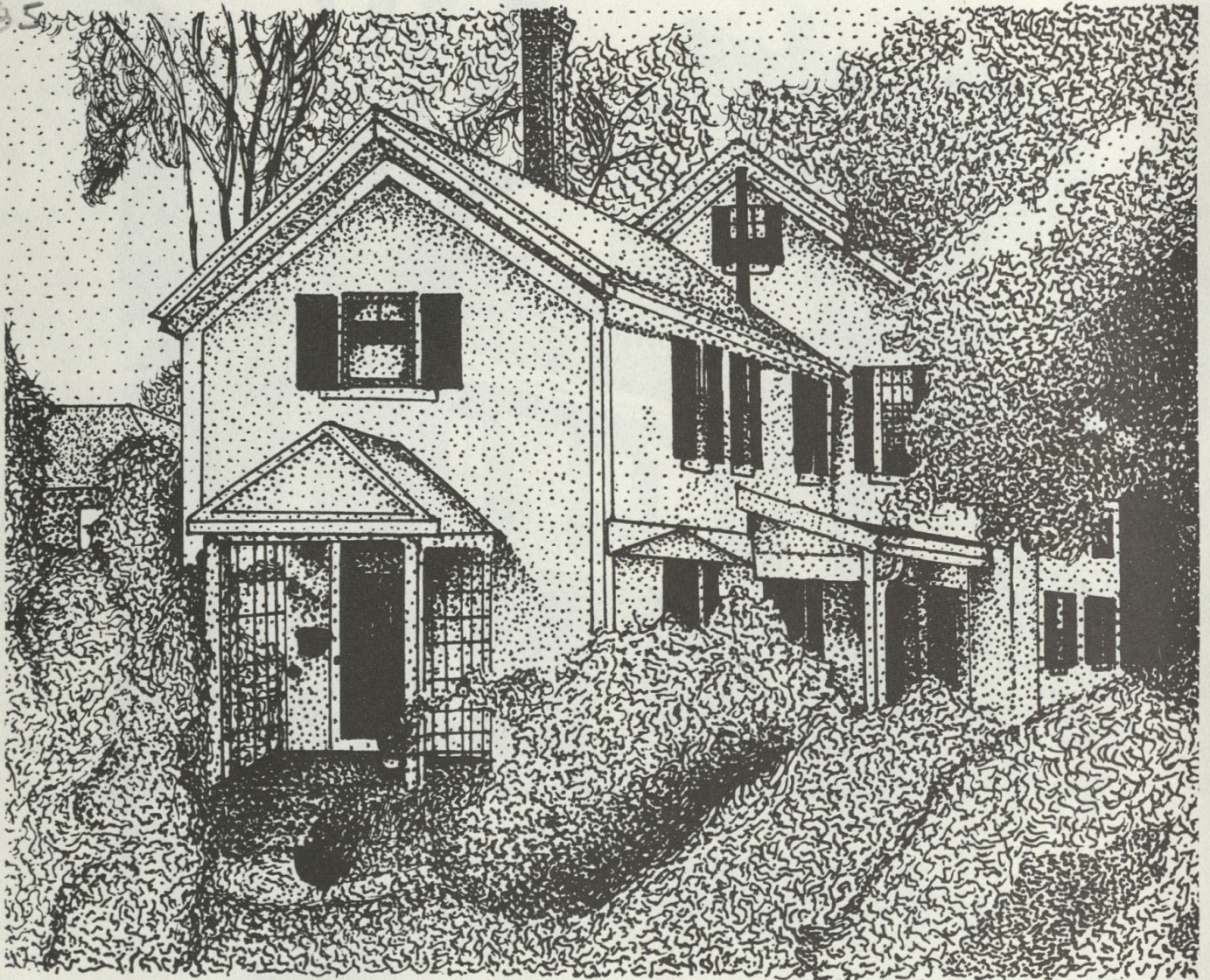
Thelma Tomblay
Sharon Richards
Bobbie Green

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COVER PHOTO: Underground at the Barnes-Hecker Mine six months before the cave-in.
Mr. Mongiat, standing to the left, and Bill Tippett, kneeling in front.

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Michelle Bute '85

Edited by Sharon Richards, Maxine Honkala, and Bobbi Ameen.

National Mine Middle School, National Mine, Michigan.



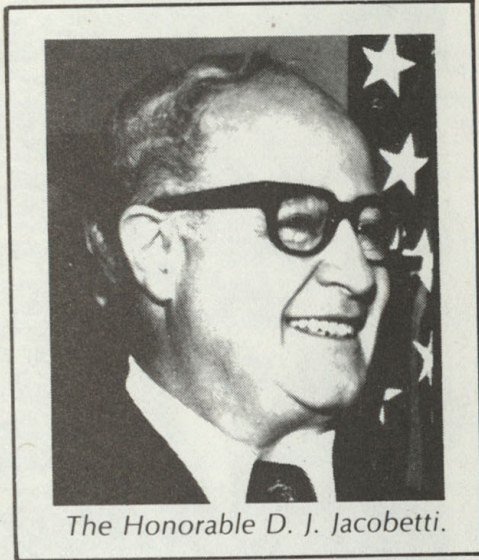
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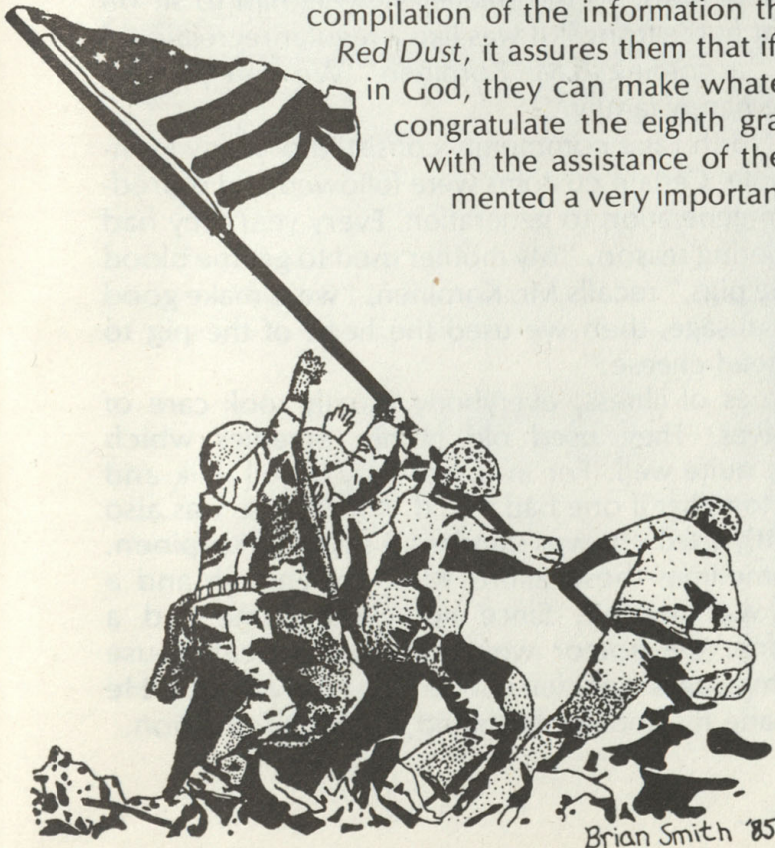
PREFACE



The Honorable D. J. Jacobetti.

When I learned that the students of the eighth grade class were going to publish a 1985 edition of *Red Dust*, I was delighted. In the two previous editions, the collection of oral interviews were of great interest to me. The theme this year, "Triumphs and Tragedies," is an excellent one. Having lived in Negaunee all my life where iron ore was first discovered over 141 years ago, and worked as an underground miner for many years before I was elected to the legislature 31 years ago, this edition sounds even better to me. The National Mine, which was opened in 1878, gave the name to your community and school and is an important part of the history of the Marquette Range. Immigrants of every nationality came to the Marquette Range to find jobs. They left us with a rich heritage seldom matched anywhere else in our nation.

Your theme of "Triumphs and Tragedies" is certainly a history of ups and downs, the good years and the bad of our area. The worst tragedy of mining anywhere in the Upper Peninsula was the Barnes-Hecker Mine. While there were other similar but smaller accidents there also have been many triumphs. The better the students of National Mine understand the true history of the area and the sacrifices that have been made by their ancestors, the better they will understand the challenges they will face in their future lives. In the compilation of the information they have accumulated for this year's edition of *Red Dust*, it assures them that if they get a good education, work hard and trust in God, they can make whatever success they desire in life. I commend and congratulate the eighth grade students of National Mine, Michigan, who with the assistance of their English, history and art teachers have documented a very important segment of the heritage and history of our area.



Brian Smith '85

Sincerely,

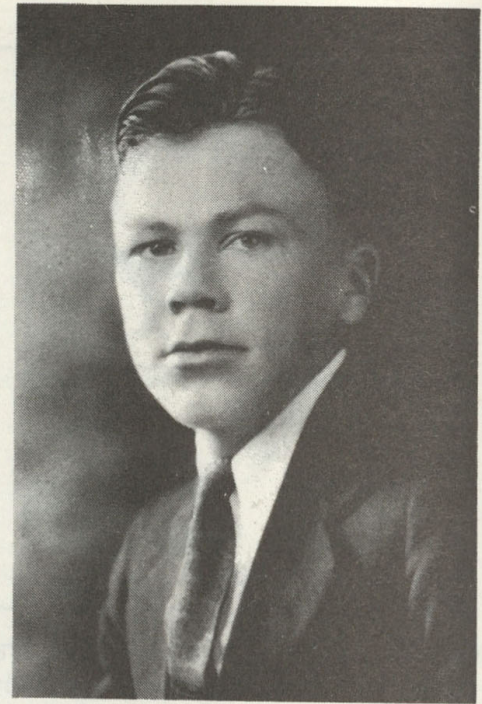
D. J. Jacobetti

D. J. Jacobetti
State Representative
108th District
Chairman, House
Appropriations Committee
Lansing, Michigan

A LITTLE "SISU" GOES A LONG WAY

In the years that Mr. Hugo Korpinen has lived in the Upper Peninsula he has witnessed many changes. Looking back, he can relate the difficult times that were shared, but he can also tell you of the happy times too. When you first meet Mr. Korpinen, you might consider him as an average everyday person. But, once you talk with him, you'll realize what a remarkable person he actually is.

The Korpinen family totaled seven people in all. Mr. Korpinen was born in 1915. He spent his youthful years in North Lake where they lived in "half of a house." This was not uncommon, as most homes were set up this way. These were "company houses," meaning that Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company built these houses to attract people to work in the area. "In those days," Mr. Korpinen told me, "most people couldn't afford to come in and build their own houses." An average house consisted of three rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. Besides building houses for the people, C.C.I. also built a school and a clubhouse. The clubhouse was the focal point of the community. It was a place where everyone gathered for a good time, and movies were a big attraction. In those days everyone could get in for just a nickel. There were only a limited



Hugo Korpinen's high school graduation picture.



Mr. Korpinen's mother.

number of seats, so the smaller viewers had to sit on the floor in the front. "It was like a regular recreational center," according to Mr. Korpinen. "We were just like one big happy family."

The North Lake community consisted of many Finnish people. Certain customs were followed and passed on from generation to generation. Every year they had a butchering season. "My mother used to get the blood from the pigs," recalls Mr. Korpinen, "we'd make good blood sausage, then we used the head of the pig to make head cheese."

In times of illness, everybody usually took care of themselves. They used old home remedies which worked quite well. For instance, they'd boil milk and onions together if one had a cold. A masseuse was also frequently used. "It was standard," says Mr. Korpinen. But, sometimes these efforts were not enough and a doctor was needed. Since not every home had a telephone, the doctor would stop at the clubhouse where messages were left concerning who was sick. He then made his house calls based on this information.

At the age of five, Mr. Korpinen started school at North Lake. It was a frame building, and there were two classes in each room. Each teacher, except kindergarten, taught two grades in one classroom. There were five teachers in all and a school principal. One thing Mr. Korpinen remembers well is that students had to respect the principal and the teachers. If students got into any trouble their teacher would take a ruler and give them a little whack with it. "And it was never the flat end, always the sharp end of the ruler," adds Mr. Korpinen. Mr. Korpinen started his academic achievement early. Winning a spelling bee, he remembers receiving a little chocolate canary that he brought home to his mother.

Mr. Korpinen helped support the family after his father died of silicosis in 1937. "An ambition I had all the time was going to school," Mr. Korpinen told me. But it wasn't as simple as that. To fund his schooling, he worked at C.C.I. for five years. Cleaning track with a "number two shovel" was just one of the various jobs he had. It was never easy, but he never regretted pursuing his dream of going to college.

Tuition at Michigan Technological University in 1938 amounted to \$39.00 a year. Because he had no means of transportation between Houghton and Ishpeming, Mr. Korpinen had unique experiences. Usually he would ride with other students from Ishpeming, but the year he roomed with the son of the prison warden, his lifestyle changed. The prison chauffeur would pick them up and take them there. "This was done 'on the side'," he recalled.

Almost immediately after completing his four years of college, he was hired by Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co. There he worked on motors, he also did some contract mining. Mr. Korpinen was involved with mining engineering as well as operating engineering. He advanced even further to become mine superintendent and achieved the position of General Mine Superintendent. His determination and persistence had brought him a long way.

Another part of Mr. Korpinen's job was to observe, study, and research new mining methods. The most useful idea they found was "block caving." This is a mass production of iron ore where tunnels are developed on the bottom of the ore body. All the ore is caved into the tunnels and retrieved in that way. This method was more efficient and much faster than the previous method they were using called "top slicing." Top slicing was tedious and time consuming compared to block caving. In top slicing, a section is taken from the top and worked towards the bottom.

*Some of the members
of the Korpinen family,
Hugo seated on the left.*

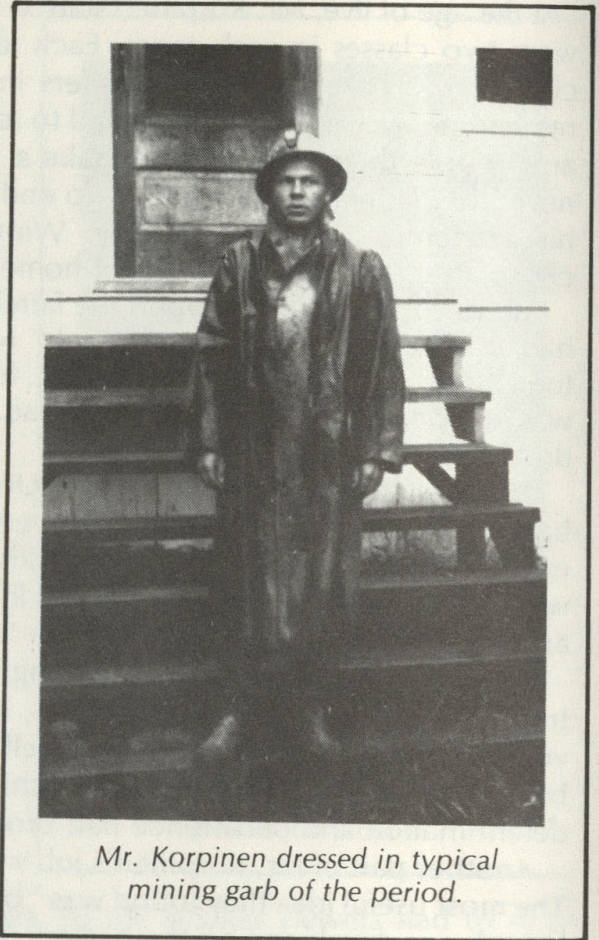


Block caving was first tried out at the Athens Mine in Negaunee. With a few changes, "we made it work," he recalls. This idea swept throughout the underground mining industry.

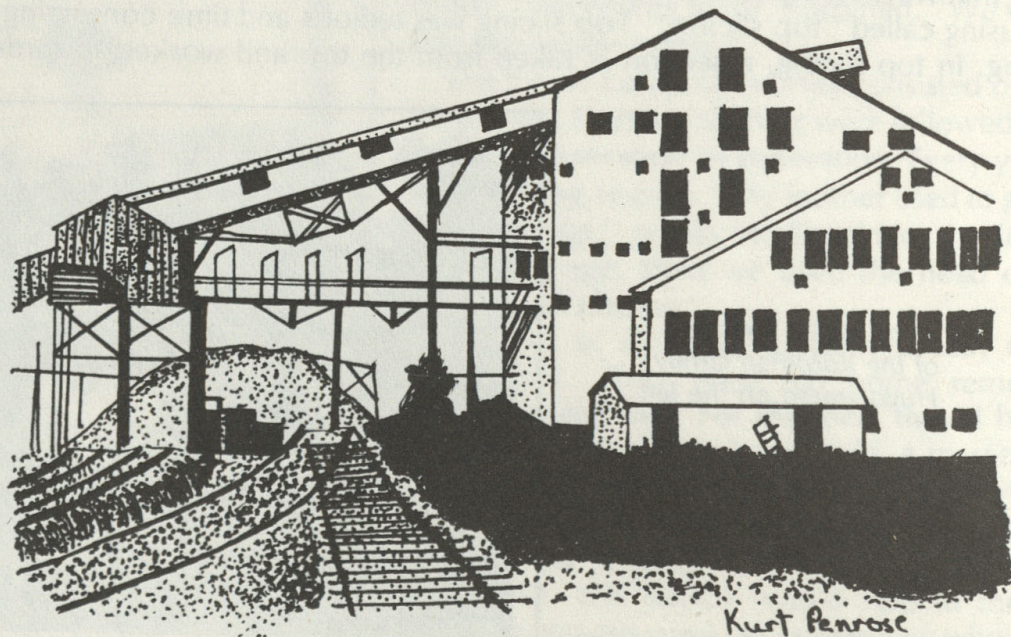
Consulting jobs and searching for improved methods of mining took him to many places. He brought back information from the Pennsylvania coal mines and the copper and silver mines in Arizona, Colorado, and Montana. Mr. Korpinen visited sites in Canada as well as Israel in later years.

Mr. Korpinen's desire since his youth was to go to college and finish his education. Although there were hardships along the way, he never gave up. He had the stamina and perseverance to see his goal reached. He was the first in his family, not to mention the first in his community, to go to college. He wanted a different, more challenging life than working in the mine. His love of learning had brought him a long way, through high school, on to college, to becoming the General Mine Superintendent for Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company. It was indeed a great accomplishment. It just goes to prove that obtaining a good education can take one far, and with hard work and determination you can turn dreams into reality.

Erika Matz

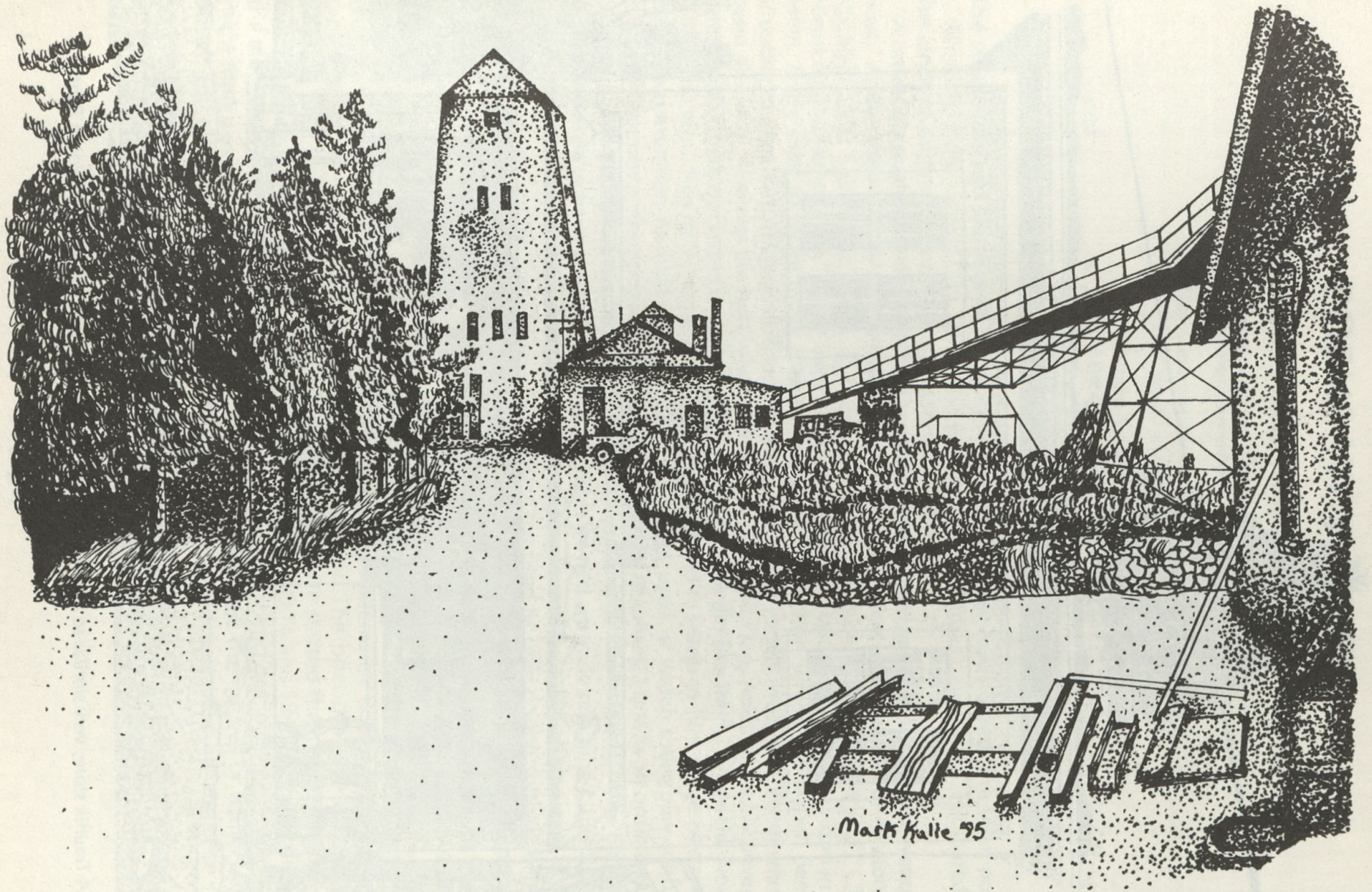


Mr. Korpinen dressed in typical mining garb of the period.

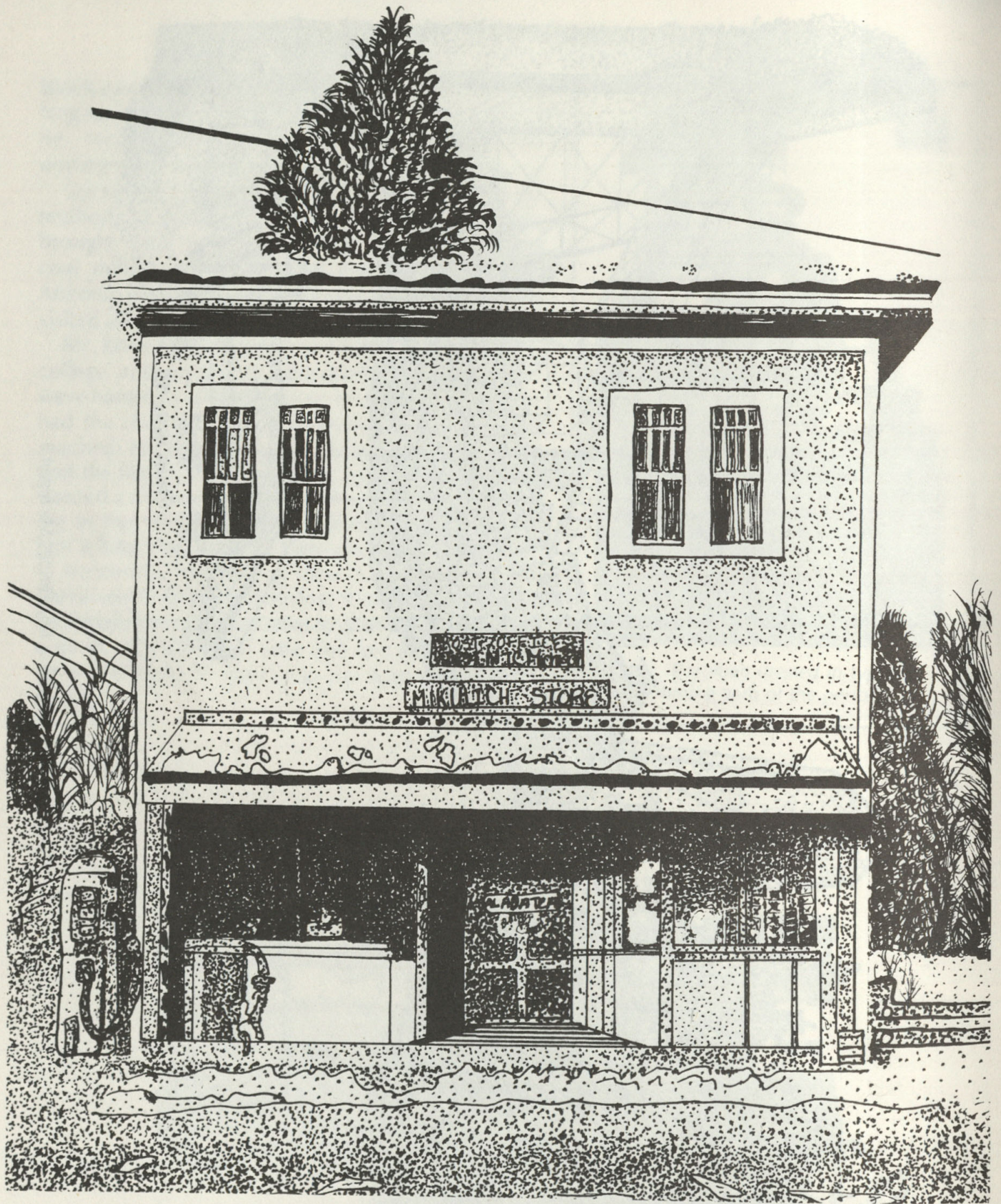


Kurt Penrose

Concentrating Plant, American Mine, Diorite, Michigan.



The Cliffs' Shaft, located in Ishpeming, Michigan.



A Traunik store, very similar to Annala's Market of National Mine. Illustrated by Robin Baird.

POEMS WITH AUDY

A young boy sat in front of Annala's store listening to a man reciting this poem:

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;

The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;

The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see

Was the night on the Marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

by Robert Service

The young boy was Dan Kuisti, the man reciting poetry was Audy Stuen, the town poet.

Recently, I interviewed Dan Kuisti who was born on Christmas day in 1915. He shared with me the kinds of entertainment he enjoyed in his childhood.

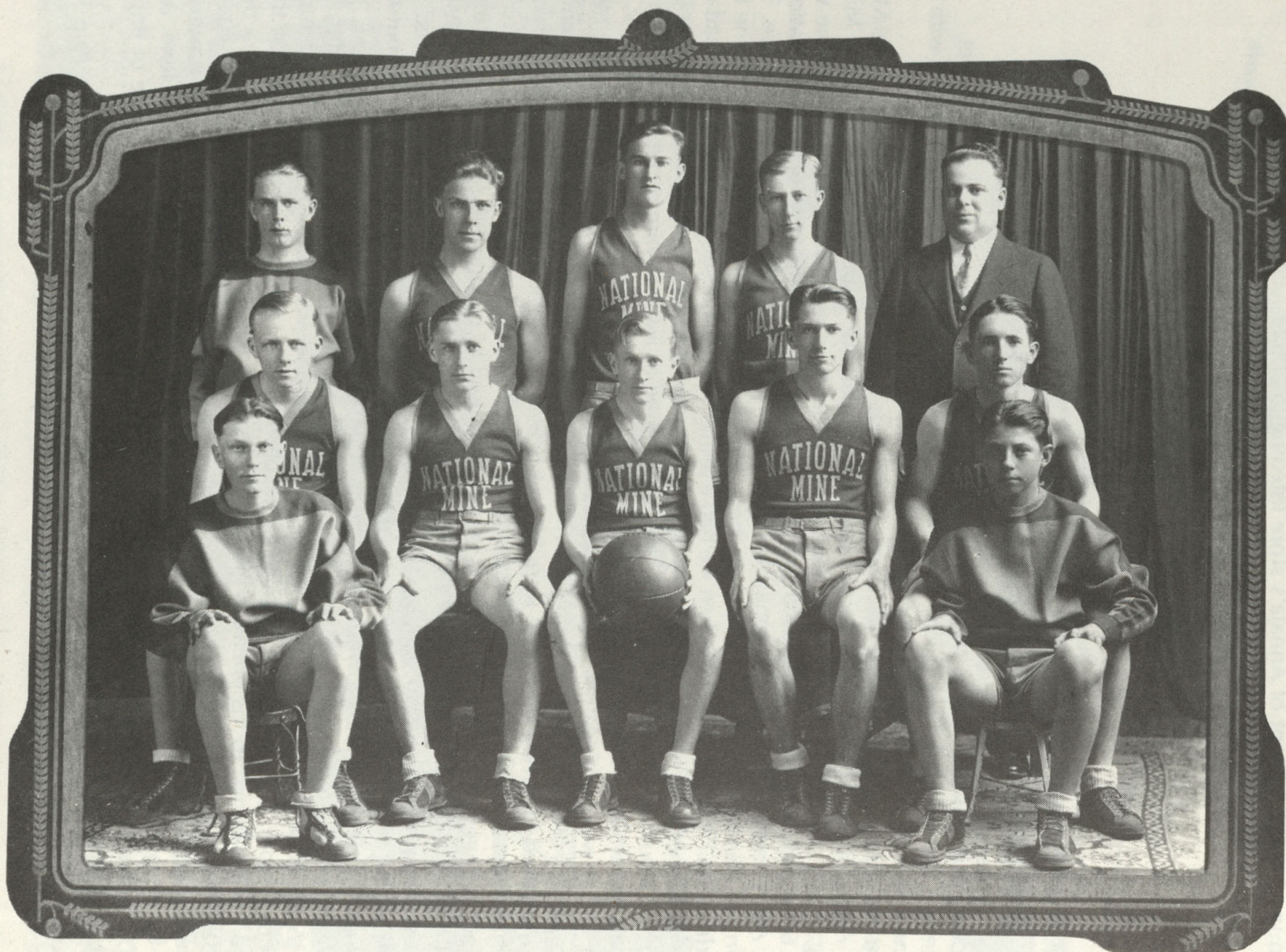
A rather unusual entertainment that Dan enjoyed was hearing recitations by the National Mine poet, Audy Stuen. Audy's birthplace was either Coleraine, Minnesota, or National Mine, Michigan; Mr. Kuisti wasn't sure. Dan was young when he knew Audy. Dan said "Oh he was about 60 or around there." Audy used to live up on the hill past the softball diamond in National Mine. Audy used to recite really long poems about the Yukon written by Robert Service. *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* was only one of them. He would sometimes recite them when he had been drinking. "He was the best when he had a drink," said Dan. Audy probably never had any poems published, nor wrote poems for money, but he sure did like them. When the weather permitted, he would go to the store and all the "guys" used to listen to him recite poetry. As far as Dan can remember, Audy liked kids for he sometimes used to watch them play softball.

When Dan was a young child, he would play all types of games. He was an ordinary kid. Dan's entertainment contained no electronics! When Dan attended the National Mine School, once a week they used to have a man from Republic who owned a movie machine come to the school and show silent movies. The movies were shown at night, and it would cost a nickel to get in. The kids had to kneel on the floor to see the movie. Dan used to play on the softball team at lunch time. The softball team he played on did so well that in 1934 they won the state championship. The team went to Chicago to play in the national tournament. Another sport he enjoyed was basketball. As a freshman Dan was on a basketball team that consisted of ten players, but they only had eight jerseys! He showed me pictures of himself on the team in '31 and '33.

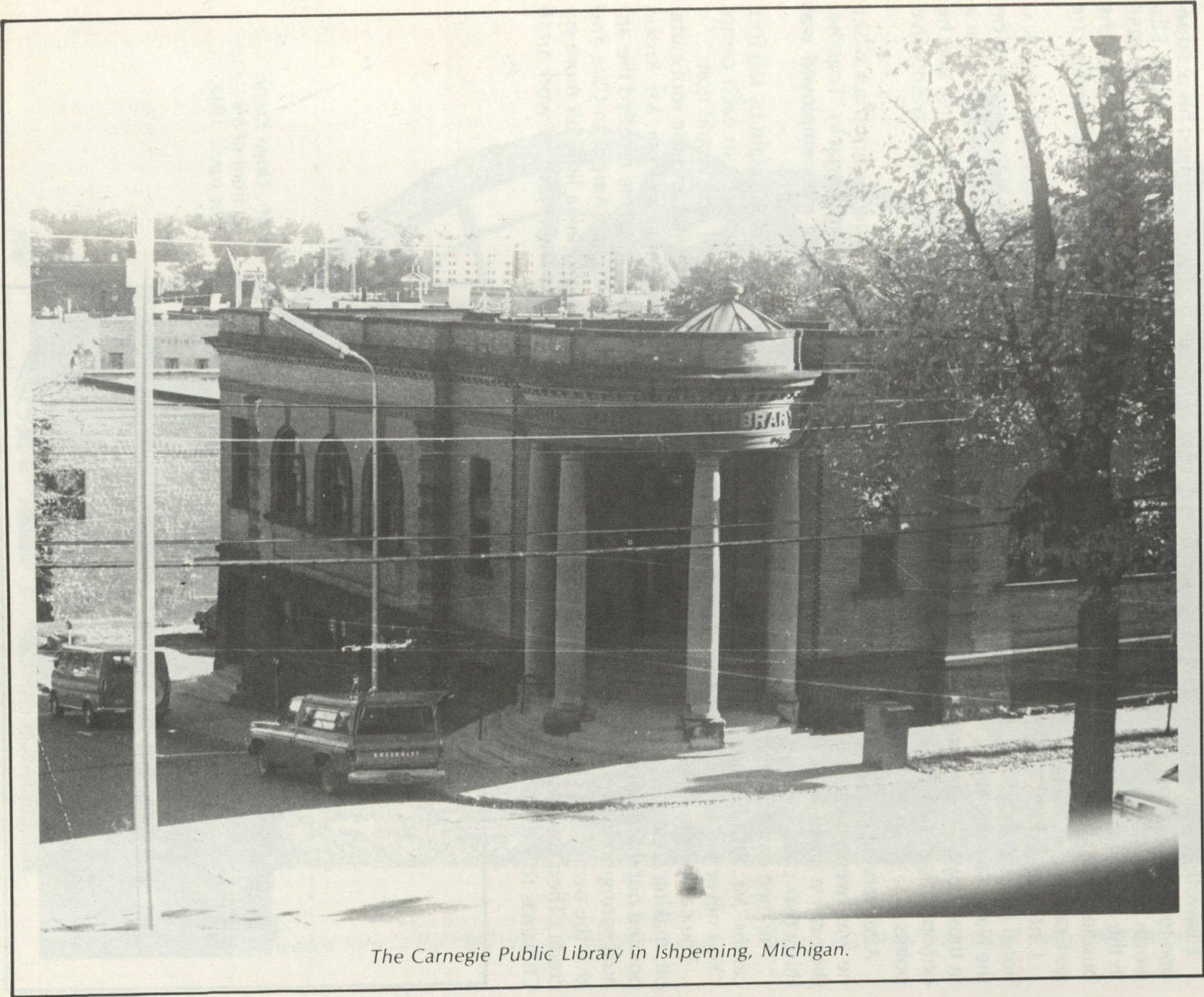
Audy Stuen, the town poet, was responsible for Dan's interest in poetry. This past winter, Dan went to the Ishpeming library and read a book that had poems by Robert Service. He had read the book before, but he wanted to refresh his memory. The poet did have an effect on those children who listened to his poems while growing up. He started their enjoyment of poetry.

Today entertainment is very different from that in the 1930's and 1940's. People didn't have all the electronic marvels, such as TV's, cassette decks, VCR's, and disc players. People's entertainment then was from person to person. Everyone entertained themselves or with a friend. Audy Stuen, the National Mine poet, communicated with and entertained his audience of impressionable children.

Pam Flink



Mr. Kuisti is in the back row, second from right, in this 1932 photograph.



The Carnegie Public Library in Ishpeming, Michigan.

LIKE ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

Ellsworth Kroon had a mining job at the Barnes-Hecker Mine. Luckily, he changed his occupation to logging before he became a victim in the mine disaster which occurred there. Today, Ellsworth Street is named for Ellsworth Kroon, who started clearing land and building houses in 1956 in the subdivision now known as Kroon Plat. Ellsworth Kroon's death in 1968 did not cause the business to come to an end as his only son, Lloyd, continued the business for himself and future generations.

I interviewed Mr. Lloyd Kroon, who was born in Ishpeming in 1926 and graduated from National Mine High School. During high school he played basketball. "Ya, I was high point man on the National Mine team. Ten points — boy, that was a big, big night if you made ten points back in those days." He mentioned that his team could never compete with the kids now. He said he only practiced once a week. The total game scores were usually around twenty or twenty-five points.

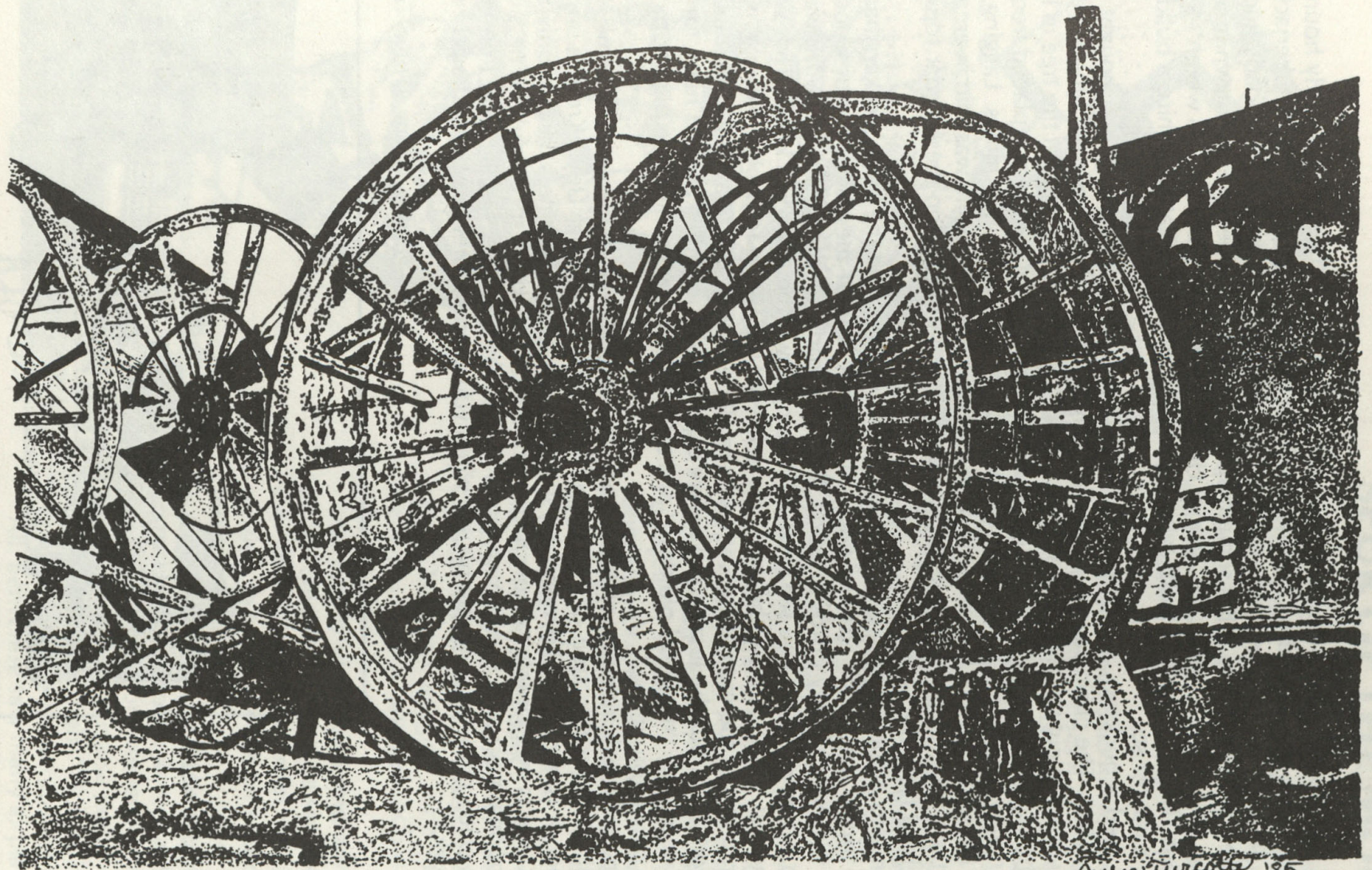
After serving in the Army, Mr. Kroon started logging with his father, buying his first truck when he was twenty years old. As the business expanded, they began hiring lumberjacks. Together they ran a small fleet of logging camps and at one time the number of men employed was thirty-two.

The men employed as lumberjacks lived by themselves in small, homemade eight by ten foot camps. Mr. Kroon made it clear that there was a reason for only one occupant in each camp. "You never put two men in one camp. See, they would always fight and one would quit."

The camps were portable and were held together by eight bolts. The sides and the roof came off, making it easy for the lumberjacks to move from one stand of timber to another. Mr. Kroon pointed out that lumberjacks in years past were different than they are now. He recalled the annual spring break-up in this manner, "A lot of them would go into the old American Cafe and give the owner the check, and they'd drink until it was gone. They'd drink a little bit more on credit. Then the owner would call us up." The lumberjacks would then have to work until Christmas to pay back their debt.



*Mr. Lloyd Kroon
in front of his
first truck, 1947.*



Even the work horses needed help — the “Big Wheels” eased the strain of lifting a log when the tongue was pulled down.

A typical day at the lumber camps would start at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. These early hours of the morning were often illuminated by a spotlight shining from the truck while the lumberjacks loaded the logs. In the summer, the camp residents would always try to finish the loading job early with the hopes of going fishing, "But something would always happen. A breakdown or a flat tire or something, you know," recalls Mr. Kroon. He also pointed out that tractors weren't available to make roads. They made their roads with a grub hoe, and would at times hire a bulldozer to come in for a day or so.

The men used a bucksaw, which is a hand saw, for a long time. Mr. Kroon bought his first chain saw in 1948. The chain saw, supposedly being a one-man saw, weighed fifty-five pounds, but was only used to cut the tree down. The bucksaw or axe was used to cut the tree in lengths. Blades for the bucksaw cost \$1.25, and because of their constant use were replaced frequently.

Mr. Kroon also cut mining timbers for the Negaunee Mine and other mines. Lagging, which was used in the underground mines to keep the drift walls from caving in, was sold in great quantities. Even the tops of the trees were not wasted because deer fed on these cedar tops which were left behind from the lagging.

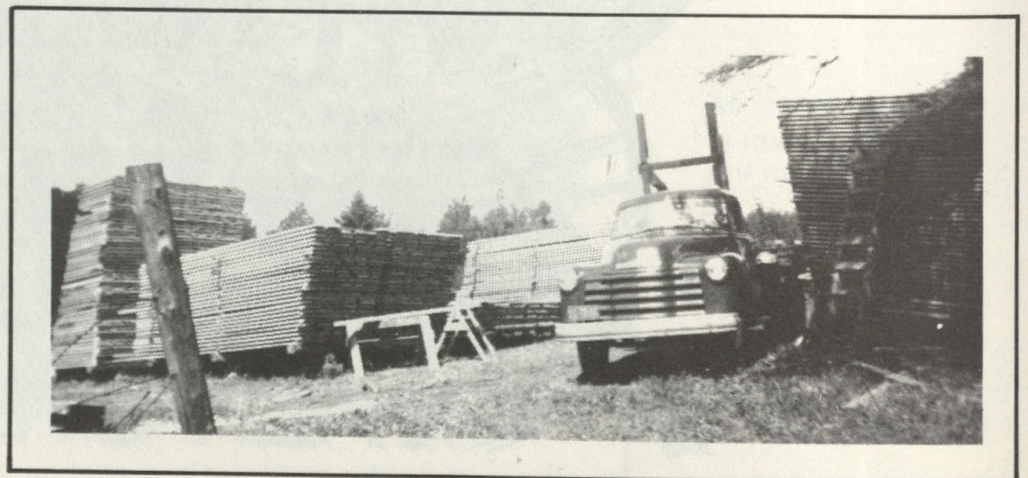
Mr. Kroon also made me realize what slow, hard work he and the other workers had. They made three trips a day to the loading dock. There they loaded the truckloads of wood into a railroad car that held twenty cords of wood. Six truck loads filled one car. His work was more tedious than it is now. "Now you see these folks going down the road, you know. That's one car load and one trip." At that time the train cars delivered the wood to paper mills in Wisconsin.

Mr. Kroon said that the men at the camps were all poor and didn't have much equipment or money to work with, but the lumberjacks were experienced, and they all tried hard. Mr. Kroon said that he does miss "the good old days" and also said they were "like one big happy family. Your whole crew, you know."

The Kroon family will remain well known and be remembered in the years to come for their many contributions to this area of the Upper Peninsula. Looking at Lloyd Kroon's successful logging career, it is hard to believe that he started in the logging business making only \$6.00 a day. Lloyd Kroon is an example of how hard work combined with a successful business can put you in an important place in the community. He states his thoughts simply, "Ya, I don't regret what I did. I enjoy my work, and people say when you gonna retire? I say why should I retire. I enjoy my work."

Julie Turcotte

Kroon Lumber Yard.



SPUR OF THE MOMENT

World War II is often proclaimed as being "a man's war." After speaking with Aili Benvenue I found out that women, although not in combat, were in dangerous places under adverse conditions. Through her, I realized that women did have a place in the history of World War II.

Aili Benvenue had no intentions of being in the service. Like she says, ". . . I went strictly on the spur of the moment." She was picking up two of her girlfriends from the recruiting office in Marquette because they needed a ride back to Ishpeming. She went into the recruiting office to check on what was keeping them. As it turned out, Aili was the first to sign up! She volunteered hoping to see Europe and perhaps get a chance to see her brother who was stationed there.

Aili left San Francisco on November 16, 1944. When she arrived in New Guinea, she found that the Air Force was unprepared to accommodate women. As she says, "It was no place for women." The base hadn't been supplied with any food and for the first two or three days, they had nothing to eat. The Navy had to come and save them from starving.

Clothing was a problem for the women. The Air Force had issued, of all things, winter clothes. Imagine winter clothes in New Guinea! When they dressed, Aili Benvenue says, "You can imagine such sad sacks we were, . . . I had a nineteen inch waist . . . I got a pair of 36's."

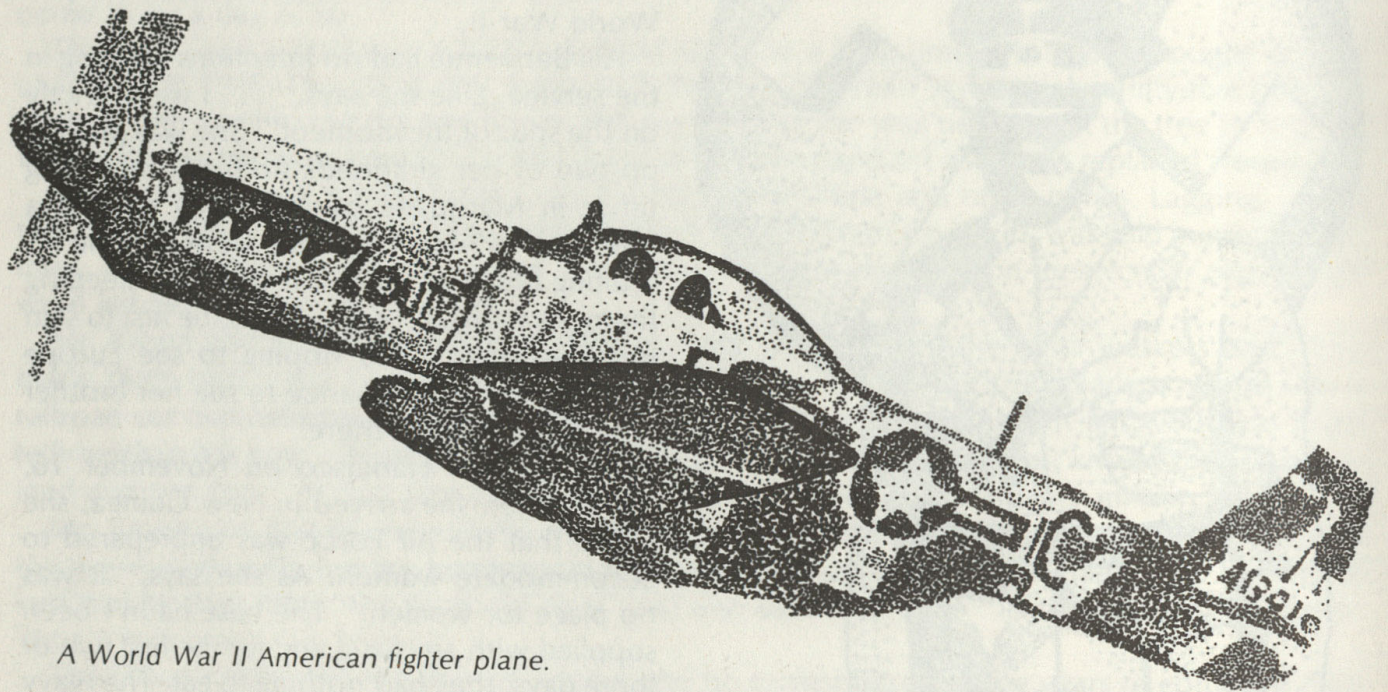
Aili had to wear pants and army boots the whole time she was in the service. However, she and the other women were given permission to wear dresses to church on Easter morning.

On that particular Easter, a radio broadcaster known as Tokyo Rose was heard saying that the only reason women were allowed to wear dresses was because Japan was going to bomb the "lot of them." It was Tokyo Rose's job to undermine the morale of U.S. troops.

Aili Benvenue saw many airplanes that had



Adolph Hitler, one of the leaders of the Axis Powers.



A World War II American fighter plane.

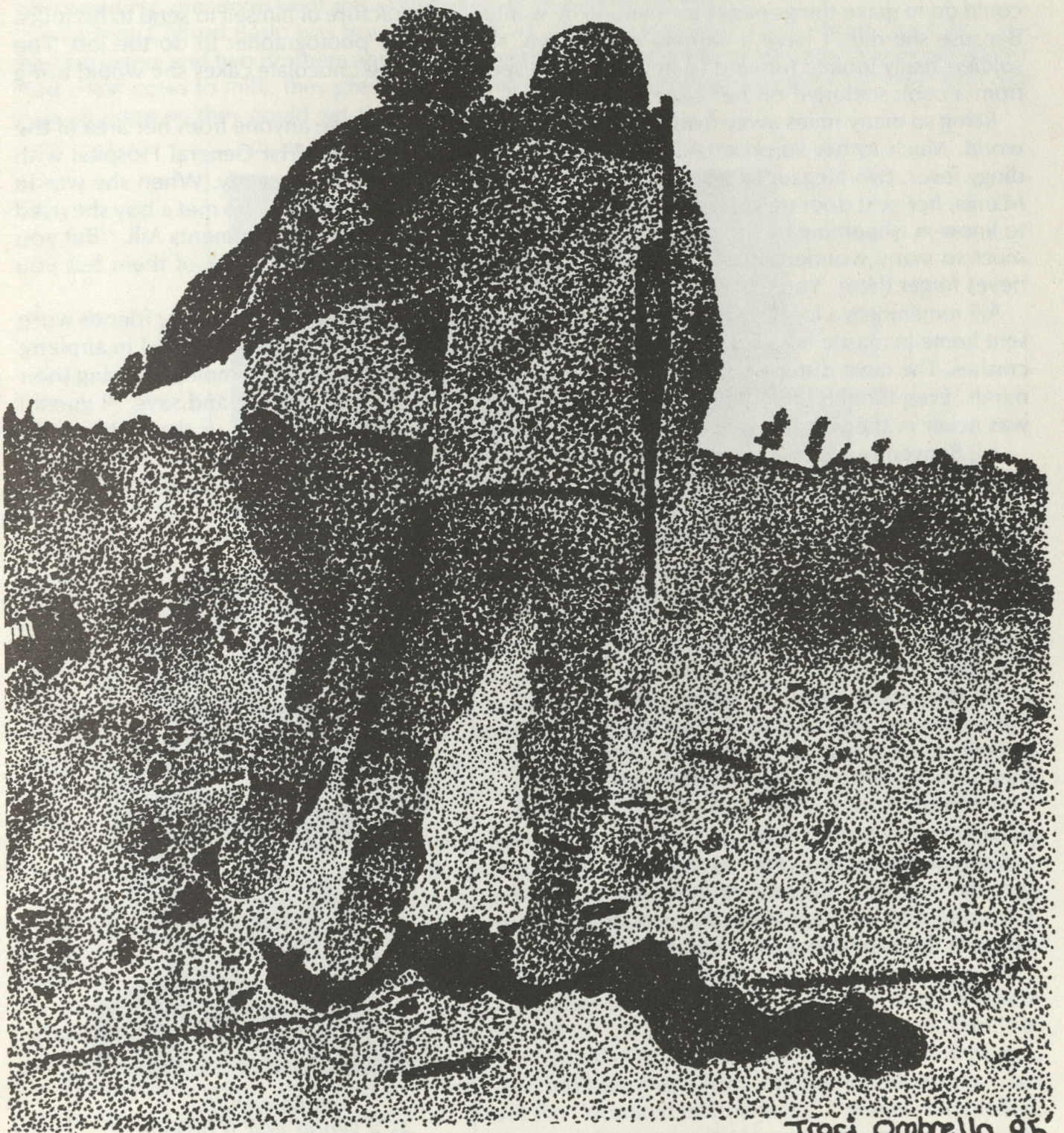
Illustration by Tony Eppert

been flown by kamikaze pilots. These pilots would divebomb their planes right at the target and die with it. "There were a lot of planes there with the 'Sun' on them . . . They were fearful people," Aili recalls.

Aili Benvenue lived in enclosures in both Manila and New Guinea. The enclosures were surrounded by a high fence and were guarded twenty-four hours a day, but still unauthorized persons would get in.

For Aili, even sleeping was an adventure. ". . . You have to learn how to sleep all over again. It's amazing the noise you hear in the jungle," Aili explained with fascination in her voice. "You never heard such racket as the jungles in the nighttime. The birds must be monkeys. I don't know what's out there but the racket is just terrific."

SHARING MEMORIES



Traci Ombrello '85

Aili Benvenue worked as a general clerk and in communications. During her free time she would go and visit the soldiers that had been injured. One day while visiting the hospital, Aili came upon a boy crying because they were going to amputate his arm. She asked him what she could do to make things easier for him. All he wanted was a picture of himself to send to his folks. Because she didn't have a camera of her own, she called a photographer to do the job. The soldiers really looked forward to her visits and especially to the chocolate cakes she would bring from a cook stationed on her base.

Being so many miles away from home, Aili never expected to see anyone from her area of the world. Much to her surprise, Aili remembers while she was in the 51st General Hospital with dingo fever, two Negaunee boys drove miles just to give her a box of candy. When she was in Manila, her next door neighbor from National Mine came to see her. She also met a boy she used to know in Ishpeming by the name of Laly. "Makes for a small world," comments Aili. "But you meet so many wonderful people, so many wonderful friends. You lose track of them but you never forget them. You always remember them."

Aili remembers a lot of terrible things that happened. She recalls that many of her friends were sent home in plastic bags with jungle rot all over them. She saw numerous girls killed in airplane crashes. The most disturbing thing of all was seeing girls going crazy and completely losing their minds. Even though there were many terrible times, Aili looks in retrospect and says, "I guess I was never in the wrong place at the wrong time, but we survived, those of us that got out."

Aili Benvenue received many awards for being in the service. Among these are the Philippine Liberation Campaign Medal, World War II victory medal, 20c service cards, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with one bronze star and a good conduct medal.

Because Aili was stationed in a war zone where the actual fighting was going on, she received a certain number of points. A woman had to have 27 points to get out of the service. Aili was discharged and returned to the United States at the age of 25.

Aili Benvenue had very strong feelings about the justness of World War II. She felt that if the enemy were going to attack and declare war, then our country had every right to defend itself. "It's terrible if they come into your country and do the things you see them do."

Considering all the experiences that she went through, Aili says, "If I was younger, I'd go again. I would certainly never tell any girl not to go, because the experience is priceless."

Katie Finney

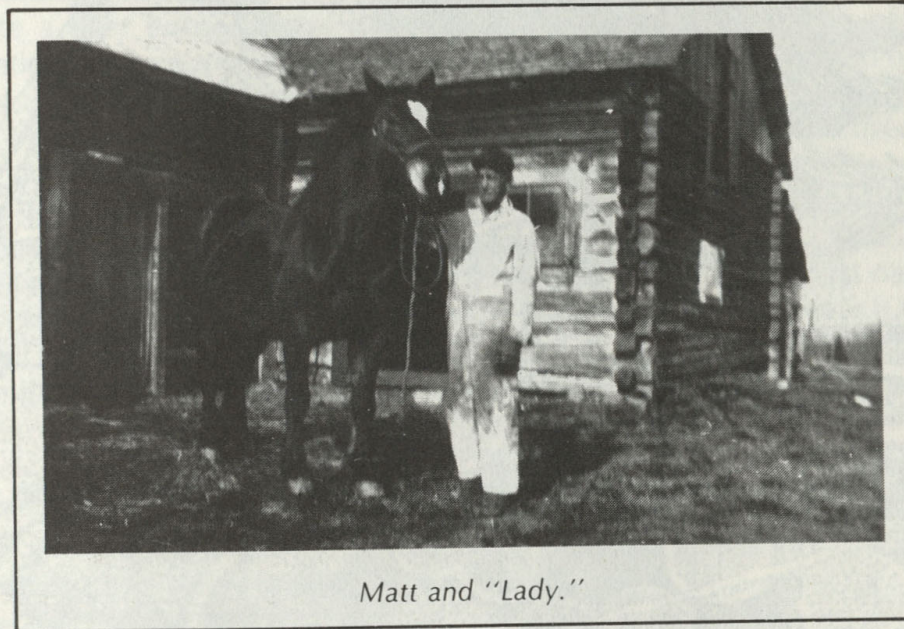


*Aili Benvenue,
as a World War II private.*

SHARING MEMORIES WITH MATT

Matt Baslo began telling me his life story by saying, "I was born on a high hill in section three in Tilden Township." He continued with an exactness unusual in a man his age. His colorful stories and amusing anecdotes kept me entertained all the while we talked.

Matthew Clifford Baslo was born on March 31, 1906, in National Mine, Tilden Township. He had six sisters and two brothers with Matt being the youngest of the family. His father and mother had a few cows to milk, they grew potatoes, raised pigs, and cut firewood to sell. Matt says this was all done so they could get a "loaf of bread."



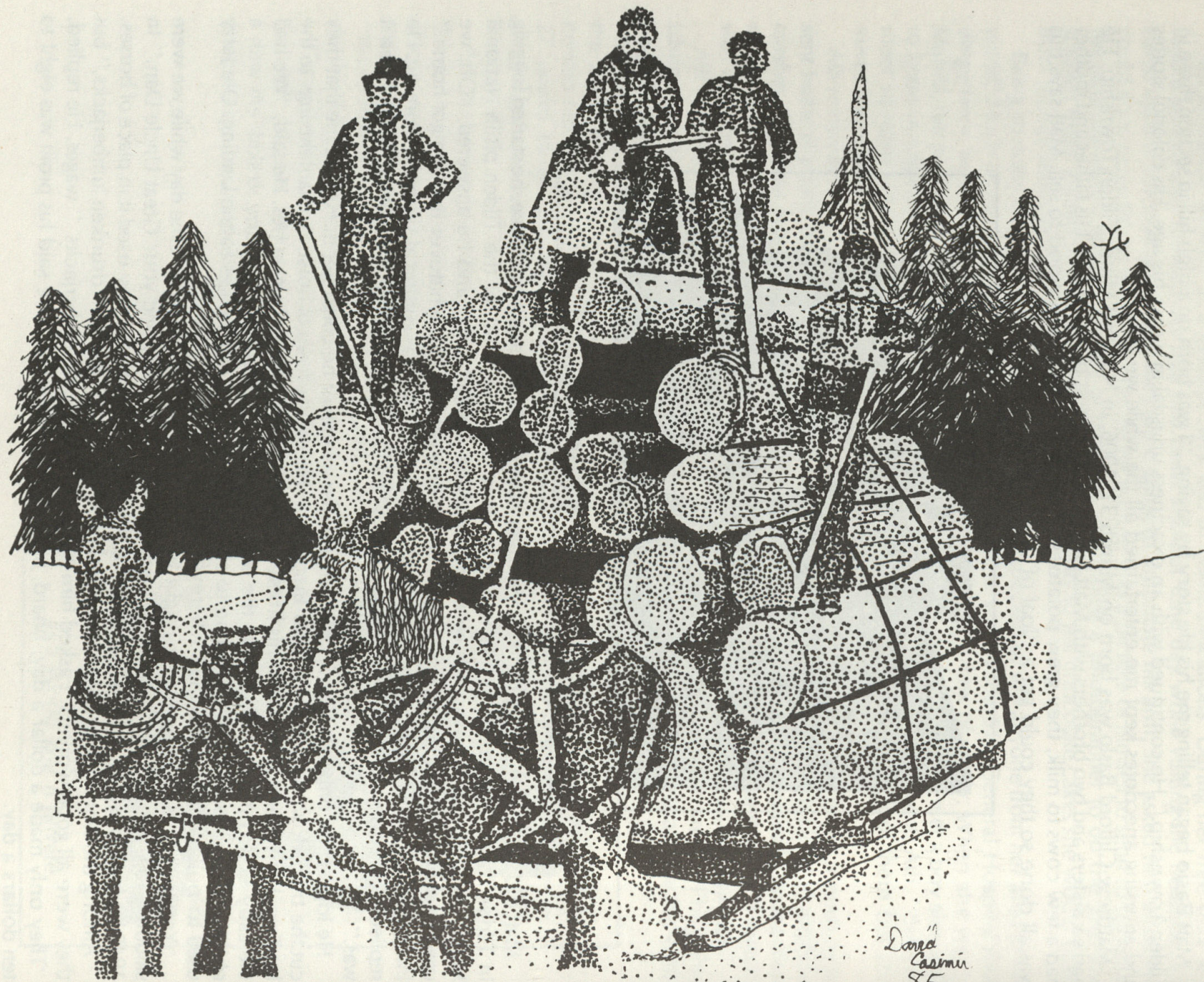
Matt and "Lady."

Matt did quite a bit of logging in his younger days. In 1939 at age thirty-three, he started logging in Tilden Township on section 33 which is about one mile south of the Tilden pit in National Mine. I questioned him about how many hours he worked a day and he answered, "Oh, we used to work from six in the morning till seven or eight at night, whatever time we got home." Puzzled, I asked him how he could see what kind of trees he was cutting at six in the morning. He replied, "We used to have these kitchen matches to light so we could see what kind of tree it was."

He logged for only one reason, to earn a dollar wherever he could get it. He told me that they cut the trees down with a "Finlander Bucksaw." He used a team of horses to haul the logs to the landing. I questioned him about his horses and if he remembered their names. He said, "We had ole Lady and Tom, the top team in the township, and then we had ole Jerry to skid 'em with a chain and a whipple tree." They had to skid the logs about three miles to the landing. Ole Jerry used to pull 'em down the bluff wherever they could use the team.

"Your Great Uncle Dan was my right hand teacher driving old Jerry. One day while we were skidding logs going down a hill, the sleigh passed up ole Jerry and your Great Uncle Dan." In 1945 he bought a tractor for \$150 from the Northwoods Club and they used it in place of horses.

Among the workers were Matt's nephews and brothers and a few "drunken lumberjacks," but they were all good workers. I asked him about the "drunken lumberjacks' " wages. He replied, "They only made a dollar a day, board, venison, and potatoes." He said his profit was eight to ten dollars a day.



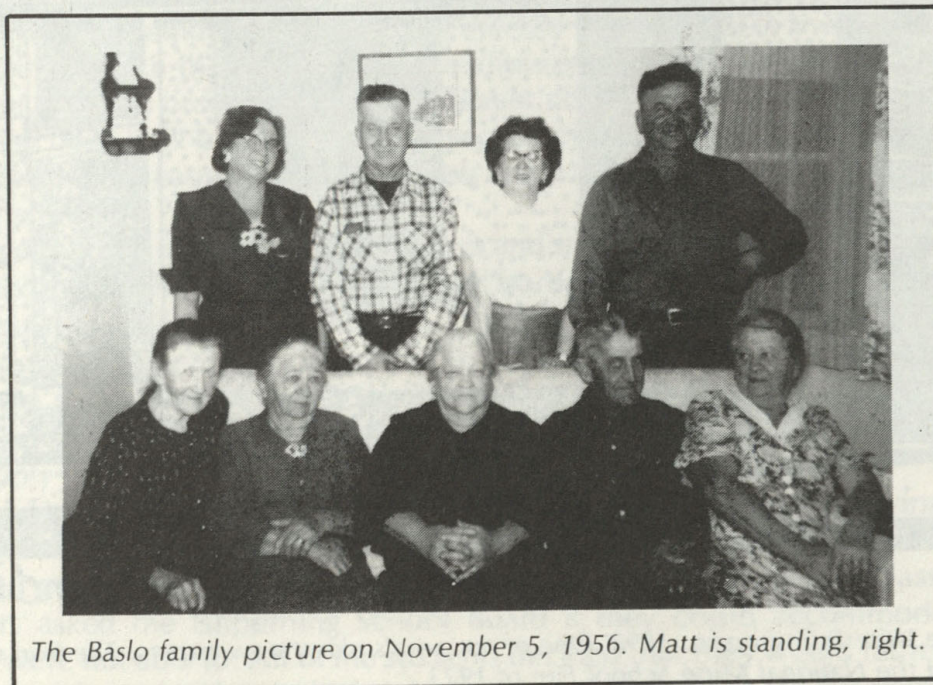
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After he quit the pulp business, he had a sawmill business for a few years. Matt cut lumber for himself and did custom sawing. He also sold lumber to local customers who were building houses and garages. He sold lumber for as low as \$18 per thousand board feet. Joe Warshawsky was a good customer of Matt's while he was building a scrap iron business. The sawmill was run by a gas motor. It had forty-eight to fifty-inch blades! While in the sawmill business, most of the time Matt worked ten to twelve hours a day. The trees he used for lumber were white pine, nor-way pine, cedar and a little bit of hardwood. The sawmill business was a lot of hard work, but it put his "loaf of bread" on his table.

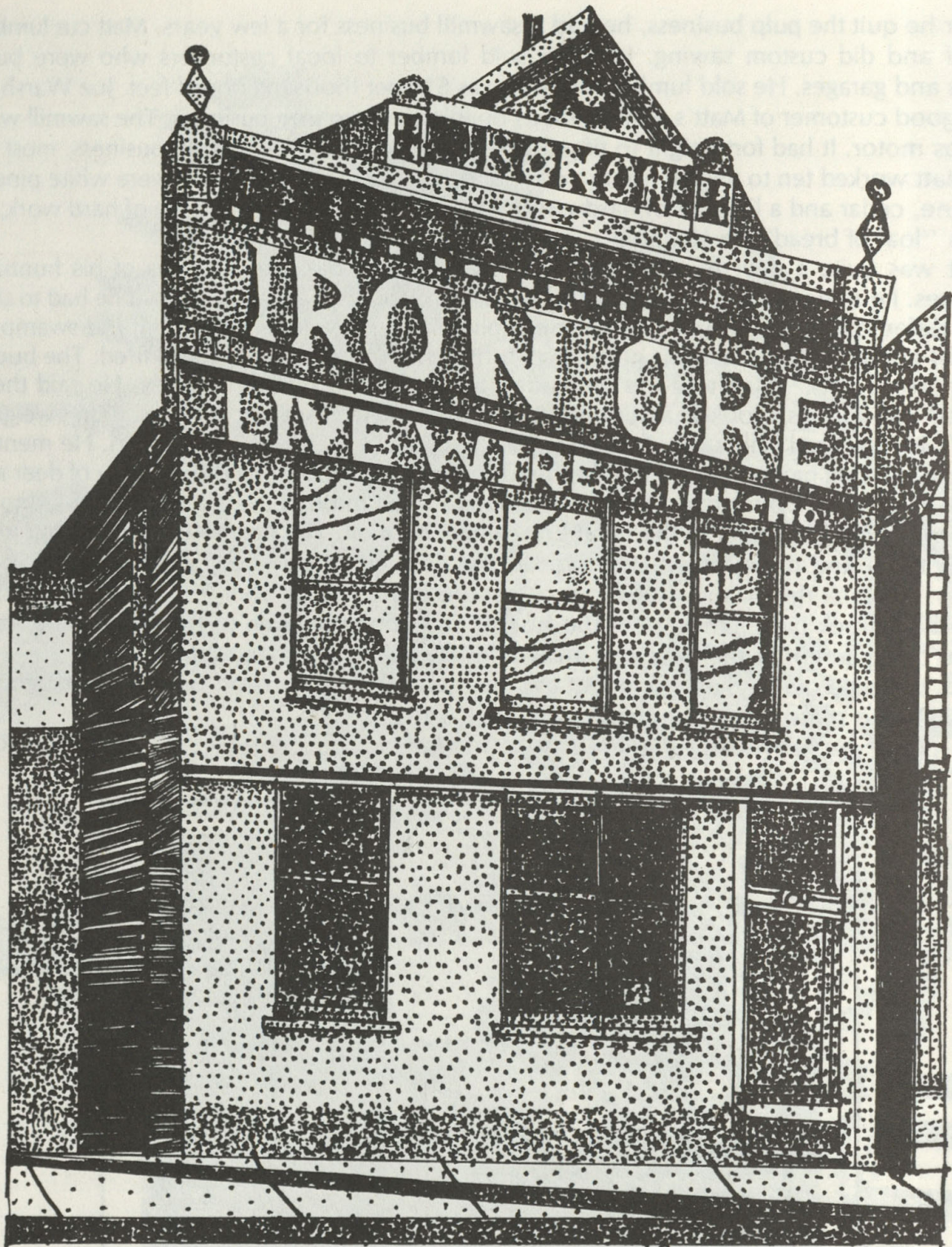
Matt was quite a deer hunter in his day, and he told me a few stories of his hunting experiences. I questioned him about a picture of a big buck on the wall. Matt said he had to shoot it in self defense. I asked why, to which he replied, "He was coming through the swamp and I figured I couldn't run as fast as a ghost, so I turned the gun on the deer and fired. The buck had twenty-four points." Matt told me he traded the rack for a pint of whiskey. He said the deer weighed 360 pounds. I looked at him skeptically and asked, "Are you sure you didn't weigh your horse?" He "altered" his story, telling me the deer really weighed 280 pounds. He mentioned that he had a dog named Cubby that helped him deer hunt. Once on the first day of deer season Matt saw a ten point buck over the hill. He found three "moldy bullets" which he used to shoot the animal. He hit the deer in the head knocking a horn off. The deer fell down so Matt took his pick-up truck and drove down. He figured the deer could be alive, so he chained it to the bumper. He took the ax and was about to cut the deer's throat when the deer jumped up and dragged the truck back almost over the hump. Ole Cubby held on to the deer's hind legs and wouldn't let him go, or the deer and all would have been down the hill.

Well, the good old days are gone, but the memories remain. I'm glad we have nice people like Matt willing to share them with us. Thank you, Matt!

Nick Roberts



The Baslo family picture on November 5, 1956. Matt is standing, right.



Elliendundin

The Iron Ore, Live Wire Printshop, c. 1898. One of our area's oldest newspapers, The Iron Ore, Ishpeming, probably recorded the National Mine School Fire of 1923.

EYEWITNESS



Mrs. Viola Magnuson

On November 30, 1923, the sky of National Mine was glowing orange. Clouds of smoke were everywhere. The school was on fire! I was fortunate to have interviewed an eyewitness, my Great-Aunt Viola Magnuson.

Mrs. Magnuson was born on October 11, 1909, in Ishpeming, Michigan, in the Badger Hill location. When she was about one year old her folks moved to National Mine where she lived until she was about twenty-two years old. Mrs. Magnuson attended the National Mine School from kindergarten through graduation. She kept her link to National Mine by beginning her teaching at National Mine in 1929, where she continued teaching until she retired in 1973.

When I asked if she were in school the day of the fire she replied, "Yes, November 30, 1923, was the Friday after Thanksgiving Day. The school was in session that day.

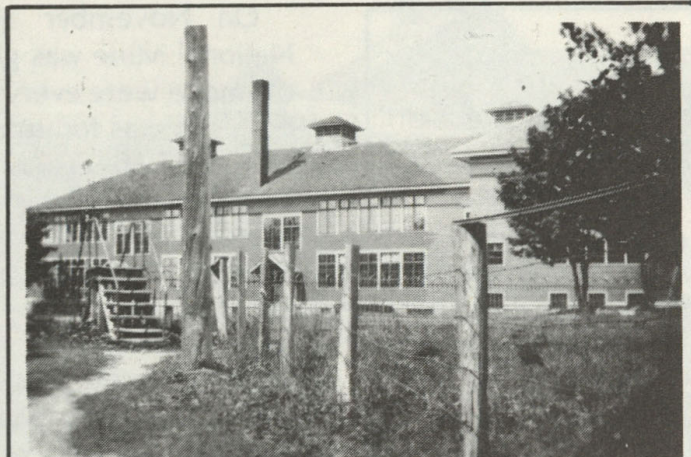
Many students resented the fact that we didn't have Friday as a holiday so many students went on strike that day and didn't attend school. That was the first and last strike to my knowledge ever held by the students of National Mine."

The building that burned was a wooden framed structure occupying the site of the present school. The school housed both the elementary and high school students of Tilden Township. Mrs. Magnuson was in the ninth grade, having entered high school in the fall of 1923. She was becoming acquainted with the new gym and auditorium that had just been completed for the 1923 school year. The fire broke out in the basement destroying the new building as well as the old. Fire walls had been built between the new section of the building and the old. Supposedly, if one section of the school caught on fire the new section would be saved, but obviously the fire walls were ineffective.

I was curious about the reaction of the teachers and students to the fire. When questioned she replied, "We were naturally sad when the school burned to the ground and we felt a great loss because the next day we had no place to go." Luckily no one was injured.

The Ishpeming Fire Department responded to the fire with tank trucks because there was no city water system in National Mine at the time. The fire department, which spent the night fighting the blaze, couldn't save the school. The ruins smoldered for many days after, due to the winter coal supply which was stored at the site.

When I asked Mrs. Magnuson if she had to miss school she responded by saying, "Oh we sure did. A meeting of the high school students, faculty, school board and other members of the community was held at the Township Hall to propose means for continuing our classes. The school board members asked the Ishpeming School Board if they could accommodate any of the students. They were not able to. All of the students decided that they would rather attend school at National Mine. After a week in which new books and necessary articles were obtained, the



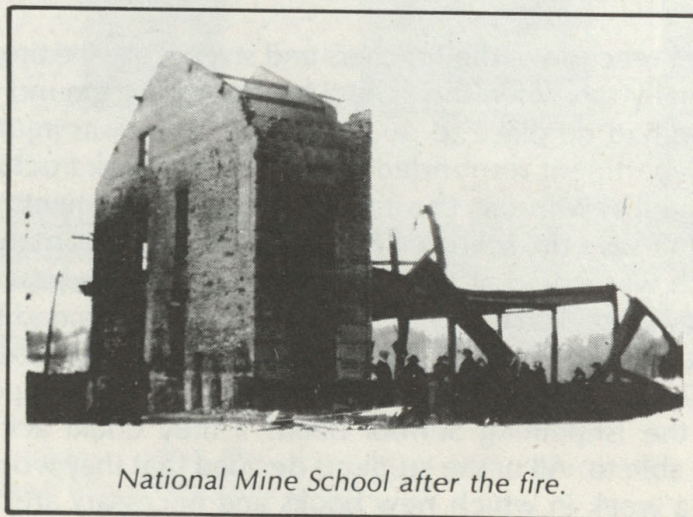
The old National Mine School before the fire.

grade and high school moved into various buildings and churches in the village of National Mine." She also said, "The grades were housed in the Norwegian Lutheran Church and the Tilden Township Hall. The Swedish Lutheran Church at the top of Brooks's Hill was the assembly room of the high school. Luckily in that area stood several mining buildings which also served as classrooms. In the back of the church was Brooks's house where they had a home economics department. In the living room of that house English and history classes were held."

A new school had to be built from the bottom up. It was made of brick which would be more fire resistant. April, 1925, the students moved into the new school. Mrs. Magnuson was able to finish the last four weeks of her sophomore year in the new building. The new school was dedicated on June 4, 1925. As Mrs. Magnuson said, "We were proud of our school."

June 4, 1985, my school will be sixty years old. I am grateful that my great-aunt was able to share the history of its beginning with me. I have come to appreciate the work and effort of all those people who have helped to make this a great school.

Bradley Mason



National Mine School after the fire.

CHERISHED MEMORIES

Nestled among apple trees and an overgrown field is the house where my grandma was born and now lives. Helen Huotari was born March 20, 1907, which makes her 78 years old. Her father, being a farmer, didn't earn a large income. She recalls that they didn't get much for Christmas. "Maybe one little thing like a doll or something. Candy maybe, but once a year."

Telling me about her school years gave us both reason to laugh. She couldn't recall if she went to kindergarten, but she knows she went eight grades. She went to first, sixth and seventh grades in District 3, also known as a camp school. She went to second, third, fourth and eighth grades in District 2. She recalled that her first grade teacher was Agnes Marrow. Her second, third and fourth grade teachers were Lempi Anderson and Ruth Peterson, while her fifth grade teacher was Alice Record. Her sixth grade teacher was Gladys Aronson. Seventh grade was taught by Lillian Theriault and the eighth grade teacher was Anna Hedetniemi.

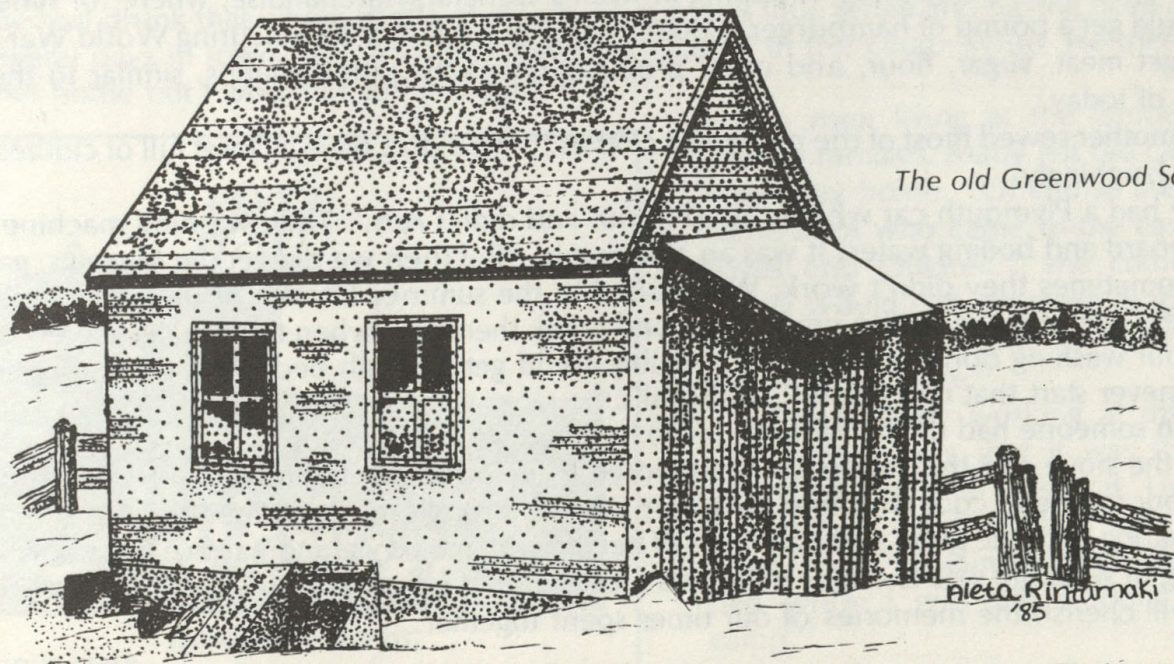
She recalled an amusing incident, "In the spring-time farmers bought pigs to have meat in the fall. There was a family that lived right by the school. In the spring they had maybe one or two little pigs and it was nice weather, so, somehow or another they got loose. One pig came in the school house. The teacher got so scared she jumped on the desk."

She also related, "We tramped knee-high in snow." Walking was necessary because there were no busses to come and get them. They also carried their lunches with them.

There were only a few students in each class so there were only a few rows of desks. "One of the boys, I think he was a grade ahead of me, the teacher would scold him because he was so pokey with getting his lesson done. He would say, 'I'm slow but sure'," she remembers.

They went to Diorite for their final exams, which she claimed was a real treat. "We were scared though," she relates.

She recalled that she didn't have a regular job, but once in a while she would babysit if a family went somewhere. During free hours away from chores or school they went skiing or skating in the winter and swimming in the summer. She remembers, "We didn't have bathing suits so we had to wear our dresses. We walked to Fish Lake and sometimes took lunch along. We had a



The old Greenwood School.



Left to right: Helen Ulvinen, Viana Niskala, Fannie Finne.

good time." On rainy days they played games or did their chores. "We had housework chores, too, so wash days we had to scrub. We had to get up in the morning and wash by washboard before we went to school."

She never traveled far away from home when she was young. "Only as far as Ishpeming, that's all." She went to Ishpeming when she needed a dentist or doctor but that was very rare. Her dentist then was Dr. Jarvis with Dr. Sivula in later years.

She was married to Mr. Toivo Huotari on November 9, 1929, when she was 22. Her husband worked in the mine and grew and sold Christmas trees. He also worked on the WPA, during the Depression. They lived in Ishpeming where two of their daughters were born. They then moved back to Humboldt where the rest of their children were born.

She did most of her grocery shopping at Ryan's General Merchandise, where for nine cents you could get a pound of hamburger, a dozen eggs, or a quart of milk. During World War II they could get meat, sugar, flour, and other products only with ration stamps, similar to the food stamps of today.

Her mother sewed most of the children's clothes. "We didn't have a closet full of clothes," she related laughingly.

They had a Plymouth car which "used to run and didn't run." Their washing machine was a scrub-board and boiling water. It was an all-day job. "But then we did get the Maytags, gasoline ones, sometimes they didn't work. We washed in the summer kitchen or the shed which was very, very cold. So, we had to crank them and crank them and when they finally started we had to get our washing done as fast as we possibly could get through because if they stopped they would never start that day again," she recalls.

When someone had the flu, a tar pot with holes punched in the top was placed on the hottest part of the stove and the vapors were supposed to help the flu. For fever the treatment was to keep your forehead cool with wet towels or rags. She recalled, "It seemed to help some."

By sharing both the good and bad times of her life with me, my grandma gave me a new understanding of what life was like when she was growing up. I found everything she said interesting, and I will cherish the memories of our times spent together.

Aleta Rintamaki

A LOST ERA

Sitting in Mrs. Kempainen's kitchen, one can't help but notice the clever carpentry by her late husband, Uno. Mrs. Kempainen, Vi as I call her, is a lady short in stature but makes up for it in the bigness of her heart.

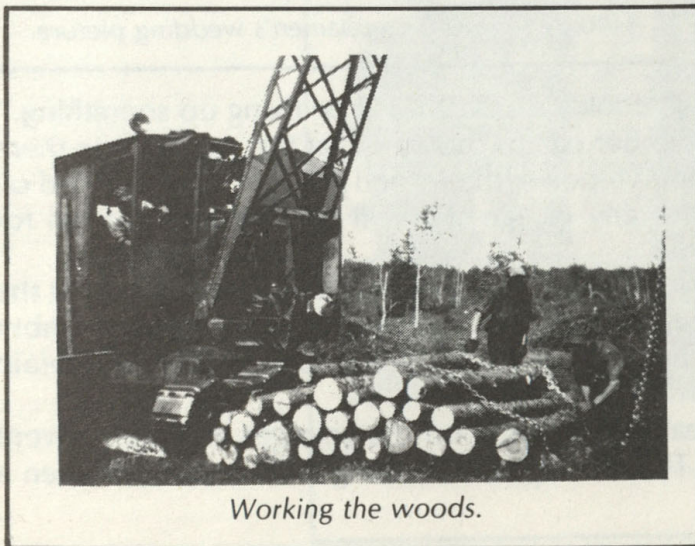
My uneasiness subsides as she smiles and asks me to sit down. I can tell she doesn't like the tape recorder, but as I explain that it is absolutely necessary, she relaxes a little and begins to tell me about herself.

"I was born May 9, 1912, at North Lake. I first attended kindergarten at the North Lake School but then my father, who was a miner, retired because of illness and we moved out to the farm at Black River."

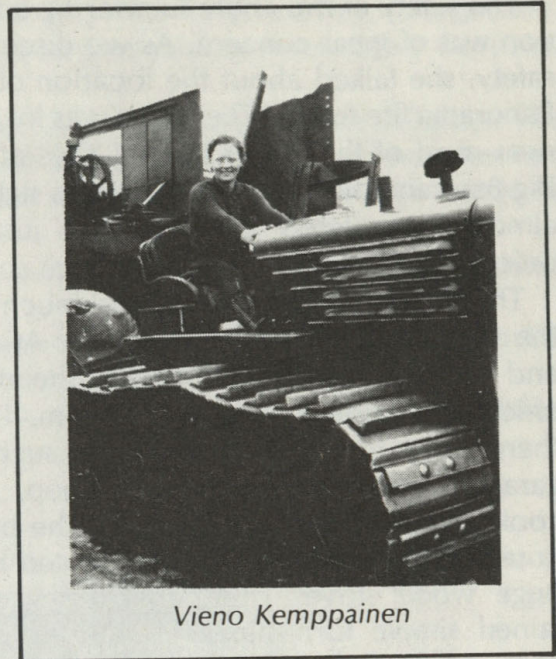
The farm school which Vi attended was a little one-room school house in which all the grades were taught together. Vi was a very avid learner and completed the eighth grade in the farm school, before going on to high school in Republic. Her classes in high school consisted of the "commercial course," which she defined as bookkeeping, shorthand, and "that sort of stuff."

Vi started working for Makela Forest Products in May of 1939 at the camp in Big Bay. When asked what her duties were at the lumber camp, she replied, "I took care of the office, the bookkeeping, figuring out the men's salaries, and pumping gas," she added, chuckling.

When I asked Vi if alcoholic beverages were sold in the camp her reply was, "Oh, no! It was not permitted." She recalled the night a younger lad came in from town; he was drunk. When he arrived at the camp he couldn't find any more liquor so he went to the store to buy a bottle of cough syrup. Vi sold it to him because he had been complaining of a cold. A little while later, he came back for another bottle, but Vi saw that he was drunker than before. "What he had done, was he had drunk that whole bottle of cough syrup in this little while and having been drinking for several days in town, well he didn't need the alcohol in the cough syrup. He tried to buy another bottle but I wouldn't sell it to him."



Working the woods.



Vieno Kempainen

The men living at the lumber camp had no families. Many felt the camp was their only home. "Of course there were some men who came to the camp with wives and children," she commented. "They would eat and sleep in their own homes and only work for the camp instead of live there."

Vi was happy working at the camp. One reason was that it was the place where she met her husband, Uno. "He was driving truck while I was working there," she explained. "We were married while I was still working for the camp."

The safety of the entire lumbering operation was of great concern. As we discussed safety, she talked about the location of the Panorama fire tower. The tower was located near most of the major cutting sites at the Big Bay camp. If a fire started, it was sighted almost immediately and put out just as quickly.

The camp in Big Bay was set up much like the other camps around the area. At one end of the camp were located the main offices with a store adjacent to them. Then there were the various buildings such as garages, stables, blacksmith's shop, the cook's shack, and the mess hall. The bunk houses were massive buildings heated by a huge wood stove. The bunkhouses contained simple furnishings. It had just the bare necessities: double decked bunks, some chairs, a table or two, and a clothesline. Facilities for washing were provided at the camp too. There was a big building called the washroom where there was always soap and hot water. Of course, there was a sauna; they had to have that!

Many people picture a lumberjack as a big, burly man who usually eats a lot. Vi defined the food as "heavy lumberjack meals." The food was high in calories with most meals consisting of meat, potatoes, and vegetables. All of the baked goods were made right at the camp and there was always a hot pot of coffee or tea brewing. As Vi put it, "It seems like every time I ran into the cook's shack, they'd be fixing up something."

Electricity has not always been available at lumber camps, however, at the time Vi was there electricity was being used. The camps had their own power plants and the lights were turned off during certain times if they weren't needed for any garage work. If lighting was needed for activities, kerosene lamps were used.

Illness wasn't a big problem at the camp. The men had colds but medications were sold at the store. Vi's only recollection of a serious illness was during an unseasonably hot day in September of either 1939 or 40. Three or four men suffered from sunstroke and one was slightly brain damaged so he could never speak after that.

Weekends in the camp were never a big deal. During time off the younger men either went home or went into town to enjoy themselves. The work days were long and sometimes when a man got time off he just wanted to rest.



Uno and Vieno Kemppainen's wedding picture.

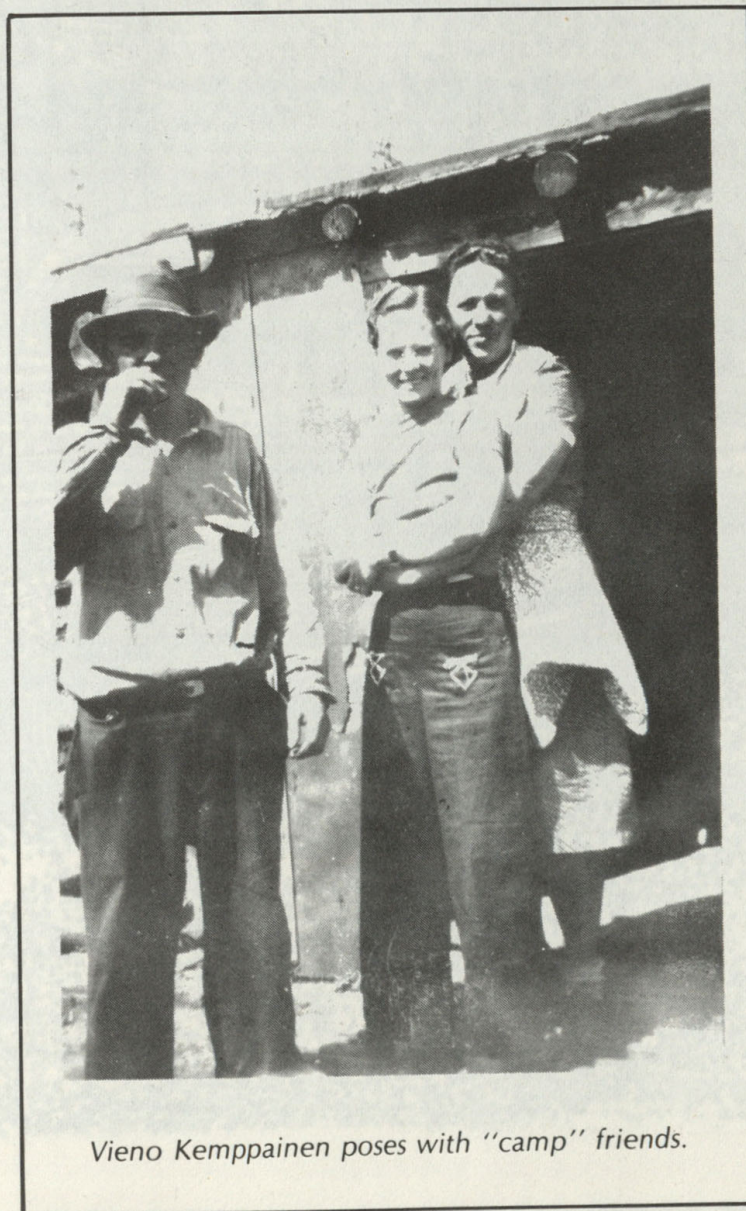
Vi left the lumber camp soon after she was married to work in the Railo building in Negaunee. At this time Mr. Makela no longer owned any camps, but was a dealer between other firms and the paper mills.

After Mr. Makela's sudden death, the company was left to his two sons and one daughter. The youngest son, Unto, took over and ran the company much like his dad had done. The other two siblings did not live in the area and were more or less silent partners. The name of their company became Makela Forest Products Incorporated.

Mrs. Vieno Kemppainen worked with the Makela family for thirty-nine years, and in those years she has witnessed many changes in lumbering.

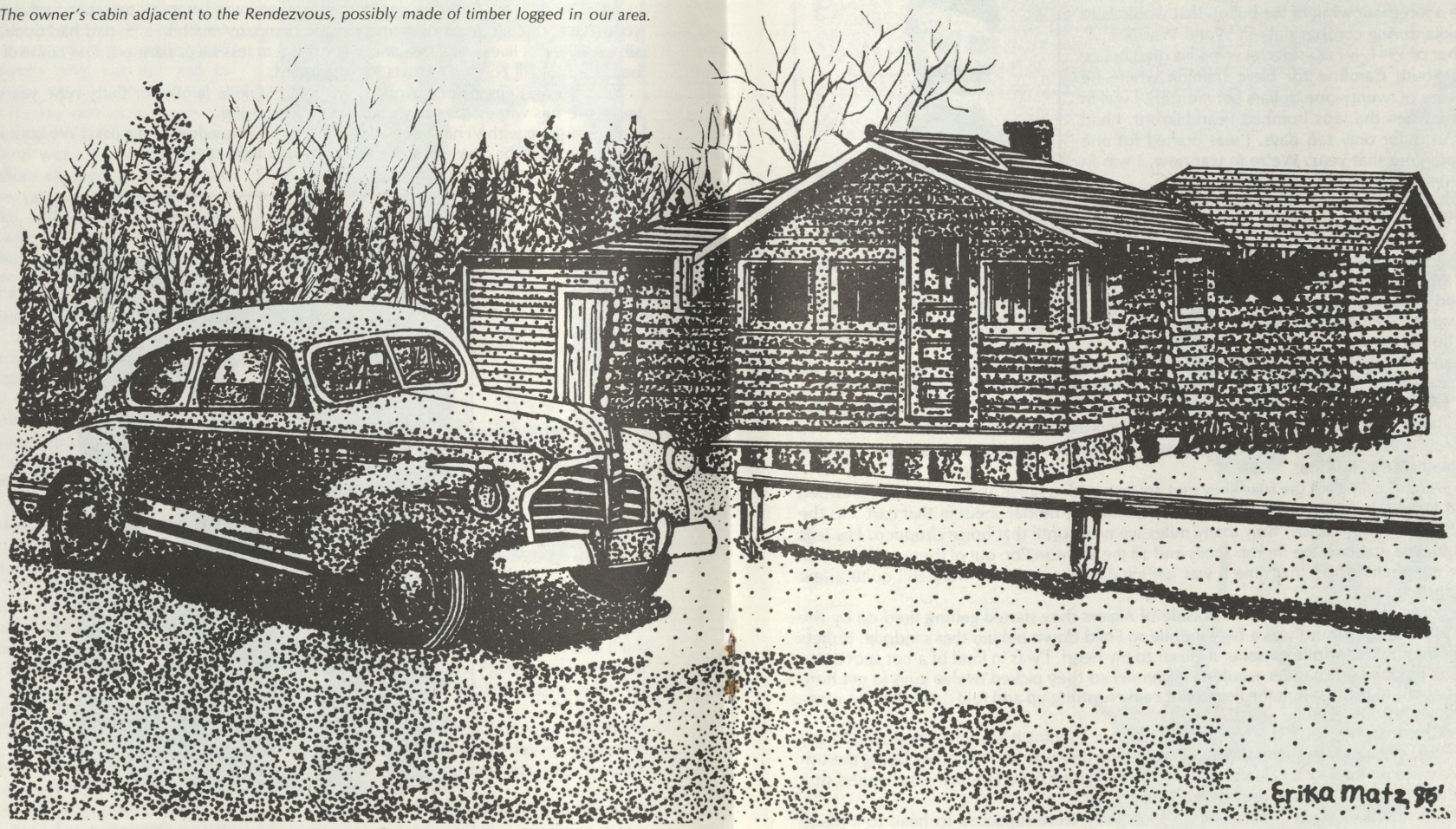
Reminiscing with Vi has been a look through the window of the past. We both look forward to the future, but for now we share the common light of the present.

Kelly Kindstrand



Vieno Kemppainen poses with "camp" friends.

The owner's cabin adjacent to the Rendezvous, possibly made of timber logged in our area.



Erika Matz '95'

BRUSHES WITH DEATH

Henry Kiiskila was born in 1914. While still lying in a crib he had parts of the ceiling land on him due to explosion of the Hercules Powder Plant. Maybe those pieces of "flying ceiling" were a foreshadowing of the bullets that would land near Mr. Kiiskila during combat duty in World War II.

In November of 1941, Mr. Kiiskila received his draft notice and went to South Carolina for basic training where he received the sum of twenty-one dollars per month. "I was in South Carolina when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. I had been in the Army for only ten days. I was drafted for one year, well there goes that year. We're in war now, I was in there for four years," recalled Mr. Kiiskila.

After basic training he was shipped to Ireland and his pay increased to fifty dollars a month. "In Ireland we were running back and forth across the bogs. It's a nice looking country, looks green from out on the Irish Sea, but when you start walking around you're up to your knees in mud."

From Ireland he was shipped to Scotland. His unit was taking commando training with the British. They were running up and down the mountains in Scotland. "Scotland isn't nothing but mountains!" he exclaimed.

From Scotland Mr. Kiiskila was loaded onto a British cattle boat and went out to the North Atlantic. After sailing for 28 days, they went through the Strait of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean Sea. "One night in the dark, I think it was about 2:00 a.m., we got into small boats and they told us to head for shore. They were supposed to land us thirteen miles from Algiers but we landed twenty-six miles away and we were supposed to have this town of Algiers surrounded by daylight," explained Mr. Kiiskila.

While they were traveling up the road they met an Arab with a horse and a cart. "We grabbed that horse and kicked that Arab off the cart and loaded all the mortar shells in that cart. Up the road we went again, I don't know how many miles we went until that horse dropped. His legs gave out on him. We grabbed the mortar shells and all the ammunition out of there and we took off again," he commented. By that time it was getting daylight and they were still quite a few miles away from Algiers.

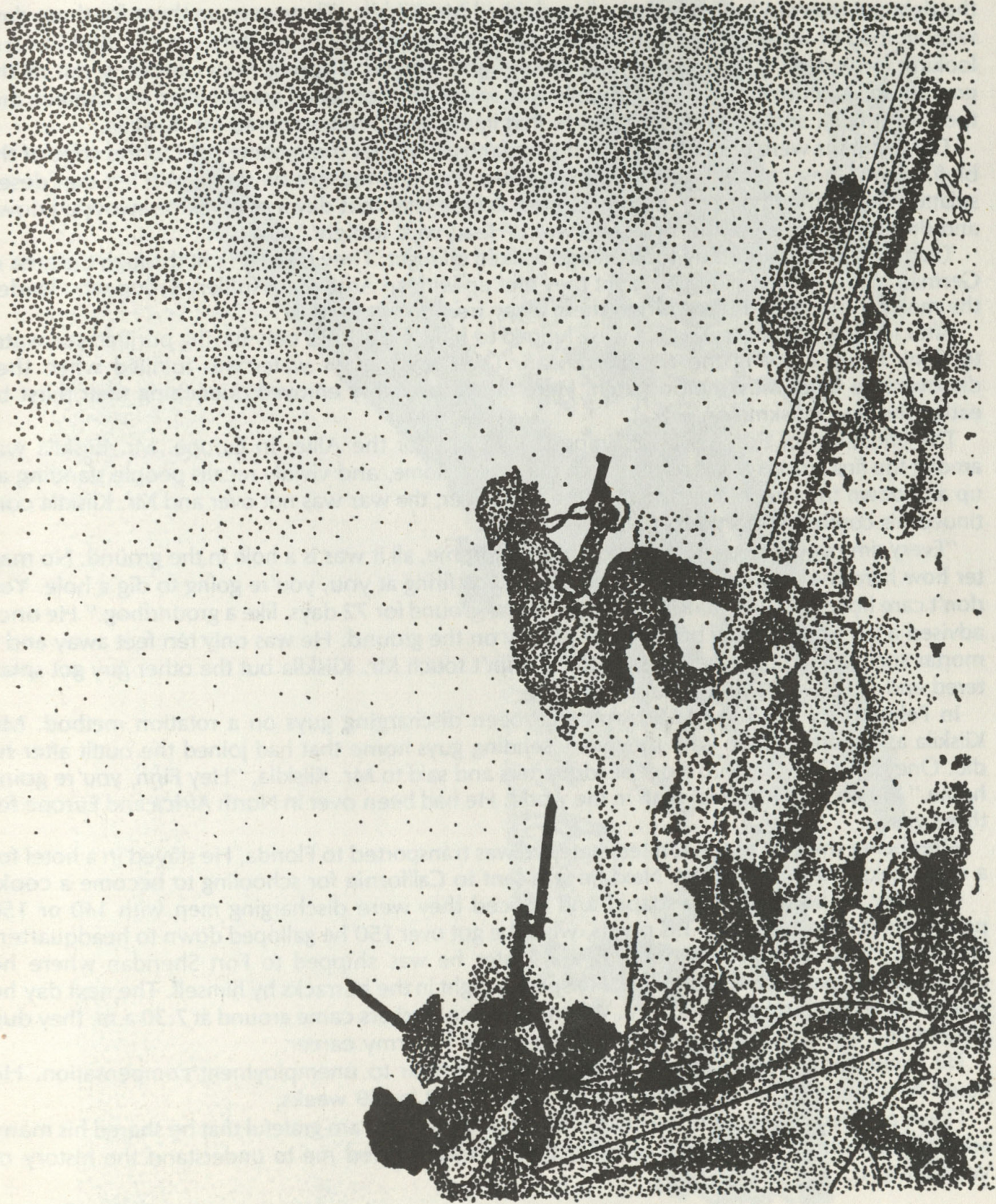
When they got to a small town on the backside of Algiers they started getting fired on by the French. Mr. Kiiskila says, "There was a big sandpile so I laid down behind that sandpile. Bullets kept whittling down that sandpile closer and closer to my head. I was in kind of a hot spot there for awhile." The French commander wouldn't surrender so they picked twelve guys to get him. They were just about to leave when the lieutenant came running up and told them that the commander had finally surrendered.

Shortly after Christmas Mr. Kiiskila was put into a box car. "I think it was what they used to call a 40' by 8' box car. We were laying on the floor, one laying one way and the other laying the opposite way. We were on there . . . I don't know . . . three or four days. I think it was headed due west to where the Germans were," relates Mr. Kiiskila.

After their train ride they started marching on foot. They were supposed to head to a place called Kasserine Pass. Pretty soon they heard tanks coming. "There were some bluffs on the left; we ran up into them bluffs. The rest of the 35th Division ran to the right. Them guys that ran to



Henry Kiiskila



ADVENTURES WITH DEATH

the right got overrun by those tanks," exclaimed Mr. Kiiskila. They were up there for three days without food or water. It was burning hot during the daytime. On the third day Mr. Kiiskila went looking for water. "I started roaming around and I found a spring, water trickling out of the ground, so I laid down and filled my belly with water, oh that tasted good! I filled my canteen and then went back and gave my canteen to that lieutenant," remembered Mr. Kiiskila.

The Germans were coming up with their infantry. "We let them come right to the edge of the bluff, where they couldn't get with those tanks. We opened fire on them. We left that desert splattered with their bodies," he proclaimed. A little later that day a small plane swooped down and dropped a note. All the note said was, "Head west tonight."

That night, after dark, they took off and walked all night. They walked right through the area of German tanks. After walking all night they met up with an American Artillery Troop who loaded the men on trucks and transported them away from the enemy.

After leaving Africa Mr. Kiiskila was shipped to Italy. He recalls only having purified sea water to drink while crossing the Mediterranean. Their longing for water was fulfilled when they discovered a large muskmelon patch. Here they thoroughly enjoyed quenching their thirst by eating the ripe muskmelon.

The liberation of Rome was an important victory for the Allies in Europe. Mr. Kiiskila was among the first troops to march through the city of Rome, and vividly recalls people standing all up and down the street cheering them on. However, the war was not over and Mr. Kiiskila continued his combat in northern Italy.

"Every time you move you have to dig a new home, all it was is a hole in the ground. No matter how hard the ground is when somebody starts firing at you, you're going to dig a hole. You don't care how hard it is. I laid in one hole in the ground for 72 days, like a groundhog." He once advised a lad to dig a hole but the guy just lay on the ground. He was only ten feet away and a mortar shell landed right between them. It didn't touch Mr. Kiiskila but the other guy got splattered and only lived about a half hour.

In February of 1945 the U.S. Army had been discharging guys on a rotation method. Mr. Kiiskila asked the captain why they were sending guys home that had joined the outfit after he did. One day a lad came up from headquarters and said to Mr. Kiiskila, "Hey Finn, you're going home." He was the happiest man in the world. He had been over in North Africa and Europe for three years.

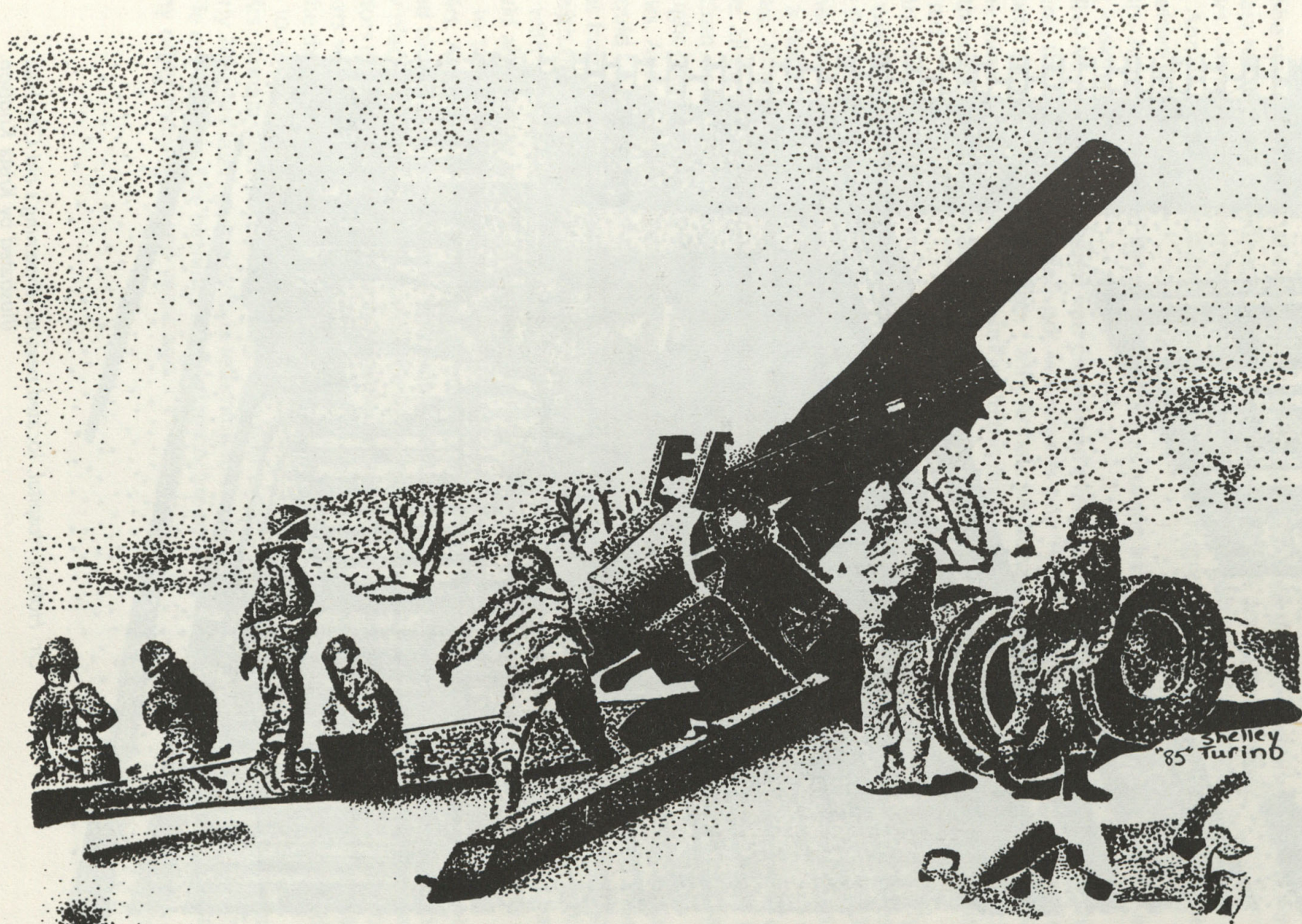
After being shipped to the United States he was transported to Florida. He stayed in a hotel for a few weeks living like a king. Next he was sent to California for schooling to become a cook.

One day he bought a newspaper and noticed they were discharging men with 140 or 150 points. He started adding up his points, when he got over 150 he galloped down to headquarters and said, "I want out!" A couple of days later he was shipped to Fort Sheridan where he discovered his papers had been lost. He spent a night in the barracks by himself. The next day he was at the headquarters at 6:00 a.m. When the office workers came around at 7:30 a.m. they dug around and found his papers. That was the end of his army career.

He came home and collected 52/20, which is similar to unemployment compensation. He could have drawn it for 52 weeks but he only drew it for 49 weeks.

I have enjoyed the experience I had with Mr. Kiiskila and I am grateful that he shared his many adventures with me. His recall of exact details really helped me to understand the history of World War II.

Kurt Penrose



THE BROUGHTON MOUNTAIN



*Dr. Holm's Hospital, located next to Ishpeming's old City Hall.
Illustrated by Krista Knutson.*

“SHE BROUGHT ME INTO THE WORLD”

“She started working when she was nine years old, babysitting for children,” said Mrs. Elsie Annala recalling the childhood of her mother-in-law, Mrs. Josephine Annala.

Mrs. Annala and her family emigrated from Finland where she was married in the late 1800's. Mrs. Annala had eleven children, seven boys and four girls. All of the girls died, along with one of the older sons.

Mrs. Annala described her mother-in-law as having bad knees and being “short and stout but nice looking.”

All of Mrs. Annala's children had chores and every one of the boys would pitch in and help out around the house. The coffee pot was always on. “Visitors were always welcome. Come in anytime and have a cup of coffee,” Mrs. Annala would say. Her husband August Annala worked in the mine. He built a store by working in the mine. Mrs. Annala says, “When we were children we thought if we only had a father that was a storekeeper we could have all the candy we wanted.”

Mrs. Annala remembers her mother-in-law as “a hard worker.” She read home remedy books and was very intelligent. “Ya, they were doctor books to her I suppose.” Mrs. Annala was a midwife for thirty years. There wasn't any specific training for this job. She learned about midwifery on her own, by reading. She had a pantry off of her kitchen where she kept her supplies. There was a home remedy doctor in Palmer and she got her supplies from there.

Mrs. Annala helped in the birth of many children of families in National Mine. Some of them were: all eleven of the Helstens, as well as the Kiiskila and Kuisti families. “Most of them had ten children or so,” she exclaims. “When I talked to anyone in Finn Farm they would say, ‘she brought me into the world,’” recalls Mrs. Annala.

Mrs. Annala only delivered babies within a three mile radius of her home. If she did go farther it would be to Palmer for supplies. She used to go as far as the Bothwells, who lived about three miles from National Mine. The expectant father or perhaps a relative would come and pick her up with the horse and sleigh if it were in the winter. Don Annala was a baby so she would take him with her, for she had to take care of her son while she was delivering the family's baby. She would always stay two or three days later to take care of the newborn baby. This was all in addition to taking care of her own children.

Mrs. Annala delivered many children. “I never remember her saying she lost a baby or having a bad birth. If she did I'm sure she would get the doctor by then,” Mrs. Annala comments. The only place that had a phone was at the store, so she couldn't call a doctor from the home. “The doctors didn't like her very much because she took their work away.” The wages were good, five dollars was the fee. “However, many times she didn't get paid at all,” said Mrs. Annala.

The thirty years that Mrs. Annala worked as a midwife she always had an afternoon nap for she had to get up early every morning. She died in 1939 at the age of 61.

Mrs. Annala delivered many babies in a warm affectionate manner. It is interesting that today, nearly 70 years later, giving birth is returning to the home-type method. Birth is no longer a cold, sterile experience. The birthing rooms of today are based on the techniques that Mrs. Annala and many other midwives used years ago.

Wendy Skaja



Mrs. Josephine Annala surrounded by some of her sons.

JUUSTOA

Would you like to learn more about Finnish Cheese? My grandma, Helen Kaminen of Green Creek Location, has lots of helpful information to share.

Helen was born in Finland on June 16, 1914. When she was two years old her family came to the United States. She grew up in the Ishpeming area and attended the North Lake School for eight grades. I was curious about how she did in school, and her reply was, "When I went to school I did quite well. I averaged anywhere from 80 to 100. The grades were marked down in numbers rather than in letters. And at that time in order to attend high school you had to buy all of your own materials. My family could not afford to send me to high school, so I didn't go, even though I wished I did."

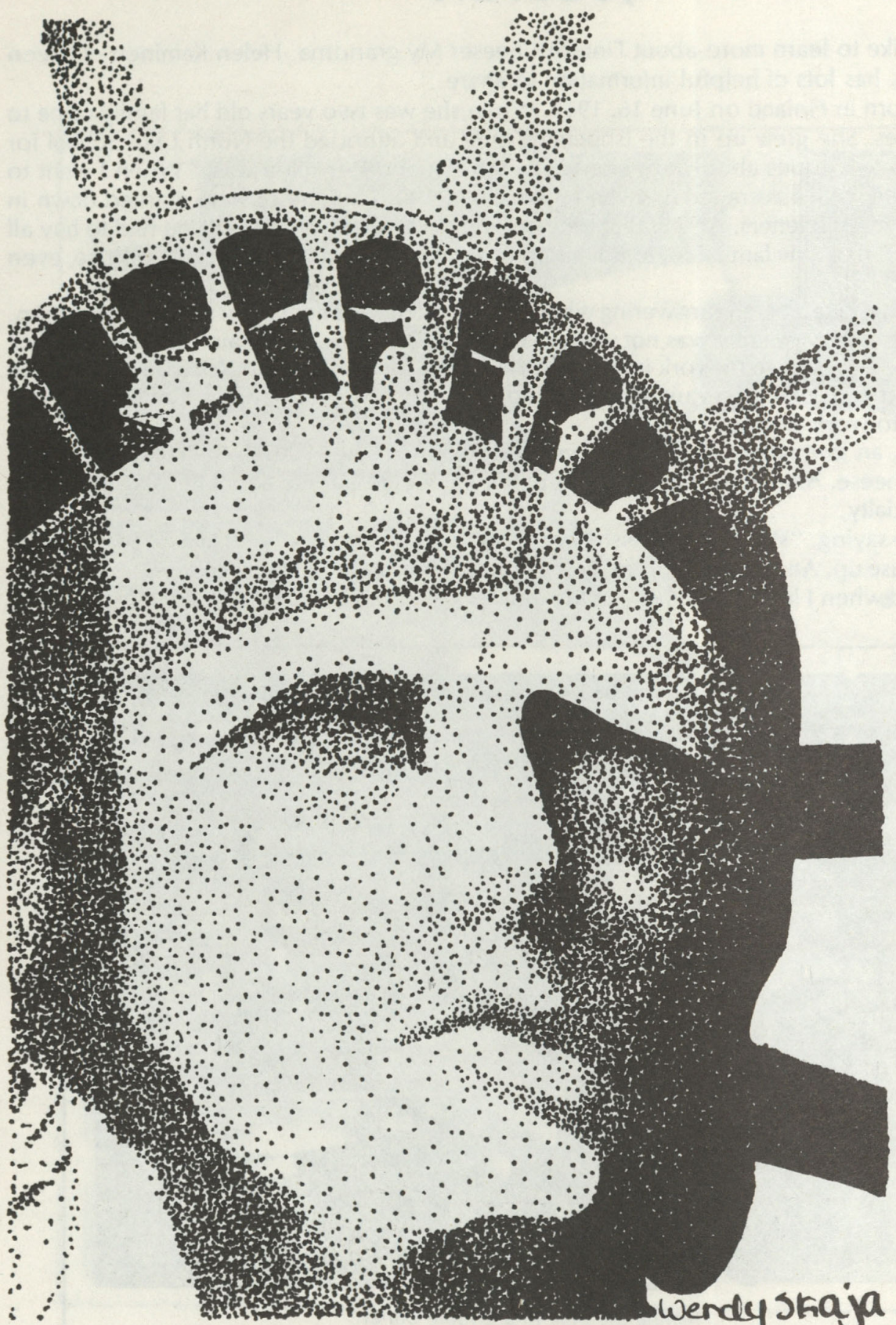
My grandma hesitated before answering when I asked her about her family's financial position. Then she answered, "My family was not well off at all. My father worked mainly on the farm, but for extra money he would go to work in the mines for a few months. At that time you could easily get a job in the mines, and then quit and a few months later when money was running low, you could go back to work without any static."

My grandma, an immigrant who carries on the traditions of her Finnish heritage, has always made Finnish cheese. After learning the details of her earlier life I asked about her skill in making this ethnic specialty.

She began by saying, "We made Finnish cheese on the farm because we had a lot of fresh milk that we had to use up. And, well, for food for the family. I love making it and eating it. I was ten or eleven years old when I learned to make it. My mother never really taught us how to make it, but



Heating the milk in a double boiler.



Wendy Skaja



Adding the Renit to the milk.

by watching her, we sorta picked it up on the side."

While sitting in my grandma's kitchen and listening to her talk, it seemed like it would be a complicated process to make the cheese. So, of course, I asked her how difficult it was.

She replied quickly, "Oh, it's not hard. It's not hard at all. You see, when I made it I used three gallons of fresh whole milk and a twelve quart pail or even larger. You put the pail in a big pan of hot water. Sort of like a double boiler. You heat it to the consistency of a baby's milk bottle. Test it on your wrist if you don't have a thermometer, which I never had. Then for every gallon of milk you stir in one Renit tablet dissolved in one teaspoon of warm water. Some people put eggs and flour it it, but I don't. It tends to take some of the squeekiness out of it. And as most people know, it's called 'squeeky cheese'."

She continues with confidence, giving each important step in the process, "Well, anyhow, I stir the Renit into the heated milk and then let it stand for an hour, hour and a half until it cuts clean. Then stir it up again and heat it by putting it back into the pan of water until it's warm. After it's warmed up again, stir it, and press it into the bottom of the pail while dumping the whey off the top. At this time, the cheese should be two or three inches thick when you put it on a 12 or 14 inch pizza pan with edges on it. Then you press it down to take the form of the pan. Next you put the cheese in a very hot oven of about 425 degrees so you can brown it quickly on top. I recommend that you tilt the pan slightly and put another pan under it with a little bit of water to catch the whey that seeps out as it cooks. Well, you brown the top and quickly turn it over and brown the other side. Then your cheese is ready."



Mrs. Kaminen holding a jar of skimmed off whey which was often used in making bread or as a beverage.

I became interested in knowing how the cheese should be served, so I asked my Grandma how she serves her cheese. "We usually serve it cold, but sometimes we eat it hot," she answered. "Either way is delicious. Often we would sprinkle salt on top of it after it has been cooled, and reheat it under the broiler."

"Do you think this custom will last?" I questioned her.

"I think so. It's something unique. It's a cheese nobody else makes. The taste is just delicious, especially when it is made fresh. There's nothing like it," she answered emphatically and smiled proudly.

I enjoyed sharing this special experience with my grandmother. She has a very unique talent and by using her recipe and directions, I plan to keep the tradition of making Finnish cheese last for at least one more generation.

Kathy Kaminen

FINNISH CHEESE

9 quarts of milk (fresh or homogenized)

4 teaspoons of salt

Beat 1 egg

1 teaspoon of flour

1 teaspoon of potato flour

1 teaspoon of baking powder

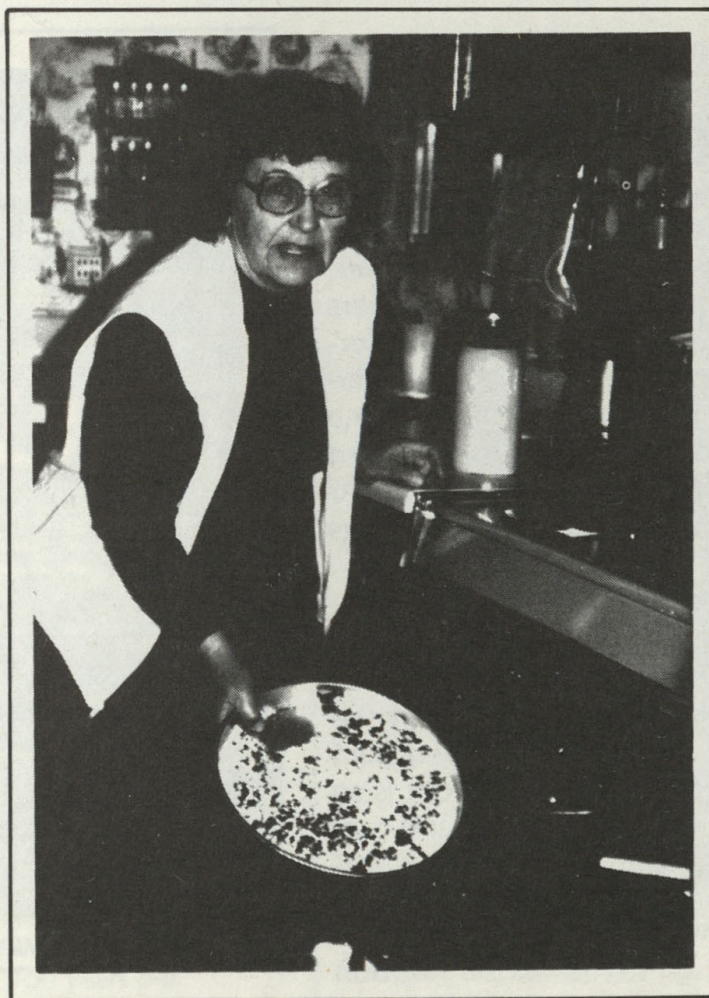
butter the pan

Mix together. Add to milk 5 drops or more of liquid Renit or 1 tablet dissolved in warm water. Heat milk to lukewarm in a container of hot water. Stir in all the other ingredients and stir well. You can choose to keep stirring while this is setting, or let stand until it sets and falls away from the sides of the pan or until it cuts clean through the center. Press out all of the whey and form into a round in the bottom of the container.

Broil in a 12-inch pizza pan until slightly browned on one side. Take out, flip it over and broil the other side until the other side is also browned.

NOTE: By putting an extra pan with water in it in the bottom of oven, the excess whey will run out into the pan below and this will prevent a mess.

Helen Kaminen



The finished product!

CARPET WEAVING — A FAMILY TRADITION

Rag carpets woven on a loom is a creative skill that is being learned by few people today. Handcrafted carpets are attractive and very useful. Mrs. Bernice Korpi has been weaving carpets for approximately twelve years.

Making carpets is a formidable task that requires many weeks of steady working. The first job that needs to be done is to set up, or warp, the loom which takes at least eight to ten hours. After that the rags need to be cut up and sorted out. Bernice and her sister have to cut their own rags which requires more time. The yarn must then be wound off the skein. Next, you must get the yarn into long strings and wind the carpet loom, thread it twice, and it is ready to go. Now, material to be used for weaving must be chosen.

The material that is used doesn't have to be a specific kind or color. Bernice says that she usually uses cotton material, corduroy, or jean-type material. Mrs. Korpi regularly finds her material at St. Vincent dePaul in Ishpeming. If she's looking for a certain texture or color combination Bernice will probably buy new material.

She says, "Making carpets is very easy, but, it's also time consuming." Sometimes, if there are extra carpets from making a batch, Bernice will sell a couple of carpets. The carpets are sold for ten dollars a yard, but a customer really gets their money's worth. A batch in carpet weaving consists of about twenty yards. The average carpet is around a yard and a half long making fifteen carpets per batch.

Mrs. Korpi was born in Ishpeming, Michigan, on October 29, 1927. Bernice was never actually taught how to weave and operate the carpet weaving loom. She diligently helped her mother while she was in high school and just simply learned. This family tradition was passed down through the generations. Mrs. Korpi's grandmother received the carpet loom from a very close friend of hers who had no further use for the loom. When Bernice's grandma was finished with the loom she handed it down to Bernice Korpi's mother. During the years, the carpet loom was stored in their barn where she and her sister Ruth helped their mother work on weaving the carpets and cutting up rags for future use.

Mrs. Bernice Korpi, her two daughters, Lois and Norma, and her niece have become interested in weaving carpets on the family loom. They, too, know how to operate the carpet loom. Today the loom is stored in Mrs. Korpi's spare bedroom which is very convenient for her. The loom is so massive that it takes up most of the room, and cannot be removed very often. Bernice believes carpet weaving is an excellent pasttime that she wouldn't give up for anything!

Krista Knutson



Mrs. Korpi explaining "setting up" or warping the loom.

BARNES-HECKER DISTRICT



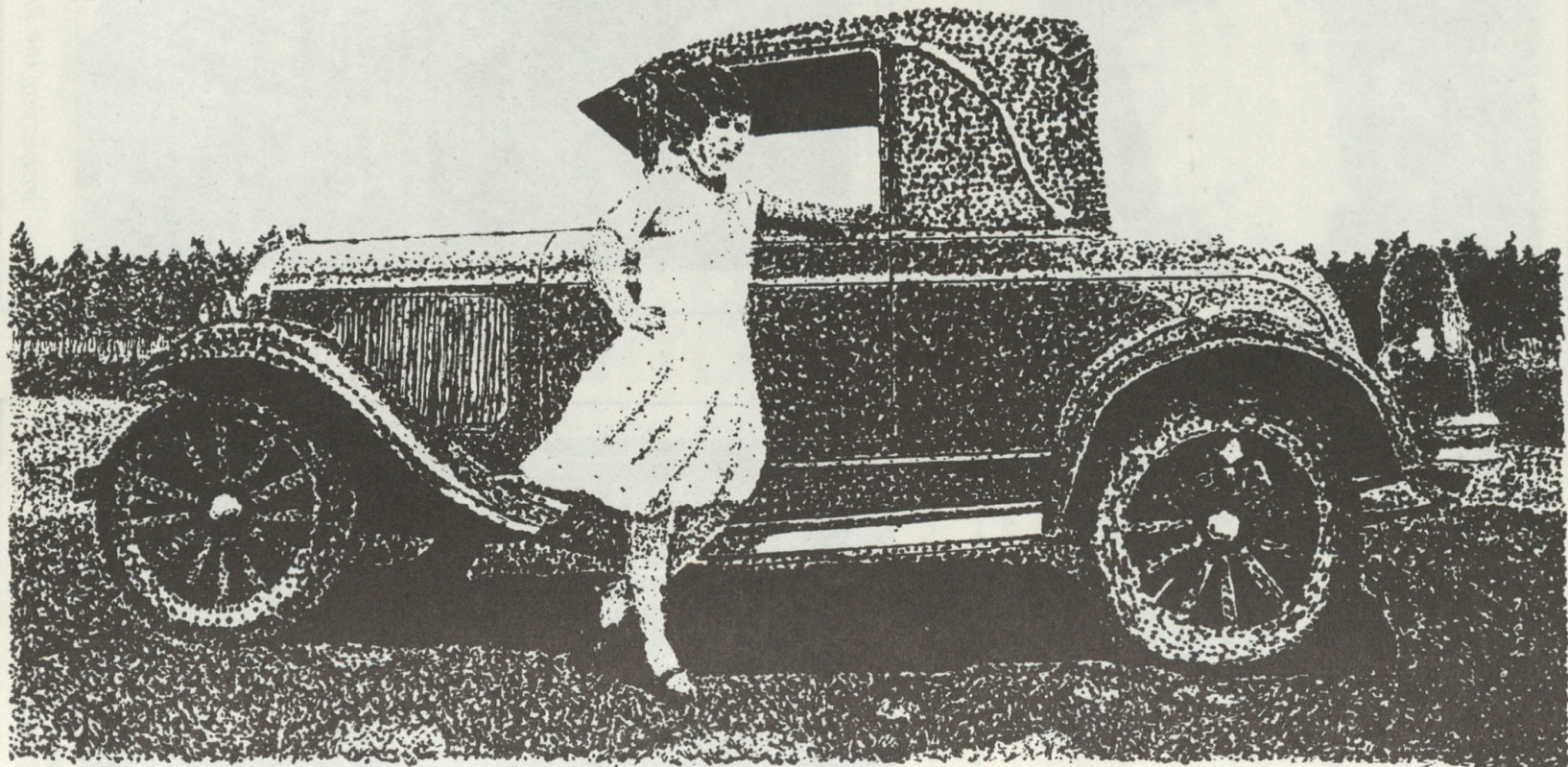
Choosing the material to be used for the weft of the weaving.



Mrs. Korpi weaving on the family loom which is over 100 years old.



Inspecting the finished product.



Steve Evans '85

TRADITION

BARNES-HECKER DISASTER

INTRODUCTION

On November 3, 1926, at 11:20 a.m., the Barnes-Hecker Mine, located in the North Lake area, caved in. Water, quicksand and debris filled the mine in a matter of minutes. One man, Wilfred Wills, frantically climbed the shaft ladder and became the only survivor. The other 51 men working underground that day perished in Michigan's worst mine disaster.

The following stories are personal accounts of the disaster as told by the descendants of the victims and survivor.

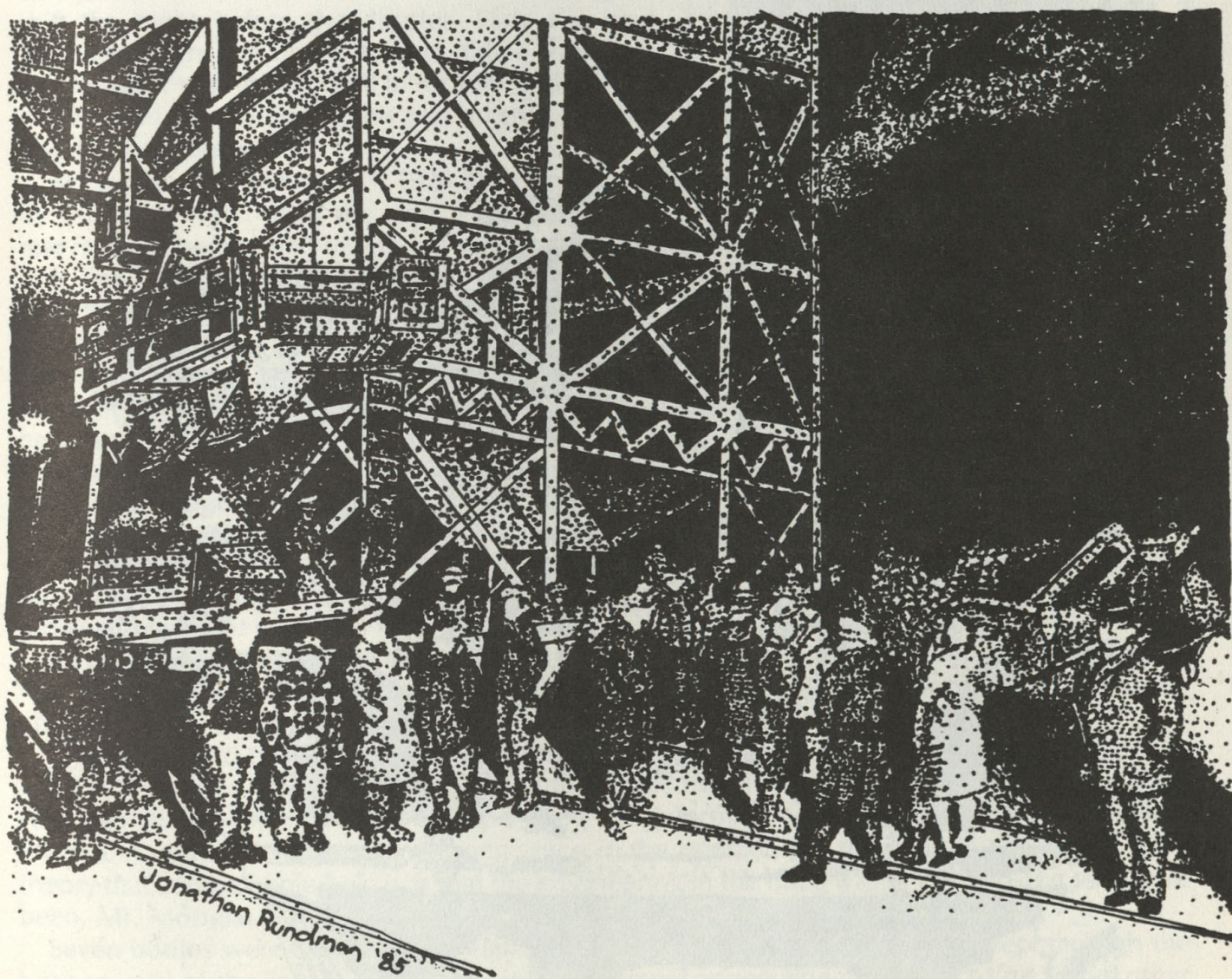
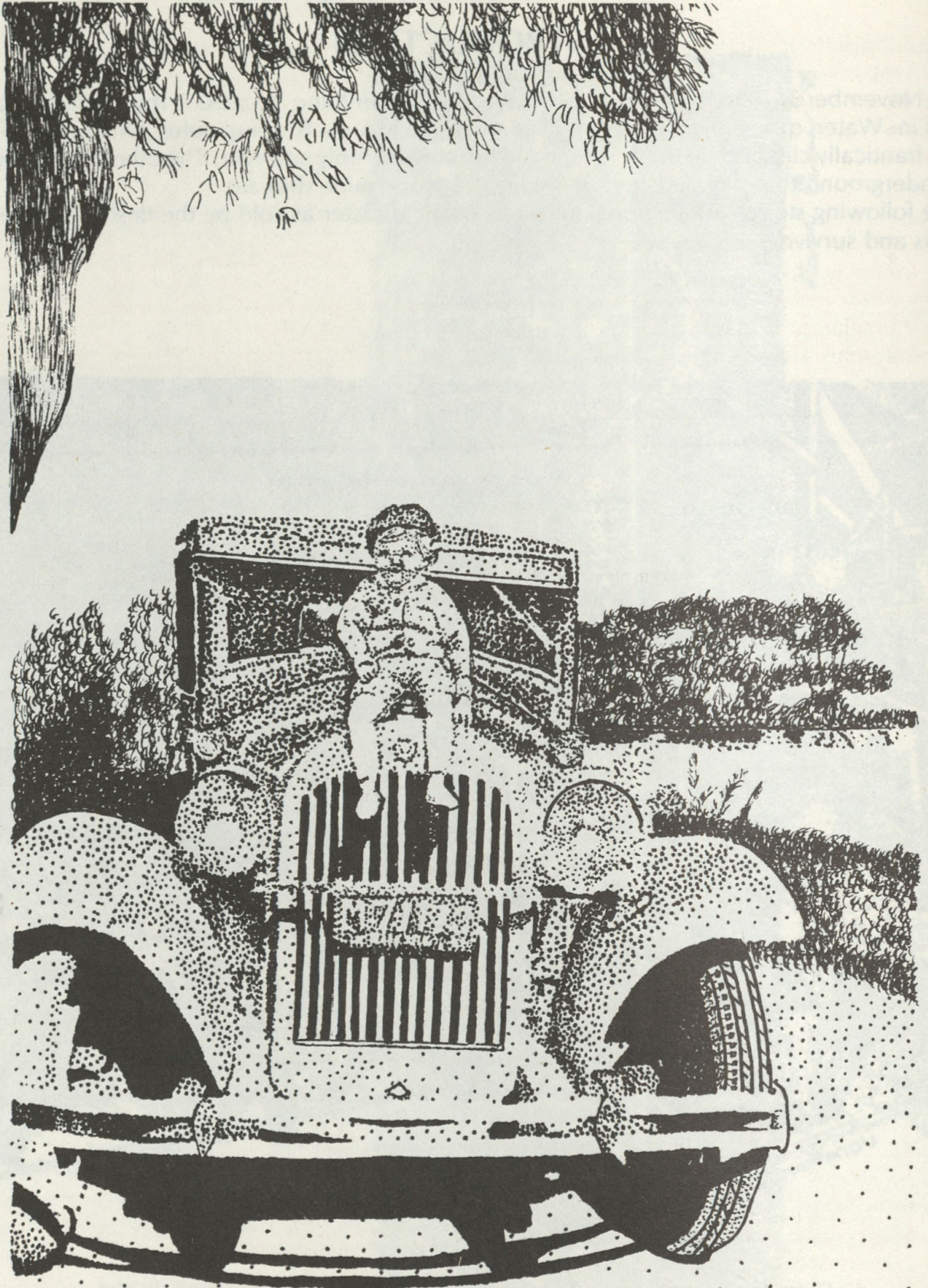


Illustration of the crowds that gathered following the Barnes-Hecker disaster.



Tonja Carriere '85

MINER'S NIGHTMARE

Eleven-month-old Peter Mongiat, Jr., the youngest of his family, couldn't comprehend the tragedy. His father, Peter Mongiat, Sr., was killed at the Barnes-Hecker Mine in the greatest mine disaster Michigan has ever experienced.

The Mongiat family lived in the Barnes-Hecker location, a quarter of a mile from the mine itself. There were seven members in the Mongiat family, Peter Mongiat, Sr., his wife, three sons, and two daughters.

Mr. Mongiat had been working about four years as a pumpman at the mine. He worked his regular shift the night before the disaster. Early the next morning when one of the miners didn't show up, Mr. Mongiat was asked to fill in for him and work a double shift. It was during this second shift that the disaster took place.

At 11:20 a.m., November 3, 1926, the mine caved in. Sand and water filled the shaft. Fifty miners and one mine inspector died that day. The mine allowed only one survivor. Mr. Wilfred Wills climbed about eight hundred feet to the surface with debris swirling up beneath him.

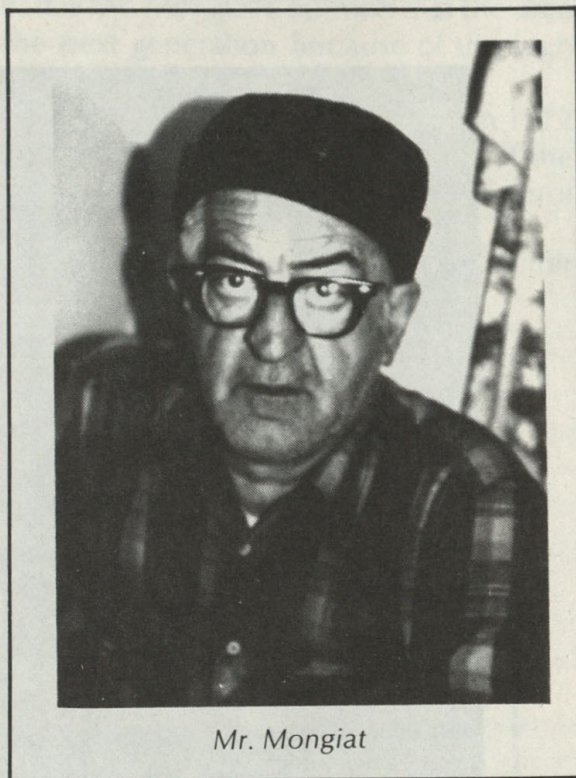
As was common practice of the time, one of Mr. Mongiat's sons often delivered a dinner pail to the mine. When the mine caved in the son went running home to tell his mother that something had happened at the mine, but she did not believe him. This forced him to return to the mine to reassure himself about what had happened. He again went home, this time with more details and exact knowledge of the cave-in.

After the disaster the company paid the widows four thousand dollars with the federal government also paying four thousand dollars. This compensation was allocated for a period of about ten years. The Mongiat family helped to support themselves by raising cows, chickens, pigs, and growing a garden.

I wondered about the long lasting effects of the tragedy on Mr. Mongiat. When questioned he replied, "I was raised without a father, sure you didn't like it but there isn't much you can do about it."

One question I pondered about was, could the disaster have been prevented? Mr. Mongiat recalled his father saying that some of the miners had heard rumblings, and his father had heard water gurgling himself. Mr. Mongiat believed this information had been reported a couple of times, but workers didn't have a strong voice in the operation of the mine in those days. One theory that some people held was that the engineering in the mine wasn't as good as it should've been. Mr. Mongiat feels that mining too close to the surface was taking place.

Seven bodies were found at the neighboring Morris Mine. They had been swept through the bottom level of the Barnes-Hecker and into the tunnel connecting the Morris Mine. Three other bodies were recovered after pumping out some of the water in the shaft. All other endeavors to recover the remaining bodies failed, so the company officials finally gave up.



Mr. Mongiat



Formal portrait of some of the Barnes-Hecker widows.

SITE OF A DISASTER

The future of the Barnes-Hecker mine site is unknown. It is Mr. Mongiat's opinion that the area will probably be mined by open pit methods during the next generation because of the high quality ore still down there.

A monument listing the fifty-one names of the men who died in the mine was erected in 1972 near the Evergreen Drive-in Theater in Ely Township. This is the only physical reminder of the mine disaster. The tragedy may be long over, but it left a permanent emotional scar on the lives of hundreds.

David Casimir



Mr. Mongiat identifying his father, Peter Mongiat, in the 1985 Red Dust cover photo.

SITE OF A DISASTER

"Joe! Are you coming?" These were the words of Wilfred Wills, the only survivor of the Barnes-Hecker Mine disaster, as he called to a working partner not far below him on the ladder. Both men were desperately trying to escape the swirling water that was rapidly rising toward them, flooding the mine. Joe Mankee, his working partner, answered, "Yes!" Wills yelled for his partner several times after, but there was no response. According to Olga Bengson, a sister to Joe Mankee, a big boulder had come and broken the ladder between her brother Joe and Wilfred Wills. Joe Mankee was thrown back into the shaft.

Olga Bengson, my grandma, had been returning from school in the Barnes-Hecker Location on the day of the disaster when she heard much commotion. "I came home from school and we heard all these whistles and all the noise and everything," said Olga, "and the dogs started like a parade going down the location with their heads up in the air just a howling when that happened." She was informed that her brother had been killed in the flooding of the Barnes-Hecker Mine.

As we sat around the table of her colorful kitchen, Olga shared with me her feelings about that day. "Shocked," she said, "we were all shocked, every one of us." The experience must have been terrible for the families of the victims.

Olga had come to the Barnes-Hecker Location from Cornwall, England, at the age of ten. This mining location had no stores but had a one-room school and the total number of houses in the location was twenty-two. She and her family, which included her mother, father, and four brothers, Jack, Tom, Llewellyn, and Joe, lived only ten minutes away from the mine.

Olga's father helped to recover some bodies from the flooded mine shaft. Joe Mankee's body was brought to the surface, but the condition of the body was not as might be expected under the circumstances. "He never lost a fingernail," remembers Olga, "his hands were all swollen and his face was swollen from water but he never lost a fingernail."

Chance and fate play a major role in any disaster. My grandma told me of one man, Walter Tippet, who had quit his job at the Marquette Prison and started working in the Barnes-Hecker Mine the morning of the disaster. By noon, he was dead. I felt a chill when she related that unfortunate and sad story to me.



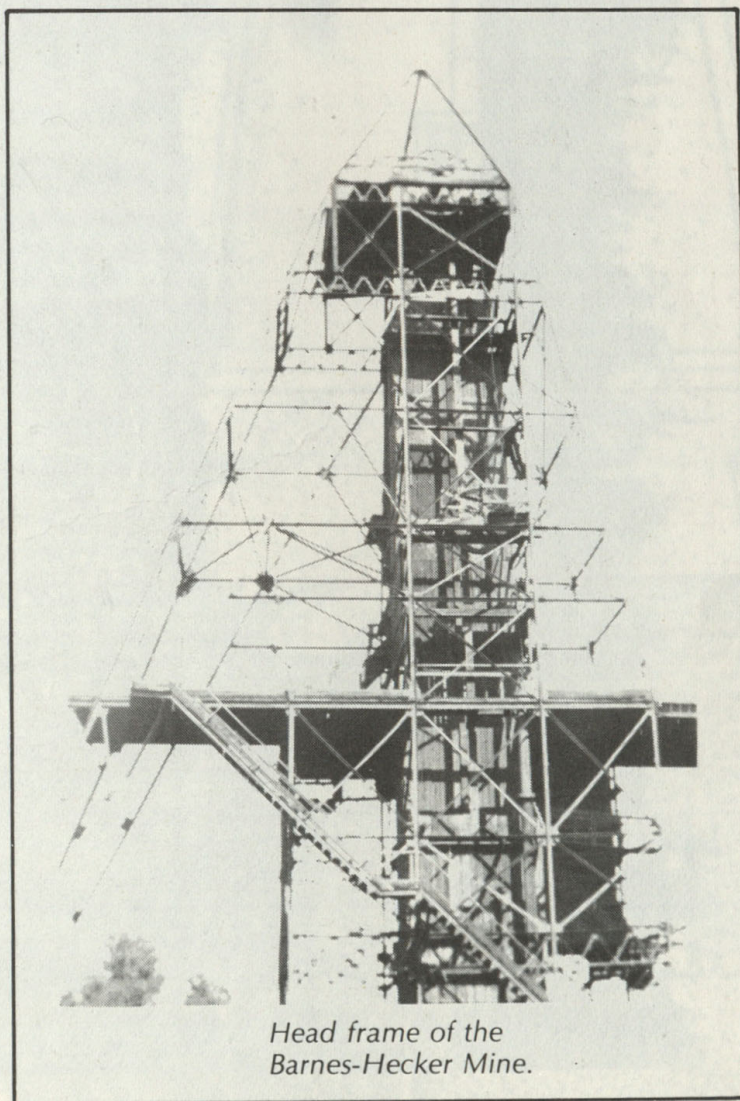
Olga Bengson, as a child.

Joe Mankee was one of the few men who had a customary funeral. After his body was recovered, it was brought home and then to a local church. The survivor of the mine tragedy, Wilfred Wills, attended the funeral. Olga mentioned that Mr. Wills was in shock, but he must have felt a great need to attend the funeral. Joe Mankee had been the best man at Wills's wedding the previous June. Memorials were held in several churches for the men that died at that time. "The bells were ringing and they had memorials all day long," said Olga.

For several years after the disaster, a memorial service was held at the Barnes-Hecker Mine site. The services are no longer held there, but a monument has been erected and pays tribute to the men who lost their lives in the mine.

One Italian who worked in the mine had always been sure that the mine would someday collapse on him and, as Olga said, "he was there and he's still there." This is true for the forty-one men whose bodies remain in the water-filled grave of the once-functioning Barnes-Hecker Mine.

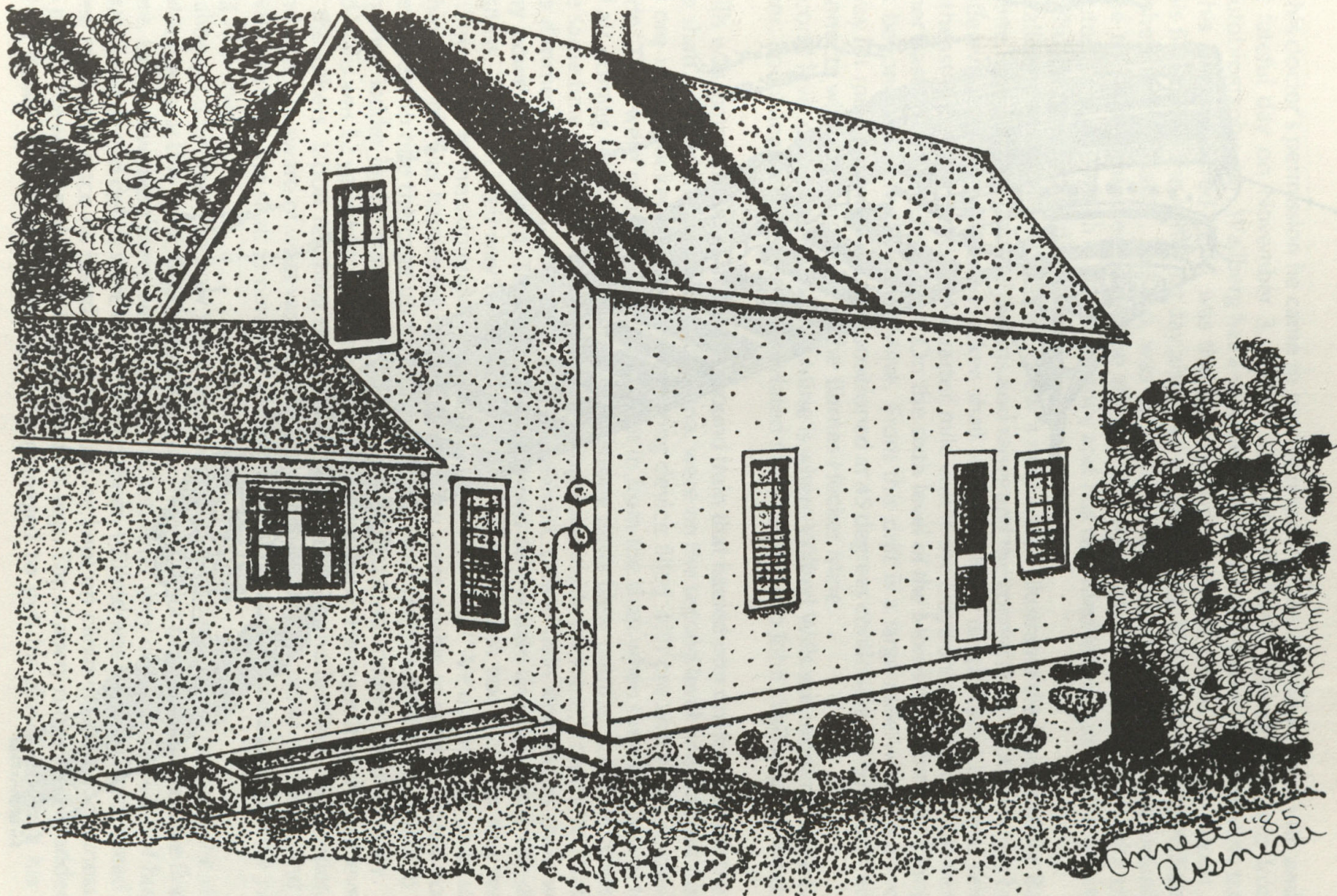
Dean Laitinen



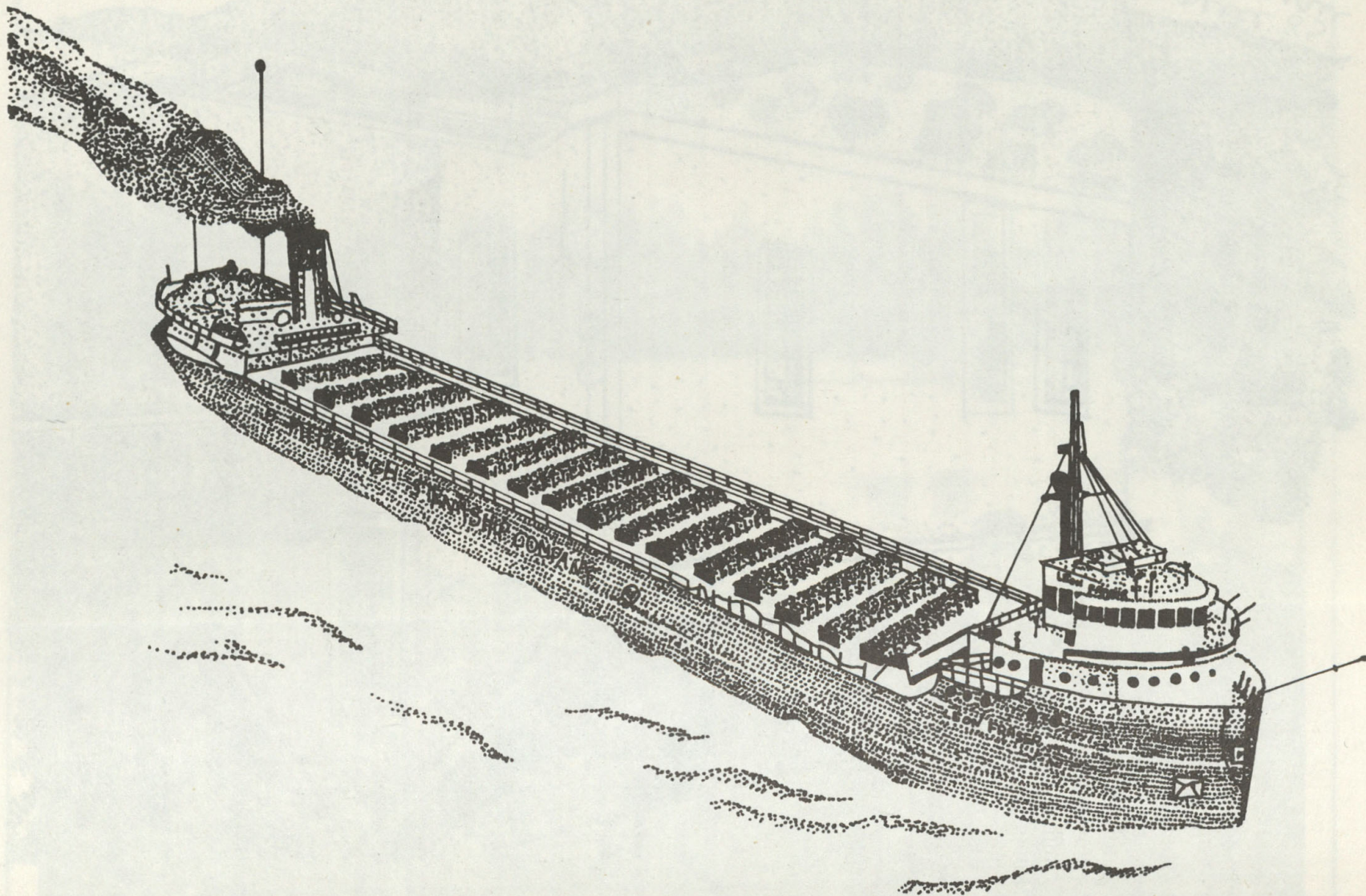
*Head frame of the
Barnes-Hecker Mine.*



This picture was taken shortly after the Barnes-Hecker tragedy. This section of swamp bottom collapsed into the mine.



Annette '85
A. Seneau



The Leon Frasher, one of the many famous iron ore vessels. Illustration by Brian Talus.

SOLE SURVIVOR

"With his doctor's permission he came to pay his respect to the men he worked with and who died that fateful day on November 3, 1926." Gardner Wallberg read these words from his father's autobiography. Mr. Wallberg has a very deep interest in the Barnes-Hecker Mine tragedy because his uncle, Wilfred Wills, was the sole survivor. Another uncle, Walter Tippett, who worked his first shift in the mine that day also died in the tragedy. The mine captain, William Tippett, perished in the disaster. He, too, was an uncle as was Albert Wills who was fortunate to have come to surface minutes before the disaster occurred. Mr. Wallberg shared with me his father's autobiography, which is rich in history and has recorded in great detail the events surrounding the Barnes-Hecker disaster.

John Wallberg, Mr. Wallberg's father, drew a map which illustrated the layout of the Barnes-Hecker Mine. The diagram details the drifts and raises and the connections to other mines by tunnels at different levels. The Barnes-Hecker shaft was 1,750 feet deep. About one and one-half miles southeast is the Morris Mine. A quarter mile east is the Lloyd shaft and three-quarters of a mile further east is the East Lloyd shaft. On the sixth level of the Morris Mine there is a long drift that goes beyond the Barnes-Hecker Mine. From this drift is a large raise which is a vertical passageway for men and materials. It is positioned at 45 degrees continuing up two-hundred feet, and it connects with the third level of the Barnes-Hecker Mine.

The second level of the Barnes-Hecker Mine is where Wilfred Wills was working at the time of the disaster. Following the tragedy, Wills related his experience to John Wallberg, his brother-in-law.

Mr. Wills was a motorman on the underground train that hauled iron ore from inside the mine out to the shaft. He and his partner, Jack Hanna, were on the second level and had just dumped a load of ore in the pocket which is a measuring device filled with ore and were on their way back inside. They were nearly two-hundred feet in from the shaft when they felt several terrific rushes of air coming from inside the mine. The strong gusts blew out their carbide lamps.

"At the same time they heard an awful thundering noise inside the mine," reads Mr. Wallberg. The lights dimmed, flickered, and went out. The electric power train stopped as there was no longer any power to operate it. The two friends jumped off the train and ran out to the shaft in total darkness. They felt their way by kicking the train rails with their boots. When they reached the shaft they called to the skiptender, Joe Mankee, and told him, "We'd better go up to surface as something terrible was happening in the mine." They were unable to get a response from the hoisting engineer to ride the cage up to surface, so the three men immediately started to climb the emergency ladder in the main shaft. The climb to surface was nearly 800 feet away.

Wilfred Wills was 22 years old and in excellent physical shape. He made it to the first level well ahead of the others. Upon reaching the first level, he called to the first-level skiptender, Tom Kirby, who was not aware of what was happening in the mine. Kirby ran to join Wills and when he and Wills reached the shaft to continue climbing, Jack Hanna and Joe Mankee were just approaching first-level.

Mr. Wallberg continues, "So now there were four men climbing the ladder up in the shaft to surface which was, at this point, 600 feet straight up. They did not hear any noise on the first level at this time, but below them there was a terrific racket. After they climbed a couple of hundred feet, the sand, water and debris were close behind them. Wilfred was some distance ahead of the other three men, and once he heard them yell but he kept on climbing in total darkness."

At one point, the water and debris had reached his legs. The slippery rungs on the ladder were slowing him down. While still climbing, Wills managed to pull his gloves off with his teeth,

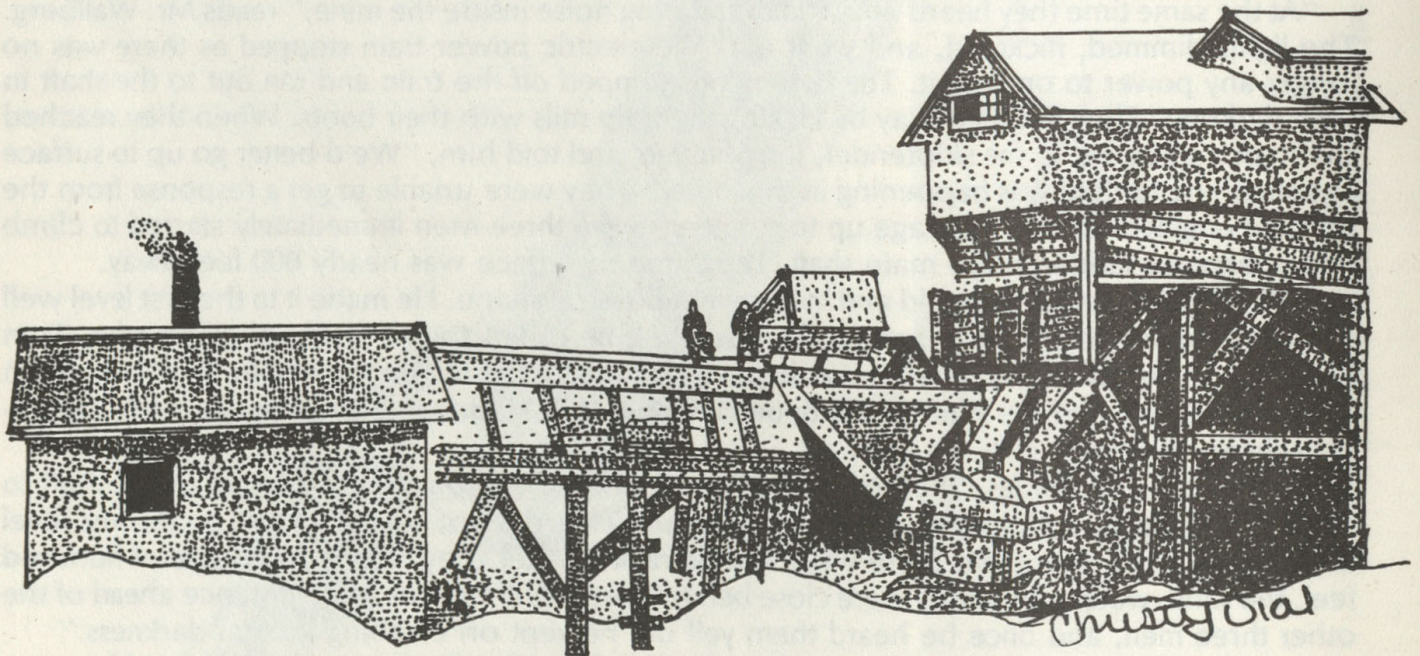
enabling him to climb faster.

"When he approached the top of the shaft at surface, he looked up and saw his brother, Albert, who grabbed him by his jacket and helped him out of the shaft. Wilfred then collapsed to the ground, totally exhausted. Albert just happened to be looking down the shaft at this time and had no idea that anyone was climbing out of the mine, especially his brother," explained Mr. Wallberg.

A short time later, someone walked a few thousand feet or more and discovered an area of swamp, 200 feet by 300 feet in diameter, had disappeared into the mine. The cave-in was in the shape of a funnel and the bottom of the opening was about eight feet in diameter. Trees, stumps, boulders, and sand were still pouring into the mine through this opening. In a very short time the mine had filled with quicksand and water. Later, the water receded in the shaft when the air pockets in the mine filled with water.

"This was the bubbling noise I heard the first night after the cave-in," reads Mr. Wallberg from his father's autobiography. He continues, "We did not sleep much that night thinking about those poor men down there hopelessly trapped, although we realized that no one could possibly be alive."

The state police were stationed by Petersen's farm where the road turns off the main highway into the Barnes-Hecker Mine site and into the North Greenwood area. Only relatives of the victims or people who had official business were allowed to enter in order to avoid congestion at the mine.



On the day after the cave-in, large pumps were installed at the cave-in site. Huge bailers were attached to the skip rope which were filled up with water and raised to the surface. When one was emptied the other would be filling. When the water level was low enough, men would enter the shaft. They found a tangled mass of sand, boulders, and timbers along with steel and other debris. After volunteer workers had cleared the shaft to a point about 200 feet above the first level, they found the bodies of Joe Mankee, Thomas Kirby, and Jack Hanna, the three men that had been climbing behind Wilfred Wills. In the sixth level of the Morris Mine, quite a distance from the raise which connected the Barnes-Hecker and Morris Mines, seven bodies were found, one of them being Captain Tippet. The bodies were covered with mud and had to be washed off with a garden hose. "Some human fragments were also found along with Bill Tippet's tape measure and notebook," Mr. Wallberg tells me. He continued, reading his father's words, "The funerals of the victims were a very sad event. I saw them in their caskets. I personally knew a great many of the victims that are still in the mine. They are too numerous to mention by name."

The raise connecting the third level of the Barnes-Hecker and the sixth level of the Morris Mine is what is believed to have saved the Morris Mine from destruction and loss of lives. The sand, water, and debris along with thousands of tons of pressure, rushed down the numerous raises and plugged the raise which connected the Barnes-Hecker to the sixth level of the Morris Mine. This prevented the Morris Mine from filling with quicksand and water.

After the disaster, Wills said he would never work in an underground mine again. In a newspaper article he is quoted as saying, "I'm all through with the mines. I'll find a job someplace else, I'll never work in a mine again."

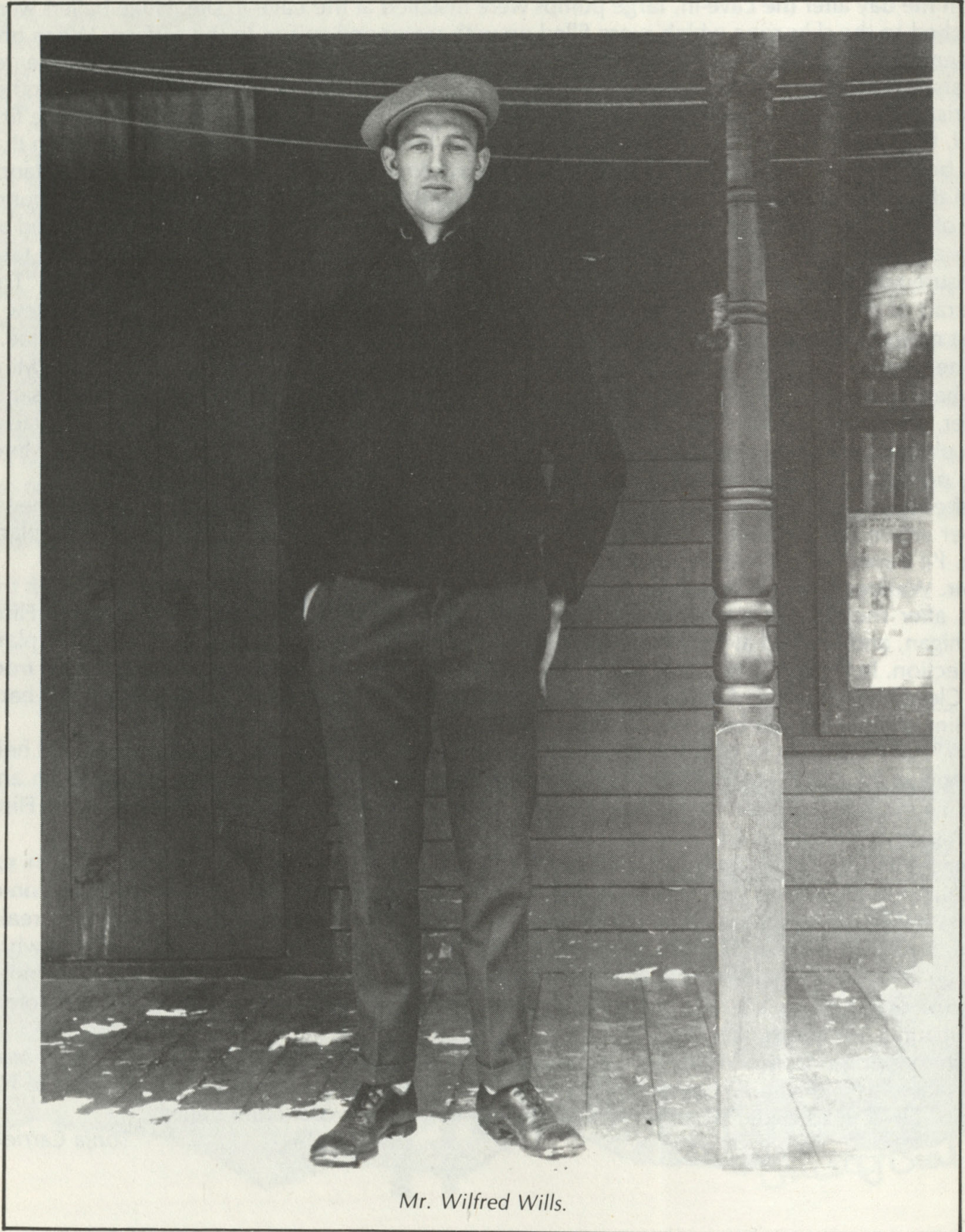
Mr. Wallberg's grandmother, grandfather, Uncle Wilfred Wills and Uncle Albert Wills left the area after the disaster and settled in Lower Michigan. Wilfred Wills made his home in Flint, Michigan, and worked at General Motors Buick Motor Division as a security officer and in plant protection. In the spring of 1943, he moved back to the North Lake area and acquired a job from the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company as a surface laborer. He only stayed for a year and went back to Flint and his old job because he didn't like the snow and cold weather.

Mr. Wills's last trip to Ishpeming was when the Barnes-Hecker Memorial dedication was held on August 27, 1972. He was not in good health as he was recuperating from an operation and battling to survive cancer. In less than a year, on May 7, 1973, Wilfred Wills passed away in Flint, Michigan, at the age of 69.

Mr. Wallberg fondly recalls his memories of his uncle. He also remembers his own experiences as an underground miner in the Tracy Mine in Negaunee. He has a definite opinion of what mining underground is like and told me, "Working underground in a mine is really something. The men think of each other like they're brothers. It's just the feeling you get when you go down. It's a hazardous job, there's no two ways about it. I enjoyed working in the mine because of the loyalty the men had toward each other. I don't think you can find that in any other occupation. I don't think so."

After visiting with Mr. Wallberg, I am grateful that he was willing to share his time, memories and materials with me. Listening to his father's autobiography was a great experience. He has helped all of us to better understand and grieve Michigan's worst mine tragedy.

Tonja Carriere



Mr. Wilfred Wills.