

Amy Coduti

Twenty-eight

"At The Time It Was One Of The Better Jobs Around"

"At the time it was one of the better jobs around," are the words my father, Michael A. Coduti, said to me when I asked him why he chose to work for the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company.

Mick was born November 3, 1953, in Ishpeming, Michigan to Shirley Coduti, and Leslie Coduti Sr. He has one brother Leslie Coduti Jr., and one sister Barbara Johnson. He is currently married to Ronette Coduti, and he has two daughters, Nicole and Amy.

Mick has been working for Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company for over twenty-one years. He began his career as a surveyor helper at the main office in downtown Ishpeming, Michigan. From there he went to the Tilden Mine as an equipment operator. He was next transferred to the Empire Mine in the same capacity, and later went inside to work in the lab. Staying at the Empire, he also worked on the floor in the mill.

The duty of Mick's current job is to control the silica levels in the ore being processed to be the final stage before it is pelletized. This is done by adding amine to the flotation system in proper amounts to maintain a silica level that is acceptable for the buyers. He also controls the water for the plant, both incoming and outgoing. The outgoing water must be constantly monitored, along with the outside tailing thickeners and the total tailings pumping operation. He said his job required no special training, but "all on the job training," he



stated. In this job he works mainly with pumps and computers. The most challenging part of his job is "trying to control the silica so we can get a product that we can sell," he explained. Mick said the most challenging duty he had was as "a shovel operator because it was so dangerous. Everyone else that was working around me was depending on my safety and my good work habits, otherwise people could've gotten hurt," he stated.

Mick has not been in any accidents but he recalls this one; one day a worker was driving an eighty-five ton production truck at the Tilden. For whatever reason he fell asleep and lost control. He drove off a bench which is a level in the open pit and down sixty-five feet. Fortunately, he did not get hurt.

Currently, Mick works inside the Empire Mine so his working conditions are not too bad. They have an air filtration system, called precipitators, which keep the air quite clean. There are many chemicals, so he has to wear protective equipment. The equipment protects him from fumes, and skin irritations. He thinks the conditions are "alright, and they have improved," he said.

These improvements have occurred because of regulatory organizations. "These safety standards have changed with O.S.H.A., and M.S.H.A. coming in and setting guidelines for the company to follow. We get monthly safety meetings on different subjects, and yearly safety classes, so it's pretty good."

Mick has seen the duties of his job change over the years through computerization, which takes out the operator error. Another change is the role of women at the mines. Mick said the role of women at the mine is changing because women are working the same jobs as men, and he thinks this will continue because



"they are good workers," he stated.

Some special training Mick has been involved in have included a job evaluation, job reevaluation, and a committee for writing procedures in the concentrating department. He recently went through a series of meetings where when a problem came up, the committee would try to come up with an answer to the problem. The answer would have to be figured out efficiently and in an effective way.

Although, he is content with his job, Mick sometimes wishes he would have pursued a different career. "Everyone that works feels this way," he philosophically states. Things that have contributed to this feeling are his work schedule including shift work and working weekends. "Things like that make me wish I'd pursued a different career," he explained.

Mick thinks the future will hold success for the Tilden and the Empire Mines. Recent tests have indicated these mines will have adequate raw materials for up to thirty years. He also mentioned tentative plans for the Republic Mine starting to do some open-pit mining again, and sending the rock over to the Tilden to be processed. The Empire Mine has a cascade pit where CCI is considering mining. They would send the ore to the Empire Mine to be processed, so he thinks "the future looks pretty good for them for at least thirty to fifty years." In addition to the Empire and Tilden Mines, Mick also states, "The future looks promising for the steel industry. It is a competition; we have made a better product at a lower price, and we're competing world-wide. We are holding our own, so I think it looks pretty good." Mick offered his opinion that if C.C.I. wants to remain competitive, they would have to make a good product, and not



spend all their money doing it. Also, they would have to be cost competitive. When I asked Mick what he thinks has been the key to success for CCI where other companies have failed he said, "CCI's biggest attribute is the employees that they have working for them. They have outstanding employees who know their job and take pride in doing it, and do it right. I also think CCI is a good manager. They do their job well." Mick hopes CCI remembers the workers as "good hardworking people. They'll remember CCI as a mine manager who was concerned about the community which they were serving, the environment, and just being good for the balance of economy of America."

Mick said that the young people of today need to develop computer skills, and they would be better off getting into an engineering field if they would be interested in working for CCI. The company's going to need more engineers, than operators. They are going to need people who are problem solvers. Mick would say this to the students of today: "Set your goals high, and work hard to obtain them. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't be something, because you can be anything you want to be!"

Mick does not spend all of his time working, for he enjoys sports; "playing and watching," he states. He likes to fish, he does a little bit of hunting, and likes spending time with his family. He also "just loves to plow snow!" he stated sarcastically.

Looking back over the years Mick remains philosophical about some of the problems that CCI has faced. He knows that "it's a money game, and everyone is just trying to make a buck for everyone." CCI and the workers have had some disagreements, mainly at contract time. In spite of these problems Mick told me



if he had to do it all over again he would pick the same career choice, because "I've been fortunate, and everything's turned out good. I've been able to provide a good lifestyle for my family and I think those are the things that are important."