

THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF MINING.

"If you wanted to stay around here, that's where you had to work, for the Cleveland Cliffs," stated Mr. Martin Tasson as I asked him why he chose to work in Upper Michigan's iron mining industry. I could tell from just the first answer he gave that this was going to be a very interesting interview.

Martin, born on June 21, 1929, in Ishpeming Michigan, is the son of Micheal and Teresa Tasson. He was born into a big family that consisted of five boys: Francis, Micheal, Lewis, Salvator, and Angelo; and six girls: Catherine, Rose, Jenny, Jennavive, Elizabeth, and Teresa. His family was practically born and bred for mining. His father, uncles, and at various times, a couple of his brothers worked at the mines. Currently married to Sue Tasson with two children, Gregory and Bridget, he now is retired after mining for forty-three years.

Martin has worked at the: CCI office building in Ishpeming, the Humboldt Mine, the Ohio Mine, the Research Lab in Ishpeming, the Pellet Plant in Eagle Mills, the Empire and the Tilden, and some of the local underground mines. Martin was a successful surveyor, a drilling and blasting foreman, and a chauffeur. Before he retired, Martin was a blasting foreman at the Tilden Mine. This particular job required much special training, such as: education and training both on the job and off, other

education groups from the Ishpeming School System, and from Michigan Technical Institute, and various other places that held the required training and schooling for this and many other jobs. Special equipment used included: loaders, trucks, tractors, and dozers, surveying instruments, transits, levels, and drafting equipment. These special tools needed to be used for surveying and other jobs such as hauling dirt with the dozers when working in the mines and pulling out huge boulders that were lodged in the mines, which required the use of this equipment.

When I asked Martin about the most challenging or difficult part of his job, his reply was, "Well, getting the job done correctly and trying to save the company money and keeping the job going." The most challenging duties Martin had to perform included all of the engineering in addition to the drilling and blasting work. According to Martin, the biggest responsibility of his job was, "I think the welfare of your people that work for you, watch their safety." he stated. His co-workers were good to work with, and they helped to really keep the job going, according to Martin. Actually, there are so many humorous stories about them, he could not single out just a few to mention.

Of course, in mining, there are accidents. Almost everywhere workers go, they are running the risk of an accident. Blasting accidents were, and probably still are, very common and quite serious. Martin told me just a little bit about a few accidents that occurred during his mining days. Once, a blasting accident occurred, and fortunately nobody was hurt, but, it was still a very dangerous and serious situation. Some accidents have included trucks and bulldozers, sometimes, when he was with

his surveying crew, workers would get cut or hurt when they were out working.

Which would bring us right to safety standards. "They have come a long way and the CCI is very safety-minded and the welfare of their people probably comes at the top of the list," replied Martin.

People that are hourly workers in the mines and are union members go on strike. For the last forty-five years, Martin has some how been a part of every strike except for one of them. He described incidents on the picket lines from the strike of 1946, at the Mather A in Ishpeming. His father and uncles were working at this time, and Martin told me that there were fights, cars being turned over, and shots fired. Strikes, now, are more organized. The importance of these unions is to provide negotiation between the company and the union members. Martin always sided with the management. He has never been on a picket line, for he was loyal to the management.

When I asked Martin about what the most important skill to learn when planning any kind of a career is, he answered. "Loyalty, they'll have to have loyalty." Loyalty is a skill, it can't be bought at a store, it has to be learned. Loyalty is a skill everyone should know and have. Loyalty is what helps companies help out others that work for and with them. In Martin's opinion, the future of the Tilden and Empire looks great. It better be, for this area, mining is one of the most important industries in the Upper Peninsula. In general, the entire steel industry will probably down-size a little, but as long as the steelworkers are competitive they will probably stay in business. Everywhere people go, they're likely to find

competition. Sports such as basketball, football, hockey, baseball, races, etc. have two competitive sides. Competition is something that makes some businesses rich and some poor. Cleveland Cliffs needs to keep curtailing costs and keep progress and research going to remain competitive. Martin said that CCI is doing all of this very well.

The success of CCI has varied because of "The loyalty of the employees plus the management and the employee cooperation," said Martin. History will remember the company of CCI throughout the years, during its time and after. Martin says, "Well, they've been over 150 years now and I think they're going to be here for another 150 years." Earlier, women weren't even allowed to work in the mines. When they were finally allowed, they were only allowed to work in offices, but now they are even allowed to drive the huge trucks and work inside the mines. Who knows what is in store for CCI?

In his spare time, Martin enjoys hunting, fishing. He likes being out in the woods, and sometimes working around the house. I really enjoyed talking with Martin. The interesting ways he emphasizes his thoughts is both educational and enjoyable. I would like to thank him for this wonderful interview. Here is some last advice from Martin to the students of today desiring a career in the iron industry. "Learn all, take all that you can, get out there and use it."