

Boone Bell

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HARD WORKIN'MAN

Mr. Gary Baldini was born in Negaunee, Michigan in 1949. His father worked as a supervisor for underground mining and his "ma" worked at the Acocks Medical Clinic.

Mr. Baldini has been working in the mines for over twenty-three years. He's been at the Empire Mine for the majority of his mining life, but prior to the Empire, he worked at the Mather B and Humbolt mines.

Currently, Mr. Baldini works as an automotive mechanic, "working on anything from little compressers right up to a two hundred and forty ton truck. He enjoys his job because "every day is interesting, always something new, something different." The hardest part of his job is lifting the equipment. Everything is so big workers either need a crane or a forklift to lift it. "Everything is gettin' so heavy," said Mr. Baldini.

When I asked Mr. Baldini if he had been in any humorous or unique situations, he told me that sometimes when one forgets to release the pressure off hydraulics systems and differentials, some pretty big oil spills occur. "Most of the time you're in the way," stated Mr. Baldini. He said it is kind of funny "unless it happens to you."

Mr. Baldini told me that his job has gotten a little easier, but everything is still so big and heavy so the weight is a big factor. He also mentioned that a lot of the new trucks are



computerized so it takes a little more thinking and troubleshooting to get to the problem. "It's not as easy as it used to be," he stated. It is also sometimes tough to keep his work area comfortable. In the winter it is too cold to leave the garage doors open, but if someone does not open the doors it gets very smoky from running the big trucks.

In Mr. Baldini's opinion the union is an integral part of the mine. To him health and safety are the most important parts of the mine. He said that in some of the non-union places a lot of guys are getting hurt or killed. Another advantage of the union is if someone wants to try to make a bargain with the company, it is a lot harder if you only have a small group of people. If someone was to have a very large group of people it would be easier and more convincing to whoever is in charge.

Mr. Baldini included safety as a main concern of the company. "Every day you go to work, you have to take your brain there with you," stated Mr. Baldini. Just because you go to work, you may not be coming home. Looking out for yourself and your partner will really pay off. "Every corner there's a dangerous aspect to that job." Safety has to be the number one priority whether it's on or off the job.

Mr. Baldini and I talked a little bit about the future of the mines. "I think the life expectancy of the mine is going to go down." There is still so many million tons of ore in the ground, but with the bigger trucks and more advanced equipment, the ore is going to be removed much quicker now. "I can't see how it's going to last anywhere near the twenty-first century." he expounded.

I would just like to thank Mr. Baldini for all of the



helpful information he shared with me. I think I learned a lot  
and I am glad he enjoys his job at the mine.