

Holly Lawen

Sixty Three

THE LIFE OF A MINER

My uncle, Mr. Roy Dymond, was born in 1953, at Bell Memorial Hospital in Ishpeming, Michigan. He was one of four children. His father along with his grandfather, and great-grandfather all worked in the iron mining industry.

Mr. Dymond went through high school, and when he graduated in 1971, CCI was doing a lot of hiring. Mr. Dymond applied and started work in 1975.

After he got hired, he put in a little over eighteen years at the Tilden Mine, most in the Tilden pit and a couple of years at the Tilden mill.

Over the years Mr. Dymond has performed a variety of jobs for CCI. One job Mr. Dymond spoke of was having to operate a rotary drill which was one of his most challenging duties. The job included "moving the drill from one side of the pit to the other side and timing your moves to coincide with the truck traffic," he stated.

Over the years Mr. Dymond has had to accept more responsibility for his work. He has also had to take on a few extra duties "there's a little bit more to do each year I guess," he explained.

Mr. Dymond also recalled that he has met all different kinds of people, "some are jokers, some are serious people, you meet all kinds . . ." The thing he has enjoyed the most about his job

is all the different people he's been able to meet throughout the years.

During his years working, Mr. Dymond has been involved in various near accidents. One he remembered was when he was adding drill steel which weighed about two tons, and it was hanging about five feet above the platform he was working on. Mr. Dymond was cleaning it out, reaching up inside of it with his arm. After it was all cleaned out Mr. Dymond turned his back, and it dropped from the top of the drill. If it would have fallen a few seconds later Mr. Dymond would have been seriously injured. Another near accident Mr. Dymond was in was where he almost rolled the front end loader over, "Fortunately there was a big three foot in diameter pipe just below me and it stopped me from rolling over."

Currently Mr. Dymond is a steady day shift general laborer which mostly includes clean-up work and miscellaneous jobs. In this job Mr. Dymond told me about some of the working conditions, "fairly dirty and dusty but we do have safety respirators and there is a lot of noise . . ."

Since the 70's Mr. Dymond recalls that safety standards have come a long way, "there's a lot more enforcement on the rules and a lot more follow ups on any accidents," stated Mr. Dymond.

Mr. Dymond remembers a letter he received from the pit superintendent. He was running a seventy ton truck and because of a failure in the drive unit the truck went into overspeed. Mr. Dymond took quick action and parked the truck and shut the engine down. The letter recognized his quick actions which resulted in a savings of approximately \$20,000 in repairs.

Throughout his eighteen years Mr. Dymond has also been a

part of the union. He has been on strike three different times. He feels that the purpose of a picket line is to show solidarity--that workers are backing their negotiators. Mr. Dymond also states, "also it's sort of a watch dog type of thing."

Mr. Dymond feels the steelworkers union is important, "It helps maintain the fairness and equality on the job, and not only for the people working for a union."

One incident in 1990 Mr. Dymond recalled from the picket line was that they had "pets" running around. "We'd be sitting around at night around the bonfire and maybe a fox would come into the fire or a skunk." Well one night both the fox and the skunk came in from different directions. They ended up meeting nose to nose about five feet away from the strikers. Everyone was scattering in different directions wondering what was going to happen. Fortunately nothing happened, and nobody got any odors from it.

Mr. Dymond believes he will continue to work in the iron industry for another twelve years. During these years he feels CCI will have to keep up with modern technology in order to stay competitive.

Because of the modern technology, women are also playing a role in the iron industry. When asked about the role of women, Mr. Dymond said, "They're adapting and they're doing a fine job." He also feels that women will even be hired on a fifty fifty basis.

Mr. Dymond stated that the young people of today need to learn computer skills, crafts such as welding, electronics, electricity, and maintenance. Mr. Dymond also felt that a

student will not only just have to learn one of these but maybe all of them.

Mr. Dymond feels that our generation will not have as much of an opportunity to work in the iron industry as he did when he was younger. He believes that we should go on with our education and not count on the iron industry as being our career.

When Mr. Dymond is not working day-shift he enjoys motorcycle riding, bowling, and he plays a lot of softball in the summer. He is also an avid Green Bay Packer fan.

I am glad I had the opportunity to speak with my uncle. I have learned many things about mining and the iron industry in general. I know now how dangerous it can be and the challenges the men and women like my uncle face each day.