

## Eric Lindstrom

eighty

## WORKING AT THE MINE

Perry Palomaki has many family members that have worked in the iron ore mines. His dad's brother Uncle Urvin worked for thirty-five years as a boss at the Empire Mine. His grandfather worked at the Lloyd Mine. Perry Palomaki's great-grandfather worked at the old North Lake Mine. "It goes back three generations if not four" stated Mr. Palomaki.

Perry has worked for C.C.I. for twenty-two years. On the job Perry uses all types of tools. He uses high voltage testers and meters. Perry uses pipe benders and threaders. He uses about any kind of hand tools. One of the most unique pieces of equipment is a pumper that puts out fifteen thousand volts. It is a big box that generates voltage to find faults in cables. It is an interesting piece of equipment because it makes a big crack like a rifle going off. Perry explained, "When you find the fault and the spot, it snaps and it can scare you a little bit".

What Perry likes about his job is the variety of tasks he does. He could be on a major job and be called to another place. Basically it would be a safety problem, and he would then have to go back to the main job. "You never know what you are going to do day from day," Perry said.

One of the most challenging jobs Perry faced was climbing vertically up a fifty foot wall to adjust a crane. He was sent



to fix an electrical problem. When he got up on the crane, he found out that one of the mechanics had adjusted the brakes too tight. Perry readjusted the brakes and lowered the crane. He just walked off the crane.

Perry had a great deal of work as an electrician. Which he has been for nineteen years. When he is working, he is mainly trouble shooting. Trouble shooting is the process of finding the fault in an electrical error. Trouble shooting can take many hours or even days. "Sometimes it takes days to find a very simple problem," Perry told me.

Perry also has to do maintenance of the electric shovels, drills, and trucks. He has to work on the plant itself and all of the building.

Over the years Perry has seen a wide variety of changes. He saw the mechanical operated circuitry change to solid state circuitry. At the plant more is available through computers. On the job the workers need a lot more training to improve skills to help them to go faster and help make the job more productive.

Perry enjoys working with his co-workers. They are a bunch of guys that are a little more educated than other workers at the mine. They have to have mechanical, welding, and electrical experience as well as hydraulics. They are like a Jack of all trades.

When Perry was on the job, a worker came from the Tilden. He was made a maintenance foreman, but he did not have any experience with the shovel. He found some iron balls full of grease. The foreman thought the shovel was falling apart. He ran to his superior and he told him to take them to the pit



engineer. The pit engineer could not stop laughing because the foreman did not know that the shovel ran on roller bearings.

A new worker at the mine was watching the shovel. The shovel swings around in a circle when it digs. He told one of his superior that he was watching and to swing the other way so it dose not unscrew. One day one student had came in for summer tranning. He saw all the yellow out houses out in the pit. He was woundering why only the electrititions have the keys. The houses were for connecting high voltage power and he thought that they were out houses!

Over the years C.C.I has been a safe company. They have made alot of improvements. It is just that they learn more about safty. The last few years the company made an effort to push safty. The impovements are they are getting better equipment. They are always setting better standaards. "There is always room for improvement" Perry said.

When Perry is working on the job, he has to be extremely careful. He sometimes uses 4160 volts, to run the shovels. That is eight times the voltage used in homes which is 5000 wats!

On the job accidents happen often, but usually it is it a worker's own fault. Another way people get hurt on the job is by not looking by hot metal. One bad accident that hapend was at Republic. Some operators had been steaming out a pipe to clean it out. The piping had fallen on some hot pelets. The steam went up the tube. There were three people that got steammed. One died because the steam was so hot it scorched the inside of his lungs. One of the other two had to retire because of his skin condition. The other gentleman just had some minor



lung damage and, he returned to work. Perry never had been in any bad accidents. So I had a chance to interview him.