

Thou Lorenz

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WORKING AT THE MINE

Greg Baldini, my uncle, was born in 1955, at Bell Memorial Hospital in Ishpeming. Today he has a wife Jacquelin and two children, Aaron and Dawn. Two of his brothers and both his parents worked in the iron industry.

When asked why he chose to work in the iron industry, he said "The money was good, and I wanted to stay in the area."

He has worked in many places like the Pioneer Pellet Plant, underground at the Mather B Mine, The Empire Mine, and he is now at the Tilden Mine. His current job is as a control room operator in the pellet plant. He has to make sure the pellets come out shaped correctly.

When asked what was his most difficult job over the years, he said "Probably working underground mining. It was all manual labor. It was hard. It was a good challenge."

Now jobs involve computers, and he has to monitor pellets in a control room with the aid of a computer and lots of machines. Machines are a big part of his job in the control room. Even there, however, he has seen some accidents. One of them was very bad--it was when a man caught his hand in a cable winder tearing three of his fingers to the bone! Uncle Greg had to help wrap the man's hand up. Despite witnessing this accident, he thinks that safety has improved over the years.

That is why he is in a union to protect miners against that. The union also makes sure the miners get fair treatment from the mine and fair wages. If the union thinks workers are not paid fairly, they will go on strike. The mine can not produce pellets if there are no workers so the mine usually compromises with the union to come up with a plan they both like. After that miners go back to work, but with a bigger pay check or more benefits like better health care.

After all the days at work, in spite of some accidents, and maybe a strike, the pellets are made and sent all over the country. I was very lucky to have been able to interview my Uncle Greg who works in the mine.