

Perry Kimunen

eighty-six

"YOU WORKED REAL HARD BUT YOU HAD FUN"

"Underground it was one happy family." These were the words of my grandfather, Glenn Perry. Even though I have heard some stories concerning his life in the underground mining, I knew he would share things I had never heard before.

Grandpa was born in Republic, Michigan. He had two sisters, Elight and Jean, and a brother named James. He has worked for Cleveland Cliffs Mining Company for forty years and seven months. He choose to work there because of the wages. Some of Grandpa's relatives that have worked in the industry were his father, Lenord Perry, and uncles: Bill Freeman, George Freeman and Warner Freeman. He also stated that he had three uncles that worked in coal mines in the west, and iron mines in Republic, Michigan, which shows that mining is a tradition in the Perry family. Only one of Grandpa's relatives were killed in a mining accident. His grandpa Freeman was killed from a fall of earth. Mr. Freeman died when grandpa's mother, Jennaveeve, was very young.

Grandpa worked at several mines here in the Upper Penninsula, such as: the Mather A, the Tracy Mine, which he worked at for seven months, as well as all the open pit mines from the Humbold and Republic to the Tilden. Grandpa retired from the Empire Mine.

To get the pay the workers wanted, they would be a member of

the United Steel Workers Union. Grandpa was a member from the time he started working. "If you didn't have a union you wouldn't have anything." he stated. Being in the union was very important to grandpa, because with out a union workers they would get paid, what he calls "peanuts".

Grandpa loved his job very much, but the thing he liked most was the open pits. "It was a nice group of people to work with." he explained. Grandpa has witnessed many humorous situations through out the years. "So many through the years, I could have wrote a book." Grandpa described working underground as one big happy family. He said there was a closeness and friendliness between the over eight-hundred men that worked there.

There wasn't any thoughts of choosing a different carrier for Grandpa. He thought of it as a good way to make a living, and after thirty years he could not quit and give up his retirement benefits he had. " I think if I had to do it all over again, I would." he explained when I asked him if he would choose mining as a career.

The key success to Cleveland Cliffs is good workers. " The men that work at CCI are sure dedicated." he stated. If a person is going to work at CCI he should " Be a good worker and have a little training." he explained. Training should be in whatever feild they were in. If they wanted to be a welder, they would go to welding school. My Grandpa's advice for the people of tommorrow is to have a clean hair-cut, look neat and talk sensibly, in order to succeed.

If you ever wondered what it was like going underground, grandpa

described it as looking like nothing but tunnels. A person entering might wonder what he got himself into.

The duties and machines Grandpa had to work with were numerous. He ran a jet peircing machine that burned holes in the ground, front-end-loaders, a four-hundred loader and a six-hundred loader which loaded cars and other things. He had to learn how to operate machinery. "It was pretty tricky, and it could be dangerous." he stated. One of the duties Grandpa preformed was foreman which required much work and was a "tedious" job. The biggest responsibility of his job was taking care of machinery, watching out that he did not hurt anybody and "keeping your eyes open at all times."

Over the years Grandpa's duties have changed. The duties went from drilling and taking out the ore by tonnages, to using an eight-ton skip, which is now a twelve-ton skip, to take ore out of the ground. He also used trucks that went from thirty-five to sixty to one-hundred to one-hundred thirty tons. Shovels that loaded the trucks used to be seven and eight yard buckets. Now they are twenty yards. He also used computers in the trucks linked to a dispatcher so his whereabouts were always known. Computerization helps produce better work production.

Grandpa witnessed only a few accidents. Unfortunately, one happening to him. He slipped off of a machine, twisted his back, and had to have surgery. Other accidents occured while loading, but they were not very serious.

Grandpa explained that there were not many accidents because his work was relatively safe. "Saftey wise it was perfect." He described. Cleveland Cliffs had a wonderful saftey program. For instance, workers had to hang up everything so others would not

trip. They also had to make sure there was not any loose earth above them. If anyone was caught violating a safety rule, they were laid off. "CCI is one of the greatest places to work, safety wise." he explained.

Grandpa believes CCI will be remembered because of the old miners that came here from overseas. The men are great, and they were competitive. "You worked real hard but you had fun." he remembered

My grandpa has given me a lot of things, over the years. This project has helped me learn more about him, and I appreciate the history he has given to me. I would like to say, Thank You Grandpa.