

Paulette Kaminon
interview with
Marvin Blight

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me: Paulette Kaminon November 29, 1989 I am interviewing Marvin Blight and it is an autobiographical interview. It is taken place at Marvin Blight's house. Me: When and where were you born?

Mr B: Born and raised in Ishpeming January the 11th 19 hundred and twenty three

Me: What were you parents names?

Mr B: My moms name was Laru and my dad's name was Charles.

me: Did you live during the great depression?

Mr. B: Ya I did, of course it's kind of dim to me, but we didn't have it all that bad. Dad was working at the grocery store, three days a week, dug ditches in the winter, drainage ditches, two days a week. Mom worked for 10¢ an hour for Ace w. Gazard. Really I didn't have it all that bad, bad enough. I know other people that were living off alot worse than we were. Still, it was tough. We just didn't go out and buy things.

me: How many children were in your family?

Mr. B: Just me. One boy.

me: Where was your family originally from?

Mr B: Well, both of my grandparents were from England, Cornwall. Grandpa Blight, my dad's father was born in Target Whales and then moved to Cornwall. The rest of them, my mother's father was born in St. Ives, Cornwall.

Me: What made them come to America?

Mr. B: At that time, the time that they came. They were looking for Cornish miners, they needed hard-rock miners and they didn't have any experienced hard rock miners in the United States so they ordered these Cornish miners. Probably should add something I didn't before, my father's father, Grandpa Blight he was kind of an amateur magician and hypnotist he was also an accompanist musician. He played the piano quit well and and he played the double Bass tuba.

~~He~~ He had an act on stage at the Ishpeming theater he also played the piano job, he was always good at it. He played in a little saloon.

Me: Are you married?

Mr. B: Yes, almost 44 years.

Me: How many children do you have?

Mr. B: Bradly

Me: Where did you go to school?

Mr. B: Right here, Ishpeming, K-twelve.

Me: What was school like?

Mr. B: Well, totally different. In the lower grades it was rougher. Now you don't have dress codes, there we did.

Mr. Bleont. Slacks the boys wore shirts and sweaters and ties. And jeans were strictly not allowed. No sneakers then. And the girls were not allowed to wear slacks, they wore skirts. And don't leave school grounds, we had a strict area. I remember this teacher

~~~~~ she had a pointer she just loved for somebody to fall asleep. The had came out on the desk and whak! Right across the fingers. She never missed, (chuckling) ~~~~~

~~~~~ although things still aren't the same. Back in the first grade I had my favorite teacher. She taught me how to spell, her name Cora Badella. She kept me after school for two weeks. <sup>that</sup> The one thing I can really remember and I got to give her credit for that. ~~~~~

~~~~~ I really liked her. ~~~~~ You know there's an old saying about history. A lot of the kids say, "flash back, flash back." It goes like this, "he who forgets the past closes the door to the future." Have you ever heard that one before?

me: No

Mr. B. You've got to remember the past because that's where you came from. And if you forgot it your in trouble. What else?

Me: Can you think of anything really humorous when you were in school?

Mr. B: Well I can think of two things. In German class it was a hard class. We were reading an expression in German and what it means is he search for him, he looked for him. ~ and it struck him funny cuz he thought it meant he socked him and that hoarse laugh came out everybody started laughing and it disrupted the entire class. <sup>10:40 min.</sup> Nobody could stop laughing. He egged it on because of his horse laugh he had. He, his laugh was really something. When we graduated, well we had this teacher in school we use to call Bull. He was built like a bull. He wasn't to bad he was another good teacher. We paid attention to him. Everybody used to give him a bad time he was also the junior-varsity football and basketball coach. The only way we could get him off history, he taught both ~~ancient~~ ancient and world history. The only way we could get him off the subject was to get him talking about football. He had an old 29 chev that was bright orange. He went out west on a trip and he ~~was~~ saw ~~the~~ a guy driving the same car, dragging a trailer behind, Passed him on the road. Bull was totally upset with that. It hurt his pride to have somebody pass him dragging a trailer. This guy, it was

Mr. B: (cont.) graduation night and we all took our cap and gowns off in his room. The boys, the girls were in a different room. Bull stuck his head in the door and said, "I was never so happy to see a class graduate in my life. He wasn't really because there were tears in his eyes. We gave him a hard time but he loved it. Because he knew we respected him. And he loved us but it was hard for him to say that. I don't know of one ~~~ but I'd give it a whirl. Mr. Going, he and another teacher and I respected both. ~~~ Mr. Going, he was our music instructor. ~~~ we had a good one, in fact the very best. ~~~

Me: How far was it to school? ~~===~~

Mr. B: About seven miles.

Me: How did you get there?

Mr. B: We walked. I was delivering the mining journal by bicycle. I had to be done by 8:15 in the morning because at 8:15 school started. ~~~ I picked up another route so I had a double route. The Mining Journal and Setenial. So I had 226 papers. I pedaled both those papers every morning before I went to

Mr B: (cont.) School. I got up every morning at 5:30 went down to the depoe to meet the train that brought the papers in. I had to meet two different trains. I had to pick up Marquette papers too. I started pedaling at about 6:05 finish by the time I went to school. More than once I'd come home from delivering and it would be quarter to 8. Mom always had oatmeal. I can't stand oatmeal to this day. She had oatmeal for me then she'd go to work. I'd run down the hill to school and I'd trip. I'd just barely get into class at 8:15. I'd probably have to stay after school if I were late. That's o.k. I had a 4:15 class anyway. I would have to stay until 5:00.

Me: What did you do for fun?

Mr B: Well, I did alot of skiing. In the summer time it was fishing. I loved fishing. We had a ski jump. The first pair of

Mr B (cont.) jumping skies I had were wood. ~ The second day I broke my skies. That was something else. They were expensive then. Paid 20 dollars for my first pair. Saved alot of my money from paper routes and I paid for them myself. ~ I tried suicide ski jumping & I don't know what was worse combat or that. I can still see myself going up over those trees. I was skinny then too. I only weighed about 85 pounds. Some difference hey. We skated. I loved to skate. ~ We would skate all night and \$ we'd get home and just crawl into bed on our hands and knees.

Me: What kind of chores did you have?

Mr B: After dad passed away I did alot. Shoveled snow, hauled the wood, & grass cutting. ~ The hardest chore was starting the fire in the kitchen stove. We had a gas stove but never use to light it. Once it a while. So we had a combination of wood and gas stove. ~ We had to keep a wood supply good. Somebody had to, guess who!

Paulette Kammerer  
Red Dust Interview w/ Marvin  
Blight

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me: Did you use to go down to the rail road tracks?

Mr B: Oh ya. — My dad use to say, "take that sled and go get coal." We only lived 2 or 3 blocks from the railroad tracks. We'd take that sled and real it down to the tracks. Wait for the train to come by, chase that train down the tracks and pick up loose coal. — We'd put it in a burlap bag. This was a nightly ritual. —

me: Were there other kids down there too?

Mr. B: Oh ya, the tracks would be loaded. Coal at that time was 5 dollars a ton and who had 5 bucks? But oh ya that track would be loaded. Kids would come from all different locations. There would be about 10 of us from our location that would help each other fill our sleds. That's how we heated house.

me: Did you go to church?

Mr B: Oh ya. I always went to St. Methodist Church every Sunday and holidays. That's where we'd see the whole family at once.