

Joy Waters  
interviewing  
Paul Christain

me - where were you born?

P.C. - 1917

me - where

P.C. - Orlando, Wisconsin

me - who were your parents

P.C. - who were they, My mother + father.

me - they're names

P.C. ~~they're~~ names they're names were Paul Christain +  
Millie Christain (Pausiod)

me - what did your dad do for a living

P.C. - my dad was a house painter + a car  
mechanic

me - how many brothers + sisters did you have?

P.C. - 2 brothers + 1 sister

me - what were they're names

P.C. - Earl, Robert, + Elaine

me - which one did you get along with the best

P.C. - + " " " " " " em. )



me - where did you live for most of your childhood life?

P.C. - my dad came here when I was about 1 year old and lived in Marquette ever since,  
me - what ~~is~~ was your childhood like?

P.C. - Well I was the oldest in the family I had to take care of the rest of the kids help out things like that

me - where did you go to school?

P.C. - I went to school lots of schools around Marquette ended up in the Grosvenor High school

me - how did you get there?

P.C. <sup>well</sup> we sometimes we used to walk to school?

me - how far did you have to go?

P.C. - about a mile & 1/2

me - how long did you go to school? until what grade?

P.C. - I went until I got to the through the tenth grade

me - what kinds of things did you do in school?

P.C. - what did we do in school we learned the same thing as you kids do I guess

me - what was favorite subject?

P.C. - I don't know



me - why did you like that particular subject?

P.C. - I don't know

me - who was your favorite teacher?

P.C. - I don't remember

me - About how long were you in school?

P.C. - I went through the tenth grade school?

me - How long was the day during school?

P.C. - The day during school I think we started about  
half past 8 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon

me - what kinds of chores did you do around the house  
when you got home from school?

P.C. Well it was always the wood pile chop wood  
bring it in haul the ashes out help out around the  
house shovel snow cut the grass same as all the  
kids do

me - did you have any pets?

P.C. - we always had a dog was our pet

me - what kind of pets did you have?

P.C. - we had one year we had a lamb that we raised  
when we were on a farm we had her for a



about a year, we lived on a farm for about  
1 year during depression. we had a lamb tamed  
that and had that for pet.

me - what kind of childhood diseases did you  
have?

P.C. - well, in them days ~~we had~~ ~~we had~~ no vaccines  
for anything so we got all the childhood  
diseases you could possibly get. Whooping cough  
the works. Dumb questions,

me - what was it like during the Great Depression?

P.C. - During the Great Depression it was rough  
going. Didn't have no money for anything. If  
you wanted anything you had to make it or  
go without so that's where I started to make  
things.

me - what was the big snowstorm like in '38?

P.C. - That was the worst storm I've ever seen.  
There was ~~no~~ snow piled up so high + so fast  
that I remember walking right after the storm  
~~was over~~ I walked in the roads ya know + I  
was plunking along + pretty soon one leg  
went down + I was what's the matter here.



P.C. - pull my leg out. Couldn't pull it out + when I got it loose I looked down + I went through a top of ~~the~~ car. Cons in them days had cloth tops ya know + there was a car buried under ~~there~~ in the snow. So the snow was pretty deep. You couldn't get to the store you couldn't get anyplace.

me - where were you when that happened?

P.C. - where was I?

me - ya

P.C. - I was up on front street up on the hill by the fire Hall. I remember that.

me - where were you when pearl harbor was bombed.

P.C. - I was living in Detroit then

me - how long were you living in Detroit?

P.C. - about 3 or 4 years I guess

me - where were you during World War II?



P.C. - I was working in factories + round  
Detroit

me. what did you do for a living?

P.C. - well during the War I worked in the  
Stensen aircraft factory + a place where they  
made engines + a then when I come back  
I got to be a auto repairman, airplane  
mechanic, and then I did that until I retired  
+ when after I retired I took up player piano  
rebuilding

me - when you were working did you travel anywhere?

P.C. - Did I travel anywhere?

me - yes.

P.C. - no, well took one trip out to California +  
back but that's all

me. what were you doing when you were there

P.C. - auto repairman

me. did you work on any particular persons car or  
any thing?



P.C. - Oh when I was out there I worked at this big Pontiac/Cadillac dealership + one day a Bette Davis brought her car in ~~to~~ ~~there~~ that I worked on that bumped out a fender for her + she gave me a nice big fat tip I remember that me - what was it like on the ride to California + back?

P.C. - what was it like on the ride <sup>out</sup> there + back?

me: yeah

P.C. - on the way out there it was pretty tough going because I was hauling a big house trailer + it was pretty slow + on the way back it was faster because we go ~~ride~~ <sup>ride</sup> of the trailer

me - what was it like going through all those curves + through mountains + everything?

P.C. - well with the trailer on it was terrible it was got on one road that was really bad then I went down the hill + the brakes started burning on the trailer



P.C. - (cont.) I remember that + that scared me when the brakes started burning it <sup>it wouldn't</sup> slow down at all so I was lucky to get down to the bottom of the hill all in one chunk

me - where the cars going fast, faster than you were?<sup>o?</sup>

P.C. - Oh they were all passing me cause I was I couldn't go very fast with the trailer. The only time I went fast was down a hill I guess. (lighting a cigarette)

me - what made interested in a building things.

P.C. - well back in depression days we didn't us kids we were just kids then + we didn't have any money for toys or anything so I started off by widdling things with a knife + a hunk a cedar + firewood we used to widdle out airplanes + toys like that + then we made a wagon by just scurving up wheels here + there + a box + stuff so then that started me off with making things



P.C. - (cont.) when I wanted something I made it  
me - what was the first thing you built?

P.C. - let's <sup>see</sup> now the first thing I built ~~that~~  
~~now~~ I don't quite remember that was along  
time ago ya know hell of a long time ago  
first thing I built was um a diving helmet  
I think I took a old hot water tank cut  
it off put a window in it + a couple of  
valves + we used to go down lake Superior  
sit on the bottom watch the fish <sup>in</sup> about 20 feet  
of water (sighing) it was a lot of there +  
after + then I started making a a see  
after that I made some snow sleds with  
a <sup>airline</sup> engine in the back + a propeller in the  
front + made a one of them in 1939 + 9  
on one of them I used a model A engine  
I remember that + a I just kept building  
things one thing after the other + made  
a after I made ~~that~~ one snow sled I made  
another one made 2 or 3 of 'em yes about  
three of 'em + then a after that I a



P.C. - (cont.) in 1950 I made a little garden tractor  
+ then 54 or 55 made a midget race car a  
and see around 55 or so I made a swamp  
boat like they use down in Florida with an  
airplane engine in the back of it that thing  
go like hell + then after I did that I worked  
until quite a few years later + I started to  
build a airplane took me about four years to  
build yeah about 4 years or so + a we tried  
that out + it worked. Never had any plans for  
any thing just built it <sup>and</sup> but a every thing worked  
~~and~~ out all right the airplane I used for three or four  
years I guess + then after I retired from  
work I built a little truck that I still  
got and a "Nicolodren" piano that's one that  
plays the piano + about nine other instruments  
I still have that then I give up.

me - what kinds of instruments are in that piano?

P.C. - instruments in the piano?

me, - uh hu

P.C.



P.C. - piano, mandolin, um Indian block, snare drum, base drum, symbols & a secondary instrument a what the heck they call it a electronic keyboard that plays with the piano & a I think there's a another drum in there to a mandolin not a mandolin yeah a mandolin I said that um what's that other thing you shake a tamborine cowbells all kinds of things.

me - did any kids or animals get in the way of making things?

P.C. - well no kids I guess a little bit once in awhile

me - Did any of your kids or anybody help you make any of those things?

P.C. - Well not exactly no they a used to have a holder of them to hold something or something they not got very interested in any thing

me - Did you ever get in the newspaper or on TV?

P.C. - yeah couple times once a Channel 5

me - Did you ever get in the newspaper or on TV?



P.C. - (cont.) and then Channel 6 had a airplane  
on TV ~~is~~ on the news one night

me - what did you think of being on TV or  
in the newspaper?

P.C. - I didn't think too much of it I don't like  
that stuff (laughing)

me - when you got older what kind of animals  
did you have then?

P.C. - well when I was out in California I got  
a monkey + brought that back with me  
it was house trained as best you could I  
used to have a lot of fun with it play +  
~~raise~~ <sup>raise</sup> come swipe the food bananas, oranges  
stuff couldn't fall it up (laughing)

me - what other kind of animals did you have?

P.C. - ~~we had~~ a wild ones we used to get once  
in a while squirrels, stuff like that we'd tame  
them

me - Did you have any kind of birds or anything?



P.C. - Oh we had one bird once little parakeet  
that we had for a couple years or so I  
guess

me - Did you have those squirrels trained to  
come in the house or anything?

P.C. - mmm no that one we I got 'em a little  
tiny baby little red squirrel used to call  
him Peanuts + he'd crawl up in my pocket  
+ fall ~~to~~ ~~asleep~~ or just stick his head out  
he used to run around the house + he'd go in  
his little cage at night + make up his bed  
every night + took all the cotton bawls out  
+ put it back in until he got it just right  
+ then he'd go to sleep in it

me - That flying squirrel you had what was that  
like?

P.C. - Flying Squirrel. Fly squirrel wasn't much of a  
pet he'd ~~be~~ ~~found~~ him in a bean tunnel  
he was a little tiny tot. then we fed him  
out of our hand milk till ~~at that time~~  
~~he~~ ~~could~~ he got big enough to eat himself  
it. e but then a there more a night creature  
he wouldn't move around or do much during  
the day so when he got big enough to be



me - The pony that o you guys had what was that like?

P.C. - Pony. well that was your nos pony bought it + ones gonna ride it. she's gonna do this + that she never did nothing oh I broke that thing to harness + made a car for it a two wheel sulky car. we used to use that for two years I guess + finally I sold that because it wasn't getting much use around here just 'gettin' fat so I got rid of it