

Camp Saxwood
Interviewing
Mrs. Toni Poirier
Jan. 3, 1988

Me: When & where were you born? Page 1

Toni: I was born in Bessemer, Mi on
October the 13th, 1921.

Me: How many children were in your
family?

Toni: We had 5, 3 girls & 2 boys.

Me: What were their names?

Toni: Grace, Antionette, Rosemary, Joseph,
& Anthony

Me: Where did you live?

Toni: ~~When~~ When I was 4 years old we moved
to Vegaunee, Mi.

Me: What did your father do for a living?

Toni: He was a miner. Worked in the iron
one mine in Vegaunee.

Me: What kind of games did you play when
you were a child?

Toni: We used to play baseball & hide-n-go
seek, & we used to play cards like
smear & games like that. Dominos.
OK. (laughs)

Me: What school did you go to?

Toni: I went to St. Pauls school in Vegaunee & graduated
from St. Pauls school.

me: How did you get to school?

Toni: I had to walk or run.

me: How far?

Toni: I walked a mile & a half each way

me: Did you belong to any clubs or organizations?

Toni: Well I belonged to the fidelity club at St. Pauls school & a biology club outside of that, that was it.

me: Which of your teachers was your favorite?

Toni: They were all nice. I didn't have any special one.

me: What subjects did you like the best?

Toni: Biology

me: Why?

Toni: Because I loved plants & trees & I used to love watching flowers grow. I used to pick a lot of wild flowers & stuff like that.

me: What kind of chores did you have to do at home?

Toni: Chores? A lot of chores. I had to always do the dishes. I had to always clean ~~up~~ my room. I had to make my bed & then help my dad out in the garden, planting the plants & weeding the plants & flowers.

me: Did your other sisters do the dishes?

Toni: yes, they all helped & we had our turns

me: Tell about that one time when you were gonna be late for school & you had to do the dishes & your mom said she would comb your curls if you didn't do the dishes

Toni: My stepmother did that. I says well its 20 after 7:00 & I have to be to ~~school~~ Church for quarter to eight & I says I don't have time to do the dishes this morning. She says you get back here & do the dishes. I says "no I can't!" so I started going out the door & when I got to the gate she grabbed me by the back of the hair (laughs) & pulled me back & I had to do the dishes, before I went to school

me: ok. What kind of epidemics did you have to worry about when you were a child?

Toni: measles, scarlet fever was really bad although I didn't have it when we had scarlet fever in those days my 2 brothers got it & I was the other kids couldn't go to school because it was contagious so we had to stay home as long as they did with scarlet fever that was almost 2 weeks of school we missed.

me: When you were sick did the doctor come to your house?

oni: Yes, Dr. Much from We gannee came to the house & I had tonsilitus or something really bad & he said you should have your tonsils taken out so I says ok & when I got better they didn't bother me any more, until I was old enough to work & I got tonsilitus again & I thought well when I got better & I start to work then I'll have my tonsils out so I got better & went to work & I went to the doctor & I says

Toni: Well they said I should have my tonsils out, cause I've been having tonsillitis quite a bit & the doctor looked at my tonsils & said there's nothing wrong with your tonsils. I won't take them out. Now I still have my tonsils.

Me: As a teenager what kind of jobs did you have? Like did you work any place? (laughs)

Toni: No, my dad wouldn't even let me babysit. I just stayed home & watch my sister & brothers.

Me: Did you get paid?

Toni: No. Never got paid!

Me: How did you celebrate the 4th of July?

Toni: Oh we used to ~~go~~ always go downtown & watch the 4th of July & that was our big day to talk with different people we knew & things like that enjoyed visits with neighbors & relatives.

Me: Did you have any fireworks?

Toni: Oh yes they did downtown.

Me: Did (interrupts)

Toni: We used to buy fire crackers & small stuff like that nothing big.

Me: Do you remember any special occasions you had?

Toni: While I was in school?

me: no like I don't know

Toni: we used to ~~go~~ to the ski tournament all the time in February, but we didn't have enough money to pay for all our ah fees to get in to the tournament so we used to go in through the hills up & down the hills then used to watch the ski tournament from the foot of the hill. by the bluff. See we didn't have that kind of money in those days. to pay for five kids to go in. well we enjoyed it though. it was fun.

me: Do you remember the Great Depression?

Toni: Oh! I ever remember the great depression yes we ah my dad wasn't work we had to be on county what do ya call it now where you go & ask for food & get food stamps nobody was working very much people lost their money in the bank & stuff like that so we had to go get food ~~orders~~ ^{orders} well any way we didn't have to many dresses shoes or anything one or two pairs that was it

Toni: for addresses for Sunday change a couple for school & then you'd wash 'em & wear 'em again. Ya I remember the depression. It was very bad there were a lot of poor people. It was sad & what I can remember we would be sittin' down eating supper & pretty soon we lived near the railroad tracks & there was so many we used to call tramps at those times man well like now they call street people but that didn't have work & they'd be walkin' along the tracks & pretty soon they'd stop & knock on your door & ask for food & my dad would always instead of just givin' 'em food he would have come & sit right at the table with us & eat & then he'd give 'em something & away they'd go. It was really bad that depression was

Me: What was the big snowstorm like in 1938?

Toni: (draws in breath) That was terrible! there were the roads were drifted so that the cars or trucks or nothing

Toni: could pass through & the plows would break down while they were trying to plow the streets & we were walking ~~in~~ in fact I had pictures I could have showed you walk there were about 5 feet of snow in the middle of the road. by the time they got to our house & we lived ~~in~~ a mile & a half from town & we couldn't go to school, but we would eventually go to school on this when we had these big snowstorms. It was really something. But we were out of school for almost a week when we had big snowstorms like this like we've been having

me: Tell about that one time ~~when~~ you said you tried golfing.

Toni: oh! Well after I graduated I went to Marinette, Wisconsin to work & ah my brother-in-law was a golfer so I said "Gee I'd like to golf why don't ya show me how." So we went upon his Aunt Mary's farm & ah

he used to take

Toni: ~~with~~ his golf clubs & golf balls & he'd go in the field & he'd show me how to golf so I thought well I can do that, so I took the golf club & I put the ball down & I hit the ball & there was one cow in the field & I struck the ball & I hit that cow right on the back. (laughs) With the golf ball, I says I don't think I wanna play golf anymore (laughs) that was really funny though it was fun. Have ya got any more questions? Then after I graduated I worked for 5 years, got married had 3 kids.

me: where did you work?

Toni: I worked at a factory in Marinette Wisconsin making gloves during the war for the army & after that then I got married & came here then I went back to I joined the title one at school & we went to classes & I became a teachers aid

Toni: & worked at school as a teachers aid for thirteen years

Me: What's the title one?

Toni: Title one program is a government program that helps receptive problem children learn. Like say they can't remember what they heard & what they ~~say~~ or that & I worked at that for 13 years & I enjoyed it. That was the best job I ever had working with children I loved it ok.

(laughs)
(Stop tape remembers something)

Me: He has another incident about the 1929 depression.

Toni: Well this is a story that is really true & um during the depression when we didn't have money or that you'd go down & you'd ask for food at the county office & I went with my stepmother & asked for

Toni: some shoes. Well first when I went in the office the manager says what do you want & I says I would like to have a pair of shoes because I have holes in my shoes & ah he looked up at his desk & he has a pair of shoes down there & he says theres a pair try them on. So I tried them on & ah I looked at him & I says oh there too big for me he says oh there good enough so in those days you just took what you could get & wear them that was really something for a person to treat a little child like that they never forget so