

Interview with Florence Sleeman
December 25, 1983 Kristi Swanthwood

me: ^{okay} when and where were you born?

G: 1904 December 17

m: where to?

G: National Mine Tilden Township

m: okay um. Have you lived in the National Mine area all your life?

G: Most of it, ^{pause} till I got married

m: um, what year did you get married?

G: 1923

m: when, what did you think about the stock market crash? when in 1930?

G: That I can't tell you, I never thought very much about it
Mr, Mrs

m: yeah
um, Did you

m: Did you like president Hoover?

G: President who?

m: Hoover He was before, He was in, He was before President Roosevelt. Did you like him.

G: Oh Truman

m: No Hoover

G: Oh Hoover Hooverized we used to say, you know
They had things you had to Hooverize on and
He was president then. You had to try to live on your
^{year, yeah} rations. You know what I mean um, uh

m: ^{uh} yeah Did you, well when President Roosevelt got
elected, did you think that he would help the Nation
with his New Deals and Stuff?

G: well, I guess I did! ^{yeah} Cause I'm pretty sure ~~that~~ I
voted for him? ^{yeah} I must have thought he was
going to help.

m: yeah, Did what, did you where you involved in any like the
work relief programs around in this area.

G: no

m: no (pause) um, Did, was there any like... Did, Grandpa
work? Where did he work during the depression?

G: Gee I don't know, I think He worked ~~at~~ the mines then I'm not
sure, [?] Cause there was only six shifts a month. ^{myeah}

(m: Didn't he work) then he worked for the conservation department ^{at}
I don't know when he started for them? Fire officer
were there

m: was there like any camps around here like WPA camps
Works progression Administration

G: I think there was

m: They like build dams and Highways + stuff.

G: I don't know where they were [↑] mm.

m: They were building stuff like dams and buildings and stuff

G: Yeah I think so

m: laugh, laugh ya well I guess there were some around here but I'm not sure I know there was like

G: there was one somewhere but I don't know where it ~~was~~

m: I think there was one down in Gwinn

G: Should know too because I know there was ^{you know} young lads used to go to that camps maybe there was one out at Ross lake for all I know.

m: yeah but you don't know heah

G: m.m. ho, no! Better not put that on your tape (laugh, laugh) (ha, ha)

m: Did you listen to the. Did you have a radio?

G: umm yes!

m: Did you listen to FORI's fireside chats and stuff at night?

G: I don't know

m: You don't know

G: um, um (m)

m: Does did the banks in our area close the banks + stuff

G: ^{pause!} I can't remember this.
s.gn.

M: Were there people out of work though in this area?

G: Yeah there's hard to get work

M: Yeah. Did you work or did you just stay at home?

G: Oh when I was married in '23 I worked for a while at the laundry cause that's I was working when I got married and I still worked there for a while but I don't remember how long

M: Didn't you have your first kid. Didn't you have Aunt Joan in 1930

G: Not for seven years

M: ^{um} when was she born 1930?

G: um. 1923 I was married and I think it was seven years after ^{that} she was born

M: Yeah so that'll be 1930 then so you were living at the farm then weren't you?

G: No I lived in Salisbury then And I lived in Salisbury when I had Richard and I think he was nine months when we moved to the farm

M: Do you know what year you moved to the farm

G: Um um, when out the farm then see

m: what year did you move there?

G: Oh I don't know lets see know, Married in 23 didn't have any children for seven years. So what would that be

m: 1930

G: well then Joan must have been born in 30 then see ^{then} Richard was born just about 4 1/2 years after or something

m: So then you moved out to the farm

G: then Jimmy was born out the farm Then Judy I went in Ishpeming hospital and I had her The only one I went to the hospital on my mother took care of me on the the others

m: was your mother a midwife.

G: well she was for some people like she took care of me and she took care of my cousins had twelve children she took care of all of them so she used to go and help like they always had a doctor so did I have the doctor ~~with her~~

m: So your ma helped out the doctor while the people had the baby's

G: she was there she did uh-hu

m: Was there My ma told me there was a little store by the country market that your parents ran

G: Yeah they did have a little Candy Store

M: Did they have it during the depression or

G: No I don't know that it was during the depression then, cause that was when I was still single I was only a little kid when they had that candy store I don't ~~know~~ ^{remember} too much about it when I could remember that little candy store used to be a summer kitchen. So they didn't have to heat up the house in summer you know they'd have that to go and cook and eat there meals in.

M: Do you know if there was any like unions Did Grandpa join any unions like there are unions now?

G: Any what now?

M: unions

G: Unions

M: Yeah like theres CCI

G: I don't know I never heard

M: Did the Did most the mines close or did they stay open and just didn't have very many people

G: I think they were just part time Only son many shifts a week and month I think it was about six shifts sometimes there

M: Did was there. Did the kids go to school ^{and everything} during the depression

G: Umm Sure

M: Were there um. Did all ~~at~~ most of them go on all of ~~the~~ ^{or} ~~things~~ go

G: They all went as far as I know. Kris

M: ^{who's} Do you know who the principal of ^{the} school was and stuff?

G: Lord no I don't remember that far back

M: ~~was~~ you weren't going to school then so did the teachers get their salaries cut and everything

G: couldn't tell you that either

M: So the farmhouse was at the ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~tilben~~ mine right? where the ~~tilben~~ mine is now

G: No the mine isn't out there yet not out where that farm is

M: no where you lived isn't that where the ~~tilben~~ mine is now where you used to live, in the farmhouse

G: oh when I was

M: married

G: oh when I was married. no it wasn't near the farm. Not too far away I guess

M: But didn't they have to ~~tear~~ ^{tear} down the farm after you moved in by ~~the~~ the country market there

G: I don't know Kris

M: what did you do like on Saturday ~~night~~ nights and stuff did you go any place or.

G: went to the movies most of the time

M: Saturdays

G: um, m.

m: what about sundays did you go to church or anything

G: not too much

m: no

G: sometimes

m: Did you have like gatherings and stuff

G: m:

m: Did you have gathering of all your relatives and stuff
at somebody's house

G: oh yes theres' always somebody out to see us especially on
weekends ^{like you know} ~~and stuff~~. Saturday + Sunday

m: what would you do then just visit.

G: ^{used to} lots of time had ten or twelve to sit down for ~~dinner~~ ^{Supper}

m: yeah

G: u m m all come to visit

m: always busy cooking hey, yeah did how'd during christmas
time and stuff. Did you were there lot of gifts or just a few

G: well we all got something thats all I can tell you

m: ~~well~~ ^{but} it was something useful souths or something

G: oh no the kids got some toys too

m: yeah to play with.

G: I remember when Joan got a doll and a buggy you know I
got the doll ^{and}. I thought she'd be so pleased ^{cause} that the doll was
in a new buggy, she took the doll out and I said to her well

what do you think of the buggy Joan, u m m it's all right.

But all she thought of was the doll she didn't even push the ^{buggy}
buggy for a while. then after a while she put the doll back in the ^{buggy}

G: But I couldn't get over that I'd thought she'd be so pleased with the ^{cause} buggy you know

M: Did you always have enough to eat, and everything

G: Oh, yes

M: Did you always have ^{like} a garden or something

G: um m, yes Only potatoes and turnips and carrots and things like that you know ~~and~~ and our own meat Cause we always had something for winter like pigs to butcher and young veal like calves that are veal, we always had plenty to eat, one thing we never had to worry about, ^{you know.}

M: Did, was ^{were} like ^{there} your neighbors and stuff really poor? Did you

G: no they I guess they ^{must have been} were a mile or so the first one neighbor I don't think, I don't think his wife was living then. He was all alone that man ^{he's} called Anderson some used to call him Just a so which was the right name I don't know

M: Did you, ^{pause} Did you ^{um} used to play puckle & stuff

G: no, never had time for that by the ^{cause} time we got ~~done~~ ^{through} with ^{our} work in the farm part of it ready for bed.

M: Did you have horses too

G: mm,

M: Did you have horses & chickens

G: Oh ya, team & horses work horses

M: Did you used to raise your own hay & grain for them?

G: The hay but not the grain

M: Did you a, were the weddings the same as they are now?

G: Oh sure as far as I know.

Bm: But they probably weren't as big as they are now.

G: Not as big no.

m: But they were still
course

G: Some were I suppose people that had a lot of money

m: Were there any ^{you know} when they outlawed drinking were there any clubs around here that you could get in and drink? You know cause they outlawed drinking and stuff

G: Well there was I suppose but I never joined any

m: Did grandpa join any clubs? like

G: Well he ~~be~~ belonged to the oddfellows That's the only one ^{that} I ever knew him to belong to

m: Were there, was there a finntown.

G: Yeah, There's still a finntown as far as I know. out of National mine

m: Did like the people like the finns + Swedes all go to one place together

G: I don't really know why they called it finntown I don't know if there'll all finns there or not

m: G:
Probably (laugh laugh)

G: I was always called that Just like one part ^{of} between National mine + Salisbury they called that French town. Now whether they were all ^(I think it was) french there, I don't know must have been

a few french people though. ^(or not) That was years ago though

m: Did you um, was there a grange hall around here It was called Grange hall?

G: Yeah that ^{that} was between National mine and Escanaba River ^{well I don't know}
Some where I know Grange Hall.

m: What used to go on there and stuff

G: Yeah we used to go out there for sleigh rides ^a ~~lot~~ ^{in winter you know} of people did young people they'd have a team of horses + go out there have something to eat in that Grange Hall + go back again

m: ^{it was} Just like a serving place like a restaurant kind of

G: No you took your own food um, m

m: were there restaurants and ^{stuff} ~~at~~ around go out to eat at all or any thing

G: were there what

m: Did you go out to eat at restaurants or anything.

G: No no restaurants out there I + was in between National mine and way out by the Escanaba River there's nothing out there

m: Did some of the people in the area go to communism during the communism go over to russia or anything

G: not that I never kept track of that ^{kind of} stuff

M: Did the country market ^{did it} stay open ^{all} during the depression and stuff

G: ^{the} Country market

M: Year

G: That was always there ever since I ^{could} remember, but it was Annala's first ^{so} I was only a kid I could remember that being there.

M: What kind of railroads came into Do you know the railroads railroad trains & stuff Did they come into national mine or did ^{during the depression} they close down

G: The what

M: Railroads ^{the} trains

G: The trains, well the train used to go through there for over to the Tilden But I don't think that was till later years cause that Tilden mine I don't know when that opened up But then a train would go down to the powder mill to you know I don't know what they used to deliver down there.

M: Did the powder mill stay open.

G: Oh ~~yeah~~ ^{yes} not full it doesn't work too much ~~down there~~ ^{now though}

M: What did the powder mill do. I mean what went on there

G: Well they made ^{powder} I don't know what they made no use to ask me that either Mr. My brother worked there too he was killed there

G: I think it was 1911

M: Did ~~you~~ you were the funerals like in peoples homes

G: Um, ^(yes) most the time they didn't have like they do know
Funeral home people had them right in their own home corpse was
brought back to the home

M: What did you think of the depression? did it was it as really as
bad as people said it was an.

G: Well I don't know everybody said how bad it was but I was
always happy enough, I had enough to eat and enough to wear
maybe not all that I would have liked to wear but always enough
to keep clean and ^{keep} warm I was never hungry

M: ^{were there} lots of people in the area were they really, really, poor, Did you
know anybody that was really poor.

G: um, m(ho)

M: no, everybody was sorta doing okay I guess

G: Well I never went around very much to know

M: Yeah stayed at home

G: ya I lived in Salisbury first until we bought the farm I
don't remember what year that was Then we went out the
farm ^{well} ~~and~~ I never seen very many people only what come out
to see us like my own relatives

M: Did you, what kind of movie stars did you like? when you
went to the movies

G: um, I liked any thing to be truthfull. But they used to have movies that you'd go and get so much like a serial ^{you'd get} so much each Saturday well they were the big thing with us. One I can remember years ago I don't know what it's called the red circle I think and I think it was Ruth Rolan in it I couldn't swear to it and when she'd get to be bad a red circle would come out on her hand. When she wasn't bad ^{that wasn't} ~~it would be~~ there, no that's as much as I remember of that you'd see that red circle come out and you knew she's going to be in mischief.

M: Did you listen to the radio ~~lot~~ lots and the songs on the radio

G: No not much

M: You were always outside doing stuff

G: when we got out to the farm I used to listen to it when ^{all the} ^{bit} I'd be doing my chores in the house you know washing milk bottles and different things but

M: You had milking cows then

G: um (yes)

M: and pigs + chickens

G: about 12 of them ^{we got a} we got a gaso line milker so I didn't have to go into the barn anymore Clyde used to milk them

G: Cause they just had to be stripped + hence he'd put the milker on each one

M: ^{um} Did you milk them by hand then in the morning

G: At first we did umm.

M: Both of you

G: And there was fourteen cows and sometimes I get the top. How was it now there was one extra well anyway I'd milk so many and I always lagged ^{a little bit} behind so he'd get that extra one _{behind}

M: there was like thirteen cows maybe

G: Yeah I think so must have been see cause I didn't get the extra one to milk any way I was slower milking

M: Did um, did lots of people ^{um} bootleg + stuff make there own booze and sell it do you know.

G: Well ^{you} what do you mean know,

M: Well like bootlegging ~~is~~ did people make there own booze and sell it.

G: Oh I guess so I don't know much about that though I never found any but they used to say they did. Whether they did or not I don't know I was too busy out the farm then.

M: Well I guess that's it