

Megan Pepin's interview with Mildred Jones

This is Megan Pepin. I am interviewing Mildred Jones in her home in Ishpeming on February 21, 1993. I am interviewing her for Red Dust about her occupation.

me: When and where were you born?

Mrs J: I was born in St. Johns, Michigan on December 9th 1913. And I was not born in a hospital. I was born in my grandmother's home.

me: Really!

Mrs. J: ~~And it was it was on~~ My mother said that in those days they thought they should keep a baby real warm. and ^{I was} they kept me so warm I ~~was~~ ^{pretty} near died.

me: Really. Um what were your parents' names

Mrs. J: My parents names were Iva and Ethan Tolles and they were they were farmers. And we lived we lived in this. ~~no~~ We didn't have any electricity. ~~no~~ no outdoor toilet. ~~no~~ indoor toilet I mean to say, and in the winter ~~it~~ it was really cold.

me: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mrs. J: I only had two brothers. Uh, one was named Bernard and the other named Donald.

Me: Um

mrs. J: They were younger than me.

me: Did you and your brothers have to help with work on the farm?

mrs. J: Yes we did. I used to have to go out late and gather eggs and my father raised chickens and I had to gather eggs and then we raised sheep and, uh, sometimes the mother sheep wouldn't own her little baby lamb and so I had to have a bottle of milk and bring the lamb in the house and I'd feed the lamb ^{little} and then my brothers

when they got older ^{in the house} they had to go out and work in the fields I never had to do that. But then when I got older we we had thrashers. What I mean by that is, the thrashed, somebody came there and thrashed the grain and the beans and ^{then} my mother and I would have to prepare a meal for maby twenty men. So that was our job

me: Ya, sounds hard. Um, where did you go to school?

mrs. J: Well, when I started school they didn't have kinder garden in those days. You started in the first grade, and I went to a one room school house and it had eight grades in it, and, uh, that was a about a half mile from where I

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Mrs. J: lived. And I had to walk there, of course.
and in those days we didn't have snow
shoes. So you just about froze. ^{when you walked.} Then
after I got through the eighth grade I
went to Rodney B. Wilson high school in
town and a neighbor boy gave me a
ride every day. And it seemed like he was
always late so he'd have to stay after
school so I'd have to wait around for
him after school, too.

me: Were there lots of kids at the schools?

Mrs. J: Yes, there was.

me: Um, what was your usual school day
like? Did you have to get up real early?

Mrs. J: Oh, in the country school we started
at nine o'clock. ~~at~~ high school we started
school at eight o'clock and so I lived
about five miles from town, so I had
to get up quite early. And then, and then we
got out at about three o'clock in the
afternoon. And sometimes in the winter
my father would have to take me to
school on a sleigh because the snow
was so deep.

me: Really

Mrs. J: Couldn't go with a car

me: Um, what did you do after school?

Mrs. J: Well I first when I got home I always did
my homework the first thing

mrs. J: so I'd have that all done. and then I always helped my mother get everything in order and do the dishes.

me: um

mrs. J: and then I liked to play the piano.

me: yah

mrs. J: I forgot to say that before.

me: That's okay. Did, do you remember any sunny things that happened in school?

mrs. J: In school, I remember, oh, a football player broke his leg, and that's not sunny but, but anyway I sort of had a crush on him and so I went, wanted to go see him in the hospital. So another girl and I went and we were so embarrassed after we got there I wished we hadn't have gone.

me: why?

mrs. J: Uh, I felt real embarrassed about it. I ~~really~~ really liked him but I don't think he cared that much for me.

me: um, what did you do for entertainment with your friends?

mrs. J: We went to the movies mostly, there wasn't much else to do.

me: was it

mrs. J: In high school we had oh um dances every once in a while. we'd go to those.

me: Hmm. Where the movies expensive? Or cheap?

mrs J: No they were ten cents. Go to a Saturday matinee and it was ten cents.

me: Really, um, Do you have any special memories of your school days?

mrs J: Well, when I started going with my future husband, I had a lot of fun because we used to go to, they had square dances a lot in those days and we used to go to those.

me: mmm. How old were you when you moved to Ishpeming?

mrs J: mmm. I'll have to figure that one out. I think forty-one.

me: Why did you move to Ishpeming, were you looking for jobs?

mrs J: No, we'd come to Upper Michigan deer hunting for fourteen years and we liked it in Upper Michigan so much we decided we'd try and find a place to live here. So we came to Ishpeming and liked it.

me: Okay, umm did you have any other hobbies around here besides deer hunting?

mrs J: Well, well ~~did~~ ^{say} before, I like to crochet and um play the piano, and um, drive a snowmobile I like to read.

me: Um, what types of animals did you hunt besides deer? Any other ones?

mrs J: No just deer and bear.

me: Ya, um, did you get any awards for hunting?

mrs J: There was kind of a sunny one because I got an award of five dollars for getting the smallest buck.

me: Really, um.

mrs J: It was only a spike horn and it only weighed one hundred and five pounds.

me: Really.

mrs J: mmm.

me: Did anybody say anything about it?

mrs J: Well they kind of laughed about it.

me: Did you have to carry it in or did somebody help you or?

mrs J: No I dragged it all in by myself and there was some men came along and ~~with~~ a car on the road ~~where~~ I was dragging it and that's the way to do it if you get a deer you drag it in. And they didn't offer to help me at all.

me: Really, um, did you fish too?

mrs J: Oh, yes, I loved to go fishing and my husband had a boat and a couple of motors on it. And we used to go on Lake Superior a lot and then we'd go out on by Keewaunee on the Keewaunee Peninsula and we used to go fishing. And uh we'd fish for Lake Trout and ~~fish~~ Salmon, and I loved to fresh fish we would always cook them. I loved fresh fish.

me: Where did you go hunting?

mrs J: Well, when we first, when we lived in lower Michigan, we came to, came up here we used to go hunting at the near the Tiquamina Falls. and uh that's near Marquette. and then the bear was down by Marquette.

me: Um, what were your first jobs that you got in Ishpeming?

mrs J: Well, I worked at the Florist Bakery as a sales person. Then I had a job at the Iron Ore Printing ~~company~~ as a bookkeeper. And then, uh, we started our own business.

me: Um, was it hard finding jobs out here or not?

mrs J: Not really. No.

me: Were there lots of businesses and stuff?

mrs J: Yes, uh huh, at that time there were, now it seems everything's gone to Marquette.

me: Yeah, um, when did you start the Ishpeming Service Bureau?

mrs J: In 1954 and the Ishpeming Service Bureau is a collector

mrs J: agency. when people didn't pay their bills, uh then the owner would give us a ring and ~~we~~ we'd collect the money.

me: what if they didn't pay? what if they didn't send the money?

mrs J: Well, if they were working and could have really paid ~~then~~ we sued um. Took them to the municipal court. And they get mad at us ~~at the time~~ ^{at some time} So we'd sue um and take their paycheck. ^{at some time}

me: Yeah, but if they can't pay, you ^{then just} figure something out?

mrs J: oh yeah sometime were going to

me: um, who worked with you? Like any family members?

mrs J: no, I didn't have any family members, it was just my ~~husband and myself~~ husband and myself, who did the work

me: And were there any other employees?

mrs J: well, we had two employees most the time. One did filing and the other did telephoning. They'd call up these people to get them to pay their bills. and they filed all the bills and called the people.

me: Do you remember anything sunny that happened at work?

mrs J: There's a lot of ~~things~~ ^{sunny} things that happened. But some things that happened weren't sunny a bit. one time somebody got mad at us and threw a rock through our kitchen window. It hit the wall and the stove.

me: Really,

mrs J: uh huh.

me: um

mrs J: and sometimes they'd ^{fall} us up and threaten us. Because you were trying to get the money that the other person deserved?

mrs J: mhm.

me: um. why did, wait how long did you own the Ishpeming Service Bureau?

mrs J: Forty years. and every year we used to give the employees a bonus. a hundred dollar bonus.

me: Really

mrs J: around Christmas time.

me: why did you quit working?

mrs J: Well we'd been working for forty years and we were getting old and we decided to retire.

me: um, so you didn't have any jobs after that?

mrs J: no.

me: at any time did you want to change your career

me: Then.

mrsj: Well, what I always wanted to do, I thought I could when I retired, but I'm old. Was to work in a gift shop, cause I liked all the pretty things there.

me: Were there any gift shops around here?

mrsj: Yes, uh, huh.

me: Lots of them?

mrsj: Pandon.

me: Lots of them

mrsj: A couple. Paul Jewellery had a gift shop. and then oh, Johnson's Drugstore has a gift shop.

me: So you wanted to do that after you retired then?

mrsj: That's what I wanted to do, but I was too old and too,

me: Oh, if you could do everything all over again would you pick a different career or different hobbies?

mrsj: I wouldn't pick different hobbies. I might pick a different career but I don't know what it would be. ~~pick a different~~ when I was a kid I always wanted to be a teacher. I decided I didn't want to be a teacher. And then I always wanted to work in an office and I got to work in an office.

me: um, when you were a kid, did they have colleges you could go to?

mrsj: Ya but my father couldn't afford it.

me: Were they really expensive?

mrsj: mmm. But not as expensive as they are now. But it was pretty much for a farmer.

me: Yeah, what kind of things did you grow anyway?

mrs J: Oh, corn, beans, wheat and all the grains.

me: Where did you sell them?

mrs J: Well there was what they called a cooperative ph, company. That bought the things. You had to take them to town on a wagon in bags. Sometimes the mice would chew on the bags and make holes in it and my father used to hire me to patch all the bags.

me: Really, um, In concluding do you have anything else you wanted to say?

mrs J: Well, In one way I wish that I was able to do things that I used to do. Can't do it anymore. Cause I've been in and out of the hospital for over a year. And then I've been in a nursing home. Now I'm just confined to home.

me: Yah, Uh, Thanks for doing this. Okay.

mrs J: Yah.