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Dan Poirier's
Interview
with
Jennie Larson

Me: This is Dan Poirier and I'm at the home of Jennie Larson, my brother and sister's grandma, in Negaunee Michigan.

Me: The first question I'd like to ask is when and where were you born?

Jennie: I was born in Luvin in 1910.

Me: What were your parents' names?

Jennie: Matt and Amanda Kuivinen.

Me: What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

Jennie: I had four brothers, Arvo, Erro, Bill and Toby and I had one sister and she's the only one living, Sylvia.

Me: Were you married?

Jennie: Yes, twice.

Me: When and where?

Jennie: I was married in Guvin the first time and in Nequamee the second time.

Me: What were your spouses names?

Jennie: Aurther Danquist was the first one and Kenneth Larson.

Me: What did your parents do for a living?

Jennie: They were farmers. They had a farm in Eben.

Me: Where did you go to school?

Jennie: Well I went in Rumely to the Grade Schools and then Eben High School.

Me: What special memories do you have of growing up in this area?

Jennie: Well I mostly grew up in Eben and Rumely, Well... we used to do things together with kids; we would ski side and play different games, it was different than it is today. Today kids always have to be spending money and in them days we didn't have money to spend, we just made our fun. We would haul water up on the hill and take a handful of straw and slide down! We had one pair of skis to the whole family.

Me: So you skied too?

Jennie: Yes, I skied too. Down the hill.

Me: What special features stand out in your mind about the cities of Ashpeming and Negaunee from when you moved here?

Jennie: Well I didn't move here until 1946 so I don't really have any special memories from when I was younger.

Me: How about when you moved here?

Jennie: Things were quiet in this neighborhood and everybody was friendly but outside of that we never had any problems of that kind.

Me: How do you think the cities have changed?

Jennie: Well... the form of government has changed in Piquette from what it was before, we have a manager form of government now and uh... but as we all know the city is not as prosperous as it was at one time.

Me: What kinds of things did you and your friends do for entertainment when you were teenagers?

Jennie: Well we played baseball I remember that (5) and uh... we would roast potatoes. We would build a fire and roast potatoes and we wouldn't have money to buy weiners you know. It was always enjoyable and we always got along good and had a good time.

Me: Where did the kids from your age like to "hang out"?

Jennie: Well we didn't really have a place to hang out. We would go down to the baseball field at the schoolyard and we would get together and play ball and we would walk home in a group, because it was a long way. It was almost three miles from my house to the High School.

Me: Did you walk there every day?

Jennie: Yes, when I was in High School I walked there every day.

Me: Do you have any interesting or humorous stories to share about the early days?

Jennie: Well... I didn't ~~live~~ live in Negrumee in the early days, I lived in Eben.

Me: Do you have any there?

Jennie: Not really, we worked hard that I know, we didn't have time for foolishness. We had a good home life and it was different than it is today, back then we all sat down at the table at one time and we didn't take a plate and sit in front of the T.V. like kids do today.

Me: Like I do!

Me: How old were you when you found your first job and where did you work?

Jennie: I was in my early twenties and I worked in the Eben Corrupt; oh ~~wait~~ wait now, I worked between my junior and senior ^{year} at a lumber camp or what they call

Jennie: a cookie or a cook's helper. I worked that summer there, but then my regular job was in my early twenties at I worked at the forstore in Elen.

Me: What types of duties did you perform at your first job?

Jennie: I washed dishes and set the table and helped the cook with the cooking and when she had the day off, I would take over. I was just a kid, but I did it.

Me: What stands out most in your mind about your first job?

Jennie: Well... I know I was lonely because I couldn't come home because it was quite a way from my house and there was nothing really to do, there was no television or anything in the evenings upstairs at that

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Jennie: time and they didn't even have electric lights, we had gasoline lamps. So we didn't even have a radio. But one thing I did enjoy was their daughter used to go there and they had a camp on some lake and we'd go about once a week or once every other week to that camp and we would go swimming.

Me: How many total years did you work in your life?

Jennie: About eight or nine.

Me: When did you retire?

Jennie: 1960 I think was the last year.

Me: During your lifetime, where were you employed the longest?

Jennie: At the Gosard in Ishpeming. I

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Jennie: worked there two different stretches of three years each.

Me: How or Why did you chose this career?

Jennie: Well... I don't know if we chose, the work was available. That was the only work that was available at that time for women.

Me: In as much detail as possible please describe the duties of this job?

Jennie: Well it was sewing; sewing women's undergarments, that's what we did there and that's what the Gossard was all about. Do you know where the Gossard was?

Me: No.

Jennie: It was where the mall is in Jopanning, that whole building was the Gossard building.

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Me: The one with the old watertower on top of it?

Jennie: Yes, they had the first time I worked there about 600 women I think working, but then it dwindled down and I think it was 400 the last time, the second time I worked there. I worked there two, three year stretches.

Me: Did this job require any special training?

Jennie: Well yes you had to learn how they wanted you to sew the different garments, I think it was for six months that we had a teacher train us on how to do it.

Me: What special equipment or clothing did this job require?

Jennie: Just ordinary clothing.

Me: Did this job have any special rules or regulations?

Jennie: Well... It had to, you had to do it right or you ended up ripping it out and doing it over again. They were very strict; Gossard products were very expensive, they required good work. So if you didn't do it right, you ripped it up and did it over again.

Me: What was the most rewarding part of the career?

Jennie: Well it helped pay the bills, lets say that. It was hard work, but it helped pay the bills.

Me: What was the most challenging or difficult part of your job?

Jennie: Doing it right I suppose, and it was hard on the eyes; sewing all day long.

Me: How many hours did you work?

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Jennie: First time I worked there it was eight hours a day and the second time it was seven. From 7:00 to 3:00 and we got time off at noon.

Me: How did the duties at your job change over the years?

Jennie: Well... I got started on one kind of work and I finally got put on the assembly line. So you did the same thing all day long, over and over again.

Me: The things just kept going in front of you?

Jennie: Well you would get a bundle of... their sewing and you did the same thing, you sewed the same part on that bundle every day. Got kind of monotonous. If you had different things to sew it would be more interesting.

Me: Did any other family members work for the same company?

Jennie: No.

Me: Did your job put you in any dangerous situations?

Jennie: No, not really except for keeping your hands out from under the needle. Once in a while you would get your fingers caught in the needle and some of the girls had to go to the doctor and have a needle taken out of them.

So you couldn't fall asleep sewing, and those machines really go fast.

Me: It would probably get boring after a while too.

Jennie: Yes it would.

Me: Please describe what your co-workers were like.

Jennie: Oh we had a friendly bunch every time I worked there, we would have a lot of fun laughing and talking and there was never any problems with the girls.

Me: Could you describe some interesting events that happened in this career?

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Jennie: No, not really in that career.

Me: Did at any time you feel like changing careers?

Jennie: Yes, I did, It did get boring but then I had the opportunity to quit I really didn't have to work and then the second time I quit because I got married again but when I was single between my husbands deaths; my first husband died, that's when I had to go back to work and I had to, to support myself. But when I got married again I quit that job.

Me: What were your biggest responsibilities on the job?

Jennie: Doing good work, that was one thing they required.

Me: Did you receive any awards from your employer?

Jennie: No, they don't give any awards.

Me: During your days of employment and beyond, (17)
what have been your hobbies?

Jennie: Oh play a lot of cards and get together and have a meal together with other widows. That's how we spend our time.

Me: Have you been involved in any clubs or organizations?

Jennie: No, not for a long time, so I don't want to comment on that one.

Me: Overall what are your fondest memories of your working days and your career?

Jennie: Being with nice people. Enjoying the association with others who were doing the same kind of work. Coming from the same backgrounds and family lives that I have.

Me: Were you a member of the Union?

Jennie: Yes

Me: Which one?

Jennie: The Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Me: Please describe any interesting moments that occurred as a member of the Union?

Jennie: Well... I don't know of anything interesting, after the union, but I know we used to have a lot of fun on the picket lines, trying to put the union in.

Me: If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same career?

Jennie: Well... Yee, it was steady and it was a nice shift and we would get home early enough and you would have the whole evening to enjoy yourself, that's one thing I liked about it, we would get out at 3:00. We would have a long evening to enjoy life.

Me: When did you start?

Jennie: Seven

Me: In closing do you have anything else to add,

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Jennie: About anything. I was going to comment on how the cities have changed when I read the questions. We used to have the old steam engines on the trains at that time and we had one over here going to the Athens Mine and we had one over here that went to the Regaunee Mine and then we had the train going through so between the three of them you had a hard time talking to your neighbor outside because chug - chug - chug - chug - chug - chug.

Me: There was three at the same time?

Jennie: Yes, they were backing into the side to get ore from the mines and the regular train was going through and then when they changed to the diesels, I would always think that there was a fire someplace with that noise, it was different than with steam.

Me: Diesels are quieter aren't they?

Jennie: It was a different sound though, with the steam engine you would hear that,

Jennie: they were so loud. But that diesel had kind of a humming sound and I'd get up and look and see if there was a fire somewhere, until I got used to it. And then this road changed here too, this used to be 480 right in front of the house. Then they put that other 480 in, but oh we would have so much racket and traffic.

Me: The old tracks were right across the street right?

Jennie: Yes, they put 480 where the old tracks ~~were~~ were and this was where the big trucks would start early at 5:00 in the morning and it was hard to sleep. So there have been changes made in Nequamee too.

Me: Anything else?

Jennie: No

Me: Okay, thanks for your time and cooperation.

Jennie: Your welcome.