

Raegen Peterson
with
Ed Peterson

intro: I'm Raegen Peterson, today is February 14, 1993, I'm interviewing my grandpa Ed Peterson for red dust, at my grandpa's house in Negaunee.

me: When and where were you born?

grandpa: I was born in Negaunee in 1926.

me: What were your parent's names?

grandpa: My mother's name was Anna and my dad's name was Edward.

me: What are the names of your brothers and sisters?

grandpa: I have two sisters, Millicent and Ruth.

me: When and where were you married?

grandpa: We were married in Negaunee in 1948.

me: What is your spouse's name?

grandpa: My spouse's name is Mildred.

me: What did your parents do for a living?

grandpa: My dad was the only one that

worked, my mother died young. My dad worked in a mine most of his life, in iron ore mines.

me: Where did you go to school?

grandpa: I went to school in Negaunee Public Schools and graduated from the Negaunee High school.

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

grandpa: Well, I can remember we had a lot of fun when we were young. The town was a lot bigger. We did most of our own recreation, very little recreation was provided for us, we did most of our own.

me: What special memories stand out in your mind about the cities of Negaunee and Ishpeming from when you were younger?

grandpa: Well, both cities I think were bigger than what they are now. Much more, many more businesses in town. We didn't get to go to Marquette except maybe once a summer or something, out to an island for a picnic, and we usually went there on a bus or a train.

me: What things did you and your friends do for entertainment when you were teenagers?

grandpa: Well, there was no television. We spent a lot of time outside. We built our own basketball courts, we built our own ski hills, mostly jumping in them days, that's about it. We worked at home, helped making wood, gardening potatoes, and so forth.

me: Where did kids like to hang out in town when you were a teenager?

grandpa: Well, we had a youth center in Jackson street school, at, I don't know if it is once a week or once a month but they had a youth center there, and some of the boys hung around in a place called Miller News. They had some pinball machines in there and we put quite a few nickles in them.

me: Do you have any interesting or humorous stories to share about the early days in Negaunee and Ashpening?

grandpa: (laughing) I don't know of any

me : How old were you when you joined the fire department?

grandpa : Well, when I joined the fire department I was in my early thirtys.

me : What types of duties did you perform as a member of the fire department?

grandpa : Well, our main duty was answering a fire call. We had a bell in the house and the alarm could be turned in from an alarm box on the telephone pole and it would ring in your house. The main duty was to get up there as fast as you could, go and fight a fire, and we also assisted in directing traffic for parades and sporting events and helping out with fireworks, and that's about it.

me : What stands out most in your mind about your experiences with the fire department?

grandpa : I guess what stands out most in I guess there was only thirty members in the fire department, you had to be elected, and I thought it was quite an honor to be elected to the fire department

and serve as a fireman for the city.

me: How many total years have you been a member of the fire department?

grandpa: I think I, probably for about twelve years.

me: Okay, What was the most rewarding part of your years with the fire department?

grandpa: I guess the most rewarding part would be getting the fires out (laughing), and getting them to get the fires out.

me: What was the most challenging or difficult part of your involvement with the fire department?

grandpa: I suppose in the winter time getting up to the fire hall. We lived a block and a half away from there and sometimes the weather was inclement and it would be kind of a challenge to get even up to the fire department in some circumstances.

me : Was there any interesting or humorous events that happened during your years with the fire department ?

grandpa : Well, I can remember one night, it was very cold, way below zero, and the fire alarm went off about four o'clock in the morning. Rather than bother with the car, I just jumped into my clothes and ran about a block and a half to the fire hall. On the way about half way up there, I got one cramp in my left leg, in the calf of my leg, and before I got to the fire hall I had a cramp in the right leg. So I wasn't too able bodied when I did get there.

me : Did you receive any special awards from the fire department ?

grandpa : Well, I think the reward of helping the people, if they had fires, was all the royal rewards we needed.

me: How old were you when you became a police officer and why did you become a police officer?

grandpa: I was in my early thirties when I became a police officer. I had been employed in the public safety department of the city of Negaunee as a driver for the fire department and the city manager transferred me from the fire department to the police department. We had a lot of trouble in them days with the new Sawyer Airbase. We had a lot of fighting, a lot of rioting going on, so he felt that I should be transferred from the fire department to the police department.

me: What types of duties did you perform as a member of the police department?

grandpa: Well, we patrolled the town, we answered and policed accidents, disturbances, helped people that had problems with sickness and needed help in that area.

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me: What stands out most in your mind about your experiences with the police department?

grandpa: Oh, I think one of the best things that stands out in my mind about the police department is the officers I worked with and the supervision. We had an excellent chief, we had a good working, a, togetherness with the other officers. We enjoyed helping people, and also apprehending people that violated the law.

me: How many total years were you a member of the police department?

grandpa: I think I put in about 11 years as a police officer.

me: What was the most rewarding part of your years with the police department?

grandpa: I was promoted to sergeant, I had about 5 years in that capacity.

me: What was the most challenging or difficult part of being involved with the police department?

grandpa: Well, I think some of the accidents, especially fatal accidents, were always a very difficult part of the job. Family disturbances was another very difficult part of the job. As for as rewarding, helping people, even if they needed help across the street, we'd do that.

me: Could you describe some interesting or humorous events that happened while you ~~was~~ were a police officer?

grandpa: Well, we had a few high speed chases. I don't know if that was very rewarding, but it was sure interesting! We'd get some nice comments from the public if we did a good job and we'd also hear from the other side to, if we didn't do a good job.

me: What was some of the jobs that you did as a police officer

grandpa: Maybe, finding kids that were lost, it was always good to find them and know they were safe, help people, maybe their car broke down, people that locked their keys out of their car.

me: Did you receive any special awards from the police department?

grandpa: Well, like I said the only reward we got was doing our job, and doing it to the best of our ability, that was about the biggest reward we could get.

me: Were you involved in any armed robberies?

grandpa: While I was on the police force I think we had two bank robberies, one at the drive-in bank on the highway, and one at the Palmer Bank in Palmer. They were both apprehended. We had a lot of break-ins in them days. One night I think we had a total of 17 break-ins in town. There were no guns involved, and we never did find out who was responsible for it. And of course family disturbances, you never knew what was involved there. I been to them where guns and knives have been involved. Family disturbances. But it was a good job, one of

~~me~~: The best jobs, (laughing) being a policeman

me: Have you ever had to shoot your gun for any reason, during working hours and not just practicing?

grandpa: No, never had to, a, never shot the gun ⁽¹¹⁾
outside of a practice or anything like that.
Never had to shoot anybody, thank God
for that

me: Were you, yourself involved in family crisis
where there was guns involved?

grandpa: Oh, ya a family fight, family disturbance?

me: yep.

grandpa: Ya, you never knew what you were handling
there, there could be guns involved, there
could be knives involved. They were one of
the most difficult calls to make as a
policeman because of the unknown factor
of what you were going to run into.

me: Could you describe one

grandpa: Well, we had one where a man was
laying on the couch, had his hand on his knee,
and the woman took a shotgun, shot at
him, one B.B. went into the knuckle of his
hand, and he bailed out the window
that was right above the couch

and he said boy (laughing).

me : How old were you when you became a mine worker

grandpa : Oh, in my early twenties

me : What mine did you work at

grandpa : I worked at the mother B, and that's where the Negaunee High School is now, upon the hill across from Teal Lake

me : What did you do when you worked at the mine.

grandpa : I worked underground as a motor man and as a miner

me : What stands out most in your mind about your experiences...

grandpa : (interrupting) getting dirty! (laughing), I sure did get dirty, it wasn't bad work. It was hard work, but there wasn't really any pressure on me.

me : Was there any cave-ins at the mine?

grandpa: That I was involved in?

me: Ya

grandpa: No I've seen where they mine big holes underground sometimes, they call it a stope, and when that got mined out it might cave in after a number of years, and we've seen that happen down there, and the wind down there is terrific when that comes down. The force of the falling ground. There wasn't any danger in it other than that.

me: Were you ever working when that happened?

grandpa: Ya, but like I said there was no danger, they were aware of the situation, and nobody would be working around there. The mining company was aware.

me: How many total years did you work at the mine?

grandpa: I guess about 8 years. I didn't quit, I was laid off and just never went back to work there.

me: Was there any interesting or humorous things that happened when you worked at the mine?

grandpa: I don't know if this is humorous or interesting. They had like an elevator that you go on to go underground, it was a double-decker. Each deck was supposed to have held 30 people and they called it a cage, and one morning we were going down and I think there was probably 40 people in there. It was really jammed in there, and the electricity went off, and the hoist stopped, and the cage had safety dogs on it where they catch, they went out and caught the cage. I think we hung there for 3 hours before somebody climbed down to see if we were OK. It was a long time to hang in the shaft, but nobody was hurt or anything. After somebody came down there, they lowered us by hand down to the first level where we could get off. It was a little bit humorous too.

me: What was the most rewarding part of working at the mine

grandpa: There wasn't too many rewards other than if you were a contract miner, if you worked hard you got some pretty good pay. I don't know anything else that would be rewarding.

me : What is your present job?

grandpa: I'm semi retired now as a salesman. Sales agent for a company out of Chicago.

me : What do you do as a salesman?

grandpa: Go around in your territory and make calls and try to sell your merchandise to them. You service them, you set up business for them, and sell your product.

me : How big is your territory?

grandpa: It used to be from Sault Ste. Marie to Ashland Wisconsin.

me : How many years have you been a salesman?

grandpa: 24 years

me : What is the most rewarding part of being a salesman?

grandpa: I think the most rewarding part is the loyalty of your customers

They'll wait to purchase items from you, they'll trust you, another thing is that you get working on an account to try to sell them and then finally you do make a sale, that's very rewarding. Sometimes it has taken as long as a year, year and a half before you could get in some of your accounts to where you could sell them you had to sell yourself, sell the company, and sell the product.

me : What is the most challenging part of being as salesman?

grandpa: Opening new accounts. It was always a challenge to open new accounts, and it was very rewarding when they did buy.

me : Was there any interesting or humorous events as a salesman?

grandpa: Well, interesting in that maybe you might gain a sale that you figured you had lost, or a sale that is bigger than you figured it might have been or might be. Humorous you got a, I don't know if there was anything really humorous but you got to know your customers well, and you'd joke around with them, and have a good time with them.

me: What was the biggest or most sales you've had? (17)

grandpa: Biggest or most sales?

me: Ya

grandpa: 1979 was the, my biggest business year. It was kind of due to all the inflation and so forth that really boosted my sale.

me: Have you recieved any special rewards from being a salesman?

grandpa: Well the company had an awards program set up that you could get trophies for certain plateaus when you sold a certain amount of merchandise, you'd get a trophy. If you sold a certain amount you'd belong to a century club, you recieve plaques for that. They had contests which I won three trips to Hawaii and one car.

me: Do you have anything else you would like to add before we stop?

grandpa: Well, maybe I'd like to tell you about a little chase that we had when we were in the police force.

A neighboring town had a started a chase in
 there city, and they came down U.S. 41. We
 set a rode block up out on the corner of
 Teal Lake Avenue and U.S. 41. I happened
 to have a young rookie officer as a partner
 that night, and you could see them coming
 down Teal Lake hill, and the other officer
 started hollering "he's gonna hit us! He's
 gonna hit us! He's gonna hit us! But
 fortunately, he went around our car, went
 up the westbound lane, and then he got
 over into the eastbound again. He came to 492,
 made a turn, the dispatching Police were
 right on his back, and not being aware that
 he was going to make the turn, missed the
 turn, and we came behind and went down about a
 mile were he lost control of his car and ended up
 in a snowbank. And I'd just like to say its
 been a pleasure doing the interview and I wish
 you luck on your red dust project

me: OK, thanks for interviewing, and I guess that's it