

Brian Maki's  
interview with  
Great Aunt Helen

me: This is Brian Maki interviewing my great aunt Helen  
in her home in National Mine.

me: When and where were you born?

Helen: I was born in National Mine in 1913 February the 8th.

me: what were your parents names?

Helen: My mother's name was Rebecca and my father's name was Thomas.

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

Helen: I had two brothers, Samuel and Thomas both deceased right now.

me: were you married?

Helen: Yes I was married

me: when and where?

Helen: I was married in the Salisbury church to Paul Solka.

me: what did your parents do for a living?

Helen: My mother was a house keeper, and my father worked for UCI

me: where did you go to school?

Helen: I went to school in National Mine

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

Helen: Well one thing I do remember is that I lived on a farm  
down by the powdermill with my Grandma and Grandpa and we  
had a very hard time getting to school in the morning when there  
was lots of snow and that is one thing I can remember when I  
was young we had to walk to school we didn't have buses to  
bring us to school we had to walk to school every day and walk  
home.

me: when

me: what kind of things did you do for entertainment when you were teenagers?

Helen We use to go ice skating ski riding and tobagen riding. thats about all there was not much to do for entertainment at that time.

me: How old were you when you found your first job?

Helen: I was about 45 years old

me: Where did you work?

Helen: I worked at Corneliuson's Bakery in Ishpeming.

me: What types of jobs did you perform on your first job?

Helen: well to start off in the morning we had to ice rolls, fill dismarks ice cupcakes and get the boxes ready for the driver when they were going to come in the morning to set the orders. we had to fill the rolls and cover them, get everything ready for them, and get all the rolls wrapped. We would put six rolls in a package and cover them with cellophane. We had a hot plate that we would press the cellophane on with to seal them. I burnt myself quite a few times, but I got use to it after a while.

me: what stands out most on your mind about your first job?

Helen: Well we use to have lots of fun thats one thing about it. It was not a hard job but it was a steady job. You had to keep on your toes all the time but we had a awful lot of fun.

me: During your lifetime where were you employed the longest?

Helen At Corneliuson's Bakery.

me: How and why did you choose this career?

Helen: well I didn't have a high school education to start with so I had to take the job I could get and that was open so I got the job.

me: In as many details as possible please describe the duties on this job.

Helen: We had to make sure we had everything ready when the drivers were ready to go and before we left we had to bake everything and wrap it, have all the bread bagged and wrapped, and everything all cleaned up. All our utensils had to be scoured cleaned and all our counters had to be scrubbed. Everything had to be taken care of before we were ready to leave.

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

Helen: There wasn't too many different kinds of equipment the only thing I can remember is the filler for the niger toes we called them at that time but I don't know what they call them now and the cream puffs that was the machine I used. Then there was another machine that was a big fryer for frying all the donuts and once in a while I would go help with that.

me: Did this job have any special rules or regulations to follow?

Helen: Not really what you call rules but we stayed in our territory and did our own job that was one thing we had to do.

me: what was the most rewarding part of your job?

Helen: The most rewarding part is the friends that I made and a lot of interesting people I met when I worked out in the store part of the bakery.

me: what was the most challenging or difficult part of your job?

Helen: The most challenging I can think of is getting up at six o'clock in the morning that was challenging for a while and it was kind of especially in the winter time because there was a lot of snow and I had to go thru all that snow every morning to get there. A lot of mornings I was late because of the snow storms but I got there and Carl was always proud when he seen me walk in the door and said "If Helen made it, the rest should make it then if Helen can make it."

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

Helen: Well they were a lot of fun. We had one boy who was deaf and dumb. He was from Negaunee and he was a tormentor. He would swipe my coffee, untie my apron string, and then he would laugh at me when I tried to get my coffee thermos away from him. There were a couple others who were full of fun but he was one I could remember more about than any of the others.

me: what were your biggest responsibilities on the job?

Helen: Well at night I worked in the store. My biggest responsibility was to lock up the store and that was one responsibility I didn't like too much. It would be after nine o'clock when I would lock up. My husband use to come down about eight thirty and would stay with me until I locked up.

me: Did you receive any special awards from your employer and were you recognized in any way for your job performance.

Helen: Yes Carl was real nice to me. He was willing to give me a hand. I remember once when my daughter came home from Detroit and she didn't have a ride home from Ishpeming. He left the bakery and brought her home and I remember that very well. Carl was really a wonderful man to work for I always liked Carl.

me: During your days of employment and beyond what have been your favorite hobbies or leisure activities?

Helen I had alot of hobbies but my biggest hobby right now is knitting mittens. Last year I knit one hundred and fifteen pairs but now I'm knitting again starting for next year and all those mittens were given to churches or children that needed their hands kept warm for the winter. Then I do alot of crocheting I croched for my nieces and alot of my friends. Then I knit afans and donated to the senior citizens and to different clubs.

me: Have you been involved in any clubs organizations or sports leagues?

Helen: Yes I've been in the National Mine women circle for over forty years, I belonged to the United Methodist Women of the Salsbury United Methodist Church, I belong to the Tilden Senior Citizen Club, I'm on the board at the Tilden senior citizen Hall and I also belong to an afternoon sewing class.

me: If you had to do it all over again would you choose the same career? Why or Why Not?

Helen: Yes I would because I enjoyed what I did and I was rewarded in many ways with the friendships I made. The wages weren't high we didn't make much money. I think I was getting three dollars and eighty something cents an hour at every time I worked but we managed to get around because things aren't that expensive as they are now.

me: In closing do you have anything else you would like to add?

Helen: Well some of my boys work at Corneliousons at the time I did worked there. James worked there, Thomas worked there, and Thomas's wife Judy worked there. They cleaned pans for Carl. They scrubbed pans for all the rolls that were made and baked there. Jimmy was a driver he use to deliver to National Mine, North Lake, and different places. Thomas Wood worked there at the time, he was a real nice lad to work with. There were quite a few other people who worked there but I can't even remember any more because it was quite a while ago.

me: Thank you for your time.

Helen: Your welcome.