

Andy Vahamaa

I interviewed Paul Vahamaa

The date of interview December 8, 1998

Me: What is your full name and why were you named it?

Paul: My full name is Paul Charles Vahamaa Sr. I don't know why my mom named me that. I guessed she liked it. My middle name Charles is named after my mother's dad his name was Charles Saari. The reason it is Sr. is because I have a son Paul Charles Vahamaa Jr.

Me: When were you born and where?

Paul: I was born September 22, 1952 in the Twin City hospital, which was at that time located in Negaunee and I don't know where it is located but, that is what I have been told.

Me: How old are you?

Paul: I am 46 years and 3 months he stutters.

Me: Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics?

Paul: The only politics that I recall was who they would be voting for in the presidential elections and mostly at that time were strictly democrats so they basically voted for the democratic party.

Paul: Now world events you said.

Paul: Uh huh

Paul: Not many major events just major happenings like the when the pope, um John Pope the 23 I believe. My mom made her comments because it was on TV that I got to go to the Pope's funeral. My mom would just imagine that she went on a plane. She watched it on TV she was at the Pope's funeral or when John F. Kennedy got shot she went to his funeral it was a. When you see when the John Kennedy assassination and funeral was a humongous event in the world that we brought TVs in to school cause we didn't have closed circuit television in school watching it happening live happening and on the TV. The persessions and the funeral and all of that. Important events and Martin Luther King with all the rioting it was so disgusting school but not so much at home. Basically along those lines it was mainly a political figure or event she would have to say she had to attend it. Then there is a joke about we could talk about it.

Me: How was the world different to you then it was now?

Paul: How is it different well let's see? The TV changed everything to what when I was growing up the TV was in black in white, no color, we only had one station, where we live now it is sort of in the sticks we didn't have cable television. If we went to my aunt's house for a special occasions like Christmas, Easter or Thanksgiving they maybe had 3 or 4 channels and that you had to turn the knob to turn the channel that was a big event. So the television and the medias and all the electronic agencies changed the technology so rapidly. 20 years ago they talked about a computer that was the size of a room & now and days you can fit them in the palm of your hands. So you don't realize that it would go that far that fast. Same with Space exploration you thought well I would send a man into outer-space and your like it would never happen in your lifetime we also watched that in school. Now they are building a space station with the Russians nobody would ever think that possible even 10 years ago.

Me: What were your favorite childhood games?

Paul: My favorite childhood games? Let's see we had kids around the same age so in summertime we religiously play baseball everyday. We spend a lot of time out at North Lake behind the house. We went to Diorite Lake with neighbors. What was the question again?

Me: What are your favorite childhood games?

Paul: In the fall we play football & in the winter we played basketball and sometimes we would go skating in the rink by our house or we went up to Diorite lake and skated where there was a flooded area. Sometimes we went to Ishpeming to ice skate or the ice rink at the playgrounds. In the springtime we got muddy.

Me: Did you do skiing?

Paul: We had skiing. We had a ski jump not far from my house. Every once in a while we went ski jumping at Al Quall. We also went sledding on cardboard and they had a toboggan slide but, we didn't have a toboggan but we could rent one. We attended basketball games in Diorite for the gradeschool. Highschool, we went to their games we also went to football games.

Me: Did you participate in any sports?

Paul: Yes just in grade school. Basketball teams where you have 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders together and you have 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were combined. We played teams like Champion, Michigamme, St. Johns, Negaunee St. Paul and other small schools like that. We didn't play Phelps or Aspen Ridge because obviously it wasn't there. We played National Mine and other schools in Marquette. We didn't play Gwinn, Graverat in

Marquette. They didn't have football teams in grade school. In high school my parents wouldn't let me play football because they thought we were too far out of town. Football was pretty much the sport I wanted to play. I didn't try out for basketball because I didn't feel like I could make it. That is about all I did.

Me: What kind of chores did you have?

Paul: I had to saw up boards with a bucksaw for sauna wood because we didn't have a chainsaw. I had to stack them in the wood shed. In the fall we would go with my dad and chop down lumber. We would go in his truck and brought back firewood. We would saw them up; we'd split em. We let them dry for a while. Then we hauled them down the basement. Then we cut boughs for brave blankets and we got money for that. Good Christmas money. In the winter we had to shovel snow. In the spring & summer we cut the grass some but not very much. I had to do dishes. On Saturdays we had beat the rugs. I helped bring water to the sauna on Saturdays and sometimes Wednesdays. In the winter we had to change the water in the sauna so that the water doesn't freeze.

Me: How old were you when you started dating?

paul: I was probably about 18 yr. Old.

Me: What did you usually where in School?

Paul: Which one High School or Grade School?

Me: Both

Me: What did you usually wear to school? Describe it.

Paul: In grade school we could wear jeans but it could not be ripped. We had to decent clothes you could wear sweat shirts and t-shirts we didn't have all of these printed t-shirts.

When I got to high school every body had short hair there was nobody who had long hair. Once it touched your ears you got a haircut. When you got to high school you couldn't even wear jeans except for black or white jeans. We couldn't wear blue jeans. They could also be dress pants. You had to wear shirts or sweaters. Your shirts had to be tucked in. You couldn't wear your shirt out of your pants unless it was a straight cut. If they were tails they had to be tucked in. No guys had earrings. When I was a freshman I had to swim in pool naked because we couldn't afford swimsuits. Later in year the school ordered nylon swimsuits for the boys. Girls had nylon swimsuits all the time.

Me: How did you get to school?

Paul: When I went to diorite we rode a bus. When I went to high school we rode on the same bus but a different time.

Me: Did you ever get married?

Paul: You know I did once.

Me: What is her name?

Paul: Nancy .K. Nelson Vahamaa.

Me: How many children did you have?

Paul: I had 3 children.

Me: What's their name?

Paul: Paul, Stacie, and Andy.

Me: What kind of jobs did you have?

Paul: When I was in grade school my parent didn't have a lot of spending money so my dad was a miner, a lumberjack that was my first job.

Me: What is your career right now?

Paul: I'm a miner. I have been in the mine for 25 yr. I started out a laborer working on the equipment in the pit. Now I am a repair maintenance where he works in the plant and I work on the pump.

Me: How did you decide on a career?

Paul: The neighbor guy asked me if I was trying to get into the mine and I said yes. Well you just keep barking at them in the mine and eventually I did get a job.

Me: As a parent are you strict?

Paul: I am lenient to all my children. But their mother lets them get away with it.

Me: How long do you have to work each day?

Paul: 8 hr an is all we were allowed to work but, sometimes we were allowed 12 or maybe 16 hr. a day.

Me: When do you plan to retire?

Paul: Well I plan to retire in 5 yr.

Me: Is there anyone who changed your life?



Paul: No one that I can think of right now.

Me: How did technology change over the years past?

Paul: Well the computers you know changed from filling up one room to fitting in your hands. When I was young we had TVs in black and white and now you have color TV sets with satellite dishes with 999 channels. New things are coming out to quick for the economy to change.

Me: If you could go back in time what would you change?

Paul: I like to be in the Roman gods era.

Me: Did you spoil any of your children?

Paul: I spoiled all of my children.

Me: How many jobs did you have?

Paul: About 10-12. But 6 were in the Tilden mine the same job that I own now.

Me: Which job did you keep the longest?

Paul: It was at the Tilden mine I was there for 25 yr.

Me: In the neighbor you lived in was it a poor one?

Paul: It was a middle class society with good paying jobs with families that helped each other.

Me: What do you like to do in your spare time?

Paul: Sit around my pool and go swimming in my pool and I like to sauna and I like to snowshoe in the winter.

Me: What did you used to do when you were a child?

Paul: We skied & snowmobile.

Me: How did you meet your wife?

Paul: I met her at a party.

Me: Do you remember hearing about the Edmund Fitzgearld?

Paul: Yeah I do.

Me: Where did you go to school?

Paul: First I went to Diorite and then I went to Ishpeming high school.

Me: When did you get my first car?

Paul: When I got my first job. When I was 19.

Me: What kind was it?

Paul: It was Chevy Nova.

Me: How many children were in your family.

Paul: There were 6.

Me: Do you remember WWII?

Paul: My mom lost 2 brothers in WWII. My father was in Europe and one of his brothers died. My father was shot in his hand and in his leg.

Me: Were you ever in the Vietnam war?

Paul: If you weren't in collage you were automatically put in the draft. If your number was picked you were in the war. Luckily me my number wasn't picked.