

Shawn Heikkila interview
with
Gary Helander

me: I am Shawn Heikkila it is Thursday November, 7
I am interviewing my uncle Gary Helander I am interviewing
him because he is an outdoorsman

me: as a child how many brothers and sisters did you have

GH: 1 brother 3 sisters

me: What were their names

GH: David, Chris, Sue, Patti

me: Where did you go school

GH: I went to Palmer for 6 years and I went to Negaunee

me: Did you graduate

GH: No, I went to work, in 11th grade I ~~went~~ dropped
out and worked 4 years for a furniture company then I got
a job at LCI I worked there for 5 years, and I got
laid off by the time I was laid off I went to school
and I got my GED diploma, and got my certificate for
graduation

me: Ok did you have any jobs as a teenager or before you
were an adult

GH: yes I worked in the woods as a lumberjack I worked
there for 4 years and I had a paper ~~Route~~ Route

me: Ok upon graduating did you know what you wanted
to be

GH: No not right off of hand

me: What made you decide to work for Cleveland Cliffs

GH: Well, when I was working for the Furniture company I wasn't making that much and I needed the money so I kept applying at the Cliffs office finally they hired me they had better pay and better wages

me: What do you do for CCT

GH: I'm a loader operator

me: What's that

GH: Well I come down and work in the ^{Pellet} ~~Power~~ Plant as a loader operator clean up and I load stock pile cars for Cleveland Cliffs

me: How long have you been there

GH: 14 years

me: What are your hobbies or interests

GH: Hunting and Fishing

me: What kind of game do you hunt

GH: I hunt small game and big game

me: What are memorable experiences about one of your game

GH: Well one year when I was hunting I was sitting on a stump and I saw this big buck standing about ten feet away from me and I looked at him and he put his head down and I grabbed my rifle he pulled his head up and I shot him and he turned around and came right for me and I was on a little hillside on a little ledge of a bluff and he came running towards me

GH: After I shot him I had to ~~star~~ Jump off the stump and I started sliding down the edge of that bluff and I shot again off my hip and I got him again and I dropped him

me: How many points did he have?

GH: He had 10 points

me: Do you do anything ~~else~~ other things in the woods pertaining to hunting?

GH: Yes I trap uh, mink, Fox, Coyotes, and Beaver

me: Where do you trap ~~in~~ those animals in the woods or?

GH: In the rivers, swamps, open land, prairies

me: How many traps do you usually set

GH: about 300

me: 300?

~~me~~ GH: How long do you check ~~over~~ them?

GH: I try checking them every other day

me: Where do you set them out

GH: There scattered you got to set a pattern you set a trap line you start with your first trap all the way down it's a wide area you go up north then you turn ~~*~~ and go down towards south you make like a horseshoe trapline

me: have you ever captured any bigger animals and wounded them like a bear or wolf

GH: Well uh, I've had bears in traps small ones
to release them you it's pretty tricky you gotta
carry a canvas with you and you sorta sneak up
and throw the canvas over them and set the trap
free from his leg and let him go

me: OK

GH: Your bigger bears they usually take the trap and
Jump through a crotch of a tree pull the trap
right off the leg it will open up a trap

me: or else sometimes they will chew their legs legs off

GH: Right

GH:

~~me:~~ and if your a successful trapper you say that
they chew their legs off if you know how to trap
these things wouldn't happen lots of people go out
and set traps and they don't check them for a
week and the animal just starves in them and
suffers if your gonna trap you should pay good attention
to where your trapping how to set your traps this
is experience of a woodsmen to know what he is
doing its cruelty to animals to let them suffer
in a trap if you do not check your traps
on time don't even bother trapping because it's
no fun

me: and a lot of animals suffer that way

GH: right

me: Do you do any other kinds of hunting or trapping

GH: well I do waterfowl I do duck hunt, and goose hunt

me: where do you duck hunt around

GH: yes I check ponds around the area in the Upper Michigan here and sometimes go down south when they start migrating we got blinds set up and check little water holes, rivers, sometimes we float rivers with canoes

me: do you do any fishing

GH: yep I got my own boat motor, I do lots of fishing

on the great lakes. Lake Superior for Lake Trout, Salmon I do lots of fly fishing for brook trout and ice fishing walleye or Northern Pike

me: what's your biggest fish you ever caught

GH: The biggest fish I ever got was a 30 pound chinook salmon and that was out of Lake Michigan

me: did you ever go on any big fishing trips

GH: yes I went up to Canada one year me and a couple other guys we fished up there for walleyes and Northern Pike and the biggest Northern we got was 17 pounds biggest walleye we got was 8 pounds

GH: and was quite an experience up there we saw
alot of moose it was a nice area up there
lots of lakes it was really good fishin up

there it was a good experience to go up there
me: how many fish did you catch up there

GH: well its hard to say every time you threw a lever
in you had one on its like fishin in a goldfish
bowl there were ~~so~~ many fish and you can
only keep so many when you come from there
we just went up there for the time to have
fun catch the fish enjoy the weather we ate
our fish at the camp that's all we had with
us and its quite an experience to be up in
an area like that and they control ~~there~~ their
pretty well up there for fish

me: What part of Canada was that

GH: Ontario

me: And for my last question I would like to ask what
had this area special to you

GH: Well its nice it aint like the big cities I never
been to a big city from what Ive heard and read
about them with all the smog and stuff going on people
and when your around here you got fresh air trees
you can go sit in your back yard and look at trees
and the weathers nice around here it might be cold
in the winter times but we put up for it

GH; and it a great place to be you got fresh air
and you can have lots of fun in this area its
a good place for a sportsman to be

me! Thank you for letting me have your time
and paicience

me: could you describe the trap you ~~you~~ use when you trap?

GH: well I use a conabare trap I use a leghold trap I use the leghold for fox and coyote I use conabare for beaver and muskrat mink sometimes use them for fox and coyote the conabare

me: What are the trickiest animals you trap?

GH: Coyote is the trickiest coyote and fox their pretty smart you got be pretty careful setting traps for them they got good smell and if you have any human scent around the trap they won't go into your trap

me: How do you decide where to put the traps?

GH: Well you look for a sign look for tracks in the sand and stuff and mostly your fox and coyotes are out in the open prairies in the fields edge of the woods you look for mice and stuff thats where there usually at

me: why do you trap the animals you do?

GH: Well for extra money and that it's fun to get out trap and see if you can out smart them

me: What are the current pelt prices?

GH: Well, their up and down they range from \$60
down to \$30 When the trapping prices are up
then you have lots of trappers

me: How do you make the pelts?

GH: Well you just take them and you skin and
you put them on stretchers dry them out
you have to flesh them

me: where do you sell them?

GH: well we got buyers we send them
mostly to Canada they you have fur
buyers that come around here and
you put up spots that are posted here
and you can sell your hides to them

me: do you trap with other trappers?

GH: mostly I try to stay away from other
~~trappers~~ trappers and if ~~the~~ everybody is smart
if they know somebody is trapping there
they won't go into your territory ~~at~~ where
your trapping

me: What are times of the year you trap?

GH: times of year?

me: yes

GH: in the spring time I trap beaver around the
April month mostly in fall when trapping season
opens in October I trap muskrat mink, fox, coyotes

me: Is there any certain limited time you can trap.

G H: yes it runs from October till ah March for fox, and coyotes for Beaver runs into the first part of April and that closes up

me: How many do you trap of the Animals how many the number specific?

G H: well it depends how many animals in a territory if you can get them or not like fox and that well its you get 5 to 10 there a year sometimes more it hard to tell depends how you got your trap set and if you can get them into your sets