

Interview With John Lake
11-27-98
Interviewed by William Lake

Me: This is William Lake interviewing John Lake in his kitchen on November 27, 1998

Me: What is your full name?

John Lake: John David Lake.

Me: Where did you get your name?

John: From my father John.

Me: Did you have any nicknames and if so what were they?

John: Well, my uncle called me twobits!

Me: Do you have any nicknames now?

John: No

Me: What do family members call you?

John: Grandpa-you, Dad, and John

Me: for the question "did you have any nicknames and if so what were they?" Why did they call you twobits?

John: I don't know bill (Laughing)

Me: When were you born and were?

John: October 27 1926.

Me: Who are your grandparents and what do you remember about them?

John: Well, there is my grandmother and then my real grandfather died before I was born and then my mother got remarried and we use to call him grandpa and he was a grandfather to us he was John Nelson.

Me: What is the oldest person in your family that you remember?

John: Well, I guess I am the oldest.

Me: do you remember anybody even is they are dead that is older than you?

John: My grandmother, Grandfather, Some cousins are older than I am. My mother my father.

Me: Did your family Discuss World events and Politics? And if so what kind?

John: Well, ya sometimes. Manly Township government.

Me: What chores did you dislike doing as a child?

John: Shoveling snow. (Laughing)

Me: Why did you dislike that?

John: It was hard work (laughing)

Me: What do you consider the most important inventions that have been made during your lifetime?

John: Well, I guess spaceflight would be.

Me: how was the world different than that of when you were a child?

John: Well, it is more mechanized. We got more things so you are able to do more work.

Me: What kind of books did you like to read?

John: Well, when I was younger we had what was called a big little book. 4 inches by 4 inches and 2 inches thick. I moved from there as I got older I went into mysteries. And today it is mostly wood working books.

Me: name at least 5 things that others have enjoyed and you enjoyed making out of the books?

John: Well, well one thing that is not finished yet is the gazebo. And then I made an entertainment center. And I built a house or 2 houses. Um what else? I've done some carving. I enjoy making wooden spoons. And those aren't made from books those are made from my head.

John: how many is that bill?

Me: I got 5.

Me: What were your favorite kidhood games?

John: Well, Kick the can was one and during winter we used to play pump pump pula way and hide and seek.

Me: What was pump pump pula way?

John: you got 2 lines facing each other and you would hold hands and you would charge toward the other line and see if you could break through one would try to stop you and the other would try to break through that line. Sometimes it would work and sometimes it didn't.

Me: What were your schools like?

John: What was that bill?

Me: What were your schools like?

John: Well, we started off with combined classes. 2 classes together like 1st and 2nd. 2nd and 3rd. And then we got into individual classes were we had several teachers but we stayed in one room. The teacher would move. Then high school separate classes and then collage.

Me: How did you get to school?

John: By bus. In grade school it was a bus.

Me: Did you ever have to walk?

John: I used to walk a quarter of a mile to catch the bus. And then I college we used to walk to school.

Me: How many miles did the bus go to drop you off at school?

John: Well, grade school was about a mile and a half. And, ah, high school was 6 miles.

Me: What was your favorite subject in school and why?

John: Well, it was a toss up between math and science. I really don't know why I just enjoyed it.

Me: What was your least favorite subject in school and why?

John: History because I didn't like to learn dates.

Me: What school activities did you participate in?

John: Well, in grade school it was manly sports football and basketball. I didn't participate that much in high school because of transportation. We didn't have any transportation to attend any after scool activities.

Me: How many years of education did you complete?

John: 16

Me: Do you have a college degree and if you do tell me what field of study you were in?

John: Ah, yes I have a college and it is BS in industrial education.

Me: What kind of grades did you get?

John: When I graduated it was a B plus average.

Me: did you like school and what did you like about it?

John: Well, it was the learning part we liked and some of the activities that we used to get into in school.

Me: What was your least favorite thing about it?

John: Um Least favorite (puzzled). Well I guess it was really the getting to school that was the least favorite.

Me: Who is a friend that you have known for a long period of time and how many years?

John: A lot of my really good friends have all passed away. I have a couple of friends out of collage one of them goes by the name John Cuula. A collage friend. Another one was Warren Ayers. Another collage friend in fact we used to he had girl friend in Ironwood we used to come home together.

Me: When and why did you get married?

John: In Ironwood in September 4, 1948.

Me: how many children did you have all together?

John: 3

Me: and what were there names, birthdates and birthplaces?

John: Connie September 18, 1951 Robert June 8, 1953 and Randy May 30 1955. All born in Ishpeming.

Me: What is the funniest thing that your children have said.

John: Hum! Well, Connie and bob used to pretend they traveled a lot and they used to pack suitcases. Connie used to dress Bob as a girl. (Laughing) randy was always small and he used to play football with the bigger boys and they used to play tackle football and he was always the ball carrier. And instead of tackling him they used to lift him off the ground. His feet would keep going but he wouldn't go anywhere they were holding him. (Laughing)

Me: as a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

John: Well, I started out I wanted to be a local motive engineer.

Me: What was your first job?

John: working for my father. It was a mason job.

Me: Did you like it?

John: No

Me: Why?

John: hard work dirty work.

Me: What kinds of jobs did you have?

John: well, after I graduated I started working for the mining company. As an engineer helper. Then moved up from there. Then after I retired from U.S. Steel I worked for the Ishpeming credit union.

Me: how many jobs did you have?

John: Well that would be after graduation that 2. And before graduation was one. Total of three.

Me: how did you decide on your career?

John: well, I was thinking on going into civil engineering. But when I started collage it was mid year. And I missed too much of the sequence. It would have taken me to long to catch up. So that is when I went into teaching, I mean industrial ED.

Me: What was your favorite job?

John: favorite job? Well, I think the last two were the favorites it is hard to distinguish because it was manly working with people.

Me: what was your least favorite job?

John: Masonry. Mason helper.

Me: how long did you work each day?

John: 8 hours. Well 8 hours is what I got paid for but there were days when I had to work longer because there were days when I was out of town or anything like that.

Me: How old were you when you retired?

John: 63 just over 63

Me: what war did you fight in and how did you feel about it?

John: Well, it was World War 2 and we all had to go out to protect the country so, so we did.

Me: If you served in the military when and where were your duties?

John: Well, I didn't get to go over seas because I spent most of my time in school in Denver to study the remote control system of a B-29 bomber. So I am able to prepare it.

Me: Just in case you get shot down or get hit...

John: No, we wouldn't be flying. A when a 29 would land it would throw the automatic system out. So it was our job to go in and check on it. See the things were controlled by remote sites so see there was a lot of electrical stuff there that could go wrong could go out of adjustment.

Me: How tall are you?

John: 5' 11"

Me: have you ever been in a serious accident?

John: No

Me: What kinds of things have you made that others have enjoyed?

John: HUM!

Me: this can be out of any material not just wood.

John: I have made so many things that I (long pause) well I hope that you guys liked the trucks that.

Me: Ya, I like that

John: I have made 3-D pictures for your mother and Connie for Joyce. I work mostly with wood that I (pause) that all you get from me is wood, wooden stuff

Me: what hobbies do you have?

John: Reading, woodworking, and photography

Me: what kind of cameras did you have?

John: I started off with a speed exspecial, then I went from there into Kodak 35mm then I got a yashica 35mm now I got a sure shot camera nothing really fancy

Me: what pets did you have?

John: a dog several of them

Me: what is your favorite style of music?

John: Well, it would have to be easy listening.

Me: what is your favorite TV show?

John: well, there is so many of them that it would have to be NYPD Blue

Me: why do you like it?

John: just the mystery part of it.

Me: What is your favorite book?

John: Well, I got two that I really like Anatomy of a Murder and Cain Mutiny.

Me: what is your favorite sport?

John: Football.

Me: what is your favorite fruit and vegetable?

John: Favorite fruit would have to be an apple. Vegetable green beans.

Me: Why do you like them?

John: there tasty

Me: what is your favorite restaurant?

John: well, it would have to be away from here it would be Burnstads and European Café. That is in Tomah, Wisconsin.

Me: Did you have a radio when you were younger?

John: Yes

Me: what did it look like?

John: Well, the first one was cabinet type and it was on four legs and it was quiet wide it was about table height. Big dials on it big knobs.

Me: so the radio must have changed a lot?

John: Yes.

Me: did you have a TV?

John: When I was growing up no. We didn't get a TV until the late 50's.

Me: what did it look like then?

John: It was a metal box with a picture that was about it. No, cabinet or anything it was just on a stand.

Me: how many channels did you get?

John: well, first on a good day we would get 2 (laughing) mostly just the one channel but that wasn't very clear. No, cable and all we had was the roof antenna

Me: When did you get cable?

John: When did we get cable ma? It must have been the late 50s we got it out here.

Me: when you were younger how did your mom or sister wash your clothes?

John: Well, my mother use to wash by hand until we got the washing machine.

Me: William Lake

Aspen Ridge Middle School

Red Dust Project