

Mike Nurmi's interview
with
Wayne Nurmi

me: I am Mike Nurmi, and I am ~~X~~ interviewing Wayne Nurmi for the Red Dust project at the Nurmi residence.

me: When and where were you born?

Mr. N: I was born in Ishpeming on August 10, 1948

me: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. N: I have two half brothers Don Nurmi, and Jim _____, and a half sister _____ Nurmi, _____

me: What were your parents names?

Mr. N: My fathers name was Donald Nurmi and my mothers name was Lempi Wig, Nurmi.

me: When and where were your parents born?

Mr. N: My father was born in Negaunee in 1917, and my mother was born in Negaunee in 1916

me: What did they do to make a living?

Mr. N: My father was a blacksmith at the Mather B. Mine, and my mother worked at various grocery stores in the area as a check out clerk.

me: What country did your family come from?

Mr. N: Both my mother and father's parents came from Finland.

me: When did they come to America and why?

Mr. N: They came to America in the early 1900's to find a new life in this country, and from what I understand there was some kind of sickness going around that they tried, they were young people and they were trying to get away from that sickness over there.

me: Are you married?

Mr. N: Yes, I am. I married Yvonne _____, from Ishpeming.

me: Do you have any children?

Mr. N: Yes, I have a daughter Susan, age 17, and a son Michael, age 14.

me: (uh) What were schools like when you went to school?

Mr. N: First school I attended was Eagle Mills, I grew up on a farm with my grandparents, mostly because both of my parents worked all day long. The language spoken, to me, was Finish. My brothers and sister all spoke Finish, so there was no, really no reason for me to start learning English, until it came time for me to go to school. ~~My~~ My first few weeks of school were difficult (mumble), (laugh), not really speaking a whole lot of English. Luckily I had a teacher who helped me as she also understood the Finish language.

me: What other schools did you attend?

Mr. N: I also attended Lakeview in Negaunee, and Central Grade, and Negaunee High School.

me: What were the teachers like, and did you have any dress codes

Mr. N: Teachers were quite strict, when I was younger. The rule of thumb then was, slapping rulers on the hands, or going into the hallways or ~~in~~ the closet for an hour or so. No Levi's or jeans of any kind were allowed, not like now a days, and I don't ever remember seeing any girls wearing (uh) pants of any kind. I think they all wore skirts or dresses

me: (uh) What were class sizes like?

Mr N: I think they were ~~some~~ somewhere around 25 students

me: (huh) What subjects did you take, and what were your favorites?

Mr N: ~~It~~ My favorite subjects in school were ~~History~~ history, drafting and Industrial Arts. Basically woodshop and electronics I enjoyed.

me: How much schooling did you have?

Mr N: I graduated from Negaunee High School.

me: How did you get to school?

Mr N: When I was growing up on the farm, I rode a bus for about $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day because we live a few miles off of the main road. The bus driver didn't ~~like~~ ^{like} to make two trips into there, so I'd get on the bus with the younger kids, and make the run miles and miles of back roads, dropping off everyone else, and then I would end up going back to the high school to pick up high school students, and make basically the same run again, but when we got to our road, then the bus would go down our ~~road~~ road and drop off my brother and sister and I.

me: (huh) Do you remember any funny or interesting events as a child?

Mr. N: One thing that sticks in my ~~my~~ mind is the day that we first got an inside toilet on the farm. I must have flushed it fifty times. It was really fascinating. And another time I can remember, I think I was approximately 4 years old. We were having a problem with a bear ripping down the apple trees, and I remember my father and my grandfather talking about what they were going to do, how they were going to cure the problem. So, I thought I'd help out, so one day I decided I take my cork gun, and go bear hunting, without telling anybody. About two and a half hours later my mother and Father or my mother and grandfather found me about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the house stuck in the mud up to my knees. I guess I'm lucky I never did find the bear.

Me: (laughs) What kind of responsibilities did you have

Mr. N: Well, growing up on farm it's a pretty busy time. Hauling wood into the house to keep the house warm in the winter time, Chasing cows into the barn for milking, feeding the pigs every night, making hay, and this wasn't the way it's modernly made, it was pitchforks throwing it up onto a wagon, hauling it into the barn that way. Picking potatoes, hauling milk from the barn to the house, making butter in a butter churn by hand, ice cream, old homemade ice cream. That didn't leave much time for anything else, you know.

me: What did you do for fun as a child?

Mr. N: My brothers and sisters were quite a bit older than I was, so, having a friend my age to play with really didn't happen that often. The closest neighbor that had any child my age was about a mile and a half away. But living in the country still had its advantages, I think, I learned a lot about the woods, and animals. I still enjoy the quiet and solitude of sitting out in a deer blind, deer season, and just enjoying what's about me. I think a lot of that was learned as a child because I grew up on a farm.

Fishing on the carp river in the summer time is one of the greatest past times that I had. Then, a person could go down and in a few hours time catch a limit of brookies, and some real nice fish. Then when winter came, skiing, making ski jumps on every hill in the area. Skiing till dark, also snowshoeing into the swamps with my father, and rabbit hunting.

me: What kinds of church activities did you participate in?

Mr. N: Sunday school was very strict, when I was younger. We'd have to memorize parts of the bible every week, and I was in ~~that~~ 2nd or 3rd when this was going on. And my ^{probably} parents always made sure that I had Sunday school every week. A matter of fact I can't ever remember, through all the years of Sunday school, ever missing one ^{day} one Sunday.

me: What kind of special community events did you take place in?

Mr.N: Well, growing up on a farm, and with all of the projects that were going on all the time, all of the animals to take care of, and everything like that. Making a big trip was from Negaunee Township to Ishpeming, and that was maybe three times a year. Christmastime was probably the best time, and something that I'll probably never forget was all the Aunts and Uncles and cousins would get together ~~and~~ at my grandfather Wigs house in Negaunee. The house was full of people maybe forty or ~~fifty~~ so people, food, Santa Claus would come, kids would be hooting and hollering and having a great time. This was about the only time that the whole family actually got together.

me: Did you have a job before you were an adult?

Mr.N: I started work at 15 years old at Negaunee, Russo's in Negaunee, as a carry-out. Other than that I really didn't have any jobs.

me: Did you go to college?

Mr.N: After I graduated from Negaunee High School, I joined the Navy. Where I toured Southeast Asia, I saw Japan, Hong Kong, the Phillipines, Taiwan, Vietnam, wasn't to crazy about that.

After 3 years, I returned, and started work with Michigan Bell as a Spicing ~~Techni~~ Tecnitian.

me: What difference in growing up do your kids have compared to what you had?

Mr. N: I'll tell ya, growing up now is a lot harder, I think, than it was when I was a kid, cause life is much more complex. The world has gotten a lot smaller do to communications, TV's, computers, all of those kinds of things. Besides all of that, pure pressure to do all kinds of drugs is everywhere. Person has to, almost have a college education now a days. It's a tough world for the young people now ~~a~~ days, and I just wish them the best.

me: Well, thank you for your time.

Mr. N: Your welcome.