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Laura Burnette's
Interview With
Leslie Burnette

This is Laura Burnette and it's February 15, 1993 interviewing my Grandpa Leslie Burnette
Me - When and where were you born?

Grandpa - Champion

me - and When

Grandpa - January 14, 1921

me - What were your parents names

Grandpa - Leona Carrier and George Burnette

me - What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

Grandpa - June, Beatrice, and Marie

me - Were you married?

Grandpa - Yes

me - When and where?

Grandpa - September 7, 1946

me - To who?

Grandpa - Lucille Burnette

me - What did your parents do for a living?

Grandpa - My dad worked at a factory in Detroit, my mother cooked in a restaurant

me - Where did you go to school?

Grandpa - I went to school in Champion.

me - What special memories do you have of growing up in this area?

Grandpa - I remember going to school in a horse and buggy in the summertime, horse and sleigh in wintertime, half frozen half the time

me - What feature stick out in your mind about Champion, and how has it changed?

Grandpa - Well, when I went to school it was strictly school work no — and hardly any sports it was strictly study. Now you have a whole lot of other things to do

me - What kinds of things did you do for entertainment when you were younger.

Grandpa - Oh, we done a lot of swimming, fishing, and riding our bicycles.

~~Grandpa~~

Me - Where did you hang out when you were a teenager?

Grandpa - Oh, there used to be a gas station in Champton where we'd hang around

Me - Do you have any interesting or humorous stories about when you were young?

Grandpa - Well, just that a friend of mine riding on the handle bars of my bicycle put his ~~big~~ big toe in the spokes

me - Did he hurt his foot?

Grandpa - No he didn't.

me - How old were you when you found your first job & where did you work?

Grandpa - I got my first job when I was 16 and I worked in a grocery store in Detroit.

me - What did you have to do there?

Grandpa - I delivered groceries with a panel truck all over Detroit

me - What stands out in your mind most about your 1st job?

Grandpa - Too many hours, too little pay

me - How many hours did you have to work?

Grandpa - 7 days a week, 12 hours a day

me - How much did you get paid?

Grandpa - 10 dollars a week

me - Were you ever in the military?

Grandpa - Yes, I was

me - What were you?

Grandpa - I was a flight engineer in the Air Force.

me - When

Grandpa - 1942 - 1945

Me - Did you serve in World War II

Grandpa - Yes, I did

Me - Where at?

Grandpa - Germany, France, England

Me - Did anything ever happen?

Grandpa - Oh, just being shot at occasionally, other than that nothing happened

Me - How many years have you worked in your lifetime?

Grandpa - about 45 years

Me - When did you move back to the U.P.

Grandpa - 1946

Me - Then what was your job?

Grandpa - I got a job with Cleveland Cliffs

Me - At what mine?

Grandpa - At the Mather A

Me - What did you do there?

Grandpa - I worked with one of the other miners getting out the iron ore

Me - Was it hard

Grandpa - Yes, very hard, very hot, very wet

Me - What were the conditions like underground?

Grandpa - It was hard to breath + very dirty

Me - What special clothes did you have to wear?

Grandpa - Just regular overalls + safety boots + safety hat + had to carry a light

Me - Was it dangerous at all?

Grandpa - I didn't think so

Me - Did other people think so

Grandpa - Yes, they did

Me - Why did they think it was dangerous?

Grandpa - Oh, with blasting powder + things like that people couldn't get careless

Me - What kind of stuff did you have to do with the blasting powder and all that?

Grandpa - Oh, you'd drill a hole in the ore + then the charge + all the blasting powder + then light it to explode

Me - What would you do when they were exploding

Grandpa - Run as far as you could as fast as you could

Me - Did anyone you knew ever get hurt in one of the explosions?

Grandpa - Yes, two people that I knew pretty well

~~they~~ - It was a real bad one. The biggest piece they found of two men was the belt buckle.

Me - The belt buckle?

Grandpa - That's all that was left

Me - What happened to them?

Grandpa - About six boxes of dynamite exploded. They were standing right by it

~~the~~
Me - Where at did it explode?

Grandpa - Underground

me - Did you have any training at all

Grandpa - No, it was on the job training

me - Did you have any special rules?

Grandpa - You weren't allowed to smoke, that was one of the main rules

me - Were there any other rules?

Grandpa - No not specific rules, just rules of common sense

me - How long did you work there?

Grandpa - 11 years

me - Then where did you go after that?

Grandpa - Then I went to the Empire Mine.

me - What was your most rewarding experience of that job at the Mather A?

Grandpa - Just the jobs we were set out to do.

me - What was the hardest part?

Grandpa - The hardest part was carrying heavy steel + getting it set in place.

me - What did you have to carry the steel for?

Grandpa - That held up the earth where we were working so it wouldn't cave in on us

me - How heavy was it + how far did you have to carry it?

Grandpa - Anywhere from 10-200 ft, + each piece would probably weigh about 200 pounds.

me - Did you have to carry a piece yourself, or were people helping you?

Grandpa - Usually we each carried a piece by ourself.

me - Did the duties of your job change any over the years

Grandpa - No, not when I worked underground they didn't
me - Then when you went to the Empire how were they different?

Grandpa - There we were working above ground in the open pit mine.

me - Was it a lot easier?

Grandpa - Yes it was, much easier

me - How was it easier?

Grandpa - I wasn't carrying heavy steel for one thing and I could see the sky

me - What did you have to do at the Empire?

Grandpa - Run bulldozer + front end loader

me - When you were working at the Mather A, what was your partner like?

Grandpa - A real nice guy I worked with, we worked together about 7 years

me - What was his name

Grandpa - Gunnard Delto

me - Did anything funny or interesting ever happen to you + him when you were working?

Grandpa - Yes, one time we were messing around behind a big electrical machine + we were both kinda ticklish at the time we were rolling around and struggling on the ground two bosses came up (chuckles) at the time that wasn't humorous, but it was after they left

me - What did the bosses do?

Grandpa - They wanted to know what we were doing back there, I told them we were working

me - Did you get in trouble?

Grandpa - No, we didn't

Me - What were your biggest responsibilities?

Grandpa - Just to be careful with dynamite, with caps so we'd
wouldn't hurt anybody or ourselves

Me - Did you receive any special awards or were you
recognized in any way for your job?

Grandpa - Well, if you were lucky, you got a pat on the back

Me - How many hours did you have to work?

Grandpa - 8 hour days, five days a week

Me - While you were working there did you have any
hobbies or favorite leisure activities?

Grandpa - Oh, just swimming + fishing + hunting + things

Me - Where at?

Grandpa - Oh, Lake Michigamme, Peshely River, Ross Lake

Me - Do you have any interesting stories about them?

Grandpa - Yes, one time at Ross Lake, there had been nobody
else up there and down near the shore of the
lake we came across a huge turtle and on the
top of his shell was cut out with a knife or chisel
1865.

Me - Was the turtle old

Grandpa - Yes, very old

Me - When was that?

Grandpa - That was in the early 1930s

Me - Was it hard growing up in the Depression?

Grandpa - Well, we never had any money, we were lucky
to get a dime each Saturday night, spending
money

me - What did you spend it on?

Grandpa - We'd be really choosy, maybe an ice cream cone, maybe a couple candy bars, sometimes penny candy

me - Where did you spend it at?

Grandpa - We'd have to go to Champion to spend it

me - What are your fondest memories of your working days + your career?

Grandpa - Just seeing that I'd done my job well

me - What did you do after you worked at the Empire Mine?

Grandpa - Then I went to the Humbolt mine.

me - Was the Humbolt mine pretty much the same as the Empire?

Grandpa - Yes, pretty much, only a lot smaller older equipment

me - Where you a different kind of job?

Grandpa - No I was doing the same kind of work.

me - Then where did you work?

Grandpa - Then I went to the Republic Mine

me - That was the same thing too?

Grandpa - Yes

me - And then what?

Grandpa - Then I went to the Tilden Mine

me - Then you retired?

Grandpa - Yes

me - Did you have a grocery store?

Grandpa - Yes, we did.

Me - When was that?

Grandpa - We opened that in 1946 + closed it in 1951

Me - What was it called?

Grandpa - Burnette's Grocery

Me - What do you do in the grocery store

Grandpa - We had all the necessary things, some fresh fruit + produce, canned vegetables + fruit + everything

Me - Was it in this house?

Grandpa - Yes

Me - Then where did you live?

Grandpa - We lived right here. There was a little log house attached right next to this one, we used to live in that

Me - Was it little?

Grandpa - Yes, it was only four rooms a living room + a kitchen downstairs, + a two bedrooms upstairs,

me - Did all the kids share the same room

Grandpa - Yes

me - How many beds did they have in their room?

Grandpa - 2 + it was cold

me - What were there chores?

me - When you were little what kind of toys did you have?

Grandpa - The only toys I had, my Grandpa made for me, a pair of skis, and a sled, and a bicycle and that was it.

me - Did you ski a lot?

Grandpa - Yes, quite a bit.

Me - Did anything ever happen to you when you were skiing?

Grandpa - Yes, I fell one night and I skinned my upper lip and I was supposed to be in the Christmas play the following night

Me - What were you supposed to be in the play?

Grandpa - I don't remember what I was supposed to be. I had a big scab on my upper lip

Me - Were you still in it?

Grandpa - I was still in the play, I hit a stump with my ski then I nitt my face on it

Me - Where was the play at?

Grandpa - Champlin school

Me - If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same careers

Grandpa - Yes I would

Me - Why?

Grandpa - Because it liked what I was doing

Me - Why did you like it?

Grandpa - Because the job I enjoyed and the pay was good and I enjoyed that kind of work

Me - Which kind of work?

Grandpa - Bulldozing, running shovel, running loader, all different things + kinds of equipment

Me - Do you have anything else to add to the interview or anything?

Grandpa - Just that we dived beyond Champion + used to have to haul our water with a wagon when our well went dry and I played horse + June + Mariea Beatrice they'd get behind and push, we'd get all the empty containers, wash tubs, boilers + fill the wagon + go down to the neighbors a 1/4 mile away + fill

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them all up + then we'd have to push + pull that wagon all the way back + that was a horse drawn wagon

Me - Did you wear harness?

Grandpa - No, I'd just hold the chaves up in my hands + I'd steer + pull + the girls would push. + that's how we used to get our water

Me - How heavy was the wagon?

Grandpa - It was a regular horse drawn wagon, it wasn't a little pull wagon like you got now.

Me - How much water did you put on it?

Grandpa - I'd say around 100 gallons

Me - Did you have to do that every day?

Grandpa - No, not every day, probably every 2nd or 3rd day

Me - Did you have any chores when you were little?

Grandpa - I had them all, cutting wood, hauling wood, splitting wood, bringing it in the house + then again there was no horse + I had to do all of it by hand, getting them out of the woods, cutting it up with a buck saw, splitting it with an axe. there were no log splitters, no chainsaws.

Me - Did you ever have a horse, or did the horse die?

Grandpa - We had a horse, but the last one we had died shortly after that. I went to school, in the winter time, Grandpa had made a great big box that went over the sled with a wind shield in there + a spot under neath to put the reins in to drive the horse. We'd heat a big chunk of grindstone in the oven + wrap it in a burlap bag + we'd put them on the floor of our little sleigh + we'd put our feet on them + that'd keep our feet warm.

- Me - How long did it stay warm?
- Grandpa - Well, it stayed warm till we got to Champion, about a 1/2 an hour
- Me - How far was it to Champion
- Grandpa - 3 miles
- Me - In the school, was the teacher real mean?
- Grandpa - Some of them weren't real mean, but some were really strict, and the majority were pretty old
- Me - What did they do when you got in trouble?
- Grandpa - When we got in trouble, they used a strap, they weren't about using it, either
- Me - Did you get in trouble a lot?
- Grandpa - No, Just once
- Me - What for?
- Grandpa - I got ^{caught} smoking, I was out of the school yard, but I was still caught smoking
- Me - How old were you?
- Grandpa - 12 or 13
- Me - Where did you get the cigarettes from?
- Grandpa - I don't really remember where we got them from, we bought them from the store or that is probably where we got them from
- Me - Who were you with?
- Grandpa - 4 or 5 other friends of mine that all hung around together we were all smoking. We all got the same treatment
- Me - Where were you smoking at?
- Grandpa - We were across the street, under an old house that was up on stilts

Me - What was your house like when you were growing up?
Grandpa - It was a big old house. It wasn't anywhere near town. It was a big old gray one. Lots of berries around it, currants. All kinds of things to pick + eat, lot of deer

Me - Did you used to hunt for deer a lot?

Grandpa - Yes, Deer + rabbits, Done a lot of fishing

Me - Did anything ever happen when you were hunting?

Grandpa - No

Me - Did you live on a farm?

Grandpa - Yes, it was a small farm We didn't grow too much. The only things we grew were potatoes. We had a small garden where we had radishes + onions for our own use Nothing for sale on anything like that.

Me - Is there anything at all else before we end the interview?

Grandpa - Behind our house there was a real high bluff + according to legend there was right near the top there was supposed to be the hord sitting there with his Bible open on his lap and I used to take many people up there all the time when I was a little tyke. I'd take them up on top the bluff to see it up close All it really was was white, really stiff pieces of thin bark + from the highway, it would look like a person sitting there just below the crest of the rock I used to take people up there so they could see it

Me - What kind of people did you take up there?

Grandpa - Oh anybody that would be travelling down the highway by. They'd come in the yard + ask to go up there, + I'd bring them up. All kinds of people, People passing through, visiting or vacationing, whatever.

Me - Did anyone interesting ever come?

Grandpa - No, they were all kind of amazed once they got up there to see what it was. You couldn't distinguish it so we'

Grandpa - you could from a little distance

Me - Anything else?

Grandpa - No, I don't think so

Me - Thank you

Grandpa - Your Welcome