

Chrissy Cox's Interview
with
Grandpa Cox

This is Chrissy Cox interviewing my grandpa, Lloyd Cox. I am doing the interview over the phone because he is currently living in Punta Gorda, Florida. It is February 21, 1993. This interview is autobiographical.

Me: Hi Grandpa.

Grandpa: Hello Chris.

Me: Hi. Um when & where were you born?

Grandpa: Shipaming. up on North Pine Street.

Me: When?

Grandpa: When.

Me: Yeah.

Grandpa: 1955

Me: Uh, what were your parents names?

Grandpa: Uh, George & Lydia

Me: O.K. what were your brothers and sisters names?

Grandpa: I have one sister, Bernice

Me: What did your mom and dad do for a living?

Grandpa: My dad was a miner at the Maas Mine in Nequaunee Cleveland Cliffs Iron

Me: O.K. Did your mom do anything?

Grandpa: Uh. She did work at the backyard.

Me: O.K. uh. where did you go to school?

Grandpa: National Mine. Class of '42.

Me: What special memories do you have of growing up in this area.

Grandpa: Oh.. there were sort of ah. friendly battles that we had. We'd make a fort in the winter time & throw snowballs...

Me: uh-huh

Grandpa: ... and in the summertime we'd defend an abandon house with apples. & swimming in Lilly Pond, & Duck Pond, & Big Pond, & #3 pit, & so on. In winter time of course sleigh riding & basketball as much as possible

Me: What special features stand out in your mind about the cities of Ishpeming + Negaunee from when you were younger?

Grandpa: The differences?

Me: yeh.

Grandpa: Well, I notice ~~that~~ more vacant buildings and uh more parking lots. There were once ~~businesses~~ businesses in those places. In fact I worked in some of them + there gone now + parking lots.

Me: oh.

Grandpa: The girls in the homes of the outline areas was so much greater now. Due to the fact that transportation is more assible now. The thing I miss too are the railroads. A busy all the time. Not only was trains but passenger trains + so on.

Me: O.K. What kinds of things did you + your friends do for entertainment as teenagers?

Grandpa: Basically I was working but uh I think w'd kind of hang around the gas stations for a while + buy ~~was~~ Main Street with the automobiles that we had. They were older ones but uh it was quite a while ago to, Model A's were common + so on.

Me: yeh. Do you have any interesting or humorous stories to share about these early days in Ishpeming or Negaunee?

Grandpa: Well, I could talk about I loved the old automobiles. When I was young. I never did care too much for the Model T because they were hard starting. And a friend of mine had one and I asked him if it was hard starting and he said he cranked it till the radiator boiled + it still wouldn't start.

Me: (Laugh) How old were you when you found your first job + where did you work.

Grandpa: Ah I think I was ah (pauses) 14. and I worked at Millimaki's bus station. That's off of 581 just beyond the school forest.

Me: Oh.

Grandpa: On the opposite side of the road.

Me: O.K. What types of duties did you perform on your first job?

Grandpa: yeh it was a bit different then now, uh. The gas pump was different. It was a gravity feed pump. You pump gas from your underground tank up into a glass container on a pump that was marked off with gallons & all you did was put the hose into the feeder nozzle on the car & let the gravity do its thing.

me: yeh.

Grandpa: The gas would run down & whether you wanted five gallons or ten gallons you could stop it on the marker. It was a relatively simple affair. Otherwise we service the car as they came in with windshield wiper & radiator checks, & oil checks, & asked them wanted tires checked and so on. It was kind of a complete service as opposed to today's when you service yourself.

me: yeh. What stands out most in your mind about your first job?

Grandpa: Well, uh it wasn't all that busy. It was my first out of school activity where I got to meet more grown-ups, uh stranger grown-ups to me they were strangers ~~to me~~. I've learned to rather enjoy the public, uh dealing with the public that way. It kind of followed through all my life.

me: Oh. Would you describe your experiences in the military?

Grandpa: Well, I had to uh many I think. I was in the navy and I was on a destroyer.

me: Uh-huh

Grandpa: I was a sonar man. Second class petty officer eventually got to be. The job was to seek out submarines and destroy them.

me: Oh!

Grandpa: Of course. I did recall on incident after the war was over. This destroyer was the first American ship into Hakadoti, Hakido Japan. I believe its pronounced Hakadoti. But uh we were there for several weeks & then uh the destroyer needed an overhaul. We went back to the states by way of Pearl Harbor. Somewhere between Japan & Pearl Harbor out in the middle of the Pacific somewhere I picked some object ahead of us. And it was a mine that had broken loose. One of those big round jobs with the spikes sticking out of it. Looked old fashion, but we shot it with the guns and it exploded.

brandpa: So it could have been a desater if a ship had hit it.

me: yeh. um. How was your experience as a police officer?

brandpa: Well, from humerous (laugh) to ah beerning very meruows. If you have a gun pointed at you~~s~~ tend to get meruows or I do. (laugh)

me: yeh. when did you retire?

brandpa: From my last full-time job?

me: yeh

brandpa: From my last fulltime job in 1982.

me: Oh. So how many years have you worked?

brandpa: Ohh (thinks about it) 43 years or some such thing.

me: Oh. um. During your lifetime where were you employed the longest?

brandpa: Cleveland Cliffs Iron.

me: For how long?

brandpa: 26 yrs. and 1 month

me: Holy cow! How or why did you choose this career?

brandpa: Uh. I was employed by the postal department in Ishpeming. I was a letter carrier. The pay was equal to what the mines payed. and there was security, but I decided to gamble because with the young family I wanted a little more than 40 hours a week. and the mines were just beginning there peletizing process. I took a gamble & I had some qualifications to say it was an educated gamble in the sense that I talked to engineers that were involved with it and they said yes its got to go and I felt Cleveland Cliffs was rather a stable company and it would go. So I left the postal department and went into the peletizing end of it and it involved lots of overtime work and therefor more pay. But basically the reason ^{I started} and getting on the ground floor ~~to~~ to speak of a new process and it was very interesting.

me: What were the main duties of this job.

brandpa: To produce a quality product that was very acceptable to the steel mills. It was so much easier for them to handle and to production increase by using pellets as opposed to open raw iron ore mined from the pits or underground.

me: Oh. What was the ~~training~~ training like.

brandpa: Safety was quite often. Especially in later years safety became a first. In my later years I practiced, preached safety to people I worked with. That was the main concern and different men were chosen to be in these departments. First aid type people & prevention of damage to machines or equipment I should say and buildings was another group that would tend to take that. Ohh. I boiled down to safety first.

me: yeh. um. what special equipment did this job require, or clothing?

brandpa: Oh an equipment was basically mining equipment like heavy machines & so on. But, pelletizing your dealing with heat. If its in the milling end of it its water & heavy equipment which is dangerous & so on & slits & whatnot. But you get into heat you got another element & so in some areas we've worked in we've had to have a spacemans suit basically it was made out of asbestos. A big hood you put over your head you put over your head with flexiglass opening on it so you could see. Special boots to pull over your shoes. Pants & a heavy jacket & they were lined. Well, made out of asbestos to be fire resistant & heat resistant, both.

me: yeh. um what special rules or regulations did you have to follow for this job?

brandpa: Well, there were a number of them. The safety first was number one. Uh good house keeping was would kind of go hand & hand with it. Training other people you work with on jobs the didn't really know. So it was a learning process.

me: Oh. O.k. What was the most rewarding part of your career?

brandpa: Other than financial of course we all have to have that. But as I mentioned at my first job I began to meet the public & dealing with the public & getting to know so many people

Grandpa: I enjoyed that the most I would have to say.

me: What was the most challenging or difficult part of your job?

Grandpa: Keeping people safe + producing a quality product. Safe was because sometimes we forget + have to be reminded. So it was a constant job.

me: Ah-huh. How did the duties of your job change over the years?

Grandpa: Well, I progressed from one job to another. The more I had there way. I'd gain more experience, but into different jobs. Not to be where I knew a little bit about everything + so if I saw dangerous things happening I would mention it to people. You get to be supervisor in some areas.

me: Yeh. Did any other family members work for the same company?

Grandpa: Well, I have two sons that worked for them. One of them for them, Victor worked for them when he went to college. He worked in the summer temporary. Then Freddy he's a welder at the Tilden mine right now.

me: Did your job put you in any dangerous situations?

Grandpa: Yes, mining is heavy industry + whenever there is any heavy industry. It is dangerous + when you get in to pelletizing you have the element of heat. You have a lot of dust + this dust can be very treacherous. Ah if you see red dust you know its dangerous. There's a danger signal there in the color. But water boils at 212, black dust can be 800 or 900° + it acts like a water almost. Its deceptively innocent looking. If you happen to get involved with dust at 8,900° it'll ———. Its one of its worst things to watch. With the red product or the dust or whatever it may have been, the danger signal is there, you can see the red. But when its black you don't realize it its there. You must be alive all the time.

me: What were your co-workers like?

Grandpa: Oh. Great. I enjoyed them. They were great guys, as I said before enjoyed meeting the public. They did basically the same thing as I did. Try & protect one another. Make life as happy as possible & still produce. We were production crew.

me: What were some interesting or humorous events that happened during your ~~career~~ career?

Grandpa: I'll tell you two. I have had many jobs. & one of my jobs I was landscaping yard for some people. Each day a little boy went by to school, kindergarden, I'd talk to him or he'd talk to me. One day he'd stop & talk some more. He told me about the 2nd day that I resembled his grandfather. Well, with my imagination I felt that perhaps his grandfather was a fine looking fellow. Strong person, not only physically but strong willed. & just a fine guy. I was finishing up on the job, last day there & he was on his way home from kindergarden & I asked him ~~what~~ what his grandfather looked like. And he said that he looks old too. (Laugh) Called the truth of youth.

me: Yeh

Grandpa: The other is I was ~~was~~ riding to work in a car pool & evidently this man didn't think too much of my ~~because~~ because I asked him how many children he had and he said two. I asked him how old they were. He said one was 9 & one was 11. I said are they a boy & a girl or two boys, two girls or what. He says a boy & a girl. I said which one is the oldest. He said the one that's eleven.

me: (Laugh) O.K. At any ~~that~~ time did you feel like changing careers?

Grandpa: No.

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me: why?

Grandpa: I enjoyed the challenges there. As I said in the beginning, it was a new process & it was continually being improved. It was very interesting to me. It was the way the machines acted & what they did & the final results. It was very interesting & the pay was good, benefits & so on.

me: What were your biggest responsibilities on the job?

Grandpa: Sometimes the crew would run up to 27 & the biggest job was keeping them safe.

me: yeh um, did you receive any special rewards from your employer & were you recognized in any way for your job performances?

Grandpa: Well, the privilege of being able to provide for the family, opportunity to ~~for~~ meet so many people. I don't know ah it was just getting employment was a great thing.

me: During your days of employment & beyond what have been your favorite hobbies? And do you have any special stories about them?

Grandpa: Well, not really, I've been a worker most of my life. I enjoyed fishing of course when I was younger & when I had the time & swimming. The usual things in the summer. Snowmobiling was a ~~big~~ thrill to me because they were just coming into vogue ~~at~~ the mid 50's or thereabouts. So that was a lot of fun.

me: Have you been involved in any clubs, organizations, or sports leagues?

Grandpa: In the sports not all that much. Because, I did play

Grandpa: basketball after school with National Team & teams from Ishpeming. I played in Rapid River & Escanaba & Munising & those places after I'd been out of school.

me: How about clubs or organizations?

Grandpa: Well, I've been in quite a few. I've been commander of the local Disabled Veterans Chapter, Marquette County Disabled Veterans had a representative on the Veterans trust fund & so I represented the county on that. I got 35 year pin with the V.F.W.

me: How old were you when you joined these organizations?

Grandpa: Ohhh in my mid 20's

me: What types of duties did you perform as a member of these organizations?

Grandpa: I was commander of the Disabled Veterans its a matter of trying to get in more members. Veterans benefits, the benefits that are available to them. To answer ~~your~~ questions concerning veterans, hospitalizations, pensions, whatever, privileges or rights they may of had.

me: Where did you hold your activities or meetings?

Grandpa: When?

me: Where

Grandpa: On one of the buildings is down now, in ~~the~~ Ishpeming. It was on ~~the~~ ridge street. Its a parking lot. The others we held in ~~the~~ the Marquette County Coartrous.

me: What are your fondest memories of your working days in your career?

Grandpa: My working days?

me: yeh.

Grandpa: I think the main one ~~was~~ is that I had the opportunity to work. Physically I remained all right & didn't hurt all that much. Was able to provide for a family. I worked many jobs but while I worked for a full time job I worked part time jobs too. In between the two of them it worked out great.

me: Were you a member of a union?

Grandpa: Yes

me: Which one?

Grandpa: I worked at Hercules Powder & I was a union president there for a while. I also ~~worked~~ worked in Detroit. I was a member of the CIO down there. The United auto workers I should say.

me: Uh-huh. Were there any interesting moments that occurred as a member of a union?

Grandpa: Other than being a little apprehensive at times, whether there was going to be a strike or not. When I was a member of the union at Hercules the locals in the area unions had a picnic up where the 8th edition now stands that was an open field. So they wanted us to volunteer because the families were all there so I got with the ice cream dispensing stand & all we had was vanilla. So just to pass the time of day a little better of course the ice cream was busy with youngsters & the cones & I'd ask different ones, you want plain, white, or vanilla? They'd ask me what kind I had, I tell em I had plain, white or vanilla & sometimes they'd make a decision.

me: If you had to do it all over again would you choose the same career?

Grandpa: ~~Yes~~ yes

me: Why?

Grandpa: ~~I~~ As a rule I enjoyed it all no matter what job I had. I worked from Oakland, California to Detroit to Tomagamee, Canada the Ashpeming area many different jobs, I met many different ~~of~~ people. I provided & I felt that was my basic duty. Other than like any other job there are times when you wish you were someone else I enjoyed them all. As a general outlook of it.

me: In closing do you have anything else you would like to add?

Grandpa: No, I think that's about it. The various jobs I had were challenges all of them, to me they were challenges I appreciated a challenge so I enjoyed myself through-out.

me: O.K. well, thanks Grandpa.

Grandpa: Yeh. This was a fine ~~is~~ time talking to you. I enjoyed it.

me: Yeh O.K. ~~is~~ Thanks

Grandpa: Your welcome.

me: O.K. Bye

Grandpa: Bye now