

Michelle LaJoie's
Interview with
Robert Forchini

This is Michelle LaJoie on February 13th and I am interviewing Robert Forchini at his house on underground mining and other occupations.

me: o.k., when and where were you born?

Bob: when, July 11th, 1921

me: where were you born

Bob: Quinn

me: what were your parents names?

Bob: Battista and maria

me: what were the names of your brothers and sisters?

Bob: 5 boys, 5 girls

Ruby interrupts: no

me: could you tell me the names of them?

Bob: Well there was Ernestine, Angelo, James, and an ~~Isaac~~ and Mary, Elisabeth, and me Catherine

me: o.k. Where were you married?

Bob: negaunee

me: What is your spouses name?

Bob: Ruby

me: What did your parents do for a living?

Bob: my Dad worked in the mine until he got hurt and then he had to retire.

me: Did your mom have any occupations?

Bob: no, she raised 10 kids

me: Where did you go to school?

Bob: Salisbury school and grammer school

me: What special moments did you have of growing up in this area?

Bob: What would that be, my dad bought a farm in ispeming, 1925, and I have been living there ever since and ah I was left here alone with my ma I had to take care of the farm till I went to the service and I came home from the service and I ripped down the barn and got rid of the farm.

me: O.k. What special feature stand out in your mind about the city of Ishpeming and Negaunee from when you were younger?

Bob: I had a horse and I used to have horse ~~see~~ races every Washingtons Birthday and ^{then} before I got home I would have to give about 10 kids a ride they all always said you promised me and I would give them a ride and when the horse got tired she would bring him to the barn door the kids would be crying and I would have to walk home. Then for little pocket money I used to hitch up the horse to the wagon go on all of these open pits before they had water on them and I used to collect scrap iron for 75¢ a ton.

me: o.k. how old were you when you started underground mining?

Bob: ah 19 years old

me: What types of duties did you perform while mining?

Bob: Everything they used to do down there, I had just about every job down there.

me: Uhuh what stands out most in your mind about experiencing with mining?

Bob: Well I was raised mining for over 20 years but made more money on day shift all the time. That's why I'd sooner had that day. What sticks out the most is the days you used to have to go pretty near straight up with a 5x5 hole, 6x6 hole, and then we would have to crawl up and under there after the blast and lots of times these cunks would be hanging up there like

grapes. You would just touch it and the whole thing come down and you have to get in the corner cause sometimes it breaks the stage so you wouldn't fall down and that was a dangerous job thats why we were day shift all the time.

me: It must have been really dangerous holly wah.

Bob: To solve the danger you had to get over in the corner. Otherwise you get hit in the head with a big chunk and get knocked out. a guy from north lake got buried up under a young fella and he died from that. we were up there one day when Dunctan first started so I noled down to him that I needed some spikes, so he brought me up a handfull of spikes and a big crack came from

Over my head and I told ~~that~~ ^{clay} to jump I think he keep the spikes down the latter and I come down to and soon as George said what's the matter, my partner said what's the matter, I said its going to cave and "Baroom" right from the stoke it caved in, so I got my head out of there right on time.

me: Wan, how many total years did you work in the mine?

Bob: 34 years

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

Bob: lots of those jobs. I suppose if you had no brains you wouldn't do it if you had no brains

me and Bob: laughed

Bob: Well, Drilling, like in arays you had to drill straight up and down, if they had to drill wet

Bob:
cont.

You got soaking wet before you were finished. Then you had to blast. One time I blast I crawled through the middle of rays and battery fell down, my strap opened up and my battery fell hat and everything had to crawl about 30 feet over to the other ray. Darker than hell then I climbed down. Danny was down there hollering to me but ah, o.k. one time the mine flooded, one gang blasted through mine and water come in many thousands of gallons a minute and we were down there, the volunteer that said he'd work, was down there and we were down there and between skips you were up to your waist in water before the other skip come down and took another bucket load up and then some guys were making a dam out by

Bob: shafts and we were inside measuring
 cont: the water like a side of a "y"
 wondering how many gallons of
 water was coming through and one
 of the guys happened to
 mention to the superintendent
 for measuring here that maybe
 all the waters going down
 through the other way. we
 could get trapped in there
 you know and pencil started
 coming out there. we worked
 3 days like that till we
 got'er all checked then the
 whole mine went back to
 work again.

me: How far underground did
 you have to go to get ~~the~~ the
 ore?

Bob: well the skip hit the ladder
 was 33 hundred feet.

me: Do you know how you did
 get underground?

Bob: go Down in a cage like
 an elevator. one morning
 the engineer keep telling the
 big wheels that something
 got to be done and they
 wouldn't pay no ~~no~~ attention
 and we went down that
 morning and instead of
 seeing the lights every 10
 seconds between 200 foot
 levels we went down and
 it was one little flash
 like lightning and we were
 finally got it stopped before
 we got to where we were
 going and everybody was
 pretty scared and the next
 cage load the big wheels
 come down, the boss and the
 superintendent, and the
 captain went over and called
 the engineer and started giving him
 hell because he let them down

Bob: to fast, he told me what
cont. do you think I have been
telling you for the last couple
of weeks or so and then he
shut up. and that's it.

me: ok, could you describe some
interesting or humorous times
while working underground?

Bob: Quitting time

me: ok. During the days of mining
and beyond did you have any
other hobbies or leisure activities?

Bob: I used to go fishing over at the
creek every night getting my limit
and I'd do a little woodwork
till I pitchent that's all I
just about do now.

me: What do you build like?

Bob: frames, mirror jobs and all that
stuff like that hang on the
wall.

me: What do you do with it?

Bob: I give most of it away.

me: What former occupations did you have before mining?

Bob: I went to the CCC's when I was 13 years old, I was home from school one day and 3 of my buddies come over here and they ~~said~~ ^{told} me let's go sign up for the CCC's, I said no and one said you "chicken" so I said lets go. we got down there and the one that said I was a chicken didn't even get off the sidewalk, so we went and registured and 2 weeks later I come home and my ma was crying, I said ~~what~~ ^{what} are you crying for, she said you got to go army, I said I don't got to go army, she said ya look the

Bob: papers come in. Then I explained
Cott: to her it was the CCC's.

So I went to the CCC's and when I come out of the CCC's and I looked out the window one ~~and~~ day and who do I see coming in the door was a troot

Officer. So he said I had to go^{down} to C. Phelps Super intendent. So I went down to him about quarter to 1 he kept me there until the bell rang until school got out and asked me all these big questions he had asked me all these questions, I don't know what he was talking about, and I'd say ya and he'd say what, I'd say no, thats better he'd say. He'd asked me these big ^{words} ~~questions~~ and I'd say no, he'd say what, I said ya, he said that's better. So when the bell rang for the kids to come out

he said well I'll think it over
 if you should work or go school
 So then I had to sweat out 6
 more months till I was 16 so I
 didn't quit school then one day
 he ~~came~~ me, and he caught me
 playing solitary and he said
 why ain't you in school today
 so the first thing come to my
 mind I never had no heavy
~~britches~~ to go through all the snow
 because the plow never ~~used~~ to
 come here, so he said the Grammar
 School principal so I went down
 to see him and he told me if I
 buy you a pair of britches will
 you come to school. I said ~~sure~~
 sure so he bought me the britches
 on a thursday and I went to school
 on ~~the~~ friday and I stayed home
 another 6 weeks. Then ah I knew
 his license # and I was coming up
 by Trino's gas station when I was
 coming home and I was eating one of

Candy Babe Ruth Chocolate Bars
 pretty choked me when 50502
 and he stopped and said why ain't
 you in school today Robert. I said,
 first thing come to my mind, I
 had to kill a pig. He said, are you
 coming school tomorrow, I said no,
 that was on a Wednesday that I
 told him I had to kill a pig. He
 said are you coming school tomorrow
 I said no, ~~he~~ said no I got to
 cut him up, he said coming school
 Friday I said no I got to make some
 gudiguis, He said make ~~sure~~ ^{sure} your
 there Monday, so that trun officer
 he come here, he would be
 so tired when he come bucking
 through snow up to his chin that
~~he~~ could pretty near cry when
 he got in the kitchen and he'd
 plead to me to go school, well
 if he couldn't make it here how
 did he expect me to go school
 with all that snow and the plow
 never used to come this way

he'd stop over at the mill and go back and then there was lots of snow. When I got done with the CCC's, Civilization Conservation Core, then I went to the WPA and I worked over there until I was old enough to go work some other place and I worked in a section. Then I worked for Norton Groceries and I delivered groceries, the Ishpeming, ~~the~~ Negunee market and I worked my way to the copper country. Then I got a job in the mine.

me: What is the Norton Grocery, and what was it.

Bub: They delivered sugar cookies, groceries all stuff like that to all the stores in Marquette county and all the way through copper country. The Norton grocery is where the rock barn is today.

me: o.k. what did you do after the CCC's?

Bob: That's where I went to railroad WPA and hutton Grocery then I went mining, got a job in the mine

me: What mine did you work in?

Bob: I side mine, I worked there for a couple of years then I was drafted ~~in~~ the service.

me: Do you now what branch of ~~the~~ service and where did you go?

Bob: I was in the army of the 3-24 division ~~we~~ we went to the Pacific

me: Where in the Pacific were you?

Bob: in the ~~Philippines~~ Phillipines.

me: how long were you in the service?

Bob: 2 1/2 years I guess

me: What did you do after you got out of the service?

Bob: I went back in the mine?

me: How many years after that were you married?

Bob: about 10 years.

me: Would you have anything else to say before we ~~end the~~ ^{end the} interview?

Bob: We got a plaque for the mather mine for hoisting the most ore of any single shaft mine in the world. anyone who worked there got a plaque.