

Chad Johnson
interviewing

Mr. - Ray Frieberg

Me - This Chad Johnson interviewing Mr. Ray Frieberg at his home on December 26, 1987 about Mining, and other points of interest.
O.K. I'd like to start off with When and where were you born?

Uncle - I was born in Covington, Michigan April 15, 1926.

Me - How many children were in your family?

Uncle - In my family? I had one brother and one sister.

Me - Were you the oldest?

Uncle - I was the youngest! And the best looking.

Me - (laughing) What did your father do for a living?

Uncle - My father was a lumberjack, a crosscut man.
~~is~~ In case your wondering what a crosscut is ^{that's a} sawyer who sawed used a crosscut saw in the woods.

Me - Did your mother work?

Uncle - My mother was a cook in the lumbercamp.

Me - So your mother and father saw each other, a lot of the time.

Uncle - She was with him all the time, they grew up in a lumber camp.

Me - Did you go to school there?

Uncle - Yes, Yes. It was a one room schoolhouse.

Me - What grades were in your school?

Uncle - one through, eh - kindergarten through ~~eight~~ eighth

Me - Did you spend all your schooling there?

Uncle - First eight years, nine years, that eight or nine years. Well kindergarten through eighth grade, Ya.

Me - Did you go to high school there?

Uncle - No I didn't, I didn't complete high school. I was lumberjacking my self when I was fifteen years old.

Me - How did you get to school, did you just walk?

Uncle - First when I started kindergarten, I walked three miles. Three miles to school in the summer, Page 2

Uncle - then in the winter we used to ride the log sleighs to school, behind the whole tractor.

Me - (laughing) Did you have any favorite teachers?

Uncle - Oh Ya! There was, (hesitated) there was Ms. Holland, that was third grade, and, Ms. Holland was second grade and Ms. Wiggins in the third grade. Ya. One, two non Finnish teachers I'll have until I get to high school.

Me - So did you talk English or Finnish when you ~~went~~ went to school?

Uncle - Both, we talked, um, we talked ~~in~~ English during our classes, but Finn. otherwise.

Me - So, what did you do your homework in English?

Uncle - Ya, we did our homework in English. of course we didn't have much homework, then days because you have to remember there was one teacher was teaching eight grades. And the schoolhouse only had eleven pupils, in kindergarten through eighth grade, so we had time to do our work there.

Me - Did you have any clubs or organizations when you were in school?

Uncle - Nothing, Nothing

Me - Nothing at all?

Uncle - In fact the only school or recreation we had in the role of activities was horse shoes, and then I think in the

Uncle - eighth grade, I went to a big school, that was two rooms. Ya, a big two room school. And we had a baseball and a box there. Besides the horse shoes that's all we had.

Me - What kind jobs did you have at home to do?

Uncle - He, he, he. First of all summers we lived in the woods. We took care of horses, cut wood for the cook shack, carried water into the bunk houses to help the chore boys. Then, at home, lets see now, we had some chickens, we used to feed chickens. And a couple times we had a cow we had to take care of that too. But the biggest job was chasing it, because you see we had no pastures, see, the cows used to just roam around. We spend about four miles a day just chasing our cows. And then of course we used to carry the wood into our own shack, carry the water, then my sister did the dish washing, and stuff like that.

Me - So you had a pretty workload.

Uncle - Oh ya!

Me - What kinds of things did you do on holidays?

Uncle - Same thing we did on the other 5 days or six days. Then days we used

Uncle - work six days a week, and for recreation we used to go fishing, or swimming, that was it. Berry picking, there was no games then. Of course it was just a little bit of a town where I grew up at. So a, we didn't have any club organized sports until. Oh, I was maybe, thirteen, thirteen years old, we finally got sort of an athletic club started, so we could play community base ball, but our big thing was boxing, that was my game.

Me - Boxing? (whispered)

Uncle - Boxing.

Me - Did you participate in boxing?

Uncle - Oh, Ya! Sure I boxed for many years. When, well I was in the navy, when I went in the navy later I boxed in the navy, and a I came to live in Marquette, I boxed with CYO, with Catholic clubs, and the Community boxing team, Oh Ya! I used to do alot of boxing.

Me - What kinds of things did you do in the navy, when you were in the navy?

Uncle - What did I do in the navy? Well, I was in an amphibious unit. A ship to shore outfit, I was on a ship was 365 ft. long, 450 men, we carried 1500 assault troops besides, we had 34 landing craft on there, and our job was landing those guys on enemy islands. Page 5

Uncle - So that's what I, I drove a boat. AND Then
for a while, ya, I drove a 36 foot landing
craft. And then I had our landing craft was
sunk, and June 10, 1944, and I went in the ship's
rifle company, I ~~was~~ in the ship's rifle
company for over a year, then I went
back to boats again. ~~and~~ ~~you~~ ~~got~~ ~~back~~

Me - So how did you get back after
your ship was sunk?

Uncle - My ship wasn't sunk, my boat
was.

Me - Oh, o.k. So, when did you go in the
navy?

Uncle - In 1943, December 1943, and before
that I was in the merchant marine,
I was working on merchant ships before
I went in the navy.

Me - Have you been sailing ships all your life
then?

Uncle - Yup. When you wanted to be a cowboy
I wanted to be a sailor.

Me - Did you have many diseases and
things when you were in the lumber
camps.

Uncle - Oh ya. The most important things I
remember was diphtheria epidemics, a.
Small pox was still pretty common.
Then they started in vaccinations for
diphtheria at that time, of course
those were the main ones
then. Page 6

Uncle - But of course we used to have Chicken Pox, all kids get that measles. It was all home remedies then, nobody brought their kids to the doctor. For colds and chest colds, we used to smoke ~~the~~ bee hives, ya we used to make cigars out of them. Then of course they used to, if you had chicken pox then they used to rub you down with sulfur, and cornmeal, ya, the home made remedies.

Me - Did you have influenza?

Uncle - Did I what?

Me - Did you have influenza?

Uncle - No, whooping cough was about the most common kids diseases then, whooping cough and chicken pox. We didn't have measles often.

Me - Where was the doctor?

Uncle - About 40 miles away in Michigamme. We used to come in on the train, then they used to meet him with a horse, or a Model-T car, then we put ~~him~~ ^{him} up there and you usually stayed over night, then we put him back on the train to go back to Michigamme. Then if somebody died, we did the same thing, we brought the undertaker, he'd put a coffin on the train, and bring it to our town, then he'd go to our house, fix the guy, then they'd haul him out to the cemetery.

Me - What kind of treatment did the doctor give you?

Uncle - Mostly saw and pills, he was much more equipped.

Me - So you went to the doctor, did you have penicillin?

Uncle - No

Me - Did you have a car? When did you have your first car?

Uncle - Oh God, I must have been eight, seven or eight years old, we got a model T.

Me - How many roads did you have coming out of Conington?

Uncle - Oh there was lots of roads you just couldn't travel them, they never plowed in the winter. There was no plowing. You put the car in the barn usually covered with hay. Then what they did in the spring, was of course the roads were so bad you couldn't travel them. So then you'd start driving the middle of May the end of May then you'd put the car away in the middle of October.

Me - Where did you get your gasoline?

Uncle - They used to have gas stations, but they had hand pumps, you have to pump it by hand. Big gravity ~~was~~. I remember the price of gas then was about 13¢ a gallon. 12 or 13¢ a gallon.

Me - Where did you get your first car?

Uncle - I don't remember where. My first car I didn't have my first car until 1937 or 48 something like that.

Me - What kind was it?

Uncle - Ford 1937 Ford. When I got it I pay \$350 for the car and I put \$200 into it. You bought a new it was \$750. And before it was on the road I pay \$500.

Me - Your father and mother did the same jobs during the Great Depression?

Uncle - Ya, Ya.

Me - So it didn't affect the lumber industry there.

Uncle - Oh Ya it did. See most of the camps closed down. My dad worked for Ford Motor Company, Patton Paper Company, Diamond Match, Mead Company. Most of those companies closed down out camp didn't. Patton Paper, Diamond match, most of those closed. So there was a alot of lumberjacks that didn't have jobs, on course the lumberjacks lived in the camps they didn't travel from home. So when they did, they didn't used to have pay days they had what you called steak. They'd pay off in the spring of the year. See you'd go to work in September, or Oct. and work all winter and they'd pay after the break up. End of March or the first of April. Then if you worked well from 1930 to about 38, 39 something like that you'd work a total of Dec., Jan., Feb, March, plus, well 6 months. And you could count on usually count on taking home maybe \$400 first full time lumber first full time job in the lumber camp I worked 11 months and I made \$210 coming for steak. The company went belly-up and I got \$210 for eleven months work.

Me - When did you first start working in the lumber camp?

Uncle - Let's see 1932 we I went in full time but first I working in the woods I started working with my father on the pulp job, was in 1937 we were cutting pulp, we were making 8' pulp at that time we made 2 1/2¢ a stick. 8' peeled, piled in one cord ~~pile~~ piles. If it wasn't piled and marked and counted you didn't get payed. At that time as a kid I made 80 - 90¢ a day.

Me - When did you move from Congdon?
Uncle - I came here in 1910. I came to Marquette in 1910. And then I went back to work in the woods in that summer. I came home in June and think I went here in August. And school didn't start until the middle of September cause I worked in the woods for a while. Then I went to high school here in fall to do then I started working full time in the woods.
Me - So when did you get out of the wood and get into the Tracy Mine?
Uncle - Oh, I didn't go in the Tracy Mine. Oh I went got out of the navy in 1936 then I went in the merchant Marine sailing on ships again. And I here until 1951. Then I worked in the Moss Mine in Neguance. And I was there for until '55 then I worked in construction down state, prison. I came back and started in Tracy in '56 and then until Jan '57, then in open pit mines in Minnesota, at McKinley, Atlantic and Greenwood mines. Then I worked in the Moss, Bunker Hill, Tracy then left mines + I went on construction on the Tilden the Empire projects I worked with the iron workers there, and then I went to work in Oklahoma in the oil fields, and then I came back and worked in the Ropes Gold Mine, and I went to work for the National Port Service and I been there for four years.
Me - So what did you do when you went down state?
Uncle - When I was down state I did steeple jacking and high work.
Me - What's that?
Uncle - Steeple jacking? That's doing jobs no one else will do, high work jobs. I worked on the highest television tower in MI. at that time, it was 1200ft high.
Me - How many people worked with you?
Uncle - There was two crews 6 and 5 men. we were doing assembly and guide work. In redundancy, it fell down in a wind storm just after we built it.
Me - How much did you get paid for that job?
Uncle - I was making big money then, I was making \$1.50/hr.
Me - You got down there and back in your car or in the train?
Uncle - Ya, I drove down there. When I went to Oklahoma I had a house trailer, and in Minn. I had a camper. I lived in an apartment for a while in Detroit. But the other jobs I lived in an trailer or camper.
Me - What did you exactly do in the oil fields?
Uncle - I was a heavy equipment operator. I drove bulldozers, loaders, graders, hoists, compactor, compressor, all kinds of heavy equipment.
Me - What did you do in Minnesota?
Uncle - I ran graders.
Me - For both -
Uncle - For most mining and construction outfits.
Me - What did you do when the Tilden was set up?
Uncle - I was doing iron construction work.

Me - For inside or outside the mine?
Uncle - Both, inside and outside the mine. I was there with the crew first clearing the timber. We were there cutting trees, and putting in roads, and blasting the first rock. That was with Lindbergh Const. corp.

Me - What year was that?

Uncle - 1973 maybe then I worked here before going to Minnesota. I worked for Lindbergh here and somebody else. I have worked for Lake States Const.

Me - What did you do while at Lake States?

Uncle - An equipment operator. Then I worked for Northern States Small Builders. I was steering water in the mine buildings, and worked for Kieret Corp., Becktel, Gravel Pipe, different pipe jobs almost all high work.

Me - No one else would do jobs that you were doing?

Uncle - No, there was a lot of other guys. They come from all over the U.S. and Canada there was 2,000 men maybe more.

Me - What did you do at the Moss Mine?

Uncle - I ran motors under ground.

Me - Did you run the box cars and what ever else?

Uncle - Ya, then I ran toners, scraping dirt hole. Then when I went to the Tracey Mine, I was, I had just about every job but hoisting engineer and electrician. I was track, pipe, lumber, man for the cage. Just about everything.

Me - How much did you get paid for doing all those jobs?

Uncle - Well it was all different scales then, when I first went in the mine I was payed \$1.76/hr and that was big money then, cause ~~the~~ most jobs in the mine were payed, up to \$1.05/hr. But most jobs were \$80. to \$9000 hr. The in the beginning I made 25¢ an hour I started. In the lumber camp, I made 50¢ + hr. up to \$4.00 and then pay back a dollar for room & board. so you got \$3.00 for an eight hr day. Out of a six day week you got \$18.00 plus deducting taxes.

Me - Could you tell me some stories, but first of all do you remember the snowstorm of 1978?

Uncle - Yes.

Me - Could you tell me some stories of what you did then how you got the roads clear?

Uncle - Well, when the ~~storm~~ storm started, I was on skis. I had gone to the store which was about 3 miles away and it was real, real mild. And it started to get overcast, it was in the afternoon. And the clock said you better head for home here is a storm coming. So, I got maybe half-way back & the wind started to pick up, started to blow when I hit the other side of the woods, you couldn't see twenty feet, complete white. When I got home we were ~~stuck~~ snow bound. Then we lived in a farm house.

Uncle. And the first floor was completely buried. And I opened our ~~way~~ ~~out~~ door ~~on~~ on the initial day and I had to tunnel our way out. I looked at the water, oh about 40 feet high and it was buried. We used to ski down the hill off of the roof. We started about two weeks it turned real, real cold. We plowed the roads with a 20 ton tractor. There were drifts so deep the tractor couldn't get through were had to be guys shoveling all the snow into blocks. The same year a whole block on Washington St. burned. We came year for Christmas, ~~whole~~ block on Washington St. was covered with ice.

Me - You still worked in the woods during the Great Depression?

Uncle - Well I was just a kid then. I did odd jobs. I lived in the camps then, but I did do a little teamstering and a little peeling.

Me - Did you have a radio?

Uncle - No, I didn't have a radio until I was 15.

Me - What year would that be.

Uncle - 1940, we never have electricity until I came here.

Me - What do you ~~use~~ use for lights then?

Uncle - Kerosene lights.

Me - What kind of lights did you have? O.K. I'm sorry.

~~Did~~ Did the lumberjacks work at night?

Uncle - No, it was dark.

Me - Is it true you had a big room with a stove in the middle?

Uncle - Ya, there was two, three kinds of things that lived in lumbercamps.

Lumberjacks, bed bugs and lice. There was more of the last 2. And another things, about lumbercamps if you ever smelled em you never forgot em. You smelled coffee, sweat, dirty sock, tobacco smoke, moldy bedding and dead bed bugs.

Me - When did you take a bath?

Uncle - Well you cut yourself out of your underwear in the spring, and jumped in the water.

Me - You went right in the river?

Uncle - No in the sawra!

Me - You had a sawra?

Uncle - Sure, depending on the size of the camp.

Me - Did you have connections with any other camps?

Uncle - You walked over and talked to them. Everybody walked into town for Christmas. And they used to go on a winter. They used to celebrate for about a week. We wasn't ever go into that.

Me - Did you have any connections out of state with relatives?

Uncle - No, our whole world was the camp. In fact until 1914 the trips to Isipemny used to be annual things.

Me - Did you have relatives in Ishpeming?
Uncle - Ya. I had a couple aunts here, and a bunch of cousins when you moved here?

Me - Did you have any relatives in Marquette?
Uncle - No
Me - You have lived in the same house since you moved here.
Uncle - Ya. well I came to visit during Christmas. But we lived on front st. first upstairs of the saloon. In 1940 we bought a house on Sherman St.

Me - So, all the times you have worked in were underground?
Uncle - all but 3 I didn't like open pit mines, they weren't as good as underground. ~~I~~

Me - In the underground, it was the same temperature all year around?
Uncle - Ya. Always 49-50° something like that.

Me - You worked the same jobs all the time?
Uncle - Well there are only so many jobs underground. All the mines some were hard-ore mines I worked in hematite mines which were soft and filled with water. The mines were heavy. We were always replacing timber caused it was so heavy. In the 3 years I worked I never saw the railroad track on the floor, it was a regular river. That mine was 3200 to bottom. The we had our wings in there + that was another 400 ft. a shaft inside the mines it was. ~~the~~ but that ~~mine~~ incidentally was biggest producer on the Marquette Range up until the Matter B started. Even after a few years the Moss was the big producer. I don't remember what the tonnage was at that time it produced it was fantastic ~~any~~ way.

Me - ~~was~~ was it pure hematite ore?
Uncle - Well it was as pure as it gets. It running about 61-68% grade. That mine operated for more than 60 years. We even mined copper. We took out 50 tons of copper out. It started as a mule mine. They used mules instead of electricity. When I was there it was electric.

Me - You did the same in the Tracy as in the Moss mine?
Uncle - Ya basically, but it was a different kind of mining. That was a sub-level mining, when the Moss mine was slice mining.

Me - What was slice mining?

Uncle - Well you start with ore point. And you drill and you get up to as high as you were going to go.
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Uncle - Then you would drill end of a sunbeam pattern. You drive a drift less and you got that mired. Put another one next to it. When you were done then you drop down below and you order mine that level, then you have all your timber and that, and it would eventually fall in on you. When you got to the bottom there was nothing on top of you. The mine and all the wood came down on top of you. And the other one you just hollowed out a hole and let gravity do the work.

Me - What was the kind that the Tracey M. he had?

Uncle - Sub-level cavity

Me - What was the basics that they did ~~the~~ here? Was there a shaft that you drilled into the rock?

Uncle - Right, then you started to hollow. We made long holes, then darged the holes up with powder and blast until the hole was so big it couldn't support itself. Then it started caving by itself, then all we did was bring the dirt out.

Me - Did you witness accidents?

Uncle - Lots of them.

Me - Have you ever been hurt?

Uncle - Twice I had my leg broke one time and then I was electricuted ~~and~~

Me - What happened?

Uncle - I got hung up on a trolley once, over the I was up 25 feet on a raise and the buck caved in on me, and there were two poles and I was straddling two poles, and I broke my right foot, and I jumped out of there, and I got to the bottom and the whole thing caved in. I ~~it~~ I didn't jump that was it. It was 120 days I lost 120 days. My feet was shattered

Me - Have you ever walked the same?

Uncle - On the

Me - Did you have any friends get hurt?

Uncle - Had some one guy fall 130 ft down the raise and survived. Another guy fell from 180 ft, he was killed. Then a couple co-workers killed boys falling ground, alot of them hurt. One guy hit by a chunk in the Tracey, he was hurt real bad. Another guy a pole coming loose, hit him in the head. He suffered skull damage, he recovered. Then another had an iron fall on him in the trench. They were working and the iron let go nobody knows how but one guy was killed other guy was hit real bad.

Uncle - I think it's not uncommon for accidents in the mine. Then there's guys who got caught in their own blasts. Usually he had rocks embedded in his face so he looked like he had fleckles when he got done.
Me - So the working conditions weren't that great.

Uncle - That's right, but no matter how good, how good you are about practicing safety, it's always the unexpected cause you never plan for an accident you always plan to avoid them, but an accident happens when you least expect it, and you can't anticipate everything. Of course there is a lot of humor in the mine too, a lot of funny things happen, but it's always the accidents you remember.

Me - How long did your father live after moving out of the camp?

Uncle - My father died in 1905. He was a lumberjack until the day he died?

Me - Your mother?

Uncle - She's still living?

Me - Where is she living now.

Uncle - She lives right up the street from me. She's in her 80's, when she left the camp, she started working in restaurants. As a cook and a school cook, she worked at Arocks, ~~but~~ mostly in the kitchen.

Me - She was a good cook then

Uncle - Oh yes!

Me - What kind of meals did you have when you were younger?

Uncle - Very basic. During the great depression we had 3 meals a day. oatmeal, corn meal, and miss-a-meal.

Me - (Sarcastically) What's that

Uncle - You didn't eat, we used to live fish a good part of the time, when my dad was working, fish + venison, potatoes, stuff like that. There wasn't anything but, of course there was no refrigeration then, and you didn't have the canned variety you do now, and you couldn't afford it any way. So mostly what you ate was what you could grow in gardens. We canned berries, I canned apples, dried apples, smoke meat, and canned meat, freeze meat in the fall at the year. You'd hang it outside, so it's nothing like you eat today?

Me - When you caught something, how did you preserve it?

Uncle - You salted it, or pickled it, or smoked it, or dried it, but mostly you canned it.

Me - Did you move around in the logging camp a lot or just stay in the same place?

Uncle - In the same general area, but you moved from area to area, but when it was logged out you just moved to the next area.

Me - Did you ever participate in the log jams?

Uncle - They didn't float logs while I was in the camps.

Me - How did you get them out?

Uncle - You used to haul them to the railroads. They used sleighs with 12' bunks, they used to make slots they'd freeze the wood and pack down the roads. Then they'd fill a humongous box with water. Put the box on a sleigh and go along the trail. They'd knock out one of the plugs and water would spill out and freeze. And a team of horses would pull a load of logs and you would never believe. The sleighs were 12' bunks and logs were 24' long. So you have a load 12 x 24 maybe 15' high so you had a lot of weight.

Me - How long did these loads last?
of course when they started using tractor they started pulling G

Uncle - They'd last all winter. As soon as it got cold enough it got a good snow base. ~~It~~ and around the first of December they started and it would end around March.

Me - How long did it usually take to clear out an area of woods?

Uncle - It depended on how big a crew you had, what you have, I remember the last big out fit, and one camp shipped out 78 teams of horses. They had 150 men. But they were in different camps. Camp 1, Camp 2, but they'd maybe wind up with 30 or 40 saw gangs. They had no power saws. Just a crosscut. A good crosscut man could really saw logs. A lot of six logs. Maybe 40 gangs that sawed down to dark and six days or week. So they'd let daylight into the swamps, when they were done there was nothing left. They'd take a section, which was 640 acres, amire square.

Me - How big were some of the logs that you've taken out of there?

Uncle - Oh in ~~my~~ my time there weren't many big logs but most of them ran about 3' or the butt, 36' even bigger, some of the pine were 3 1/2'.

Me - What did you do when you were a kid doing those odd jobs?

Uncle - You mean working in the camps, well I was a

Uncle - hooter, what a hooker did was he had a spot jack, and that was used for piling logs, or decking. It was on an area where they'd skid all the logs from a surrounding area to this one point, then they were stacked. So they had a pulley on the spigot and a team of horses pulled to get the logs up. Then there was two men one on each end. And they had a guide rope, and you'd pick those up and put them in a pile. That was my job I was a hooker a put the hooks in. Then I worked as a swamper, a road rat.

Me - What's that?

Uncle - Road rats well they fixed the roads, they filled the pot holes in, they kept them smooth. The swampers cut the brush out of them. Then the chore boys helped the broken down lumber jacks, carried the wood, carried the water, built the fires, helped cook, wash the dishes. Then your class out men, teamsters, blacksmiths.

Me - What kind of clothing?

Uncle - Wool one part, cause them days you couldn't really afford to have more than one part. You never wore good clothes cause they got wet and dirty. Cause you were usually soaking wet. And that type of clothes usual so you'd wear a wool patch is where another layer would be. Wear you put a wool patch is where another layer would be.