

Brian Helsten's
interview with John Hamel

me: when + where where you Born.

Mr. H: I was born in Lakeming on December 7, 1950

me: What are the names of your parents?

Mr. H: My parents names are Art JR. Hamel + Pat Hamel.

Me: What did your parents do for a living

Mr. H: My dad worked out in the woods and worked for Sawyer and stole for many years now he's a contractor.

me: What are the names of your brothers and sisters.

Mr. H: Well I have three brothers and four sisters. ~~One of the girls is Susan and~~ ~~next~~ The oldest girl is Susan, im next ~~to~~ Paul, Mark, Leslie, Becky, + Mary.

me: Are you currently married if so what is your spouses name.

Mr. H: I'm married to Susan her maiden name was Gurbetti.

Me: What are the names of your children
Mr. H: I have two girls Brenda and Amy and I
have three step boys Brian, David, & Shawn.

Me: How long have you been working in the
Mining Industry?
Mr. H: I've been with the mine for 12 years only years.
Me: Why did you choose to work in the Iron
Industry?

Mr. H: Well I guess the main reason is a decent
living and to provide for my family. *include + quote*
Me: Please ~~recesses~~ name those relatives that have worked
in the Iron Industry.

Mr. H: Well I haven't got many relatives I guess that my
father-in-law Sonny Buzzetti, and that's about it.

Me: What are the names of the various mines you
worked in?

Mr. H: Well I started out in the Republic mine &
worked up there for about six years and
then I went over to the Tilden worked there
for awhile and went over to the Empire
for awhile and now I'm back at the Tilden.

Me: Over the years what kinds of duties have you
performed for C.I.

Mr. H: Well when I first started at the Republic mine we
built a rock ~~road~~ ^{road} underground and made
a room so the trucks could dump
underground and put the crusher underground
and then shortly after I got out of there
I started driving truck.

me: Over the years what have you enjoyed the most about your job.

Mr. H: Well I guess the guys are a big part of it were a kind of like one big family out there it's been an enjoyable part of the job for me a lot of the different stuff I've done through the years it's been fun-enjoyable.

me: What are the biggest responsibilities of your job

Mr. H: Well like I said earlier my job encounters fixing all of the equipment out there at the pit making sure it's running and if it breaks down we got to fix it generally especially on afternoons and midnight shift it's only me and one other electrician out there we really haven't got an electrical boss out there a lot of responsibilities really no one else to turn to get it going and then another challenging part of my job is making sure I do the job safely and don't get hurt by electrical shock you could get killed

I'd say that's the most challenging.
me: It describes to you describe the most dangerous situations that you've ever been in.

Mr. H: Well probably the most dangerous situation is I worked underground at the Republic mine we had to go about forty feet in the air had to go and carry lift and had to cut some roof bolts out from up there we had a big long torch about ten feet long to cut them big bolts out about big slabs about twenty feet long and about three foot thick and if they'd come tumbling down forty feet to the ground then we would have to move ahead a little and cut the bolts out ahead of that and that was real dangerous I don't know if I'd ever want to do that again.

me: Have you ever been in or witnessed any accidents,

Mr. H: Well I guess I've been pretty ~~to~~ fortunate through the years and I've never seen any major accidents happen I guess about the biggest would be an car line when I worked underground and hit someone But it didn't hurt him real bad

me: Could you please describe any way you're relatively may have got hurt,
Mr. H: Well I guess well like I say I've been pretty fortunate for that part well I really can't describe any there

me: Could you please describe the working conditions

Mr. H: Being that I work out in the pit I guess it's a lot cleaner & quieter than it is inside the plant I did work in the plant for years it is a lot noisier and dirty. It can be quite noisy in the shovel sometimes but basically most of the time were out of the noise

me: Have safety standards improved and what changes do you see that yet have to be made,

Mr. H: Well I think we come a long way on safety out at the mine, and especially we got out of the underground mining business it was just inherited a more dangerous place to work no matter you try it's still more dangerous than the open pits and working conditions are getting better.

me: How have you seen the duties of your job change over the years.
Mr. H: Well ah I guess there getting more stuff piled on us at the mine its just the way the world's going more men are doing more work its a world market moving its getting real competitive things are getting more complicated and more sophisticated out there its all of the new tech.

me: Please describe what your co workers are like.
Mr. H: Most of them co workers out there are running the mill people I guess common there and there does we have lots of good times out there and we still get a lot of work done.

Mr. H: Sounded the loaders then I posted for welding jobs I was welding for six years. Then there was an electrician posting and I posted for that. I guess because of prior education I got my foot in the door there. I've been an electrician now for quite a few years. *include*

me: In as much details as possible please describe the current duties of your job.

Mr. H: Well mainly I work in the pit now my job is to keep ~~run~~ the big shovels going. The electrical part mostly everything is run by electricity out there at the mine. *include*

me: Did this job require any special training or a higher education?

Mr. H: Well had to get some electrical courses at Northern and I'd say that got my foot in the door to get into this electrical program. I've taken quite a few special classes out at the mine.

me: Please describe any special machinery or equipment that you use on the job.

Mr. H: Well I guess in this electrical job out at the mine your dealing with alot of voltage. The main lines are ~~is~~ thirteen thousand eight hundred volts. We got some special equipment for that and on our new shovels we got alot of electronic stuff in there and we got special stuff for that to ~~put~~ quite a bit of special stuff that we use. *include*

me: What is the most challenging part of your job?

Mr. H: Well I guess we had a big fire out at the tunnel a few years back with the big tube and the conveyor belt there all kinds of control wiring going down there I was just a big mess we had to straighten that out that was a big challenge. *include + guess*

me: Were you involved in any special projects or have you implemented any new programs.

Mr. H: Well I guess at the Republic mine we ~~did~~ drove a 3000 foot drift we put the # one belt in from the primary pressure to the second primary pressure that was a special project they had it cost them about 10 million dollars to put that system

include

in I was on that project for about four years we drove out a big fumbo machine they called it we had to get two big plumes out of there put some big air hammers on there and mucked the drift out after they blasted with a big scoop tram all of us had alot of dynamite and electric caps it was quite interesting and that was a special project. At the Tilden mine we got a big 36 yard shovel in there now and were putting that together and I've been involved some what in that project.

me: Have you ever won any awards or have you ever been recognized in any way from your job performance.

Mr. H: Yeh I guess I really haven't got any awards I guess they really don't give them away at the mine you get a that a boy from the loss once and awhile ~~times~~ of course a guy screws up once and awhile to I guess you get to get about three that a boy to make up for one screw up.

me: at any time have you felt like changing jobs or your career

Mr. H: Well through my years I've had a few different jobs I'm in the electrical department now I guess I found a home I really like this job its something different everyday I'm going to stay right ~~there~~ where I'm at now

me: what do you think the future holds for the ~~the~~ Tilden mine, & the Empire mine

Mr. H: Well I think we have a bright future out there when the 80's comes we certainly had some tough times then a struggle we had quite a few layoffs a lot of guys we laid off through the 80's now we're coming back again we stream line a lot of things out there and I think we were going to make it I think we were going to make it in the world market, With all of the stuff that we've done between the eighties and nineties.
Q: What does the future look like for the iron & steel industry in general.

include

Mr. H: Well it looks like its on the upswing now they're even talking about the republic mine starting up it looks real promising we've heard roomers through the years about it I never did believe since just recently I think this isn't just a roomer I think its going to go there going to make some kind of a different kind of like a Braquet over there its going to be then mixed with coal I guess its going to be for the mining mills and the mining mills are one of our competitors that mining mills like electric arkburnice they use a lot of scrap iron in mining mills we'll be able to mix this in with the scrap iron can make some good iron with it

include

Q: What do you feel must be done in the future for C.C.I. to remain competitive

Mr. H: Well I guess we got to continue on with getting bigger equipment and more sophisticated equipment we got a dispatcher system out there now that is giving us 10% more we get our trucks certain places quicker and stuff like that and its really improved our efficiency and we're going to do some more experimenting out there and I think a lot of stuff on a small scale and if it works on a smaller scale we got to put it on a full scale. and stuff like that

include

me: What do you think has been - the key to success of C.C.I. where other companies have failed

Mr. H: Well I guess looking back at history there been many many mining companies that have failed and C.C.I. has prevailed and I guess one main reason were the big iron ore reserves we were the first ones with iron ore pellets and I think that went back in the 50's and we've done a lot of experimenting with that through the years now we got a flux pellet, Mag pellet, and we got a Hematite pellet I guess we got five different kinds of pellets out there and know were experimenting with this because that's why the survivors are willing to stay ahead of the market and be the first ones and the leaders in the industry.

include

me: Looking far into the future, how do you think history will remember the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company & it's workers.

Mr. H: Well I guess working out at the mines you got to work them mines 365 days a year and 24 hours a day and I guess people have looked at it isn't easy and I guess people have looked at it's hard on a person & their families. it's hard to get to everybody's events you miss a lot of stuff I think people will look at that in the future and say that must of been quite a deal to go through and I suppose they'll look at the big holes I wonder how they got here its amazing even for myself I go on long weekends sometimes and its amazing how that Pitt changes in just three four days.

me: How has the role of women changed in the iron and what direction do you think it will take in the future

Mr. H: Well we have a few women out there know more than we used to have. Its changed somewhat some of them are getting into more sophisticated jobs out there theres a few women who do some of the trades out there know and I think thats a good thing

me: What skills do the young people need to develop if they plan to work for C.C.I. someday.

Mr. H: Well I guess the first thing is to get a high school education and were starting to get heavy into computers out there know and I guess kids have computer classes anyways and once they get out of high school I guess they'd probably have to get into a trade school would be the best thing to get there too in the even at C.C.I. to go to a trade school like welding, electrical or machinest stuff like that and then try to pick up some experience and I think they could probably get in there someday

me: In a related question, what advice could you give to the students of today.

Mr. H: Well I guess in today's society in the world market you would probably have to go a little farther than a high school education, not necessarily a college education, say like at Northern Michigan, people aren't just out out for college and I think they could

Mr H: get quite a good job.

me: are you know or have you ever been a member of the steelworkers union.

Mr H: Yes, I'm a member know I've been ever since I've been in the mine for 20 years.

me: Have you ever been on strike if you have how many times.

Mr H: Well it was in 74 the first year I was in the mine we were on strike for two weeks then in 77 we were on a strike from August 1st to about Thanksgiving that was a long one and then not to many years back we were on a long one the strike before the last one I'm sure you must remember that one that was longer than the one in 77.

me: How does a strike actually began.

Mr. H: well usually our contract is up August first and sometimes the company & union mark it ahead of time and if things don't look good we have a union meeting we have what's called a strike authorization vote we all vote whether or not we give the union the power to strike if they don't figure the contract is fair enough.

me: How many employees does a strike usually involve.

Mr H: Well usually from C.C.T. it usually involves probably about 24 hundred people

Me: What is the purpose of a picket line and what happens there.

Mr. H: Well Basically the major purpose of a picket line I guess is to show the company that we have support that we're back in the union, then we watch the people going in and out of the mine and making sure ~~no~~ no one else takes our job

Me: What takes place at a union meeting or a union rally.

Mr H: Well usually at a union meeting we talk over any grievances we have out at the mine and any gripes we have we try to resolve them. They let us know on what progress has been made on certain issues basically stuff like that I guess.

Me: In your opinion why is the Steelworkers union so important to the workers.

Mr H: Well I guess unions are not important that just to the steel industry but to this country I guess years ago in the steel industry for instance the company owned the house you were in they owned the company store they basically owned lock stock & Barrel couldn't make a move

Mr H: Without going through the company
I don't think its a way to live
being owned completely by the company
and alot of companies just weren't
Being fair with the working man they
were working way on poverty levels
union has come a long way to bring the
standard living in this country
Me: Please describe what you like to do in
your sparetime.

Mr H: Well I like to fish when I get a chance
especially Brook trout fishing I like
to try to do a few thing with the kids
arcenal hear I like to go to their
basketball games and get into their sporting
events.

Me: If you had to do it all over again would
do it all over again.

Mr. H: Well I guess I would its been a decent
living through the years enjoying alot of
stuff at the mine basically its been a good
job.

Me: Before we end the interview is there
anything you would like to add

Mr H: Well I guess not right at this moment I thank
you for the opportunity to be interviewed.

Me: I thank you to this concludes
my interview.

1. job duties —
2. underground mining —
3. working at other mines over the years. —
4. conditions for working in the mines. —
5. strikes over the years at the mine —