

# Jackie Swanson's interview with Roy Isaacson

This is Jackie Swanson interviewing Roy Isaacson on February 15, about his life at his residence

me: when and where were you born?

Roy: Ironwood, Michigan Feb 10, 1942.

me: what were your parents names?

Roy: Herbert and Melvina Isaacson.

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

Roy: Well, I have four living brothers and sisters or ~~one~~ <sup>three</sup> ~~sister~~ <sup>living</sup> and ~~brothers~~ <sup>brothers</sup>, my sister's name is Betsy, my two other brothers are Dewey and John and I had ~~two~~ other brothers that are deceased, Ray, Richard, Billy and Bobbi.

me: were you married?

Roy: Yes, I was

me: when and where?

Roy: I was married in Ironwood to Karen Badowski in 1967 and ~~we~~ after 13 years of marriage we got divorced.

me: what did your parents do for a living?

Roy: my father worked in the iron ore mines for 45 years and my mother was a housewife.

me: where did you go to school?

Roy: I went to school in, first of all in Ramsey, Michigan, I went to first grade then I went to Black River Harbor and I went to the Roosevelt school in Ironwood Township, then I went to the Ironwood in high school.

me: what special memories do you have of growing up?

Roy: Probably of where I lived in Black River Harbor it was kind of isolated the only thing that had maybe was 10 to 15 kids. we had to come up with our own entertainment to keep us amused.

me: what kind of things did you and your friends do when you were teenagers for entertainment?

Roy: well like I say we lived out at Black River we'd get together and go down to the pavilion they called it down at Black River where it was a stone building that was built by the CCC's in the 1930's we would take a record player down there and play music and have a little dance and other nights we'd play cards, play canasta, that sort of thing.

me: when did you find your first job and where did you work?

Roy: well my very first job was when I was going to high school I worked cleaning up a drug store

Roy cont: for \$7.00 ~~at~~ a week. I Lived 20 miles out of town so the gasol<sup>to be published</sup>ine was only 18 to 20 cents a gallon so I ended up making \$4.00 a week the rest went for gas.

me: what stands out most in your mind about your first job?

Roy: well it taught me how to save money but my second job probably overshadowed that. quite a bit but it was running a charter boat out of Copper Harbor.

me: Cool!

me: Were you ever in the military?

Roy: Yes, I was I joined the navy in December 8, of 1960. I served 4 years. I went to the Great Lakes for boot camp I also went to school there to become a electronics technician. Then I was stationed on the U.S.S. Constellation which was an aircraft carrier. That's where we implemented with all of the people, that has about 5,000 people.

me: Please describe your experiences?

Roy: In the military? I basically got to see a lot of the world. I started off with New York City that's where I picked up the ship and then we went from there, it was a brand new ship at the time so went down to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba which a is on the news a lot with all the refugees and had a shake down cruise which is getting all the bugs out of the ship.

Ray: Then we went back to New York and then we  
 got orders, by that time the Cuban crisis  
 was started so we had to go down and help  
 control the area for Cuba for the Russian missiles.  
 So after that crisis was over, then our ship  
 got orders to go to the west coast and in doing so  
 we had to go around South America because  
 the Panama Canal wasn't big enough for our ship.  
 So I got see places like Rio de Janeiro, Chile,  
 Santiago, we were going to stop in Lima, Peru  
 but they had the uprising there so we couldn't  
 stop there. We stopped in Panama City and we  
 went up to Acapulco, stopped there that was  
 interesting. then we were stationed in Santiago,  
 California, we were all in Santiago when we  
 made a what we call west pack cruises where  
 went over seas to the Philippines to Japan,  
 Hong Kong and we've seen quite a few  
 places, quite a mixture.

me: How many total years did you work in the  
 military?

Ray: well, I started when I was 18. I did have a  
 job after I got out of high school, I worked at  
 a mint trench from June until December, then  
 I joined the service. After I got out of the service  
 I went to Gogebic junior college there, I started  
 in the middle of the term so I went a 3 years  
 there and then I graduated from there  
 and went up to Michigan Tech. and I was  
 going to become an electrical engineer but I didn't  
 quite make the grade up there so I picked up  
 a 2 year degree in electrical technology while I was  
 there, while I was doing that on a charter boat

Roy:  
cont

for two years. Then once I graduated from Tech I got a job with Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company back in 1971. I was a electrical draftsman <sup>designer</sup> for 12 1/2 years with them and then I got laid off in 1983 and there was a big crunch in the iron industry. So then when I left that job I was laid off for about a year. Then I got a job with Marinette Marine Corporation found in Marinette, Wisconsin, worked there for 4 1/2 years and I was doing contracts all over for that company so I was laid off there. So then after leaving there it just happened that CCI was hiring for electricians so I applied for an electrician job at CCI and I was successful at getting that job and I have been working there for about 3 1/2 years up to the present time.

me: where were you employed the longest?

Roy: well, like I say I worked for CCI for 12 1/2 years and then I'm back now as an electrician I got my time back for them years with the electrician job I have now I have approximately 18 years for this company.

me: Did this job have any special rules or regulations?

Roy: oh yeah. You gotta think safety you shut equipment down you gotta get permission it's mainly following safety procedures

Roy: You don't do anything first without checking  
cont with your superiors.

me: what was the most rewarding part of your  
career?

Roy: well, I don't know if I had anything rewarding  
in all I would say it's real rewarding because  
I had a chance to do many different kinds of  
jobs. ~~X~~ When I was down at Marinette Marine  
I was an electrical draftsman and I did have  
experience on the computer. drawing, besides  
drawing ~~and painting~~ <sup>in painting</sup> at CCI and now being  
an electrician I'm getting experience as being  
an electrician which is entirely different  
~~education~~ from drafting giving me a more well  
rounded education.

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

Roy: In the most challenging probably when I  
was working with Marinette Marine we were  
designers, we had to design equipment to  
fit in a very limited space we were building  
mine sweepers were all wooden ships with  
only ~~wood~~ <sup>the</sup> metal ~~ships~~ <sup>logs</sup> with stainless steel  
but these ships are <sup>only</sup> relatively small ships  
and they have a lot of equipment put on it  
and very limited space so the challenge was  
being able to fit all of this equipment in the  
limited space that we had

me: How did the duties of your jobs change over the  
years?

Roy: Well, like I say I went from being an electrical draftsman where I used pen and ink and pencils maybe and went to Marinette Marine and learned to do drawing on the computer and also pen and ink down there. Then when I become an electrician there was no drawing at all it was strictly seeing how the actual equipment is compared to what you see on a drawing and the physical layout of things is a lot different than what it is on a drawing, that is why you have to have both and it's very important that you have accurate drawings to help you know where the physical location of all this equipment lies.

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

Roy: No, I never had any brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts that worked for CCI or Marinette Marine.

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

Roy: Oh yeah like when I'm an electrician out the mine were working with extremely high voltages 4160 volts and 13,000.8 volts. These are you know you don't get any more chances when you make a mistake, that is why you have to be careful because the first mistake you make is your last mistake.

me: Please describe what your co-workers were like?

Roy: I had an opportunity to work with a lot of people we had a good time. I remember when I was working as a draftsman for CCI that we had many fun ~~time~~ things that we did together, we'd go on bus trips for skiing. The would start at the office at CCI and we'd go up to Blackjack for the day, that was a lot of fun. Which today is Presidents day, we used to get that off and we'd also get together

Ray: And going up at Marquette Mountain, that was  
Cont: very enjoyable.

me: Could you describe some interesting or numerous events  
that happened during your career?

Ray: well, ~~yeah~~ <sup>yeah</sup> there was one in particular that we could  
consider numerous like a you've seen on tv the Rooties  
for the Green Bay Packers, they'd make them believe  
that they got free turkeys by going to a store and  
tell them that you're a packer, that you come to pick  
your turkey. They pulled the same thing on me  
~~at~~ at CCI when I working at the Brown store,  
the mechanical office they ~~to~~ told me that  
I could pick up a free turkey over at the  
warehouse so they sent me over there. Those guys  
kind of ~~played~~ <sup>played</sup> the role for a while, it took me a  
while before found out that they were just pulling  
my leg.

me: At any time did you feel like changing careers?

Ray: oh ~~yeah~~ <sup>yeah</sup>. I kind of got pushed into the careers  
that I was, because when I joined the service  
I became an electronics technician and I thought  
that I could use them skills in the career  
that I chose. After being in it I think back  
that if I hadn't joined the service and got  
into that field, I probably would have done  
something else like maybe become a carpenter or  
something.

me: What were your biggest responsibilities on the  
job?



Roy: well, my biggest responsibilities is right now, is to keep the equipment running. my job right now more or less is a trouble shooter. where if my shovel or my drill goes down I have to go find out why it went down and fix it, keep it on line and try to fix it as fast I can.

me: Did you receive any awards from your career and were you recognized in any way for your job performance?

Roy: Yeh, we were recognized in that a being in the electrical field we had two years without a lost time accident. so they rewarded us with a flashlight (laughs).

me: During your days of employment and beyond what have been your favorite ~~activities~~ hobbies as leisure activities?

Roy: well, by far my biggest hobby is fishing. I spend one heck of long time fishing. I probably got that trait from my dad, he took me fishing when I was about 2 years old. I was really small when I started going fishing and running a charter boat. I was almost a professional, then now I just fish for pleasure. ~~Do~~<sup>Do</sup> one heck of lot of time fishing and I also love hunting.

me: Do you have any special stories?

Roy: well, I have quite a few stories, <sup>story I</sup> one I suppose could be quite interesting. when we were ice fishing a few years back we were up to Lense and we went out.

Roy  
Cont

on Second Sand Beach they call it. The wind was blowing quite hard from the shore out and my partners were weary about going out and we were all fishing for maybe an hour or so. All of sudden we heard this big boom like a sonic boom. The water starts rushing in the holes and right away we realized that the ice let go. So here we are on the ice flow it was a race against time to get off the ice before it left the shore. So we hurried up and packed up and three people riding in the sled, two guys riding the machine and I had to ride with the equipment sled. When we got back to where we came out, the ice had separated by at least 200 yds away. Unfortunately the ice pack was going down the shore line at about 2 or 3 mile an hour clip. So then it was race going down the shoreline, at about 5 or 6 miles down the shoreline we finally found a place where the ice was safe enough to jump the crack. More or less safely we did manage to cross ~~over~~ the crack and maybe 10 minutes later that crack opened up and we would've been stuck on the ice. It was a hair raising experience.

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

Roy: Yes, I belong to the Ishpeming Elks, the Ishpeming VFW and I also belonged to an archery club which is disabandoned because the club area was bought by Benson Forest they kicked us out of there. I also belonged to what they call a vets club when it was in Houghton which was

Roy: an organization for just socializing and then  
cont doing your winter carnival activities up there,  
which is a lot of fun.

me: Do you have any jobs with the clubs?

Roy: No, I never was active in the leadership roles  
of the clubs, more or less just a member.

me: of all what ~~were~~ your fondest memories  
in the working days in your career?

Roy: well, I suppose it was working with  
a lot of different people even down,  
I had lots of fun with the people  
I worked with at CCI and down  
at Marinette Marine there was a  
nice group of people that we got to know  
and that we got to do a lot with socially with  
them, it was a lot of fun and right  
now more or less I am back here. I just  
have my few fishing partners that are retired  
people from the company and we have a lot  
of fun fishing.

me: were you a member of the union?

Roy: Yes, I am.

me: Which one?

Roy: 4950, Local 4950 It's a, like I say I'm not  
an active member, I'm just a member.

me: Please describe any interesting moments that occurred  
as a member of the union?

Roy: well, like I say I never participated too much in the active roll of the union. My biggest condert union I suppose is when we were on strike was playing horseshoes down at the gates where we were picnicing.

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

Roy: I dont know. I probably would of if things worked out the way they did ~~was~~. Overall I cant complain. I have it pretty nice and right now I gotta good job. It seems to be pretty stable right now for electricians. There's not that many. were under budget right now for numbers of electricians that were supposed to have so I feel ~~good~~ like I should for the remainder of my working career.

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

Roy: well, I think this is very interesting <sup>deed</sup> that you interview people like this. I am sure there are people from all different walks of life that had different experiences to share with you. I thank you for taking the interest in interviewing me.

me: Thank you