

Kari Marta's
interview with Solo Isotalo

Me: When and where were you born?

Mr. Isotalo: I was born in Humbolt Township on March 15, 1921

Me: the names of your parents?

Mr. Isotalo: Quot and ~~H/ma~~ Isotalo

Me: what did your parents do for a living?

Mr. Isotalo: My dad worked in the mines, farms, and wood work. mom was just a house wife.

Me: names of Brothers and sisters?

Mr. Isotalo: 4 brothers = Jack, Charlie, Mathew, Robert Sisters = Mary, Silvia, Irene

Me: Are you married?

Mr. Isotalo: Yes, I am.

Me: What's spouse's name?

Mr. Isotalo: Elsie

Me: What are the names of your children?

Mr. Isotalo: They are Dale, Susan, Sally, Dennis, Tomi

Me: How long have you been working in an Iron Industry?

Mr. Isotalo: all total is 21 years

Me: What did you choose to work in the Iron Industry?

Mr. Isotalo: mostly because the wages were higher than any other job possible quote

Me: Name relatives that worked in the Iron Industry

Mr. Isotalo: brother in laws = Arnie Laakso, Robert Laakso, Father in law = Gus Laakso
His dad + his brother Jack. in mind

Me: What are the various ^{names of the} mines or buildings you have worked in?

Mr. Botalo: Champion Mine, Republic Mine
~~years~~ ~~years~~ He said he worked 21 yrs = 30

Me: Over the years what kind of duties have you performed in C.C.I.?

Mr. Botalo: I worked as a Killois in the pellet plant, in the pit a drill helper and also a drill operator, worked in the warehouse.

Me: Describe the main duties of the job you held?

Mr. Botalo: Checking out the merchandise that come in + checking out as they go out + a little more book work = warehouse
In the pit = operating the drills, drilling holes, helping on the drills. Two differ kinds = on the road ridge? drill + the jet drill

Me: Did this job require any special training or high education?

Mr. Botalo: No, it didn't have any high education but you needed to be broken on a job for a certain length of time before you were an operator. include

Me: Could you describe any special equipment or machinery that you used on the job?

Mr. Botalo: Yes, I used the newest drills that came out for drilling holes in the pit. The bigger machines came out in 1974. The duties were too numerous to mention.

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

Mr. Botalo: Champion mine. The dangers you had in the ^{strops} were they caved in mostly on weekends ^{correct} in Champion even things was dangerous to skip ride down + up you had to be careful. More so than at the open pit mines. The dangerous things in the open pits were the ^{poor} air you had. The air was really gassy. Sometimes you couldn't see clear for a whole hour after a blast.

Me: Thinking back over the years what was the most challenging or difficult duty you had to perform + explain why?

Mr. Botalo: At the Champion mine where it was so dangerous, and every move you had to make you had to be real careful. Most dangerous was when the strops were loose, chunks were coming down + you had to be real careful.

me: what have you enjoyed the most over the years?

mr. lootalo: mostly for being with and working with a group of hard working men and I made a lot of new friends through out the years. everyone helped each other of course our work was pretty steady & you worked wether or not the weather = the weather was a factor

me: what was the biggest responsibility of your job?

mr. lootalo: the biggest responsibility of my job was safety and every move you made you had to be sure that you weren't being unsafe. the biggest is I guess "do a days work for a good days pay."

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me: Describe the most difficult situation you have been in?

mr. lootalo: like I said the most difficult situations were at the crampton mine. were you had to ride a skip when I first started without no covering as you were coming up 25 levels there was no protection from anything falling down from the shaft.

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me: Have you been involved or witnessed in any accident?

mr. lootalo: I was in an accident in 1973 were I fell off a drill rig with ice on top of it putting alcohol on a jet rig & I fell backwards & come to find out the next morning I had a broken neck. after that = couldn't work

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me: could you describe the most unique or humorous situation you have been in over the years?

mr. lootalo: the humor part was when on time we ran out of juice in the crampton mine for a couple hours and my partner he figured that the juice was going to be gone all day and when it wasn't the juice came on and I jumped in the skip and as I was coming out to the landing upon curba he was just poking his head out of the trap door. I beat him up there even though he ladder 24 levels

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Me: Could you please describe the working conditions?
Mr. Lotalo: The working conditions in Champion Mine was real dangerous you had to know what you were doing at all times. Of course any mines are dangerous. I would say that the underground mines were very dangerous compared to the open pit mine.

Me: ^{How has} ~~that~~ safety standards changed & what improvements that you see are yet to be made?

Mr. Lotalo: I haven't worked for twenty years so safety standards have changed immensely for what I heard & the improvements that are yet to be made I wouldn't know but I imagine they are doing all they can.

Me: From when you started your job and when it ended the job, did the duties of the job change? (Over the years)

Mr. Lotalo: Yes, they changed tremendously from the underground mines to the open pit. You had to learn more about machinery & different ^{include} aspects of your job of the open pit but I enjoyed it very much.

Me: Could you describe what your co-workers were like?

Mr. Lotalo: My co-workers as far as I worked in the mines were all good & easy to get along with although some were harder workers than others but on the whole the workers were real easy to get along with.

Me: Do you remember any special stories that stood out about them?

Mr. Lotalo: There was a lot of stories told but I can't remember any special & I wouldn't want to mention any in here.

Me: During your career were you involved in any special projects or having you implemented any programs?

Mr. Lotalo: No, I haven't really. ^{in anyway}

Me: Have you won any awards or recognized for your job performance.

Mr. Lotalo: No, my job performance ^{was} I say was on the average but I did get a couple of better jobs while I was in the pulp plant and in the open mine.

Me: At any time did you ever feel like changing your job or career? Why or why not?

Mr. Lotalo: No, cause when I retired from the mines I was too old to change my job & I was very satisfied with the income.

Me: What do you think the future holds for the Tilden & Empire?

Mr. Isotab: I wished I knew that and many more wished they knew but I hope its a good future & it seems to me that they have to hold out down costs like as mentioned many times & to get along the management and labor as to get along.

Me: What does the future look like for the iron & steel industry in general?

Mr. Isotab: Well, what I read ~~wrote~~ right now it looks very promising but like I said you have to get along both labor & industry and I guess workers have to do all they can to keep it in progress. That's all.

Me: Do you feel what should be done in the future of C.C.I. To be competitive?

Mr. Isotab: Yes, I just mentioned that management & labor must get along & of course they're trying everything they can to cut costs which is natural in every industry to remain competitive.

Me: Do what do you think has been the key to success of C.C.I. where other companies have failed?

Mr. Isotab: I think the success of C.C.I. is that they've had good management & they knew what they were doing, more than some of these other companies & they were a better place to work & I guess they were more fortunate mining better mines of quality of the workman were very - had to be there!

Me: ~~Thinking~~ ^{Looking} far in the future do you think that history will remember C.C.I. company & it's workers?

MR. Isotab: They all ready have they had dif. plaques put up. One is in Humbolt right by the antique shop were the first discovery of the Obst ^{finished} was discovered. That was years ago & I know exactly where it was in fact the building were it started in is right ^{where} by the pit is now & down under.

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me: How has the role of woman changed in the Iron Industry & what directions do you think it will take in the future?

Mr. Isotalo: When I left the Republic mine I don't think there was a woman ^{working} there as yet & I believe they took a few woman right after I retired but I think which is good there is a lot of jobs they can perform that the man can.

me: What skills do the young people of today need to develop if they plan to work for C.C.T.?

Mr. Isotalo: Well right now I think they have to have skills in things like welding, ~~maintainance~~ mechanics, electricians & it has to be almost trade to work with C.C.T. now. The labor that's been used all the years I've been working there was common labor which is the strong back & weak mind.

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me: In the remaining question what advise can you give in general to the students of today?

Mr. Isotalo: I think the students of today have a very good chance of ~~ferthering~~ ^{furthuring} their education but the cost of a college degree is getting out of hand really costs a lot for the parents which is hard to come by sometimes.

me: Have you ever been a member of the Steel workers Union?

Mr. Isotalo: Yes, I have. I was a member of the Champion mine Union but they didn't have a union in there till about 1956 or 1957 ever since then I've been a union member.

me: Have you experienced being in strike? If so, how many times?

Mr. Isotalo: Yes, I have experienced being on strike Off Hand I would say about 5 or 6 times all together.

me: How does the Strike actually began?

Mr. Isotalo: The strike always begins the cost of living it happened naturally. The people wanted more money for the cost of living expenses and benefits of course is mandatory now with health insurance & so forth.

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me: How many employees does the strike involve?

Mr. Isotalo: Republic involved about 150 men. at C.C.T. The last champion strike in 1971 it involved 3500 men.

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Me: Do you know any interesting stories about an incident on the picket line?

Mr. Isotalo: Not really but before I got in the mines after service there was a strike in 1946 which was getting to be pretty dangerous. The companies fought hard against the union but the union finally came to terms with the company there was a three or four month strike.

Me: What is the purpose of a picket line? And describe what happens there?

Mr. Isotalo: The purpose of a picket line is when your unionized you don't like any ~~union~~ workers to go through the picket lines to go to work which never happened to much not while I remember except the purpose was to keep all the help from going in to work undercover although the management were about going through the picket lines.

Me: In general was is the most interesting or unique story that you can remember from any time the workers were on strike?

Mr. Isotalo: I don't know about unique times but everybody had to help out & somehow we made living years ago it was always something you can pick up to do on your own it was a struggle for most families especially if they had children but somehow we made it through with fish & deer meat.

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

Mr. Isotalo: A union meeting everything is discussed especially safety among the first thing and for the future of what benefits we should have & haven't got lots of times its just how to approach to company & somehow get along.

Me: In your opinion, why is the Steel workers Union so important to the workers?

Mr. Isotalo: Well, it's important to the workers just like any other union that is important to any other job I think if you do a pretty good day work & somebody don't like your looks or what ever reason at least you had a good excuse before they fired you or sent you down the road or something happens unintentionally any thing on your work line you have a chance to come battle through the union I admit union is sometimes radical but it doesn't mean to be we just have to have them to organize.

me: So, strike was a bad situation?

Mr. Isotalo: Yes, ~~but~~ they were but if it wasn't for all the sacrifices we made during the strike, a lot of these younger miners right now wouldn't have benefits. In fact dental plan + vision plan didn't come out till the early 80's if I remember right, most of the time when I worked in the mines we never had them and glasses + so forth. One time when you needed glasses on the job the safety glasses was provided by the company + most of the time on the job your gloves were provided.

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me: Could you describe what you like doing in your spare time?

Mr. Isotalo: In my spare time, I'm not able to do a lot of things that I did years back to fish + hunt but I still enjoy bird hunting and deer hunting + enjoy ~~company~~ ^{comradship} ship of retirees and of course its nice to go on a trip once and a while with the wife, go on a tour bear + there

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

Mr. Isotalo: In my case I probably would cause I didn't have any further than an high school education and if I was to stay in the U.P. that its about the best job without education of course if I had to do it over again I'd try some row to get a college degree after service is probably what I should've did. you have to sacrifice enormously but I advise anyone getting thrown high school row to ~~perform~~ pursue a college or career in some field a trade of some kind.