

Dan Pennala's

interview with Norman Pennala

me: Hi I'm Dan Pennala I will be interviewing Norman Pennala at his house in North Lake about mining on December fifth, 1993 O.K. When and where were you born?

Norm: I was born on July 19, 1922 here in North Lake

me: What are the names of your parents?

Norm: My parents names were Elias and Hattie Pennala

me: What did your parents do for a living?

Norm: My father was a miner for the C.C.I. and my mother was a house wife

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

Norm: Well, I had no brothers but I had three sisters, Eleanor Bennett, Martha Ulrickson, Viola Williams

me: Are you currently married

Norm: Yes

me: If so what is your spouses name?

Norm: Barbara

me: what are the names of your children?

Norm: Gary Pennala, Jill Marcotte, Cathy Rabenold, John Pennala

me: how long have you been working in the iron industry?

Norm: Well I worked I'm retired now I worked there for forty one and a half years for C.C.I. *emphasize years*

me: Why did you choose to work in the iron industry?

Norm: Well when I got out of high school there wasn't much jobs around and that looked like it offered me the most opportunity at that time and so I was lucky enough to get a job and at the *possible quite*

me: what are the names of the various mines or buildings you have worked in?

Norm: Well I worked I started off I worked at the Athens mine *include* as a sample picker and then I worked in the cem. lab for 17 years and then I went to the Republic Mine after when they opened up or before they opened up.

Me: over the years what kinds of duties have you performed for CCI.

Norm: Well I was a analyst at the cem. lab and then I ended up as operating foreman at the ~~the~~ Republic mine. but I retired *at the* pellet plant

Me: In as much detail as possible please describe the main duties of your current job?

Norm: Well, these are the jobs that I held at the end I was like I said a production — or operating foremen and my a jobs were just to keep the plant running from day to day and make sure there was a all the schedules where filled and replacements in place if we needed any and production run along met my quotas. *include*

Me: Did this job require any special training or higher education

Norm: No it was something that was just coming up new pelletizing and we had to learn and fly by the seat of our pants and what training I had was on the job training *include*

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

Norm: *include* Well, the most challenging one was trying to learn pelletizing like I said it was a ~~new~~ phase of work around here and something new the CCI. was starting up to me that was the most difficult.

ME: What are the biggest responsibilities of your job?

Norm: Well, its just like a keep the plant running and a and maintain a goal is to meet the goals of production that we had at the mine the company set up for you that makes sure you got ya know as much pellet ~~as~~ as you could in a day and that was it.

ME: If applies to you describe the most dangerous situations you have been in?

Norm: Well, when you work in a pellet plant that was about the worst place when you work in a pellet plant you always got its always dangerous because your working with heat it goes 23 hundred and 80 degrees farenheit in the kilns and you got red hot pellets that are going that are around most of the time. and you go in these areas sometimes if got a trouble and you got to be extremely careful ya know to not get burned and a take every precaution that you can.

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ME: Have you ever been involved in an accident or witnessed one?

Norm: Well, yes I was involved in an accident it was a at Republic we had a down comer from the grate and it was plugged we had just started up are unit after a ten day repair. and a consequently when you start a pellet plant up you got you can't run it until you get all the heat up to where it is and where its supposed to be and you just can't try anything before you start opperating you got to get it right up to cooperating just so you could operate. Well, we had an unfortunate problem there we had a leaky grate and one of the down comers filled up with hot pellets and a we couldn't operate like like that so we shut it down and we went down to the bottom to clean out the hopper we had firehoses and alot of water and that hopper like I said was filled with red hot pellets and we got what we called a blowback and all the heat that was generated

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Norm: from the hot pellets and the cold water just blew back up to the towards the openings on the hopper and it was too hot to black ~~black~~ hot dust all over the place and a two men got burned three men got burned but two very severely and a they a they died due to their accident they didn't die at the job but they died shortly after in the hospitals. *include*

ME: Could you describe either the most unique or perhaps humorous situations you have seen over the years

Norm: No, I haven't seen any. I can't remember that's a long time for me I don't remember any humorous things [too serious with the job for any humor I guess]

me: Please describe your working conditions. *possible quite*

Norm: Well, working conditions well we started that plant I was there when we started it working conditions were bad because there was a lot of problems that were foresaw so we had to overcome those things eliminate them and there were some bad places there but everything worked alright. We changed them

me: How have safety standards changed?

Norm: Well, we one of the things that happened is we always had a concern for safety but now well before I left I been retired for almost 12 years now but before I left we had committees working union committees and safety committees with the union and they brought to us as management we would try to take care of as many as we could and everything seemed to be working pretty good I thought. When I was leaving we sort of eliminated the worsed part like I say you always have dangerous spots but I mean

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Norm: I thought we did a pretty good job it looked pretty
& good ya know by the time I left

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

Norm: No, I never had any ideas about leaving the C.C.I. I liked my job it was a good job I never wanted to leave there go anywhere else and then after I started getting my years accumulated well I never would have got all the years I would on another company as I had with the C.C.I. so it ~~was~~ ^{helped} my pension and all that stuff.

me: have you ever been a member of the steelworkers union

Norm: yes I was a ~~member~~ member of the steelworkers union
I was an officer for the local 2656 at the Cliffs
Shaft and we met at the old building across from
the library in Ishpeming

me: have you ever been on strike?

Norm: Oh yes we been on strike

me: how many times?

Norm: lets see maybe 4 times or 5 times, 4 times probably

me: how many employees does a strike usually involve

Norm: Well, everybody thats on hourly on an hourly wage
goes out on strike and all the plants all the unions
they covered different locals covered different mines. when
the strike would be called all the hourly men would
go out on it that the way it was done

me: what is the purpose of a picket line

Norm: Well, a picket line I think is more to show solidarity that the people all on strike are all together and would stick together and that I think the picket line also shows ~~the~~ people that aren't really familiar why where striking or somebody that's not in the mines or ya know that we have problems ya know we had problems that we wanted resolved.

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

Norm: Well, I wasn't I remember hearing a story once I don't know about. One of the big ones was at the mather A. one time when I think they had quiet a bit of trouble on a picket line I'm not too familiar with it I wasn't involved in it and a I think it got kind of rough

Me: fighting?

Norm: Well, fighting and I guess a couple of cars where overturned ~~and~~ and something like that like I say I think I was ~~in~~ in the service then I really wasn't too familiar with that one. But we never had any when I was on strikes or the picket line. We never had any big a to do about anything.

Me: Did you ever go to a union rally?

Norm: Union Rally? what do you mean union rally.

Me: Or a Union meeting

Norm: Oh meeting oh ya I used to go to union meetings when I was a union member Yup I a Every month we met

Me: What did you do?

Norm: Well, we would air our grievancers out and anybody have any things that they wanted our grievance man to look into then we would formulate our proposals that we were going to bring up in the next union contract meeting in Duluth it was a business meeting everybody was serious about what ~~that~~ they were going to do

Me: What were some of the grievances?

Norm: Oh working conditions, job seniority, and pay, and well like I said I was at the chem. lab at that time we never had the grievances that they had underground but I heard about them ya know in different places and different guys would get more money or they got money for the company account or they got money for this it wasn't always uniform so some of the people had gripes.

Me: In your opinion why is the steelworkers union so important to the workers?

Norm: Well, again it to me it's a place where the hourly men can go for security they know they got somebody kinda watching over them on their places and they can get their demands met better because there's safety in numbers

Me: What do you think the future holds for the tilden and Empire

Norm: Oh I think future holds are going to be. they look good to me I think there going to be alright those mines will be

Norm: operating as long as there's iron ore bodies around here and I think it looks good

Me: So the iron and steel looks pretty good?

Norm: Yah I think the iron and steel industry looks good to

Me: What do you feel must be done in the future for CCI to remain competitive?

Norm: Well, I think they gotta have a good work force a happy work force. they got good knowledgeable men I know I worked with a lot of those guys and there all good guys they gotta keep up with all the new innovations coming up in pelletizing and things they need now to make steel there's different types of additives there putting in the ear getting rid of the big mills and getting these mini mills I think those are the things they gotta go right along with and stay with that and keep them happy and supplied.

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Me: What do you think has been the key to the success of CCI.?

Norm: Well, again they have stayed the course ya know they haven't varied from a. they don't go looking for different parts or different things to do there strictly in mining that's there big job and I think they have looked for holdings in iron ore holdings in other countries to operate and there doing a good job there buyins up all these other companies that are falling by the wayside to operate them and right now from what I understand there one of the biggest operating companies in the world so I think there on the ball.

Me: looking for into the future how do you think history will remember the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company and it's workers?

Norm: Well, they have been here a long time so they must have been doing everything right and I think history will bare that out that they were on the right track all the ~~way~~ while and they had good guys working for them and everybody did a good job up here both company and workers.

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me: how has the role of women changed in the iron industry.

Norm: They were just starting to come in the workforce when I left ~~at~~ we had some but mostly as students, although there was some that were coming in to be permanent employees. and a I don't know I didn't see anything that was going to be detrimental by hiring women they always did a good job and I think as time goes by there will be more women working in the mines or in the plants rather.

me: what skills do the young people of today need to develop if they plan to work for CCI.

Norm: Well, if that was me starting off I think I would get some technical training in electrical fields, instrumentation, accounting something like that because you still need your laborers and your still going to have to have man power but I mean if I was young I'd want to go to school at least for a couple years.

Norm: get some kind of a education in that respect

Me: What advice could you give in general to the students of today?

Norm: Well, that goes along with the same one I just answered that I think I'd go for at least a two year degree in some field of ~~B~~ technology or whatever they find that they need I wouldn't just say go there I'd say well I'll take what they give me I think I'd look it over a little bit and see if I could help myself by going to school for this particular phase of his work and then I'd I think I'd oh I know I'd go and I knew it helped me out in the long run

me: please describe what you enjoy doing in your spare time.

Norm: Well, ~~the~~ ~~the~~ Dan you know me I been busy for the last 12 years I like travelling and I just like the outdoors and I like my camp that's where I like to spend most of my time

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

Norm: yah I mean what more could ~~a~~ I ya know accomplish at that time heres a kid that just got out of highschool happened to get into a job with the way back there. Worked myself up to a production foreman at the Republic Mine well I don't know can't beat that in my books I don't think I'd ever I'm not sorry that I did what I did and if I knew that I could come out the way it was I think I'd do it again

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me: looking back over the years what impressions stand out most in your mind concerning your association with CFI.

Norm: Well, my association with CFI, always has been good even if I was in the Union I mean I wasn't anti company just because ~~you~~ ^{you} were in the Union most of the guys aren't and they just lookin out for themselves and a like I say I have never had a bad experience with CFI, and a they have always treated me right I think I have always treated them right so what goes around comes around I guess

me: Before we end the interview is there else that comes to mind that you would like to ~~to~~ add?

Norm: No nothing really I think we've covered it pretty well and a just that well I don't know I can't think of anything ~~know~~ now Danny so I'll just end it here with you pal

me: Kay, thank you very much

Norm: Okay

3 Safety - pink

- 1 trainings - green
- 6 unions - light blue
- 4 accidents - yellow
- 5 duties - black
- 8 future - orange
- 2 why he worked in the mine - dark blue
- 7 picket lines & bins on strike - purple