

Courtney Boase
interview with
Don Ryan



me: This is Courtney Boase and I'm at CCI's main office. The Date is December 1st 1993. And I'm interviewing Mr. Don Ryan.

When and where were you born?

Mr. Ryan: I was born in Ishpeming, February 9, 1939.

me: What are the names of your parents?

Mr. Ryan: My Father's name was Fred and my mother's name was May.

me: What did your parents do for a living?

Mr. Ryan: Um, my dad worked on the L&N railroad and my mom didn't work. She did some part time kinds of things. Back in those days women didn't work as much.

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

Mr. Ryan: I just have one brother and his name is Bob.

me: Are you currently married?

Mr. Ryan: No.

me: O.K.

me: ~~What~~ What are the names of your children?

Mr. Ryan: Um, Tim, Mike, and Trisha

me: O.K. How long have you been working in the Iron Industry?

Mr. Ryan: I came to work at Cleveland Cliffs in August of 1977, so that would be 17 or no 16 years last summer ①

Mr. Ryan: so like, 16 1/2

me: Ok. Why did you choose to work in the Iron Industry?

Mr. Ryan: Um, I think in my case it's going to be different than a lot of other people you know, in that my job is kind of different than most people who work at Cleveland Cliffs or the mine. I have worked in broadcasting, I worked in public relations I have worked in government relations kind of work and so, I was really looking for a job that would make use out of those experiences. ^{I guess} And, so Cleveland Cliffs at that time was probably one of the few companies around here that was big enough to have someone who worked in public relations public affairs and, um, and also at a level where it was a good job, I mean it was a good paying job and a and so that's really how I wound up working for Cleveland Cliffs because of other experiences and wanting to get into a public relations/public affairs type of job.

me: Ok. Well you already answered the second one so, Please name those relatives who have worked in the Iron Industry

me: I, I don't think I have any relatives who did or um, I don't know how far you want to go. Close relatives, I can't think of any aunts or uncles, my parents didn't. A. my dad working for the railroad, since it was the LSI was close you could say, because the LSI's main job is hauling Iron ore, but he didn't work in any of the mines.

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

Mr. Ryan: I've always worked in this one building

I've worked in, most people call it the Main Office

But, it's really not that any more it's the Ishpeming office and my office has always been in here,

me: Over the years what kinds of duties have you performed for CCF?

Mr. Ryan: Well, my duties have always been in the area of public relations, um employee communication and for awhile I was also involved in management and supervisory training, and that covers a lot of stuff that's kind of in general. I don't know if we get more specific here somewhere along the line, or I can't remember.

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

Mr. Ryan: Ok, that's where I guess we get into more detail. There's a lot of different things I do

in my job, I'm called director of public affairs

which means I'm in charge of public relations for Cleveland Cliffs in this area and in fact in Michigan, um one area of that is dealing with

the news media, um if we have press releases they go out through me through my office. more often it's a matter of the press calling and wanting information, because we're a big industry, big employer, big land owner, been here for so many years we're kind of part of the regular news beat, I guess ③

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

You could say for the newspapers and anything we do they want to know about it and so, usually what happens is they call and they here something, or they see somethings happening so, they call for more information. Sometimes it happens that way, sometimes we put out press release, and they call with more questions, a thats just one thing um, another thing would be part of my job is to be involved in the community ^{quote} so I'm involved in a lot of different organizations, get to know people and work with them and its away for the company to be involved with community affairs and I'm on the Chamber of Commerce board, I'm on the Economic Club board, I was on the hospital board, a Im the co-chairman of the operation action U.P. thats a U.P. industry. Just a lot of things like that, um, we do things like putting together booklets like this Tilden mine booklet, you can have a copy of it, but its away of putting together information of the mine so you can share it with people and have a better idea of what there/were doing. we also a, are department is responsible for putting out these newsletters one for the Empire Mine and one for the Tilden Mine. Dale Hemmi la does most of the work on this now, but he works for me. But, this all comes out through my department, so thats what we would call employee communications. ^{include + quote} Sometimes we get

(My Ryan cont.)

involved in local government affairs, um, recently for example Marquette County was talking about passing some new ordinances and we kind of disagree with them, and the way there written and the fact that they would affect the mines in a way that we think is not good. So, part of my job is to meet with local government officials to talk about it and see if we can work it out and you know see if you can get them to change or a, um, do whatever it is your trying to accomplish. so, it could be any a number of different things, um we do a lot of different contributions um, that comes through me usually someone contacts me and asks you know for a contribution or something and so, I have to handle that and theres budgeting that goes on, theres probably more kinds, occasionally we go out and give speeches or talks to service clubs or other organizations, um, thats, the main job is to try and help people understand what we do, what Cleveland cliffs is doing, what the Empire and Tilden mines are doing, so, that the community and the public will be supportive, um, you can go some places in the country where people don't like mining, um, and a, for example in Wisconsin some companies have been trying to open mines and they've had alot of problems getting support from the public (5)

include + quote

include

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

and getting the permits they have to
have, we've always had a pretty good relationship
here between the mines and the people who live
here. Occasionally, there are some problems but, um,
You try to have a good relationship that's what it is
public relations, so, you do all you can to help
people understand, what it is that you're doing and
try and get them to be supportive so, the mines can
operate and do what they have to do.

Me: O.K. Does this job require any special training
or higher education, if so please describe it.

Mr. Ryan: Well, if someone was going to start now, I
think it would. In my case it didn't, but, you
know, I started doing something else a long time ago. Um,
not that I'm that old, but, I think I'm in that
period when not everybody went to school, and I
started working in radio / T.V. so, I got some
job experience that way and I got a lot of on the
were to set out to go into public relations now,
I would say yes, you definitely would have to have
a college education, um there are some schools now
who offer degrees that deal with public relations
if not that it would probably have something to do
with management or communications or media or
maybe even English, you know but, um, most ⑥

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

definitely it would probably be a requirement
because you should have at least a bachelors
degree to start.

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

Mr. Ryan: Dealing with the news media, ^{part} um, and in a broader way, knowing all you have to know to be in this job, I'm not trying to say that I know a lot, but, if you work in public relations, people expect you to know, and so, first of all you have to know where you can go to get the answers and, remember I just work at this office and were talking about things that go on in the mine, and so, you have to try to stay current with as many things as you can that are happening, that people are most likely to ask you about. You know, I^I were to get a call from the newspaper or the t.v. station saying whats happening at the something or other, um, you like to kind of be in the position to either answer it write away or else you have to know how to do it very quickly, you know, ^{include} because they want an answer now, normally, if its the paper they might call up nine o'clock in the morning and want an answer then because, the paper goes to press at eleven o'clock or twelve o'clock, so, its ⑦

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

trying to know as much as you can, even
though you don't, I don't work in the mine.

You know, I'm not there. But, really that's what the interest is. It's not going on here, It's what's going on out there. So, it's trying to know all you can, and short of that, being able to know where you can get the answers, and you know some days the phone just rings and we answer it and it's a question that, you know, you haven't thought of for a long time.

me: Looking back over the years, what was the most challenging or difficult dutie you performed and explain why.

Mr. Ryan; Well, I think [the most difficult time was probably the strike in 1990] quote, Because there was a lot of, um, news media interest, newspaper, t.v. station, and you have to remember even though my job, you know, there are a lot of people above me in the chain of command that really decide things, but on the other hand if I'm the guy who's name is appearing in the paper or on t.v., you have to be credible and so what your trying to do is, work with the news media to answer their questions, on the other hand you know you don't want to say something that's going to make the negotiations go worse, you know and you lived here in the community, and ⑧

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

You deal with people and, a, you know, it got to be a long, dragged out strike and it went on for a long time and a, It's not an easy job to be doing that every day, taking those phone calls, and trying to answer those questions in such a way that your honest, but your not getting into areas your not supposed to get into, or not getting people angry at you for things you say. So, I say that was probably, dealing you know, dealing with the news media during the strike would be the most difficult especially during the strike in 1990, *quite part*

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

Mr. Ryan: I guess there's no simple answer for that, I, kind of a variety, you know, mine isn't the kind of job where you just go in and do the same thing every day, I mean it's the different things you do and it changes a lot, I mean, mostly my job is dealing with people, it allows me to be creative, you know, it allows me to make some decisions, um, there is a certain amount of responsibility associated with it that's to enjoy having. But, um, there's no single thing.

me: What are the biggest responsibilities of your job?

Mr. Ryan: Well, I think it kind of like the other question to that the fact, that people expect because my job is a public job, and you know people see my name in the paper and on television, and on the radio, they expect you to maintain a certain level of honesty, and credibility, and a, um, it's not always easy, people expect you to have a lot of answers that you don't have because, they often see you talking about different things, All get a lot of calls from people just asking you questions that you have nothing to do with, you know, just because they see, it's not me, it's my job, they see my name, you know, so it's, um, trying to stay informed and stay on top of things so, as much as possible you can respond to people who are looking to you for information,

me: Ok. Could you describe even the most unique or perhaps humorous situations you have ever seen over the years.

Mr. Ryan: I can't, I couldn't think of any.

me: Oh, alright. Please describe, no wait, ya Please describe your working conditions.

Mr. Ryan: My working conditions are fine, I work in this office most of the time, and, it's a well equipped office and have modern tools to work with-computers, (10)

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

and, um, all the rest, a.

me: How have safety standards changed

and what improvements do you see to be made?

Mr. Ryan: That's not an area I work with that much, you know, Obviously safety is a major concern in the mines, and, a you try to work with it as far as some of the communications things that go on, but, a I think it's just a constant battle, constant struggle, I guess to make sure people are - work ^{careful} safely, um, I don't know if our standards, a I think are standards are already very high, we would like to eliminate all accidents, but, a, It's just doing all things to make sure that happens, and a, my role in that is very small, but a, you try to work something through a newsletter or something else just to promote safety. But, most of it really happens at the mine.

me: How have you seen the duties of your job change over the years?

Mr. Ryan: I don't think they have a lot in my case except that when I came I was, I was not the director of public affairs, I worked for someone else, you know, so I was promoted, so, it has changed in that way. But, the job itself hasn't changed that much.

me: Please describe what your co-workers are like and do you remember any special stories that

(me cont.)

stand out about them?

Mr. Ryan: No, I think again this is more appropriate for people who work in the mine, with a lot of people, you know, were a fairly small department here, there's just two of us, A, it doesn't really apply.

Me: Ok. In your career have you been involved in any special projects or have you been ^{of have you} implemented any programs, if so, please describe them.

Mr. Ryan: Well, again, you know, were kind of different here. I mean we've been involved in different things, um, I was involved in developing a lot of training programs at one time, Right now, were starting a new television advertising program, um, where we a couple of days a week are doing, these commercials but were not selling anything, these really intended to help people better understand again what ^{it is} we're doing and, um, some of the things talk about what we're doing in the environmental area and some of it has to do with things that are going with the mines to make them better operations, a, things Cliffs and the mines do to be part of the community, um, so, that was a new advertising program, there are probably a lot of different things, you know, there's no big major.

Me: Have you ever won any awards or have you been recognized in any way for your job performance (12)

Mr. Ryan: Um, not that I can remember. I mean your recognized you know, been with the company but, no.

Me: At any time have you felt like changing jobs or your career? Why or why not?

Mr. Ryan: Well, I think everybody does from time to time, might get a little frustrated, have a bad day or something but generally, no.

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

Mr. Ryan: Well, I think its pretty clear that the Iron ore industry is going to be smaller. Its a lot smaller today than it was ten or twenty years ago. If you go back twenty years and take a look you'll see that quite a few mines have closed, a the size of the iron ore industry based on the compacity used to be over 120 million tons, now its 82 million tons, so the industry keeps getting smaller and thats because the number of steel companies and the number of steel plants keeps getting smaller and today, a, again if you go back twenty years or so, a about eighty percent of all the steel in this company was made from iron ore. About twenty percent was made from scrap, now its about forty percent made from scrap. So, there is a lot more steel made from recycled steel from scrap iron, so, the amount of iron ore being, the amount of iron ore being needed is less today than (13)

Mr. Ryan: it used to be, so the mining industry has become very competitive and a, both the Empire and Tilden mines are & the people who work there are working very hard to be producers of high quality pellets and to keep costs under control. I think if they keep doing that and continue being successful at it, that there probably would be a good future in it for the Empire and Tilden mines but it's not something that's guaranteed. It's something we're going to have to earn in competition with other mines because there is still too much capacity in the United States to produce pellets compared to the amount that is needed and so, it's kind of constant on-going struggle to be competitive.

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

Mr. Ryan: Well, I think that relates to the last question, in that there is some changes going on and that is, they talk about the _____ mills, these are the smaller steel mills that use electric furnaces, and they're the ones that make steel from scrap. And so, that part of the industry is getting bigger, and the other part, the part where they take the iron ore pellets, limestone and coke and put it into a blast furnace and make steel that way is getting smaller, and so the industry over all is getting some what

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

smaller, the steel industry. Plus, the segment

that uses iron ore is getting smaller yet, so ^{include} that's a change is going on and that's one of the things we're looking at now is producing something called direct reduced iron. You may have heard that we've talked about the possibility the Republic Mine could re-open and if it did that's what it would make its not the same as the pellets made at the Empire and Tilden. It's a product that would go a step beyond that and it would go into a type of furnace that would convert the iron ore pellets to a metallic iron or direct reduced iron, that probably wouldn't be possible with the Empire or Tilden because the nature of the ore. But, it is a possibility at the Republic. So, I guess basically what we're saying is that the overall steel industry has gotten smaller, that part of the industry that uses iron ore pellets has gotten considerably smaller and if there is any growth it's in the area where they primarily use scrap to make steel and so as a result of that the iron ore industry has also gotten smaller. This - The iron ore industry in the United States has pretty well tied to the United States steel industry. I should say to the North American steel industry. We do go back and forth (U)

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

with Canada. We don't ship pellets overseas from Michigan or Minnesota. We pretty much rely on steel mills along the Great Lakes area, some in Canada, some in the United States. So, are future is dependant on how those steel mills do, me: What do you feel must be done in the future for C.C.I. to remain competitive?

Mr. Ryan: Do you mean C.C.I. or the Empire and Tilden Mines? Do you know?

me: Probably just the Empire and Tilden
Mr. Ryan: Ya, cause if its the Empire - If its C.C.I. were talking about the whole company and I think some of the things it will have to do is get more involved in this direct reduce iron and some of those projects. I think right here for the Empire and Tilden mines its really just a matter of when any product can, you know has a larger supply in demand um, then you just have to really work hard to be the best. If everybody was trying to get iron ore pellets, you know, and there was a shortage that would be one situation, but its not its just the oppisite of that. There's too much iron ore looking for a place to go and so in that situation the steel companies have a choices where to get their iron ore and so what are they going to do their going to take the iron ore pellets that are the quality they want and the lowest cost. Their no different then you or I, So, what really is going to effect the future of these mines to remain competitive is there ability to stay ahead, you know, to be the best, make the best product, the other thing thats changed a lot, the um, if you think about you include + quality (15)

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

If you go way back in time before these operations, they use to just take a chunk of rock, chunk of ore and that's what they would ship off to the steel mill. Then they went to pellets and that was, you know, a major change but, it was still just one pellet, now were making several different types of pellets. We make the basic pellets, we make the Flux pellets where we add the limestone — to the pellets, a, we make different grades, different, depending on the customer's needs. So, that's also something we do to remain competitive, we try to meet our specific customer's need. A that a lot different than just sending a piece of un-processed ore to a steel company or more recently than just saying here's a pellet. And so to do that at the resource lab in Ishpeming has probably, not probably it has some of the most advanced pellet testing equipment in the world and so were able to know how are pellets will react in the blast furnace and we know a lot about them so that we can make the kind of pellets the steel company wants and we lean look at ways to improve the pellets were making. So, a lot of people don't think about that when their thing this just is, you know a little rock of something, but, a there is a lot more to it then people realize. *imp - include*

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

Mr. Ryan: Well, I think over the years Cleveland Cliffs has been a really sound company, um, you know, this really gets into some complex stuff, but if you go back during the 1980s a lot of steel companies in the United States were having ^{major} problems, quite a few went into bankruptcy, these were companies part owners of the Empire & Tilden mines and the only really solid ~~force~~ through a lot of that was Cleveland Cliffs and in some case the company took over the ownership, to keep the companies share in the mine, to keep them going, a, Cleveland Cliffs has been, I guess you could say the strong foundation that's kind of kept things going, and I think that's been important. I think the company has looked at it self as an iron ore company and really focused on that. A, we did get into some diversification for a while, but starting back in 1977 a decision was made to just focus on iron ore and to get out of some of the other businesses. So, we really have made iron ore are business and we continue to do that. I think it has been a pretty strong and solid company, good people running it, good people working for it.

me: Looking far into the future, how do you think history will remember the Cleveland Cliffs Iron ~~Company~~ and its workers?

Mr. Ryan: Well, I don't think will have to look too far into the future because we already have a long history, but if we do I think people will look at it very favorably, you know. When you think about it next year will mark the 150th anniversary of the discovery of iron ore in this area. And, actually they've been mining here for over 140 years. Cleveland Cliffs, the original company, the Cleveland Iron Mining ^{plant} Company was formed back in 1850, you know this company is over 140 years old. Now wouldn't find many companies, you know not in the United States that are that old, certainly not like in Michigan or this part in the United States. So, we already have a long history. I think people will look back and realize that not just Cliffs, but Cliffs and the mining industry and ~~the people who worked there~~ really played an important role in building this country, you know providing the raw material to allow steel to be made, to build much of the infrastructure we have in the United States today.

How has the role of women changed in the iron industry, and what direction do you think it will take in the future?

Mr. Ryan: I think typically in the olden days if you want to call it that, women were not involved in mining. Then as women started to get a long in a so-called "non-traditional job", a women have gotten more involved in mining, mining jobs. Unfortunately, there have not been a lot of opportunities because of all the cut backs, we really haven't hired any people, with the changes that occurred in the 1980's we really haven't hired many people in the last fifteen years, there haven't really been any opportunities, but I think you'll see more of that in the future where women do get involved in any kind of jobs there will be that opportunity, um, for instance driving a truck or operating heavy equipment or even in maintenance or what ever it might take, but in that sense I guess were no different than anybody else and that change did not start to occur till fairly recently and the reason their haven't been any opportunities is because we weren't hiring anybody, men or women. But, as we do hire people, now it will be both.

me: What skills do the young people of today need to develop if they plan to work for C.C.I. someday? ^{include}

Mr. Ryan: That's a good question because there's a lot of people who don't understand that and we've had some discussions and one of the things we do is we have an educational partnership with the school districts in western Marquette county. There's a lot of people who think we want welders or mechanics coming out of high school but that's not what we want, um, for people in the future.

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

not only in mining but a lot of other fields. We need people who understand the basics we need people who know how to read and understand basic math, we need people who have some basic science understanding, we need people who know English and have some communication skills, um, we need people who understand some other things like ^{importance of} work ethic, and punctuality and a showing up for work every day. Those kinds of things. So, ^{quote} um, we can train people who to do various jobs, but a, young people have to understand today, they have to pay attention to the other things, you know, it's important to be able to read and write, and communicate, understand some basic math, and some basic science understanding, in order to get a job in ^{prob} almost any industry.

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

Mr. Ryan: I guess the advice would be they better pay attention in school and realize their future more than ever will depend on what they learn in school. One of the unfortunate things the kinds of jobs available for high school graduates the people who work in the mines there are less of those kinds of jobs available and so as we fill those jobs were going to look for people who have a higher educational level and then for the people who don't qualify for those jobs were going to look for some other kind of job so, it's really important people realize that education is going to be more and more important for their future and for getting a job and creating a living and life for themselves. ^{quote}

me: Please describe what you enjoy doing in your spare time?
Mr. Ryan: I don't have a lot of spare time, it's really kind of worked out in spending time in community activities I told you before it's part of my job, but I guess it's also part of my hobby I'd say. I mean the fact that I'm involved in different groups and organizations and ^a working to achieve some things, I do play golf occasionally. I like to walk better in the summer than the winter. But, there is no particular activity.

me: If you had to do it over again, would you make the same career choice? Why or why not?

Mr. Ryan: Ya, I think I would, I don't have any regrets about ⑧

(Mr. Ryan cont.)

it, um, but you have to remember I didn't start by making a career choice at 16, 18, or 20. You know I just kind of evolved. My initial career choice was to work in radio then my career choice changed to working in television, then I got more involved in public relations. Then I worked, actually I worked for a congressman for 3 years and then kind of came into mining. So, um, my career has changed somewhat.

Me: Looking back over the years, what impressions stand out most in your mind concerning your association with C.C.I.

Mr. Ryan: I guess just the fact that through it all, you know, they have just been a solid company, um, I said there was a lot of difficult times in our industry, iron ore and steel, all through the 1980's & 1990's, I think Cliffs has always been a well respected company, both nationally and locally, and I think it's good to work for a company that you're proud of and I've always felt that way. Me: Before we end the interview, is there anything else that comes to mind you would like to add?

Mr. Ryan: No, I don't think so.

Me: O.K. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ryan: O.K. Now what are you going to do with all this?

Me: We're going to put together a red dust book and in there will have all different stories on iron mining so like they'll be sold by a store across from the old bank up by Westwood their going to be sold there and just like if tourists come through and they want to come by and read.

Mr. Ryan: How do you get from this to a book now, what

Me: We take it and we listen to it and we write down everything about it and we hand it in and our English teacher helps us and we start to write stories from it and then the stories are chosen something like 25 stories are chosen to be put in the book. We also do red dust drawings in art to like, drawings that we do that you can make stuff from um, and they get put in the book if they are decent drawings.

Mr. Ryan: So, you don't just verbatim & put it down. You take this and write something from it in your own words. Bright.

me: Ya, we listen to it and write down and then we write down what we got from the interview.

Mr. Ryan: So, then I should ask you is there anything else that I can tell you that is not the list that can help you do this?

me: I don't think so, I think I've got everything I need.

Mr. Ryan: O.K.

me: So, thank you very much.

Mr. Ryan: Ya, you know its a lot different from someone who works at the mine, but its different than what I do. Its hard to remember the different things in 16 years you get involved with and different projects but,

important info -
can be an
excellent story!

Job duties - split - — purple
training programs/education - orange
future of C.C.I. - red
success of C.C.I. - green
how he received his job — blue + light
blue