

Shawn Salmio's
interview with
Laurie Salmio

Me: Grandpa who is 85 years old, we'll be talking about his experiences ~~x~~ of working in the mine. Around 1926 he started his mining career, on the surface at the Mary Charlett Mine, and my Grandpa's name is Laurie Salmio. O.k., are you ready?

Him: I'm ready

Me: O.k. um how long did you work at the mine, about how long, how many years?

Him: Well a, all total I worked off and on ~~for~~ a while but, not a, steady at the Mary Charlett, or the Rollins Mill mine where I worked. They ~~were~~ were just a, short lived jobs.

Me: Oh

~~Him:~~ But then I started later on at the Cleveland Cliffs in 1942.

Me: O.k., um do you have anything else to say, or did I cut you off?

Him: Well [I worked at the Rollins Mill when they had mules under ground, and we had carbine lamps, and no electric lamps there had carbine lamps, which is done away with and there, I think the last of the mine that had mules in it in Negaunee.] [good quote]

Me: mm

Him: the Rollins Mills.

Me: Well, I am going to check and see if this recorded now.
O.k.

Him: O.k.

Me: O.k., um, why did you choose to work in the mine?

Him: It was the only job that payed any money around here include

Me: Oh, ya

Me: Were there any other relatives that worked in the mine?

Him: aah, my brother worked in the mine, a, for a while.

Me: oah, what was his name?

Him: Richard, Richard Salmio

Me: ~~oah~~ ya

Him: and a, he was a iron worker on surface, he worked for many years.

Me: oah, any other relatives

Him: A, my step father worked in the mine, and a cousin named John Lotti, I was a partner with him for over 10 years,

Me: oah ya

Him: mining, at the Moss Mine. That's were I started their at the Cleveland Cliffs in the Moss Mine.

Me: Ya where was the Moss Mine?

Him: It was in Neguanne. It's, its, a, ^{Maas} Moss, and Neguanne Mine, and the Athens they were all in a row and the Neguanne and Moss Mine were under the same caving ground

Me: Where would it be right now, if you wanted to see those caving grounds, or do you know, do you remember?

Him: A, I wouldn't remember where it is at ~~it~~ because it is all ~~out~~ blocked off, and a there's houses around there

Me: ~~oah~~ were there any other mines you worked in

Him: Well, the Bunker Hill, that was an old Neguanne mine. I worked there, and then I worked at the Mother B, Mine, that's were I retired from, and then I worked at Humbolt open Pit, I was a crusher operator there, I worked amongst the crushers.

Me: Ya

Me: In all the mines you ^{worked} in, what kind of jobs did you do?

Him: Well at the Mary Charlotte I was working on the steam shovel, then I was on the crusher there later on, it is sort of a crusher that they crushed the ore and it went straight to the cart. And the Rollins mill mine a, part time I was, a breaky on the, with the dunkeys, and then I was subtrammings pushin buggys. They called a, a buggy is sort of a car, that two buggys made a car down, down below with the mule took and it was a car, and the two buggys you dump in there and, and the amount of two buggys made a car - down below there.

include
& quote

Me: Oh ya. What were the buggys where, what, did they look like, or.

Him: Oh they were just ordinary cars, but they were small and they had four wheels on, metal wheels, and you had to take from one shoot and push it down to another, dump it into another shoot, and then push it back up again, load up and push it down there and dump it again there. Two, two fellas doing that, I had a partner ~~with~~ with me, we were both doing it, because you had to push by hand, so.

include
& quote

Me: Ya was this all done underground?

Him: Ya this was all done underground. That went into a shoot, what they call a shoot. All down there, and down below here the mule would come, ~~with~~ and the mule driver and helper would come and take the ore out from underneath there.

include

When you ~~dump~~ dump it they shoot. It was the same thing in other mines, ~~only~~ ^{only} they used motors.

Me: So that's how they got the ore out of the mines?

Him: Ya, and they ran it out shaft, and from there they hoisted it up in a skip and a, ~~dumped~~ dumped it out in a pile.

Me: Ya, did that go, did the ore like right to the trains to ~~bring~~ ^{bring} it ~~to~~ towards the boats to ~~haul~~ haul it away or, do you know?

Him: to the boats?

Me: Ya like on the train and everything

Him: Well, the trains, ~~the trains~~ were there the, the Steam Shovel loaded them up out on the, and the piles were of the mines were on surface and the Steam shovel goes there and they were loading the cars up one car **after** another and then they drove, ~~the~~ engine drove the cars over to the docks, and from there it goes into the boats.

Me: Oh ya. Um, were there any special machines or equipment that you used?

Him: Well we had these here, sort of a motor that the ~~scrapers~~ scrapers that they pull the scraper back like that and then you, there were two drums on the big scraper you just handle like that. One pulls the scraper back, the other one pulls the scraper forward and it dumps, it dumps into a place where there are two rails there and a shoot is right there and it empties right there and you keep going **back and forth** hauls that stuff into the shoot

Me: Ya, Do they still do those kinda things today?
do you know? in the mines or is it different
now?

Him: No they don't have the, there ain't any underground
mines anymore.

Me: Oah Ya.

Him: These all surface mines. These all run by machinery.

Me: What was the most challenging thing about working
in the mines?

Him: Ha, trying to make some money. You sometimes get
paid by the foot ^{good quote} when your drifting, and then after
much dirt you pull out, so much a cap.
include

Me: Oah Ya? What was drifting?

Him: ha?

Me: What was drifting?

Him: Drifting was making a tunnel. You make a
tunnel. They had nine foot ~~legs~~ like this, and a
nine foot cap, like that, and then you drill *
holes here, you drill about three holes, four holes,
five holes, and then six holes, and you blast all ~~times~~
with ~~these little sparks, like sparks~~ ~~and you lit these~~
of these little spark, like sparks - and you lit these
fuses one at a time, and you, and the trouble is you lit the
shortest fuse first, ya know!
include

14. ~~And~~ And lit them like that and set the heck
out of there! Before,

Mom: Oah Ya!

Itim: Before anything starts to explode, because you
want'ta have the center part of this here, we called that
the breast, were you had to drill there, because you
drilled six foot holes, deep like that you know. They had
the two in the center like that, or the center one, that
does first, then the ones on the side, they go, they
go, one on the center they go, and then sides go and
finally when the top goes, the center top, and then the
all blasted, The bottom finally, they all ~~explode~~ pile in
next one up blast, they explode, they all ~~explode~~ pile in
one pile, they all come in together. The final holes go
SO they ~~the~~ corner ~~so~~ where you, at the bang, bang, that's
on ~~the~~ the next legs, these SO called, we called them
where you put the ~~next~~ legs, these SO called, we called them
legs. And then you start scrapings, you made what they
called a "jim pole." We use to call them, you'd make a
hole in the ~~breast~~ with a pick and such like that
and ya put a pole there ~~and you~~ and you
nail it against this here ~~and you~~ and you
right here, and then you put a chain on there,
then you hook your rope and block ~~there~~ and
then you start scrapings, scraper goes in there
and back and forth, back and forth.

include

Me: Does that pull the dirt and rocks out?

Him: Ya, it pulls the dirt in, up to the shoot and it dumps in, and you empty it out. When you set it all emptied you start putting these timbers up.

Me: Oah ya, so it wouldn't cave in?

Him: Ya, well you put it up there, you got it all fixed up there so, and after you got the timbers in you start drilling again. That's drifting, see?

Me: Was there a lot of room to work in the mine?

Him: Well, like I say there was nine foot timbers, there was plenty of room, and then there was nine foot caps, and they were wide like that, so at the bottom it ~~was~~ ^{must have} been twelve, fifteen feet, on the bottom, because it slanted in like that, and nine foot on the top. So there must be, they had, there was room. But finally when you start caving it down ya know, I mean it started settling kind of, a lot of times you pulling dirt and there at the backend starts to break up on top there so dirt every thing is breaking there you still you got your block in there because keep your block in there because you still getting the dirt that's coming out to there.

include

include

Me: Ya, was it real ~~dark~~ in the mines or?

Him: Well without a light it's dark, ya,

I've never been so dark in a mine.

I remember in the Rollins Mill underground there and, and I was up in the subs pushin' buggy with another ~~lad~~ ^{lad} there and all of a sudden somebody blasted ~~someplace~~ ^{someplace} and that air come woof like that, and we had carbide lamps, and the lamps went out and we were in the dark, dark, real dark! (laugh, laugh) You couldn't see your hand in front of your face because there is no light no place, (see my partanan got scared. He was a new comer too, I had for a partane - He said "What happened?" I said somebody blast- and blew out the lights. So I had the flint on there, ~~and~~ and I scratched the flint like that and ~~my~~ my light come on, and he finally done the same thing I told him what happened, the concussion of that air blew out the carbide lamps. You seen I have a carbide lamp at home, and I have some carbide too but I don't know, the carbide is settans old probably wouldn't use it. I don't know if you can get carbide anymore

include

Me: Oah Ya. ~~Was~~ Was that on your hat ^{then}?

Him: Ya

Me: Oah Ya.

Him: That's when they had carbide lamps, but later on when I was at the Mass they had electric lights, with a big battery you hung on your belt, and a cable went up on your head.

Me: Through all your time you worked in the mine what was the most challenging? Oah I already asked you that question.

What kinda things did you ~~enjoy~~ ^{enjoy} about working in the mine?

include Him: Oah a, pullin' dirt especially when you making money, that was the most easiest job in ~~the~~ the mine when you were pullin' dirt, I ~~enjoyed~~ ^{enjoyed} that part.

Me: ~~Was~~ Was that dangerous?

include Him: Oah and a good partner, that's one of the ~~main~~ main things about working underground because you had to depend on your partner and ~~there~~ there is a difference in partners. I found that out. 9

Me: Was that dangerous, That kinda work?

Himi: Oah yes, ~~oah yes~~ oah yes, you made your own house and you lived in it. Sometimes, some of the partners were pretty rough they didn't cover everything up good ya know. So when we come on em holy moly what a mess. We had to start covering some of that up because it's kinda dangerous. So that put us back, and said gee wiz.

We told em, "I says you left a mess there what the heck, we took time to fix it up." Oah you just keep your head to high, your looking up. Don't look up there. (HaHaHa)

Me: What was the biggest responsibility of your job in the mine?

Himi: your what?

Me: What was your biggest responsibility of working in the mine

Himi: TO make shure you take care of your partner, that is the main thing, to see that everything went right.

possible
quote

Me: Ya. What was the most dangerous thing that happened to you in the mine?

Hi: Hhmmmm. I can't remember anything really dangerous that I was in.

That I know of right off hand.

Me: Where there any funny things that happened to you - or to someone else that you remember?

Hi: I don't know of any funny things

Grandma: stories

Hi: Ya. When my partner was out I had another man working with me, and he was drilling. He was singing songs as he was drilling, and he wasn't putting any pressure on the drill, ^{and it wasn't} it was ^{drilling} making a lot of noise though.

Me: What kinda working conditions did you have on the mine

Hi: Sometimes it was kinda wet. We had to use rubber clothes

Me: That rubber clothes ~~you~~ you had, is that at camp,

Hi: Their not rubber their sort of plastic there. That's when you had a wet place

Himi: They were the meanest places to work.

Me: Where were there any rats in the mine ^{quite}

Himi: Oh ya, there was rats, some of the fellas even trapped them.

Me: Did the safety standards change as you worked in the mine.

Himi: Umm. I don't know. Safety wasn't too much, but they try to practice it anyhow.

Me: What were your partners like? Do you remember any of them.

Himi: Oh yes. I had one good, the best partner I had was my cousin. He was my best partner. The others weren't that hot. But a, I had some others that were pretty good, but then I had some that weren't.

Me: Any special stories that you remember about them.

Himi: Well a, not in particular.

Me: When you worked in the mine were there any special projects or things that you did?

Me: No, no just mining. I was repairing at one time, and I retired being a repairman. I liked that job.

Me: Did you want to ever change your job at any time

Him: Well like I say if I would've know repairing was that good I would've changed it a long time ago from mining.

Mining you made more money alright, but you had to work for it

Me: About how much money did you make an hour?

Him: Oh not too much. Oh Oh three dollars an hour. That was high. Three fifty or something like that. *include*

Me: I have some question here about what you think will happen in the future.

Me: What do you think is the future in the mining industry around here, what do you think about it?

Him: They're never going to run out of iron ore around here. Because they're taking the low grade ore from the surface. There's lots of ore down below there yet, but the reason they're taking the surface iron ore, close to surface it's cheap to operate it. Otherwise ~~the~~ ^{underground} iron ore costs too much.

Ham: Thei's richer ore under ground

Me: So it's better ore the further down you go?

Ham: It seems that way. Ya

Me: What kinds advise can you give to students today, like any advise.

Ham: Go to school, and get an education.

include This here and some of these jobs don't need an education, they just need training.

Me: What skills do you need if you want to work in a mine.

Ham: I don't know. You just need training. Not too much skills. You just need training. That's the way most of them are doing. There is no schooling for these jobs.

Me: It's just on the job training?

Ham: ON the job training.

Me: What kinds things do you like doing in your spare time.

Ham: Putter around (Ha Ha Ha)

Me: If you had to do your life all over again, would you take the same jobs or would you take different ones?

Ham: I don't know. It would have to be the same something. Similar to that. Without an education you take ^{what can you get} ~~you get~~ 14

Me: Did you have a full education?

Hi: No ~~only~~ eightth grade. I flunked recess so they fired me (hahaha).

Me: Well before we end our interview is there any thing else you'd like to add?

Hi: Don't go underground and work. ^{quit} Stay on surface. There's plenty of work on surface.

Me: Did you see any accidents happen?

Hi: No, really I've hadent.

Me: Did any of your friend die or get hurt in the mine?

Hi: Well we had one boss that got killed in the mine. He went to help to miners get the dirt running. I was ~~at~~ hang up sort of in a way. He went up there inside ^{up there} with a pick or something like that to pick it up and he got buried, but I wasn't there I was on the other shift.

Merry
↳ was this
on Merry
Street in
Neyam...

Me: You lived in the Mary House didn't you?

Him: That's right.

Me: What was the Mary House?

Him: That was made for ~~the~~ Captain Merry
He was the captain at that first pit
the Jackson Pit their ya.
Their's even ^{rums} rumors that he had
a drift from his house to the
pit. With I doubt it but anyhow.

Me: There was like a tunnel. There was a room?

Him: Ya, Ya, But then after it was
empty for many, many years
the Mary House they used to call
it the "haunted house" so we got
to live in a haunted house.

Me: How long did at the Mary House?

Him: Well ya, I lived there for quite a
number of years. I forget when
we moved there. It's in the
forties, the late forties. We lived
there for many years, Then they
decided that the Mather B was gonna
mine ground ^{that area} ~~there~~ so they decided
we had to get outta there, cause
they were going to tear it down, and ^{they} ~~done~~

Me: What year did they tear it down? Do you remember?

Him: No, I don't remember that even.

Me: Do you have any experiences about the mules? About the mules that you worked with, underground? The donkeys?

Him: No, just a, with the donkey they, you'd kinda talk to them. I remember we used to carry mints in our pockets, and the donkey would nose in our pockets, for one of them mints, they like mints. So we fed them mints to the donkey.

Me: Oah they liked mints.

Him: Ya they like peppermints

Me: How were the donkeys used, how were they used underground, the donkeys

Him: How they were used?

Me: Ya, what did they do?

Him: Well they pulled the car, that ~~carried~~ hauled the ore out shaft, and then they stood down there for months and years

Him: they had a barn down there, and you had to feed your own ^{include} donkey

Me: So you had your own donkey?

Him: Ya, you had your own donkey when you worked down there. You had to feed them.

Me: What did you do when one of them died?

Him: Well I don't know I'd never had one die. They say when ~~you~~ ^{they} hoisted up I remember they hoisted one up to surface. They say when you get them on surface you had to blindfold them. The sun is too bright for their eyes at first ^{include}

Me: Their eyes changed? (like the Morlocks)

Him: Ya because their mostly in the dark. Because there was no electric lights down underground at that days. There was some lights out shaft ^{put} not inside in the long drifts where they hauled the ore from.

Me: Could you tell us about some
of the things you were talking about
earlier before we started the interview
about the donkey, how you were
kicking around and everything

Him When you loaded a car on a
donkey ya know, I R you over
load it sometimes it spills on
the track, ~~you~~ you get up on
the watch ya call the driver
gets up there my brother
~~gets~~ he was driving, ~~the~~ I
was a breaky on the back so
we got on the car, and he
says come on now Boss or
whatever - was the donkey name
was, gidiup he said, and he
takes a couple of jumps and a
nope he wouldn't go. Try it again
no it wouldn't go. Then we
give him a third ~~time~~ time
and he starts kicking away.
Well then we got the
heck out of the way, so we
got out there and ~~we~~ cleaned

include

Him: the track with the shovels, and the donkey would be listening, so finally after a while you set up on the ear again, and tell them to go, ~~so~~ finally it starts to move a little bit, then it really starts ^{pulling good} ~~pulling good~~, and finally then go out shaft ~~pulling~~ going at a little trot like that.

Me: so were they stubborn, the donkeys?

Him: Aah, their stubborn in a way but their smart. A ~~donkey~~ donkey's smarter than a, their like mules, a donkey and a mule are probably the same thing. A burro is smaller. A mule is a cross between a horse and a burro. The mule is smarter than a horse. A mule will never drink any poisonous water or eat anything poisonous. A horse will, and a mule won't pull an overload a horse will try to pull an overload. A mule won't he'll kick like I said.

Me: so their smarter than horses

Him: Ya that's what I read. I read that
somewhere that their smarter than
horses. Then when they go out
shaft with the mule, my brother
was driving the mule. When
they come out to shaft their
was these rails were turned up
like that, when it get a a
certain point there, he
unhooks the mule like that.

The mule goes on the side automatically
and he jumps off and he holds
onto this chain all the time.

I was in the back riding the
car ~~the~~ alone and it was running
Ahead to this rail, when it hit this
rail it turned a handle. It would
turn over and empty. When emptied
I'd pull it down like that. By
that time the mule had turned
around, and was ready to go in
shaft, my brother hook on to the
end of the car and start going
in, and I would have to jump
in the back

include

OR the car and get inside
the car, and get in front
which I didn't do the first
time. We were going around this
curve like that, and bingo the
front end of this watchcat bounced
up like that and went off the
track, and heck I got tumbled
and I was just getting in. He
yelled to me "Get in the front" I was
just tumbling it there when it went
off the track

Me: Were those cars heavy. Like if
it fell off the track, were you
heavy to put back on did
they weigh alot.

Hi: Oh I forgot what we had. The
mule helped us put it back
on. You had to use bars and
what^{with} not and get it on the
rails. But after that I remembered
to get in^{front} the car.

Me: Well that about does it. Thanks
for your and every thing. I know
more about mining that I did before.
well Thanks
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This is the best information
on early mining that we have
ever had. It can be a terrific -
super story. Please put your
best effort into writing it.