

intro

LISA MAKI

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Interview with Mrs. Linda Lafond

me: I'm Lisa Maki the date of the interview is December 3rd 1993. I'm interviewing Mrs. Linda Lafond purpose of the interview is Red Dust on Iron Mining. Location the interview is her house in Nagaunee Michigan.

Lisa Mahi

interview with Linda Lafond

me: when and where were you born?

Mrs. L.: I was born in Manistique, mi. in 1950

me: what are ~~your~~ the names of your parents?

Mrs. L.: no answer

me: are you currently married if so what is your spouses name?

Mrs. L.: yes I am my husbands name is Leo Lafond

me: what are the names of your children?

Mrs. L.: I have just one Jason

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

Mrs. L.: ~~It~~ It was 3 1/2 years

me: why did you chose to work in the Iron Industry?

Mrs. L.: It was an opportunity to experience a job I had not been in before and to have a higher paying job

me: Please name those relatives who have worked in the Iron Industry?

ms.L: I have a brother ~~who~~<sup>that</sup> is employed with Cleveland ~~company~~<sup>Company</sup> at Empire Mine. Genard Bancroft

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

ms.L: I was employed at Humboldt which is near Republic but it was closed down probably three or four years after I had quit.

me: Over the years what kinds of duties have you performed for C.C.I?

ms.L: I worked in the pelet plant, Humboldt was a pelet plant and so I, in the beginning, I pretty much was trained on trained on everything they had there which is on the ~~mill~~ mill, the kilns, in the mill itself which is where the ore first came in to the building, and then I was, then the last couple years I worked ~~at~~ the mainly worked in the mill itself.

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\* quote

me: I as much detail as possible please describe the main duties of your current job?

ms.L: work in the mill I would change the mills that rotated and they had large steel balls in them that touched the ore, so I would, and to change those you do put the iron balls into them. and then I ran the mill and before that I had filters that would take the water out of the ore after it was crushed. and so I, those had to be changed so I did that.

*in chud*

me: Did this job require any <sup>special</sup> training or higher education? If so please describe it?

ms.L: It required training. The person that I worked with, which was the person who operated the mill, had trained me in being able to run the mill myself if someone didn't show up on the shift or what ever.

*emphasize on the job training*

me: Please describe any special machinery or equipment that you used on the job?

MOL: well also having working in the mill also required, especially on the midnight shift during the winter, when the train cars would come onto the mill and it was way below zero they would freeze up and they wouldn't move. So I'd have to go out and get one of the loaders and ~~there~~ their hook onto it with a bucket along one of the train cars or get behind the whole stream of cars and push to get the cars to go. Because the air and the wheels on the train would freeze up! so that was one of the extra jobs <sup>that</sup> I had to do.

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

MOL: I can't really think of anything that was <sup>really</sup> terrible difficult. Once I was trained on the jobs I really didn't find them difficult, the only part ~~is~~ that I would say was difficult was going to work on mid-night shift.

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

MOL: I like working with the people. I like performing jobs, because they were physical jobs. So you got tired, but it was a different kind of tired →

like

cont.

MUSL: then being working at a desk job. It was just, It was, Humboldt was a nice environment to work in.

me: what are the biggest responsibilities of your job?

MUSL: when I worked in the mill the biggest part of that was to make sure that the mills were charged when they needed to be. Because if they ~~were~~ weren't if they went too long without being charged because "after so many hours of going around and pushing <sup>this</sup> ~~all~~ these balls would they would break up themselves." and so there was less of them in the mill and as the mill turned that's pretty much what kept the mills turning at a certain speed. So if that was, if you didn't pay attention to that and not get them recharged they would stop and then all the ore and whatnot inside would come out and it would really make a big mess. (laughing)

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me: If it ~~apply~~ applies to you, describe the most dangerous situations that you have been in?

Mr. L:

There really wasn't anything that I can think of that was dangerous other than pushing those train cars. I usually preferred to push them from the back string but that didn't always ~~work~~ move them. So some times you did have to hook on with a bucket down the line between a couple of cars which that would about have been probably the only part that I consider dangerous, because I always thought if I couldn't get the bucket on the hook from where I was pushing once the train start or the cars started moving it could drag me down the track.

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me:

Have you been involved in or have you witnessed any accidents? If so please describe them.

Mr. L:

No, I wasn't ever involved in anything at work, but there was one after I had quit work probably four months after. There was a gently man that I had worked with that had trained or had broke me in on when I first started. When the ore would come in from the cars it would come in on belts and sometimes the belts would shift so the dirt would go off onto the floor so it would have to be shoveled up. →

cont.  
MOL:

Because otherwise you'd get this huge pile and so he explained to me one day how to get the belts to go to run back in the proper tracks. And he had said to make sure that I ~~didn't~~ never got my hands around the belts or some ~~other~~ of the older guys that had been there for quite a few years would take dirt and they would throw in and it would cause the belt to shift. And he told me never to do that because ~~it~~ <sup>they</sup> was a special tool that they used to do that and to make sure that I used it because my hand could get caught in the belt. And after I quit about four months I heard that had happened to him and it had pulled his arm off.

include: 2 darts

me:

could you describe either the most unique or perhaps humorous situations you have seen over the years?

MOL:

one of the other guys that I had worked with, there were different things that would happen now and then, but I really can't think of them all right now. But there was one guy that I had worked with and I believe we were on a repair and she was helping someone of the other guys in the balling mill and they were dismantling one of the ~~some~~ part of machinery. and so they had a solvent a big tub of solvent there that they would clean the different parts in and I mean it was ~~just~~ for a few seconds it was funny to see it, but once you realized what had happened it wasn't really all that funny. she had backed up and had fallen in to this that solvent which it burned. she kind of spend a couple days home. (laughing)



me: Please describe your working conditions?

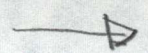
mrol: They were it was good working conditions. There were times when we would be on a repair which they would close or shut everything down and the repair the mules and what ever needed to be repaired. You would get into some situation there that because they would take you off your regular job and put you helping someone else either help the welders or what ever. A couple times I had ~~gotten~~ put with a couple other people cleaning the belts that went from the building ~~out~~ to outside and in that section during the winter time it was really freezing in there, I mean there would be ice on the belts and we would have to go in there and clean the ice off the belts. So that was an area that ~~really~~ didn't look forward to having to be put into.

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me: How have safety standards changed and what improvements do you see are yet to be made?

mrol: I don't think that, I don't really know enough about that one.

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



ms L: I don't think I can answer that one either because they really hadn't changed while I was there. It would only be a guess on my part, I would think probably that there's probably in Tilden and Empire would be more. I don't really know. I would imagine that those areas ~~that~~ I had worked in in Humboldt are more advanced in Tilden and Empire. There's probably some parts that I <sup>probably</sup> had performed at Humboldt that probably don't even need to be done at the plants now.

me: Please describe ~~and~~ what your co-workers are like. Do you remember any special stories that stand out about them?

ms L: They all, I enjoyed working with every one. I can't really think of anything right now, but we all got along and all performed our jobs together real well. There were some of the older guys that I worked with that would come along and if they saw you lifting something heavy they were just that kind of person that they thought they should help you with it or do it for you. ~~and~~ so I had to tell them ~~you~~ explain to them ~~and~~ ~~different~~ times that it was nice of them to do it, but I was capable ~~to do~~ it of doing it. ~~But~~

me: During your career, were you in any special projects or have you implemented any new programs? If so, please describe them.

Mrs L: No, I wasn't.

me: Have you ever won any awards or have you been recognized in any way for your job performance?

Mrs L: No, not really in any ~~special way~~ you know special way.

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

Mrs L: No, I hadn't. I really did like working there and if Cleveland Cliff would go back to hiring again I would like to go back and work for them, because I really did enjoy it.

me: How did it feel to be the first woman hired on the Marquette Iron Range in the early 1970's?

Mrs L: I really didn't give it much thought as far as being, I didn't really think of my self as <sup>(being)</sup> the first, I was just something that did happen because I was hired first as far as →

*pinch  
purple  
green*

cont.  
Mrs. L:

simply went. But I don't know I just I pretty much just focused on the thing that I had I just thought I had a really good job with a really good pay. so that was about it.

me:

Did your co-workers treat you any different because you a woman?

Mrs. L:

Not a majority of them didn't, but there were a few. you could probably count on one hand that didn't really say anything to me, but I did get the feeling that they didn't care much for the women to work in where the men worked. But they really didn't say anything they just wouldn't talk to you.

include  
x  
passable  
people

me:

Did the people in the community treat or act differently towards you because you were a woman miner?

Mrs. L:

they were suprised some of them that didn't know that that's were I had you know was employed and when they found they were really suprised that I was doing what they considered a mans job. and they would ask me to you know what I did there ->

include

cont.  
 MOL: and <sup>when</sup> ~~what~~ I would tell them they would  
 some of them would be "Oh, I would  
 never think of myself doing those  
 jobs." But it was something that was  
 new to them.

me: are you now or have you ever been a  
 member of the Steelworkers Union?

MOL: I was when I was employed there  
 yes.

me: Have you ever experienced being on  
 strike? If so, How many times?

MOL: Yes, and I think the only strike  
 that I was involved in was in  
 1974 because that was the year  
 that I had gotten married. So  
 while we were on ~~the~~ our honeymoon  
 when we left we were on strike, and  
 so my husband and I would ~~call~~  
 make calls home to relatives to find  
 out if E.C.I. had gone back to work  
 and they would tell us no. So we  
 had cut our honeymoon short by  
 two days and decided to return because  
 we thought they probably would be  
 going back, but as it turned out we  
 could have stayed we could have been  
 gone for another week because they  
 hadn't gone <sup>back</sup> to work for another week.

include

me: How does a strike actually begin?

MWSL: There's negotiation between the company and the union that is probably starts ~~six months prior~~ at least six months prior to when the contract runs out. And so as it gets closer to the contract time then the union and the company will kind of let the guys know what is going on as far as negotiations whether there ~~was~~ the company is giving and not giving on what they want. And so if things aren't really settled then on the night that at 12:00 midnight when the contract runs out the union lets the guys know that they haven't really settled anything and what major things that the union would like to have the company agree with. And if there major issues then they let the guys know and they just don't show up for work.

me: How many employees does a strike usually involve?

MWSL: It would involve what ever properties are in operation at that time. When I was employed it involved Empire, Humboldt, and Republic. I don't believe right at that time that Tilden had been built yet or if it was I don't think it was in operation yet. But probably it would be well over a thousand employees.

me: what is the purpose of a picket line and describe what happens there.

MOL: a picket line would be those people that are employed on that property, whether it be Empire, Tilden, ~~and~~ Humboldt. They schedule so many guys or you know personal to show up on the property and they pretty much make sign to let the public know that they are on strike. ~~and~~ Some of the signs would say why they are on strike either because of low wages or benefits or what ever it may be. ~~and~~ Then there also there to make sure that or to try to make sure that people don't cross the picket line or that the company doesn't hire people in to take your place and go to work on the property while your trying to get benefit or wages or what ever.

me: do you know of any interesting stories about an incident on a picket line?

MOL: NO, I really don't because the only strike I was involved in I was really out of town during that time. So I hadn't ever really served any time on a picket line.

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

MOL: There really isn't any that comes to mind.

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

MOL: The union will inform employees what is going on between the union between the talks and the company, what company has agreed to or ~~has agreed to~~ what they haven't agreed to, and they find out from the employees whether they want to if its for a strike to end the strike and go back to work or do they want to stay out longer and try to get if theres major things generally they want to say they want to stay out and wait. But if there things that if there's a strike in a year where its kind of minor issues some times they'll let they'll inform them of this and sometimes they'll tell them well the company will give you extended contracts which as you go back to work and its like things will be settled in a week or two or what ever so we ~~are as well~~ go back to work. So its pretty much these kind of things that the

include



cont  
must: company will inform the employees of and employees will let the union where they stand on the different issues.

me: In your opinion, why is the steel-workers union so important to the steelworkers?

must: I think it is important because it I think it gives the security there to certain extents because the union helps the employees obtain the good benefits or the high wages that if you were employed at an establishment where there isn't the union there to help you on those issues. Unless you are working for a real good company that will give you the good benefits and give you the good wages, but if you employed where that doesn't exist then you do need the union. So it helps them that way and then in other way too that if you have a problem on the job that it is something that can't be settled between you and the boss you can go to a union ~~person~~ personal and they will help you with it, but if it is something that is major they'll what do you call it the assignment ~~beget~~ against each personally. So they help you settle things in that way also

include

msol besides just looking out as far as benefits and wages go.

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

msol: I like reading, right now since I have a sheep dog I am involved in taking him to obedience classes and grooming him every day because he has so much fur he needs to be brushed every day, during November I hunt fox about two weeks with my father, and doing things with Jason, sewing, listening to music.

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

msol: Yes I would, because its I guess because its not in the traditional women's job its something that is total different and for myself I do enjoy physical work so I did like that part of it. I think being employed in what they call a man's job is probably the only place where a woman ~~could~~ can work and get the same benefits and the same pay that a man does.

includes

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

msol: I guess I was kind of impressed at the time I was hired and even at when I think back about it now going into that kind of a job I really didn't know what to expect as far as the job went itself or how I was going to be treated by the company or the people that I was

Ms L cont

working with, I guess they were superior to me they were very fair. I kind of had thoughts when I went into it of maybe being given the menial jobs but I was trained on everything that was in the plant. I was given the dirty jobs and I was given the better jobs. So I guess the fairness I mean I was always treated fairly and equally with the other with the men worked there. ~~and~~ the other women that I worked with were kind after ward that I can't remember any of them I mean we had our little things ~~that~~ I mean one would be put on a job ~~that~~ that maybe shouldn't have been because of seniority because they did go according to seniority. ~~So~~ that was always stratend out. But it was it seems though they hired women with an mind that they had to be fair with us and treat us the same way they did the men and they do.

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

Ms L: Not really other than I did enjoy my 3 1/2 years working there. I liked working with the people and the pay was really good. I didn't really the midnight shifts were something else they were because of rotating shifts and working day, after noons, and midnights I just never did really come used to at the midnight shifts. So that was kind of hard, but I don't know I really

cont  
msk; enjoyed working there and if  
the opportunity ever arose were  
I could return and work for C.I.  
at Tilden or Empire I would take  
the opportunity to do it again.

me: Thanks

Why did she leave?

~~intro - name - space act~~

~~why work - how long - what duties - explain~~

~~special training~~

~~machinery she worked on - biggest responsibility~~

✓ ② Job duties - light blue

✓ ③ special machinery - pink

✓ ④ - big responsibilitys - green

✓ ⑤ dangerous situations - orange

✓ ⑥ working cond. - brown

✓ ⑦ women (miner) - black

✓ ⑧ strike + union rally - dark blue

✓ ⑨ do it all over again + enjoyed about job - yellow

*[Handwritten signature]*