

Kristin Ott  
interview with Ralph Maki

me: when were you born?

Mr. M.: January 29, 1915

me: what were the names of your & parents?

Mr. M.: Emil and Lempi Maki

me: What did your parents do for a living?

Mr. M.: Father - miner mother - Gossard

me: ~~B~~ What are the names of your brothers & sisters?

Mr. M. Brothers - John Richard, \_\_\_\_\_ Sister - Ruth

me: Are you currently married?

Mr. M.: Yes

me: what is your spouse's name?

Mr. M.: mariane <sup>check sp.</sup> Marianne or Marian?

me: What are the names of your children?

Mr. M.: Roland

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

Mr. M.: 39 1/2 years?

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

Mr. M.: Money



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

Mr. M.: A lot of my <sup>by the dozens</sup> cousins all of his brothers &

me: What are the names of the various mines?

Mr. M.: 1st \_\_\_\_\_ Mine, Mather A, Bunker Hills \_\_\_\_\_  
(You'll need to get these names)

me: Over the years what kind of Duties have you performed for C.C.I.?

Mr. M.: Miner & a welder

me: Please describe the details of your job?

Mr. M.: mostly developing rock drift & iron ore & the last ten years I was a welder.

me: Does this job require any special education or higher training?

Mr. M.: mostly just experience at the job

me: Do you have any special equipment or machinery on the job?

Mr. M.: electric shovel operation \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mr. M.: [the charging & blasting part you have to be very careful.] good quote

me: Thinking back what was the most challenging duty you had to perform?



Mr. M.: One time a boy drowned in a pit in Neg.  
And the whole mine shaft had to go & look  
for this guy, I worked 14 mid-night shifts  
there. And they were gonna give up the job because  
the boy wasn't being found. And the last night  
I worked I found his sailor cap And from  
then on they got a diver the next day to go  
down the thirty something feet but the water so  
cold that it would not bring the body up. It  
was a stressful job.

include  
+ quote  
part  
Blue

me: what are the biggest responsibilities on your job?

Mr. M.: That's hard to say work is work [I enjoyed  
work, made good money because of the contract. The  
higher you work the more money you make] <sup>stress</sup> <sup>contract</sup> <sup>mining</sup>  
<sup>harder?</sup>

me: what is the most dangerous situations you have been  
in?

Mr. M.: Safety

me: Have you been in or witnessed any accidents?

Mr. M.: Yes many times

me: Can you describe them for me?

Mr. M.: What they call in a mine a stoupe cave <sup>in</sup> & a  
dog river? it was a-by the way we were down at  
the time-but eventually we got out of there in time

check  
this

me: What did it fill up with?

Mr. M.: Iron ore it was what they call a stoupe <sup>stoupe</sup> & it just caved  
all right in. (3)



me: Did any friends or relatives get hurt in that?

Mr. M: Not in that accident but I had a partner  
a he got killed in the Mother. A mine he got on  
a board? train which he shouldn't have got <sup>check this</sup>  
on and he fell off & he got killed in that  
accident. Just the first time he ever got on

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me: Could you describe the most unique or humorous  
situations you remember?

Mr. M.: laughing We will come back to that

me: Could you please describe the working conditions?

Mr. M.: Well there was <sup>one thing,</sup> one it's work I guess safety wise I am  
a very safety man, Sometimes you forget safety if you  
wanted to make the contract pay?

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me: tell what safety \_\_\_\_\_ & what improvements do you  
see are yet to be made

Mr. M.: They have really really changed the safety ~~stand~~  
standards & once the union is organized they go  
after a lot of safety demands

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



Mr. M.: My job was all underground work and now  
is all open pit. *include*

Me: Please describe what your co-workers are  
like?

Mr. M.: ~~There~~ There were some good ones & there were some  
goofy ones, and there were some bad ones. But  
it seems that the company always wanted to  
break in the young miners so they became miners  
but you never get two good miner together very  
Seldom, they always have to pick on them. A guy  
just started or that's just the way they made miners  
you have to be experienced. I went through  
that too, [*He's describing - on the job training*]

Me: Have you helped start any new programs?

Mr. M.: *include* Fire Prevention, you go to a class to learn things  
about that, A lot of the mines had fires & you  
would learn how to put these fires out

Me: Have you ever gotten any awards or have you  
been recognized in any way for a job performance?

Mr. M.: Not really, I just get paid for my good work  
that's all. We did get ~~an~~ bucket w/ food? in  
in but the pail was cheap we usually just  
threw it away.

Me: At any time have you felt & like changing careers?  
And have you?



Mr. M.: Yes, during the war I changed jobs I <sup>quit</sup> ~~quit~~ the mine  
And had a hard time getting out of the mine because  
the priorities of mining + if you got out of it you  
were put in \_\_\_\_\_

My doctor advised me to get out of the mine  
and so I did. I <sup>quit</sup> ~~quit~~. Thought I could find a  
better job at the \_\_\_\_\_ but all that  
was there was the foundries, I joined the  
<sup>merchant</sup> <sup>marines</sup> ~~mercharines~~. I made 4 trips across the Atlantic  
Ocean which is very treacherous when you have  
400 ships and a <sup>convoy</sup> ~~convoy~~? Our ships were  
full of bombs and if we get hit there that  
would be But ~~is~~ the Lord was with us + we  
finally got recognized as veterans. I got  
back just in time before the big strike.

me: What do you think the future holds for the  
Tilden + the Empire?

Mr. M.: I think it's a good future as far as \_\_\_\_\_

me: What does the future look like for the steel industry  
in general?



Mr. M.: It has been shaky but I think it's been picking up now quite a bit according to the last news I hear anyway. [I belong to the Retired steel workers & we get the news from the unions that things are picking up.] <sup>include</sup>

Me: what do you feel must be done in the future for C.C.I. to remain competitive?

Mr. M.: I think the C.C.I. should start listening to the labor force. Management and Labor once they get along good. I think there gonna make a good go of it. But if they buck each other <sup>include</sup> they've got a lot of problems. And the last few years they've been getting along fairly well.

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

Mr. M.: Well, I think C.C.I. itself now has come along way as getting along with the Union a lot better.

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

Mr. M.: All I can say is that they got a bunch of good workers and I don't know how much more I could add to that. (7)



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

Mr. M.: Well the company has hired a lot of women and <sup>possible quote</sup> my idea is women can do a lot of good work too but I still believe that the women should be home taking care of the kids. I would never let my wife work & we've been unmarried 55 years and the only time she worked at the bakery for 2 1/2 yrs. and my boy went to the navy and that kind of shook her up. But if the man can't support the family & the trouble is you have 2 supporting the family the way the economy is these days.

Me: What skills do the young people of today need to develop if they were to plan to work for C.C.I. someday?

Mr. M.: Well, they should pick up a many diff. skills to go to open pits now they do many diff. jobs there now especially welders should try to go to school ahead of time before you go to C.C.I. But C.C.I. has a program where they train workers too. They give them a job and train them for certain lengths of time. That's one good thing C.C.I. has done <sup>include + quote</sup>



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

Mr. M.: Start dressing like people. Like people of years ago. They had a dressing code here in Ishpeming that was out of this world when I was in school. You didn't go with these big holes in these knees. The dress code has got to come back. Do you believe that?

me: I don't know, I'm not so sure about that one

me: Please describe what you do enjoy in your spare time?

Mr. M.: I've been retired now 18 1/2 yrs. I had to quite the mine at the time I had open-heart surgery way back in 1975 and I had a rough time with it, it was 35 days in the intensive care and I got over it in 1 1/2 yrs. it took me to get better. Then it was 3 yrs. and I had to be operated a second time. They sent me to Mayo because I was such a high risk. I feel like right now I can do anything. I bowl 2 a week & I go down to the Senior center to play cribbage w/ them young ladies. And I do a lot w/ my <sup>great</sup> grandchildren & I got a 5 year old great grandson that I spend a lot of time with.

Condense & include



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

Mr. M: I would, as far as the work I made enough money in the mining game we built our own home the wife and I and I'm satisfied with living comfortably now with a half decent pension which we bought for in our days & but coming back way when the Barnes and Hecker went down. my mother got \$300 weeks of Compensation Computation? And the from the state and the company added \$28 a week which amounted to \$8,000 something for 6 yrs. 1932 that ended my mother had to go to work in the Gossard I had to quit school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, my brother quit in the eighth to go and find some work out in woods to keep her going & but we were still happy people at that time even it was tough going, what gets me I lost an education we just didn't have enough ~~people~~ money to buy a toothbrush even at one time & when my dad worked at the company we were still poor people very poor people

Was his father killed in the Barnes-Hecker tragedy?

include quote

mining got out what

my dad came from <sup>Finland</sup> Finland, and then they promised us jobs when we were 18 yrs. old. But I didn't get a job until I was 21 because the mines were closed. There weren't any other jobs around here. And you have decent money. (10)



Mr. M.: I think I if I would have gotten an education I think I would've been maybe not maybe my life was made this way but I missed that education

me: You didn't get done with highschool?

Mr. M.: No, I didn't even finish highschool we had 2 youngem brothers & sisters my mom went to work & we had to watch them, I had to cook for the boys & do jobs that I could get. It was just tough. And to tell you the truth when I got married I was still so poor we were only working 3 days a week that when we got married you know it costs \$5 I thought the minister was going to give me \$2 back I looked so poor. But Anyway I can say one thing were still were happier people them days then we are still today. There so much stress these days as for a s kids & parents & everybody

include  
& quote

me: What can you tell me about the Barnes and Hecker?

Mr. M.: A well it was a sad sad story about that. I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and ~~now~~ ~~now~~ I come home for dinner we had to walk but there was no school bus in the ~~em~~ days And I was going back to school And the teacher told me that something happened at the Barnes and Hecker mine I said oh my dad works there & she didn't say no more (11)



Mr. M.

Barnes  
Hecker

include & quote parts

When I got home & I had found out then my mother and all her relatives ~~But~~ they were all crying & I said well what happened well the mine caved in I was 11 yrs old at the time the next day we went out there mom took us in the old model T and rode out there & I still remember all those ~~people~~ <sup>2</sup> people there crying and they were really crying there was a lot of widows of course so then things went on and on you could hear in the paper they said well they got a chance to get the men out but I really don't know how to explain this my mother so she worked up on that 5 kids we did get a lot of help from Red cross, Salvation Army, mostly and business management company we got help from there to get started then it was only \$5 for a C.C.I. house at the time of course we got free rent after that but my mother the money she start getting from <sup>compensation</sup> ~~computation~~ she didn't want to live in that house anymore so she bought a house on Cedar Street over there & lived there the rest of my life that's one good thing she did, but she never remarried she lived till 87 yrs. old & she worked 33 years at the Goryard just for us to raise us it was a terrible I didn't think to much ob (12)

It was unusual for a woman to work at that time



Mr. M.

that happened that a man's life was only worth 8,000 something dollars. That's terrible the 2 brothers got an education and one went to college anyway but he worked his way as much as he could. It was a terrible day, my dad was sick that day & my mother didn't want him to go to work that day & he just made it in time but that's life for you & it was a man who spoke very little English he was learning it as he went. I didn't even learn how to speak English till I got into kindergarten. But he was a good father as I can remember he always had one of us kids in his lap and he was very strict and I think that would've made a big difference with all his boys not that we, we were all half decent guys you know. All married and got children so. ~~€~~

Barnes  
Hecker

include

me: Are you now or have you ever been a member of the steelworkers union? (13)



Mr. M.: I've been a member of the steel workers union ever since it started

me: Did you help get it started

Mr. M.: Yes, Yes

me: Have you ever experienced being on Strike?

Mr. M.: Yes

me: How many times?

Mr. M.: Well 1, 2, 3, 3 or 4

me: How long do they usually last?

Mr. M.: Well the just one it had to be 104 days

me: How many employees does a strike usually involve?

Mr. M.: At the time about 2/3 worth of the union.

me: What is the purpose of a picket line & describe what happens there?

Mr. M.: Well the idea is to see <sup>who</sup> we don't want going to work but we have picket lines anyway they get the worst of it in the end anyway



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

Mr. M.

include

<sup>laughs</sup> Yes, well we got the superintendent and the captains  
car over and they were trying to hold it and  
the captain say no no you can't do it but the  
guy went over anyway so and there was another  
incident where one of the I call them scabs  
he was driving a truck that was all armored  
big bumpers on ~~em~~ that were made out of  
steel and everything that came through that  
picket line as fast as that could go he  
could've killed someone of course they used  
tomatoes, eggs, and rocks & everything flying  
& they followed him right to his house that  
time <sup>but</sup> if there would've been one more man or  
two more men that truck would've went ~~right~~  
over an right into the the house too but  
sometimes after I saw little kids in that house  
I'm glad it didn't go. I hate to see the kids  
hurt.

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



Mr. M.: When were on strike (laughing) well the time  
2 of the bosses came over to my house  
and offered me to come to work I says why  
is the strike settled? they said no its not  
settled but the company is offering 10¢ an  
hour more if we all come back to work  
& I said is that signed by the union  
they says no I say well the union's  
looking were looking for 18<sup>1/2</sup> an hour & I  
said when we get the 18<sup>1/2</sup> an hour then  
all come back to work and that's how they  
try to break the union that time the  
boss's go around & make people  
I don't know what it they did at that time.

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

Mr. M.: At the meeting they discuss everything they got  
minutes? read everything's marked down they got  
a Secretary that takes everything down & they  
read out what they did at the last meeting &  
one thing with the union we donate a  
lot to the Salvation army & different  
organization's that need the money.



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

Mr. M.: Better standard of living that's all in the nutshell right there <sup>good quite</sup>

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

Mr. M.: My oldest brother he worked all his well 6 months longer in the mine than I did ~~and~~ now he's in the rest home & he's blind and he got <sup>Alzheimer's</sup> Attimers I think it's work related but he got bad eyes \_\_\_\_\_ & one thing is that I got the best eyes in the family and I have very little cataract started & I will never be bothered w/ that. But I had other problems ~~and~~ and it's but I'm thankful the good lord has done wonders for me & I'm not a really fanatic religious man but I believe in god I went to Sunday school, confirmation, & belong to the Bethel Lutheran church & go to church as much as I can.

Me: Well thank you very much!  
<sup>over</sup>



Concentrate on the "roots"  
he has in mining especially  
that his dad was killed.

Do his children work in the  
mines? This can be an excellent story.

1. underground mining —
2. Barnes and Hecker —
3. stress on job —
4. changing careers —
5. what the mine gave him —
6. strike —



Grandson 32  
Great grandson 12  
Sister - Ruth  
Brothers - Wilho (worked for CCI - 44 yrs.)  
                  John  
                  Richard

Barnes Hecker -

- There was an inquest in 1927.
- All officials were questioned about incident
- No miners questioned
- ~~A~~ Jury decided company not at fault. ~~There was~~ Mine was not a safety hazard.
- "Company wanted to forget incident." Quote  
→ Mr. Maki is still trying to look at records from trial. He feels it needs to be talked about



Mr. Maki - instrumental in helping start <sup>steelworkers</sup> Union. Due to his dad's death in Barnes-Neeker, ~~he~~ he felt people needed more money <sup>to live</sup> on. <sup>more benefits</sup>

The company knew the Steelworkers Union would try to organize ~~up~~ the miners. They tried ~~to~~ <sup>try</sup> the company <sup>tried their own</sup> union. Miners went to first meeting Mr. Elliott - speaker.

So Company organized <sup>their own</sup> union. Miners went to first meeting - Mr. Elliott - speaker. Miners not satisfied

- 1) no bargaining rights
- 2) no vacation
- 3) no pay raises - it was (right after depression - other companies gave raises - not CCI)
- 4) more like a social gathering

AFL-CIO

11 Steelworkers Union ~~gave~~ gave a better standard of living. (Quote)

Today - he belongs to Retiree's Union. They pay dues meet once a month - stay updated on



What's going on with union.  
No voting rights, though.

80 members. - extra  
money they have - they  
give to Salvation Army, etc.

Last contract - <sup>(ccu)</sup> company  
gave retirees nothing. Working  
Miners gave each retired  
miner \$500 from  
their own salary.