

Me: My name is Meredith Lamb. I am interviewing Isaac Palomaki at his home. Today, Mr. Palomaki and I will discuss his year teaching at the Fire Center School as well as his childhood memories of West Ishpeming School.

What is your full name, and when were you born?

Mr. P.: Isaac Palomaki. I was born on May fifth, nineteen eleven.

Me: What year did you start school?

Mr. P.: Let's see, I must have started in 1916

Me: 1916? Describe a typical day at elementary school.

Mr. P.: Oh, that is hard to remember way back there, 85, oh no, 85 years ago! (Laughs) I can't remember too much of the early, cause I started school at North Lake, and then we moved from there to West Ishpeming. We moved in the middle of the year of February, so that's a, I can't remember too much about that. I remember the old school and that's all (Laughs)

Me: Did you have homework?

Mr. P.: No, not any at that time anyway, but during the elementary school it got higher grades <sup>there was no work</sup> then, especially arithmetic, so you had to work your problems out at home.

Me: What did you write with?

Mr. P.: Write with? Pencils, no pens, there were no ball point pens in those days. (Laughs)



Me: What did you write on?

Mr. P: We had paper. Paper that was all furnished<sup>sh</sup> by the school district, so same thing we the pencils. We didn't have to buy anything, stuff like that, until, I can't remember, until I got into high school when you had to provide your own.

Me: What was lunch like?

Mr. P: Lunch was, we always came home for lunch, cause the school was only a couple of ~~but~~ blocks away from home so, we had a one hour for lunch from 12 to 1 o'clock, so Yeah, it was nice to go home

Me: Oh, those were questions about lunch at school, but it wasn't, where were your jackets kept?

Mr. P: In wardrobes. We had, I think there was one wall, 3, three or four. I think there were three wardrobes. One was for <sup>the boys and one was for</sup> the girls, and they had a door that slid open, it rolled up you know and it, you had your ~~clo~~ clothes in there, you'd pull them down. And then the third <sup>quick</sup> one was used for supplies all the time. School supplies, cause there wasn't <sup>too</sup> much space, there was a little bit of a closet, ~~at~~ in the classroom.

Me: Describe recess. How long was <sup>it?</sup>

Mr. P: We had a fifteen minute recess in the morning and afternoon. And at those recess times I used to sneak home with a couple of friends and we'd go home and get some apricots ~~and to~~ <sup>laugh</sup> to snack on. we had



time to do that. Then of course played at recess time always, baseball or something. In the winter time there was a little bit of a hill, we made a bump and we used to ski right at that recess time.

Me: What other games did you play?

Mr. P: That's about the only games that we played, other than the snow battles, in the winter time.

Me: What were your desks like?

Mr. P: Well, the desk part and the seat were screwed to the floor, so they weren't movable. And then the desk had a place to hold your books in there so they weren't hanging around. And the desk and the seat was adjustable to whether you were small or large, you could raise or lower them to your liking.

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Me: How were unruly children handled?

Mr. P: I don't remember too much about that, but I know up in the upper grades already we had the principal. For one of the students he made a paddle out of old lumber and he had that, then if you didn't behave in class you had to go up in class and put out your hand and he'd hit it. And that was a good swat to. (Laughs) And so a lot of them pulled their hand off and that made them all the more (Laughs)

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Me: Describe your clothing. In the winter did you wear many layers?



Mr. P: Well, we tried to do so, we had so much clothing so we wouldn't be cold outdoors, and we did want to peel off everything when we got in the room, we wanted to get out at recess time and . . . you'd just have a little jacket that you put on in the wardrobe, so yeah, and we used to put <sup>all</sup> our mittens and things if they're all wet we put them on a radiator so they dried up.

Me: So did you have lots of layers other than that, your regular clothes?

Mr. P: No, not, your under clothing and then you used to have a woolen shirt and then you used to have a sweater on top of that, and then a jacket on top of that, so and that's the only thing we put in the wardrobe then, so we only had to throw the jacket on to get out.

Me: How did you get to school?

Mr. P: Walked. I lived right on the bottom of the hill here on the other side of this hill, in the corner, and we used to cut across. There were no homes\* here. It was all pine woods and we had a path from there right to the school, so, no transportation of any kind necessary.

Me: How long did it take? Not very long, I guess.

Mr. P: Oh, maybe about five minutes. That's about it.

Me: Describe any special programs the school offered.

\* His West Ishpeming present home and area.



Mr. P: I don't know that we had any special programs that I can recall, other than what we did at Christmas time and at the spring of the year. At Christmas time we always put on a big Christmas play, program that took care of the whole school. That was from Kindergarten through ~~eight~~ eighth grade, so and that was quite a thing. We'd start practicing the play always right after Thanksgiving. That was a good time of the year 'cause we lost a lot of hours practicing and we didn't have to do any school work. (Laughs) And then we had another program in the spring of the year that was for, mostly for 4-H club work, 'cause we put on a play then, and we used to fill the auditorium with parents come and see the program. And then we would look forward to the trip they had a 4-H round-up at Marquette at the, well then it was the Normal School or something, it's now NMU, so and prior to that we got a free treating to the Delft theater for a free movie and then from there we moved to the college and we brought our own lunch along, though when we went there. And that was a whole day spent over there. We looked forward to that

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Me: Yeah, I bet that was fun.



Mr. P: Yeah, it was, and then you know we had the two schools, the ~~the~~ North Lake School and the ~~the~~ West Ishpeming School and the boys at North Lake had their own baseball team, and we had our team, and we would see which one was the winner at the end of the year, then. We played it at the college. *include*

Me: Was there a kindergarten at your school?

Mr. P: Yes, there was, yep.

Me: How big was the school, like how many kids?

Mr. P: We had four classrooms, and we had a library, and in the basement we had a woodshop, and on the other side of the basement we had sewing machines and stuff because the girls did ~~their~~ 4-H work there, sewing garments and things. And then the winners of those won prizes at the school. They were sent to Marquette, to the Marquette County Fair and they were judged there. We used to get prizes up to ~~X~~ first, second, and third prize. I think one was 25 cents, one was 50 cents, the other was 75 cents. But that was big money in those days if you won. (Laughs)

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Me: How many kids do you think went to the school?

Mr. P: Well, I think most of the time all the classrooms were filled. I would say there'd be <sup>pretty</sup> close to twenty-five, between twenty-five and thirty in each classroom. We had the kindergarten and the first grade were on the first floor.



Mr. P: And they went up to the second floor and we had the second and third grade on one side and on the opposite side on the second floor was the fourth and fifth grade. And then downstairs were the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. So, one teacher, the principal, had three grades. So we had four teachers all the time.

Me: Can you remember the name of your first teacher?

Mr. P: I would be trying to think of that and I think it must have been Miss Wallin.

Me: How do you spell that?

Mr. P: I think it's w-a-l-l-i-n.

~~Miss~~  
Me: Miss Wallin?

Mr. P: Yep

Me: Do you remember any of your other teachers' names?

Mr. P: Oh, yes. Then we had, I think the second and third grade was taught by Miss Parson's. The fourth and fifth grade was taught by ~~a~~ Miss Steinbaker.

Me: Do you know how to spell that?

Mr. P: I know it's s-t-e-i-n-b-e-c-k-e-r. And then the principal while I was there was, I had two principals. We had Mr. Larson was the one when I was in sixth grade, and then we had Mr. MacNeal my seventh and eighth grade.



Me: Miss Parson, is it Miss Parsons, or

Mr. P: Yeah, Miss Parson.

Me: Does it have an s at the end?

Mr. P: Pardon?

Me: Does it have an s at the end, or no?

Mr. P: No, Miss Parson

Me: How long was a school day?

Mr. P: From nine 'til twelve and from one 'til four.

Me: Did you ever go on any field trips?

Mr. P: We used to go at the spring of the year and then maybe sometime in early fall, you know, a beautiful day. We ~~used to~~ cut across the Carp River <sup>over</sup> here, and we went in the woods there, and there were a lot of open spaces, we used to have a lot of games over there. I don't think we did much other than games over there, we didn't have field trips as far as classwork is concerned. The only field trips we took for that was in the spring of the year when we were preparing for the 4-H thing in Marquette. We made charts, we took, we made charts on flowers, all the different wildflowers. And then fellas usually took, made all the trees, <sup>all</sup> around, little bit of a piece, maybe 3 or 4 inches long, and we'd cut up into the center or heart of the thing. We glued them on, we sawed!

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Mr. P: a piece off on the end and we glued that piece there, so they could see the rings. Yeah, we used to get a lot of prizes on that stuff,

Me: How were holidays celebrated at school? You mentioned a program.

Mr. P: Yeah, we had the Christmas program, and a program in the spring of the year. They were the only two activities that the whole school took part in.

Me: Do you remember any thing else that you did on Christmas in school?

Mr. P: What do mean?

Me: Did you do any other Christmas activities, or did the school give the kids anything?

Mr. P: Oh, yes the schools always, we got a box of, you know like they <sup>used to</sup> pack ice cream in, those kind of cartons. We got that full of candy, and we got an apple and an orange. That was a big thing. And then at the closing of the school in the spring, we used to have an outdoor picnic, and we had ice cream, we had bananas, and, but otherwise we brought our own lunch, but the treats were on the school always. We used to go up to the, it's where the old West India used to be, called the Ishpeming City Tourist Park. There's a home there now on the hillside. That's where we had our picnics.

Me: What were your teachers like?



Mr. P: We had three women teachers and one man teacher, and he was the principal. They were all good. I never found any fault in any of them. (laughs) I think I was a little <sup>bit</sup> timid, I wasn't one of those that would cause much trouble. So I got along ok.

Me:  
~~Mr. P:~~ But, were they very, quite strict?

Mr. P: Oh yes, they were. You had to toe the mark, You didn't get away with anything. *good grade*

Me: So then there were always three women teachers and one male principal?

Mr. P: Yeah, that's right.

Me: What do you remember about diseases in school?

Mr. P: Well, I suppose there was the regular common cold all the time. I can't remember any really contagious, like chicken pox and there must have been, but I can't recall anything. I know I had chicken pox one time, so then of course measles. Those are about the only ones that. But I can't remember having to close the school on account of any epidemic. I suppose they were individuals and they stayed home. Course, in those days if you got any of those diseases like measles or chicken pox, scarlet fever, the health department would come and put a sign on the wall at home, and you were not supposed to go & mix with anybody while that sign was on until doctor gave orders that you're free now. (Laughs)



Me: Wow, I never knew that.

Mr. P: Yeah, I don't ~~see~~ see that being done at all anymore. You'd know to keep away from any place that had a sign on it, that there's diphtheria or something in there.

Me: So, do you remember ~~anything~~ at all of the flu epidemic of 1918?

Mr. P: I have a faint memory of it. I had friends that had that, that is they were family friends, the two that I can recall, they passed away. That one family, they came over, they used to live in North Lake, they walked all the way from North Lake to our place to visit for the day. And I can remember him, he was chilly all that day when he was home. He was sitting ~~a~~ right by the stove on a woodbox, 'cause he felt chilly. We were supposed to go to another family later on in the afternoon, and I think they did go too. ~~He~~ He went home and took sick and in a couple days he was gone. Yeah, there was an awful lot of deaths ~~at~~ when we had that epidemic.

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Me: Who were the most memorable teachers of West Ishpeming?

Mr. P: Well, I know that Mr. Larson was a very good principal, and so was Mr. MacNeal. And I think all the lady teachers, they were all good teachers. Like I said, I had no complaints, and I guess we learned something over there, so. (Laughs) And that was the main thing.

Me: Tell me about community activities in the school, did you have any of that?



Mr. P: Well, I can't remember of too much community activity, other than Christmas and at the Spring of the year when we had our programs. And I think there were, the school was given up, our church was permitted to keep Sunday school there. I can't remember how many years, but I know we used to go there for Sunday school. And I think it was used by some other parishes, too. Different denominations that were. Is pastor Lamb your dad?

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Me: Yes.

Mr. P: ~~That~~ Very nice fella.

Me: Do you know him?

Mr. P: Oh, yes. I thought you were the daughter.

Me: Where do you know him from?

Mr. P: I've met him at the church. I think the first time I met him, you were there too, you gave a program at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church. I think ~~to~~ that was a Sunday night. You sang, and played the piano, and there was something else. Was it violins?

Me: Yes.

Mr. P: And we sat at the same table for our lunch. That's ~~was~~ where we were introduced to each other and I've known him since then.

Me: How much did a candy bar or pop cost?



Mr. P: A whole nickel, five cents. (laughs)

Me: for both of those?

Mr. P: That is, each was five cents. And that was the same thing for a cone of ice cream in the Summer time. It's far crying what they charge today. You can't get a candy bar for less than seventy-five cents. And I think your pop is someplace up there, too.

Me: What type of hobbies ~~did you do~~ or ~~had~~ handicrafts did you do when you were young?

Mr. P: We had the woodworking shop in school. We made a lot of articles over there that were used at home then. I think I have one in the basement that I made. Must have been sixth grade. Other hobbies, mostly was playing ball in the summer time and in the winter time it was always skiing and skating. I followed those things up until very recently. I just quit skating two years ago. I didn't dare go anymore in case I'd fall down. I have a new hip. I didn't want to fall and break that again. But I still cross country ski. I don't dare go downhill anymore.

Me: My grandpa has a new hip, too.

Mr. P: Yeah, that was quite a thing.

Me: What was church like?

Mr. P: Church? Well, we went to church. I belong to Bethel. We used to walk from here to church, and then in the church the men sat on one side of the church, and the women sat on the other side of the church. We had a big, pot-belly stove in the center. And there were all kinds of big smoke pipes running all along the church sanctuary. Hit the chimney then, so that was really something.



Mr. P: And then we walked to Sunday School until I was old enough to take the car by myself, and then I used to take the kids from around here into the car and go to Sunday school.

Me: How was your family affected by the Depression?

Mr. P: It was rough going. We were a family of six. Four boys and ma + pa. He worked in the mines and they closed them and sometimes for a while they were able to get 2 days a week. Finally they closed completely. And I don't know was that the county, or was that the WPA works by the federal government. He got two days a week. You can imagine what you're gonna feed on that. We used to go, there were three brothers and my dad go for the day up in the woods and cut pulpwood. We were lucky if we made 5 dollars a day with 4 of us working. (laughs) The big part on that was lunch time, mom used to pack a good lunch always, and dad would always share if we didn't have enough, he'd give up his. (laughs) ~~that~~ I think I got a few days of work once in a while. I worked for Ishpeming Township on a weekend, so I guess I got 3 dollars a day for that.

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Me: What was the cost of eggs and bread during this time?

Mr. P: I know they weren't very much. Were they 15 cents? or 10¢ doz. eggs + 15¢ for a loaf of bread.

Me: You mentioned your dad worked at the mine until it closed. Then what was his job after that? Did he not always have a job?

Mr. P: No, until the Depression was over and he got back into the mines and he worked there until he retired.

Me: So, did he have off and on several jobs during the Depression?

Mr. P: No, well we used to go and pick a lot of berries during the Depression, blueberries. And we'd sell the blueberries. Had a warehouse, he used to buy the blueberries. We'd pick a bushel or 2 bushel a day. At first the price of berries, we were getting 7, 8 dollars a bushel, and they start coming down to 15 and 4.

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Mr. P: Then when it got down to about four, it wasn't worth it. Then we went and picked for our own. And then mother preserved the, we used to put up hundreds of quarts of blueberries and strawberries. We used to take ~~up~~<sup>off to go</sup> berry picking. Dad was then working in the mine, and if he had day shift, he would come and get us and there was another fella who had night shift. When he came home in the morning from night shift he took us with his car and brought us South to the Greenwood, South of Ishpeming there. They'd leave us there. We had our lunch and everything. We'd stay there till my dad got home from work after day shift, and he'd come pick us up, so we had from about seven in the morning to about five, six in the evening before we could get home from there.

Me: Did any family members drop out of school?

Mr. P: No.

Me: Did you loose any money in the bank?

Mr. P: We ~~had~~ didn't have any money to put in the bank, so we didn't loose any ~~money~~<sup>thing</sup> in the banks. (laughs)

Me: You attended a different West Ishpeming school, not the one that is there now?

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Mr. P: We had one that was right across, just north of the one there is now. Across I think that's Center St. Right in that corner, the corner of Silver and Center St. was an old wooden structure there. That's where I came when we moved from North Lake. There were mabye just a few months. I can recall ~~to~~ the day we moved our stuff from the old school into the new school. It was really something when I came over here. I started at North Lake and finished over in West Ishpeming.

Me: Was there a fire in that school? Or did they just build a new one?



Mr. P: No, there was no fire. They just built a brand new school that's all. I can't remember of any fire. Course, <sup>there was no fire course we took all our stuff from there</sup> when we moved, so. I remember that North Lake burned down. My wife was teaching there when that burned down. She was teaching up in the copper country in Topiula when that school burned down. So she went through two fires in a school.

Me: Where did your family go shopping for groceries and clothes?

Mr. P: Right in town, we did most of our grocery shopping at Koski Mercantile Company or Rosberg Mercantile Company. And most of our clothing was either from Rosberg's, or Penny store, or <sup>Lowey</sup> Coenstine. Wherever we could get it the cheapest. (laughs)

Me: Did you or other students have any role models?

Mr. P: No, not that I can recall, anyway.

Me: Did you have after-school chores or jobs?

Mr. P: Oh, that was the main thing when school was dismissed in the afternoon. We had our chores to do before we could go out. There were four of us, so I had the chore of filling up the coal stove with coal all the time, another brother carried the wood for the range in the kitchen, and the other one had to split and make the kindling so we could start the fire in the morning. And then we had a chance to go out for a while to have some fun. In the winter time it was skiing all the time. Before supper time came. And that one had to be home for that, otherwise you were in trouble.

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Me: What kind of pranks were pulled on Halloween?

Mr. P: Well, the big one was, in those days there was no sewage or anything. In those days we had the outhouses, so that was the main target most of the time. They were knocked over. Then, of course, if you had any wood piled up outside they would knock that over. We didn't get very much done at our home.

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Mr. P: One time they knocked the wood pile over. And that was really something, my dad used to pile the wood, and he made a perfect pile of it and they knocked it over. Never did find out who did it. That's the only time ~~they~~ that we had any damage done at the home. And we weren't aloud to go<sup>out</sup> anywhere. They didn't want us to get into any trouble.

Me: What year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. P: 1929

Me: That was right about the Depression struck, hey?

Mr. P: Yeah, that was right about the time of the Depression.

Me: How many students were in your graduating class?

Mr. P: 135

Me: Where did you graduate from?

Mr. P: Ishpeming Highschool.

Me: Oh

Mr. P: If you read the Mining Journal, <sup>you'll see</sup> once a month that the class of 1929 meets for lunch. We're still keeping that going. Yeah, we only had five last week when we were there. Yeah, it's nice to get together. ~~You~~ → Ishpeming is great for that. You see so much of that. The different classes having breakfast, or luncheons.

Me: So, after eighth grade you went to Ishpeming Highschool?

Mr. P: That's right. We were bussed from here. The ~~school~~ <sup>township</sup> or the school hired a bussing outfit.

Me: What did you do in your leisure time?

Mr. P: Well, we used to have to work during leisure time at home. We used to have to get the winter's supply of wood.



Mr. P: We used to get them into the car, then we had to saw the wood up, and then we had to split them, and dad did the piling always. He piled the <sup>wood</sup> ~~wood~~. And then we had to sneak in for a swim always. We used to swim in the Carp River, here. And we used to swim in Rock Lake, behind Snyder's drugstore. You can see it from the overpass. That's where we used to do a lot of swimming, too. That was something, on a hot day, the roads had tar on them. The tar would melt. Most of the time we were bare-footed, ~~just~~ just. We just about burned the bottom of our feet, on that hot pavement. <sup>in between here.</sup> Get tar stuck underneath our (feet).

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Me: Were there many drop-outs in high school?

Mr. P: Well, I don't think there were that many. I can't recall any. 'Course we didn't have much contact with the students from Ishpeming. The only time you might notice something is if you had someone in class that dropped out. There weren't that many.

Me: There are some high school questions here, but since you went to Ishpeming, I'm not going to write about that.

Me: What kind of grades did you get in school?

Mr. P: Well, I was average. Some subjects you liked, you'd get a little better grade than some of the others, but I was an average student so.

Me: How would your parents have reacted if you were unruly in school?

Mr. P: Didn't tell 'em, cause we would be in for another one at home. (laughs)

Me: Did the school contact your parents if you were?

Mr. P: It wouldn't do much good if they did because my <sup>folks</sup> ~~parents~~ never spoke English, they were Finnish. <sup>include</sup>



Mr. P: They wouldn't have been any, they wouldn't have been able to communicate very well. (laughs)

Me: So, you spoke Finnish at home and English at school?

Mr. P: That's right, and I had the toughest time. I was the oldest, and I had nothing but Finnish at home, and then go to school and start to learn the English. The others had it a little easier after I got started, so, yeah *quote*

Me: Do you remember ever getting in trouble?

Mr. P: No, I was a good boy. (laughs)

Me: What are your most vivid memories of school?

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Mr. P: Oh - in the grade school it was programs at Christmas and the Spring of the year and in the field trips we took. At Christmas time we had to go out, the fellas, get the Christmas tree for the auditorium. And we always got one so big, I don't know how we used to haul it, kill ourselves trying to drag that tree in. And then you had to chop half of it off so it would fit in the auditorium. One time we got a hold of a horse, and got in to drag the tree for us. (laughs)  
Then, 'course, in high school I can remember the senior class plays. And then, of course, the basketball games. I didn't get to many football games, but I got to basketball games, so.

Me: Did you play in any of those sports?

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Mr. P: No, my folks wouldn't allow me to go out for football, so I did go out for basketball, but my parents forced me to quit that because I had to walk from I shpeming, home, and my supper was always late, so I had to drop out that, so I can remember Coach Watson. He used to come around and ask me to play football, too. He said, "I'll get you all new equipment, shoes, suit and everything." Page 19



Mr. P: I said, "my parents don't," he said "That's enough, I don't want to hear anymore!" and that was the end of it, (laughs)

Me: Who was your favorite teacher?

Mr. P: That would be hard to say. I know I enjoyed the principal at West Ishpeming School, Mr. Larson. He was good. ~~\*~~ And MacNeal was good. ~~\*~~ And then in high school we had Mr. LaClair, and Mr. Seaborg, and Mr. Flaa. Those were good science and biology teachers I enjoyed. I wasn't too fond of chemistry, but (laughs)

Me: What did you do on a date?

Mr. P: We didn't have dates that early. But, we'd get together and go on a weiner roast, or marshmallow roast. (Go to some camp. We had high school times. Yeah, we used to go to that park over there, Ishpeming City Tourist Park. They had a big fire place out there. I don't know how many, there must have been 10 or 12<sup>^</sup>. We were fortunate to be able to get a car sometime, you know, to go ride around. It wasn't easy. We didn't have cars available like the young folks do today. (laughs)

Me: How early were you allowed to start dating?

Mr. P: My parents never said any time for that. I can't think of what other things we did. Course, movie was the big thing on Sunday evenings or Saturday night, so. We used to have to, oh. Before they had laws in Ishpeming they supposed to have movies on Sunday nights. We used to have to go to Negaunee. We used to take the bus from Ishpeming to Negaunee to see the movie. Then, 'course when I got able to drive we were able to go as far as Marquette when we went to the Nordic or the Delft theatre there, so. Those were big times, yep.

Me: What was the most fun you remember having in school?



Mr. P: I can't remember. I have no idea what was the most fun, other than school activities. They were important they were a lot of fun. I can remember they used to have a boys' club at the high school. What was it called? It wasn't the High Y. There was one club in there, and they used to put on a freshmen stag for the incoming freshmen boys. And we had a good time in the gymnasium, having races, and all kinds of exercises in there. That's where ~~they~~ they discovered I could do a little running, so. Then I got on the track team. That was only, I guess, my junior year. We didn't have, there were only a few <sup>fellas</sup> ~~boys~~ who participated. But we went to a UP meet in Houghton, and think I was on the relay team and we took third place in that, and then we had a fella who was a good half-mile, so he took first in that, and then we had a good hefty fella who was able to win ~~the~~ the shot put <sup>for us</sup> and another one that won the javelin through throw. I don't think they allow that javelin throw anymore. I haven't seen any here. That's kind of dangerous, throwing that thing around, especially if there's any people. You have to be isolated somewhere where no one's around, so.

Me: You mentioned the 4-H. Was that a school-connected thing?

Mr. P: No, that's a county affair, sponsored by Michigan State University. I think they still have 4-H club work.

Me: Yes, but you could do things for that during school? In woodshop?

Mr. P: ~~Oh~~ Oh, yes we did that in school. All the collecting leaves and samples of wood and different kinds of soils and that was all done during school, too. We used to get time off and work on these projects, so.

That was the fun part of the spring of the year in school, we missed out on a lot of school work. <sup>include</sup>

Me: So that was a big thing?



Mr. P: Yeah, especially the three upper grades, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, so, yeh. And you know in the grade schools, too. We had a regular graduation for eighth grade students, we had everything. We had valedictorian, salutatorian, giftatorian, prophesy. We had all that. We had the eighth grade from North Lake, and the eighth grade from West Ishpeming. We always had the graduation exercises at North Lake, then and a big program, so. That was really something. I don't know if they have graduation anymore when they get through eighth grade. I don't recall anyway. *include*

Me: No, now we have an eighth grade graduation, but it's not that big.

Mr. P: It's not that big, eh. I think we even had giftatorian when we ~~were~~ <sup>got</sup> through eighth grade, yeah.

Me: Some people get awards and things at our school.

Mr. P: Yeah that's right. They give awards.

Me: How many years did you attend college?

Mr. P: Four.

Me: What courses did you take?

Mr. P: Industrial Arts. And I minored in History and geography.

Me: Where did you go to college, then.

Mr. P: Northern, ah, it was called Northern State Teachers College.

Me: What kind of certificate do you have?

Mr. P: I've got a Bachelor of Science degree *-unusual for his age!*

Me: Did you take any summer classes at all?

Mr. P: Well, I went to a few summer classes that I had to pick up, you know. You couldn't always get them in the regular terms.



Mr. P: If they were offering a summer, I'd go and take one then, so.

Me: How many grades did you teach?

Mr. P: Let's see, I taught first, second, third, fourth, and I think it was seventh and eighth. There was no fifth or sixth grade.

Me: Oh, really?

Mr. P: No, that was a one-room school. You figure I take on Industrial Arts course, and I get stuck in one room, with kids from first through eighth grade, and then when you're working with the kids in the upper grades, you have to try to have some kind of work for the ~~upper~~<sup>lower</sup> grades to keep them busy while you're with the older ones. Well, couple minutes, you'd give them their home work, they'd scribble something on there, "I'm through, what ~~is~~ can I do now?" Ohhh, that was the worst part of the teaching for me, cause I wasn't accustomed to working with, I never did any practice teaching with children of that age, so. The only children I had, but they were at the John D. Pierre school, there was a, all the students did their practice teaching over there. And we had them all the way from Kindergarten through high school. Well, I had a few of the lower grades that used to come for wood working, in the shop. That's where I did my practice teaching.

Me: How many kids did you teach?

Mr. P: I think I must of had about thirty.

Me: In one room?

Mr. P: Yeah.

Me: Describe a typical day at that school.

Mr. P: At the college?

Me: No, when you were teaching.

Mr. P: Well, the children lived about well the farthest one was a couple miles from the school, and about the closest ones were



Mr. P: a mile away. And they had to walk to school in the morning and they had to walk home again. There wasn't much time. And we had recess over there and in the fall and spring it was always baseball. They wanted to play baseball. And I was out there with them all the time. And we had, that was a one room school. One of the boys, he was in seventh grade, his parents were the janitor of the school. He used to have to keep the fire going to keep the place warm in the winter. And then we had just an ordinary pump to pump water, and one time that was outta commission, so we had to get that fixed. And I had my two brothers come over there and they worked on that, while I was teaching, and had to go and get wrenches from two miles away from one of the students' homes, that they had a big enough pipe wrench to be able to work.

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Me: Where was the Fire Center school?

Mr. P: I don't know if you've ever been driving up that way. It's north of Ishpeming. You know where Deer Lake is, that lake. If you keep following that road about ten miles from here I used to travel there with the car everyday from home. During a snowstorm, I tried to get over there. The snow was drifting across the road, I had to close my eyes and press on the accelerator and hope I landed on the other side of the road, and I managed to get through. (Laughs)

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Me: So you said you drove a car, then where did you live? Did you still live here?

Mr. P: No, not at this house, I was on the hill there, cause I wasn't married then, so.

Me: Right. What did the other students do while you were teaching one of the grades?

Mr. P: Well, they were supposed to be studying and doing their work, but ~~you~~ <sup>like I</sup> said ~~from~~ the younger ones, you gotta be with them all the time to



Mr. P: to keep them busy. It's pretty hard to leave them alone.

I used to work at night <sup>at home</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>when I got</sup> everyday to find some kind of work for them to do while I was teaching the other classes, so I used to combine a lot of the subjects in both the third and fourth grade and the same thing with the seventh and eighth grade. There isn't that much difference in subjects, so.

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They had all the supplies in school there. You didn't have to, although I used to buy a lot of magazines for students of that age. They could be studying. There's always good articles in them for them, so.

Me: What subjects were included?

Mr. P: Well, we had history, we had grammar, and arithmetic, geography. And in those days we used to teach orthography, if you know what that is. That's where you learn to pronounce words with the ~~diff~~ different vowels and everything, and how to break up a word. Yeah, that was interesting. And then we had, I taught, agriculture. You had to get to know all the different breeds of ~~cow~~ horses and cows and chickens and hogs and <sup>(cows)</sup>. But they had a nice booklet that was considered science, too, at the same time. And ~~they~~ that was filled with questions <sup>and</sup>, and that was their job to fill ~~them~~ out the answers to all the questions. They had to look up the information.

Me: What were your books and materials like?

Mr. P: We had good materials. We didn't have any kinda leftovers, <sup>quote</sup> I thought that being out in the country that they'd send the leftovers or something from around the others, from North Lake and West Ishpeming. But no, we had good, we never had any trouble getting supplies. Whatever we asked for we got, so.

Me: What happened if you were sick?

Mr. P: Well, fortunately, I didn't miss a day. No, I went down there every day. We had, well now you have a superintendent for the school Page 25



Mr. P: districts. In those days, they didn't have a superintendent. All they had was a principal in the schools, and then the one that was ahead of it all was the Marquette County School Commissioner. And he visited all the schools in the county, and for eighth grade, before you could graduate, you had to take a <sup>include</sup> county exam, <sup>examination</sup>. It was an all-day thing, and that was usually given at the West Ishpeming School. And then if you passed the exam, then you were aloud to graduate, so.

Me: Did you have your own house while you were teaching?

Mr. P: No, no, I was living with my parents.

Me: How did you discipline the kids?

Mr. P: I didn't have any discipline problems. I had about eleven ~~kids~~ children in that classroom, so there wasn't any discipline problem. It was kind of fun for them, they get somebody from the outside to come over there, and when I played baseball and all the games, we came outside ~~at~~ all the time at recess and before school in the morning and noon hour a lot of times, so I didn't have any discipline problem at all.

Me: So, there just weren't any fifth and sixth graders?

Mr. P: No, there weren't any fifth and sixth graders. They're just trouble makers, eh? (laughs)

Me: So there were just one or two in each grade?

Mr. P: Yeah, that's all. I think I had two eighth graders, and two seventh graders, and I think I had one third grader, and two fourth graders, I think I had, was ~~with~~ three first graders, so.

Me: How did the parents react if - oh, I guess you didn't have any discipline problems, so



Mr. P: I think the parents and the children had some problems, but they never brought them up to me. I heard from the side that there were arguments with the parents. I guess someone must have been teasing one of the girls, or something. 'Cause actually, there was only, I think I had three families. There was a Korpi family, and a Maki family, and a Olila family. The kids were from those three families. (laughs)

Me: That must have been something.

Mr. P: Yeh.

Me: Did the school have any extra-curriculars?

Mr. P: No, nothing.

Me: Did you have any duties besides teaching?

Mr. P: No, that's all I had over there, yeh.

Me: What are some of your most vivid memories of teaching?

Mr. P: Well, I really enjoyed working with the children. I enjoyed that part of it. Then of course, teaching 'cause they were so willing to participate; you did have to force them to answer questions. They were always willing to answer, so it's fun when they participated in the recitation. Yeh. I tried to get a school, but there was no openings in schools when I got through at the college. I got through right at the Depression in 1933, and I travelled through out the whole Marquette County, visiting school boards and asking, trying to put my application in for a teaching job. The first question they asked was, "What experience do you have?" I said, "Well, I can't say that I have any, because I'm just out of school." And you know that ~~had~~ they had all kinds of teachers that ~~had~~ were available that had experience already, experienced ones, so a lot of them even lost their jobs.

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Mr. P: Yeah, it wasn't easy 'til I got a job at the, I tried to get into West Ishpeming. I wanted to get to be a principal over here, but there was always somebody ahead. I was single in those days, so those people that got the jobs, they were married, and, so, I struck out every time. So when this was offered over at FireCenter I said, "Oh I'll take it," and I didn't have any work, so. And I got sixty dollars a month, teaching. (laughs) Then if I taught for the whole year and I didn't drop out of there, I got a hundred dollar bonus at the end of the year, so I guess my salary for the year come to about 600 or was it 700 dollars.

Me: Did you eat lunch with the kids?

Mr. P: Yeah, we all ate in the classroom, there. They all had to carry their lunch, and I carried mine.

Me: What other adults were at the school during the day?

Mr. P: There weren't any other adults around, no.

Me: You mentioned a custodian, was he there after?

Mr. P: He come after school was out. They come to clean it up, so. I ~~mentioned~~ <sup>imagine</sup> that student that I had, there in seventh grade, he probably did most of the cleaning there for his mother, 'cause the mother was the one that did the janitorial work.

Me: Did you ever belong to a teachers' union?

Mr. P: No, there ~~was~~ were no unions in those days. It didn't come in until, well they first started getting them when my wife <sup>was</sup> started teaching. They had some kind of teachers' organization in the township, but not around here. We didn't have any unions. I don't think they had any in Ishpeming or anywhere, that I can recall of anyway, so.

Me: Do you have any pictures or memorabilia from any of the schools?

Mr. P: No, I had a group picture of my grade, at the West Ishpeming school, but I don't know where that is now. I think I was going to try to find it, but then I forgot all about it, so. I don't have any pictures of the children I had at the Fire Center School, I wish I had had a



Mr. P: camera. It would have been a nice thing to have.

Me: Yeah. What is the current condition of the Fire Center school, or is it not still standing?

Mr. P: It was dismantled. I think they dismantled that thing in, ah. One other fella came in there, and I graduated with him at the same time from Northern. And when I dropped out, he got the teaching job over there. And I'm not sure if he taught one year or two. So that school was closed in, ah '37 or '38, one or the other. And then somebody bought the building and they tore it down. And the fella that bought the school used the lumber ~~to~~ to build a house, and the house that he build is almost right across the street from where I am now. (laugh) I said, "That's a memorial to me. That's a school building that I used to teach in."

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Me: So it closed in '37 or '38?

Mr. P: Yeh, one or the other, yeh.

Me: What is your special memory of West Ishpeming?

Mr. P: Oooh.

Me: Did anything especially stand out?

Mr. P: No, nothing that I could think of, that was special that really stuck in my mind, so. That's so far back that it's hard to recall anything.

Me: So, do you have any pictures at all of teachers or friends or anything?  
or even you?

Mr. P: I'll go see if I can find anything.

Me: O.K.