

Jeremy Oja's Interview  
with  
William Spencer Felt

This is Jeremy Oja on Dec. 14, 1990 giving an interview to William Spencer Felt at Mr. Felt's house getting the interview.

me: ~~Would mind~~ I randpa would you mind if I give you a brief biographical ~~sketch~~ sketch?

Gramps: No its all right.

me: When and where were you born?

Gramps: I was born in National Mine January 15, 1926.

me: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Gramps: I have 7 sisters and 1 brother.

me: What are their names?

Gramps: (Ha Ha Ha) (um) My oldest sister is Ann, my second ~~oldest~~ oldest is Marian, and thers Carol, Pauline, Christine, ~~Clare~~, Clair, Helen, and my brother Allan ~~x~~ and they all went to National Mine School (Ha Ha Ha)

me: When and whom did you ~~marry~~ marry?

Gramps: Whom first?

me: Doesn't matter.

Gramps: I married Arleen Pearce (uh)(hum) July the 31, ~~1948~~ 1948.

(2)

Me: How many children do you have?

Gramps: I have 3 daughters.

me: What are ~~there~~ their names?

Gramps: ~~with Roberta~~ (ah) Roberta Arleen, Ruth May, and Beth Ann.

Me: When and where were your parents born?

Gramps: My My (Ha Ha) My parents were born also in National Mine. My father was born Dec. 5th, 1899, and my mother was born, when was that ma, July 8th, 1900.

Me: Now we are going to get into the body of the questions.

me: What years did you attend National Mine School?

Gramps: I started school, ~~that~~ National Mine School is Sept. 1930.

Me: Do you remember ~~some~~ of the names of some of your grade school teachers, and what were they like.

Gramps: Put a stop, (cough) (um) some of my grade school teachers were Dorothy Austen Gleason, (um) ~~Ellen~~ Ellen Peterson,

(uh) Fanny Milimax, I ~~do~~ had her I do believe the fourth ~~at~~ and in the fifth year, that's all I can remember of those.

me: OK ~~do~~ do you have any humorous or ~~inter~~ interesting about your grade school teachers?

Gramps: (Ha Ha Ha) No not really. No they were just a good teachers that's all.

Me: Do you remember some of your junior high and high school teachers? ~~Can~~ Could you describe them?

Gramps: Why yes I ~~remem~~ remember my junior high and high school teachers. (um) we had quite a diff quite a few of them. (um) our coach was Patrick & Leason manual training teacher also, let me see now, (um) George Annella was the superintendent he no he was the principle ~~is~~ I'm sorry there, (ah) he taught english ~~and~~ and a different subjects as ~~was~~ Walter Bath was our ~~superintendent~~, (um) ~~he~~ he taught history, ~~we~~ we had an (ah) Bently Griggs I think he was math, and (ah) George Lacombe he was (ah) Geometry teacher (ah) well there was a that's about all I can remember right now.

Me: O.K. Do you have any interesting or humorous stories about them?

Gramps: NO not really humorous but they meant business when we were in school. (ahhh) If we got out of line a little bit they took mostly matters in their own hands, and we didn't dare tell our parents at home because we would get another licker maybe.

Me: (That's interesting) Do you remember what the first day of ~~the~~ school was like.

Gramps: No not quite. They they they claim I hid underneath a table. Maybe I was a little scared. I was only 4 year old

When Gramps: ~~When~~ ~~has~~ had school first wasn't 5 until January

Me: How long was the school day?

Gramps: How long is it today

me: 8 hours

Gramps: it was about 8 hours it was a lot long cause in them days we walked to school and we walked ~~home~~ home, carried our lunch bags.

me: How far was it to ~~the~~ school and back?

Gramps: (um) If I went through the woods it was ~~about~~ about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and if I took the road way like in the winter time it was just about a mile or so

Me: What kind of subjects were taught?

Gramps: Oh the same as what they have now of course you have a little more in different sciences and ~~stuff~~ computers and stuff.

me: What was your favorite subject? ~~History~~ ~~history~~.

Gramps: History (Ha Ha Ha).

me: Why was that your favorite?

Gramps: Well it was the easiest for me but I ~~like~~ liked math. English was my worst subject.

me: Why was that your worst subject?

(5)

Gramps: Well it was bowry (ya) (Ha Ha) ~~Put~~ put it that way.

me: Somewhat ~~but~~ like it is today

Gramps: Ya (Ha Ha Ha Ha)

me: How were you expected to act and behave?

Gramps: In school

me: (ya) yes

Gramps: Well it was ~~was~~ we were suppose to be gentlemen or so I suppose. I don't know. We were suppose to act good if we didn't ~~they'd~~ they'd get after us.

me: (oh) ~~said~~ so it is not like it is today.

Gramps: No the teachers run the school them days I guess the kids run the school these days (Heh Heh)

me: What were the punishments given if you broke the rules?

Gramps

Gramps: I can remember ~~out~~ one ~~time~~ time when I got well a slap maybe, with a ruler, and a hair pull maybe. Sent to the ~~the~~ Superintendent's office or the ~~principals~~ office Principals office they'd help.

me: That happens today too.

6

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me: How did kids dress when you went to school?

Gramps: How did they dress? Well we had overalls and boots (ah) a lot of the boys they'd (ah) come with boots (ah) off the farms and that because they had to milk the cows before they ~~at~~ got to school.

me: Were there any special fads or sayings when you were young?

Gramps: Not that I can remember no nuttin.

me: What music did you listen to?

Gramps: What music did we listen to?

me: Ya

Gramps: Town and country music mostly Rock and Roll that's when Rock n' Roll started them days

me:

Gramps: Well all we had was well basketball was one. (Ah)  
~~Gramps:~~ Made a baseball wea that's about all. We never had very much them days, no track or anything.

me: Which activities did you take part in?

Gramps: Well I tried, I took part in in some baseball and basketball.

me: Did any of the teams win a trophy or a tournament?

Gramps: Of course. It was National Mine School you know. Ya but that was a (oh) I think a (ah) I don't know what the he -- year it was. When ~~guy~~ Guppy Aho and the Kido boys Kido ~~Twins~~ twins were playin they had a good team.

me: What were they playing basketball, base?

Gramps: Basketball thats all they were playing.

me: What effect did this ~~have~~ have on the school?

Gramps: I don't know. It didn't have much effect at all.

me: How did the teams ~~travel~~ travel? How far ~~was~~ was it ~~to~~ to go?

Gramps: We traveled ~~by~~ ~~by~~ by bus. (ah) Let me see the furthest we went we might have went to Minisingy but (ah) we used to go Michigan ~~one~~, Champion, Republic thats about all.

me: What were the text books like?

Gramps: Well they were ~~not~~ well they were the same as they are today. thats all. (Ya)

me: How much homework did you get?

Gramps: (Ha Ha) Don't ask me silly question like that. Used to get a lot of homework but I never took care of it.

Me: What was lunchtime like ~~like~~ like ?

Gramps: you just go in the lunch room it was down ~~at~~ at the end right across from the manual training room today and we would sit and eat then go out and play everybody brown ~~bagged it~~ bagged it. there was ~~no hot lunch~~ very very very little (ah) hot (ah) meals. a couple times a year maybe.

me: When there was a hot meal did it cost anything ?

Gramps: No it was all free.

me: How long was your recess ?

Gramps: (Hm) same as today ?

me: Please describe it, like what you did ?

Gramps: (Ya) Got into mischief mostly (Ha Ha Heh Heh)

me: Did you have any special plays or programs ?

Gramps: Oh (Ya) We had different plays Mrs. Gleason she she had many good plays X-mas plays and thats about it.

me: Can you describe any of them ?

Gramps: (Ya) I was in a couple of them. We had barn dances and just like any ordinary play would be. They don't have nuthin that good anymore, cause the whole ~~high~~ high ~~school~~ school used to take <sup>From the</sup> K-12 grade thats what made ~~so~~ them so good.



(9)

Me: Do you remember any humorous or interesting ~~stupid~~ stories about them?

Gramps: No I don't remember no

me: How long was x-mas vacation?

Gramps: (Ha Ha) (Geez) It's the same as, couple weeks.

me: that was rather long compared to what we have now.

~~Gramps:~~

me: What did you do on X-mas vacation?

Gramps: We didn't do very much ~~stuff~~ ~~to~~ ~~shovel~~ ~~snow~~ shovel snow haul in wood.

me: Nothing fun like today.

Gramps: You aint got no fun today. We were the ones who had the fun go down and play ice skate clear off the pond and we would ice skate ~~the~~ ski ride that's about it.

me: What were the were the rules stricked to follow at home?

Gramps: No When dad said you get the wood you got the wood there you don't it wasn't that strict. You just did what he told you to do

ME: ~~What~~ What were the punishments if you didn't do it?

Groups: (Um) I don't know in other homes but a a we never had much punishment in our house.

ME: Can you describe the graduation ceremony at National Mine?

Groups: Well you just go and get your diploma get (ah) go upon the ~~to~~ stage and the valedictorian and the that they'd give a little speech and they'd give you yours of course it didn't take long because there weren't a many kids in school.

ME: What special memories do you have of graduation?

Groups: (Ha Ha) Of my graduation well its a ~~strange~~ strange affair because I had quite ~~at~~ school and went into during the ~~world~~ WWII and I didn't graduate until after I got out of the navy after the war was over (ah) I was already married I went (ah) to the ~~the~~ Ishpeming to the Ishpeming night school at Ishpeming high school and got my diploma but I got my diploma through the ~~the~~ National-Mine High School. In 1950 and my oldest girl was born in 1950 so thats the (Ha Ha) the more humorous part of ~~my~~ my graduation?

Me: That's interesting. Were you able to maintain <sup>(11)</sup> contacts with childhood friends?

Gramps: (Ah) Yes even today I have lots of good friends around here that.

Me: Do you have any teachers that had a great impact on your life?

Gramps: (Haha Haha) Not really no

Me: ~~Do~~ Do you have any, Did you have any special yearly picnics or outings?

Gramps: any what?

Me: Special yearly picnics or times when you went out?

Gramps: well ya. Back in them days my dad he worked for the Hercules powder company they always had a nice picnic in the fall of the year and (Ah) the different churches had picnics we had our own picnics we would go here or there

Me: Did you ever have any picnics at National Mine at the school?

Gramps: No No picnics no we had parties.

Me: Did any ~~to~~ tragedies occur when you were in school?

Gramps: ~~No~~ No No not that I can remember

(2)

me: What do you think is the biggest change in school since you were a student?

Gramps: I shut it off. He: What is the biggest change in the school. Well the our school has ~~too~~ changed quite a bit being on from K-8 well when I went to the National Mine School it was the full year K-12 and you graduated from that school (ah) there possibly more kids now in one grade than there was in the whole school when I went the whole high school anyway they started off lots kids were quiten in them days to go work so thats it.

me: Thats interesting. What are your fondest memories of National Mine.

Gramps: Of National Mine I was born in National Mine and I guess it's in my blood I ~~but~~ like the little town and I probably will stay here till I go some where else where

me: If you had a message for the students today what would it be

Gramps: Study hard don't be afraid to study hard don't let nobody fool you cause you got to have you got to leave that school you to get out in this world you will need more than just good looks.

me: Is there anything else you would like to add? <sup>(3)</sup>

Gramps: No I guess not that's all you are getting out of me.

me: Thank You for the interview

Gramps: You can ask your mother lots of things

me: O. K.