

Tennie Vertucci's interview

with

Ken Nelson

He: Tennie Vertucci, it's December 8, 1990, I'm interviewing my Grandpa Ken Nelson, it's for my R & D just interview, were doing it at my house in Ishpeming Township. We'll start with a biographical sketch, ^{and} Tell me when and where you were born.

Grandpa: Well, I was born in Ishpeming, April the 2nd 1938.

He: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Grandpa: Yes, I got 4 sisters and 3 brothers.

He: O.K. When and where were your parents born?

Grandpa: Both in Ishpeming.

He: O.K. What years did you go to school at National Mine School?

Grandpa: 1934 to 1946.

He: '46? O.K. Do you remember any names of any grade school teachers?

Grandpa: Yes. There is one that is still living ^{was} Mrs. Hosen, she is a

Mrs. Hagmison ^{right} now.

2. Me: Can you describe what she was like?

Grandpa: She was a first grade teacher.

Me: First Grade?

Grandpa: Very nice person.

Me: Was she? Did you have a favorite teacher?

Grandpa: Well, Pat Gleason, he was the manual arts instructor. And the basketball coach.

Me: O.K. Um, Do you remember any humorous or interesting stories?

Grandpa: Well, I'd have to think on that for a minute, but...

Me: O.K., we can get back to it. Do you remember the names of some of your junior high or high school teachers?

Grandpa: Yes, George Annala and um, well Mrs. Gleason was the music teacher. That would have been Pat's wife.

Me: She plays the piano at some of our concerts.

Grandpa: Yeah. And there was George Annala and there was a Mrs. Oglin. It's kinda hard to remember them. It was a few years ago.

Me: Yeah, yeah. Do you have a favorite teacher?

Grandpa: Well, I'd say Pat Gleason.

Me: Pat Gleason? How come?

Grandpa: Well he was the manual arts instructor and I made a lot of different things. I made a desk that I still have. And he was also the basketball coach.

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Me: Did you play basketball?

Grandpa: Yep. Four years

Me: Was it your favorite sport?

Grandpa: Well, ya Basketball is.

Me: Um, How did you get to school and back home?

Grandpa: Well, when I started school in kindergarten that was the first year that we had a school bus. My two older sisters prior to that, went to school in the winter with a horse and skigh, and a wagon in the summer. The first year that I started school was the first year we had a school bus.

Me: Was it far from your house to school?

Grandpa: Uh, well around the bus route, yes around five miles.

Me: Was it um, what time did you leave for school? What time did you usually start for home?

Grandpa: Quarter after seven in the morning and we got home at four in the afternoon.

Me: Ok. Was there any dresscode?

Grandpa: Uh, they were quite strict with what you wear as long as their clean.

Me: Um, what kinds of subjects were taught?

Grandpa: Well, Everything. Well your regular math, your reading, your writing when you start out. And then Geometry and Algebra

Me: Did you have a favorite?

Grandpa: I really liked Algebra and Geometry.

Me: Algebra?, Um,

Grandpa: I did quite well in that. ^{English} Literature I wasn't too good in. I couldn't get interested in that. I did like American History.

I don't like English that much.

Me: I like History yeah. Was there any fads or sayings that you guys use to do when you were in school?

Grandpa: Well, no not really all that much, kinda a regular heavy schedule. We use to carry our own lunch and eat in the lunchroom.

Me: Yeah, what did people do that. Um, How were expected to behave?

Grandpa: Well, you had to behave with George Hinkley. He was a little rough.

Me: What kind of punishments were given if you didn't behave?

Grandpa: Well, he didn't think much about hitting you on the hand with a ruler or grabbing you by the shirt, he was pretty strict, but a real good teacher.

Me: Um, what kind of extra curricular activities were offered besides basketball?

Grandpa: Well, you know, every year we had these plays, different plays and a Christmas play.

Me: Did you ever participate in any?

Grandpa: Oh, yes. Just about every one of them. I had to tap dance one time.

Me: Tap dance? (laughs) Was that one of the special moments?

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Grandpa: I think so, I enjoyed it.

Me: Did any of your sport teams win a trophy in a tournament?

Grandpa: Oh yeah, yes, and I had the record for a while in the number of points scored in one game. I had 41 points.

Me: O.K. Was there just Christmas plays and programs or were there lots of different programs?

Grandpa: There were always spring plays too. A regular play, and then we had a interschool thing, different sessions and things.

Me: Were there lots of crowds there?

Grandpa: We used to have what they call, Oh I forget what they call it, Orator, or, um, and you could participate, they had that and there was another one but I can't think of it. We had to learn this part and get up and say it in front of the group.

Me: Do you remember any humorous or interesting stories that happened at one of the plays?

Grandpa: Well, no. But one time a part of the scenery just fell down. We would have big ropes that hung from the ceiling and one got loose and fell down. Nobody got hurt though.

Me: What was your like at Carntine, did you go out side and do any thing interesting?

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Grandpa: Oh yeah! In the summer we played baseball and in the winter time we mostly throwed snow balls at each other. I used to get in practice shooting free throws, in the winter time usually.

Me: Did they have courts or in the gym?

Grandpa: Yeah, in the gym

Me: When you go to National Home now does it look a lot different?

Grandpa: Oh, its completely different, oh yes.

Me: When you go for Grandparent's Day or concerts does it bring back lots of memories?

Grandpa: Well, they don't have the auditorium no more, they used to have well where the gym is now they used to have a net across the stage so the ball wouldn't go out into the auditorium. They never had that one room, that's like the lunch room now. They never had that one room, they added on that.

Me: The elementary part, like the newer part wasn't on there was it?
Grandpa: no, no, no - that was put on quite a bit later.

Me: Do you like going back to National Home now?

Grandpa: Oh yeah, I enjoy going out there I go for Grandparent's Day and basket ball.

Me: Yeah, like, what did you use to do after school?

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Grandpa: Well, living on a farm, we had cows and pigs and chickens to take care of. Me, I had a pretty busy schedule. I had to milk 4 cows every morning before I went to school and then when you get home you gotta take care of them at night, then you have mandatory that you do your lessons so, there was no tv. We didn't even have a radio until 1938 and that was run on a charger because we didn't even have electricity and most of the time you were in bed by 9 or 9:30 at night.

Me: Did you have lots of homework to catch up on?

Grandpa: Quite a bit. Yeah, you had a study hall where you could get some of it done but at night you had some.

Me: O.K. Um, you graduated there right?

Grandpa: Yeah. 1946.

Me: Um. Can you describe the graduation ceremony?

Grandpa: Well, there was, it was pretty much all the same, there was a guest speaker and the valedictorian and salutatorian who gave little speeches. I wasn't in that category.

Me: Did you graduate in the top of your class though?

Grandpa: Well, in my class there was only seven and I was in the way. I had 3 above me and 3 below me. I was the only boy.

Me: Were you? Do you remember any special memories at your graduation?

Grandpa: No, I can't say really. Mostly formal, we didn't have the big graduation party afterwards like we do now. One of the things I used to like is when they had dances in the Town Hall after a basketball game. I used to enjoy that.

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Me: Do you like to dance?

Grandpa: yes

Me: Um, Right now are you able to see or do you talk to your childhood friends?

Grandpa: Oh yes, lots of them.

Me: Um, Let's see here. When you used to go to school, all your brothers and sisters went to National Mine right?

Grandpa: Yep, we all graduated from National Mine. I had two sisters older than me and the rest were younger.

Me: Did you ever talk to your brothers and sisters in the school halls?

Grandpa: Once in a while, yeah, yeah. We didn't get that much time between classes.

Me: What did you and your friends do a lot in the summer and after school?

Grandpa: Well, we ~~farmed the garden~~ between the garden, raising potatoes and rutabaga and cutting the hay and taking care of the cattle I used to love to fish. Every spare moment I got, I'd go fishing.

Me: Did you do a lot with your dad?

Grandpa: Oh yeah. Yeah we used to play a lot of horseshoes.

Me: When did you decide that you wanted to become a meat cutter for...

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Grandpa: Well, my dad used to slaughter animals and I got started doing it with him, and at that time there wasn't much going on in the mines or any other work, and I had the opportunity to go to that school and take it up, and now I've done it for 43 years.

Me: Do you always want to live in Ishpeming for all of your life?

Grandpa: Well, that's a hard one to answer, I like Ishpeming. Even though we get a lot of snow, it's still nice.

Me: Um, when the sport teams would win a tournament did the school ever have, like a pep rally?

Grandpa: Oh yes, we used to have pep rallies oh yes, always after a basketball game.

Me: When you go to basketball games now, is it like handled differently?

Grandpa: Well... Basketball is still basketball.

Me: Yeah, but like did you used to have cheerleaders at the games?

Grandpa: ^{Have} What?

Me: Did you used to have cheerleaders?

Grandpa: Yeah, we had cheerleaders, yeah.

Me: Like at halftime, was there anything going on, on the floor at half time?

Grandpa: No, no there wasn't no program.

Me: Or do you have small teams on the basketball team?

Grandpa: Have what?

Me: Did you have a small team or did you have a bigger team?

Grandpa: Well, we had a good team. What do you mean by bigger?

Me: Did you have lots of kids who tried out?

Grandpa: Well, we generally used to have 10 or 12.

Me: Do you still like to watch sports?

Grandpa: Oh, yes.

Me: Did you ever play football?

Grandpa: No, I never had the opportunity to play football, baseball, basketball, ^{baseball} ^{-though.}

Me: Did any of your brothers play basketball?

Grandpa: Basketball, all of them.

Me: What did your sisters do?

Grandpa: Well, they didn't participate in any sports. There wasn't much available for girls in them days. That's kind of a hard one to answer.

Me: Yeah... They helped my mother a lot at home.
So you have two sisters older than you, how many are younger?

Grandpa: Two older and two younger.

Me: How many brothers do you have?

Grandpa: Three.

Me: Three brothers, and they're all younger?

Grandpa: All younger than me.

Me: All younger.

Me: Um, Did you used to ever get into a lot of trouble at school?
y'd and your friends?

Grampa: Not really, No not really, Once in a while, I guess everyone gets into a little mischief once in a while. I wasn't all that bad. We used to go swimming in the summer down in duck pond.

Me: What was your principle like?

Grampa: That was George Annala, he was also a teacher. He was a nice person. If you did what you were to do, he was real good to you.

Me: Um, Like when you go to town now, is it a lot changed from when you went to school?

Grampa: Oh yeah. It's not how the town it used to be.

Me: How did you used to get to town? You used to live out in the country didn't you?

Grampa: Well, you walked, sometimes you walked, but my dad started in the mine in 1936 and he bought a brand new car and then on Saturdays, it was ^{always} shopping day, my mom and dad would go shopping and my dad gave us kids a quarter to go to the show and treat.

Me: A quarter?

Grampa: Yeah. 15 cents to get into the show and 10 cents for a treat.

Me: What did you guys use to do like as a family thing?

Grandpa: Well in the Summers, picnics and blueberry picking. We used to go to Mishkind in Marquette and Champion beach. A few times over the Summer so that you had some eating, ya know. Other than that, we didn't do too much.

Me: Did you have a small house or was it big?

Grandpa: It was kinda, fairly small.

Me: Did you all have to share rooms?

Grandpa: The boys did yeah. There was four bedrooms.

Me: When you used to go to school shopping, did you used to get one outfit or, when you went school shopping, like...

Grandpa: Oh yeah. You got one new pair of pants and shirt and things like that. And as the year rolled on if you needed something, it was gotten. Things weren't all that easy in them days because the money wasn't there.

Me: Did you live at home a long time after you graduated?

Grandpa: No, only 6 months, then I went to the trade school in Flint. I came back and I lived there until I got married in 1950.

Me: How did you meet grandma? How did you meet her, Grandma Lorianne?

Grandpa: Well, I was cutting meat in Vegaville at a market and she used to come in to do a little shopping once in a while for her mother and I guess we got to talking, I asked her on a date ~~with~~

Grandpa: Two years later, we were married.

Me: Does it seem like National Day has been there for 75 years?

Grandpa: No, I can't remember back that far.

Me: Well, because this is its 75th anniversary of National Day.

Grandpa: I know. I'm signed up to go to the party in Marquette.

Me: Do you still have class reunions?

Grandpa: Oh yes, we don't have as many because of the small classes so we try to combine our 3 classes.

Me: At the school plays like were they all, for like a Christmas play, was it strictly religion or did you have Santa Claus?

Grandpa: We had Santa Claus in some programs, a lot of music and singing.

Me: Did you have lots of neighbors that lived around you?

Grandpa: No, we had one neighbor at 1/4 of a mile and our next closest neighbor was a mile away.

Me: I'm gonna ask you something. Do you ever feel sad that some of your friends aren't here anymore?

Grandpa: Well, I miss some of them, in my class there's 2 that have already passed away. Kinda young so... but I still miss my old friends, I still see some and we have a nice little chat.

Me: Well, thank you a lot, I really appreciate it all right.

Grandpa: O.k.