

Emily Hill's Interview

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with
Harold Solka

Hi my name is Emily Hill and I'm interviewing my Uncle Harold Solka. I'm at his house in Deer Lake on December 8, 1990

me: OK, when and where were you born?

Uncle Harold: National Mine, September the 8, 1913.

me: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Uncle Harold: 10

me: 10 of them? What were their names?

Uncle Harold: I'll give you the boys first. There was Martin, George, Edward, Joseph, William, Tom and I. ~~The girls were:~~ (Ha, Ha) The girls were: Anna, Mary, Elizebeth and Ruth.

me: How many of them went to national Mine?

Uncle Harold: Well, they probably all went to National Mine, but I was the only one to graduate.

me: Were you?

Uncle Harold: The first one to graduate. Ruth graduated after me

me: When and who did you marry?

Uncle Harold: Helen Christian of National Mine. She was a year behind me in

Uncle Harold: (continuing) high school, so I guess we were pretty familiar by the time we got married.

me: Do you have any children?

Uncle Harold: 5

me: 5 of them? What were their names?

Uncle Harold: Bruce, Richard, Christine, Lois + Tom

me: Did they go to National Mine School?

Uncle Harold: Nope. They all graduated from Ishpeming High School.

me: Ishpeming? What years did you attend National Mine?

Uncle Harold: Sixth grade through the ~~twelfth~~ 12th

me: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Uncle Harold: Anna Milimaki in the 6th grade, ~~Oscar~~ Oscar Swanson, George Annala, Walter Bath - High School teachers

me: Uh-huh. What were they like?

Uncle Harold: Oh, some were strict, and some were not to strict

me: Lots of fun?

Uncle Harold: (ha ha ha) yah.

me: Do you remember, like, any interesting stories about them?

Uncle Harold: (hesitates) no

me: no? How long was the school day? When did you start?

Uncle Harold: Well, It seems to me It was 9:00am to 12:00pm and 1:00pm to 4:00pm

me: 1 to 4? How did you get to school? Did you have to walk?

Uncle Harold: We walked. It was only a 5 min. walk probably.

me: Do you remember what kind of subjects you had?

Uncle Harold: oh, In high school, Latin, English, Algebra, Physics, Chemistry, ... that's about it

me: What was your favorite one?

Uncle Harold: Chemistry and physics would be.

me: How come?

Uncle Harold: I don't know, It was kind of interesting ... Maybe it was the teacher ... I think he was "kinda" easy going, but interesting

me: That helps, what was your worst subject?

Uncle Harold: Algebra

me: Algebra?

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Uncle Harold: You had to memorize too much,

me: Oh, How did the kids dress, was there a dress code that you had to follow?

Uncle Harold: no

me: no?

Uncle Harold: It was poor times then... you dressed in what ever you had. You wore the same clothes all week I guess.

me: Was there any special sayings that kids used to say or...

Uncle Harold: no

me: no?

Uncle Harold: I can't remember

me: How were kids expected to behave? Was, like, the rules very strict?

Uncle Harold: Well, the rules weren't strict, but, I can remember George Annala, who was principle, he laid down the ~~rules~~ law

me: m-huh

Uncle Harold: He made kids behave... He was a good teacher also.

me: Was he?

Uncle Harold: m-huh, He later went to Ishpeming High School and he was well thought of there.

me: If kids didn't obey, what kind of punishment was there?

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Uncle Harold: ... Well, (ha, ha, ha) I can remember 1 time Mr. Scutt was superintendent, One of our friends came up the school with an old Model T. I and Earl Roberts jumped in and took off in the afternoon and ~~I guess~~ he must ~~of saw us~~ have seen us. I don't know what day it was, but he sent me home for the rest of the week. I didn't have any work to make up, so I thought it was a little vacation. It was in the spring. (ha, ha)

me: Oh... was there any ^{kind of} extra curricular activities?

Uncle Harold: Sports was about all. Basket ball was the main thing ~~about~~ ⁱⁿ National Mine. But I always played football, rough and tough, after school, ~~evenings~~ in the evenings, we used to play down by ~~the~~ the post office behind the billboard - we'd play rag football (ha, ha) passed time playing tackle.

me: Did any of the basket ball teams, like, win any trophies or championships?

Uncle Harold: Yes, we won a few district championships

me: Were you on the basket ball team?

Uncle Harold: Yeah, for... 4 years. ~~Was~~ National Mine won the U. P. Championship in '29.

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me: oh,

Uncle Harold: They went down state. Then the following year I was playing, we lost out to the same team National Mine played, That was Rock and National Mine beat them and we played practically the same team and we almost beat them. That was the last year anyone went to Lower Michigan

me: Oh. How did you get to Lower Mich? Was there ~~the~~ busses

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me: oh, how did you get to Lower mich? Was there
busses to take you?

U. H. No, I believe it was a train.

me: a train?

U. H. Railroads were still running then

me Oh.

U. H. I remember when I graduated I went in the
C. C. 's and we trained at Ft. Brady in the Soo.
and we had to ~~go~~ take a train to get there,
and then after we got through our training, we
were transferred to a C. C. camp, they were
relief camps in those days. We went by train to
Kenton, Mich. which is west of here about 50 miles
It was just like the army days we stopped in
Ishpeming and my sister & her husband were
there to see me off. Times were so tough then
I spent 3 years^{up} there

me: oh

U. H. in the woods, working for a dollar a day

me: were there cheerleaders for your basketball
team?

U. H. yes but I can't remember who.

me: oh. do you remember any cheers they used to
say?

U. H. no

me: no? How was your academic performance?

U.H. Oh I guess I did all right. I was valedictorian
me: were you?

U.H. I fooled around ^{I guess} my grades used to up + down
+ I guess I wasn't very ~~serious~~ didn't try
too hard I guess. So I don't know, I guess
I was just lucky.

me: wh-hub. What was lunch time like, did you
get a very long break?

U.H. I think it was an hour, because we went
home

me: You went home to eat?

U.H. yes

me: there wasn't any hot lunch?

U.H. no

me: no?

U.H. only those kids from green creek, they had
come by a bus in the morning - they had to
stay somewhere so

me: oh. Who was the principle?

U.H. George Annala that's only one I can remember
and Walter Bath was Superintendent +
Grag scutt was a Superintendent.

me: Could you describe George Annala? What
was he like?

U.H. Oh he was real strict you had to pay
attention to school work (ha) there was

U.H. no fooling around with him. He was a good teacher.

me: was he?

U.H. He kept the kids in line too

me: Did the school have any ~~area~~ special picnics that you went to or outings that you went on? Like field trips or something?

U.H. I remember 1 spring I don't know if it was '31 or '32 we planted that National Mine School forest on 581 going out south

me: oh

U.H. _____ but that's about the only thing - nobody had any cars them days there

me yah

U.H. there were some model T's so you couldn't go very far

me: did any of your teachers have an impact on your life?

U.H. no

me: no What was your graduation ceremony like? (I had to repeat this)

U.H. I can't remember ~~anything~~ anything unusual about it & just normal I guess

me: and you were the Valedictorian?

U.H. yah

me: Do you remember anything about that?

U.H. no

me: no

U.H. no

me Do you have any special memories of your graduation?

U.H. oh we used to have a class play every year
I guess that was about the most fun ^{we had in} ~~the~~
High school I guess.

me: Did you have a Prom?

U.H. I can't remember. I wasn't much for that stuff anyway (ha, ha)

me: Do you remember if there was any dances?

U.H. I guess there was, but I wasn't much for that stuff anyway

me: oh Did any tragedies occur while you were in school?

U.H. ... no not that I can think of

me: When did the school burn down?

U.H. oh that was somewhere between 1920 and we moved out to National mine in ~~1925~~ '25 when went to 6th grade that was in the new school. In between there some where. Probably '22, 1922

me: Oh & do you remember anything about that?

U.H. Only thing I remember were living in

U.H. National Mine or in the Location of Ish.
 called Badger Hill - there's no remains of
 it any more we could see a red glare in
 the sky - I don't know how we noticed it and
 we went up on the hill or did we walk out
 there? I can't remember. We saw it
 burning anyway.

me: Were you in school then or ~~was~~ were you
 still going to school then?

U.H. I can't remember see I was going to
 the Salisbury school then

me; oh

U.H. And I don't know what time of the
 year that was

me: Did you ever... Were you able to
 maintain contacts with your friends
 from school?

U.H. not too much because after I graduated
 I went away to the C.C.'s for 3 years, then
 after ~~that~~ ^{I got} through there I worked for the
 state in the DNR for the Fire Division
 in different areas. So I never stayed
 home very much except ~~when~~ in the
 winter time when skiing started then there
 was a group of us ~~that~~ ^{that} skied just about...
 just about every day I guess. It was

U.H. Poor times - there was nothing else to do.

me: Did you buy skis or did you make them?

U.H. Well, tell you ^{I had a} I borrowed a pair of skis and I walked around Cliff's Drive ~~and~~

me: Did you go cross country skiing or down hill?

U.H. ^{it was} jumping mostly

me: jumping

U.H. All jumping. Then I rode Suicide Hill. I believe I was the 1st one from National Mine. (ha)

me: ~~Really?~~ Really?

U.H. And I, yah, Then I entered the tournament 'cause I stood the Hill that time - my skis come up in my face, but I didn't fall so I walked home through Ish. I entered my name in the tournament for ^{there} that weekend I guess ^{and} I borrowed a pair of 2-groove jumping skis from Annal's the older boys had some. They used to have leather back straps but they had a clamp on them. So I rode in the tournament ^{with} on them and I never fell, ^{well} I guess after I the other kids in National Mine there was Edward Manty, Jean Kiskala, Henry Kiskala, and Arthur Heitenin started jumping there to when they seen how easy it was. It was fun so.

me: I like to ski too, but we usually go

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cross country.

U.H. Well, that's, I didn't mind that either Did some of it, but well....

me: We go cross country skiing in gym class to, did you have a gym class?

U.H. no.

me: no?

U.H. Well, I guess they might of had some class then, but basketball was just like a gym class. and we

me: oh

U.H. They practiced that every night, so...

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

U.H. Oh, from what I see + hear + read, I don't know, these kids, they aren't as strict anymore

me: no

U.H. I + looks like are too free I guess.

me: we had different classes ~~there~~ too 'cause we have gym, ^{we have} home ec, we have Art and we have Industrial Arts. Did you have any of those?

U.H. Some of them we had, uh, Industrial Arts. That was fun, you learn how to use tools

me: yah

with We had a ~~po~~ good teacher, ~~then~~ The same man taught basketball so...

me: Do you have any good memories of when you went to National Mine?

U.H. Well, I guess basketball was the main thing in my life and maybe that's what kept me in school.

me: really?

U.H. because no one else in the family graduated me: Did a lot of the kids have to drop out to get jobs?

U.H. Well, there wasn't any jobs in them days, me: There wasn't any?

U.H. No you couldn't ~~get~~ if you didn't no one that it was almost impossible to get a job. The Depression. ~~was~~ It was the worst part of the Depression. In order to get spending money I used to ~~take~~ take my brother-in-law's car + ~~take~~ take half of the basketball team to games away from home so I'd get 5 ^{or so} and split that w/ the owner and that was my spending money.

me: oh Did any of your brothers work... have jobs to get money from?

U.H. Well, they were all, some of them were married, I don't know, if they, and

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U.H. And the ones that weren't married ^{I guess} worked on Relief - there was no jobs to get them days. I remember ~~the~~ ^{when I} 1st year I graduated we went to work out in the woods. We worked 6 days a week. Some days you were lucky if you made a dollar it was on peace work. If you had it hard going and a lot of big trees you didn't make a dollar a day and you had to work hard.

me: Oh. Do you remember what it was like at home during the Depression?

U.H. Oh, it was a little radio to listen to that was about all and . There used to be what you call thum we'd call them sharks they'd be in different parts of National Mine and we'd go to them & play cards at night for a past time.

me: If you could give a message to the students at National Mine today what would it be?

U.H. Well, you have to study so you can go to at least a training school or college for a few years or there's no hope for any jobs with any future in them.

me: yah

U.H. That's the main thing, I guess.

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me: OK. this my last ~~q~~ question. Do you have anything else that you would like to add? That you didn't get to say before?

U.H. Well, we brought up 5 children & 3 of them had good educations. They all had good jobs so that's why it pays to go to school.

me: yah

U.H. The 2 @ that didn't go to college or beyond High School, ~~th~~ they still made out pretty good so I guess it's up to the individual a lot too.

me: yah

U.H. And how they turn out. Was to be in your blood I guess (ha, ha) or ~~th~~ your genes or whatever you call them. From what I can see. Because I wasn't very strict with the kids.

me: Well thank you very much, for having me over & letting me interview you. Stop