FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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This is an interview for the Oral History Course at Suomi College. We're at the Michigan State Police Post in Calumet; it's July 22, 1974, approximately 7:30 P.M. I am Dorias Helgren, a student in the class, and also in the room in Larry Harju, a student in the class. We'd like to interview John Foster. Jack was a security policeman for C & H Security for Calumet and Heckla Mining Company for a number of years until his retirement. Jack, would you start off by telling us a little bit about your background...how you got into security and etc.

Yes, my grandmother landed at Eagle River in Keweenaw County in 1866, a little girl of four years old. She came with her mother twenty-one days across the ocean from England, came down across the St. Mary's, across the Great Lakes into Eagle River. The last boat in the fall, her father was on the dock waiting for her...he worked at the Cliff Mine at that time. He had come two years prior to that to work here.

What did he do at the mine, Jack?

He just was a miner; and he met them at the dock with a horse and sleigh and took them up to the Cliff location and he carried her on his back up over the North American Road up onttop of the cliff where the North Cliff Mine was at that time and the location. The Chippewas were there at that time and my grandmother told me that the squaws used to come and sit and watch her mother cook and she'd give them something to eat and then they'd go back into the woods. The bucks would come and pound on the door and say, "Bushee me ten cents"... they wanted ten cents for fire water; but ten cents was a lot of money in those days so they certainly didn't get too many ten-cent pieces. And my grandmother told me a number of instances of how they climbed up into the loft at night and when the stars were shining they could see the stars through the cracks in the boards. And in the fall when the snow would start to sift down, why the snow would blow through until snow covered the roof. And then in later years they moved down onto the main road where the mine was at that time and, of course, they had a little better housing there and there was a government store and at one time, she told me, the Indians wanted something at the store and the storekeeper wouldn't give them what they wanted and they went back up on the cliff and put on their war paint and the women and children went down into the root cellars and the Indians came down and finally the storekeeper agreed to give them whatever they wanted and they went back; there was no problem. Well, then as the mines
closed in Keweenaw County, the people moved southward into the south end of Keweenaw County and into Houghton County. My grandmother, at that time after my grandfather died, she ran the boarding house at Centennial Mine and that's where she raised me and my sister. I had one sister. So, I was brought up at Centennial Mine Location.

I: Where was this mine? You say your grandfather came down here and worked at a mine...Cliff Mine?

R: Cliff Mine

I: Where was that at?

R: That's right down here...well, next to Phoenix.

I: Right across from Phoenix by the Cliffview Tavern there?

R: Right there, yeah, right across

I: Where did your grandmother come from?

R: England...grandfather and grandmother.

I: Wasn't that a little location there they had across there...wasn't that a little...

R: Oh yes, was quite a number of...

I: ...a little village or whatever they had?

R: Oh yes, Cliff Village.

I: Hanging on the side of the mountain deal...cliff.

R: Right. Well then, Centennial, of course, was an individual mining company at that time like a goodly number of others. Take, for instance, Cliff-Phoenix - Copper Falls and all down through Keweenaw was at that time...why, Calumet and Heckla didn't control. Ahmeek Mine, Mohawk, Wolverine, North Kersarge, South Kersarge and then, of course, Calumet and Heckla had quite a number of mines working in this immediate area here and there were also mines south of here. Well, then back in 1915...that was after the strike...the Calumet and Heckla started to buy up controlling interests in all these areas.

I: When did C & H come into this area?

R: They came in in 1867.

I: '67 they came in

R: Yeah, and by 1923...that was after World War I...they got controlling interests of all these mines. Well prior to that, each individual mine had watchmen of their own...they weren't uniformed...but they carried that silver star, deputized in either Keweenaw or Houghton County, and after the Calumet and Heckla got control, they had a
uniformed police force here of fourteen men plus watchmen at the various mines. Now the watchmen weren't uniformed but they did carry a star; but the uniformed men here locally in Calumet, there were four districts. The Calumet end and then foot troops around the shops, the Heckla and south Heckla end. See, all these mines were working at that time and these officers took care of the mining property plus the locations because the company owned all of these homes. For instance now, South Heckla and Heckla and Calumet... when I retired the men were carrying clocks, the watchman's clock. In those days, they had a better system; they carried a key and they punches in at various places in a locality like you would a fire alarm box... they had a police box and it tabulated in the main office so they had a wonderful system at that time.

I: So they knew when every building was checked
R: That's right.
I: They knew exactly when it was checked.
R: Exactly
I: It would funnel off to one main office
R: Yeah, they had a big clock with five dials in that office, it was a mammoth thing and they still have it. It's going into Coppertown U.S.A. August Beck was the head of security back in those days. Keith Murphy was the Chief of Police; but prior to Mr. Beck's coming to Calumet and Hecla, he was Sheriff of Houghton County and also Marshall of Red Jacket. He came in about 1901 and stayed on until around 1941. Then Keith Murphy took over until 1948, when Sgt. Jack Miller of the Michigan State Police came in here to... he was a Detective Sgt... and we had a copper theft at that time that was... well it involved an awful lot of money all down through Keweenaw County. Some of the suspects were climbing the poles and cutting down copper wire that went down through to the old mines and Sgt. Miller came in here and cracked the case and, of course, he was eligible at that time for retirement from the State Police, so Mr. Peterman offered him a job here and Jack took it and he was put in as head of security.

I: When he came from the State Police, where did he come from...
R: Marquette
I: The Marquette Post
R: He was the headquarters in Marquette. So then he revamped the whole security system here; he put in four districts and put in automobiles. First off we had Ford, Chevrolets and Plymuths, and then we brought in station wagons used also as ambulances. District No. 1 was here in Calumet, the Calumet area, the mines and the locations; District No. 2 was the smelter, where they had the foot troops; District No. 3 was from Lake Linden to Tamarack Mills; and District No. 4 was the mine area. Keweenaw. And he had a free hand at that time and he took on
more men - we had about thirty-one men at that time. I was working on the Keweenaw end when Jack came in, but I had met Jack before because I worked two years at the Marquette Prison as a guard there.

I: What year was that when all this...
R: When Jack came in?
I: Yes
R: 1949, and Jack moved me from Keweenaw end then to Sgt. down at Lake Linden at the Tamarack Mills; and Sgt. William Kurl was on the mine area and Leslie Chapman was Chief of Police...he had charge of this immediate area here in Calumet.

I: How much land did C & H own at that time?
R: Oh, they've got about two hundred and fifty thousand acres in Keweenaw alone, I guess.
I: They must have had the whole north end of the peninsula just about all wrapped up then.
R: Well, that's right and as far south as, well nearly to the Highway Location...Tamarack Mills, and of course they owned a lot of land in the south end of Houghton County towards Red Ridge and Beacon Hill along Timberline and that area and some in Ontonagon County.
I: Keweenaw County was almost exclusive.
R: Yeah, a goodly part of Keweenaw County was between Calumet and Hecla and Copper Range.
I: Did your job require you to go underground?
R: I did at times, just on special occasions when they wanted to get some information on fire protection or taking tours through; but outside of that it was strictly on surface. Of course, at that time I had charge of the fire department too. Jack Miller, unfortunately, came down with TB in 1950-51 and Les Chapman was put in as acting security officer and they moved me up from Lake Linden to act as Chief of Police here and then after Sgt. Miller passed away, why Chapman was put in as Security Officer and I was put in as Chief of Police; and Les then, retired in 1959 and then I was put in as Security Officer and they combined both Security Officer and Chief of Police so I handled both jobs.
I: That's Chief of Police for Security.
R: That's after '59; and I worked on then until I retired, December 31st, 1972.
I: You were Chief of Police for the C & H Security then.
R: Right
I: And you were fire chief for the same C & H Security...that's the fire
that's now Calumet Township.

R: Exactly

I: The one over on Mine Street

R: Right

I: I see. What type of work did you do as a Security Officer, John? Did you guard the mines for theft or what exactly did you do?

R: Yes, we had overall coverage of police work; of course we had a lot of
theft...of course back in those days mine junk, you might say, and
copper was a problem, scrap copper. During World War II, C & H was
buying up scrap copper all over the country and it was coming in in
boxcar loads down at the smelter. And we were unloading it there, of
course that was a big problem. Prior to that, a lot of silver in the
copper came out of the mines here and they had an electric lathe plant
down there at the smelter and for awhile they were taking the silver
out of the copper. And Germany, at that time...this was prior to
World War I, was their big buyer of Copper and over in Germany at that
time they were taking the silver out of the copper and were getting
the copper practically free. But after World War I, of course, they
lost that market and then they had to go out and find new buyers.
But the men down in the plants down there used to pick over the copper.
You could see the silver in the copper and of course this was one
thing that we had to watch for theft of the halfbreeds as they were
known by, a lot of silver, etc. And we did have a number of cases
where some of the employees were caught taking silver and also copper.

I: Well, what did you do with the employee or someone that you caught
stealing copper? Did you arrest them?

R: Oh yes.

I: Were they fired by the company?

R: That was normal procedure. If a man was caught stealing from the
company, he was discharged and, of course, they were taken into court
and fined, of course.

I: Where was your power derived?

R: Pardon?

I: Where was your power derived as far as arrests? Was that just strictly
with C & H?

R: Oh no, we were deputized in Houghton and Keweenaw County

I: From the sheriff at that time.

R: That's right, yeah...yeah we had...

I: So your jurisdiction then reached outside of C & H
See, prior to...let's go way back. The sheriffs at that time, you had a sheriff, an undersheriff, a turnkey who did nothing but stay in and guard the jail, and maybe they had one or two deputies. Well, what type of transportation did they have in those days...a horse and buggy or a train, very few cars. So, to get from Houghton out to the north end of Houghton County, the sheriff had a problem. Now with all these men out here deputized, the first thing he would do was he'd pick up the telephone and call the C & H police and say, "Take care of this for me, will you." Which we did. This saved the county a lot of money.

How strong was your force then?

Well, we had then...well, back in...let's say from 1913 on, we can't count the strike area or era because at that time they deputized hundreds of people around the area.

As far as C & H was concerned, how strong were you?

Well, we could go anywhere and make an arrest.

I mean, how many people?

Oh, we had thirty men...thirty-one men; and this was a big saving to the county.

Right

But, it wasn't a good deal either because we were criticized a lot being company policemen, as we were called. People didn't like the idea of company policemen coming in and making an arrest. I can understand that. So, we talked it over with V. S. Cromer, who was General Manager here in '56, and we had a meeting as the Miscowabic (?) Club...we brought in Mr. Chiles from Lansing, Captain Landigan from Marquette at the District Headquarters, Les Chapman, myself; Mr. Cromer sat down and discussed this with Mr. Chiles and we asked him if it wouldn't be possible that he could set up a Post here in Calumet.

Was that Chiles from Detroit?

He was a Commander out of East Lansing. So, he went back and it wasn't too long we got news that the Post would open up here. So, they looked this building over, it was an old Captains office for No. 16 Shaft and they thought that would be suitable for the Post. Went to work and started here and we had Sgt. Moilanen, the first commander here.

What year was that when it started?

'56...and then Sgt. Perry came in, he wasn't here too long and made a change again and of course then Belanger came.

Well, when the State Police started here, how did that change your work?

That was the best thing in the world. From then on we did a minimum of community service. Prior to that we were doing all of it that is
outside the two villages; of course we worked hand and hand with Laurium and Calumet and I must say that we got along fairly well under the conditions; but we were still criticised, you know. Well after the Post came, why we turned over practically everything then to the State Police.

I: When you arrested someone say on a charge of larceny of copper, maybe you worded it stealing then, I don't know; but where did you bring them? What court did you bring them to?

R: Well, we'd call the prosecutor and inform him of the case; get the okay out of the prosecutor's office and then we took him to the local Justice of the Peace here...Norman Trezise, (?), whoever...old Judge Osborne was over in Laurium years ago, Judge Fisher downtown.

I: Who was prosecutor at that time?

R: Steve Condon's dad back years ago.

I: Was the prosecutor?

R: Steve Condon, Sr., surely.

I: What did you have then for trials them if the fellow plead not-guilty? Did you have trials?

R: Well, them days if it was a felony, of course, it had to go to Circuit Court in Houghton. But Justice Court used to handle most of our cases.

I: Did you have trials in Justice Court?

R: Oh, it wasn't too much of a trial; I mean, the fellow plead guilty or not-guilty. We always had our evidence.

I: Did you have the prosecutor come up and submit the evidence?

R: On some occasions...some occasions if it warranted.

I: Did you ever have a jury trial?

R: Some...some...I've been on a case where they've had a six-man jury.

I: Was that before like Magistrate Rhol or Judge Rhol then, was that before him then? Would he decide the case?

R: That was before Trezise. And it varied, we had drunk and disorderly, things of this nature, the same as you do today. We had squabbles over land, things of that nature. We had suicides. We had a little bit of everything.

I: What kind of fine did these people get?

Oh five dollars...ten dollars and costs.

No in-jail time?
R: Oh yeah, thirty days probably.

I: Where did they serve it?

R: At Houghton...of course we used the Laruium and the Red Jacket jail at that time, you know. You'd lock a man up, you'd lock him in jail overnight and then take him out in the morning and bring him to Justice or if you had a judgement against him, the Sheriff would come out and take him to Houghton.

I: That's the same jail that's in Calumet right now?

R: That's right, in Laurium

I: And the same one that's in Keweenaw, where the sheriff's residence.

R: Exactly.

I: Well how long is that jail that's in Houghton now...that's a fairly new building...the one that the sheriff lives in now; but the old jail was up near the District Court, is that right, or was that the women's section?

R: Well, where the Tax Commission is now is where the jail was and where they're putting up the new District Court is where the Juvenile and the Ladies lock-up was.

I: Well, how long ago was that when they changed that?

R: I don't know just how long that is...not too many years. You'll probably have to ask John...he'll have the records in there on that. But that old jail, gosh that was there for years.

I: Jack, what type of communications did you have? Did you have any radios? Or when did the radios come in?

R: Radios came in when Jack Miller came here. Before that, we had four districts here and had the foot troops around the carpenter shop, they had the Calumet end and the south end...the C & H Police at that time were uniformed and they were riding bicycles and they had men in the machine shop around the clock, 24 hours, every day.

I: Workers you mean or security men?

R: Workers...they worked there and the night shift, they were there for the purpose of driving the fire truck; so they had men there all the time and they acted as a dispatcher. They took all the calls and they had a red light outside the building. If there was a call for police, they'd turn on that red light and then whatever watchman on his beat on a bicycle that would see that red light on, he'd go in there and find out what the complaint was.

I: The one that's just out here...is that the one you're talking about?

R: Yeah, so that's the communication we had. We had the same thing in Lake Linden outside the garage at the smelter we had a red light and they'd take the call there at the smelter because they were there all
the time, and if there was a call for security, they'd turn on the red light and that's the way we got it until we got the radios.

I: Ted, did you have radios in the cars then?
R: Oh yes
I: When the cars came in you had radios in the cars
R: Yes, when the radios came in, boy that was a new deal for us. That was a good deal too because...especially with the area sprawled out the way it was and if you needed somebody to back you up why you got 'em.

I: Did you carry guns?
R: Oh yes, we all had Colt 38's. Prior to that time the boys carried the "Saturday Night Specials" as they were called...32's or 38's, you know, the shiny steeled ones. They had hundreds of them around here during the strike.

I: Those are the guns they called "Strike Breakers".
R: Right and I took...I had quite a collection when I was Chief of Police and Security Officer and I broke down a whole mess of 'em and I got on the tug down at Lake Linden one day and dumped them down in a hundred and ten feet of water.
I: Now they're all on the bottom.
R: A whole suitcase full of 'em.
I: How did you communicate with these people? You know, everybody different dialects and everything.
R: Yes, that was no problem.
I: Was kind of a broken English they'd come across with or...?
R: That's right, but on the force at that time we had men of all nationalities and if you had to converse with somebody that wasn't too clear in English, why you'd send a certain fellow down there to...
I: Predominately what was it at that time?
R: Well, the English came, the Irish, and the...
I: Some French, didn't they?
R: The French settled in Lake Linden, that was the French stowe.
I: Boon Copper talks a lot about the French.
R: Yeah...and of course, we had a lot of the Finns, the Finns kept coming. Of course a lot of them settled on the farms and they'd work the farm in the summer and then things slack up in the fall, they'd still take care of their cattle but they come in and get a job in the mine and
they'd work the mine. And then the Croations came, the Austrians, the Slovaks, and oh we had a little bit of everything here. But people were pretty decent, they got along pretty well.

I: All these houses around here are company houses or they were until a few years ago.

R: They were.

I: Was that your job to patrol the houses that were owned by the company or not?

R: The area you mean around the houses on the location?

I:

R: Oh definitely, sure.

I: What did the company do? Rent the houses to the employees?

R: That's right. I paid...now the house I'm in, I moved in there in August month of 1930. I've never moved since I've been married. Of course I've bought the other half since. I paid $5.50 a month rent when I went there and I think it was $7.50, that's about the highest I paid in rent. And then during the Depression around 1936, '35 or '36, they sold the houses to the people for $5.00 a room. I bought the house...that is the half of house...for $25.00...a five room house. The largest house on Calumet Avenue went for $125.00.

I: What year was that when they sold them?

R: Around...well, during the Depression, around 1935, in that...around that area.

I: Did you handle traffic accidents between cars and horses?

R: Yes we did. We handled them all over the area here. The sheriff would say, "Take care of that for me, will you" and we'd do it.

I: What did you have, a standard accident report form?

R: We had a State form.

I: And that went into the State same as now

R: That's right, we had to send it into the State

I: What kind of violations did you give the people at that time?

R: Oh, whatever it was...failing to stop or failing to yield the right-of-way or whatever it might have been.

I: Did you issue tickets for speeding?

R: Definitely, we had the little ticket books and the warning books. They came from the sheriff's.
I: You were a regular policeman being paid by the company
R: That's right, yeah.
I: What type of complaints did you have the most often? Were they family fights or did you handle everything for...
R: We had a lot of family quarrels...that's one thing we never sent one man alone on, we normally sent two men...theft, juveniles, water problems, land problems...
I: What do you mean by water problems?
R: Well, the company owned the Water Company at that time and well you can imagine how long ago that thing started and the pipes were getting corroded and if you had a hot summer, there was a shortage of water and that we'd have to go around throughout the area here where people were watering the lawns and that and tell them to don't water the lawns or don't water your garden. This was quite a problem in those days. Then, of course, you had a complaint on fires and B & E's, drunk and disorderly, things of this nature. Then when the railroads were running, we had a lot of what you'd say tramps or bums coming into the area and they'd be roaming around. That was another thing you had to kind of watch especially in the nights, you know.
I: What did you arrest them for, being vagrants?
R: Vagrancy
I: Did you have any crimes against people, you know, like assault and battery type things?
R: Oh, we had some. I think we had our share; but there's one thing about it, we were born and raised here and you knew the people, you knew their problems and you didn't push too hard on a lot of these things until you really had to, you know. You knew their father; their mother, their grandfather, their grandmother. Like I said, people were pretty decent; but off and on you'd have a case where you had to do something.
I: Did you ever work on a murder?
R: I, myself, no; I did work on a rape case and I had to go to District Headquarters in Marquette to take a couple down there for lie detector.
I: When was that?
R: That was back in the 50's. I also went with Trooper John Rhul and / John Wheaton to Milwaukee on a theft of copper from the smelter. Worked with the Jumper Squad down there and I found eight hundred pounds of our own copper down there in a warehouse.
I: In Milwaukee?
R: Yes

I: Were any arrests made on that?

R: Yes, there were. Another time we had a fellow that backed a truck into the smelter and took a load of copper to East Kingsford. There was a junk yard down there and Les Chapman and I had to go down. We were lucky on that case because there was a deputy down there at that time working in the junk yard and he called the sheriff when the truck came in and the sheriff said take it but get all the information you can and they called us and we came down, identified our copper, the arrest was made and the fellow served time.

I: Before the State Police got here then, if you had a murder would the C & H Security Police handle it?

R: No, I think we'd call in the sheriff on a case like that. Although I've had suicides and we've called in the sheriff too. Anything like that that we thought would warrant...

I: How did you go about your search and seizure? You know now the rules we have to go by...we have to advise a person of his rights and we have to have search warrants and search and seizure is a real ticklish thing for a policeman now. How did you do that years ago?

R: Well, we had twenty-five hundred dollars worth of copper stolen from Oseola one time and Frank Speeno was on patrol and he went out there and he happened to see a kid hiding behind a bush and we had those big reels of underground cable, oh mammoth cable, you know and Frank got the kid out from behind the bush and he had chunks of this stuff...I don't know - ten-fifteen feet long...cut off of these big reels. And there were four or five juveniles involved in it at that time. So, we had to get the sheriff out on that case and they took the juveniles down to Houghton and locked them up. They wanted to talk to them down there, so I went in that night and one of the kids called me in the cell and told me that they were selling it at a store here, a local store. So, what we did then was call the prosecutor and had to get a search warrant, of course. We had to call out our land man from the Calumet-Hecla that night to get all the information on the premises and, of course, this had to go down on the search warrant; and we had the sheriff and two of his deputies and I think four of ours plus Chapman and myself and a couple of others and we went to the store, the fellow opened up and I read the warrant to him and then the boys went through and we worked for hours that night and we got two truck-loads of copper out of that place...twenty-five hundred dollars worth.

I: That was a lot of money then. Was that all bulk or ingot or how was it?

R: No, that was just big cable. So, we went to Circuit Court on that and he was put on probation, two years probation, with the stipulation that he would pay the company back the twenty-five hundred dollars which he did.

I: When you arrested somebody, did you frisk them for guns or knives or
anything before you.

R: Yes, that was our teaching. You see, I went to East Lansing to school. I graduated from the Brandstedder (?) School there in East Lansing and stayed at Kellogg Center and a lot of my training came from the Headquarters of the State Police Post there. They were in conjunction with Michigan State University. That's where I got my training and I was the only one from up here that got that; but we did go to Marquette on numerous occasions with some of our men and the State Police would give us a schooling there. The FBI did the same thing. I went to Ironwood, I went to Marquette and to Houghton for FBI school and so did our men. And then we had local schools here at our fire hall every year an eight-week course and departments from all over the county would come out. We'd have a prosecutor, different attorneys and the sheriffs and the State Police to conduct these schools. The FBI Agent would come in one night and so we kept up as much as we could under conditions, you know, with schooling.

I: How did the company hire men for security? Did they pick certain men from within the company ranks?

R: Yes, men were chosen...they just didn't take a man because he wanted to...that was talked over between the public relations director, the security officer, the chief-of-police and then he would call in his men and ask them what they knew about this fellow. Of course you'd get his education and run-down. They were more or less chosen.

I: Did they have to have a high school education, can you recall?

R: Not back in those days, no. But in later days after Miller got here, why things got a little stiffer; there was a change all over then.

I: How did you interrogate people? You hear stories where the policemen used to carry night sticks and their blackjacks and if the guy didn't talk, they'd hit him in the head until he did.

R: Yeah, that's true back in the old days. Had a fellow downtown called Paul Speckhar.

I: Phew, we heard about him.

R: Paul was quite a guy. He talked broken English and the kids used to stand on the corner at night under the lamppost spitting on the sidewalk and shooting the breeze and Paul would come along and he'd say, "You live here?" And they'd say, "No," then he'd say, "Move here and take your spitz mit you."

I: Was he Austrian?

R: Yeah

I: He was with the Calumet Police Department.

R: Right, Red Jacket in those days. We had a fellow here called Angelo Banditeini, oh he was a big man...three hundred pound over six feet...
and riding that bicycle he was like a big bear upon that bicycle and he had a special-made bicycle with a special frame; and he thought the world of that bicycle. He'd go down to the machine shop at night and he'd take a piece of kerosene waste and he'd go over every spoke of those wheels. He took care of that bicycle so. And the story is that there was a dance at the Coliseum one night and some young fellows were out taking the wheel off some car so he went over and held a flashlight for them so they could take their wheel off and the next morning had a complaint that somebody stole the wheel off a car. He held the light. There was another story...he was standing on Calumet Avenue and Red Jacket corner one time and a fellow didn't stop there. So he motioned the fellow down, and the fellow stopped and he said, "You gotta stop". And the fellow said, "I'm a physician." And he said, "I don't care if you're goin fishin, you gotta stop".

I: What kind of hours did you work, Jack? Did you work mostly nights or swing-shift or what?

R: I started out on nights, eight-hour shift, of course everybody had eight-hour shifts and they worked around the clock. And then, of course, they rotated their schedules until I became chief-of-police and security officer, then I was on twenty-four hour call. Had a telephone right by the bed then.

I: Did you get called out a lot?

R: Oh yes, very much so. This is heaven now, my wife's real happy

I: How did your wife like that when you didn't come home for meals and get called out in the middle of the night?

R: Well, she was used to it, so..

I: She was understanding.

R: I'd call her as much as I could; but there was times when you couldn't. You were out in an area where there's no phones.

Did the company furnish your uniforms or did you get them from sheriff or...

R: The company went fifty-fifty with the men on their uniforms. They'd buy you a whole uniform and then they'd take so much out of your pay for so many months 'til your half was paid for.

I: What did you have a badge then...or did you have an arm patch that said C & H Security?

R: We had arm patches that said Security Police and a shield and your cap badge, your handcuffs and your billy clubs and your guns and holsters and same brown belts and the works.

I: What kind of payment were we talking about then?

R: Well, let's go back to Pete Murphy. Beyond him I can't tell you, but Pete, I've got one of his stubs home. He got about two hundred and
fifty dollars a month.

I: What year was that?

R: That's back in the early days...oh, let's say the 30's; and when Jack Miller came in, I've got a stub from Jack Miller...five fifty. Now that's from '49 on. Of course he got raised...this is his starting pay of course, he got raised a little bit after that.

I: He got paid monthly then, right?

R: Right. And then when Chapman took over, Chapman got about seven fifty.

I: That was when?

R: That was in the...he retired in '59. That was in the 50's after Miller passed away. Then when I took over, I took over as chief-of-police and security officer and when I retired December 31st of '72, I was making eleven grand.

I: That's not bad.

R: So you see, we came along with the times.

I: How did your pay compare with the miners...was it equal or...?

R: Well, of course, some of those men worked on contract and some worked just daily. I think probably it was something on even with whatever job you were doing at that time. There were so many different rates of pay at that time. A welder got so much, a carpenter got so much and a fellow in the foundry got so much and common laborer was way low, you know.

I: Did you have insurance then or did you get any benefits like retirement or insurance?

R: Yes, the company, of course, had retirements for salaried people. You see, the police were on salary in later years. On day rate, of course you had your aid fund that took care of and they had insurance, of course, and compensation and things of that nature; but then when you got on salary why they had a retirement fund that you paid into so much a month and I took out one in '42 and I took out another in '52, so when I retired I had two retirements which has certainly paid off.

I: Paying off now.

R: You bet

I: They give you a percentage-type retirement?

R: Yes, that's right.

I: What did you do in the wintertime when there was so much snow? Did that restrict your police work? How did that work out?

R: No, it's kind of odd but with all the snow we have in this country,
there's hardly a day that you wouldn't roll unless visibility got so bad that you had to pull in. But our patrols went right on.

I: How about the men on bikes?
R: Well, then they were on foot in the wintertime...they'd have some big big coats.

I: Did you work alone at night?
R: It started out that way, yes; and that was one thing that we were always a little leary about, a man working alone but the company could never see fit to put two men in a car and that's the way it ended.

I: Did you ever have an officer get beat up or assaulted?
R: Well, we had some that got in fights, but I don't think they were hurt too much.

I: Did they lock all the buildings at night...did you have to go check for open doors?
R: That's right and of course some buildings where you had attendants where they were working twenty-four hours, around the clock.

End of Side 1

I: We were talking about the wintertime and the fires and that. In other words you were saying that you were not only a policeman, you were the township policeman, you were the local policeman and you were the fireman too.

R: Yes, outside the villages, that's right.
I: And you watched for fires besides.
R: Exactly
I: Did you go into the village and work at all or did you assist the village police?
R: Oh yes, we worked in conjunction with them a lot especially on robberies because we knew the people.
I: They would call for your assistance
R: That's right
I: How many policemen did the village have then?
R: Oh four or five men.
I: But the company didn't have a jail.
R: No
I: You used the village jail all the time.

R: Our first police headquarters was up here on Mine Street right by the (?) House, back in the strike days from then on and that's when they were going around on bicycles. Then during the Depression they tore that down and moved down in the basement of the swimming pool building right down here on 41 and 26. They moved in the basement there first and then when Jack Miller came in, why...and revamped the whole system, they moved up in the front. That...of course the pool was closed then, the bath house; but the building was turned into research also and Goodman Lumber Company in later years.

I: When did you move over to the building that the Security Office was in when they closed down here?

R: That's when Miller came.

I: That's where the building is over here?

R: Yeah

I: On Red Jacket Road and 41 then.

R: Oh that, you mean in the main office?

I: The main office.

R: Oh, I moved there back in...well when I was security officer after Les Chapman...I would say around 1962. Burt Stock (?) was head of Community Welfare and Employees Relations and he wanted Security up in the main office close to him and they moved me there in the basement then.

I: Is that office still there now as a Security office or has that been changed now?

R: I threw the key away.

I: That's all through now.

R: There isn't any.

I: Well, what brought the change to the present time where there's no Security no more? Was that after the strike when they closed down?

R: The strike started May 10th, 1968, down at the Kingston Mine. They had a grievance there and they walked out.

I: What was that grievance, do you remember?

R: On the bell signals on the skip lowering the men...that was their grievance. And they stayed out on strike until August the 21th when the Union contract was up and then the whole thing went out. That's when the strike was legally started; and we had some problems during the strike...broken windows - oh a lot of broken windows, damage to
some of the buildings, and they were putting pieces of iron and steel in the switches in the railroad, breaking the switch locks, things of this nature...and of course we had a problem because the supervisory was trying to go into the plants, they were trying to keep some of the plants going, the things that had to be...power plants and boiler houses and such...and we had problems then with picket lines. So, that was the start of the downfall of the whole thing and of course as time went on they layed off my uniform force, I wasn't too happy about that and then they put some of the supervisory on security around the area. Some on the cars, some in each individual building where they thought it was necessary and then as time went on they started to lay off the supervisory and before you knew it I was down to four men and then three and then two and then finally myself and then I retired. That was the end.

I: During the strike that started in '68, how did you get along being that you worked for the company and being that you were a sheriff deputy, how did you get along between the company and the people in the town and the union and that?

R: I never had any problem. You treat people like you want to be treated yourself. With all my years in police work I certainly had to say that I got along with the people. You did a job when you had to and that's it.

I: How about the conflicting animosity coming in from people who figured that you're working for the company, you know, and naturally the company is the one that supplies the money and the people up here right away they figure that you're a no good, you know.

R: Yeah, I've heard it said a lot of times that I was one of the official family, you know. Some people resented it, some didn't. Down through the years most of the people here felt that they got their living here and back in those days when the company owned the houses, they came around and painted the houses, if you needed your screen door fixed you went down to the carpenter shop; they gave you your calcamine in those days to calcamine your rooms or if you wanted your walls papered, you went down and picked out your paper...

I: Company store or...

R: No, you went downtown and picked out your paper in certain business houses that the company said go here, go there; and they had a terrific crew of men going around painting and papering so they were taking care of the houses, the repair work. And then back in those days, back in the thirties or the late twenties, they started putting bathrooms in the houses, things of this nature; so I think the majority of the people felt that they were earning their living here and this is what they were happy with so they were satisfied.

I: What do you think brought about so much of the animosity from the people towards the company? Why did they hate the company?

R: Well, I think that started over wages and things of this nature. Probably as time went on, people were getting more educated. Our kids today wouldn't stand for those things, you know, as they went years ago.
I: Do you feel that the company wasn't fair in any of these ways?

R: I think in a lot of cases...not the company...some of the bosses. I don't think the company was at fault because Mr. McNaughton (?)...back in those days he was God here...and if you had a complaint and went to him, I'll tell you he straightened it out. But I think in lots of cases the bosses were at fault.

I: Differences among the supervisors

R: That's right. They had their little cliques, you know.

I: Did you end up settling disputes in the mines between the worker and his boss or something like that? Were you called in on those?

R: Not in the mines, no. Not anything inside a shop or in the mine. That was up to the main office, public relations and the bosses, of course.

I: Can you recall when they had a policeman on every street in Calumet? When was that?

R: That was during the strike, probably

I: Yeah, we've heard stories that there was a policeman on every street.

R: Oh yeah, we had hundreds of deputies around here. I can remember my grandfather coming home and taking that old Saturday-night special and putting it up on top of the cupboard so we couldn't reach it. The Wadell men that were brought in from New York down at Centennial used to come around on a big white horse and the first thing in the morning and the men would fall in behind him and he'd take them off to the mine.

I: They worked for the company then.

R: They were brought in as strike breakers and I can remember that was the first time we had electric lights down at Centennial during the strike...I mean on the streets. They put in some lights.

I: For security?

R: For security purposes, sure. Because when we got off of that street car at night, we used to run for home because while we got a little light from the streetcar going by, you know, we'd run because you're liable to bump into a crowd, we didn't know. That's right.

I: Did you graduate from high school here in Calumet?

R: Yeah

I: And what did you do after and before you got into Security?

R: I worked at the Michigan Hotel

I: Is that the Michigan House now?
Un hum...and the Calumet Theatre.

What did you do at both places?

I was day clerk at the hotel and I was taking tickets and ushering at the theatre in the night.

That was live theatre then.

Some...oh yeah, we had stock companies coming in...Winger Brothers and Uncle Tom's Cabin and George White Scandals, things of that nature.

Have you been in it since it's been remodeled?

Oh yeah

Is it pretty much the way it used to be?

Yes, very much so. They've got some more things to do there yet, the brass rings...

They're missing the big chandelier...

Yeah, that's fabulous though. And then from the hotel I went to C & H and I started in the round house firing a locomotive.

For the company you mean?

That's right. They had eighteen locomotives, thirteen crews going at one time. Boy things were booming then in the 20's.

Where would you ship...where would you train these things?

From the mine to the mills. Well then I did a little running too, but when the steamers went out I didn't want anything to do with the diesels, so that's when I went in security work.

We spend a lot of time report writing, probably on an average of an hour or two a day typing reports and typing reports and there's more reports than you can imagine in arrest reports. What did you do way back when you arrested somebody...did you have to make reports or did you keep some sort of a log or how did you handle that?

Prior to my time they had very little reports, very little; and then when Jack Miller came, of course Jack brought in a lot of the State Police work, you know, he made up forms and had them printed up. Something on the order...and we kept a file on all our complaints and that's when we really started to make reports.

Were these all hand written or were they typed?

Oh no, typed.

They were all typed?

Yeah. If you brought in a hand written report, why the clerk in the
office would type them out, you know. See we had a girl in the office for awhile when I was Security Chief there.

I: And she'd type reports for you?

R: Yeah, answer the radio, telephone...see, I took over Chapman's job and my own, so usually when Chapman was out I'd be in or vice versa; but then when he left I was out a lot so we had to have somebody in the office.

I: What kind of radio frequency were you on...the Sheriff Department in Houghton?

R: No, we had our own.

I: It was your own within the Security...you weren't hooked in with the sheriff at all.

R: No...I think we were on 52.49...that's kind of high but it wasn't a citizen's band, we were on our own. Then they hooked in the locomotives on us too so that we could talk with the trains. That was a good deal because there were a lot of things along the railroad tracks, you know, that we had to check in on.

I: Nowadays we go down the street and we get called a pig. Did you have that problem when you were there walking a beat?

R: No! I can remember when I went to high school, a football game down at Agassiz Park and we had an old fellow called Kerr. He had the shakes but he was in uniform and they always carried an iron cane. And you know how kids will creap up on the line, you know, and things were getting exciting and he'd come along with that cane and boy when you seen him coming, boy you'd respect him. I'd see him coming down the railroad track back of the house there and I'd run. I think kids, they were either afraid or they respected a policeman years ago.

I: Now they don't.

R: That's right.

I: Do you think people had more respect for other people's property years ago than they do now? Now they don't seem to care.

R: I think so. Of course way back in those days everybody had a fence around their property. There were fences all the way down the streets, you know, each individual family had a fence.

I: How many homes were locked?

R: Very few...very few; but I think people respected each other. Good neighbors...if anyone was sick in the block, all the neighbors were there. If there was death in the block, all the neighbors were there. It didn't matter what nationality you were.

I: Can you think of any outstanding type of police activity that you were
involved in at all then...at all during...whether it be hilarious or tragic or whatever?

R: Well, I had one suicide I thought was kind of tragic. I got a call about five o'clock one afternoon and went down to this home and the garage was closed and went in and the fellow was sitting in the car and the key was on and the gas tank was empty and was an empty fifth on the side of him. Very nice fellow. I guess one of the kids, the neighbor's kids had just opened the door of the garage and saw him sitting in the car. The interesting part of my police work I thought was when I went to Milwaukee and worked with the jumper (?) squad down there. When I went to school at Lansing, I was the only one from the Upper Peninsula. We had a class of thirty-five. Our instructors were terrific, some from New York City, Detroit, Flint, Los Angeles on the West Coast and Jack Foster, of course, from East Lansing. I called one day and said...Francisco and Hodges were down there and I wanted to take them out to dinner one night and I called up and he said, "This is Sgt. Jack Foster," I said, "Well, this is Chief Jack Foster from Calumet." He said, "Are you kidding." But...

I: What type of school was that, Jack? Was it just a school for policemen for different cities or from anywhere?

R: Oh yeah, we had policemen from Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, all over...St. Joe...some detectives. It was a very good school; but I was gonna say that I couldn't go home on weekends, I was the only one from the Upper Peninsula, and all the other guys on a Friday night would take off for home and come back Monday morning. Well, I was stuck there so I worked with the campus police on the weekends. I worked the hockey games, the basketball games and I took the drunk-o-meter test there for two weekends.

I: What was that?

R: Well, they put you in a room and put some potato chips and some popcorn on the table and give you a deck of cards and three or four of you would play cards and then they'd come in and give you a drink...they were measuring this all the time, you know...of course first they'd take your weight and age and all that because with different people it worked differently and then you'd play cards for awhile and shoot the breeze and then they'd come in and give you another drink and they'd take you out then and run you through a series of tests, written, oral, etc. Then they'd bring you back in and run you through the same thing again...play cards for awhile or talk or do whatever you wanted and they'd keep feeding you these drinks and run you back through these tests then again.

I: What kind of a test did they give you to determine how drunk you were then...the exercise test or did they have a breathalyzer like we have?

Yeah, they had breathalizers and different things out there too. This was the lab there at East Lansing.

I: Do you remember that balloon/where you had to blow up a balloon?

R: I know we blew into some machine there...I can't tell you now exactly.
I: Were they testing you more on just observation to see how your reactions would change...

R: And blood tests and so forth

I: As far as the breathalyzer test?

R: Un hum...there was a fellow there at the lab called Kibbel who was formerly from here...he's still there, isn't he?

I: Yeah, he's our chemist now, isn't he. Do you remember the period of time when the lumberjacks would stay out all winter and then they'd come in in the spring and they'd all come in town at one time and kind of raise hell around town?

R: Yeah, of course we never had too many problems with lumberjacks because there was no saloons on the premises, you know.

I: All the saloons were in town

R: Yes, that's right.

I: Is there just as many now as there were then?

R: Oh no.

I: Not as many now.

R: No, Lord no, we had eighty-two saloons here at one time in Calumet and Laurium. Every second door was a saloon.

I: Between the villages you had eighty-two saloons.

R: Eighty-two saloons in the area, sure.

I: Was there a lot of bar fights then?

R: Oh yeah, lot of drunks.

I: Did they mostly get settled themselves?

R: No, the village police would take care of them...lock them up. But in those days they used to let 'em out in the morning...they wouldn't arrest them, they'd let 'em out...let 'em sleep it off.

I: They'd sleep it off and they wouldn't go to court...the next day they were out.

R: Yeah, let 'em go home unless you got too many complaints on the same fellow, you know, he got to be a habitual drunkard; and then they had to go around lot of times and warn these store keepers, the families they'd really request it that you go down there and tell these guys now, no more, don't give 'em no more, you know, don't serve 'em. This often happened because they were spending...well here, a man would work in the mine, he'd go home and take his pay and go down to the bank and he'd start shooting 'em in, you know, well the family was without
money. So, this often happened

I: You didn't have welfare then, did you

R: Very little...I guess the county might have had some but that was hush hush in those days. Nobody wanted to be pointed at and say...he's on welfare or county...they'd call it county in those days...he's on the county. It was the same in school. Poor families...you'd get your books from the district...well, never advertise that that so and so was getting his books from the district.

I: Lot of pride involved.

R: That's right, if he was poor or not. Things have changed. Now it's a way of life.

I: Now it's a...ah...career I think for some people

R: Yeah, it was the same here with your churches years ago. People went to church. Gee on Sunday, no work, everybody goes to church and they'd dress up, you know. Saturday night everybody went to town...the stores were open Saturday night. Sidewalks weren't wide enough for baby buggies and people. Street was lined with horses, buggies, cars, every second store was a saloon, ten-cent store with the round windows, the candy counter you couldn't get near it...three deep. Salvation Army band going on (?) Corner...Kilpella's Corner now...the old blind man...Dewey used to lead him around...playing the organ with his tin cup. There was a fellow called Charlie Tiller had both legs cut off. He'd sit on the sidewalk and he had two wooden blocks with straps on them he'd hold onto and...well he was cut off from here and he had a leather pad strapped on him under here and that's the way he'd walk with his hands and he'd sit on the sidewalk down there with his hat in between his two stumps here selling pencils. Ten trains a day in and out of Calumet...Northwestern, Duluth-Southshore, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Mineral Range, Keweenaw Central, you had 'em all.

I: Well, what kind of people were coming in, just salesmen and people that worked here?

R: Coming from foreign countries all over...1922 Calumet-Hecla brought in a bunch of fellows and their families from Germany.

I: To work in the mines

R: To work in the mines, yeah

I: Well, did they have some sort of agreement with the company that they had work all year for them or...

R: But they didn't stay, they were sneaking out at night. That's how Peterman's store went broke...had everything on the book.

I: Where would they go then...they'd just go to the city, you mean?

R: Go all over...sure.
I: Just to get out of the city.
R: Lots of those fellows had a trade, you know.
I: Just to get out of their agreement...all they wanted to do was get over here.
R: See, the boarding houses were full then
I: What kind of patrons were in bars...mostly men? Did you see any women in there?
R: Well, women went in the back...the women didn't sit in the front.
I: You didn't see any women in the front
R: Oh, if she was sitting in the front of the saloon why she wasn't a woman...she went in the back door. When the hospital was going here...all these mines working...the engine houses, this place was lit up like a Christmas tree. Where Pellegrini lives down on the avenue, that was a nurses home. That used to be a big boarding house...and Pellegrini just cut the top off and lowered her down; but it was nice to live in this area with the hospital going, with the nurses home and all these engine houses and mines going. Old Doc worked down at Ahmeek mill...when those eight heads were going that ground was just moving, you know. And Doc always said, "I sleep good while the mill is going, but the minute the head stops he wakes up."
I: He got used to that.
R: That's right.
I: Can you remember arresting the same guy over and over and over again? The same drunk like we do here...we have one fellow here that we've arrested over a hundred times.
R: Not a drunk but a junk dealer.
I: What was that for? For buying stolen copper or something?
R: Yeah...in fact two of them, one at Lake Linden and one up here.
I: You'd arrest them over and over again.
R: But finally one served time.
I: Prison time you mean?
R: Yes, prison...he served down at...when Miller came in.
I: How big was the jail then? Can you get more prisoners now in there, do you think?
R: I don't know what John...I can't tell you what his average is or what it used to be.
I: Did you put a lot of people in jail?
R: Oh, I wouldn't say too many considering the people that lived
I: What was the population then...about?
R: Oh Lord, we started with about sixty thousand...well now what have we
got, about ten - twelve thousand...so it came down. In 1913 after the
strike, people moved to Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, Highland Park...Ford
was paying five dollars a day. It didn't matter what you were doing...if
you pushed a broom. All the men left after World War I. My
grandfather...all the boarders...my grandmother had ten boarders and
even my grandfather went, pushed a broom in the factory. Five dollars
a day, you know, big money. Then the Depression and then a lot more
moved out.
I: Was it real bad here during the Depression or did the company
got people out?
R: Well the company helped. They had a relief program for awhile and then
they let you work for your coal or your rent, whatever it was that you
owed them...you'd work a couple days, you know...things of that nature.
And of course then the WPA came in and CWA and the XYZ's and all that,
you know. I still think people were happy. They got along...they made
it, you know. I never had much, but...
I: Do you think the police had less problems then and do we have more now?
R: Oh, I think you got a lot more now...oh Lord, yes!
I: Did you have any high-speed chases then with cars...chasing cars...did
they run on you then or did they stop?
R: We wouldn't chase them if they went high speed.
I: Just let 'em go
R: Let 'em go...if you got the number, okay. If you didn't, why don't
break your neck.
I: Can you remember any bad accidents you had?
R: Oh yeah, quite a few of them...lot of 'em.
I: Lot of them with a lot of dead people in the cars?
R: Yeah, a lot of really banged up...I can think of a couple out in
Section 16 going to McClain park on that twisty road through that woods
there...
I: By the waterfall, you mean?
R: Yeah...some bad ones in there. Had some bad ones down on this corner
I can remember once the Finnish church had a convention here on Pine
Street, you know, and I think it was a party from Minnesota that come
out of that stop there and spiked a car here and there was a Dryer family from Rambletown, I think, involved in that. Gee, that was a mess. Quite a few injured in that. But we had it, took care of it. The undertakers had the ambulances at that time, C & H had their own.

I: Who operated the ambulance for C & H? Did you do that too?

R: No, the man from the machine shop...see they always had somebody there twenty-four hours.

I: That was only for company injury then?

R: Yeah, the same with the hospital now. When the hospital was here a lot of cases came in that weren't company, you know, you had people on the highway. Well, they would take care of them, I mean if it was necessary; but then ship them to Laurium.

I: That's where the hospital is now.

R: Well, the old one was down towards the airport. There's a new home there on that corner now; but that was the first Laurium hospital; but this one was put up there around 1922.

I: What were most car accidents caused from then...speeding or drinking...did you have a lot of drunk driving then?

R: Yeah, had drunk drivers, sure. But I think neglect in a lot of cases.

I: Driver error

R: That's right.

I: How did you determine whether a guy was drunk then? We have breathalizer to help us, but how did they determine...

R: We didn't need that...if you smelled it and he was wobbling around, why he was drunk.

I: That was it.

R: And there was no argument and I don't think I had a case where they came back and called you on it. I remember I was riding down Pine Street one time with my wife and there was a car ahead of me with an old fellow and his girlfriend driving, and the car came down Pine Street and crossed the road and spiked the guy in front of me; and that boy...I was off duty, but I called one of the boys and telephoned the machine shop and one of the boys came down and it was a business man from Calumet too, but he couldn't stand up. And we took him down to Red Jacket and the night cop said, "He's the manager of one of our stores." Well, we said, "We don't care who he is, he's going in."

I: In other words, you arrested a company official as well as the other workers. Everybody got arrested. How were the roads then? We can travel 120 miles an hour down 41 now, you know, the road can stand it: but were the road very good then or were they real rough?
R: Of course you had good roads and bad and your cars weren't tuned up the way they are now either. Cripes when you went around the county years ago in the old Silver, you strapped an extra tire on the backend and it took you all day to get around there and you had three or four punctures before you got back so things have changed. Now you can go around there in twenty minutes.

I: Did your patrol cars have red lights on top and a siren and everything?

R: Yes, we did. And then when the law came out on blue lights, we changed to blue; and then the complaint came out of Lansing that we were not a community police department so we had to change back to red.

I: The bubble on top.

R: Yeah, Sgt. Belonker (?) he was made about that. He said, "Goll dang it, they should have blue the same as anybody else." I said, "I don't care what color it is." We changed back to red.

I: How many cars did you have then?

R: Four plus our private cars we got mileage for.

I: Oh, if you used your own car...

R: See, I always had a siren and light on mine, so I used my own car; and we had two detectives or investigators, that's all they did. They had a private car unmarked.

I: Oh, you mean working for you you had detectives?

R: Oh yes; that's all they did was worked on complaints. If a boy comes in at night with a complaint, throw it on the investigator's desk; the next morning that was his job.

I: That's all he did...the same as we have a detective here

R: Right. Yeah, we worked up a pretty nice force and, you know, the village departments up to that time they had no records either and then they started to copy us after Jack Miller got here and got these reports out, you know. Because in those days, what the heck. You had old Paul Speehar downtown, (?)...old Tomlinson and Hornsbee...why I don't know if they could write or not.

I: Everything was settled right on the street...right there.

R: Don't talk back. 

I: Do you remember when the old handcuffs like Reuben Rohl had in his office there, is that the type of handcuffs you had then? Those heavy old steel cuffs?

R: I got 'em home...I got a museum home with a lot of the junk in.

I: From being in police work, you mean?
Saturday-night specials and a lot of things I collected down through the years...for about forty years I've been collecting stuff. I think it's interesting that people look at these things. I've got the knucklers from the 1913 strike, I've got the homemade billies, I've got some of the cartridge belts from the militia that were here.

You mean during the strike?

Um hum

How many militia were here?

Oh gosh, I don't know. All your National Guards from Michigan were in here. This was an armed camp. I've got five boxes of glass plates, nothing but strike. Now glass plates, you know that's when first they came out the same as your film is now for your pictures.

Didn't they put out the militia down on Pine Street somewhere?

Oh, we had them all over the area

What'd they put them in, tents?

Sure

Bivouaced by the armory there?

All around the armory, all around the warehouse, the main office, Ahmeek, Centennial, all the way down. The women were bad in those days too. They carried umbrellas, you know, and brooms. They'd go after the men going to work.

How many men did you have working then, you know, when they were on strike? Did you have a lot of them working?

You mean the company here?

Yeah

Oh Lord help us, they deputized hundreds of people at that time. Then they had the horse troops too. They were uniformed men. They had about twenty men on horses going around with big clubs, you know.

How many men were working the mines then while the rest of them were on strike?

I've got a book home, 1915, where Calumet-Hecla had over eight thousand at that time.

Eight thousand employees.

Yeah, so that's right after the strike in 1915.

So in 1913 they must have had more.
R: And I've got the handwriting of everyone that worked for the company at that time. They collected five cents from each man and they bought the general manager, Mr. McNaughton, a gold watch and every man signed this book and they've got wherever you worked it's headed...well, Hecla mine, Calumet mine, machine shop, etc. and then they signed it. That's quite a collector's item.

I: Un hum, I can imagine

R: Eight thousand two hundred and some odd employees.

I: What are you gonna do with that stuff...put it in Coppertown?

R: No, I don't think it'd be safe in Coppertown. There's no security

I: I mean later on, you know later on when they get done.

R: They're gonna have to do something different then they have now. If I see my way clear, I might think differently later. I've got a collection of railroad lamps and crossing signs, chemicals, copper, company locks and I've got a yoke to carry water. I've got John Silver's wooden leg. Have you ever seen a...you've seen pictures of a fellow with a wooden leg, just a stump sticking down, you know, I've got one of them there and before they made splints and all this, the small stuff in the hospital, how they used to strap it on your leg if you had a broken leg and, oh I've got so much stuff there it's a tremendous collection. I've got some of the fire alarms from some of the stations and things of that nature.

I: Where've you got this, in your house?

R: Yeah, and I've got...oh I must have about three thousand pictures of this area in the olden days. It's fabulous.

I: Do you have any of the negatives?

R: Some. I'm on my twelth book of company...C & H pictures. They're all eight by tens and I started out with steam locomotives and then diesels and then the rock houses and the shops, etc. I'm on my twelth book.

I: Do you have a picture of yourself when you were in security with your uniform on?

R: Yeah

I: Do you think we could get one of those?

R: I don't know

I: Have you got any we can get to go with the rest of our reports here? When was that taken?

R: Oh, that's another thing we used to do. When the carnivals came in we policed the carnivals. That's when this picture was taken.
I: That was at the carnival?

R: Yeah, that was back in the fifties, I think. Yeah, we had to...see, it was company property when the carnivals would come in. They always had to hook up on the company. Had to give them water. The circus would come in they'd have to turn the water on out there for them. It was called Legion Field because it was leased to the Legion; but the company leased it. I don't know if you can get a picture off of that or not.

I: Let me see if I can run that. What kind of crowds did the carnival bring in?

R: Well, there we talked about fellows bumbling in on the railroads and they always had a bunch of low-class people with 'em, you know and we had our problems down there at times.

I: Did you ever have problems with drugs like we have now?

R: No

I: None? You never had anybody come through and.

R: No, I can't think of a case where...

I: I can remember when I was a kid in Ishpeming...oh this must be back in '55, I think it was...that's only twenty years ago...the Ishpeming City Police arrested a fellow in Ishpeming that was going into the drug store and had some fake prescriptions and that was...at that time they arrested him and that was really bad. That was really terrible. That really made headlines when they arrested him. Nowadays when somebody gets arrested for drugs, it's nothing.

R: Now, you know, that's another thing that reminds me now. You know, when Miller came, he set up a good fingerprinting outfit for us now that the village police never had that. And they had a case over in Laurium where some woman got drugs on false pretenses or something or I don't know just what happened over there but they had to bring the people over to us to have them fingerprinted and that.

I: So before that you didn't have any fingerprints at all...you didn't fingerprint anybody.

R: That's right. Jack Miller did a lot for us here and I think he set us up on the same grounds as the State Police and it educated a lot of us. From then on when anyone needed fingerprinting why they used to come right up there.

I: And you did it.

R: We did it.

I: Well, did you keep that fingerprint card yourself or did you send it into Lansing?
R: We had a copy...we kept a copy, sent in a copy. And that's when we were educated into sending a lot of our evidence to the lab at Lansing.

I: Did you have a lot of people arrested for bearing guns during the strike? Did you have a lot of that or was that kept pretty quiet?

R: Not that I know of. There was a lot of shooting during the strike.

I: Shooting at each other, you mean, people or a lot of people getting shot?

R: Un hum...there was a lot of shooting at that time; but that was handled through the sheriff department. I don't know too much about it.

I: Where did you get all the guns you collected?

R: Well, they were turned back in to the office...lot of people kept...gosh there were guns all over the area. When the Tamarack Mills office closed a lot of guns were left in the safe there, so I went down and brought them back to the security office. When the Ahmeek office closed, went down there and there were a lot there in the safe and brought them back to the office; and lots were left in the warehouse upstairs, so brought those over. And then people in cleaning house, lot of people would bring them in and say, "We don't want this in the house." Found a lot of ammunition and things of this nature when they'd be house cleaning...so that's where we got quite a collection of guns, etc. And I couldn't see...a lot of it was rusty and the barrels were pitted...they weren't of any safe use at all, so I got rid of them.

I: Can you remember that train robbery that was supposedly here?

R: I've got the story of it at home.

I: Have you...what year was that?

R: Off hand I don't recall. Was a C & H payroll.

End of Side 2

R: Myself, I can't recall what year that was, do you know him?

I: He recruited me into the State Police.

R: Oh, did he? Well, we had the powder house at Ahmeek broken into one night and a number of cases of powder and caps and fuse and everything was stolen. Went down and worked on it and we could see where they hid this stuff in the bush, some of it, some of it was moved out and then we had a neighbor down there found some more in the bush down there...he was out walking around one day and found some more. Anyway we cracked the case...a couple of fifteen year old kids.

I: What were they into with powder?

R: Just to have fun, I guess. So I had a picture taken up in the warehouse and we had all this stuff lined up...showed the loot. August Beck, one time, when they were stealing silver from the smelter,
there was a fellow from Lake Linden making the same pay as the average man down there and everybody knew he couldn't buy a big car and fix his house up the way things were going, you know, he was spending money hand over fist. So they kind of suspected him and August Beck took the streetcar down one night, the last car. The streetcar ran as far as Hubbell right by the smelter and the fellows used to ride home on the last car, you know, afternoon shift. So, this fellow got on the car with his dinner bucket and August Beck nailed him. Dinner bucket...there was plenty of silver in there.

I: He was stealing silver off the mine.

R: Off from the smeltzer

I: And there was no search warrant then, he just grabbed the bucket and searched it.

R: What you see is what you get, yeah. Fellow came out of the smeltz one night with a dinner bucket, had it up under his arm and somehow the thing opened up and everything went on the ground. He had it filled up...not with railroad spikes, just carpenter nails, you know, and different sized spikes. And he said, "Goll hang it, those fellows are always playing jokes on me." There was a security man right there.

I: Well, didn't the company give a lot of these things away? If a guy wanted something, didn't the company give it to him if they asked?

R: All he had to do was ask the boss if he needed something, you know, what the heck.

I: It didn't really pay to steal something then, you could have had it...

R: Naw...not unless you were going to get something that you were gonna sell.

I: If it was for your own use, they'd probably give it to you.

R: Of course, years ago the fellows running the jewelry stores used to make a lot of money. These fellows would have their little (?) bags and you know, you fill one of those up with silver in those days, you know, it was worth a little jack. And these fellows were buying it.

I: They knew it was illegal.

R: Oh sure.

I: What did they do with it?

R: You mean the jewelers?

I: What did they do with the silver...did they have some way of getting rid of it?
R: Make ornaments out of it. Either that or they'd take it to like Milwaukee, when we went to Milwaukee we checked out a jewelry store down there that were buying half-breeds, you know, but you couldn't get anything out of them. "Where's your book?" "It burnt."

I: What were they getting for silver at that time?

R: Gosh, I can't tell you. Of course the guy that was selling it, he never got the full price, you know, they never. And another thing, here locally a man working in the mine, if he wanted specimens to take home, nobody'd bother him; but when you start selling it, then it's a different thing, you know, this is the thing you had to watch. If you wanted a piece of copper for your neighbor who is coming up here on a vacation, well you'd take it home there. The boss knew you were taking it. But we had problems too, they started to sell it to different business men, you know.

I: All these houses here on Calumet Avenue, they were all heated by one heating plant.

R: Yeah, Superior Boiler House.

I: They were all company official's houses then?

R: Right

I: The mine captains and everything?

R: See, it heated everything from the hospital here right through to some houses in Rambletown.

I: They were all owned by the company and the people living in them were officials from the mine. Was that all steam heat on the boiler?

R: Yeah

I: Must have been a pretty good-sized boiler.

R: That's when you had all those little steam bugs running around your radiators. Remember those little white bugs that run around the floor. They used to have the doors and windows open in those days in the wintertime. It was pretty hot in those houses; but after they bought their houses...

I: Then they closed them.

R: They corked them up good.

I: Then they had to heat

R: Yeah...well the company put the furnaces in them before they sold them. Sure, they put a furnace in every house.

I: So, a hundred and twenty-five dollars for the biggest house on the avenue...
R: With a new furnace!
I: With a new furnace, right.
R: And a concrete coal bin in some of them. But times changed.
I: How many hours a day did you work here then? Did you work eight hours most of the time, or did you have to work twelve?
R: Well, I did up until the time I went on... well let's say Lt. and then Chief-of-Police and Security.
I: Did you have a rank in file of Chief-of-police and Lt. and Sgt. and different duties as you went up in rank and more pay?
R: Oh yeah, sure... more responsibility. Oh Lord, when I was down at the south end, Spur who was Lt. at the smelter, when he retired, then I took over the whole end down there... well then, if I got a call at night that was from that end, then I had to go all the way down there, you know. One bad thing down there was the coal pile... the fires.
I: The heat generated itself...
R: That's right and she'd break out and then you hadda go down there and always make a report. See, all these reports. Then we started coming into reports for every little thing. We had the Incline Damm where kids used to swim, that was a bad deal. You had the Hungarian Damm, that was another one... company land and they owned it and was always...
I: Did you have problems over there?
R: Yes, we did. We had a number of drownings in those places.
I: Did you get involved in Civil cases where kids drowned or people sued the mining company for different things and you got involved in it because you investigated it?
R: Yeah, one big deal I was involved in was the little girl...
I: ...that fell in the mine shaft?
R: ...fell in the mine shaft
I: How did that happen? She was picking blueberries, wasn't she?
R: Yeah
I: And she fell in
R: She fell in but the shaft, itself... that's No. 4 Tamarack... I always felt that was one of the safest we had. We had to check the fences of all these mines, you know, and the shafts. This was another
duty we had. And this particular day...well it was during the Centennial in '66...the day of the big parade here and I was tied down with a policeman on every corner...I had a big force at that time, and had the fire department. When this call came in around noon, these kids had gone out there and I had checked that area not too long before that; the concrete cap on this thing was oh about that high off the level of the ground. But over on the north side there was a clump of bushes and there was a pipe going up in the center of this concrete cap for circulation. Well, they got in near these bushes, they got in through the fence...somebody apparently had cut the fence, you could never keep a fence intact anyway because these tourists and that, gosh, they wanted to look down the shaft, they're gonna look...well anyway, there was a hole down in there where the timber under the concrete had rotted out and she got in there to take a look and it must have went right down because she slipped right through.

I: Did they take the cap off and go down a ways...how far down did go?

R: Oh they went down...seems to me they said that there was a crosscut to No. 3 about twelve hundred feet.

I: She was down that far?

R: You couldn't see because the timbering was caving in and there was water down in there and when they pulled that cap off a portion of it fell down in, it broke, you know...oh, that was... Then we had all this heavy equipment...these big cranes right around the top of it...

I: Caving in the walls?

R: Well, this is what we were afraid of. They made a cage and they were lowering the men down in there to try and get at her. We had to fence the area because people were out there...we had newspaper men and photographers from all over the country here, you know. And after the parade I got as many men out there as I could. The fire department had gone out there and they couldn't do anything and the sheriff was out there. We had a camp there all night then. But when we got the cranes there...well we got a school bus out there and set up a telephone and put in lights and everything imaginable, you know, was like a carnival. And the big job was to keep people away, relatives and so forth; but they were very understandable. The thing that we were afraid of was with the weight of these big cranes and everything around there was that the whole thing would collapse with somebody in there again and we didn't want another life lost. So, they quit the job.

I: They never even seen the girl. They never got close enough to I to see her. She must have went right to the bottom...as far as possible.

R: Far as she could go.

I: How far was that down?

R: Well, I thought they said around twelve hundred, I don't know if I'm
I: Did the company get sued for that?
R: There was a case. I never heard anymore about it. We hadda go to court...well I hadda go in and they took testimonies
I: That was in Houghton Circuit Court and all?
R: Yeah...it never came to Circuit Court.
I: Settlement maybe.
R: Never heard anymore about it
I: That was one of your jobs, checking all these fences to make sure and keep people out of these fences. Did you find people inside a lot of times...inside the fence?
R: Oh gosh, yes. Rock piles the same thing. They were all over the company. You know, it was a funny thing. People'd come up here from the city, they'd think this was a wide open area, you know, you can go anywhere you want because lot of times the chamber of commerce downstate will say, "Well, you go up there you can go anywhere and pick rocks," and there's more rock hounds today than you can name, you know. It's teriffic...it's got to be big business and bus loads come in, you know. And I've seen people get out of a bus and they'll start crawling up the...there's people behind 'em and the minute you start crawling up a pile, you're just starting to slide, you know. And this is what you gotta watch and we had to go with them on a lot of occasions.
I: I know in the 50's I used to go down, my cousin and I, in deserted shafts that you have up above the Cliff there and there's one in Hancock also where you had the tracks going off into it.
R: Yeah
I: Yeah, we used to shimmy down the rail. All the railroad ties were rotted off but we shimmied down that rail, you know, a real hot day and we'd get down maybe about twenty feet and it'd be ice cold. Have your fingers get numb and look down and try to see how much further it was, you know, down to the bottom, and throw a rock and about a minute later we hear it go ka-thump, you know. Oh, back up that thing we'd go.
R: Got a call one night from Mohawk right behind Slim's Cafe...wintertime...three kids from Tech they went down the shaft and it was all ice and one kid slipped and down he went. I don't know how he stopped...he stopped down there...I don't know how he grabbed and I don't know what the devil he grabbed, but we had to call out the mine rescue crew, lower ropes down there seven hundred feet and get him out of there.
I: He didn't get hurt.
R: Oh, he was injured a little.
I: Was that an incline shaft?
R: Slope in, yeah.
I: The only direct shaft I seen was...around here or that I fooled with as a kid was...I was going over to the Cliff mine right across from the Cliff Funeral...
R: Well, that's just pheuuuuuuu...Ahmeek 9 and 4 is like that, yeah. Another problem we had was kids climbing the Cliff.
I: Oh we did that for sport all the time.
R: Yeah, well we had one that died, kid from Dollar Bay.
I: Fall off?
R: Yeah, he fell and we hadda go in with a basket and pick him up. We always called the fire department because we were set up for rescue and the same with the Houghton-Douglas falls, I don't know how many we've taken off of there.
I: Almost every year there's some.
R: They'd get up there and freeze, you know.
I: Panic...lot of Tech students come off there
R: Yeah, that's right
T: How do you get in there? You had ropes that you can carry in there, into the falls...I guess you can drop over the edge.
R: We could drive in part way, we used to go in part way with the ladder truck and then use ladders. See, we rigged up a ladder that we could stick up over the end and throw your ropes over...
I: ...the end and bring it up...
R: ...and then lower down your belts or your net and then we had men at the bottom telling us which way to move, you know. I always worked the ladder up top. We've taken quite a few off of there.
I: That's a long way down.
R: Yeah! Security police...you can talk city police or State Police or sheriff's department, you always...every departments got their headaches and maybe it's a little different than one another, you know.
I: You had quite a variety then, really.
R: That's right, yeah. We had a lot of territory.
I: Yeah, you were kind of a private police department for the company but then again you were deputized for the county, so you went and did the
county's work too.

R: That's right.

I: So you had more variety.

R: Then you had the timberlands. That was another headache because there was always somebody cutting somewhere, you know.

I: Stealing lumber off the C & H property. Well, they used to have a lease (???)...my grandparents owned a big (?) and they leased their land to C & H.

R: Yeah...see I have two. I have a ninety-nine year lease on the north half of the house and a quick lease on this south half because I just bought it recently. They can't issue a ninety-nine year lease anymore and they're waiting now to plot the ground.

I: That's what my grandparents had is a ninety-nine year lease. That's what's holding up the Post right now, this building right here.

R: Yeah, the old lease, see.

I: It's the old lease and they've got the money and everything and they've remodeled it and go right through it, but they can't get the lease straightened out.

R: You see this is the problem today with your State laws, etc. and none of this ground was plotted, see, and to plot it they're gonna have a lot of headaches because there's no two lots alike. Where you got a double house, maybe the house is more over on that side and this half over here's got a nice yard and the other fellow's got nothing and, you know, it's a problem.

I: How did these double houses get started or were they company houses?

R: Oh sure

I: They were built by the company just for

R: For the employees

I: For the employees that's why we have a lot of double houses. How many did they make.

R: Oh, they had over a thousand houses at one time starting over at Lake Linden, Hubbell all the way through.

I: They built them all over. The company owned every one?

R: Well, not every one. Some had individual houses in here in between but very few. I don't know how it came about. How anybody would put up a house on leased land, you know, and build a house...but it worked out very nicely. As time went on, why we got our blinker lights and your highways are a little better, your highway signs...Jack Miller
worked a lot on that because there were no speed signs through here at all until Jack came here.

I: It was an unlimited speed limit then.

R: Of course it was always understood...

I: That'd be state-wide wouldn't it?

R: It was always understood that wherever it was in a residential area it was twenty-five miles an hour.

I: What kind of a fine did you get for speeding years ago?

R: Five dollars and costs, something like that. Yeah, these fines weren't enormous but then of course money was scarce in those days too. Maybe that was considered quite a bit.

I: Did many of them work their fines off?

R: You mean at Houghton...the jail?

I: Right or to the magistrate

R: Not that I know of.

I: Doing some kind of remedial task or something...cleaning up the highway or something of this nature.

R: Not that I know of.

I: Those were the days when you could go to the magistrate and you had a really bad guy and tell him to jack the fine up a little bit or something.

R: The magistrate, if you didn't have the money right then, he'd say, "Well I'll give you thirty days bring it in."

I: Time payments

R:

I: Pay me whenever you catch me.

R: Sure. We had five kids one time...I don't know where they got the dynamite...but they went down to Kersarge, there was an old powder house back in the woods and they took a station wagon and went down there...the powder house was built during the strike because it had a railroad spur going in there so they could unload their powder and that...they went in there and they set up this charge and shut the steel door and they thought jeez there's gonna be an awful bang and they blew that thing to pieces. And lucky enough they were far enough apart that nobody got hurt. They jumped in that station wagon and come out of there sipping, you know. And there was a fellow in Wolverine he was smart enough to take their license number...he heard the report,
you know. So, got them all down in Justice Court and they all paid a fine but then the thing came up, "What are you gonna do about the powder house?" Well, all their fathers were down there and I said, "The only thing I can tell you fellows, go up and see the General Manager." Burt Peterson was general manager and they all knew him, and I said, "Maybe the powder house was so old, they're not using it anymore, go on and talk to him anyways." So, they went up to the office and talked to him and I guess it was settled, I don't know.

I: Forget it.

R: Forget it. We had another case where some kids stole some dynamite from one of the powder houses and one of the businessmen downtown that runs the radio station down there on Sixth Street across from the Post Office, his kid was involved. The Mother was cleaning his bedroom one day and there was a suitcase under the bed and she pulled it out and it was loaded with dynamite. He was sleeping on it.

I: Was that part of your job to keep track of dynamite years ago between the mine?

R: Sure, absolutely...we had...

I: Did you have to escort dynamite trucks or what?

R: We had to check...yeah and then years ago it used to come in on railroad cars, you know. From the time that car hit our siding, we had to have our nose on it 'til it got there and unloaded.

I: Did you ever have any incidents of sabotage or anything with dynamite where they'd close up a shaft or anything like that?

R: No, but we kept pretty close watch on it especially on days when the truck would go to the powder house and then deliver it to the mines. Our man in each area had to count every box that was taken off at that shaft and every round he counted until it was lowered down.

I: How about the payrolls? Did the men get paid in cash?

R: No, in check

I: But when the payroll came in where did it go...down to the bank?

R: Yeah

I: Did you have to follow that too? Or was that all...

R: The only escort I had to make was when the silver came in on the train. You see, you put so much silver in your copper at the smelter. It does something...I don't know...knit the copper together or solidify it or something...when that came in we went to the train and if we didn't load it into our cars, if a truck was there, we had to escort it to the smeltz to make sure it was put in the safe. It came in in bars.

I: That was foreign silver, not taken from the area?
R: Yeah...see there was so much silver in your copper here but you always had to add some, so they bought some.

I: Do you have anymore questions Larry?

R: Can I tell you one more incident before I close up here...around 1966 with all the women working for the company in the offices and that, the management thought it'd be a good idea to take all the supervisory underground, take them through on a tour so that they'd be better acquainted with the work they're doing such as women and supply work. They'd be ordering things for years that they didn't know what were being used for or anything else; so every week for about eight or nine weeks, I took a tour underground at Alloway...men and women; and we had a mine man with us, of course.

I: Was that Alloway 3?

R: Yeah...we toured the whole company surface plants and everything and underground with all the supervisory. We thought it was a pretty good education for everybody.

I: We were trying to set up a tour here at the Post and get down in the Centennial before they get operating.

R: I don't think that would be a problem with Andy.

I: No, they said they were gonna call us I think when they get in a position where they can do it...do it better and then they'll take us all down there.

R: Well, I hope my little talk will help you out on your...whatever you're gonna use it for. I'm sure...I always enjoyed talking about old times and my experiences, and share it with somebody.

I: I'd like to thank you very much, Jack; it was real interesting to me. I learned an awful lot here.
Cahumet Fire Dept
Uniform Police Dept.
1913

McNaughten Bag he used when he was kicked out of Chicago en route Cahumet

Assorted specimens of copper from old mine shown by Jack Foster

12 Books of C. & H.
Mines.
Railroad, Shaft Houses.
Shafts, etc.

Jack Fosters Home
Cahumet
151
Cahumet Ave.

News & Views
Lamps Fire Hoses
Women Leg Support
Rog Leg.
Clock from Centennial Mine
Lamp 1836

Assortments Mine Lamps
+ Time Clocks, Lathes, etc.

C+H Fire Alarm Box

Jack Foster
STANDING HANDING
AWARD PRESENTED TO
Herb by C+H Board
of Directors Roll.
Used to call meetings
to order.

C+H Board Chair
Police Dept.
Before Uniforms

McNaughten on left
Agassiz on right