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Story of Bomb Scare and Break-in
Interview with HAROLD LENT and his mother-in-law, MRS. MACDONALD, by Paul Jalkanen
July 26, 1972

Lent: Grandma, you give him a little background on your father. Tell him his name and where he was born in England and so on. He died in 1915. You can start and give his name and he was born in England.

Grandma: William H. Roberts. Born in Cornwall, England, spent 62 years of his life in Cornwall, followed mining, the principal occupation of people in that section. He remained in Cornwall until 1854 when he put into execution his long desire to come to America. Crossing in a sailing vessel, took 31 days, in making the trip to New York City. Located in Ontonagon, then he goes from there to Wisconsin and

Lent: lived in Wausau

Grandma: with the intention of seeking employment in the lead mines

Paul: That's right. There were lead mines in Wisconsin

Lent: Oh, yes. There still are. Very strong mines. It was in and around the area of Wausau.

Grandma: The lead was sold and the money returned to the United States. English money, in consequence, being circulated in the lead regions. And Mr. Roberts returned to England, married in his native parish and there resided about 2 years. Leaving his wife in Cornwall, Mr. Roberts returned in 1857 to Michigan; four months worked at the National Mine. After mining for a year, he made another venture, going to Valparaiso, Chile, in a sailing vessel to accept a position as captain of the mine. He remained there 3 years and then went to England in a sailing vessel, taking 104 days on the way.

He was quite a traveler as a young man

Grandma: At the end of 6 months he came back and for a year-and-a-half was engaged in mining in ________ County, Maryland. In 1863 Mr. Roberts located in a new village of Hancock which was in that year given its' village government, with ________ Parks as president. After working with the Pewabic Mine for 2 years he opened a grocery store in the store now occupied by Schulte Brothers, (across from the Methodist Church, that new building, Building & Loan building) in 1895 he retired from business.

Paul: Your mother must have come over then, too

Yes, and he married her on his trip back from Chile, I think it was, and brought her over here.

Grandma: Mr. Roberts is survived by his wife whom he married in England on August 31, 1855.

Lent: He died here in 1915. The home he constructed, the last home, was where Dr Barrios now lives. That brick house up there.

That's where you used to live before.

Lent: That's right. We lived there for many years. That was built on or about 1902.

Grandma: He served as a member of the village board of trustees for 4 years, from 1880 to 1884, and his frequent re-election demonstrated his ability as a councilman
and the confidence of the community. In 1885 he was elected village assessor.

Lent: In his later years, grandma, he became director of the old First National Bank which is now where Finnish Mutual Insurance is.

Paul: So he was involved in mining for awhile. And then he kind of gave it up and went into this grocery business, when he settled down, or supposedly settled down.

Lent: That's what he did.

Paul: What year were you born in?

Grandma: 1879.

Paul: That's a long time ago.

Lent: 93 years ago.

Grandma: I'm 93 years old now.

Lent: Still in good shape.

Paul: When my dad suggested that it would be very good to talk to you, for some of the history of this area, and he told me that you were 93, I couldn't believe it. Because here I had seen you at New Year's time, at our house.

Lent: Yes, she's always very active; she went to Florida with us, this winter for 3 months and she'll go again this coming winter, and she keeps very active.

Grandma: My memory isn't as good as it used to be.

Lent: The secret is being active. And her own little efficiency apartment which she now has.

Grandma: My mother used to say you can't expect to be first and last, too.

Lent: Can't be everything. She had 2 sons and a daughter, grandma did, the daughter being Willena. And Donald who is now deceased, taught at Michigan Tech and Houghton High, and her son was William H. MacDonald who was a lawyer in Washington, D.C. and he passed away, 4 years ago. That's the background of the family.

Paul: You've outlived your children except your daughter.

Lent: Yes, she has.

Paul: What was it like living in, you were born 1879, what was it like living around 1900, the time that you were married; what kind of problems did people face in this area.

Lent: Tell him about the food, grandma, bringing the butter in; you'd have to rework it and so on. And vegetables, there weren't any such things.

Grandma: Oh, yes; in them days, when I was in Marquette that was in my mother's time, in those days, no boats came in here, and they would have to take the butter and keep working it over and over to be able to eat it.

Lent: Cut the mold off the meats and the hams.

Grandma: Nothing came in; and then the first boat came in, there was quite a rush. My father would take a horse and wagon and go down to the boat.
and get oranges, and things, fruit and vegetables, because they didn't have them all winter, except what people could dry.

Lent: That was the early days

Grandma: There were no trains in here then, either.

Lent: That's right, grandma. The old methodist church that you attended, was down where now the Crown Motel is. And she attended there for many years, and then they built a new one in Hancock across which is now the Detroit & Northern. And grandma played the organ there for 30some years.

Grandma: I was 18.

Lent: She played right through until I came here.

Paul: Did you have a good childhood? Was—Did you have a lot of fun? Growing up in the 1880's? 1890's?

Lent: They thought it was in those days, they owned their own horses, their own cattle they kept their cows in—what was that pasture known as?

Grandma: Hamel's.

Hamel's pasture which is now back of where the Clarence Erickson's live, and Mrs. Mattson. That was a field where they ousted cows, go and get 'em every day, bring 'em back to the barn.

Paul: Did you have to work in your dad's store?

Grandma: No, I never did that. He had a dry goods and grocery store

Paul: Did your brothers work in there? Did you have any brothers?

Grandma: One of my brothers.

Paul: Was your family well-to-do? Not wealthy, but you lived pretty well, comfortably?

Grandma: You mean, in the early years?

Paul: Yes. Let's say, before you got married.

Grandma: Yes

Paul: During hard times, you didn't starve, you got along pretty well.

Grandma: No, everything was fair, and my father made very good investments in the early days.

Did he invest in the mines here, too, in C&H, Quincy?

Grandma: C&H for many years.

Lent: Homestake.

Grandma: And there was a man in Houghton, Jewish, that was head of the meat business over there and he was quite an advisor to my father on stocks; very fortunate to get his advise on stock.
Lent: He was very generous in his donations, too; church and other civic things And he was a great traveler even after he retired, wasn't he, grandma? After 1900, he loved to travel. She was his pal to travel.

Paul: Did you go with him then?

Grandma: No

Lent: Well, you did to Maryland and so on.

Grandma: Oh, I used to go to Maryland; made 2-3 trips to England

Paul: Back to England after he retired. Did your mother go with him?

Grandma: No, she didn't care to travel. She stayed at home

Paul: Was your family life strict?

Grandma: Yes, I wasn't allowed to dance.

No cards?

Grandma: Oh, no.

Paul: Why do you think your father stayed here? This was a rough area at that time In many ways, backward. There's nothing.

Grandma: In the first founding of Hancock

Paul: Why did he stay from 1850; and here it is, these wicked winters well-known for up here.

Grandma: I don't know why he didn't get into a warmer climate

Paul: It could have been nicer in Chile.

Lent: Well, he had a home and he also owned a home which is directly across from Lieblein's, with a little iron fence around it, that's where she lived as a little girl.

Paul: So you were born up above the store and then moved down there a couple blocks and then they built the other house up here?

Lent: Then they built this one. That's right. She was very active.

Paul: Can you remember some other things from your childhood; when you were young; was there doctors? did a doctor come to the house? when people were sick or did you just have home remedies?

Did you have a company doctor in those days, grandma, for your family?

Grandma: Yes, we had a doctor, Scallon.

Lent: They were mining company doctors

Paul: And they'd come down to take care of any sickness or illness?

Grandma: Yes.

Paul: What kind of home remedies can you remember? I'm sure they were passed on to you.
Grandma: Wizard Oil was a great thing for headache and I remember when I was a young girl I used to have quite a lot of headaches. And I'd rub wizard oil, and it'd help. You've never heard of it?

Paul: No, I never have.

Lent: And she's always been very healthy; only had one problem, you had your goiter removed at Mayo's. In 1915. Just think of that; 58 years ago, she had a goiter taken out at Mayo Brothers Clinic.

Paul: Did you drive down there? Was there cars?

Grandma: Train.

Paul: When did your father get a car? Or did he have one before he died?

Grandma: That was after

Lent: He never bought a car, it was Uncle John and you folks bought a car. But his son had a buick in those days, typically 1912-15. Open top, eisen glass windows, straps to hold down the windshield

Grandma: When it rained

Lent: If you could get from here to Chassell without at least 2 flats, you're doing very well.

Paul: Well, they were all dirt roads and very rough roads at that time.

Lent: Pneumatic hardpressure tires

What kind of feelings did you have and your father have towards the major industry the mining company here? Was it a kind of a good feeling at that time; I suppose there was a lot of people moving here and good times.

Wouldn't you say it was a good time until the strike of 1914? Then the battle started.

Grandma: Ya, that was what put the damper on the whole business

Paul: Do you remember that strike at all?

Grandma: I remember the strikers walking the streets

Paul: Did they walk down here too? in Hancock?

Grandma: Parade down here in the streets of Hancock, and then the strike breakers came in here to break the strike.

Paul: There were, I suppose, fighting among them; some killings too, weren't there?

Lent: Oh, yes, they finally rode the main strikebreaker out on a pole. They actually did.

Paul: That was a kind of a rough time.

Lent: But she had a lot of fun as a young girl, for instance, the church was your main activity, socially.

Grandma: Oh, yes
And you used to take lovely boatrides, big boats, up and down this, they were huge boats in those days, like 2-300 people on a Sunday afternoon and that was a big deal that would take them down to the Entry or down to Lake Linden area or out here to the Canal. Beautiful boats (I've forgotten the name). Do you recall the name, grandma? No.

What kind of bridge was here at that time? Was it the one just before this one?

One before that. There were 3 since her day. It was a wooden bridge 'cause Uncle John told her brother about it when they tore it down.

We used to pay a toll when you'd go over it.

Big timbers like you see in the mines. And that was constructed pretty much by the mining carpenters; this is her story of her brother, who passed away in '54. But he worked on the bridge. And he hauled the steel for the new bridge which, in those days was around—not this one, the one before—somewhere around 1900, wasn't it, because Uncle John worked on it as a boy.

It lasted 50-60 years because this was built in the late '50's.

And they ran streetcars across it. Steel one

Well, there were streetcars running all over these towns

Oh, yes, right through 1932.

Did you go for streetcar rides up to Calumet and Lake Linden?

Yes, and that was quite a trip.

Take a long time, I suppose it took half-hour to get up there. Cost a lot of money?

I don't remember.

I used to take 'em. About 15¢ I paid those days

Was there one that ran from Hancock to Lake Linden?

Yes, Ed Sleeman, you know Ed Sleeman in town, he was a motorman on one of them. And also, William Towsey who lives out in the west end on Emery Street.

Did you go all the way through Hancock High School then?

Yes, I graduated from Hancock High School.

Remember any of the teachers at that time?

Mr. Ball, he was superintendent principal, Mr. Whitney was superintendent, many years before I was there, I remember that name, Whitney.

Do you remember any favorite book that you packed in all these years?

The Bible, I read the Bible every day but I have cataracts on my eyes so I'm afraid to read too much. I don't read as many books as I used to.

You used to read a lot, but you don't feel like doing it any more. What kind of work did your husband do?
Grandma: He was a stationary engineer at the Quincy Mine.

Do you remember how much money he made? When he first started working there?

Grandma: He used to get $75 a month; we made a plan to always put aside $5 in the bank every month.

Paul: That was in the early 1900's.

$75 was pretty good money!

That wasn't bad money, $75, because I've talked to some who made $40 and $50, or they'd made a $1 a day. Did he go on strike then? With the strikers in 1913?

Lent: He wasn't considered a miner; he was a hoisting engineer. He had to help guard the mine property. A gun on his hip.

What did the sheriff do? I wonder what the law authority did at that time?

It was awfully rough. There is a story written on the strike, you can probably locate it through one of these early historical novels, by Roy Drier; that strike was a great volume of books in itself.

Grandma: What's the name of that book, Harold?

Lent: I think it was called "The Great Strike of '14" or something like that.

Paul: Do you remember what politics was like at that time, or the political parties?

Grandma: No, I couldn't tell you.

Paul: Did you vote for president in the early 1900's?

Lent: McKinley?

Grandma I don't remember.

Paul: How did various nationality groups get along at that time? Here you are Cornish and Scottish, Scottish mother, and Irish

Grandma: In the early history, there was almost war between the Irish and the English. Quincy Mining Company, yes. I don't know why but I suppose it resulted from conditions in Ireland.

Probably European background.

They used to meet head-on on the old wooden bridge, the story that I was told, and boy, did they battle on that bridge; throw one another off; that's the old wooden bridge. I remember your brother telling stories before he passed on.

What about—I 'spose the Finns that the same problems—they'd fight with the Irish

I don't think they fought so much, the Finns, no, the Finns are a very docile type of people. They came in to work. There wasn't much fighting with the Finnish people, Grandma, in those days, it was the English and the Irish; They were not a fighting people, they may have had little problems, no doubt, of their coming in to work in the mines which was about the 1890's.

Grandma: The English had the superiority over the Irish in early days and that feeling
And they didn't have the opportunity

That feeling has been there and it continues even today in Ireland and England. What was it like when the mines started to close at different times; the good times that the mines had but then after World War I there was a short depression at that time, in the early 1920's, a feeling of somewhat despair, I think, up here, because there being a big boom

1907 they had a panic. Was like a depression.

It was bad, too, we couldn't sell the copper; nobody wanted it.

Did your husband ever make less money than $75 a month? Sometimes get worse?

No. Sometimes he worked overtime; sometimes Sundays; not always but so many times they worked Sundays.

Did he work different shifts?

Yes

They'd have 2 different shifts?

Yes; one shift was in the morning, from morning until 2; afternoon shift was from 2 to 10; and night shift was from 10 till 6 in the morning.

Tell Paul how he got to work, grandma, from Harris Avenue.

We lived on the corner where, across from Gartner, (Dennis' and he walked up that hill, right up to Quincy, to the engine house.

In the wintertime, too?

Oh, yes.

Right up that snow and that snow was deep.

He had to make his own path sometimes

It was 10¢ for the streetcar, the heck with that!

He had to leave an extra hour early to get there in a half-hour.

Just think of climbing that hill! There was a path there.

That's quite a hill.

You never tried it with him?

no.

What were local churches like, you belonged to the Methodist church, were the ministers very good, coming to the house, and very friendly at that time? Not only the Methodists, but the others also?

Different men, different personalities, in ministers. Some were quite pompotuos
and some would only say the liturgy. Some would take a notion to change it.

Paul: I suppose generally they were very good men who would come and visit.

Grandma: Oh, yes, they were. Some were better preachers than others.

Hancock and Houghton, at one time, were considered "training" ground for the Detroit area. And they often times, had many young ministers. And they'd get their training and go right on into Detroit area or large cities. They did that over and over.

Paul: What are some of the other recollections you have? What kind of good times did you have after you were married and bringing up your children? What kind of entertainment did you have, and what did you do with your children to have a good time. Let's say your husband wasn't work/ing Sunday, what did you do? Besides the boat riding.

Grandma: That house that we lived in on the corner, it was terrible coming down that street, and I wouldn't allow the children to sleighride and I often think about that and now I'd allow it but in those days it wasn't allowed on Sunday. And my older son like to skate and took out his skates, unknown to me, learned to skate.

Paul: Snuk out on you?

Lent: What a time he had!

Grandma: That was considered quite a sin to skate on Sunday.

Paul: That's right; some people don't like it even when the grocery stores are open on Sunday.

Lent: I think this is ridiculous myself, Red Owl open 24 hours a day; a small town.

Grandma: Stores weren't open on Sundays in those days.

Lent: Your son, William, was a very active young man, full of vim and vigor, like her father, he had to just burst the seams and it was not uncommon for him to go and do things and the other 2 children were more docile, Willie and her other brother, Donald; they stayed home but Billy got out. She'd make him go up and stay in the bedroom and he would tease the life out of 'em for that. He would open the window for instance, it was early Sunday evening and he'd get an empty spool (from thread) and he'd dangle that on a string and hit the window, and just irritate, he was just full of zip.

Paul: How old was he at this time?

Lent: He'd be like 16, around there. He was just full of it and he'd sneak out in the summer, and he'd dive off--not only the dock, but the bridge, the old wooden bridge. He lived a hard ______. He lived hard, didn't he, grandma? What you didn't know about, they lived a hard _____.

Lent: He'd hop trains and go to L'Anse and Baraga, Calumet, they'd ride the coal trains; she didn't know these things.. ______--strict.

Paul: I don't know. I've talked to some people who said it was good that they were strict and some felt it'd be OK if they let 'em a little loose. That basically came from the old country.
Lent: But it was church every Sunday night, wasn't it grandma? For everybody, morning and night. They had to go.

Paul: 2 times a day? Did you have services, morning and night?

Grandma: morning and night.

Paul: Did he give a sermon in the morning and one at night, too?

Grandma:

Lent: She called it a discord, he just talked, on and on, like 40 minutes

Paul: So you have 2-hour services; long ones

Lent: The story she gave us, it was terrific. They just couldn't sit there, these kids, with their little padded seats, the little hard wooden numbers.

Paul: They'd get very fidgety

Lent: It was rough

Paul: Did your parents want your brothers and that go to school? Did they want you to go beyond high school or anything, beyond college?

Lent:

Grandma: He didn't quite finish high school and he took care of the books in the store for my father and he had saved his _____ he'd get for spending money, and he would have like to have gone on to college but my father felt that he needed him in the store and didn't give him that chance to go.

Paul: I just wondered how hard he pushed.

Grandma: You see he himself hadn't had any so he didn't appreciate that

Lent: Not even a public school education.

Paul: You're father seemed like quite a gentlemen, he liked to go and kind of take off on his own.

Grandma: Oh, yes, he liked to take off on his own.

Paul: Well, you can tell that from his younger days and even when he gets here. Got that urge to keep moving.

Lent: He had little or no formal education but you tell him, grandma, how he could add and subtract.

Grandma: Oh, yes, he was very smart that way, did a lot of thinking in his head. Get a problem from school and I'd show it to him, ask him if he could figure that out in his head where I'd have to use paper and pencil.

Paul: Some people have that kind of knack for mathematics. To very quickly catch on or they can do it very fast in their mind; you have to have some mathematical mind.

Lent: And he didn't want you to go on to music, for instance; she was a great musician and he didn't want you to go. But she would have loved to have gone.

Grandma: He would but my mother didn't want me to go.

Lent: Oh, the mother, I'm sorry. Her mother put her foot down. She couldn't go
But grandma, you would have loved to go to a music school because she has always been an organist and pianist.

Grandma: She thought I'd meet someone and get married.

Lent: She thought she'd meet the wrong kind of mate.

You were born in '79, got married in 1903.

Grandma: I was 24.

(end of tape)

Paul: Why don't you tell us a little bit about what your wedding was like? Can you remember when you got married in 1903? How did you meet your husband?

Grandma: In Hancock, at church. He was from the iron country, Republic, and we were married in 1903. It was a quiet home wedding.

Lent: You had met him at church, you told me one time, grandma. You met him in the church and that's all she was allowed. She wasn't allowed to go anywhere else.

That's right, it was kind of restricted, you couldn't go out too much.

A young gentlemen couldn't come over to do much courting, it was kind of-

Lent: How did your father signal when it was time to go home, grandma?

Grandma: Our house on Harris Avenue had a double living room.

My father was ready for bed at 9. He wore high boots, I can remember them out in the hall, and when he'd take his boots off, that was a sign he was getting ready for bed, it was time for him to go.

Lent: He'd make a noise with his boot on the floor----bang, bang. He had a boot jack. This was Uncle Dell's sign, we called him Uncle Dell affectionately. Go home! And he meant it!

Paul: Well, I suppose at that time

Lent: Well, 9, yes, they go to bed; they're up early.

Paul: Ya, they get up at 6 o'clock in the morning; they animals and that to take care of sometimes; probably had their own garden.

Oh, yes. And one boy would have to get up and fire the furnace in the morning, wouldn't he, grandma? Uncle John would have to get up, to get that furnace, that's a big house. All wood, no coal. They'd bring in like 20 cords of wood, all kinds of it, that's a big house.

Paul: They must have spent lots of money on having people bring in wood to that place

Lent: There was a full-time man working there all the time. Cutting, splitting, carrying it in the basement, carrying out the ashes, getting up early in the morning, shoveling the snow.

Paul: When you were young, before you got married, when you were still living at home, and a strict life, did you have much spending money? We you able to go downtown and buy some candy--

Grandma: My mother gave us 25¢ a month or something like that, (laughter) I can't remember just how much
Paul: Never very much

Grandma: to buy candy

Paul: Did you get money for playing the organ? Were you paid for that?

Grandma: In later years I did.

Paul: But not before you were married

Grandma: No, not before I was married.

Lent: Women weren't seen much on the street; those were fancy women on the street

Paul: So you couldn't go downtown when you got 25¢ a month, but your dad was probably doing kind of well, not overly wealthy but he was doing quite well and he could build a nice house like that, a brick house---

Lent: That's right and he lived a full life.

Paul: Ya, I'm sure that he was spending some money

Lent: He was treating everybody else.

Paul: Did your father and mother get along, or should I ask a question like that?

Grandma: Oh, yes. My father was always the boss,

Paul: She didn't talk back at all

Grandma: The last word. He'd tell my mother how far I could do about anything, how far I could go, and she'd have to tell me.

Lent: He couldn't tell her what to do, mother would relay it. Or any disciplining, he would tell her what to do and the mother would have to discipline his kids. He couldn't, underneath he was chicken-hearted, but outwardly, terrific adventurer.

Paul: Was your mother very nice, easy-going person, congenial

Grandma: Oh, yes

Paul: And easy for you to get along with, except that I 'spose you'd get angry when she would be relaying messages for your father and you knew that it was coming from your father but through her.

Grandma: Last word, you know

Paul: Did you help her with the cooking and baking?

Grandma: No, we had help.

Paul: Oh, you had couple helpers, too

Lent: Full time

Paul: Full-time help? He did quite well then

Lent: And she stayed on. Sophie Alanen from South Range lived with 'em some 45 years
Grandma: She lived for many years with us.
Paul: You lived out little bit by Suomi then.
Lent: Yes, that's the one across Lieblein's.
Grandma: Yes, we lived in our house on Quincy Street.
Paul: And you had someone living in with you then, too? At that time?
Grandma:
Lent: Wasn't Sophie there then?
Grandma: Seems to me we used to have a woman that came in to wash.
Paul: And you moved up here. When did you move to this house?
Lent: 1902, I think. Just before you were married, grandma.
Grandma: Yes, that's about right, 1902.
Paul: Did you live there then for a while after you were married?
Grandma: After I was Married?
Lent: Summit Street.
Grandma: I lived in west Hancock, when I was first married.
Lent: Not far from the Suomi College, grandma, remember?
Paul: Oh, ya, right up a block from there
Lent: Not far from the present Suomi College
Paul: That's right. They just got started.
After you got married, did you go to different events? Up here was the booming area in the 1900's, there were plays going on in Calumet and big 4th of July celebrations, I heard the other day some one told me that some other carnival company would like to come up here, it was a really big thing to do, to come up here on 4th of July or a week at a time and they did well up here. In fact presidential candidates came up here.
Lent: And some of the early theatrical people like that scotchman, who was he, grandma Lauder?
Grandma: Oh, yes, singer was he?
Lent: He was, he would do as they do today, sort of a lyric-word man
Grandma: humorist
Lent: Sir Harry Lauder. And they had all the top operating stars in the country, anyone you could name.
Paul: Did you go to some of those with your husband?
Grandma: Yes
Paul: Go and hear some of the operas or opera singers?
Paul: Because that was your field. And you continued to play in the church then, I 'spose, after you were married?

Grandma: Yes.

Paul: Did you bring up your children different than your parents brought up you? Change a little bit?

Grandma: 

Lent: I think grandma was a little too strict, she was fearful that they wouldn't be brought up right, too, and she was pretty firm with her children. Probably more than her father was because he was chicken-hearted but the mother was firm with you, grandma.

Grandma: Oh, yes.

Lent: And they were awfully afraid that the children might embarrass them.

Grandma: That's what I said, we had to draw the line on something.

Paul: But that would be accepted, most people didn't allow most people didn't want——Sunday was still considered a day of rest and stay home and go to church and kind of a family day; maybe you might go on a picnic; you might take a ride if you had a car. Did you do other things on a Sunday afternoon; did you do things with the family, go on a little trip of something?

Lent: Might go with Uncle John in his car, grandma, you remember, you said? Yes. Her brother had a car, Buick, in those days, after 1912, and you always had a carriage, grandma, with horses, and you had your own.

Grandma: Oh, I had a pony one time.

Lent: It was horse and buggy and they were fancy buggies. We have some pictures

Grandma: That was before I was married now.

Lent: That's right! Yes! Real fancy. But afterwards the family had this——remember those little surreys, well, they had this and they would all go on Sunday afternoon; that was the story told me. And Uncle John was her brother, was the house man, he took care of the horses, the cattle, and everything was right up to snuff!

Paul: Was he married?

He didn't marry until 1920. To Aunt Jennie. Right? Yes. And they moved in that Dennis home and grandma moved into the family home because her mother and father ----- no, the mother was still living through '31, he passed in '15.

Was your mother quite a bit younger than your dad?

Grandma: By 2 years

Paul: 2 years only? But she lived on for

Lent: He lived a hard life

Grandma: She lived 17 years after my father died.

Paul: How old was your father when he died?
Paul:  Your father was 79 and your mother must have lived to be 95?

Grandma:  94.

Lent:  And she has a brother, Henry, who lived in Arizona and at one time at a meat market in Lake Linden, and he was 94. She is now 93. She will hit 100 if she does what we tell her. We go to Florida in the winter, it's nice and lovely; and it's warm. She gets out of doors; she'll sit out of doors by the hour;

Paul:  It's not too bad here in the summer, you can get out and sun bathe.

Lent:  No. But a rough winter would shorten anyone's life.

Paul:  What other kind of recollections do you have after you were married, do you remember World War I? Did your husband go to war? Or was he older?

Lent:  He was older; he was "in-between". But some of the young men did go to the Spanish-American War such Mr. Swaby Lawton, but not 'Uncle Dell, it was all volunteer those days.

Paul:  And World War I in 1917? Do you remember the war?

Grandma:  Not too well.

Paul:  What did you have--did you get the daily newspaper at your home Gazette at that time?

Lent:  The Native Copper Times

Grandma:  Evening Copper Journal.

Paul:  I think there was a morning paper and one night. Two papers at that time.

Lent:  Yes.

Paul:  What kind of feelings do you have about the area?

Here you are, one of the natives, and your father one of the natives, after all of these years, and in some way the Copper Country is not dying, but is really lax in some ways, the great vitality that it had many years ago, in fact, someone told me the other day that they felt it really lacked it already after the 1920's, and by the time the depression came here, it was pretty tough already and that things really haven't gotten that much better. What kind of reflections do you have back on life before you mentioned that you thought your parents were too strict, maybe you were too strict on the children, what kind of other feelings do you have, how do you feel towards the mining company or towards some of the other industries, but that was the major industry of course. Do you have any other--I don't know what I'd call them, I suppose --

Lent:  Name of the dominant industry that dominated everything.
The mining companies dominated everything in those days, didn't they, grandma? The property, land, even the people if they could, in restrictions, etc., but in their way they thought they were being very gracious.

Paul:  It was really a kind of "paternalism" feeling; they'd take care of their children

Lent:  at their own dispensary which was medical, and what else, grandma, the mines--

Grandma:  I don't think they did very much
Lent: Not too much, socially

Paul: Do you remember the depression? Big depression of 1929-30? Do you remember what it was like? Here you are, living up in the big house, what was it like? Was your husband making—did he get laid off at all?

Grandma: No, he retired. He wasn’t laid off but—

Paul: There was no pension plan or anything, was there, at that time?

Grandma: No. There was never any pension plan.

Paul: So when he retired, then the depression hit, afterwards

Grandma: He had a nice little letter from the company.

Lent: No pension and no federal pension.

Paul: How did you live through the depression then? Here you are, a retired couple, and I suppose you had some of the investments that your father made, that you lived little bit on that,

Grandma: Yes, we had to live on

Paul: yes, because it was pretty rough for a lot of people around town here

Grandma: Oh, yes, it certainly was.

Lent: Living meant food, shelter and church

Paul: It wasn’t extra—not going to a lot of movies, or anything like that

Grandma: No demands on at any time

You spend your time basically at home. Reading, or having other people in.

Grandma: That’s right.

Do you have a lot of close friends from the church? That would come over and visit or did you go visiting?

Grandma: Yes, we had friends.

Lent: The George Roberts; the Leese family, who was superintendent of schools at that time,

Paul: Did you go out, let’s say, a couple times a week at night?

Grandma: no.

Paul: Not that often. I thought maybe

Church, or theatre

Oh, you went to the theatre pretty often.

They enjoyed theatre if it was top program.

Paul: You mean like the plays put on
Lent: Yes, real tops. Movies didn't interest them.  
But you see radio came in about that time, grandma. Fibber McGee and Molly and those things. And they enjoyed all that. And who was the man who said, there's b-a-a-a-d news tonight? Gabriel Heather. This was their evening and at 9 o'clock they'd go to bed.

Life has changed tremendously.

Grandma: Living here wouldn't be like living in the city, would it?

Paul: No. Life has changed here, but it has changed all over, too, at the same time

Lent: But you bought your first car, grandma, about 1930. Remember, Willena went down to Washington, D.C. and she and her brother drove it home.

Paul: Is that right? Why did you buy a car way out there?

Lent: They had a good buy. Her son did. And it was called, not the old McKnight, but it was similar. Peerless, and It was a beautiful car.

Paul: Keep it inside in the wintertime.

Lent: Oh, yes, on blocks, battery taken out,

Grandma; Oh, yes, we never used the car in the wintertime.

Paul: Were the roads plowed very well? in those days?

Grandma: Not so well, I don't thing.

Lent: No, but in the beginning, in 1932, they did a much better job than they now do. Right! Labor was cheap. There was no such thing--last winter, for instance, you could hardly get through here. In those days I lived on Harris Avenue, it was done beautifully. The present Road Commission is lousy compared to those days. I'm serious. The roads were wide, beautifully kept. They had big plows, they didn't have snowblowers. They kept them wide; if we had a severe storm, you might be blocked for 3-4 days. Then they would open them up, but they had all kinds of labor, relief labor, they had 50 men over here shoveling snow for instance. You had beautiful roads. Now they're lousy. There are! They're terrible! I'll tell the mayor if he wants to know, they're terrible. And yet we have all modern equipment. And yet you've got modern, $40,000 snowgoes. But you see, the problem is no one wants to do the labor, they all want to be heavy-equipment operators. Nobody wants to work. It's the truth.

Paul: How did the different church groups get along? Were there different Methodist groups up here? Two different branches of the Methodist church?

Grandma: Well, Quincy had a church in the early days, the men who worked in the mines attended that church, and then town's people attended

Paul: This is kind of considered the higher class one, in some ways.

Grandma: Yes

Paul: The people from the town never went up to the other one

Lent: Oh, no.

Paul: That was for the working

But you had the same minister, sometimes, grandma. He served 2 churches.
What other recollections do you remember from the 1920's, early 1900's, the feelings of people, what they did, what kind of good times there were, what people did for good times? Or anything else, I want to leave it open-ended.

Grandma: That's the year of the Kerredge Theatre

The theatre again, church and theatre, I think.
Sleighing didn't interest you much, on a bob-sleigh with a horse

Grandma: Oh, no; that was in the early days, that was quite a sport

Lent: They did go but.

Grandma: Besides the Quincy, the bob-sled would come all the way down the hill.

Lent: Her brothers would do this, but not she. She wouldn't be allowed.

Paul: It was OK for boys, but the girls couldn't get out and do anything.

Lent: Ya.

Paul: Did you have a lot of clothes when you were young? Before you even were married?

Grandma: Yes. My father had a store, you know, we'd go down there and cut off material and have a dress made.

Lent: There was no ready-made.

Paul: He didn't mind if you went down and took some material

Grandma: Oh, no. He'd charge that.

Paul: He didn't mind it too much

Grandma: Those days they didn't charge anything, he had a little book. And you'd take the book with you when you went to the store and have whatever you bought, charged in that book. And you'd turn the book in at the end of the month and pay your bill. If you were honest, if dishonest, didn't always pay bills.

Lent: Did your dad get left with a lot of bills?

Grandma: He had a few left over after he retired from the store. My job was to go around and collect, a dollar or two a month.

Paul: From different people you mean, you had to go to their houses? That was the one time you could go out.

Oh, ya, he'd send her for the money.

Grandma: I didn't do that very well, either, because some people weren't ready, weren't prepared always.

Lent: Get a dollar—at least, get something on the account. Anything that was charged on the book.

What happened if you didn't come back with some of the money from some of the people? Did he send/her again after?

Grandma: Nobody dared to go back.
Lent: They also had a bob-sled delivery wagon, what used to go as far as Oskar.

Paul: Deliver groceries that far, and dry goods?

Lent: Uncle John used to drive, in thë wintertime it was a sleigh.

Grandma: He'd cut across the lake in west Hancock and come out over there by the old Atlantic Mill.

Paul: Oh, when it froze over.

Lent: Down the ol' Atlantic road, by the brewery there.

Paul: And then go right up the hill; did he go up to Atlantic, then, too?

Grandma: And bring groceries up there.

Grandma: Yes. He had that way too.

Paul: Did people call in their grocery orders then or what? Were there telephones?

Lent: He told me that he stocked the wagon heavy, or sleigh, and people would say, I'll take butter, ham, whatever -- till finally it was all gone.

Paul: And then he'd just sell 'em as they'd go

Lent: That's what he really had to do, there were no telephones, in the early days.

Paul: Did they deliver groceries in Hancock, then?

Grandma: Oh, yes.

Paul: People didn't always have a way of getting down or anything. Husband would be working all day, work 10 hours or something.

Lent: That's right. And the store would be closed, when he got home. There was delivery.

Paul: I 'spose the wife would have to send the little boy down with a slip of what she needed.

Lent: That's what they would do.

Paul: I suppose your dad's store did well because it wasn't a company store. Maybe it was because here you had all the company stores and they were different and people charged there, of course, but then they took it out of their check. And maybe your dad's store because he was independent and not tied to the company at all. He must have been a good businessman.

Lent: Oh, ya, he was. He could be hard, too, couldn't he, grandma. He had to be at times.

Paul: I want to thank you for your time.
Paul: Tell me a little bit about your own background

Lent: My father was English and my mother was German. And their grandparents had come from the old country, not their parents but their grandparents. And they lived in southern Michigan. And the grandparents had moved into the northern Ohio area, Ashtabula, Brian, Mt. Peter, these are the names that they tell me about. They did move out to Wichita, Kansas, for a short time, these are grandparents of me, and my mother's father was not only in the Civil War but he died in the Andersonville prison. So we had all that story. And her father was sheriff of Hillsdale County for many years.

Paul: Is that where you went to school? Hillsdale?

Lent: Yes. In that area, that's where I lived. Hillsdale High School; Hillsdale College. And then I did some work. And this was in the height of the depression. In 1930-31. And in those days, we worked summers as boys do now. But tuition would be, for instance, $200 a year, not as it is now, $1800, but still $200 was hard to save because your jobs didn't pay too good, we worked railroads in the summer. As a gandy dancer, for instance, tamping ties, laying rails, $3 a day, that was it, and then you'd have to pay for your meals out of that, and get the meal from the company, pay the railroad company for that. That's the type of thing, although in '28-'29-'30, I did have a very good summer job in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and was able to work in the hotels where they had what they called Sulphur Baths. We worked on tips and in a summer we could lay aside $400-$500 but we worked hard, 4:30 in the morning, on, until mid-afternoon. And take care of these people and they would give nice tips. So we got our college money that way. And I finished in Hillsdale in '31 and taught for a man whose name was B.L. Davis and there was an opening in Hancock, Michigan; we had a class of 89 students, 8 of us were fortunate enough to get jobs and it was fortunate. We were not better than the others.

Paul: Just like today, tough

Lent: It was through friendship of B.L. Davis who was the former principal at Hancock. And he asked me if he thought there would be someone who would have a nice room where I could stay. Got a good one for me, he said, with Ryan Harrington. He lived over here where Myronen's now live. And I lived there for 3 or 4 years as a single man, and taught Chemistry and Physics here at Hancock.

Paul: That was your major.

Right. For 6 years. And Mrs. Lent and I were married in '36. And in '37

You met her here because you were living in east Hancock?

Yes. The church again, we met at the church. We were Joseph and Mary in a play and went on from there. That's right. They had many church plays in those days. This was a good activity during the depression because there was little else one could do.
Paul: How was it--

Lent: For instance, I got $900 teaching in Hancock and I thought that was good salary but we eat at a restaurant for $6 a week and when we were married in '36, I was still teaching and the salary was $1400, that was pretty good those days. The coach is the only one who would exceed that, All teachers received the same. Regardless of their experience or their age. If you look at the record, you'll find they all got pretty much within $5-6-7 a month, the same, who would put in extra hours and he'd get 100-150 by coaching both football and basketball. And that man at that time was Lawrence Malm who now lives on Houghton Canal and is retired. Lives next to Sandy Lahti, out there.

Paul: What other recollections do you have of the depression years?

Lent: Well, that was the depression years and, of course, Hancock at that time like all communities was struck by this depression.

Paul: Was it already here when you came in 1931?

Lent: Yes, it was.

Paul: You started in the Fall of '31.

Lent: The Stock Market crashed in the Fall of '29. It was slow coming back but there was a tremendous amount of relief and welfare here and this was outside money, so to speak, state and federal and this created a fund throughout the community of money and it would bounce from one merchant to the other, in and out of the banks and back to the gas station and so on. But very few people had cars; I recall that only the principal as far as I know, drove a car year-round and that was Olin Vedder, who is now deceased. The superintendent had a Dodge sedan, his name was Leonard Menneese and he put it up during the winter, didn't drive it. Meaning, up on blocks, take out the battery; in the spring, out would come the car and that was a big deal. As far as I know, no other of the 70 teachers had a car in those days, we all walked.

Paul: You were living out here and you walked.

Lent: Ya. And just before we were married, my wife was teaching in Dollar Bay, and she needed a car, to and from, and she bought a used Chevrolet.

Here with strict parents, your wife got a college education, started teaching.

Yes. Grandma would make sure that her children went on to education, she wasn't allowed. But she made a point, out of this money that they saved, these children went to school. All 3 of them; Donald graduated from Northern,; and he also was a student at Tech; Mrs. Lent graduated from Michigan State; taught at Chassell and Dollar Bay; for years; and they roomed there, you didn't live in Hancock and drive to work; you lived there and that was almost demanded of you. You had to live there And Will graduated from Lawrence as a lawyer and University of Michigan Law School. And he set up business with Sherier in Washington who was a friend of W. Frank James who was a congressman from Hancock at that time.

So all of her children got educated.

She made sure of that. And they were mostly good students because Grandma would spend the time with them, hours on end. It wasn't that they were any more brilliant than any other children, but they worked and as a result they were valadictorians, etc.

(end of tape)
Lent: In about 1935 I moved from Harrington's over to Mrs. Jeffries which is now where Rance Mason lives. And her husband had been president of the bank, but had died, and she wanted someone in the house, she was an older lady and I lived there 2 years I think, and then Mrs. Lent and I were married, and we moved into 317 Vivian, where now Clarence Erickson lives. At that time was a re-modeled, lovely home and the Wargelins' were our neighbors next door, Ray and his wife, they lived in that home, it was the original Traub home. Then in '37 I became principal of the high school in May.

Paul: How did you work your way so quickly?

Lent: Very odd. Well, I went to the University of Chicago in '32-'34, those summers, working for my masters. And not to brag at all, but of the 70 teachers, I was the only one who went to summer school. How did I go? Well, I was single, there were 2 other young fellows who wanted to go from other areas, southern Michigan, and we went, lived very frugally, however, and when the break came for a job, they wanted one with a masters and I literally almost had it so I was appointed. Recommended by our superintendent, in '37.

Paul: Here you are 27 years old

Lent: Ya. And I finished the degree in '39; Mrs. Lent and I spent 2 summers in Chicago. Out of our fabulous salary of 1400, I think I got 1625 as the principal of the school. We made it! One way or another! So I was principal under Olin M. Vedder for 6 years. And World War II came on in the '40's, and several of us who were then active in the administration, applied in the Navy because we thought we would prefer the Navy to being drafted. And that's the honest truth! And we did. We went and spent our time in Milwaukee but we were never called. We had our papers, everything, but the 3 of us from this area were never called. We had our papers.

Were you in the Reserves?

I used to be Lt. Jr. grade. Because we had a masters degree, the 3 of us, but we were never called.

Paul: So did you spend your time sitting in Milwaukee?

Lent: No, we came back, and I went to high school again those years, and then in '43 I applied for and was appointed as superintendent of the Osceola Township Schools, which is Dollar Bay, Osceola, Tamarack Mills, Oneco, which is now where the airport is, Point Mills and Tamarack Mills in Lake Linden, Hubbell. I had those schools. And we had about 500 students and roughly 38 teachers. I was there for 6 years and Mr. Vedder unfortunately for himself became very ill in February of that year and passed away. Miss Eskola who was then principal became acting superintendent and in the spring I was appointed superintendent for Hancock and returned to Hancock. And I was there

Paul: Where did you live then when you came back?

Lent: We lived still at 317 Vivian because there was nothing available in Dollar Bay and we drove back and forth; in those days we had a beautiful used Chevrolet and it ran. And there were 2 or 3 other teachers who lived in Hancock in those days and drove to Dollar Bay because of lack of place to stay. Just had a very few homes in those days. And then I was superintendent from '43 until '63 but in the meantime Mr. Barkell had been appointed and I think it was '60 and I went on as assistant superintendent so frankly I was about 16 years as superintendent and 7 years as assistant and business manager. And then I retired this last January. So that finished off about 40 years.

Paul: What kind of feelings do you have of the educational system?

Lent: Of course, in those days Hancock was considered a very strong academic school. We
were accredited by the North Central, which is unusual in those days

Paul: This was unusual?

Lent: Right! Unusual meaning there were a lot of battles of schools attempting to get on nationwide; Houghton was also accredited, but not many of the others. Calumet, in and out; Lake Linden, in and out; and so on. Dollar Bay was accredited by U of M system but they did lose their North Central accreditation on several occasions and then they would fight to get it back, meaning the staff would have to have certain professional qualifications, this, that, activities—they wanted modern types of things, where there was student-type of commencement, this sort of thing. Then we had a lot of student activities those days because children just didn't have money as they now have. No allowances. Very few jobs for young children. We had dances and Mrs. Lent and I would gladly chaperone dances, Friday nights, for years, almost every Friday night during the school year, and we enjoyed it ourselves. And we had good crowds, no problems, no liquor, no cigarettes, they knew it wasn't to be done, we just didn't have any, frankly we never did. Very fortunate! And the kids cooperated because they wanted a place to come to. And they knew if they once left the dance floor or the gymnasium, or the building, they were not to return that evening. That was it. If they once went outside, that was it. And they knew that. We just didn't have any trouble. Educationwise, yes. That's about it. And of course the young people had no problem if they once graduated at any college or university in the United States. So we thought that was pretty good.

How did students get along in the '30's?

Lent: In the '30's, we had to make our own fun again. We had football, and we had basketball, we had our social events, and student clubs, Hi-Y and on and on, so they would create their own fun; they didn't need money; a little, yes, but not as it is today; just didn't need it.

What about the Finnish children? Did they come sometimes learning half-English?

Lent: Oh, yes. We had several who learned English and we had a special class for them. And this would work out very nicely, and I know your father was there in the early days, early meaning early in my day, and he will recall some of those same problems. But not too many, most of them knew English well and Finnish. And we had no problem of minority groups.

Everybody was a minority.

Lent: Everybody had a lot of fun, together. Thought nothing of it.

Paul: There probably was less between the children than there was between the parents.

Lent: Just didn't have it. Right. I think that is true. We just didn't have any problems that age. It didn't crop in. So we had a grand time; in those days, Boyu Waisanen was a student and Jay Lanctot and your father, this type of young people, so we each had a grand time. And discipline, yes, but to a minor degree. Not a great deal of discipline was ever necessary.

Paul: There was never in Hancock a lot of

Lent: Not any real serious; we just didn't have it; once in a while we'd have a problem; it's true that an unfortunate situation, without naming any names, but it was usually some unfortunate thing that would lead up to an emotional crisis, and the kid would create a discipline problem. We had the first bomb scare of any school in the nation, by the way, and that was on or about 1957. That's right. And the sheriff took the building over, and we emptied the building of all the students and they stayed outside while they searched the lockers, went right through the building, no bomb was ever found.
But it was by telephone call to the sheriff that a bomb was set to go off at 1 o'clock in Hancock High school.

Probably some student

Lent: As far as we know, it was the first one in the nation; as far as we know. And there has been several since. So brother, we know what this worry was; it was a worry. Because there were students in the building at the time, and we had to get them out.

Paul: You never really had a lot of problems with breakage in the school, did you?

Lent: Not until about 1959 we had one serious serious break-in or burglary where they used dynamite to blast open the safe over the week-end. It was in September, the first week-end of school, when someone knew that there was a lot of cash which we couldn't get into the bank over the week-end because banks weren't open Friday nights, and accumulated because there weren't money counters those days and we would, of course, take in the rent money from the students. In those days probably, 1200 students and then we would count them the second week. And would bank the bills however, but the cash we had to count. There were no counters, so these things had to be set up to be done later. They broke into the school by going in through a window, whoever it was, and it was reported to the sheriff; none was ever found, yet I got in on it too, by the way, and fingerprints were taken but no one was actually apprehended but they did use dynamite and blew off the dial but it didn't open. And they did blast the principal's office safe which you've seen, open the same way and it had about $400 in currency and probably 2-300 in bills; they took that but left the coins. They didn't want to carry it. They wanted to move fast. That's all.

Paul: The students in the '30's and '40's and even up until the '50's and '60's, were never really very riotous in the school or anything like that.

Lent: We had a lot of fun with the kids, once in a while somebody would say: comes the revolution, but then there never was one. Mr. Lent was dictatorius to some kids (laughter), too dictatorial, too authoritative, comes the revolution but we didn't have one.

Paul: Were you dictatorial?

Lent: Well, meaning that John Doe didn't follow rules and regulations would be disciplined.

Paul: Discipline in schools has changed quite a bit since you started

Lent: Without a doubt. Oh, yes.

Paul: You think hurting

Lent: Yes, I don't think there's near enough discipline and of course it's easy to set the blame, but I think in the air about 12-14 years ago when parents said you cannot spank my child. You may not discipline my child in a sense.

Paul: But there was never

Lent: That's what . We had very, very little. I think in all my day I never spanked more than 1 or 2 children and I think they enjoyed that because someone had to settle them down emotionally. Never any severe discipline. No paddles and sticks like in grandma's day when the superintendent had a great big stick. We had none of that, it wasn't necessary, it was all by conference and consultation. But some little fellow, being a grade school kid, he— but this was the era when teachers were restricted from severe discipline. Frankly I think that's where some of the problems began. Societwise. If you know what I mean.
What other kinds of changes have taken place in education? How do you feel about them?

Lent: Of course there's been a tremendous change in education, in the teaching and in the methods. But fundamentally education is still the same, I visit Suomi, there's still the lectures, there's still the discussion, they might rap with someone, meaning discuss, this is what we always did. But there's more of it now than there was in those days.

Paul: Not so much faculty oriented

Lent: No, I think they aim for more critical thinking on the part of the student, it may stimulate them. This is true, but I also, being an older administrator now, just can't see some of the types of things that are now permitted. But this is nationwide, not just Hancock. I'm talking about the kid who doesn't clean up, the long hair, he's dirty, and they have it too. On the other hand the student who has the long hair, keeps it clean, he looks lovely. You like that, in fact I think the change is good. But it's the kid (you've seen 'em, sat next to 'em) and had to move over probably, for obvious reasons. Otherwise, no, there really haven't been that many changes. True, you have visual aids, different types of communication, of recent date which is much more modern, TV in the classroom.

Paul: Do you think the school systems of this area have kept up with audio-visuals?

Lent: Insofar as they have the funds. Some of the city schools but still educationwise our children are farther ahead than the city children. And this is proved over and over again, when they transfer here.

Paul: Do the students do quite well on their tests here and there?

Lent: After they've been here a while, they do not do well when they first come here. I'm talking about the large cities.

Paul: Students that move up here?

Lent: Right. Now if they come from the outlying areas of the cities, the suburbs, the more wealthy areas, then they are probably to a degree, advanced more than our children.

Paul: But the students here do as well on the national tests,

Lent: Well, and better and in college it's the same; you see them, listed. They get top honors. And furthermore, University of Michigan has dozens of our young people as their secretaries and so on, they take everyone they can get. The same is true of Suomi. If they can get 'em from this area; Burroughs of Detroit, you probably know this, around Plymouth and Livonia, standing order—any young people you can send to us as a bookkeeper, or a typist, can begin working for their company, no questions asked. They want them. And they love to get them. We have lot of our people there.

Paul: Isn't that a problem

Lent: They have to go there, there's nothing here for them. The mines can hire a few, the banks a few, Detroit & Northern a few. Copper Range a few; There just was no opportunity for the young people so they had to leave here in large numbers and they did. And would come back if there was something here which they could do.

What kind of feelings do you have about the future of the Copper Country?

Compared to when I came, it's so much more active and economically sound than it was then. So it's very difficult to say what's happening. But as far as Hancock compared
to Tampa, Florida, well, there isn't a comparison. Because they have huge industry, they have a huge tourist trade, we have it but on a minor scale, and since the mines have closed, there is a problem. There is a hope that they again will open but they'll never hire as many people again because it's going to be modernized mechanically, probably 2-300. They won't need them.

What's the tax base here?

Lent: Just average. Because the mining property has been taxed relatively low in terms of acreage. For instance, Hancock Township and Quincy and so on, those mines have been taxed at a very, very low rate, not rate because the rate is the same for all, but at a low assessment, which has been set by the state tax commission, not locally, and as a result, it didn't bring in a great deal of money. For instance Franklin Township when it annex ed to Hancock, owed us some $4800 in tuition which they had been paying over the years for their students, they just didn't have the money so we agreed to take them and forget it and annex it and so on but that created a tremendous battle in town when we had our first millage election.

Paul: When was that?

Lent: That was in 1954; it was a tremendous battle, meaning everyone was upset. Here Hancock, Mr. Lent's recommendation we take in all these outside districts, Franklin, Hancock Township, Salo, and they owe us all this money and they should pay us and they frankly didn't have it, the mines owned all the property literally, very few farms, and what were available were leased from the Quincy Mine; the children needed an education so we just battled it out one summer until we finally got the millage through, said, you must pay this flat millage or we just can't operate and this will include everybody. So we threatened to close the library and we would have done so, we would have cut staff, eliminate all athletics, we would have had to, we would not have eliminated any students. If the people didn't like it, they would have had to eliminate the present school board which would have been slowly done because they had a four-year term. There is no such thing as re-call. So we have excellent men, I won't name them, but some of them are still in this community, strong financiers of this community. And still are. They could see the need for educating the children, let's forget about the money, and go from there because the state paid the major portion from there on anyway. Still do.

What kind of other major problems have you had as administrator of the school system?

We haven't had any that were too outstanding, we've had our usual problems with administration but usually it's been money over the years because it's been a struggle from the depression right up to the present time. For instance, in the '30's when I was principal, I recall that the state aid per pupil was $32. Today it's almost $700. The other money had to be raised locally. This was a problem.

Salaries were small, that's true,

Paul: You said you got $600 the first time?

Lent: $900. And then 1400 when we were married and 1600 as principal. When I was superintendent in Dollar Bay, I went down there for 3,000 which was considered a top salary. Even more than Hancock was paying at the time. When I came back, salaries had improved over those 6 years but there again, because of state aid, which we lobbied for and we admit it, we were lobbyists. I spent most of my spare time in Lansing, lobbying, I was there day after day, flew down and trains, we all did, to battle this thing, we were some of the first lobbyists. And now they're not considered—the top echelon people don't like lobbyists; that was the only way we could force the state to do it. The local people couldn't do it. And yet we were being priced out of market and other areas so we battled, the U.P., we stuck together, all the superintendents, we spent a lot of time down there during the legislative sessions. We were well received. We were never treated badly down there. But we did lobby.
Paul: What were some of the social problems in this area? In the '30's and the '40's?

Loneliness? Drinking?

There may have been; of course, we didn't travel with the crowd, who--but still this is all right but still I know of it

I mean because of your association with children, you would come up with some of those.

The problems? Broken homes? Divorced families. Mothers who were in a stuper in the mornings, couldn't, and didn't, get the children out of bed and we would have to send the assistant principal and you know who I mean, out there, Mr. Gustafson, I did some of it out in Osceola; there were just a few parents of this nature and it was because the emotional situation--things were so bad and they were just miserable, but somehow they got a hold of alcohol.

Paul: And there's trouble, like their dad wouldn't be working

Lent: Oh, yes, there was all of this problem; on relief, and would have very little in terms of money, they could get food and clothing but they weren't the best of clothes.

Paul: Did they have buses running in those early day?

Yes. In the early days we used trains. Painesdale had all their students travel by train, from Atlantic Mine right on up to Painesdale. Lake Linden used some of them. The DSS&A operated then. Hancock never did. They used the streetcar and in those days, the county buses. They were operated by a private company. Their Board of Education would give them tickets to ride this bus to high school; off-times they would sell the ticket to school and then they got a few pennies to buy a few things. And in the winter they'd come in with frozen cheeks, frozen ears, and we'd have to help 'em get that thawed out and say, now, next time, you take that bus, in the winter at least. They'd sell the ticket, it was worth money. Maybe 15¢ on the hill, or a dime, I don't recall. That is true, so socially, you had those problems. But not to the degree that one might think.

Paul: There's always something, but kind of minor, that you had to work out.

Lent: Ya, right. They just didn't have the money to buy, the liquor which is sold today. For instance I read last night that the wine business has gone into the billions of dollars when in our day it was a few hundred thousand. But Hancock always had saloons, right, grandma? And I had come from the community of Hillsdale where it wasn't even sold, except on the backdoor somewhere.

That was during prohibition, though.

Lent: Right.

Paul: Hancock had--even though prohibition--speak easies--

Lent: Oh, yes, they had a backdoor, yes, I can name 'em right along the street. But there was that drinking to that extent. But it wasn't social drinking, for instance, it'd be rare for a woman to go into a saloon, that'd be very rare. And no liquor was sold at restaurants. None. If it was done, it was done by the bottle, at the home or at parties. And this did happen. Suomi College can tell you a few, which I won't relate. They had problems, too, I know because I knew Dr. Nikander, I knew Dr. Wargelin well, both Ray and his father, I know some of the problems they had with some of the older students; the parties they would have, drinking, but it wasn't excessive,

Paul: Well, colleges have always had that kind of problem I guess to a degree.

Lent: We've always gone through that but it was not excessive, never has been, but liquor has
been a problem state-wide but Houghton and Hancock had their saloons. That handled the problem.

Paul: So you even had 'em during prohibition time.

Lent: Oh, yeah, they didn't have to go underground, here the door was open

Paul: That's how some of the people around here made money

Lent: That's right.

Paul: They became wealthy. Bootlegging and making their own wines

Lent: Some of the politicians got by very nicely by just rapping on the bar and they'd be handed a check or a bill, to keep their business going.

How was law authority at that time? What did the authorities say?

Lent: We had good sheriffs in those days. "LOck" Schumaker, Jay Pearce, they were very strong.

Paul: Can you remember the first time you voted for president?

Oh, yes. This would have been Roosevelt, the first

Paul: 1932 probably.

Lent: I remember all the problems to be elected a Democrat and oh, boy, everybody was all upset because this was a Republican area. Very strong, The whole U.P.! It changed later. But oh, how people were upset when Roosevelt was elected and then with all his social programs, holy smoke, it really

Saved some of the people here, though. Welfare, WPA.

Lent: Oh, yes, we had PWA, and WPA; they had a lot of good projects. those days

I've heard that they built the waterline from Painesdale

That's right, and the Brockway Mountain Drive was constructed in those days.
A friend of mine was the first to go directly over it and through it, in a Chevrolet tudor.

Paul: It was built in the end of the '30's then.

Lent: It was in the '30's. We happened to be out that way in Copper Harbor and we started back on the Brockway Drive because that road was---well, we'll go far as we can and go back. We got to about where that little house is now, where the observation post is, and I thought, oh, boy, we could go no further, they're about 30-40-50 men working on the road with shovels and picks and they got a hold of the car and pushed us through. And the other side hadn't been finished, they were working both ways. Just like the ol' Union Pacific.

Paul: When did things get better around here, after the '30's? When did the depression really kind of ease off?

Lent: I think by '39 it began to ease off, and '40 it was much better. And then of course with World War II, things began to hum again, because the mines opened up to sell their copper. Oh, yes, it was really humming. In the early days when I first come down here, don't you remember Uncle Aitch used to say, you could shoot a gun down the street in Hancock and Houghton and not hit anything. Right? That was true. People were not
on the street, they had no money, they wouldn't be over in town in droves as they are now, you wouldn't have any parking problem. The streetcar went down the middle of the street until

Paul: When did the streetcar phase out?

Lent: '32. After that they left the tracks there, I think some of them are still there. Holding up the road in a couple places where there's a _________ underneath; some day she's going to cave if they don't fill it. And that's down by the City Drug Store. And you can see a dip there now; you drive today, you'll see what I'm talking about. That's held up by very treacherous things, it should be opened up and filled. A state Highway and they should force 'em to do it. Then, of course, World War II, things boomed, as far as we were concerned. Suomi College began to grow, right after that war. Michigan Tech began to grow. Tech had 400 students when I first came in '31. And now it's 5,000. Suomi had like 40 to 50 students, maybe 60 students, now they have 400. This brought in professors, employees, employment. Detroit & Northern was very small in those days, today it's huge, a $300-million institution. And the banks were small but now they employ many people too.

Paul: So things really progressed in many ways.

Lent: But it's usually from outside money, coming in one way or another. Welfare, yes, it's still a big thing. There's some farming, some dairying. Mining is very minor, a few go to White Pine. What are there, 8 or 10 busloads a day, but it does help the economy. If you had someone to open a factory, with a hundred employees, you'd be doing pretty good. Then even the Ripley Foundary and Formatics, this all helps.

(end of tape)