

Rogers City
Interview with Fred Dagner
Rogers City, Michigan 10/17/08

INT: INTERVIEWER
UNW: Unknown Woman

START OF INTERVIEW

INT (INTERVIEWER): Rogers City Michigan, October 17, 2008. Here we are with Mr. Fred Dagner. Can I call you Fred?

FD (Fred Dagner): Sure.

INT: Okay great and he's a great guy actually, he's just sitting here waiting to give us some great information. So I'm just going to start off by asking him his birth date.

FD: August 20, 1922.

INT: Great and your ethnicity?

FD: Pardon?

INT: Your ethnicity, your background?

FD: German decent. My mother was born out at the (Haydensville Area) that was a German Colony out there. Westerly German Colony, south of that was all Polish. My dad's ancestors came over here on the gold rush out in California. They got Ellis Island; they got the train and got fouled up in Detroit because they were heavy drinkers.

INT: Okay.

FD: This is the honest to God truth. They were heavy drinkers. They got on the wrong train and ended up here in Alpena on the DNN. They didn't go, the DNN.

INT: So that's destiny.

FD: They were left up in Harvey in Northern Michigan.

INT: And they were going to?

FD: They were going to California. They got screwed up in the Detroit area, must have traded trains or something and they been drinking and ended up in Alpena. Well in them days lumber was king, there was a job for anybody who wanted be up here. It was a big lumbering deal then. My grand folks all went to work lumbering. And I got relations that were quite prominent as lumberjacks, they were. They lived in Alpena. I was born in Alpena. The DNN had a round house in Alpena in other words that's where the engines came in to get repaired; they bring them in there. And all the young fellows in Alpena, they got a job in that round house, in these engines, getting them service, get them back on the DNN Railroad – that was to Mackinaw. Well my dad was in there and I don't know when he met my mother, my mother was born out here south of town in the Haydensville area. She was of German ancestry and my dad was German ancestry. Well they got married and I was born in Alpena.

INT: Did they teach you any German?

FD: Yes.

INT: So you speak German?

FD: My grandmother taught me a lot of German, but I won't tell you what it was.

INT: Oh, I see.

FD: She called me names, you know.

INT: Improper German.

FD: It was rough German. But they got married in Alpena when they started this plant down here, _____ side of the plant. And they got those engines from Panama Canal and the steam shovels; oh they had to have engine operators. All these kids fit the bill, they could run an engine, they worked on them in the Round House. They all come up here lock, stock, and barrel and they moved in here and got those jobs running the engines.

INT: What year was that about?

FD: Oh that was after I was born 1923/24. They come up here and their shovels were up, dug the Panama Canal, went up and dug the Sault a couple of them. That's where a bunch of the shovellers come down here. In the school, I'll tell you about the friend of mine, her dad got a job up there to, in the Sault and that's, he got married first and they were (Serbs), they came over here and he came down here, he worked in the bars and got killed. They used to use liquid oxygen as a b____ element see. Very volatile and well, he got killed on it and they lived down (battlefront) there was three houses on that block, we were one and they were the third one. We got to be good friends with those

people we grew up together. As Bart that's what they call Battle Front that was all _____ people down there. They built the house from all around Second Street here all the way down to where the hole is now, where the break is, those were all company houses. First Street was the same way all the way down to Calcite. And when the _____ moved down there, those were all company houses. I mean, it was known as Battle Front. I mean we were neighbors we worked together; the kids were in a fight--.

INT: So Fred did you have a farm at all; did your parents have a farm?

FD: No my grandparents had a farm. They had a farm out here on Section 12 they called it.

INT: What did they produce?

FD: Most farms were homesteads, in other words the government gave you a homestead of a square mile, if you could make a go of it, it was automatically yours, it didn't cost you nothing. Those were homesteads.

INT: And then what did you plant?

FD: They planted out there, what always plants, grain, potatoes; it's a good potato area. The best potato area in Michigan competes with the _____.

INT: So then during the depression you didn't have any problems right, because of the farm.

FD: We didn't have a farm.

INT: Your parents did.

FD: No, no, no my grandparents had a farm. My grandparents made it, not through yet. Michigan, and they built all these houses here that when Brandi built the houses. The biggest crew in the plant was Carpenters, that was 60, 70 houses they built and one of my ___ got to be a painter, one was on the blast, one was a driller, and one was in the crusher, they all went to work. My grandfather around the farm in Section 12. He was a farmer and his specialty was building a barn. There were some farmers that were good at barn building that was his specialty, you know Grandpa Schmidt, he was a barn builder. The boys all left the farm and went to work at Calcite, after the Metz Fire came through my mother says, she was a girl she remembered it, maybe you read in the paper about the Metz Fire. The trees were all cut down the big ones the pine, all that was left was the branches and that was the tinder right there. They all got dried pine trees, woosh. She said it would have been the _____ on top the barn; their farm would have burned down too. _____ on the way to Metz, ya know, we talk about the big Metz fire. That brightened the path.

INT: There was an article about that last night.

FD: There was an article in the paper about the Metz Fire. My mother was a young girl, she told all about that, what they went through. She said that was almost as bad as the passenger pigeons. Passenger pigeons she said they come in flocks. If they come in the building, they _____ a whole field on you.

UN: And lots of grasshoppers.

FD: There were passenger pigeons like she said. And the boys all had shotguns, boom, boom, boom, keep chasing them away. I mean farming was hard. Farm bred horses; you didn't have tractors she said. You chased the problems off and you chase the horses. And she said you work from sun up to sun down. She said when the boys, they started hiring people at Calcite, well they all went to work. That was better than farming, they outlive grandpa, I'll tell you he can farm too. He was a carpenter and he got a job at Calcite.

UN: Did Calcite always take care of these houses then?

FD: Yes, they maintained them. A guy by the name Zepple, he was a painter and my uncle was his helper. And they painted inside the houses, I mean when they built the houses they had a group of painters to paint them, but they maintained those houses. You paid rent on those houses to the plant. And down on Orchard Street, you know where that is down two blocks. That was a company house. My dad moved up here from Alpena he got a company house, we lived in that. Because my dad, the Comies, the Topekis, that's another one I told you about, Ericsons, Gordons and Sopers all worked at Calcite. They all had company houses and the block coming from Second Street all the way up, a whole block on both sides of the street, all company houses. The beach hall, those people there, all company houses. They were company houses.

Unknown Woman (UNW): Question, I remember when _____ and Wildred Sag_____, right here, Wildred, I used to spy when we first moved to town because she would tell that evidently as you moved up in the plant, you moved up the ladder you got a better house.

FD: Yeah, they took care...

UNW: They'd change your house.

FD: They took care of their people.

UNW: There were people who said that I lived in this house, I lived in such and such a house and they would name all the people, the houses they lived in. It was playing musical chairs, but musical houses.

FD: Better house, better job.

UNW: But they were all plant houses though.

INT: So Fred can you list the kind of jobs you had here?

FD: What I did, when time of school come out?

INT: Yeah.

FD: My first job was a good job. I worked for Mr. Whitely. Mr. Whitely had the advance, I worked at his house up here on the hill, and I was the house. I _____ around. He had a, Harry had, he was sick, Harry. Harry _____ himself, he had _____ TB. They had a boulder of wood fire boulder. It was my job to cut the wood, split it, haul it in the basement, take care of the lawns and shovel snow in the wintertime. Across the street was PHF that was his father in law, this was Whitely was a Hefbr _____ and then older gentlemen that worked for them as a caretaker, well he was too old to put the screws up on the windows and they'd come and get me and I'd help them see and I got 25 cents an hour for that. That was big money. But then Friday I would play football, I couldn't do that, but I didn't play basketball. I work there and I had my weekends and stuff and I'd go hunting. I'd rather hunt than play basketball. But I worked for Whitely 'till almost the time I graduated. I graduated in June and I took over on the steamboat. I went on the John G. M _____ as a deck hand. I never had a book even. They called it a book because it took _____ on Ignace Island. The inspectors were up in St. Ignace, well how was I going to get up to St. Ignace? George Jones was a hiring agent and he made the rounds. He said "I'll forget about it, we can carry it out in the spring." So I went to work. I got out of school in June, I think September, October I forget the date, it was in the fall of the year and I finished the season on the John G. Munson laid the boat up in the Cheboygan River. I came home. I got a job and hope I go back in the spring. Well spring come and they didn't hire me. _____ hire those people, where we laid the boat up in Cheboygan, you did all the work in the _____ and I didn't know that. So what did I do, I stuck around home and well I was getting _____, I needed the money. I needed the money bad. So all of a sudden George Jones comes, he says, the first of April,

"Fred get your clothes packed get on the Munson again."

I says, "George is it a April fools joke, I'll kill ya."

He says, "No, I'm serious I mean it."

I went sailing then and was on the Munson, I finished a year in there and the next couple years I was sailing the Munson. In the wintertime it was a joke around here you're working. They took the deck hands, the oilers and the firemen and they put

them out in the quarry, work them in the plant, building track. Now these Italia's were the older people they were the track workers, but we were the young guys the ones that they wanted to keep us, see. So we'd go out and stack work and we weren't track workers. It was a regular picnic. That happened a couple years and then we got transferred to the Bradley.

INT: Yep, there's a note here that you sailed on that.

FD: How can you be on the Bradley, they said. I says you know that's the flag ship and they want the best on here. That was a saying, but you know there were no unions in the wall. I was on the Bradley one year and I went on the Munson's old Christians Horse his mate and I went on his watch. I got to know him because he lived; he stayed at the {Fork} Hotel. That's gone now; it's a laundry mat there that was a roomy house. And they were in Denmark, him and another guy called Nelson. And my mother, that Mr. Fork was my grandmother's brother and my mother was down there and I got to know these kids. This Christians Horse, this Nelson got killed and his mom just took over his wife and two kids, she just moved in. I got to know this; I've been on the sea where he was first mate. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, you're my friend you know. When I transferred over on the Bradley then Captain Kurs was his skipper and he got ill that time and Chris was the oldest first mate, he came over as Captain. He was watching job come up.

"Freddy," he says, "you are the watchman."

Oh my, there was no such thing as seniority. I went up there ladder on the boats, right up the ladder I did, but Martha my asking my about the service board over here. She told me once, went to school with her I graduated with her, she says

"Now Fred I'm going to give you some bad news," she says "you guys, all you young guys with AD papers and oiling and fire certificates are going to the service, you're going to get drafted in the army."

Oh my, I didn't want to do that.

She says, "If you were smart, you get down below some place, enlist some place."

Well where are we going to enlist, I didn't know anyplace down. We took boat down there we'd never think about where you enlist. Well I was on the Bradley, we went down there and we had a, they were building a new dock there. And the Bradley come in and there was no spars or anything, there was dead heads back in the, with hooks on that's where you put the cables for the boat there. And Chris Horse, he was a skipper he says, "Freddy, can you swim?" "You know I can swim," He says, "You swim to the shore and take the heave and get the cables on there and you can have the whole trip off." So I did and then this, I was telling you about the girl from out in Haydensville, went to school together, we grew up together and I say let's go up town girls. We went up town. "Wait a minute now," I said, "got something to tell you about," and he got his notification too, he was going go to the service. I said, "Hey, let's go find a place so we can enlist. So we hear the taxicab, they know.

I called this cab and says, "We want to know someplace where we can enlist."

He said, "What's the matter with you damn fools, you got a good job?"

I says, "Yeah but that will pan out."

He says, "I'll take you down the Grizzwald building." I don't know where the --, where's the Grizzwald?

He took us down there, it was an enlisting center. I walked in there and there was a big guy, in dress blue uniforms on you know. My kid brother entered the marines just ahead of me see.

Well I said, "Well I'm going to take that.

"We got to examine you right there," he said, "Take a deep breath. Hold out hands, can you walk, yep you're in the service," he said.

Oh come on. No just kidding.

UNW: What year was that?

FD: 1943. He gave us an in, he said, "Now he called a guy and he gives a good physical."

About a half hour he called an officer he said,

"Raise your right hand."

We did, he swore us in.

"You guys are marines," he said.

I said, "Well good god, we're a long ways from home. "He says, "You won't be called for a while, don't worry. He says, "You go on home, I'll tell you it will be less than a month though." And he was right.

UNW: That's how you got in.

FD: Yeah, he called us we got a notification. Mark _____ got an office up here.

We told them, he said, "Yes I got a notification that you guys were sworn in, you will be notified by me, where you report and when you go down there.

"Oh, good deal. How long?"

He said, "I don't know."

Well I was gone with my wife then, I lived in the house right behind here. This house right next door here, where my mother and my brother and I lived. I had walked for months and I couldn't find my mother. They moved into this house. I wondered. My mother lived here and my wife lived right over in the corner over there. Right on the corner on 2nd and Ontario.

UNK Woman: I remember her.

FD: Dorothy lived there; she walked through Mrs. ____ yard to go to school. Oh that's a good-looking girl, that's a good-looking girl. We grew older and Art Richardson, maybe you don't know, Jenny Gordon girl, he had the Dairy Bars in town. And we'd be off in the wintertime ya know, if you wanted to, we were young, we could get into any bar and buy a beer, they'd sell it to ya. They were 19, 20 years old. You had the money you could get the beer. We had a Constable in town; maybe they still do it we'd have a dance in town some place like this. The Constable has to make an appearance. Every

night there was a dance. Pat Shelow was the Constable. So I said Lisa I didn't have a girl's orchestra. There will be no gardens, that's something _____. Good orchestra. It was a boomtown. All the boats laid up in Rogers City, six steamboats. The guys are gone all year. Couldn't image the goods they had. It was a boomtown in the wintertime. The young guys could go buy a bottle of beer any place.

The constable says, "You guys can go buy a bottle of beer, you can buy all the beer all you want." He said, "But any trouble you're all done, and that not only means you but the rest of your friends."

Oh my god, _____ all the same age, but never happened, no trouble. But there was no trouble getting a drink either, we'd buy 'em at the bar. If we behaved ourselves we were all set.

INT: Now what did you do during Prohibition, that you couldn't get drinks legally?

FD: Prohibition?

INT: Yeah.

FD: Oh Prohibition was over with, everybody, everybody in this neighborhood working for Calcite. Working for Michigan, they made their own _____. Everybody made home brew. You could go up to _____ and buy whiskey. They had stills out there, all these people had stills. Yeah no kidding, they'd sell whiskey, _____ whiskey here I guess, anyplace else cuz I know my uncle would come up from, my uncle Harold. He came up from Alpena and he went down to Detroit and got a job for Chrysler. No he come up here, he didn't go to Chrysler. He went down below, what they called the Purple Gang. Well they knew all the moonshine was made up here, they'd get him a car. Pick that car up and take a big black _____ and load it with whiskey, jugs of whiskey. That was in Prohibition. Honky Tonks they were selling good whiskey made out and poor in a nest they were. He goes yeah, but that was his job. And then when the Prohibition came back, that was all done see they couldn't let more out and he went to work for Chrysler. Everybody made home brew. I'd suck on the hose lots of times and put it into bottles. Take it and shut it off. That was my job see. Somebody put the sugar in, my ma and dad they had the malt and made yeast, but everybody had home brew. They can make some pretty powerful beer.

INT: Yeah they could adjust the alcohol level.

FD: Sugar content made it more alcohol. But they had, their whiskey was, you could go out. Whiskey was no problem buying up here at all. In fact, I got to be a foreman in the quarry. I knew some fellows; we had two pulley's working for us. Young guys, they were working for me, they were. Every Christmas we'd have a party out there, we had our own building and we had a really big party. We'd go out and shoot a deer on _____ road, we could buy a beer, but they'd go out the _____ and bring home a

couple jugs of moonshine. I mean real moonshine. I wouldn't doubt today if you knew the right people you could get some. I wouldn't doubt today you couldn't still do that.

UNW: I remember a story that you told my husband that I'm sure you've forgotten. Back when we moved here in 1965 you were one of the first people that my husband met and we were looking for a house here in town. And you said it's a great place to live, anytime you want to go out to shoot a deer you can just go out and do it.

FD: Yeah, oh yeah.

UNW: My husband never forgot that.

INT: Can you still do that?

FD: Well I don't. I tell you my kids, I had six kids we lived on venison. I had a good job, I had my own pick-up truck, I had a 20-20 pistol and would go around and I'd shoot a deer and I'd say well my God's rooting for me, tonight and pick that deer up and clean it out for us. We had a building with big empty cupboards; we'd skin it out and hang it. We'd have one for the _____ and one for me. And I shot, oh, hundreds of them. My kids lived on deer; they loved deer meat, mashed potatoes, and red gravy. Ma makes red gravy, it was gravy with tomatoes in it see.

UNW: And you never threw any venison away?

FD: Oh my god no. That was it.

INT: That was all sausage right?

FD: I'll tell what happened though, when the kids got ready I took them up to dinner one time and we had beef _____ and they got deathly sick. That's a _____ joke. My kids never taste beef it was always venison. It was available.

INT: Free, why not?

UNW: You didn't go throwing it was like people.

FD: Oh no, no. I had an idea; I had my own pick-up, the best chance in the world. And that USD the property from River Grand Lake you know.

UNW: About 15 miles, 16 miles.

FD: All USD Property, I still got a lifetime certificate to hunt that if I want to.

UNW: Oh, good.

FD: The guy, I would take all these customers hunting you know. All the people had docks, public relations down here. All these guys had docks down there; the companies would buy. It was my job to take them out hunting. They built blinds for them; they made f_____, that's probably the best you can get. I knew where the main deer was, I go where you shooting them. That was a good job. I had one of the better jobs at the plant. I think I did.

INT: And then there's something here that says stories of CCC. Do you have stories to tell?

FD: The what?

UNW: The CCC, the conservation camps.

FD: Oh, yeah. I'll tell you when we were young gaffers in school, the CCC Camp, when it was first originated. You go by the big pine trees on the left hand side, after that there's called the Pines, there's no trees in there. The farmer cleaned that right out. All the pine branches were on the ground and they cleaned it right out. It was called the Pines. And it was the best space for prairie chicken. There was prairie chicken out there in Northern Michigan. And when the CC boys got here all WWI veterans they were. All the old times, the young guys hadn't had a chance to get in there yet. And those old guys planted all those trees they planted miles and miles of pine trees. They had Doug Furs, they were WWI veterans, they put these trees in; they grew like crazy. The Captain that was in charge of the CC's his name is John Edwards. He was a Captain from WWI. And he had two daughters, Betty Jane and Maurine and they moved into _____ building, they moved in there and the one girl was in our class. That was close to see we were. And between the young guys we were on softball teams. We had softball leagues going on all the time you know. And she ah, we'd play football and play softball and she would come to school and I got to know her real well because she was in some of the classes I was in. Sure I'll talk to her, why not.

And she said that, "You know," she said, "Out in the Camps out there, there's a bunch of WWI veterans, they play ball, how would you like get your ball team to go out there and play ball with us?"

"I'd have to check and see, but the guys were in favor 100%."

She says, "You get a free and everything."

So we played ball out there. It was a picnic, these old WWI veterans they were something else. Not that they were old, but they were veterans and oh gosh, we learned a lot of lessons out there. But it was fun; we did that quite a few times – played ball with WWI Veterans. They used to come into town on the weekends, they'd get a pass, they come on to town on the weekends and I got to know quite a few of them. I think the first bar tender that hired over at _____ hotel, the first one, they had a bar there, he was from the CC Camp and I knew him. I was a school kid yet. I knew him

from the camp there. And I knew the Captain Edwards real well. He knew I had a rabbit dog, he says,

“On weekends you come out with me,” he says, “and we’ll stay at the hotel at the camp, we’ll go hunting rabbits.” Well I’ll do that; sure I’ll do it. But he’d get his 45 is what he hunted rabbits with. Then I got to know the girls real well.

UNW: That was more important.

FD: Well the oldest one was in my class and I was so called dating her. It wasn’t a date. Wallburg’s had a drug on main street here and the show was down here at 1st.

UNW: Star Theater.

FD: Yeah and it was a store there and the _____ was on the corner yet. And we’d go to the show and then they moved the show to where it is now. And we’d go to the show and they lived over in the building _____, the building I told you. They lived in there. And everybody walked, we didn’t have any cars, we couldn’t afford a car, we were going to school yet. And when graduation come she was a big, I mean not big but tall, she was a big girl. Her and I walked along together. I was only boy and girl together that was graduating. And I got to know her, but it wasn’t serious, good friends. She went to college, I couldn’t afford _____ I went steam boating. She went do to, I forget where, Central. She went down there, went to school, I was on the steamboat. Well that river, this is comic, went down to river. I didn’t have a car, got my dad’s car, he let me have the car, he said go-ahead pick her up. She wanted to drive the car back; she rode and took it to the snow bank. It didn’t hurt her.

UNW: That made your dad happy.

FD: He didn’t know about it, I never told him. We didn’t tell him. It didn’t hurt the car, right in the snow, flopped over. Well after she graduated she went to college, I went to steam boating. I never saw her again. Never saw her. I got out of the service, I was getting discharged at Great Lakes, that’s where they discharge the marines, I was getting discharged there, I looked to the directory, Edwards, Captain Edwards, I’m going to give that number a call. I called it and Mrs. Edwards answered the phone.

I says, “Hello Mrs. Edwards?” Yep. I says, “This is Corporal Fredric D. Dagner, USS Marine Core, discharged going back to Rogers City.”

“What?” she says.

I says, “Yeah.”

What you know, she told me where the kids were. I lost track of them, that’s the last I hear of them see. When I got home and I didn’t go back sailing again. I got a job at Calcite. My mother and Father lived down around the corner and over the next doors the _____, they had an apartment upstairs. Dorothy and I moved in up there. We were married, you know, when I was in the service. The two guys that were at my wedding, they both got killed in Okinawa. Yeah they both got killed in Okinawa and

Dorothy had cut out the Detroit papers the fatalities, they burned it and she saved that. And I still got it. And we moved in next door to our neighbors here. I mean those were neighbors of my mother and father-in-law in the corner. I went to work at the plant then, I did not go back sailing, well I guess that's cuz my father-in-law was superintendent, might have been something to that, keep him home now. Well I went down there and I got painting steal work up in the air, there was four of us painting the steal work, Charlie Gordon, Philip Henry, Adolph Foreman and myself. Only maybe Eric _____ all four deserved this, we were painting. A big came up in the powerhouse, they wanted fired in the powerhouse. In my boat time called in my seniority see, and I got it. So I worked in the powerhouse as a Fireman. I worked there 7, 8 years in there. I was getting to be, I was fireman I got to be older and in a couple I could have been maybe an engineer. What happens, by their powerful consumers? All beginners do that see and they write it off. And the powerhouse went down. So I go out and I get transferred out in the quarry. For 9 I had been making electricity, I got out in the quarry and I was distributing it see. Well we had the big generators and the big generators and a powerhouse. Got on these electric shovels, they had a big circular motor on them, 1,000 dollars per second, four generators to when DC motions, on the ____ motion on the shovel had a motor but it was a DC motor. That's when you can reverse them back and forth. I fit in there pretty good; I fit in there good. Hey, low and behold, Emerson Lee, Red Lee was the boss out there. I went out there and I could climb poles, I could hook a pole. And they put; he put me on shifts.

He said, "You got to learn, get down there and finished it."

So I did. Couple years; about four years he retires, I got the job. And I finished; I had to get the job – that was one of better jobs in the plant. I had, I was in charge of all the shovels, and drills, and stuff, electrical. That was my job. I had at one time, I had 15 men working for me, but that cut down, cut down and ended up maybe 12. We had all those shovels, the drills. They started pumping water, below sea level, below lake level and they had pumps. That was another responsibility we had. Anything on the quarry was my responsibility it was. I didn't mind it. I spent a lot of time down there. Lots of time something break down, I'd have to get down there. Get the parts out, get a crane or something, get it back together again, get it running, but the money was good. If the money wouldn't have been, heck well I was raising a family, I had six kids, I need the money. I need the money, so I kept it going. I come to retire then and the boss lived right across the street from me. I can't think of his last name, Bob – I don't remember. He was on the plant, he was –

UNW: Landous?

FD: Bob Landous lived right across the street in the house here. I got to know him pretty well. I'd go in there, I'd have a shop order maybe seven, eight, ten thousand dollars look at oh my god.

He said, "Hey if don't pay for it take care of it yourself." Nobody talked to me like that before,

"I don't give a damn who you are," I says.

I check the two or three supplies and that's the best money you can buy. Oh boy, that changed his tone all together. Him and I got along perfect then. He was my neighbor you know. In fact he was such a good guy he got me a bottle of this whiskey, Blue Velvet you know.

"Here, that's extra," he said. When it comes time to retire—

UNW: What year was that?

FD: Oh that was, I retired in the 50's.

UNW: Oh you've been retired a long time then.

FD: Yeah I've been retired for over 25 years.

UNW: The fifties?

FD: No I worked after that, but I've been retired for over 25 years. Oh yeah. Maybe more than that; I don't keep track of those dates.

INT: You must have good money coming in.

FD: I did, I had good money. I had a good job. I had one of the better jobs. I couldn't take it all, but when it finally come time to retire they were getting rid of the older staff. I wasn't that old maybe 60, about that.

And I took, he says "They're called a Sabo" he says. "What do you mean?"

"We'll let you go, with a dang good pension," he says, "And you're going to be a big shot until you're 62 years old."

I was just, I was close to 62 then.

He says, "We'll give you a good shot until you're 62, then you get your pensions from then on."

So I took it. I took and I retired early. And I wasn't a bit sorry. But then I thought boy oh boy, but we took the plant.

UNW: I remember. Yeah.

FD: Stan and _____, we had those boats. We were fish crazy. All over go fishing, we'd go.

INT: There's something here that says fish docks. Are we getting to that or?

FD: I told my dad I shouldn't have told you that. We were kids down on First Street, we were growing up. In depression, there was people who had money in this town in the depression was the fishermen. Why? They fished, Mr. Shmeckle and Mr. Mortz they fished every day. A train would come in. The DNM would come in, they a trap going

right down to the side of the Oil company down by there. Where the Pavilion is now. Oscar Smith had one on First Street and the _____ yards right down into the fish dock. They would lay all them fish on there. Every time that train come in they had boxes of fish on ice. Where'd them fish going? Oh the _____ in New York are buying them, they got money. That was what we were taught. I guess it was right because all the market was in fish. The train would take them out. Those fishermen were power in depression, they were a rough bunch. They were a rough bunch of people, I tell you, but we were down by the docks all the time. Down to First, we lived half a block from it. We'll that's where we'd congregate at the fish dock. It was a bunch of tough guys here, but one of the nicest men in my life name was Francis Paquette, he was working for _____ he was a gentleman's gentleman he was. Francis was, him and a guy named Ty Spencer were the dockworkers, they boxed the nets and box the hooks in the boat to take them out and they dried the nets and us kids were there all the time. We lived down there practically; I set the place on fire one time too. I did.

UNW: Intentionally.

FD: No, no, no. I had a piece of fin you know, that would make sparks. I didn't think anything of it and they used to put fuel all around them trucks and they spilled this fuel all one day and tick, tick, and the whole dock started to burn. I didn't run. There was a couple guys come out and they got buckets of water and put it out. "I don't want to see you guys here anymore."

UNW: At that time was it down there that the ice companies, did they get their blocks of ice in the winter from down there?

FD: They got the blocks from the little lake down there. The little lakes south of quarter, you go through the gate. A mile down there a place called Little Lake. It's covered up know, but it was little lakes. Fred Malone, he was an entrepreneur in town. He had the ice business, he had a cement dock plant down on, by you know where Newhouses lived down on the end of First Street. That was a little cement dock place. He had a barn on - right across from Tony Cebello's garage right now. That was a big barn there. That was a large barn. He was into quite a few things.

UNW: That's where all the apple orchards were.

FD: Yep. Right across from here on this corner, there was a great big building, a big one. And he was going to rejuvenate that, a big roomy house but he never got around to it. But he had down at the _____, they had a building down on the beach by behind Newhouses' house. The city used it for a garage that month, but in there they had a big ice cutter. They had horse's with big cleats on their feet, pull that down and it's cut that ice with that saw. Then they'd cut it the other way. And they'd make big blocks of ice, ice blocks where that big. They were big ones. Then they'd get a set of tongs and down there is what they called the icehouse. Icehouses had three sides, no top, filled with

sawdust on the bottom. And they'd put the ice in there in tears and cut it with sawdust, all summer. And he had an old john mow called Art Hartwig, Mr. Loonloon did. He delivered ice; you have an ice box in the top you know. And old Art would come, he knew his customer. He had a tag in the window; you'd have ice. You paid for it. And Noah Hartwig would come around with an old truck, he go down there get a load of ice, he hit the ice boxes and the kids him would follow him you know.

UNW: Sure because they had an ice pick and they'd always give you as a kid.

FD: The kids got the pieces.

UNW: That was a treat.

FD: That was a treat. We used to go down there in the winter time, when they'd get that team going, we'd be down there with them. Ma get mad, don't you dare go down there. Open water where they'd cut the blocks out. We'll that didn't mean anything. That's how they cut the ice, they had a big saw—and that saw would cut the ice, the ice was too thick and then they'd cut it the other way and they hand tongs they'd hook onto it. And these horses would pull it up and take it up and they'd put it on a drag, take it up in the ice house dump it off and cover it with saw dust. Sold it all summer. Between that and cement block in this big building and he had the big barn there right across from his house that was the Lones Barn they called it. And he was an entrepreneur in Rogers City, he was. Come the depression, everything was gone.

UNW: Even for him.

FD: Went to pieces. Yeah, well I don't remember a lot of it, we were young kids. But poorer we got older on Franklin Rose got in there and it was a different thing. I remember when I was a kid, I was in – remember three schools we had?

UNW: I do remember those.

FD: Yes.

UNW: One was gone.

FD: W.P.A. came into effect then. And the ____ was only working a few days a week. Times were tough all over, my mother was divorced and we had friends Haydensville who owned a house we were living in. We were on welfare, everybody was on welfare. I remember when the WPA started, they were on that 5th street the one by the schools they were digging ditches in the wintertime, by hand. Big water Susan Roosevelt, WPA. Those were WPA members. Well they were in the school half the time by old Mr. _____ getting warm. They weren't slave drivers, those guys were working at the

plant, but they had to take a job some place. And they were coming in the school and we'd see. I knew some of them; you worked with my dad.

UNW: What kind of money did these men make? Do you have any idea?

FD: I don't know. It wasn't much, but it was enough to get by on. When I was sailing I was making more money than my dad was running the engine down here. I know that for a fact. So the wage wasn't that high.

UNW: I was thinking the WPA guys.

FD: Oh that, it was enough to keep you going. It was a job. Roosevelt made a lot of jobs and that was one of them the WPA. The CCC Camps were another one. They did that for the younger guys. Oh yeah.

UNW: So you were in the Pacific in WWII then?

FD: I was in the Marine Corp. yeah. I got twins that re-enlisted down at the original building. I thought we were going to go the west coast. No we went Paris Island down in South Carolina that was something else.

INT: You got a rude awakening.

FD: It wasn't so bad; we had work for 2 to 4 years already see. We had took the hard Knox, but the poor kids who got out of school, oh my god. They abused them, they were just weren't used to that. And they were rough on you. They were really rough on you; they'd run hell right out of you. And this was the big thing in the Marine Corp. You could run all day and come back on your hands and knees, you better be coming back fast.

UNW: I don't think it changed too much from what I hear.

FD: No it hasn't changed. I know it hasn't. But we went down there and I went to South Caroline. The _____, they was from Detroit. Well that's the DI, he's the guy who badgers you around and beats you up. When he said "Poop," you squatted right down. That was it. Before we went down Fred Bradley, a young Fred Bradley was a representative, his son. The man who built, he was in the House of Representatives. His office was on top was the _____. That's where he spent all his time and he knew all the sailors, but he was here all the time. He says, "You know we're going to get drafted." Oh I'll get you _____ he says. You guys got to be made. Okay, you do that. We'll he said that to every sailor he knew. When you get down to PI (Paris Island) and you don't like what's going on, they abuse you. You know like a damn representative _____. That's what they'd tell us. Call your representative and your senator. We'll mail call come, they'd get the platoon out and mail call, they called your

name and took one step backwards and walked that way and the PI would had your letter and you'd go right back by the square and you wouldn't read it, but everything was perfect, had to be.

He says, "Fred Dagner," he took it he said, "What the hell are you doing?"

I said "What do you mean?"

"He said that was the _____ you called your congressman."

Here I had a letter, a big letterhead on it Representative Fort Bradley, District of Michigan, Washington D.C. you know. Oh my god.

"Oh I want to see you after recess!"

He thought I wrote my congress see. And Harry _____ got the same thing. We both had to go check into a DI that night.

"What the hell are you guys doing," he says "you called your congressman?"

I said, "No, no, no, no. No sergeant that is not what I did." I explained what we did.

"Oh," he says "You're a bunch of fools, you could have been out in Sheepshead Bay now in the Merchant Marines."

I says, "Yeah, I could have been in the Army too."

He said, "What would have been worse you think." He said, "It can't get much worse than it is here. If it is I'll make it worse for you."

That was his run, put you through hell if you survive you were a good marine. Oh yeah.

UNW: Well for a lot of people that kind of background probably served them well as the years went on though, in the war.

FD: Oh yeah. Well we had a name for being, I mean they did abuse you in boot camp, they did. That was for a reason. You could stand anything, you could take it okay, if you didn't you're in trouble. Now I didn't, but I was working for four years on a boat. Some of these kids out of high school that was shameful. They didn't even care, but it made marines out of them.

UNW: They seem to want to protect that still today, that reputation.

FD: They don't do that anymore. That hassle they had, when they drown those guys at Paris Island. That put ended that right there. That was all over the world. That was terrible. They drowned a bunch a guys. Oh I was out of the service already when that happened. My Mike, he had to get in the Marine Corps.

I said, "Don't be a damn fool, don't do it."

He said, "You enlisted so can I."

I said, "I'm telling you, don't do it!"

He got in the Marine Corps. he did he was in Vietnam. He got a red tag.

UNW: What's a red tag?

FD: Psycho. You don't have to ____ the Marine Corps is psychos, just scared right to death. Can you imagine what they go through?

UNW: And being young.

FD: Mike said they were fighting. They were Chinese; he had a name for them, and they over run them one night. He said thought for sure he was going to die. I said we had bad sides by the dozens, we had the Japanese were famous for that. Well he says you know I feel real bad about it. I was in the Marine Corp. and I red tagged me and took me out. I said, "Mike half the guys in the Marine Corps were psychos. You can't imagine what they went through. You have no idea." But he left here and went up to Norway, Michigan. And he says, "I'm going to VA hospital there and I was having problems." And he was. He got a job at the plant welding. He couldn't take it. He went up there. I know why he went up there. His buddy was a disk jockey up there in Norway and his dad owned a big pot of land up there and they were planting pot – out in the woods growing marijuana. My wife and I went up to see him one time; we visited. He bought a little house and loaned him some money and he bought the house. And we were going up there, well Mike wasn't home and Kara was home. He married Kara _____ down here you know what I mean?

UNW: The name I've heard.

FD: We're going through the house and I'll fix some switches for him. I went up to town and bought him a couple of switches; I brought them back.

I said, "Kara we got to turn the power off in the house."

"I think in the basement," she said.

So I went down in the basement I look, he had marijuana hanging from the wall the basement was plugged with it. Drying her out and selling her. His dad owned that property and they were planting it and selling it.

He comes home, I says, "Is that the reason you want to get out of Calcite?"

"I don't know," he says, "I don't know, I was using it heavy." They came down here and eat dinner with us and they had to go for a ride, keep going. Well I said you know you're going to get in trouble, you're going to get caught.

"Well maybe."

But he's still up there, he broke the habit, he did. He got over it. He still up there. He's a tree surgeon now. He takes care of trees. He was working on a water softener deal, they were putting water softeners and _____ and the prison in Marquette was a big job for him. And his boss and he made good in that. And his boss started the nursery and my son got a job in the nursery, he was his right hand man. Well he decided he'd go out on his own. So he, right now he's working, I call him a tree surgeon, that's what he does. He comes down and he's a tree surgeon. My other son was in Vietnam, he was in special services, other words he was a sniper. He says him and a boy from California were a sniper team. A chopper come in and drops them down. You got 24 hours, so now you got a job to do. You do it and be here or you're on your own.

And they said, "We were back there, we were there."

He says, "You know Dad I spent more time in Cambodia than I did in Vietnam." Nobody was supposed to know that though see. No one was supposed to know that.

But he says, "I'm a full disability now and it paid. I knew the right people, the right people knew. I have no trouble going to VA and getting what I want, Captains Administration. They're taking good care of me."

So I got two boys who kind of had it rough. I told him well they didn't have it any rougher than I did, but they survived. I guess it was hell on their mother though when I went in and then have two of my own boys go in. Knowing what was going to happen, boy she was beside herself. She'd sit in the front room with two TVs going watching the works over in Vietnam. And she said she swore my oldest boy there, he was in the Marine Corps, she called the station and she wanted to talk to Dan Rather. Are you crazy girl? No. Well she got a hold of him.

INT: When was that again?

FD: When the Vietnam War was going on.

INT: And Dan Rather was working back then?

FD: He was a news reporter then.

INT: Wow, okay.

FD: And he says yes I'll get you that tape, but I wouldn't advise you to get it, that might not even be your son. She was bummed she didn't get that tape. My oldest boy in Vietnam. It wasn't bad enough we were married when I was in the service. We got married and the whole wedding party and two marines came with me. They were the boys in Detroit, they were street wise in Detroit or I'd never got married down there. They set it up and I got married in Detroit and they both got killed over in Vietnam. And my wife saved, in the Detroit paper they had a clipping obituary, I got them home yet, I saved them. And I got pictures of the wedding, we took down town. There's two guys. I was one of the fortunate ones I guess because I was living when they got busted there. Yeah. But life goes on. The war we're fighting now I don't understand that. I said the first thing they should do, Mr. Bush I'm going to give you some fatigue like the Marine Corps and send you over there. See how smart you are. Get over there for about a month and it will change your way of looking at things a hundred percent. You will be so smart. They don't hardly kill 5,000 troops over there. What have they accomplished, not a darn thing. That's stupidity. I think the oil barrens out in Texas have got money invested in Iraq oil wells and stuff. They have to. And Saddam Hussein was down through there that was a way of life for them people. Why did we interrupt them, why did we have to stick our head in there? That was the way of life for them people. They were happy but I think oil barrens have money down there. Saddam left and set the oil wells on fire, the best was over there, he was put out the oil wells. I wonder why, who

had the money invested there, the oil barrens, but you'll never find that out. That's my opinion. I mean why do you, why does a democratic, they belong, they were there long before we were. All before we were. Good god, then we're going to change the way of life. Dumb.

INT: Well thank you Fred, I'm just going to stop the tape here and we can talk about other things.