

Interview with Arvid Maki
Marquette, MI
July 15, 2005

Subject: Dormitory Construction on NMU Campus

START OF INTERVIEW

Russell Magnaghi (RM): Interview with Arvid Maki, Marquette, MI, July 15, 2005. What we want to discuss is the development, or what used to be across the street from Mr. Maki's home, which is University property and where just a few days ago they started clearing the land, cutting the trees, and started the process to actually construct the dormitory there. Okay, Mr. Maki could you give us your birthdate?

Arvid Maki (AM): May the 8th, 1923.

(RM): 1923?

(AM): Yes.

(RM): Okay, so you're 82 years old.

(AM): Yes.

(RM): Okay. Tell us a little about your background. You were born in?

(AM): Covington, MI and I lived there... I don't remember even [laughs]. I moved to Marquette anyway, went to Pierce High School, never went to college, just worked.

(RM): What work did you do?

(AM): All kinds of work. I was a butcher once for a long time, a truck driver, I worked for Munising _____, all kinds of stuff.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. So you were working at the wood products company that made the bowls – Munising bowls or was that something else?

(AM): Yeah, they made them, yep. All kinds of different bowls and stuff like that.

(RM): What did you do there?

(AM): I run a lathe.

(RM): Oh, okay so you made the bowls then?

(AM): Yeah. Oh yeah I made round ones. Mhm.

(RM): Yeah, yeah, okay. Could you tell us a little about when you moved here? Start with that; when you moved to this location.

(AM): Must have been about 10 years – when I was ten years old.

(RM): Oh, ten years old!

(AM): Something like that.

(RM): Okay so you've been here then for a long time.

(AM): Long time.

(RM): Yeah. So what I'd like to then is have you tell us a little about what used to be here; what do you remember, what was this like when you were first living here growing up?

(AM): This was a swamp with lots of water and they drained it all out and built houses along Niedhart here. Good houses but they broke up one by one and now they're aren't any.

(RM): Now in that swamp, you said they drained it...

(AM): Still over there, part of it.

(RM): Oh so at one time all this area was like the way it is at the end of the street?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): So it's down...about how deep was that would you say, that swamp?

(AM): Well it's still over there on the other side of the road...

(RM): Like twelve feet or something...?

(AM): No, no it's just big enough so they don't build over that area. [laughs]

(RM): Yeah, yeah. So you had the swamp here; did you play in there as a kid?

(AM): Oh yeah, all along here, yeah.

(RM): What did you used to do? Build tree houses and...?

(AM): Yeah everything, yeah. Went to school here like I said in Pierce High School. Oliver too. Got my diploma even! [laughs]

(RM): Very good! So how did they fill the swamp in? Do you remember?

(AM): Just dug down a little bit and the water sunk I guess.

(RM): Did the city use it as a dump?

(AM): No, not really. No.

(RM): Okay, because the fellow I was with earlier said that he thought the city used it as a dump out there.

(AM): No I never seen no dump around here. Yeah it's just the swampy water down here and that gradually went down. I suppose the houses around here had something to do with it.

(RM): And then did they fill that area? Did they fill the swamp with dirt or, what happened?

(AM): Well they added ___ part of it and part of it's still there in the end of this road that's why there isn't a road going across to the college put on there...

(RM): Then when you were going to school, you were living here, how did you used to get over to Pierce school?

(AM): Walked.

(RM): Yeah but I mean was there a little trail to follow and...?

(AM): Oh yeah. Bicycles – I had a bike, I went to school with that and eventually when I got bigger I once in a while used to get the old man's car; a '27 Chevrolet. [laughs] That's old hey?

(RM): Now what did your father do?

(AM): He worked on the railroad; the SS&A.

(RM): Oh, okay, okay. And on the property here did you keep a garden? Did you have any fruit trees or anything?

(AM): Oh yeah, over there fruit trees, apple trees; I think there was some plum trees, but they're all gone. No, there's an apple tree there yet.

(RM): Oh. Were these things that your father planted?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): And did you have a large garden out here?

(AM): Oh yeah, I remember he used to plant carrots and stuff like that. Oh yeah.

(RM): Did it take care of the family then? I mean, the vegetables they produced?

(AM): Oh no, they went to the store to get most of their stuff; the co-op store. [laughs]

(RM): Oh okay so you went to the co-op store?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): Do you remember what the co-op store was like?

(AM): Sure. I was a butcher in there. I used to cut up the old meats you know, just like they're cutting up the land around here. [laughs] Right now it's a carpenter shop but it's still there, the building.

(RM): Yeah. Was that the original building where the carpet shop is?

(AM): Yeah, it's been there ever since I... Then it was a dairy there too.

(RM): On the corner?

(AM): Yeah, just up from the corner a little ways – if you went by there now you'd see that they're closing up because they're selling all their stuff now.

(RM): Yeah, yeah, I guess they're going to move. So there was a dairy on the corner...

(AM): Yeah, and then a store, and THEN the dairy.

(RM): Oh, a store on the corner, the dairy, and then the co-op?

(AM): Mhm. Something like that. It's still there ____.

(RM): Yeah, but the co-op building is the carpet shop?

(AM): Yeah I think so. I haven't been by there too many times lately so. They change so fast.

(RM): Yeah, yeah, okay. And do you remember when the street car ran on Presque Isle?

(AM): Oh yeah, yeah, I remember the street car.

(RM): Would you take it?

(AM): Oh yeah.

(RM): What did you do, go down and ____...

(AM): We were young kids then and I remember when the street car used to go by before it took off we used to grab ahold of the back and ride free. [laughs] That was a lot of fun, you know.

(RM): Did you slide on the ice or...?

(AM): Oh yeah we'd slide right on the ice if there's enough ice.

(RM): Now when you were growing up and you lived here, you said that they started building houses across the street?

(AM): Yeah. You mean out here now?

(RM): Yeah.

(AM): Yeah, they started. _____. Except on that side of Wright St. there wasn't any houses for a long time, but gradually they started to build there too.

(RM): So they started building houses over here about when – you said you moved here when you were ten?

(AM): Around there.

(RM): Around that. And then, how much time passed before they started building houses here, you think?

(AM): Well my grandma and grandpa built this house; that's many years ago. That, I must have been like I say, about ten. And then... gradually grew up.

(RM): What?

(AM): It gradually grew up; everything around here. And now everything's going down.

(RM): Yeah, okay. So they would have built this house then about in the 1930s?

(AM): Must have been, yeah.

(RM): You think? Because you said you were born in what, 192-...

(AM): '23.

(RM): '23. So that would have been... and you moved here in 1933, when you were about ten.

(AM): Something like that, yeah.

(RM): But they already had the house before that time?

(AM): Yeah I don't remember them building a house, but they built it.

(RM): So sometime before.

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): So they would have moved... they were living in Covington? Your grandparents?

(AM): My mother and dad were.

(RM): Were in Covington?

(AM): Covington.

(RM): But your grandparents were...

(AM): They came from Finland.

(RM): Okay, and they were living in Marquette?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): Oh and you were living in Covington because your father was on the railroad?

(AM): Right.

(RM): Okay, okay, I see, alright. So this was where the Makis lived?

(AM): Yeah. He's been here for all his life.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. Okay and what did your grandfather do?

(AM): I didn't exactly see it; I don't remember him. I don't know.

(RM): He didn't work for the railroad?

(AM): No.

(RM): No, okay.

(AM): I don't know what he did.

(RM): Did he work for maybe the...

(AM): I think he died before he even come here. That's a long time ago I don't remember.

(RM): So anyway, then they gradually put houses up on the street here and so on. So you were probably a teenager then?

(AM): Yeah we had two houses out here, ___ or the other was the name, and this one. But then gradually more and more went up and it grew.

(RM): Do you remember some of the names of the people that lived here, you know, across the street?

(AM): Dionne right over here across the road, Haslet up the road a little ways, and us. I don't remember the name of the people directly across the road. But it started to grow then all of a sudden it ended again and the whole street just filled up and now they all washed away.

(RM): Uh huh. Now who were some of the names of the people on this side of the street?

(AM): Reino.

(RM): Reino?

(AM): Uh huh. He's the only one right here on the other side of my grandma.

(RM): Oh, over here?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): So then by the time they got done all these blocks had houses like you have down the street here; there were houses one after another in this area?

(AM): Yeah, yeah.

(RM): Okay, and was that true on the block up the way here?

(AM): That was all woods.

(RM): Woods back there?

(AM): For a long time, it was from here that way it was woods like in a big field there too, I remember.

(RM): Do you remember any cattle out there? Did anyone keep cattle?

(AM): Oh yeah cattle and horses, they had them out there too, yeah.

(RM): Do you remember was that a dairy? Did they run dairy cattle out back there?

(AM): I don't know if they did or not. I think they might have had some of their own, you know.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. But they didn't have a commercial... you don't remember it being commercial?

(AM): No, no. The only one was down on Presque Isle, _____ dairy.

(RM): Now were a lot of the people here Finnish background or were they just a mixture of...?

(AM): Oh there were a lot of Fins, yeah. Maki's and.... Geez I don't really remember them anymore. But there was a lot of things around here, _____ like.

(RM): Now did many of these people work down at the Glibstow factory?

(AM): Oh yeah.

(RM): I mean your neighbors here that worked down there?

(AM): Yeah, some of them did, yeah. My dad he worked on the railroad; DSS&A Railroad. Know what that stands for? Duluth South Shore and Atlantic.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. And then do you remember when the streetcar used to go up Wright St.?

(AM): Oh yeah. It went up so far and I forget how far – past ___ house up there and then turn around and come back.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. Now did you take that as well? Or that's the streetcar that you took?

(AM): Well we took that one, yeah. I think they only had two, or one, I don't remember any more – for the business.

(RM): Well I think they used to go to the cemetery, used to go to Holy Cross Cemetery with the...

(AM): Yeah, maybe that's what it is, it turned around there eh?

(RM): Yeah, and then came back.

(AM): I know they didn't go too far, and they drove past _____.

(RM): Now what used to be down toward Presque Isle? Do you remember what used to be on the street there; were there stores or...?

(AM): There was a store on the corner there.

(RM): On the corner of Wright St.?

(AM): On the corner of Wright St. and this one, and on the other side of the street all the way was swamp and they drained all them swamps and built all them homes that are there now. It's all filled up.

(RM): Now that swamp that was over there was like the one here, this was just an extension of that swamp.

(AM): Yeah it was all swamp around here. It all filled in and people built houses.

(RM): Now do you have a basement in this house?

(AM): Oh yeah.

(RM): And it doesn't get wet?

(AM): Yeah it used to get damp a little bit, I remember, in the spring, you know when it started to melt, but not bad. We used to pump our own water too down there, right down the basement, and the pipe is still sticking up.

(RM): So you had well water down there?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): Okay. And so when you were growing up most of the houses were built between here and Presque Isle or were they developing that area, or were the houses already there?

(AM): No they were building them all the way to the lake there almost and they made the road along the lake and it was downtown from there on, you know.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. So when you were growing up then they were kind of developing Presque Isle; the stores and the houses along Presque Isle?

(AM): Oh yeah, yeah. But real downtown was on Washington St., you know it was real store. All the stores; a lot of them that are there now were there then that I remember.

(RM): Now when you were a kid did you do any hunting or anything in the swamp here; catch frogs or fish, were there fish in there?

(AM): Oh yeah, we used to hunt – but no it wasn't that big (for fish). We used to hunt rabbits. [laughs]

(RM): With a gun or a snare?

(AM): With the whole works.

(RM): Any way? Then did you eat them?

(AM): Yeah, any way and then bring them home, oh yeah we never wasted. We brought all that meat – that was good meat you know them wild rabbits.

(RM): Yeah, yeah.

(AM): We used to fish, rabbits, lot of skunk but we never ate those. [laughs]

(RM): Did you shoot them or...?

(AM): No, nah we never. We couldn't afford to waste that much ammunition in them days. I used to have a bunch of guns, I still got one but I gave most of them away to my younger friends you know, nowadays.

(RM): Uh huh, yeah.

(AM): They think they're really something, you know, old guns. Me I'd just as soon throw them away; pistols and everything. I even remember I had a .38 revolver we used to practice shooting with. Those were the good old days. We never had no building or anything that people didn't like. Everybody liked what they saw in them days.

(RM): So this was kind of a very pleasant community then, neighborhood?

(AM): Oh yeah it was. It was real pleasant. It was a good place to live.

(RM): Uh huh, now were there a lot of kids?

(AM): Yeah, kids, half grown-ups, stuff like that. We used to hunt right around here in this area. We didn't go too far because we never had no cars or anything that we could drive around and gradually it picked up and we bought a car. I remember a '27 Chevrolet we had, yeah.

(RM): So you lived here the whole time? You raised your family here?

(AM): Yeah, I never married though.

(RM): Oh you weren't married, oh.

(AM): Nope, never married.

(RM): So when you worked in Munising then you didn't commute, you lived in Munising?

(AM): No Munising Wood Products was here.

(RM): Oooh oh oh oh! You worked in the branch on what was it, Piqua St. over by the high school?

(AM): Yeah, yeah.

(RM): Oooh I didn't know that, they had a branch over here?

(AM): Yeah, pretty sure they ____ ____.

(RM): Ahhhh.

(AM): Yeah I remember I used to go in the ____, used to make all kinds of different candles and everything and shipped them off.

(RM): Could you tell us a little of what work was like there? How many people worked in the ____?

(AM): Oh I don't know, there was each shift probably about four or five when they had their shift going; you know, shift work. They used to pay us by how many candles we turned out.

(RM): Ooh, and how many could you turn out if you were going...?

(AM): Oh I don't remember how many. As many as you could, you know. Sometimes if you didn't make your quota they'd say, "We don't need you anymore." There's always somebody else. It was a good place to work though. They were real strict.

(RM): So you worked there, you were a butcher at the co-op, and then what did you do work over there after that?

(AM): Yeah I think it was after that – you mean at the Munising ____? Yeah. I don't remember which is which now.

(RM): Yeah, yeah. But you used to do all your shopping down at the co-op here?

(AM): Oh yeah, you worked there you might as well.

(RM): Yeah, but I mean later on when you left you still went and shopped there?

(AM): Oh yeah, yeah. And the dairy was right next door to it, even went and worked there a couple of times when they were kind of short on labor.

(RM): Yeah, yeah.

(AM): You never had trouble finding a job anyway. [laughs]

(RM): You never worked at the Cliffs Dow plant?

(AM): I never did, no. I figured I'd have got too dirty in there. [laughs] It was full of soot every day, yeah I remember cement people that worked there they were all full of that soot you know, they looked terrible. But gradually they cleaned that up too and when they had everything all cleaned up they closed the whole works. [laughs]

(RM): Yeah, yeah.

(AM): Yeah, people were a lot of fun them days.

(RM): So you have fond memories of this neighborhood then?

(AM): Oh yeah, I love this neighborhood, yeah. That's why it stood up so long I guess in the college. One of these days the college is going to move right down to the lake.

(RM): Well that was their dream but it never happened. I don't think it'll ever...

(AM): Not in my time.

(RM): No. Were you involved when they wanted to buy the property there in the late 1960s?

(AM): No.

(RM): Because that's when they bought a lot of this property; when they were going to go to the lake, when they had that dream of going to the lake.

(AM): No the only thing I did was went to school there. I never sold any property or anything like that, I never...

(RM): Alright well that sort of answers the questions that I wanted you to tell me about. Anything else you want to add about life living here? Oh, did you ever hunt birds to eat or just rabbits?

(AM): Oh we ate partridge too, yeah.

(RM): Partridge was in here?

(AM): Yeah, we still hunt partridge, not right here in town but at least a little way up by... We had a camp then later on, you know everybody was building camps so we bought one that was already built up in Big Bay, Michigan. We still got the camp, call it Dodge City. Yeah, nice camp we got up there.

(RM): Oh, so you went up there hunting deer and whatnot?

(AM): Deer, partridge, rabbits, we used to fish brook trout in them creeks up there, all that stuff like that. Lots of fun that was, you know, go fishing; fish usually _____.

(RM): What about 8 inches then?

(AM): Yeah they had to be 7 inches to keep them, and throw them all back in if they were under. 7 I think it was, yeah.

(RM): Now did you have any brothers or sisters?

(AM): Yeah I had two sisters I still got one, one died. I got one that lives in Flint, Michigan.

(RM): Oh, did she leave to get married and go down to Flint to work in the automobile industry?

(AM): Right, yeah. That's _____.

(RM): About 19-?

(AM): I don't remember, it wasn't too long ago, you know. She's a couple years younger than I am.

(RM): So do they come up and visit in the summertime?

(AM): They used to but they're kind of slacking on it now. Well I'm the same way with them going down there. I got a good truck now. Everybody's got good trucks so you can do a lot of traveling, I don't know if I'll go to camp tomorrow or not, maybe, it always depends on the weather.

(RM): Yeah, it's supposed to be warm, well it's getting warm now.

(AM): Yeah it's supposed to be up in the 90s.

(RM): Yeah, yeah, it's very pleasant sitting here on the porch.

(AM): Yeah. My grandpa built this, part of it, and my dad helped him. Used to be just a door here, I remember. I remember we never used it when the door was there, finally we built this porch. It was lots of fun.

(RM): Now did your grandfather actually build the house?

(AM): I think he did, yeah.

(RM): He didn't have it built?

(AM): No. He had one guy for sure that helped him.

(RM): That helped him, yeah. So this then would be the house built by a Finnish immigrant?

(AM): Yeah.

(RM): Interesting, because I'm always looking for you know, cultural remains of the immigrants; something that an immigrant did. So it'd be one thing to have the house built, it'd be another thing to have the old timer build the house.

(AM): I don't think there's too many being built around here now though.

(RM): No.

(AM): The college owns a lot of property. I don't know how much they own that way. They're going to hit Dead River pretty soon, and the lake down this way they're going to hit that, which they already have part of it probably, except for that big building...

(RM): The dome, yeah. Okay, well that sounds real good. I thank you.

(AM): You're welcome.

(RM): Alright, see you did remember quite a bit!

(AM): Oh yeah. [laughs]

(RM): Yeah, that was good.

END OF INTERVIEW