

Interview with Geno Lucchesi
Interviewer: Dave Halala
Houghton, MI
September 13, 1980

DH: It's September, 1980. I'm at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Geno Lucchesi in South Range. I'll be conducting an oral history interview for the benefit of the family and also for those who need to know more about the significant families in the South Range area years ago. This interview is being conducted particularly because Mr. Fred Lucchesi, the oldest of the children of Mr. and Mrs. Caesar Lucchesi is back in the Copper Country for a visit, but he will be leaving to go back to California this summer. So from here on in we will be hearing the voices of not only myself but Mr. Lucchesi's Fred and Geno. Let me ask first of all, were all the children born here? Your father and mother came from Italy.

FL: They got married here.

DH: They got married here in the Copper Country.

FL: My Dad and Mother in Calumet.

DH: That was here in South Range. Were you born in South Range?

FL: No, I was born in Hancock. My Dad had a grocery store when I was a boy. Then he moved to South Range in '09 or '08 and a half, and Anna was born, and Geno and Leo, Bruno, and Norma were born in South Range.

DH: Your father came from Italy as a young man alone? Did he have any family here?

FL: No. No family at all. My mother came over in 1902 as a young girl. Her brother brought her over. He was living in Baltic. She was 12 or 13 years old.

DH: What did your father do when he first came over here?

FL: He worked in the mines. He worked in Quincy. Then he worked in Baltic. That's when he met my mother.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: When he came from Quincy over to Baltic he met your mother. Then he decided to leave the mines and go into business for himself.

FL: He got married and they moved to Hancock and got into the grocery business in west Hancock.

DH: I know there's quite an Italian community in west Hancock because I used to live with a lot of them right in the midst of them. Where was it by the way, in Hancock?

FL: Kitty corner from Geno's restaurant. Next to that Mobile station. Right in that corner.

DH: When you were born the family was in Hancock at that time. What did your father do afterward? He didn't stay in the grocery business in Hancock very long.

FL: He came to South Range and went into the livery business. He bought horses and wagons and whatever and he rigged 6, 8, 10 teams of horses in the barn all the time.

DH: Maybe we should talk a little bit about being in the livery business because I think younger people, perhaps even your grandchildren don't understand what a livery business is. Do you remember it?

FL: Sure. I used to have to clean the barn.

DH: And it was right here on Main Street in South Range?

FL: Where the garage is now.

DH: When was South Range started, by the way?

GH: It was incorporated in 1903. It started before, but it was incorporated in 1903.

DH: And what was it intended to be? A community for the mining company?

GL: That's right.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: There were mining companies all around just like you read in this article here. The communities all around were mining communities. And there was Tri Mountain, Spaulding, Painsdale, Globe, and Atlantic. All of these were mining communities with mines in them and the only thing they had was the mining company store. They wouldn't allow any other businesses in there. It's kind of interesting to note. Do you remember the Leopold and Glorified murder in Chicago?

DH: Yes, I've read about it.

GL: One of the followers of the boy, I think it's Leopold, was the originator who planned the village of South Range. It was known as a ??? mining company and ??? Bluff. Bob Brown has books that shows the original business between people and the planning of the village. You can see where they sold the pieces of rock and their names.

DH: Let's get back to Fred here, you were born in Hancock, but you came over here as a young child.

FL: Two years old.

DH: So your first recollections are of growing up in South Range. What was it like to be in South Range almost 70 years ago?

FL: It was quite a little town. Lots of action here because all the hunters came here to spend their money and so did the loggers and lumberjacks, especially in the spring. They'd been out in the woods all winter. There were a lot of saloons in town. We had many beautiful...U.T. Store, which was Eve's prior to that. On First Street Eve's had a slaughter house between the houses that are there now. Then there was...there was three theaters in this town at one time. So there was lots of action for us kids. We had woods all around us. We played all over.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: Was there was a board sidewalk from Tri Mountain?

FL: Yes. There was a board sidewalk from South Range to Tri Mountain. It was on the right side of the road all the way up, about that wide.

DH: He's showing us it's about 2 feet wide. Was it elevated from the ground?

FL: Yes, about a foot and a half because there was a lot of water.

DH: Let me ask about the community. I know your Italian by background but some of the names of stores you rattled off are Finnish. Was South Range a community mostly of Italians and Finns?

FL: Just Finns. There weren't too many Italian families. There were some Austrian, Italian, Croatian, Polish. At one time there were two Finnish churches in this town.

GL: 75 to 80% of the original town was Finns.

DH: I didn't realize that. What was the big Italian community on the range, because I know there's Italians up there.

GL: Tri Mountain. Sons of Italy, you've heard of that. That's just south and east of Tri Mountain when you go down the rail road tracks and cross down. That's the Sons of Italy. Tri Mountain consisted of a lot of Italians.

DH: What was Baltic like by the way?

GL: Baltic and Brookland, Brookland was almost 100% Finnish. Baltic had a mixture of everyone. English, Cornish.

FL: They had English and Cornish in Baltic. Baltic was the mining community. Baltic, Tri Mountain, and Painsdale were all mining communities.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: But I mean in comparison to South Range, because Baltic is right next door so to speak. That was where the mine was. Did the people who lived in South Range work in the mines or did they service the community and the miners came over?

FL: About half and half I think. There were many that worked in the mine, but lots of them were in business. There was Taylor's, two shoe makers shops, two tailor shops, three barber shops.

GL: How many saloons?

DH: Probably not as many proportionally as there was in Hancock, but let's get back to the livery stables. Your recollection is that your father was in the business, right on this site. You have recollections of the livery. What did the livery stable actually do? I think this is for the people who don't know much about it.

FL: He used to rent buggies and cutters in the winter time for one or two people and hacks, big beautiful hacks for summer time with rubber tires and the whole bit. A big padded pole between the horses, like a big beautiful limousine. The seats were velvet inside with glass windows and doors that closed tight. In the winter time we had almost the same thing, except the driver sat low on the runners. It had red velvet upholstery inside and a charcoal heater that you put on the floor and a couple robes to put on your legs. You could ride in it for funerals or weddings or going to parties.

DH: You answered a question I was going to ask, I was going to ask why people would rent this. They did not have, the way we're used to having our own cars, people didn't have transportation. So if they had a special occasion then it was rented for that reason.

FL: Always. At one time when my dad was in the livery business here, there were three other livery stables in town too. We were all pretty busy. I know as a kid, if somebody

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

had to go to Houghton at 2:00 in the morning I'd get out of bed and put some clothes on and my dad would put the harness on the horse and I'd drive it down town.

DH: Did you also provide a local delivery or freight service?

FL: We had drays, the sleighs with the wheels for delivery service and furniture moving.

GL: Where did the horses come from?

DH: How was this maintained? Did your father acquire land and harvest hay and so on?

FL: Where the funeral home is at the edge of the village of South Range, he had 20 acres of land. We used to put the horses there on the farm and let them graze. The horses came from North Dakota and Montana. Wild horses, just saddled slightly by cowboys.

My Dad was an expert with horses and he'd train them.

GL: He was in the army in Italy in the Calvary.

DH: I see.

GL: Everybody in Italy had to be in the army.

DH: How old was your father when he came from Italy?

FL: 22 I think he was.

DH: I've heard a lot of things that we'll be touching on later, about your father and your own lives.

FL: He was an expert on saddles. Riding saddle horses. He was a ??? around the area during the strike. He had a pair of beautiful black horses and he would keep them saddled 12 hours a day each. They were tied to the side of the barn and he'd jump on them if there was a problem. He wouldn't take the road, he'd jump the fences.

DH: Did you get involved in farming or did you buy most of your hay?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: We used to buy the hay. We had 20 acres, but we used to buy the hay. There was a hay loft above in the barn. After Geno was a year old we were living in front of the barn. We had built the house up above. It was a big concrete block house. That's where Geno and the rest of them were all raised, me too of course. We had horses and some mules. My mother always had one or two cows. Across the street she had a garden and chickens. My dad was a deputy for the county for many years. He was always on call for something or other.

DH: Deputy for the mining company.

FL: Well he was deputy sheriff for the county too.

DH: I'm going to do this in a little bit of chronological order and I'm going to try and weave in some things. Your first recollections are of growing up in South Range. Did you go to school here in South Range?

FL: Yes. The school house was on the north end of town. I was in the third grade when it burnt down. This was around World War I. We went to school in Polly's Store today in South Range. I was in third and fourth grade in there. Then they built the new school up at the end of the Main Street and then I went up there.

DH: That's still there.

FL: Yes.

DH: Perhaps I should ask you this, I came from a background where I didn't speak much English until I went to school. The family language was Italian wasn't it.

FL: Yes, that's correct.

DH: You really learned English when you went to school.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

GL: Our household was different from the rest. Our father really wanted to learn English. Every time we came home from school he wanted to know what we learned and he wanted to know the words. Instead of him teaching us Italian he wanted us to teach him English. This gentleman was so loaded with ambition it's unbelievable. He even had an instructor during the summer time, one of the high school teachers John Sandy, teach him an hour a morning in a closed room in Hancock Station. Nobody was allowed into that room. He wanted to know how to read and write. And he was looking to get his pilots license at that time and he had to take an exam and he could barely write.

DH: In other words the family language became a mixture of Italian and English, but as far as your father was concerned, he wanted to stress English.

GL: That's right. And Freddie can tell you about how my mother learned English.

DH: I don't recall ever meeting your father, I did meet your mother some years ago.

FL: She spoke pretty good English.

DH: She wrote it too. Phonetic.

GL: The way it sounds.

DH: She wrote it beautifully.

FL: She learned from the store from the salesmen. She would ask. She always asked questions. She would ask what's that or this. The salesmen would teach her.

DH: You're going back to the Hancock days.

FL: Yes, this was back in 1906 or '05. She was in Hancock when the bridge was knocked down. In fact she thought my dad was either on the bridge or just on the other side of it because he had left just as many minutes before with the wagon to deliver groceries.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: You're talking about the Northern Wave and I think it's 1905.

FL: When my dad came to Hancock, he got his citizenship papers in 1908. In 1908 he had one son, Elpaco, but he died when he was a year old. I had a sister that was born, but she died that same night. Then I was born in '07. Wait, 1905 is when my Dad got his citizenship papers, what am I talking about '08. It's 1905.

DH: That was more common in those days, infant mortality and so on. It's unusual today. Now let's get back to South Range, we've got you in school. How many years of formal education did you have, because I know it was customary to go not as long...

FL: The middle of the 8th grade. Miss Biscanna was my teacher. I was home every morning at 2:30 with a ??? caterpillar and a snow plow on the back and I plowed from South Range to Houghton to Painsdale and back to South Range and then I went to school, every morning in the winter time.

DH: That's even more work than milking the cows every morning.

FL: I never milked a cow in my life. My mother always had them around but I never milked them. I even drove 2 teams on a sleigh ride party.

DH: We've pushed it into the early 1920s, right after World War One. Then you started to work full time for the family business. Let's get into the trucks now. Your father was a pioneer in many ways around here, in the use of automobiles and busses...

FL: Since 1911.

DH: 1911 was when he acquired his first one. Was this linked to the livery business?

FL: Oh yes. Before the war we already had busses operating.

DH: Do you remember any of this Geno?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

GL: I was four years old. I was born right during the strike. In fact my mother gave birth to me while my father was working for the mining company as a police man. The miners who were striking walked up to the corner down here. I forget who was the county sheriff at the time. He told these people to go home. They turned around and went back. This is the time I was born. This is about 1918, I was four or five years old. The year the school house burned down I was just starting school. I went into these places temporarily.

DH: Let's finish up on the livery. When did the family finally decide that it wasn't worth it to keep horses and the livery stable?

FL: I think it was in '19. I'm not positive, but it was in that area. Pa said horses are out and the automobile is here to stay. People disagreed with him, but that's what happened none the less. We started to plow the roads for the busses to run in the winter. We already had several big busses and small ones. This is what happened.

DH: We want to pick up on that point, maybe we should do it right away. I think a lot of people don't realize that as the transportation was made, after all the horse and cutter or sleigh could go over the packed down snow and trail. It's a little bit different for automobiles and the heavy vehicles, the busses and delivery wagons. Everybody knows how much snow we get here in the Copper Country. Around November or December you start running into problems. You said that roads had to be plowed. Who did the plowing?

FL: We did. We had to put the county besides. I'd plow the road and they'd have a grader come along behind and put the snow back in the road again.

DH: Explain this.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: We were bucking the railroad then. I presume that's what it was. I wasn't interested in it, I was interested in plowing the roads. I suppose the county commissioners were the guys that ran the mines. They would tell Pop to send this equipment up, he was the county engineer. He'd send his equipment up and they'd close the roads. I'd go back down and open them up.

GL: The policy at that time was that you put the equipment away for the winter. They're like the surveyors. You put your cars away in the winter time. You probably remember putting your car up on blocks.

DH: I can barely recall putting cars up on blocks.

GL: This old guy said no. He tried to run up on top the snow but it was impossible. We went through the same thing in the '40s. Canada helped us build this airport and they sent us rollers. I was running the airport at that time. We would run these rollers over the runway and the different temperatures changed the condition of the snow. Sometimes it was solid as can be and sometimes it was bang, down. The reason they didn't allow Caesar to plow the roads is because the farmer would come through with his sleigh to bring food to market and here is this road and a 6 foot bank. How could they get down to this bare road when he's got runners. So they had to satisfy this guy. This guy wanted to be satisfied also. So there was two factions. They used to roll the roads in this time.

DH: We have an old remnant of a roller in a museum in Lake Linden. I think we got it from around Calumet. I've also seen pictures of how they came through and tanked it. That must have been a mess in the Spring by the way.

FL: That was a mess, with the horses too. Have you ever seen horses in that soft fluffy snow? They used to sink to their poor bellies and lay down and cry even. It was a shame

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

the way they were abused sometimes. The man was being abused too. There was

nothing you could do. Nobody was going easy those days.

GL: It's kind of like that airport deal in '47. One day a Tri Motor came in, he landed nose first right down into this road. He's lucky he didn't break the airplane. We had to go out there with a tractor to pull him out. I got to Mr. Winkler, he's responsible for that airport, I like to give him the credit. I flew the boys over that from Canada to look at the area....

DH: Let me interrupt you for a minute and clarify. Geno Lucchesi is talking about what is the Houghton County Airport half way between Houghton and Calumet, lest there be any confusion. There have been other airports. You're speaking of what is now the county airport.

GL: Several houses in this town were brought from the Arcadian area. They came from the Arcadian mines and here were a bunch of empty homes and instead of building new ones they brought them where the airport is now presently located.

DH: Do you know anything about that? Did they bring flatbeds in?

FL: They didn't have flat beds. They may have put runners on them and skidded them on the snow. They couldn't do it in the summer time. They didn't have roads that big. And how could they cross the bridge? They used to charge a nickel to cross it.

GL: To finish up my story about the airport...I saw Mr. Winkler and I said we have to plow this runway. He said I can't do it. Who can? The County Commissioner. When do you want to see him? Tonight, as soon as we can. The next day there was seven pieces of county equipment on the runway and they plowed the runway open. They put all the snow across.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: Geno, did we date that?

GL: 1947 or '48.

DH: It's as recent as that. That gives you some suggestions in the methods and errors in trying to cope with the snowfall up here. Maybe we can go back to that. We're back to the 1919 period and your job was to go out there. What kind of plow did you have?

FL: We had the same kind of plow that the horses used to have, but my Dad had it built from that model but to an automobile scale. Instead of that 36 inch tread it was 56. It had wings on the side and made ruts in everything. It was a heavy piece of equipment. I had to hold the outfit all by myself. Then we got going with that and we started making V plows in front of our cars. The county used some too. Then we got roadside plows. We made one by copying one from the railroad. That didn't last very long. Then the Hope Manufacturing Company made us a road plow. That worked pretty good. I used it for many years. Then the Snow King came in. It advanced and advanced. The Snow??? came in from Germany.

DH: Let me ask some questions in connection with that. What you're really saying is your father's intent to maintain this bus service and transportation through the winter and he was really doing this as a private risk type of thing. It was his own money and equipment and it was not subsidized. If I remember correctly what you said a few minutes ago the county was actually trying to stop it. This was, you'd start in South Range and then what?

FL: We'd go to Hancock and then to Painsdale and back to Hancock. Every hour. We're not fooling around. This is what he wanted.

DH: So it was necessary to plow the roads.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: It wasn't every hour all the time, but nonetheless, it was good service. I think it was

1922 he took the bus bodies off the reels and put them on logging sleighs. Then we had a 2 ½ ton holt and a 5 ton holt and a 10 ton too. We used to tow the small bus bodies and with the small cat and the big bus bodies with the big cat. The exhaust from the caterpillars running to the heating unit of the buses. You had to be careful when you turn not to break this steam hose. We used to go from Hancock to Painsdale. We turned around at the bridge corner. At 5 miles an hour you didn't go very far, very fast. But every Saturday night they had the big dances and our bus was there waiting for the people.

GL: Holt is Caterpillar. He invented the Cats. This tractor company bought them out and it's called the Caterpillar Company.

FL: It was a three hour trip. It was a long ride, colder than the dickens. We didn't have heat in the Caterpillar. But there was heat in the bus.

END OF SIDE 1 TAPE 1

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DH: We've changed tapes on this. We've been talking about some of the storms and Fred has been talking about some of the busses. I think you should give at least one example of what it was like trying to run a bus here in the winter and the kinds of weather you would run into.

FL: We used to get stuck. You couldn't see where you were going. You'd hit the drifts and snow banks.

GL: I was a young lad, but I remember this gang making a canvas cover for the back wheels and they had horse shoes riveted on the canvas to try and go over the snow. They

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

tried everything possible to go over the snow and old Caesar finally said you cannot go on top of the snow, you have to move the snow. Can you imagine them going through that experiment?

DH: Basically, your Dad and the vehicles were the only thing using them. Were the other people use what you plowed?

GL: There were very few cars.

FL: The wholesalers would come up after I opened the road up. 10 minutes after I get home they'd send their boys up to deliver the groceries. They'd deliver up here. They would drive. 1922, '23, '24, those years. It's hard to remember everything that happened, but every now and then you remember something.

DH: Let me touch on this thing you were talking earlier that there was some opposition and you felt it came in part from the railroad. A customary way for people to travel, unless you wanted to walk or ride a bike, you rode by train or streetcar.

DH: The streetcar didn't come out to the Range did it. That was one way of travel and what your dad was doing is bucking the travel from the railroad...

GL: It's just like the airplanes took away the railroads now in this country. This is what happens in this world.

FL: There was a time, I remember people relating to me down in the Lake Linden area, when he was running the bus the streetcar people would take their big snowblower and blow the snow from the tracks onto the road. Then Caesar must have sent these boys down and blew the snow on the tracks. There was nobody in any significant power that was with him. That's why the other night I wanted to talk about ???

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: I can see how you would want to write an article on this thing because you're talking about things I've never understood that deeply. Did you ever think your father was really discouraged that he couldn't keep with this?

FL : Never. We have to try better. Make something different. He spent a lot of money, fortunes. Everything that came in he spent, plus what he had in the bank.

GL: At one time he bought a Model T pickup and that was the first snowmobile in the area and we took pictures of it. He put an extra wheel in the back and a center runner in front. Then he put a track over the two back wheels. They went over the snow banks. He and his good friend Mandy Ellen had the Rex Bar in Houghton. They were both here and they got this old Model T. First snowmobile. They used to go downtown.

FL: I drove it for years. I used to go to work every morning in Houghton with it. It was Model T Roadster, 1924. It had a one ton truck rear end. It had a regular speed transmission in behind the regular transmission we put in there. Then it had tracks. When they'd get wet they'd freeze and crack. Then they made a chain link after. Somebody patented it and made a good one.

GL: The Sheriff Department bought it in the '20s.

DH: Let me speculate, you must have converted these livery stables into garages.

FL: We tore the livery stable down and built a completely new garage out of limestone.

DH: And this became the garage for all the equipment you were accumulating.

FL: That's right. All our horse equipment went into a barn in Hubbell. I never paid much attention, who cares when you're young. But in later years I inquired. Then I found out from people in Hubbell that owned the building that it burned down and everything was lost. All the sleighs, hacks, buggies, harnesses, saddles, side saddles for

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

the ladies, the whole bit, everything went. I don't know what year that burnt, in the late '20s or '30s.

DH: Let's pursue the story of your father here, he's in the business of running a bus service and trucks and plowing. When did you get into the business of gasoline or bulk oil?

FL: The gasoline pump was in front of the barn. Somebody said '15 or '16. I remember as a kid getting up at 4:30 in the morning to pump for the saw mill. I had to fill up 5 barrels of gasoline one gallon at a time. That was around '15 or '16. It must have been put in at that time.

DH: So it was primarily there for the convenience of the equipment, but then it began to branch into a business of it's own.

FL: Yes. Sundays we would pump gas. Cars were being driven then and my mother and I would get out and pump gasoline. Sell gasoline, they were new cars then. Our gasoline used to be delivered from Standard Oil with mule teams. In the winter time on runners and in summer time on wheels. Then these things were such big gas users they had to bring a big truck in. When you fill these big Cats with gas and 25 gallons in 8 or 10 buses, gasoline goes pretty fast. That tank had to be filled up every day.

DH: Where did they bring it from?

FL: ??? Mine Junction if I remember right.

GL: I thought it came from Berkley.

FL: Anderson was the driver. He died 2 or 3 years ago. He was pretty old when he died. He drove that and the Standard Oil truck for years and years. Then we started with the bulk tank.

GL: 1924 is when the South Range station was built.

DH: We're talking about the Range Oil and Gas Company. Was that the original building by the way? Or has that been replaced?

GL: It is the original building, but it has been enlarged. Three different times. When it started out it was a 30x30 building. Then he went into the wholesale business in 1929. I remember him...the first time I saw him in overalls. We were with the buses yet and he said, come on we've got to go sell gasoline.

FL: We were with Standard Oil, then we had Delco. It was a product from Detroit, it was from Ford Motor Company waste burning. Out of the coal they made Benzol. That was a high tech thing at the time. Then he went into Johnson Oil Refinery Company out of Chicago because they had ethyl. Ethyl got to be very popular.

DH: We're talking now about the late 1920s?

FL: We're talking now about 1932. Somewhere in there. Johnson Oil Refinery Company had the ethyl and Delco Benzol got out of popularity. He switched to that. Then in 1934 the Texaco man came in. It was a good move at that time.

DH: While he was with Johnson or Delco he was also wholesale retailing at that time?

FL: No.

GL: Johnson was one of our first delivery boys. We had the old 1931 International with the 400 gallon tank. The tank is sitting in the yard there. We started a long time before that because I used to deliver gasoline up to Stratton's camp, Anderson Logging. Every 2nd day I had to bring 405 gallons of gas and put it into the tank. That's a long time ago. That was up high because they had to siphon it into the gas tank. There was never much snow up by Lake Linden.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: What year was that?

GL: That would have to be '25 or '27. We had the state truck with the tank on the back.

FL: We made a gas truck out of the Saber. It was an old bus like a Greyhound. We had those buses in the '20s. He did make a gas truck out of one of them.

GL : He was going to make a freighter out of one of them and haul Johnson oil from Chicago with it. 30 barrels to a load. That poor bus was made for a bus only, then came the beginning of Greyhound. This is where that started too.

DH: Northern Minnesota is where that all started. Let's try to wind up a few of these things. We're still in the bus business. How long did the family remain in the bus business?

FL: The Range Bus Line Company, he sold it in November 1925 to the Copper Range Mining Company. He stayed here for that winter and then he put the garage up in Houghton. In the meantime he went up and bought these old buses and he bought out the L'Anse run. We ran to L'Anse and Hancock and then after to the Covington Junction. After we had the Range Bus Line Company we from Hancock to Tapiola and Elo. We had a side where the old logging people were.

GL: The second one was Cloverland Rapid Bus Line Company.

DH: Did your father have partners in this or was it pretty much a family owned business?

FL: Just individual. And he gave orders to the rest of the family too. He was the boss.

DH: When you talk about bus line, did it also provide a delivery service or was it strictly passengers?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: We had a slight delivery service on the L'Anse run. We didn't do it on any other one. We had tags...I didn't drive too much on the L'Anse run. By that time I was doing specials, Michigan Tech, Suomi College...

DH: In other words the buses were also for charter as well.

FL: They were always for charter, even from the beginning.

DH: Maybe we should explore that. What were some of your more interesting experiences running charter? How far would you go on these trips?

FL: In the beginning, 1921, '22 when I first started driving it, it was churches, Sunday school picnics, the ladies and all that stuff. And the men's lodges too. Not everybody had an automobile. They'd have their meetings in different places. I drove Hancock High School to many places, wherever they played. Marquette, Ishpeming, Negaunee, Iron Mountain. I drove Michigan Tech to Duluth, up into Minnesota and Wisconsin, they played Ashland. This is when Harvey was coach. Before Knobleck came in we got in a lot of trouble with Knobleck because they boys wanted to have fun in Duluth. But the church groups would go to Duluth. I drove near North Dakota. At ??? corner above Duluth there were 7 of our buses there.

GL: How about the trip to the college of ??? Remember when the Federal men came through to grab all the saloon keepers?

FL: I didn't go there. Jackson Prison. I had a load of bootleggers.

DH: Are you saying now that the Prohibition agents would hire your...

GL: The sheriff did. The law says you need to take two detectives to a prisoner. All these old deputies in the county and my Dad was one of them. They chartered a bus. I took 14 of them. We went to Jackson Prison. We pulled in and they wouldn't let us near

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

the place. They sent us out of town to the new prison. We went in there and had to go through 5 doors to get in there. We took the prisoners there, then we went to Detroit to pick up a couple prisoners. We didn't get the prisoners in Detroit. We stopped at Newberry and visited...there's the snowmobile.

DH: I'm being shown a picture by Fred and Geno of the first snowmobile in the Copper Country. You want to describe it?

GL: This happens to be Ralph Pece standing in front of it. It's taken on 1st Street next to our garage. Freddie you remember that I told you there was a store. That's the house I was born in. That's the Finnish Hall. Not the Workers Hall. There it is right there. There was a store next to that house.

FL: Then the slaughter house was next to it.

GL: This is the one with the track in the back and the Model T and the runner in the front.

DH: I need to ask you quickly about the Prohibition Era and your reaction to it.

Obviously with ethnic groups like Italians, table wine was real common. I imagine it created some problems around here.

FL: Plenty of problems. I never drank in my life. Nothing stronger than...

DH: This was not a typical Italian household in the sense of table wine then.

FL: The wine was very seldomly on the table. My Dad drank very little. My mother if she took some wine she would put soda pop with it. My brother and I never touched anything in our lives. The others touched a little bit. I'd be tested. I still am, but I'm accepted now.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: That's fascinating because again we have an example of how we can generalize too much about an ethnic group and assume that they would be in opposition to it. But in reality the Lucchesi household was as temperate as some of the Finnish prohibitionists were that I knew years ago.

FL: My mother would make a little wine. As a matter of fact I still have the barrels. They won't hold nothing anymore. You have it for company and visitors. We used to get a lot of business because dignitaries would come from all over. The engineers came from California and spent two weeks watching us plow snow. They came from the Caterpillar Company and other companies that make snow plows. In Alberly, MN there's a company that makes great big plows. The county has two of them. That's how they plow the road...

DH: I've read about that and the difficulties they had with it. Let me ask this, when did the county or the state finally accept the idea of keeping the roads open?

FL: It was the county, the state had nothing to do with it. I don't even know if these roads were designated state highways at that time because they were dirt anyway. I don't know when they started. '24 or '25. At that time they were convinced that it had to be done. 26...I used to be at the county warehouse myself and take out a tractor from there. They closed the railroad. They didn't close it all the way because they hauled the school kids to Painsdale. That ran for many years.

GL: I was going to give you a picture. Freddie said #14. This is #11.

FL: Mine was Miss Cloverland. This was Miss Logs. Miss Chassell is white. Miss Baraga is the one we took the body off and made a truck out of it.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

GL: All these buses ran on WPA and later on we took them to the scrap yard and they made bombers out of them.

DH: Let's get back to that WPA. They were used to help people work for WPA projects?

FL: We had a 45 passenger bus but we had all the seats taken out and benches put in. It would carry 40 WPA workers to the job. Segola area. They would repair things. WPA paid for the drivers and we had to break in a whole lot of new drivers because they could only work so many hours. I had to maintain the buses anyway. The real high price of \$40,000 bus is \$10 a day.

DH: I can't stay here more than another half hour because my youngest daughter needs the car. I want to talk to Fred and I'll interview you later on some of these things. Let's put it together. I do want to touch now...were you involved at all in your father's interests when he got started in aviation?

FL: He was in aviation a long time before I could tighten a wrench. 1919 is when he started.

DH: What do you mean when you say he started? Did he actually acquire a plane?

FL: No, he flew them though.

GL: He did because he went down to Chicago and he had to put a deposit on it. He had to put down \$3500 from Chicago Municipal Airport. It was a Jenni WWI Bi-Plane.

DH: Did he bring that particular plane up here?

FL: No. In '29 I think he got the first standard.

DH: Did he ever explain to you why he was interested in aviation?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: We're looking at a picture of a Jenni...

GL: That's a standard.

DH: A standard. It's dated...

GL: 1926. They've got three.

FL: It went through the ice in the channel on the big Portage. I went out there with my boat and Scully was still holding on to the tail. The ice was only two inches thick out there. She went through, the runners. I tied a chain around the propeller and two barrels. Then I had Scully let her go. I tied the boat to the tail and we sunk the airplane. We sunk it right down in the water. Then I cut ice for three miles with an ice saw. Then I put a tripod in front of it. I pulled that baby out of the water inch by inch. It's right close to the Sleepy Hollow farm was or the dealer that sells Jeeps now. We were about a half mile out. It was sub zero weather. We were out there three days. I cut a channel with the boat and the whole plane under water where you see it there. Then we chain blocked it up. When the wings came almost to the surface I didn't dare pull them out because instantly they'd freeze and I'd never move it again. I'd have to strip down and put my arm with a big knife in the wing so the water could run out. My dad would rub it because we'd get blue. The other wing was the same and the fuselage was the same. We finally got it up as you see in this picture. We got her on board on more solid ice. Then we got the farmer from Sleepy Hollow. He had a sleigh to haul ice off the lake. He hooked it up and we started for home. We got to the ??? club and the horses started to go through. They were splashing all over and twisted sideways and broke the anchor. We left it there. I went home and got two big cinder blocks to anchor it so the wind wouldn't blow it away. What happened is there was 2 layers of ice and about 10 inches of water between

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: No. He just took everything for granted. He was interested in everything else.

Progress is what he was interested in.

GL: He drove everything but a locomotive.

FL: The only thing he was trying to do before he died is fly a jet and he never got to. He flew everything else. At one time in the history I was the only licensed air plane mechanic in the area.

DH: Was he the very first to show interest in the air plane?

FL: No, there were several others. Ben Winberg had a Jenni at the time. ??? brothers from Amek. ??? they called them. They were mechanics. They had a Jenni and he was flying passengers down the Keewenaw Bay and he came down where you drive where the old White Horse was there was a bar. Just behind it is a cliff. He was landing on the sand down there. He got caught in the draft and he was down on the ground. They both burned. That was the end of his flying days.

DH: Your father came in at 1919.

GL: Winberg was the original and he got in flying with him. Then I guess he went to Copper Harbor too.

DH: Was this more like a hobby or did he develop a business in this?

GL: No business.

FL: It was just advertising. He had Range Oil and Gas written on the side.

GL: This is when he set the standard. Scully landed it on the lake and it broke through the ice. They were trying to get it out. Were you involved in it Freddie?

FL: I was the only guy there.

GL: They had a team of horses out there.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

them. The horses were going through the first one and hitting the bottom. The next

morning I jacked it all up and put a piece of 2x4

END OF TAPE 1

DH: We changed tapes again. You were just talking about going to Parks Air College.

FL: Yes. It's in St. Louis, IL which is today part of the University of St. Louis. It's the Catholic institution. Mr. Parks was a convert Catholic. After the war he donated the whole airport to the University of St. Louis.

DH: I'm assuming your Dad sent you down there particularly.

FL: I went there on my own. I was wandering around the mechanic shop for years with buses and automobiles and everything else. I thought it would be a good way to take a vacation, to go to school for six months for airplanes. I worked there for 6 months and then I came home to take care of the buses again. By that time my Dad had the airplane. That was it. I checked his log book.

DH: How much flying did you do?

FL: None

DH: You aren't a pilot then.

FL: I never like to fly. I rode up with my Dad once. I used to go up with Scully with his Cessna. I went up with Geno. We flew out over Lake Superior one time and I didn't know where I was going. I was flying with the instruments. I wanted to see how the newer instruments worked. The next thing I know he says you're 20 miles out over Lake Superior. So we turned around and came back.

DH: All of this was being done on the Isle Royal Sands?

FL: Yes. Scully had a hanger there and everybody came in.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

GL: Lake Superior Aviation taught for 10 years out of there. After World War II that's where I did all my flying time instructing airport cadets. We would give them ten hours a week.

FL: Flying up in this country wasn't that simple. I remember when the shell plane came in in 1931. He got down on his knees and said please God let me get out of here again. My Dad said why? He said there's nothing between Green Bay and here but woods. So you land on the trees and walk out. Then they had that big fire on Isle Royal and the Navy had boats coming in there. In '31 and '32 they had the Secorsky flying to Isle Royal. It was a 14 passenger. Seeley was the pilot. It had wheels too. That flew off the sand and off the lake. Remember that Geno?

GL: Right there by the Houghton County Road Commission. We parked there.

FL: The winter time was another color. We used to keep them down by the bridge.

DH: You're talking about the Isle Royal boats?

FL: The marina. In the winter time he used to tie it down there and Scully would tie his down.

DH: Let's get back to the family business. I'll be able to pick a lot of this up from Geno. You're into the '30s and definitely going into the distributor business as well as retail. But your main concern is with the buses and the WPA you'd mentioned. How long did you stay with the family business?

FL: In '34 I had the buses up in Calumet and I got married and we built the Laurium station and that's where I stayed. I ran that for 17 years.

DH: Let's enlarge on that. You put the operation in. You've expanded the operation and it reaches over how much of the Copper Country?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: 5 counties. Something like that.

GL: Keewena, Houghton, Baraga, Ontonagon, the four counties.

DH: You were running a station rather than being in the bus business.

FL: I still had eight buses running on WPA. I had to keep them in an old church building in Calumet over on 7th Street. I had the buses. I was still maintaining these buses and running the business and fixing airplanes too. When Dad says hey my airplane ain't running right you go down to the airport and get it started. We had a hanger at the Laurium Airport too.

DH: How did you find time to get married?

FL: It was a Saturday night in a big snowstorm and we went up and picked up the women.

DH: I think this an interesting sense because he's talking about his connection to my group, the Finns. You actually married a Finnish woman.

FL: Yes. Niccola. I had three daughters with her. Her father was a commercial fisherman. Her brothers were too, and her sister's husband. My first wife was a Finnish gal.

DH: And you lived in Laurium or Calumet?

FL: I lived in Laurium for 17 years. We went to San Jose, CA after that. I was a councilman for two terms in Laurium.

DH: That opens up an entire new ballpark. Did your father ever slow down?

FL: I don't think so.

GL: He died with his boots up.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: He was in his office that day. The day before he drove 200 miles to visit all the gas stations. They tell me this.

DH: On into the '40s, how was the operation in the second World War? Did it get...

GL: It was almost impossible to find employees. The only people left at home were the old people. Freddie you were alright in Laurium.

FL: During the war I took care of the logging trucks that were hauling logs that made the plywood that made the gliders that they made in Belgium.

GL: I was flying and I had very little time to help him in the office. Bruno didn't make it. Bruno had his arm cut so he got into the 4th category and he eventually took over the Hancock station. Leo got into the service.

DH: Was the family gradually brought into the business right along? Fred you're the oldest. You come next in line.

GL: I followed in his footsteps. Freddie had the Laurium end. Bruno had Hancock. Leo was in the service. He finished his college and then he worked for a company in Detroit. Then he came back and ran the station again in Houghton. Leo was kind of in and out of the business.

DH: But all this time your father was still very active in the business..

GL: He was the boss.

FL: He died that night and gave you the keys. Then they called me in San Jose and said Pa died. I had just left here, I was here two weeks before that. He was pretty good.

GL: He built up a nice business and he left it up to us from there. He had 12 stations that he had built. Business was down a bit because he didn't give any authority to anybody else. When he did go we had to take it from here and build it up again.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: Did you retain the bus business at all after World War II?

FL: No. Because during World War II we junked them all. Pa said the government needed aluminum and this is what we got. Let's make airplanes. By this time he turned his papers over to Greyhound. Greyhound started with us up here and we went to the Covington Junction and met the Bessemer Taxi Company there. They went to Ashland and they met the Northland Transportation Company which went to Duluth or Minneapolis or whatever. The Jefferson Highway in Minneapolis went on west. We'd sell a ticket in Hancock for California. How it got to be Greyhound is the Pagel Company sent this man in Duluth a Greyhound dog for Christmas one year. So his was Northland Transportation Company and he had a garage because I used to go up there all the time with the bus, and he painted a greyhound on the side of his buses. When he decided to form Greyhound, everything consolidated, he called it the Greyhound Company. He was a Norwegian.

DH: And your father sold this here over...

FL: I don't think he sold anything, he just turned it over, license free.

GL: There wasn't anything to sell really.

FL: We had the rights between L'Anse and Covington Junction. I think Pa just turned it over to Greyhound. This is progress. For my Dad he said if there's no competition then we quit. We gotta have competition. So this is the way it works.

GL: He did buy out the Kennedy ????. He used to drive a bus from Houghton to L'Anse. It was the three...

FL: The Three Twins was out of Marquette. You remember the twins that founded Rome? This is the emblem they had on the side of their bus. But it was three instead of

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

two. The Flannigan brothers in Marquette. I think they're trucking now. They were an old time company two because I would go visit with those brothers all the time when I'd go to Marquette. This is the way all this stuff was going. The Kennedy boys had the buses to Houghton and Pa bought them out. Before that with the Range Bus Line Company ??? of Hubbell had big sedans running between Lake Linden and Hancock. In '23 my Dad bought them out. Then those drivers went to work for us and we started a bus service to Lake Linden from Hancock. He was always in it. He bought out ??? like Hertz Rent-A-Car. I can't think of the name, but they were across from ??? Hardware, they had a garage there. They had Model T sedans. Pa bought that out. Then we went into the Yellow Cab. We had a fleet of Yellow Cabs running. Joe Bishop was there too come to think of it. He was not connected with that. Leo Sandervit was there, out of L'Anse. His brother owned the Ford dealership for many years, Copper Motors. Leo and I used to run that Rent-A-??? til we found out some people who rented it wouldn't put no mileage on it and they'd take it home and saw wood with it. Jack up the car. We'd find no mileage on the autometer on the front wheel. So we quit that foolishness. I think we only had it about a year. We had the Copper Country Yellow Cab.

DH: How big of an area would you cover with the cabs?

FL: They would go anywhere where people wanted to go at that time. And he kept his airplanes under the Copper Country Yellow Cab Company. As part of that company. But that's the way it works. At the time we had the Range Oil and Gas Company, the Kroger and Rapid (?)Transit Company, and the Copper Country Yellow Cab Company, all three businesses going at the same time. I used to have to maintain everything on all three companies.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: Let me ask about the business here. Was your father in any way, where these separate incorporations?

GL: Just separate names.

DH: But it was basically all Caesar and Lucchesi.

GL: The wife was the bookkeeper.

DH: Your mother trained herself to be a bookkeeper, did she have any formal education?

GL: No.

FL: One day in Italy. She went to school for one day, she told me that. She got a licking for being away from taking care of the sheep or goats. She was 7 or 8 years old.

FL: She was 12.

DH: And she had family where?

FL: In Baltic.

DH: Let's spend a little time about your mother. We've spent a significant amount of time on your father, but she must have been a big factor in that family too.

GL: Absolutely. She was an Angrini.

DH: Besides raising the family she became a part of the business.

FL: She always was a part of the business, even in the grocery store. And raising us. She was a small woman too. I think she was only 5 feet two.

DH: I met her at a wedding reception at the student's church.

FL: She was a good church member. She believed it very strongly. She figured that man is just man. If the priest said something she didn't like that's okay. God was still up there running the show anyway. Man is only man and that's it. That's what she taught us guys.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

DH: Did she just gradually slip into taking these responsibilities of helping your father out?

FL: She had no choice. I found a book of hers the other day. I took it over to Norma's house. My mother was marking down who rented the horse and how much. To Lake Linden, one horse and one sleigh, \$3. All these prices are written by her. 1912, 1911. I haven't found any earlier than that. She didn't live upstairs of the livery stable at that time. But this is all her writing. She wrote everything phonetic. How it sounded is how she wrote it.

DH: She was a silent partner at that time.

FL: We were all silent.

DH: Maybe I shouldn't ask this, but how did they get along? Occasionally were there things she didn't agree with? Or was his word law?

FL: His word was law. She agreed. She had no choice. None of us knew what was happening at the time. We went along with it and that's it.

GL: At times he'd trade in 2 or 3 cars before he came home and horses was the same thing.

FL: He forbid my mother to learn how to drive until he was too old to drive himself. Then he was sorry he didn't let her learn to drive.

GL: In 1930 they made copper stationary.

DH: By this time your father was a very influential figure in the town and the county. What were his interests outside of business? Or was he a workaholic? Outside of planes? Obviously this was a hobby as well. Did he have any other outside interests?

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: I don't know if he did or didn't. I went about my own business and he went about his own as we grew up. No matter where he went he was either selling or promoting something or making good will or something all the time. Regardless if it was 3am or midnight. He slept 3 hours a night, that was his limit, my mother's too. None of us slept.

GL: He always wore a shirt and tie and suit.

FL: And he'd crawl under the bus with his suit on to tell you what was wrong if you didn't know how.

DH: Did he get involved with Sons of Italy or Knights of Columbus?

FL: He belonged to them.

DH: He belonged to them but didn't really have the time to be too active.

FL: Just like me. I never go to the meetings either, but nevertheless I belong to them.

GL: He was on Village Council for a few years, but not that much.

FL: The only time Dad got into politics, he ran for sheriff one time. Back in the '20s I think. He did pretty good but he didn't win. Somebody from Calumet got it because there were more votes up there.

DH: I'm assuming he ran Republican.

FL: They were all Republican up here anyhow. The others didn't have a chance til after the Depression.

DH: Did he put everything into the business? Did he get into outside investments of any kind?

FL: My mother did. After he died Ma got into fooling around with stock.

GL: He never knew she had them.

Interview with Geno Lucchesi

Interviewer: Dave Halala

Houghton, MI

September 13, 1980

FL: No. He didn't know she had them. She was smart. She kept the books, she knew what was going on too.

GL: Maybe he didn't show her it all. I don't know where he got the money. He always had a Cadillac and he always had an airplane, which isn't cheap to maintain. He spent an awful lot of money outside the business. I asked him one time and he said never mind. It's none of your business where I get my money.

FL: That's right. We just did the things he told us to do and ran our own affairs besides too. All his work involved the business of my own. I had to take care of his equipment. If a bus broke down in Milwaukee he'd call me up and I had to drop what I was doing and go take care of things. He was quite a man. My mother was quite a lady too though. As big as us guys were along side of her at one time. 6'1 and he is pretty close to 6 and Leo and Bruno are big men. My youngest sister was no slouch either. When Ma gave orders we danced. If she got mad we ran away. We were gentlemen, we didn't hit our women. Ma was Ma and that was it.

DH: I'm going to have to break this off, but I will pick it up with Geno sometime and hopefully when you come back next spring and summer we'll follow up on this. I think it's good for you people to have this on tape and I like to have the privilege of listening to it, simply because I think there's some definite Copper Country history here that hasn't been told. I know there's been feature stories from time to time, but even I uncovered something. This is Dave Halala signing off on this 13th of September at 11:30 in the morning at Geno Lucchesi's house. Hopefully we're going to get more tapes from this in the future.