

The Upper Peninsula:

North on I-27 to I-75, we took the Mackinac bridge (Toll \$2.50) to route 2 and then 77 north to 28/41. Mike Hoover and Lori T met Sue and Thurman Estes at the Brentwood Motor Inn in Marquette at 4 pm that Saturday. The Brentwood had large, very clean rooms and served a continental breakfast but no place to sit and eat. Prices were very reasonable compared to the other places in the area. We walked downtown but most stores closed at 5 pm. We took a drive on Lakeshore Blvd passed an ore freighter carrying taconite.

“She’s riding low in the water!”

We drove through Presque Isle, a state park; it is a beautifully scenic spot. We stopped for dinner at the Shores Restaurant and Lounge on Lakeshore Blvd. The food is very good and very reasonably priced. Steve Brennan called during dinner. He, Sue and son Kevin ate there later when they arrived. After dinner we explored some rock used for erosion prevention around parking lots in the area – there were some interesting finds.

The next morning we went for breakfast at Big Boy. We checked out the Seaman’s Museum at Michigan Tech which was only a few blocks away. They have beautiful sample of crystals and rocks. Steve took a lot of pictures. The museum also has booklets for sale on the local area mines and quarries. Then it was a short 2 miles down US 41/28 to South on 35. We came to a railroad track and stopped to fill our bags with taconite iron pellets. The taconite is shipped from the Tilden mine. Box cars are usually overloaded with the iron pellets which fall off the freight cars.

We then drove down south 35 and west on 480 to a freshly blasted road cut where we collected nice samples of banded hematite. We then drove to Ishpeming – we stayed on 480 then County Road which is also Ready Street. We turned left onto Jasper Street. We drove to Jasper Knob which is at the corner of Hill and Jasper St. Above a stone wall, there is a path leading to the top and beautiful formations of jasperlite, layers of jasper between layers of hematite. Collecting is not allowed but the hike is worth the view. I doubt that you will find such beautiful large formations anywhere else.

We went to Da Yooper’s Tourist Trap on W 28 in Ishpeming. It didn’t cost anything, was a fun thing to do, saw some great specimen of rock and used the bathrooms. They have a gift shop with interesting stuff for sale. We had to chuckle at the price on their taconite packages.

Later we went west on US 41 to the town of Champion. We turned left at a flashing yellow light and a street titled AAJ. Look for a sign that says US Steel No Trespassing (safe on a Sunday). Take the road left but beware that the road is a little rough and my car probably needs the scratches buffed out now but it was so much fun. We found tailing piles high with specular Hematite (some of the specular hematite turned out to be magnetite.)

We left with cars loaded down and headed west toward Houghton-Hancock. On US 41 there is a rest stop called Canyon Falls south of L’Anse. It is a memorable experience that needs to be on everyone’s list of things to see; a nugget in Michigan topography. The state has done a good job of making the waterfall accessible and if I can walk it so can you. It was a lot shorter than I thought it would be. Just don’t stop at the midway point – go until you see the End of the Trail. Most everyone found good hunks of birch bark to take for souvenirs. Sue Brennan didn’t chance the hike because of her foot surgery and got in a good midday nap.

In Hancock, we stayed at the Super 8 motel which had a great view, was reasonably priced and served a continental breakfast. We met at 5:30 pm and went to dinner at Applebee’s on route 26 south of Hancock. After dinner we checked out the retention rock at Walmart since the layer of rock was fairly new. Mike knew that since there was no vegetation growing through. There we found copper! Kevin Brennan proved himself to have a nose for copper and found some very nice pieces of copper in matrix. It was well worth the effort. We drove around later to see if we could find some other freshly laid rock and then back to the motel.

Next morning we met for the continental breakfast at Super 8. Then we went to the Keweenaw Gift shop. The owner, Kevin, sells wholesale and retail copper at shows across the country. For their rough ore, we were directed to the foundry at Dollar Bay, north on US 26. We were allowed to take pictures of their cutting and processing. One machine was sawing slabs from a huge chunk of copper. Discovery channel was coming the following day to film their operation. Mike was able to negotiate a good price on flats of copper. Steve has a background on foundry work and the conversation brought out some interesting details of "how to avoid those explosions."

We took M26 to US41/26 north to Allouez and stopped at the Rock Shop. We left there and went hunting for a place to look for Lake Superior agates. The road Mike was looking for, however, was closed. We made a lot of wrong turns after that but finally ended up at Tamarack Water Works road and hunted on the beach for agates. We returned to Calumet and went to lunch at Jim's Pizza— some of us really wanted to try the Pasties and a local recommended Jim's.

"Pasty (short a) not Pasty (long a) – those are what certain women wear," said Mike.

Some of us still can't keep which is which straight or maybe it was just a joke all around. Sue Estes definitely did not want a Pasty, short a or otherwise. My first experience with a Pasty was all right. It had rutabaga, carrots and some strange meat with lots of pepper.

"That's road kill!" was someone's comment.

There were six pasties ordered but only five left so Sue Estes gladly opted out. There was no gravy and they were a little dry.

"Eat it with ketchup," the waitress said.

After lunch we went to Mohawk. Just north of Mohawk, right into the Mohawk self-storage, we drove down the two track trail back to the tailing piles. We found copper. Mike didn't want to climb at the Mohawk so he stayed at the bottom sifting through the rock that had already been broken up and he did find a handful of copper there. We left and continued north on 41 to the Delaware mine. The underground tour was recommended but not worth the \$9.50. All of us were disappointed but we did get to pet Oreo, a pet skunk. We continued on 41 north to Copper Harbor where we ate dinner at the Tamarack Inn – a pricey restaurant. Our waitress was from Macedonia.

"Can you tell me what the Gulf Ale Shrimp is?" I asked.

She looked at me incredulously and began describing, "a cut and flattened ..."

"No! I mean is it battered and fried?"

"Fried? Yes!"

The Estes decided to order the steak and split it between them which was an additional \$3.00 and their dinner was delayed as the waitress from Macedonia thought they ordered a Pasty. Pasty pronounced with a short a not a long a. By then, we all knew Sue Estes had an aversion for Pasties so it was somewhat comical. There was a lot of comical relief on that trip which made it memorable. (Just remember to keep Mike and Sue Brennan separated during meals – there can sometimes be too much comic relief.)

We left Copper Harbor west on M26 to take in the scenic stretches of Lake Superior. We stopped near Agate beach. We all weren't very successful finding agates but the Brennans found a few – we did catch a great sunset that night. One stretch of beach was not washed well by wave action and all the stones were very reddish making identification more difficult. We did meet a very playful golden retriever at Eagle River.

"Lori, watch this," said Sue Estes and she threw a rock into the lake. The golden bounded into the lake and stuck his head down into the water looking for just the rock that Sue had thrown, retrieving it for Sue.

Tuesday morning Kevin, Steve and Thurman went back to Walmart but were chased out. Mike went to the Keweenaw Gift shop to pick up the flats of copper he had ordered. Then it was on to the Tilden mine in Ishpeming. We were early and took the opportunity to return to Champion for more

specular Hematite, then on to the tour. The tour cost \$10.00 but was well worth the money. We viewed a truck worth over \$2 million that had 12 foot tires. We viewed a pit that measured one mile across by one mile and was 1100 feet deep. We saw Grinders that measured 10 feet in diameter by 32 feet in length and other awesome machinery.

Kilns were fired up to 2400 ° F and the temperature was 126° where we stood. The processing of the iron starts with crushing stone to 10 inch pieces or less. They are transferred to tumblers with water and they become the consistency of sand. It is transferred to other tumblers where it becomes the consistency of face powder. Cooked baking soda is added for processing. In the end, the result is taconite pellets that are about 65% iron – a more economically way of shipping iron. DVD's are available and show the complete process. Mike used the DVD successfully at the Learning Fair in July at Spring Arbor University in Jackson, Michigan.

After the tour we separated and went our separate ways. Lori spent two minutes at the cliffs in Bay Harbor and found crystals in a horned coral and a nice hexagonaria (Rough Petoskey stone.) The Brennans picked up more taconite at the railroad track (after all, a small package of twenty-five sold for \$4 at Da Yooper's Tourist Trap.) Then they worked their way down to Clare. Along the way, Kevin found a nice Agate. One of the trophies for the Estes was Kona dolomite that was "secured" from that first parking lot we checked out.

The Brennans highly recommend the trip for families. The Tilden mine tour was excellent. The Estes loved the beach hunt as well as the tour of both Tilden and the copper foundry. Lori is amazed at how much more beautiful the sunsets are at the lakes. Mike voices the feeling of all of us in relating to you how much good company we shared – humor and fun. It was a good group and a good trip.

"So," asked Steve, "when is the next one?"