FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

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Interview with MRS. RUTH BUTLER
by Paul Jalkanen Aug. 9, 1972

Mrs. Butler, can we start with some of your personal background, or what kind of work your father did and where he was from.

Ruth: Well, my father came from Canada with his parents to Humboldt, my grandfather was a mining man and they came over there to the Humboldt Mine and eventually went into Republic to help open the Republic Mine. There were 4 men who went in at that time as a Carnegie project but my father's family was the only family that went in; my grandmother, of course, had to keep a boarding house and she also had a very large family, my father was one of 13 children, but they were wonderful people, my grandparents were certainly wonderful people, the things they did for that little town and it was quite remarkable but the only neighbors grandmother had were Indians and they used to come in and visit grandma and she'd visit them and sometimes they'd insist on staying all night, they slept on the floor by the fireplace and the kids all called grandpa and grandma "poppa" and "momma" and so the Indians called them "poppa" and "momma". And they thought that was their name, they had no idea. My grandfather was the Surface Boss at that time but he was also interested in exploring and in his time he made a great deal of money but as fast as he'd make it, he'd go into another mine and try another one. And it would be quite a thing for him. But he was a real pioneer.

Paul: This must be in the 1850's and '60's.

Ruth: Yes, it was in the 1860's. And they went up to Republic around 1870 I think it was and maybe a little earlier because, I think 2 years, it must have been 1869 they went into Republic because 2 years ago Republic celebrated its' centennial. And so it had to be that year of course, that he went in. My father was the oldest son and he had very little education. My grandmother had been a school teacher and I think mostly what he learned, he learned from her. She was an avid reader and so was he. But he had very little formal education. But boy was he a great guy! He had a personality that was just tremendous. People just loved him! and he really was an outstanding person, I think. He wasn't always successful financially; he went into logging and of course at that time it was all virgin timber and he was very successful until his last year logging and of course everything was with horses. And his horses, they got cholera and one after another died and he lost everything he had, he had a large barn.

Were you born yet? At this time?

Ruth: I was born and I have a faint remembrance of my father going to Marquette from Republic; we were in Republic.

Paul: He worked around Republic during this logging?

Ruth: Well, all over, he logged all over, he logged up around 3 Lakes and they say that Lake Ruth is named for me, I don't know whether it is or not but that's the story around Three Lakes and my aunts told me that was so, that my father had named those 3 lakes because he logged the virgin timber. Named them for his 3 daughters but the other 2 lakes don't bear my sister's names so I don't know whether that's the story or what. But that's what they say and I always think it's kind of pleasant to think that my name's a beautiful lake. But I remember my father going to Marquette and this is one of my very earliest memories, and I heard them talking about this suit and he came home on the train and I ran up to him and asked him if he had won his suit and he said, oh, yes, (he had lost everything, they had a law suit, everything he had) oh, yes, and I said, why didn't you wear it, I thought it was a suit he was winning but that's what I remember, and I remember him sitting with his head in his hands at the table and my mother, she sat there beside him and they just looked so crushed, crest-fallen.
Were you the oldest girl?

Ruth: No, I wasn't, I have an older sister and a brother. I'm third. But I remember just faintly as one of my early memories. It was a real heartbreaker, of course. Then he went up into Ontonagon County.

Paul: Must be around what, 1900 then?

Ruth: He went up in 1898. He went up to Mass City and opened a livery stable there and of course it was a pretty necessary thing in those days because Ontonagon County was pretty well spread out. And I have an old ledger from his livery stable with names in it that are kind of amusing; a horse on Sunday cost twice as much as it did on a week day. Because of the swains would take their girls out for a ride, and he said he didn't like Sunday drivers, because they abused the horses, isn't that something, and another thing, he had a philosophy that the Lord declared that the 7th day was a day of rest, and if the horses went out on Sunday, every horse that was hired on Sunday, had one day of rest. That went for people, too. And he used to say that to me when I worked on Sundays, Gee, always leave one day in the week if you work on Sunday, and you know, by golly, that's pretty true. You aren't made to manipulate for 7 days. And he had a lot of philosophy that was pretty down-to-earth. My mother was a very talented woman. She was a musician and very talented and they were not one bit alike, my mother was almost humorless; she couldn't take a joke and she never knew when the joke was on her and she was always mad and my father was a great joker.

He was an easy-going kind of fellow?

Yes, he was, he was easy-going, normally. And he was quite a drinker. A very heavy drinker, in fact, at times. And of course that was very hard on my mother and hard on the family too because money went for that that should have gone for the family, but

Paul: Did he make his own?

Ruth: Oh, no, he didn't make his own, never.

Paul: I know there were stories people used to make their own a lot.

Ruth: Mostly that was later I think that was after the Prohibition came in.

Paul: When did your father die?

Ruth: He died in 1940

Paul: He lived for quite a time then, eh?

Ruth: Yes, he did, he was 84 years old. A ripe old age. Very good.

Paul: Was your mother quite strict then? Because you said she was kind of humorless, was she a strict woman with the children?

Ruth: Well, she wanted us to obey but she was I think very understanding with her children. I think that the many things she was strict about she worried about, she lived in these little mining towns and the temptations were certainly right out in the open and she kept a pretty firm hand but made a very nice home, we always had a pleasant home, our friends were welcomed, we never knew how many we were going to have for dinner, my father was very hospitable too. Never knew when he was going to bring somebody home, mother had a way of getting something together whether she had much or little, she had a way of doing it.
Paul: Do you remember some other old stories from the 1890's and early 1900's, some stories that your father might have told you about living in those days?

Ruth: Well, would you like to know any of these about my grandparents, or

Paul: Sure, some of those. Or characters that lived at that time, people who were, I suppose, kind of hermit or different kind of people who lived different kind of lives than we live today.

Ruth: In Republic, of course Republic is like a all small town and specially pioneer town, you always had your characters, and my grandfather was a great Methodist. And there's a little white church in Republic, a little white Methodist church, it still stands, and my grandfather gave the lot for that and laid the cornerstone for the church. And my father was married twice. And so was my mother. But my father's wedding was the first wedding in that church. And the woman whose husband was the mine agent wrote a few years ago a description of that little church. She lived there and her husband died in Republic, and wrote a description of the wedding of my father and it's just fascinating; all of the little group that they belonged to got out to decorate the church and it was in May and it was decorated with Arbutus. And she told about people taking their different plants from their homes to decorate this little church and how lovely it was, and then his wife's funeral was the first funeral, she lived only 3 months and she had had tuberculosis.

Paul: This is your dad's first wife, then?

Ruth: In 3 months she died and her funeral was the first funeral in that little church. That's a sad little story she told about that she went to help my father take care of his things, they had a little home there, after his wife died, and he had had a horseshoe of Arbutus tacked up over the door, he never took it down, he took it down that day and he said, it didn't bring me any luck, did it? And I can just picture my father, just because he was very tender hearted. His biggest fault were his excesses like a lot of other people because when he had money he was generous to all, when he didn't have it, he was ashamed that he didn't have it of course. We had, in Republic, there was one character they called "Pete STump". His name was Peter Bagson and he had a stump foot and so they called him, the cruelty of people; and then we had a family that had several children that were we'd say now, retarded, we called them crazy in those days, and I think of what those poor kids, what they suffered, but the one boy was called Willie. And about the biggest insult you could have was to be called Willie, Jobes, just somebody make it in you weren't quite right. And he learned to ride a bicycle. He used to have a bad habit of putting his fingers in his mouth when he got excited, learned to ride his bicycle and somebody came along, and they knew, he wanted to show, so he put his fingers in his mouth, lost his balance, smashed his bicycle, smashed himself up considerably; these are just little episodes; my mother belonged to a study club called the Bayview Study Club and they had the most beautiful books, in fact I have some still that she had bound, glossy print, I think she paid a dollar-a-year for subscription to this magazine, but they would have these study sessions and at the end of the year, the first big social event that I ever went to that I can remember and I must have been about 6 years old I guess, this study club at the mine superintendent's house and my mother sang, and she sang, "The Holy City" and I can still hear her, and when I hear that song, it always brings that tender memory. They had a lovely program, I was to be one of the ushers, and my girlfriend and so we had a delightful evening, and they had painted programs and it was a very glossy thing and at the end the thing that impressed me was that everybody there joined hands, all the husbands were invited for this, they joined hands and circled and it was one of those houses like many of the old houses where the dining room, kitchen, hallway, and everybody they just circled around and they sang "God be With You".

Paul: Do you remember traveling from Republic to Mass?
Ruth: Oh, I sure do! That was one of the highlights, because we went by train. My mother's sister lived in Negaunee and because we were going to move 100 miles away and might never see them again as long as we live, we went down to spend a week with them before we left. We went down on the old DSS&A to Negaunee and then when we got started we had a big lunch basket with us. We had to go up and go to Sidnaw and there we had to wait for the next train to take us into Mass City. Well, something happened to the train, the mixed train and it didn't get there and it didn't get there and we were really glad that we had that lunch I can tell you! My mother walked us all over town trying to take up time because I suppose we got pretty restless but we finally arrived in Mass City about 8 or 8:30 at night and I remember it was quite dark, this was in probably the first of November, so the days were short and my father took us to a little hotel, boarding house there, and we had dinner and then we went over to the apartment he had for us, and oh, I know my mother's heart just sank when she saw it. It was over a saloon, and it was the only thing he could get, too, of course, but the barest rooms, oh, they were so big and so bare and he had, she had the chickens, they had sent the chickens on a head and so my father had taken it upon himself to kill 3 or 4 of these chickens and have some of his friends up there for a boo-yaw the night before and the place was only, the kitchen was only half-clean, it wasn't a very nice reception to

Paul: So your father was there already

Ruth: Yes, he was there and established himself and then we came. Well, there was no running water of any kind and no clean water, the water that you got from pumps was surface water and smelled, so we drank mostly beer

Even when you were young?

Yes, when we were young because you couldn't stand the water and we would, of course, have barrels outside to catch the rain water and that would be alright when it first came down but in a few days it would have polywogs in it.

Paul: So you had to use it right away

Ruth: Yes, and we had to boil all the water and then, of course, it was tasteless, it was quite an experience; then my father built a house for us and we lived in that for a while and he moved his barn, when we first went there the barn was down what they call "lower Mass", they had 3 sections: lower Mass, middle Mass, and high Mass, they called them. And he built a great new barn, it was a block long, he could take care of 170 horses in it and he decided that he would move our house which he did, he moved it a mile-and-a-quarter and we lived in it all the time it was being moved! It was slow work because it was moved by a horse on a turnstile with rollers and we never knew just where our house was going to be when coming home from school but that was quite a fascinating thing too. Just a little bit different. We went to school in Mass, we had to go quite a ways to school but it was a pleasant school, we had nice teachers, some we didn't like and like and like every kid, some were better than others, and then my mother became very unhappy because it was such a terrible town

Paul: Was your father doing OK? Financially? With a big barn and everything?

Ruth: Oh, yes, he was but he was drinking so hard and it was not good for him to be in that situation nor his family and she just couldn't look forward to her family staying there so she was influential, I'm sure, in getting him to leave and he had an offer from a company to come to Houghton and to take care of their livestock for a mine and so he sold his business but not the building and we moved to Houghton

About 19-
Ruth: That was in 1905. And we came to Houghton and I went to High School here in Houghton, but when he got here the job didn't materialize. They didn't give him the job so he had really a rough time for a while. And after that he did several things and we made out OK but it was not easy.

Paul: It was a rough life, then

Ruth: Yes, it was. It was very rough.

Paul: Where did you live in Houghton?

Ruth: We lived in East Houghton, out on Pearl Street. The old house is still there.

Paul: Your mother must have had a hard time too when that job didn't show up.

Ruth: Oh, she had a terrible time and of course she had so much pride and she was worried but these jobs would be in their mitten and at one time he was the Superintendent of Public Works for Houghton and that worked out very well and then after that, he did several contracting things and made out but never again did they make as much money as they had been making but you know money is no good if you don't spend it for the right things. You can make all the money in the world and if you just spend it on your friends and your own appetites and your family doesn't benefit it's no better than not having a job at all.

Paul: Your father must have retired then kind of slowly, I suppose. Didn't work very much after 1920.

Ruth: Yes, he did. Well, that's right. Around 1925 or '30. Course there wasn't much for him to do.

Paul: Was your mother still alive at this time?

Ruth: My mother died in 1927.

Paul: Kind of a hard life then when you were growing up, for you, your dad doing well and then went broke at times and half-broke.

Ruth: Yes, it was very hard, in these towns, Houghton was about as snobbish a town as you could ever find. Who'd have any idea?

Paul: I've heard that before.

Ruth: People, you're either in or you're out. And people were cruel. These kids in school, if you weren't "in" with the top, you were down at the bottom.

Paul: You were on the wrong side of the tracks or something.

Ruth: Yes, it was a real rough deal and many of these people had not much to offer. Many of these kids that we went to school with didn't have a darn thing to offer they weren't even very great but their people had made a little money and money was the God, you see, they had a big home and hired girl that was the thing at that time, maybe had 2 hired girls, and they paid $6-$8 a month and worked the hides off 'em.

Paul: I suppose it was very difficult for children who came from immigrant parents then? Like Finnish or others.

Ruth: I think it was but you know, we've talked about this since summer so much, because you were American, you looked down a little bit on the kids and when I think of it now, some of the kids we thought weren't quite as good as we -- it's all in your head whatever it is. And where people were looking down on us, we were looking down on somebody else and they were looking down on somebody else. But there was
something about the Finns, especially, I think, they had a hardness, they could leave it, within themselves, it may not have been a real hardness but they had some strength, they kept going and they kept to themselves.

They had their small communities, or even a family would keep to themself.

Ruth: Yes, they keep to themselves and they didn't invite you in and now my mother and my father, too, they were really kind to everybody. I remember my mother started an old Sunday School up in Republic and she had all the kids coming and lot of those kids had never had a Christmas tree so we had a great big Christmas tree in our house and she had sent away for fancy candy boxes and she invited not only the kids from the Sunday School, she invited all the kids she knew, everybody we knew, and for the girls the candy boxes were little doll cradles, the cutest things you ever say, and for the boys, little sleighs. She was really a very resourceful person. And far ahead of her time, we all say it's too bad she wasn't living in radio and television times because that would have been her "duck soup". But they were very kind to everybody and we were not in our home permitted to ever make fun of or to look down on kids. When you think of it now, the Finn kids came over and they all wore babuska's. Well, of course, we thought that was about the limit, now everybody wears 'em, isn't that funny? (laughter)

Paul: Things change.

Ruth: Ya, they do change. But many of the young people that I knew who were foreigners were—they studied so hard that they were far ahead of us academically because they weren't fooling around with other things, they studied and they just did well

Paul: What do you remember about going to high school? In Houghton, you went to high school from 19---

Ruth: '05 to '09. I had a very nice high school experience, it was very good, I was like I've been all my life, I like to be part of things and I was a part of things I was in whatever school plays there were, course our high schools did not have activities by a long ways that you have now but I was in the junior play and the senior play

Paul: Did your parents let you go out and that? it was kind of hard for girls to let go out.

Ruth: Well, I wasn't permitted to date Tech boys

Paul: Already at that time there was this?

Ruth: Oh, yes, sure, because Tech was started in 1886.

Paul: There weren't that many students there?

Tech's always been "God's gift to the Copper Country" girls and there would be probably 3-400 boys here and many of my high school friends were allowed to go with Tech but my parents wouldn't let me. The first thing I did after I was through high school was to have a date with a Tech fellow. (laughter) I thought that was the ultimate! When I found out that invitations were coming from 3 or 4, why, I felt pretty good. But it was a very nice high school and I think I enjoyed a lot of things that perhaps some of the girls didn't enjoy, because I had a faculty for doing things.

Then you went out and taught afterwards?

Well, then I went to Ferris. And I taught after that.

Your dad wanted you to go on to school. That was important that you went on then.
Oh, yes. My older sister was a graduate of Northern, she was one of the early graduates and if you can believe it when she went to (it was Marquette Normal) and it cost $60 for a term for board and room and laundry. Just think of that!

$60! For a term. It's a lot different. Things have changed.

I'll say so. And my brother did not go away to school but he went to work for a company in the west and he finally came back and settled in Racine, Wisconsin. That's where he passed away and my older sister is dead, there's 2 of us left. But I went to Ferris and oh, I had a wonderful time at Ferris, gee, I just got out from under my mother and dad and I had a great time, a high ol' time.

Ruth: Things have changed

Paul: $60. For a term. It's a lot different. Things have changed.

That's right. Well, even some people taught school without even going to college.

Well, I did the first year. I was assistant to the kindergarten teacher in Hurontown. It was in the Houghton school.

In 1909-10.

Two years. The life certificate. That's what you did in those days, it wasn't a degree.

That's right. Well, even some people taught school without even going to college.

Well, I did the first year. I was assistant to the kindergarten teacher in Hurontown. It was in the Houghton school.

In 1909-10.

Uh huh.

And then you went to Ferris in

Uh huh.

For 2 years, and came back in

But in the meantime while I was here I met my husband and we were sweethearts and so when I went away to school, we were engaged and I had a very good time but we wrote often and when I came back after my second year, we became engaged. He graduated from Tech and went to Tennessee and then to Mexico and he was driven out of Mexico during the Pancho Villa area where they were having the revolt.

Yes, they had to walk 400 miles to get out. He was with a very deep mine there and an English Company and the rebels came in and they shot the assistant superintendent, they took all the women and children down in the deep mine to protect them and it was a real bad experience but then when they left they had like a lumber wagon that brought their whatever they could take out, the number of these people that were coming, of course it would be the officials and mining engineers and the women had a carriage to ride in and they had to make a water hole every night because they had to keep driving and all that they had to eat, they had a great big pot of beans on the back of the wagon and they heated that up every night. And I said to him, I betcha you can never stand to see a bean again, he said, I can eat some right now.

(end of tape)

You were talking about your husband's exploits in Mexico, where he had walked 400 miles out, interesting, it must have been about 1912-13.

It was in 1913.

Then he came back?
Ruth: Um hm. And it was a harrowing experience. And he was very interested; they had an engineer who had 2 little girls, they were twins. The youngsters who were in the camp, they took down underground and by the way, he said, he described this mine, he said that the surfaces underground where they would put these kids were flat, just like an amphitheatre and these 2 little American kids got the German and the English and Mexican youngsters together and they were all singing the American songs, like Stars Spangled Banner, Hurray for the Red, White and Blue, and he said it was rather amusing to see them. But it was, when he came out of course, it was a real bad time for engineers, it was hard for them to get anything and he finally did with the C&H. And we were married in 1914.

Paul: Do you remember one thing, before we go on to your married life, do you remember any home remedies that your mother had for sicknesses or illnesses or that?

Ruth: Of course we had camphor, that lovely castor oil, of course, and my father was a great one for taking medicines. We used to say that when they had the 1-cent sales at the Rexall, my husband used to say about my father, that he had the 1-cent booze. Because he'd go down and buy so much medicine. But when we were kids he used to take native herbs, they were little bitter pill and they came about a hundred in a box and they were really a laxative. But these pills were go for whatever ailed you. One of these pills was good for you and I remember one time, my mother was away for a little trip and my younger sister got very lonesome for her mother, and my father said, now, my dear, you take a native herb, in the morning you'll be all right, so she took a native herb and in the morning of course she was all right. (laughter) but that was his----I have a liniment recipe and I don't have it here, I'm sorry, I'm going to put it in my book, it's called Tonta's liniment so whoever Tonta was, I don't know. Somebody, but it was Tonta's liniment they used and I don't remember too much about medicine.

Paul: Was there a doctor down there, if you got sick?

Ruth: Well, yes, we had a doctor always.

Paul: Was there a midwife that came in when you were born?

Ruth: I 'spose but I don't remember (Laughter) I imagine there was, my mother didn't tell me much about that sort of thing and I don't remember ever hearing her say anything about who took care of her.

Paul: Let's go on with your married life. Married in 1914?

Ruth: Mm hm. And we lived in Calumet the first year we were married. And it was right after the great strike and things were tough.

Paul: Do you remember stories of the strike or anything, you had had just come back from school.

Ruth: Yes, I was back and I worked one summer for a Justice of the Peace down here and I remember great hordes of people coming in, coming down from the range and they would have a trial there and his other office was in the upstairs of the old firehall and there was this great big courtroom and he had a small office on top of that and he used to lock me in the office when they were having these----turn the key so nobody would go in and say anything to me because the language was so abusive. These people were really abusive and they had somebody who kept them riled up every single minute but he would lock me in there because he was a friend of my father's and he wasn't going to have anybody saying anything to me that wasn't all right.

There was a lot of bitterness left over, wasn't there?

Oh, my, of course, there was and I can see why. The people that came in,
like Mother Jones and Moyer, came in to rabble-rouse but on the other hand the miners sure had a lot of things to gripe about.

Paul: It was pretty tough

Ruth: Yes, it was tough and a few years ago, I was the founder of the museum here in Houghton County, one of the founders, I was really the instigator, and we have over there some very fine records of the strike, they have some of the newspapers and a report of the governor and a report of the congressional committee and I think that MacNaughton who was the general manager was the most arrogant person I've ever heard of and when I read, when I look at some of the ads that he had in the papers and things, I, you just can't conceive of such arrogance. He wouldn't get away with it now, I'll tell you! Times have sure changed! in that area, but oh, miners had it hard,

Paul They worked a lot of hours, 10-12 hours a day.

Ruth Sure, and low pay. Finally I think that when Ford got started and paid $5 a day that was terrific. Now $5 an hour is nothing. But times were hard, times were hard for engineers, my husband worked as a miner the first year we were there.

Paul: Did he go underground then?

Ruth: Went underground and worked as a miner and

Paul: Do you remember how much money he made?

Ruth Well, the first few months he made $40 a month

Paul Were you teaching then at the same time?

Ruth No, I didn't teach, you didn't teach after you got married in those days. That was taboo. When you were married, BING, you didn't get a chance to teach anymore, you were out on your ear. No, I just kept house. We managed. It was one of those things, but he got a position at the Victoria Mine and he was the underground superintendent there and I think he got $150 a month and he thought that was just real.

Paul: That went up quite a bit, from 1914-15. The war was going on in Europe and then we got involved in 1917.

Ruth: Yes, and you know, we used to go downtown in Calumet that first year, they had on one of the buildings, they would flash on the buildings the reports coming in from the war, they'd come in by telegraph, telegram and they'd put them on the walls of one of those buildings and we used to go down every night to see what the story was because there was no radio of course.

Paul: That's when the mines were really booming at that time, during the war and that

Ruth: Then they started to boom. They had been kindda' bad for a couple years and they started again any my husband was out at the Victoria Mine and I think that the only time they really made it pay was when he was underground superintendent, I know before that it hadn't paid and after it didn't pay. They broke for those years. And that's where you lived a real community life.

Paul: Where was the Victoria Mine?

Ruth It's 4 miles from Rockland. And it was out on a railroad, you had to go 4 miles to Rockland to take a train but you make your life in those little—and it was quite a pleasant life in some ways and some ways it was hard. One of the great tragedies of living in a mining community in the old days, was the superintendent's
wife. That's a strange thing to say, but they could either make a
community pleasant place to live or they could make it so hard for you that you
wish you'd never see them again. And the superintendent's wife at Victoria
was quite dictatorial and in some ways she was good but she would get these ideas,
and you never knew just what was going to happen. You never knew whether the
thing you did was right or wrong. But I remember they built a community hall, it
had a little hall upstairs with a piano in it, in Victoria, no, you didn't go back
and forth between Rockland, that was an occasion, 4 miles, and upstairs they had a
little stage and they could put on a little entertainment. But if you in your reading
you may find or some of your interviews find that they did quite a little community
singing during the first World War and for quite a long time after that. And the
superintendent's daughter, whose husband was the assistant superintendent and I
thought we'd try having a community sing so we started in this little hall and she
would lead the singing and I would play the piano and we had all these people.
Well, the people got to coming, it was just marvelous and they'd sing and sing,
we had Italians, and Slovenians and Austrians and Finns, not so many Finns, but the
others, and I had taught kindergarten so I, thinking of all of their folk dancing
which really kindergarten rhythms are, it was an off-shoot, I thought, well, I'll
Teach them those folk dances, those kindergarten rhythms and the men and women were
just crazy about it; it was a release, you see, lot of these people didn't even talk
English but they had so much fun and do you know, our superintendent's wife made us
quit because the people were getting too friendly, we were getting too friendly with
them? Yes, can you feature that?

Paul: That mining superintendent had it made then, his son was the assistant superin-
tendent.

Ruth: Sure And his father had been a superintendent before that

Paul: So they controlled the whole thing then.

Ruth: Sure, and his brother was superintendent of the mill. Sure, they had it locked up
tight. And so anybody else that went either had to do exactly as they said or they
weren't very popular. One time, oh, I'd get so disturbed because I was young and
liked to do things, and gay, and oh, we didn't have a bathroom when we went there
so they were putting in this bathroom

You were about 25 years old at this time

Yes, that's right, so she came over to instruct me about how to use the bathroom,
well, of course, all my life I had lived with a bathroom (laughter) and it was
kind of funny but she told me of certain things not to put in a toilet like hair and
few other things, these things are silly to tell you, and I got so uptight with her
I could hardly stand it; then she came over one day and dressed me down for something
I wore. I dressed too young, she said; I made my own clothes and I always thought I
dressed pretty cute and my husband thought I looked OK so I wasn't feeling heavy pain
on my clothes, she told me I dressed too young and it made me so doggone mad. that I
told her off. I said I'll dress the way I please and I went as long as my husband
liked it, I'll dress that way. So when he came home I was pretty disturbed because I
was scared to death he'd loose his job, now he said, I'll tell you something,
he said, they didn't hire you here, they hired me, and he said, I'm a good engineer
and they need me and he said, when they don't want me anymore, it isn't going to
make any difference how nice or how poor you are, they're just going to tell me to
get out so don't feel bad, do as you please. So that was really good for me. I got
a long a lot better because then whatever was said, I just passed it off.

Paul: So then you never really taught again for awhile

Ruth: Only taught once after that, and that was to fill in a vacancy, after we moved from
Rockland.

(coughing)
How long did your husband work for Victoria mine?

He worked for 3½ years and then he went into the old Minesota which is in Rockland and was the superintendent there, the Michigan Mine is what they call it now, for 3 years and then the war was over and there was so much copper stockpiled that, bing, everything was gone, the mines all closed, and then he went to work for the Michigan State Highway and he was the project engineer when they put through the first new Military Road, followed the old military trail and that was the biggest job in the state, at the time, because it was through clay and they brought a little half-yard loader, gasoline motor, and people came from miles to see that half-yard loader, mechanical loader, it was all done with horses and I realize that even in the 1920's horses were used so much; they built a camp for the men right there at the river, at the Ontonagon River, because it was too far to go back and forth.

Paul: He must have lived out there part of the time.

Ruth: No, he didn't. He went back and forth, he drove out

Paul: Did he have a car then?

Ruth: No, no car, he went with the horse and buggy

Paul: In the wintertime they worked too?

Ruth: Not so much in the winter, they closed down because you see the clay would be frozen, they didn't have the methods of doing things, up here a good many of the road projects don't go on in the winter, but one thing that was very interesting, they put in a corrugated 24-inch pipe right down the middle of the road with manholes to control the flow of the water and the clay, see those were clay banks and the flow from the banks would wash out the road and that road never did wash out, they put this corrugated pipe right down the road, I thought it was very interesting and at one time, he was the project engineer on a bridge and he wouldn't accept the bridge and the bridge went out the next spring. He wouldn't put his stamp of approval on it. And because of that he gained the envy of people who were very powerful in the Democratic party and when the Democrats went in in the highway, he had a 3-day notice that he was through after 17 years of being on the biggest highway jobs in the state.

So he worked from 1920 to 1937?

Ruth: Um hmm.

Paul: So then politics played a major role in the jobs then after that time, or part of the time.

Ruth: well, they did on the highway jobs. But then he was the inspector for several of the new buildings, representing the college, Douglas Houghton Hall, the addition to the Chemistry building, and I've forgotten what others

Paul: So from 1920 to 1937 you moved around the state.

No, no, we moved here to Houghton and then he went out to different places and then we had a place in Keweenaw Bay and we would go down there summers but he was offered a place in the Math Department at Michigan Tech which he accepted and when they were able to have a fulltime campus engineer, he became the campus engineer, he was during the building of the many buildings and the one that he really hated was that big Wadsworth Hall, he despised that building, he said it looked like a prison; and you know, I hate it. You walk past it or you drive past it, front or back, it looks like a great big prison, all those little square windows and he hated that building, he hated to have anything to do it, isn't that funny?
Paul: And so he worked for Tech then

Yea, until he retired.

aul: In 196---?

Ruth: I don't remember what year he retired. It was around 1950 because he passed away in 1960. And I think he had been retired maybe not 10 years.

Paul: One question I had before we go on to something else: what was courting life like? between your husband and yourself? Was courting different at that time than today? Different because of the car.

Ruth: No we didn't have a car. When we went to a dance, we walked. Or we took the streetcar. The streetcars were running in Houghton. The big dance place was over the old Citizens National bank which is now an insurance agency, Douglas Insurance Agency, they had a hall up there and that's where we danced, during the high school, we walked. Nobody thought anything of that at all, you didn't even had a horse and buggy to go with, by that time.

Paul: So you couldn't stay out very late, though, either, right here; although you were out of high school now.

Ruth: Yes, out of high school, and he belonged to Sigma Rho fraternity so of course we went to fraternity dances and it was all part of the times. I 'spose the kids today would think of just doing nothing. What it was most times, you beau came to see you and you had probably your girl friend and her beau and played cards, or went for walks you didn't have exciting life like the kids have nowadays, I don't think that we hurt a bit for it either.

Paul: How much money did you first make when you started to teach?

Ruth: $50

Paul: $50 a month. Teaching.

When I taught at Hurontown, all I made was $20 a month.

Ruth: That was assistant. /$50 a month while I taught school. And while we were in Rockland we loved it, we loved Rockland and we loved the people there and we kind of fit in with everybody and I did everything, I had a group of Campfire Girls; I remember when I had my 30th birthday my husband saw a dress over in Ontonagon in a store window and he thought it'd look nice on me so he went in and bought it and brought it home to me for a birthday present and honestly it was the funniest thing, it fit me exactly, he didn't know but he thought it looked like the size and it was just beautiful, I loved that dress and these kids just came in to see me, they didn't know it was my birthday, and one kid says to me, how old are you, Mrs. Butler and I was a little taken back, and I said 30 years old and she said, oh, God I hate to think of the time when I'm 30 years old. She's long past it now, I'll tell you. Well in her 60's. But I used to take the kids camping down at Twin Lakes in the summer

aul: And take your children along with you?

Ruth: I'd take my children with me and take the Campfire Girls

aul: And your children were all born the teens, or 20's

Ruth: Yes, my son was born in 1915 and my oldest daughter in 1917 and then my youngest in 1927. So that they were spread out a little bit and I always hoped that I'd have
one more child which I wasn't quite lucky, I'd like to have had another son but wasn't quite that lucky. While my husband was here I was very active in college life, I was past president of the faculty women's club and active in our church which is Trinity Episcopal, very active there.

Paul: Church life was always a major part of life, like you say, when you were young.

Ruth: Absolutely, And in Rockland there was only the little Methodist Church there and I was very active, we were both very active in the Methodist Church there and my son was in my Sunday School class and he says, Mother, that was the most wonderful Sunday School class, I used to have the kids come once a week and bring their own supper and then I made cocoa and desert for them, they brought their own sandwiches and then we'd have them study their Sunday School lessons and then they had an outdoor rink in the winter, I'd take them skating because I loved to skate and I'd take them skating or skiing or something like that kids, but first I'd have to get their Sunday School lessons

Paul: Then you'd have play time afterwards

Ruth: and he said I never heard of anybody else doing that and I said, I don't know if they do it or not but that's the way we did it because the only way I could teach them anything, see Sunday School wasn't much for any kid, only the association because there's no time. The biggest thing in their life gets the least time. The thing that should be the most influential.

Paul: It's true that Sunday School and Church was very important in most lives and today it's kind of faded.

Ruth: Well, yes and no, I'll have to say for my children it's very important and for my children's children, so it's gone on down—and of course it was very important to my mother and my father was not a church person and I think he was a great believer and he was really a Christian when it came to thinking about other people. But he was not a church man but church was very important to my mother. And his mother and father, my grandparents, they were wonderful church people. To go back to my grandmother I just think this is very interesting, she was as a youngster, they were having a contest in their church and the one who memorize the most Bible verses and give them without error would get a prize and the day before the contest, she had only one pair of shoes and the sole came off of one of her shoes, and of course in those days you had the sole put back on, she was determined to go and give her verses so she left her foot up as if her foot had been hurt in bandages and went to church and won the prize! What do you think of that? Isn't that good? (laughter)

Paul: That's quite a story! Those are the great kind of stories, those are the fun ones.

Ruth: One time my grandfather, who lived in Champion, they bought a farm over there and he was still interested in mining, he had this little farm and he would do this prospecting, sink his money into something, but they made a little "buddle" of some kind and he went to Marquette before Christmas and bought Christmas presents and he bought my grandmother a silver tea service and he bought her a seal coat and at that time he had $4 home, he bought each one of these girls great big dolls, and had them all shipped from Marquette up to Champion, part of his good luck at Christmas time. I thought it was kind cute, the tea set, one of the grand children has now, not one of my grandchildren, I mean one of her grandchildren and then I thought that was pretty good, seal coat and all the stuff was shipped in barrels from Marquette, oh, and he bought a barrel of apples at the same time.

Paul: And it was shipped in. I 'spose when he had the money he used it, he spent it to prospect or sinking shafts
Ruth: They always sunk it in another hole but they always got along, they did well, they lived a good life. After all money isn't life itself, money provides a lot of nice things for life but I think that many people have had a better life who haven't had a lot of money.

Paul: What do you recollect about 2 specific things, first of all, the prohibition days and secondly, the depression? 1920's and 1930's. Your children were growing up at this time.

Ruth: Well, the prohibition days really didn't affect me too much. We weren't drinkers.

Paul: I wonder if that was because of your father, you said he liked to drink, maybe it was because he did you felt that you

Ruth: Well, it was in a way but when my husband was at Tech and was a member of Sigma Rho and they used to be pretty good "hoisters", he couldn't stand drink. I mean his system couldn't tolerate it because one drink made him about as silly as anything could be and he would do silly things like get up on a chair and fall off, or something of the sort. Well, after that happens a couple of times, that was enough. He was a very serious person and he said to me, I'll never drink again in my life and he didn't, and because he didn't want to be the fool of the party. And where I have had a little wine or something of the sort, we never had it in our home because I felt that if it was something he couldn't stand if I encouraged it, it would be on my shoulders and so we never did, and I like a drink, I like a good drink of Scotch and I drink it straight and I like a little wine but not to sit and drink or drink alone. I never take a drink alone but I like a drink of straight Scotch on the rocks and it doesn't affect me but if I drink 2 or 3, it does. But I wouldn't do that because you have to have strength in some things

(end of tape #1)
Tape #2 - Ruth Butler

Paul: 1930 depression

Ruth: The depression was very vivid because my husband was out of a job, he was out of a job first with the mining and later with Road Commission, and it made it very difficult, we had 2 children in college and we had to pull them out and it was really a tough time. And of course there was no unemployment compensation, nothing of that sort, and banks failed, we lost what little money we had which wasn't much of anything anyway but the little bit we had, went.

Paul: The banks failed right here in Houghton, too?

Ruth: No, not right here in Houghton, but one in L'Anse where we were interested and they failed in a number of places so that the little assets you had just went. And we went through a case of first having a job for 2 or 3 months, he did some research for the C&M and a little bit here and a little bit there so that we could manage to get along but it was pretty tight squeezing and certainly not many luxuries. As it turned out the groceries and that sort of thing weren't so high. And we moved down to our place down in Keweenaw Bay because we owned that and we didn't own a house in town and so we lived down there and did lots of things to get along. But he had been up here on the inspection job for the college and they were to build a new building and he wanted to— he had made personal application to be on that job, that was the Douglas Houghton Hall and at Christmas time, we make a great fuss over Christmas, I think that record they play "I Just Go Nuts at Christmas" was really meant for me because I'm just crazy about Christmas, that's the one big day in the year that I love, and oh we were quite discouraged of course because nothing turning up but I made an awful big fuss, my son and I went out and cut all kinds of greens and I decorated the house to the hilt and I had some red calico and I made covers for the backs of all the chairs and made a great big bouquet with popcorn and cranberries and cedar to put on the back of every chair and then made corsages for the table and just spent hours and hours and my husband said to me, something wonderful has to happen for you and this is the one memory that's very dear to me, it's one of the things that really is a thank you day and the next morning, Christmas morning, this was Christmas Eve, and we went around the house together and looked it over, we had managed a few gifts for everybody and the next morning before we had had our breakfast the phone rang, and it was Dr. Dillman to tell him that they had had a meeting of the Board of Control and he was to come the next day, the day after Christmas, he was to have this job as engineer. Isn't that wonderful?

Paul: That was a nice Christmas present. Best Christmas present probably you ever had.

Ruth: It was a memorable time, even now I weep at it which is silly I think but I'm still moved by it.

Was that in '36? '37?

I don't remember, I just can't remember; but it was really something and then after that he was on 2 or 3 buildings and then he went into the Math Department while he was at Michigan Tech but he was a wonderful engineer; my son is an engineer and he worked with his father just as a helper and rodmans and that sort of thing, and he did some work for the Conservation Department up in Gogebic County and down in lower Michigan and Gibson says that his father is the finest engineer that he has ever known and he taught me and my son is research engineer with Olds, he's design engineer and has had contact with many engineers and he still thinks his father is the finest engineer he's ever had anything to do with. I think that's great.

That is! What about if we get into what you're primarily, I 'spose, involved in for many years, political life and all, when you first became involved. When was the first time you voted? For President?
Ruth: I voted in 1918. That was my first vote. However I've always been interested in politics because my dad was a politician and when I was a kid, he'd be running for office, in Mass City he'd run for highway commissioner because it was important for him to keep his horses working; the horses that he worked in the woods in the winter he had to keep working on the roads in the summer, in order to keep going, so he was always running for highway commissioner and I think the first time I remember anything about his running, my brother and a lot of kids made torches after the votes were counted, went down the little street, and they held up, "clean and sweet", "clean and sweet", isn't that silly?

Oh, he won then?

Oh, yes, he won of course there were times he lost, too, but I remember that was my first memory of an election but I've always been interested because I used to go to the township caucuses with him. They had a Republican caucus or they'd have a--- it was Republican I'm sure because the others would have their own, and they'd have a caucus to elect a supervisor each year, or something of the sort and get his name on the ballot, that's what it was, it was a caucus, it wasn't an election, but the caucuses would choose and we used to go down to the Amphidrome, it was in the upstairs of the Amphidrome, this was while I was in high school, and the way that those fellows who were running for office would lambaste each other, it was just terrific. Oh, they'd say the darnedest things right there, they made their speeches right in front of all the people and say terrible things and then afterwards they'd shake hands. Whichever one won got it. And I always thought that was pretty funny. But I enjoyed it a lot, I was once when Robert Shields and Miller were each seeking the office of president of the village and the things they said about each other was something unbelievable even to the extent of calling each other dishonest and all the rest of it. And then after they shook hands. But it was very interesting. And then when we went out to Victoria, it was very interesting because of course the mining company had to be sure that their men got in, and by golly, they got in each time.

That's one thing that I always wondered about; everybody says that elections are pretty free up here but I always felt and I get that feeling still, that the mining company made sure all of them in their individual area that all of their men got in.

Ruth: You bet your life they did!

Paul: Their sheriff got in, they had control there.

Ruth: That's right, whatever. In these little towns the supervisors and everybody they made sure that they got the ones that were sympathetic to the mines. These mining people have an awful lot to answer for. You reveal mine reports, and have Henry Jones killed underground, no fault of the company, he had it right under the report of the mining inspector, "no fault of the company" time after time never a fault of the company

Paul: It was always his own fault

Ruth: Yes, he was careless

Paul: Or the timbers would crush him or something

Ruth: Yes, but no fault of the company

Paul: I suppose the widow got hardly anything, she probably got a little bit of money

Ruth: Well, if she got anything I remember when there was a young man killed out in Victoria, he was killed, I believe, in the machine shop or someplace where they had machinery, it was not underground, and the superintendent came to my husband
and wanted him to swear that this boy's parents didn't need his help, my husband wouldn't do it, he said, I won't do it, a boy killed and they didn't want to give any compensation. Oh, they had the most unethical ways of making money you ever saw, it was terrible, and when I read these old reports and I have some from way back in 1870's, always no fault of the company.

Paul: Do you feel that way about the iron mines too?

Ruth: All of them! They're all the same. The people on top crush the people on the bottom. They work but their compensation was small enough, they were killed, I think that sometimes they gave the woman one month's pay and let her live in the house for 3 months without rent or something. So she would have to be a midwife or take in washing or something.

Paul Boarders.

Ruth: Yes. I had one experience in Victoria that I think you ought to know about. The boarding house. The keeper's husband died and they were Finnish and so some of us went into Rockland to the Methodist Church where they had a Finnish minister come to bury him and we went in there, and oh, it was the doggonest long service I ever went to in my life. They had a long sermon in English and one in Finn and they sang and sang all in Finn, but we had to go down to the cemetery but in Rockland they had what they called the dummy, he was a fellow who couldn't talk, he was retarded, he had been injured either at birth or later on, he walked like somebody who was sort of paralyzed but he was the grave digger, so when we got down to the cemetery, Mrs. Olson decided that she'd like to have the nameplate off her husband's coffin, now this was after it was down in the ground, they used to lower them right down so I can still see them, they lowered the dummy down, hung on to his feet, had him unscrew the nameplate and brought it up. She had it for her parlor table.

Paul: She put it on her parlor table!

Ruth: And 3 months later she married somebody else. Isn't that a good story? And I was there!

Paul: That was a good story! I like that.

What were we talking about before?

We were talking about politics and the mining companies controlling the politics.

Ruth: Yes, they did. The people, they finally saw to it that the vote

Paul: I even have a feeling that it's true in the bigger towns, like Houghton and Hancock and Calumet.

Ruth: Oh, sure it was. Of course it was.

Paul: Rockland, Mass

Ruth: It was everyplace and one thing, it killed the Republican Party in the Copper Country is the fact that they were so unfair when they got enough votes that they could oppose the mining companies, and oppose these people, they went Democrat and of course during the depression they went for Roosevelt and the Republicans have never been able to regain which is very sad because many of their injuries and their really legitimate gripes have long since past and the Democrats are hard boiled about these things and it's going to get to the point where they're going to be the "outs" because they say that they have touch with the common people but they don't.

Paul: That's a very interesting comment. I think that's very good because from my talking
to people I get the feeling that lot of people, the MacNaughton's, and the others were all Republicans and what happened that they by being so stiff-necked or whatever you want to call it, they hurt themselves and when it came to 1930's then the people started voting Democrat and that's what happened in Houghton and Baraga Counties.

Ruth: Well, you see when the depression was on and Roosevelt went in with all of his social upheaval, which was really Hoover's plan, he just took over and gave no credit to Hoover but he was in a position to do these things, and believe me, he did them with a high hand and he wasn't too concerned, his wife was very concerned about everybody and I think she's one of the greatest Americans we've ever had. Greatest American woman, Mrs. Roosevelt. I feel that more and more as time goes on she will be the person who is remembered as the one who put forth those great social changes that helped the poor and I think she had a real hard time, and I think he was hard-boiled as all get-out; he just wanted to be honored. For myself in reading and looking back on the things, he was a very selfish, autocratic person and she was the one who had to take the hard life and she did it, and she was a wonderful woman and I don't like to have to be able to say that about a Democrat woman, I wish she had been a Republican but she was an American, she was a great woman and I have the greatest admiration for her.

Paul: When did you first become a kind of a "mover" in the Republican party?

Ruth: Well, I've been forever, ever since women have been--I was on the county committee in Ontonagon County, I was on the county committee in Baraga County, I was on the county committee here always, and I am now in Marquette. I had my picture in the paper down there a few weeks ago, there were two 18-year old boys, I was the oldest elected delegate to the convention and they were the two youngest. And they took our picture together. And had it in the paper.

Paul: So you're going down there in August then, Miami.

Ruth: No, no. To the county convention. No, I have no desire to go, it's too hard, I have had only one opportunity to go to a national convention and I didn't do that because for one thing, it's too expensive, you see you don't get your expenses for those things, anybody that goes, goes on their own, and I never felt that I could afford it; the convention where Barry Goldwater was nominated, John Clements and his wife offered to drive down and take me so I wouldn't have any expense, I thought that was wonderful but I wouldn't go because in the first place, they were going to fly with the others and it was much more fun and I would never deprive them of that but I thought that was a wonderful thing for them to offer, young people. But I've been on the county committees and been very active and I wasn't really active much, I would be on the committee but didn't take---until after my husband was fired on a 3-day notice which was a real bad thing and then because I didn't feel I could but after that I did take a very active part and had some wonderful experiences.

Paul: You've been very active since about 1940, during World War II.

Ruth: Yes, that's right. And my husband was an invalid the last 5 years he lived so that I couldn't be too active, however, I did do a lot of things and helped do a lot of things and helped work out ideas which is one of my assets, I can do long-range planning for campaigns and that sort of thing and I helped out a lot, then the last year he lived was the year they took the census, 1960, and I went down, you had to take an examination and I went down and took the examination just to be a census taker, I thought I'd get out of the house that much and I had a perfect paper, the only one, so they made me the leader, I had 18 people under me. So it was really a political thing, you knew very well, because it's always that, if a Republican president is in then it's Republican people; if it's a Democrat—that's the way it is. So, then my husband died just before the census was taken and it was a very good
thing for me that I had that responsibility because he had been a great responsibility and it's a real funny thing, a person is sick and everybody kept saying to me, oh, it's a blessing, well, that made me madder than hops because I couldn't see why he had to be an invalid and I just felt that there was no blessing to that because it may have been a blessing to people to think that he should go but you know when you've had a good life with a person it's a funny thing, after they're gone, you can't remember the bad. All I can think of I can't remember the bad with him, all I can think of is the good things and the wonderful things we did together and so to me, it wasn't any blessing to have him taken only that I'd never have him live again the way he was the last few years, I wouldn't want to see anybody do that, but I had this responsibility and it was a very good thing for me because I had something to do everyday, I had to check these people every day and I had to check in with Marquette every Monday.

Paul: You were living here theN?

Ruth: Yes, living here, and I had to check in with Marquette every Monday what the results I had to take people off the job if they didn't prove competent and get somebody else, I had to go over their books meticulously, I had to check every person they did before it was sent in. And in that thing, Richard Hoyer was a great help to me, he was one of the census takers and he would have really been a much better leader, I think, than I was but my, he was a great help to me. He would help me go over these books and find some of the errors and so we'd correct them. We had some real funny experiences, too, every 4th house they had to fill out a long form and give their income and all the rest of it, of course people hated that like poison and 2 or 3 people that I knew quite well who should have had no qualms at all about giving any of it but would call up and say, well, I don't see why I have to give you that, you don't have to give it to them if you don't want to, I'll send you a form and you send it in to Marquette, I never told them that Marquette sent them right back to me. (laughter)

That's a good story!

You know, it's the funniest thing, you would never notice it, this was done in code, a lot of it. You would have never noticed them unless they called attention to the fact because you were going through these books and everything.

So many of them.

Ruth: Yes, and you weren't going to pick out all your friends and see what their income was, in fact, I couldn't have cared less, but the minute they objected,

Paul: you might check it and take a look at it

Ruth: Well, you couldn't help it, because they would send the form to you and you had that to insert in a book yourself, you see, I had to take it and put it into a book that this person was supposed to be giving information, I had to write that in myself at the end but I never told them. It was just one of those things. Well, then the next year was the Constitutional Convention. And my grandchildren suggested that I run for the Constitutional Convention. (interruption)

Paul: We were talking about the Constitutional Convention.

I decided to run so I announced and I had opposition in the primary and Carmen Delli Quadri was the Democrat opposition, he had no opposition on the primary, but I had opposition from a man in Calumet, well, it was very interesting and quite exciting to see everybody but I won by, I guess, twice as many votes

Paul: That was the first time you ran
Ruth: That was the first time I ran for office, right. And I got twice as many as he did so I was in, but the day of the primary, I wrote to him, and I said, tomorrow one of us will be in and one will be out and I want you to know how much I appreciate how gentlemanly you've been and I hope that nothing would happen that we couldn't be friends. By gosh, that was the best thing I ever did, he worked like a dog for me then. I don't think anybody had ever written to him, he was a man who ran for office quite often and was not a winner, was one of those unfortunate things but anyway we ran the election, it was quite a heated election, of course, Mr. DelliQuadri is so-informed, he's a specialist in political science so I wasn't at all sure that I had a chance. But we did some pretty heavy campaigning but not on personalities but on issues and until we got the League of Women Voters, they had a meeting for the candidates, Bert Heideman was running for the spot in the Senatorial District and I was in the Representative District, and Carmen DelliQuadri was my opponent in the -- and a woman from Baraga, Mrs. Jacobs, was running against Bert Heideman. But she didn't do much campaigning and I don't think she ever thought she had a chance of winning, and she didn't show up, so Carmen said to me that night, I'm going to take you both apart tonight and I'm going to be mean, and I was a little bit perturbed about it, the way they had this set up, I've never seen any debate ever set up like this, you were not allowed to--for instance, if Carmen said something that I could debate I couldn't reply to it. I had to wait for an opening until someone asked me a question. Well, I had an ad on the radio, on WMPL, used to be over in the Scott Hotel, and I had an ad on it, it was just noon time or about 1 o'clock and I turned it on so I could hear what my ad sounded like, and they gave the news and in the news was a telegram from one of their State Central members, the Democrats, announcing his resignation from the State Central Committee and his non-support of their candidate for the Constitutional Convention because the state Democrat ticket had gone on record as saying they would oppose anything that the Republicans brought up at the Convention. So I called up the radio station and asked if I could have a copy of that and they said, sure, and I drove right over and got it. Well, I didn't tell anybody, I never said a word to anybody, I didn't know if I had a chance to use it, I wasn't in the mood to be dirty unless something happened, and I had proposed that on the re-apportionment that we would have one representative from each county and that the senators would be apportioned in different ways. But at least on representative from each county and from the larger counties, more than one, which would have cut the house of representatives down but would have given everybody several representations according to geographic areas and I had propounded this on the radio, well, he got up that night and said I didn't know what I was talking about; oh, first he told about the wonderful new provision in New York new constitution, that that was an ideal constitution and Michigan should certainly take New York's constitution and follow most of it. Then he went on about I didn't know what I was talking about, well, I had lifted this out of New York constitution, so I couldn't get up and debate him, and finally R. G. Allen asked me something about taxes so I got up and I just let him have it, and then I said, "furthermore, the Democrats are going to, anything the Republicans do or anything they offer, any proposals they make, are being defeated by order of the state central committee", and so Carmen jumped up, he said, that's some Republican propaganda and I said, absolutely not, this is a telegram that came over the Associated Press to the radio station, I heard it and I went right over and got a copy of it, and I said, I'll read it to you. He was so deflated, he didn't--wasn't that something that I heard it that day?

Paul: lucky, that day.

(end of tape)
worthwhile

Lots of interesting things.

Then I was elected. And I wrote to Carmen the day before the election, the same way, and we've always been very good friends, he's a very educated man, and a very fine person, I have a lot of respect for him.

Paul: So you've really become very much involved in politics in the last 10 years.

Ruth: That's right.

Paul: Since that time that you first ran. What are some of the problems that you think there are with the Republican Party? Not so much today, let's go back and continue up until today. What do you see as some of the major problems, maybe this area then nationwide.

Well, I think one of the biggest problems is welfare. I think that people that have been on welfare for 2 or 3 generations, won't go for Republicans, they're afraid they'll lose their welfare which is very silly; Republicans have a much better plan for this problem than the Democrats have but people are afraid, people live in fear, fear of taxes, and I think this is one of the great problems right now and I think that in many places, I don't like to say this because it's my party, and I'm devoted to it because I think their principles are my principles, but I think many of our Republicans have not yet learned that the common man's vote equals theirs. And in this day and age it makes no difference who you are, if you are a laborer, if you're the governor of the state, or you're a ditch digger, you all have the same chance to vote and you want the same things for your family and I think that many of the Republicans, and I say this to them time and again, and when I say it to some of our people that we don't aim for the common man, they think I am against them, they can't understand that I'm for the party, I love the party and the party is more to me than any person in it.

What kind of a Republican do you consider yourself? Middle Republican or do you have any label for yourself?

Ruth: I just consider myself a darn good citizen of the United States and I want the best for everybody and I'll have to say, I'm not High-bound about anything. I am still in my outlook, younger than many of my young contemporaries, because I have never allowed myself to feel that any good luck or any real fine thing that happened to me has happened because I'm better than somebody, it has happened and I am so grateful for the things, I've had a wonderful life, I wouldn't change places for anybody in the world, I've had a wonderful life and I'm still having it, and I'm going to live every day as if it's a bonus and I'm going to live it to the fullest. And as far as I'm concerned, I think I'm pretty progressive; I don't know just how to explain this.

Paul: You are not for keeping everything exactly like it was.

Ruth: Absolutely not! I feel that—I think that times change and I think that I've been fortunate, I've been able to change with the times, that's why I could do for Suomi what I did. That's why I could go out and contact a lot of young people because I have a rapport with young people.

Paul: I think so; I agree with you.

Ruth: And now whether it's because my two grandsons lived with me and we lived together all those years or whether—my father was like this and I think I am very much like my father in personality. Young people just got along wonderfully with me and I do; in Marquette we've made more friends among the young people than I have people,
for instance in their 50's and 60's and I have made many friends among my own age. That is, contemporaries, I don't mean as old as I am, many of them younger but along about there, but we've made some wonderful young friends, they come to see us and we have dessert together and I love to re-finish furniture and collect antiques and they do the same and it's really great and I think that I feel that the problems of the world are so big, I don't know what to say about them but I think you just can't go off the deep end and I'll have to say for McGovern, give everybody in the world a thousand dollars, they won't be any better off then because the people who can't manage can't manage on a thousand dollars.

Paul: It must be difficult for you, you're a good Republican, and yet you feel sometimes that they are

Ruth: A little stuffy, maybe

Paul: little stuffy and you feel, here you are 81 years old

Ruth: Well, I feel frustrated that I can't move them. But, I'll tell you, you feel frustrated with your family sometimes, you can't move your family the way you want to sometimes. And sometimes that's good. Maybe it's good that we aren't all the same because they certainly don't all agree with me but they're all nice to me.

Paul: Maybe one of the problems with this Republican Party, it's been stereotyped as a conservative, maybe stable, not changing kind of thing too much, maybe that's one of the problems, I don't know

Ruth: I think they have but that's not true, not true, it's true of a lot of people, for instance in the Upper Peninsula. You take the people in the Upper Peninsula who are well-to-do. Of course we have a lot of Democrats now well-to-do, it isn't

Paul: Oh, it's not

Ruth: No, and I'll tell you, that's why the Democrats are going to get their—it's going to come to the time when the Republicans are going to be the sympathetic group and it's because that's life, one's up and one's down.

Paul: And the Democrats will become that starchy and conservative

Ruth: Yes, and they'll get so darn self-satisfied, people do that. People get so self-satisfied and they begin to feel, when they hold office, that they're not there to fulfill and obligation, the obligation is to them, personally. People get to feel that way and they get to be very stuffy and over-bearing. But I don't know, I don't know what kind of a Republican I am at this

Paul: I think you speak of the Republican Party better than I think I've heard some people speak who are Republicans. I don't think some people speak as well of it as you do. I think maybe some people show it in a poor light. Or they demonstrate it in a poor light.

Ruth: Well, it's very highly interesting, I love it. Of course, then I ran—the Constitutional Convention was one of the great things in my life. There I became friends with a number of the people who were leaders, and close friends, we kept in contact; there was Alvin Bentley who had been a representative and he has since died, and his wife has established in his memory, she has given a half-million dollars for a building at the University of Michigan; I was invited to the groundbreaking ceremonies and it's for the keeping of books and records and memorabilia of Michigan; it's going to be a very fine thing and Dr. John Hannah from Michigan State and we became wonderful friends, I'm just devoted to the Hannah's

Paul: Now he works for Nixon, doesn't he?
Ruth: He does, he's in—of course, he worked with Eisenhower, too, in the Rights' Department, Human Rights, and that's what he's on special consignment; then I was friends with George Romney, he and I became very friendly and I was his vice-chairman of his campaign when he first

Paul: He was one, probably in the year that I remember, see I'm not that old, but I think he was one of the strongest going, what I hear, in the state that is generally considered Democrat

Ruth: Well, of course he was the first Republican in at least 14 years because Williams was in for 12 and Swainson in for 2, and it was quite a difficult thing and he had to run, really, as an Independent on the Republican Ticket but he really had to and we became very good friends and his wife, Lenore, and I think a great deal of them.

Paul: He seems like the type of Republican that you are.

Ruth: Well, I think probably he is. Progress and all, he's a very fine man, there's a fine family. Then another one I'm trying to think of. In fact I had many, and I had one, we had about 17 or 18 negroes and of course, my first experience working with black people and it was very rewarding, we had wonderful associations with them and I became very, very fond of a number of them but we had one man who was a lawyer, he was a very successful lawyer in Detroit, Mr. Gladac, and when we ended the Convention, they knew I was going to try for the House that year, and he's a Democrat black, and he came up to my daughter and he said, I want your mother to win that election and I will go any place in the state to campaign for her. I never called on him because I thought it wouldn't be right for me to call on a Democrat to come up here for me, but wasn't that nice of him?

Paul: Did you win then up here?

Ruth: No, I didn't, I ran against Hellman and he was the incumbent and they were not ready for a woman, that's what they defeated me on.

Paul: And now he's got seniority in there.

Ruth: Oh, sure.

Paul: He won yesterday I think, didn't he?

Ruth: I don't know, I haven't heard

Paul: I think he did. I would think it's the incumbency and the committee he's on

Ruth: He'll be defeated sometime I suppose but it has to be running somebody in his own party and I think it'd be pretty hard for him to be defeated because of it. I don't know anything about the man who's running against him, I don't happen to know him, but I know a lot of Republicans don't like him. I was the other day at a party and I heard every woman there say they wouldn't vote for him, Republican women, and I said, what's the matter with him, well, they hadn't a good word for him, for one thing. (turned off)

I wish I had hours and hours to talk with you, maybe sometime, maybe another year we can do some more, I could listen to this and pick out some things that we could spend more time on. I wanted to ask you about how you feel about the Upper Peninsula today, what you think about the Copper Country, I 'spose partially today. What do you think it's going to be like in the future?

Ruth: In thinking about the Copper Country, I would say this is my hometown, I'd say, here I am back in my hometown where half the streets run uphill and half the streets are on top, and I love it. I don't know just what's going to happen to it, I regret not
being able to be around the next 40 years because it would be so interesting to know. But I believe firmly that there will be ways of bringing this back into a moving area because it has so many things for it, the location is beautiful, there's no place that you can go that's more beautiful than the Copper Country, rain or shine, snow or winter sun, it is a beautiful section. And I'm sure that with all the people working on areas to try to bring in industry, I think there's going to be certainly enough surge, there has to be in some ways, some places; however, even though I'd like to be around, I'm kind of glad I'm not going to see it myself. I won't be old enough to see all this development because of course it'll change just like the college, I hate those buildings out the college. If they had been up on the hill, they'd move the campus up on the hill and put those high buildings up, it would have been majestic. There they look like factories. I feel real sorry, that's personal. That's personal. It's not anything else. But I think the Copper Country must have a future. It can't just die.

Paul: I 'spose one of the hard things is that the children leave. There's nothing to hold them.

Ruth: Of course we export our finest commodity, our young people. We educate them and then we export them. And we have nothing to bring them back or give for others. But it'll change, I think, it'll have to come to the time when only education has a paying proposition, for instance, Tech is the biggest going concern up here and course I think, I'll probably be crucified for saying this, but I think they really ought to call a halt to some of the crazy education they're doing. I think we've got a lot—I don't care who the teacher is, if he's a good teacher, after he has his Bachelor's and he has his Master's, then he's got to deprive his family all his life to get his doctor's, it doesn't make him any better teacher. I think this is crazy. I think that we've gone so crazy on degrees and on prestige and on social life in college that we lose sight that we're there to educate and I think the undergraduates come in on the short end. When I was at the Constitutional Convention I was on the Rights and Suffrage Committee and also on the Rules and Regulations, which were 2 highly interesting, and we had for our chairman, on the Rights and Suffrage Committee, was Dr. Pollack, who was at the head of the constitutional law at the University of Michigan and he was an expert on constitutional law. He was just simply terrific. Well, after the Constitutional Convention he went back to Ann Arbor and he resigned his chairmanship. He said he was going to spend the rest of his life on the undergraduates who were being short-changed every place and taught by graduate students and people who had had no business with the undergraduates. And so he did that, he died last year it was a great loss to the country, to lose Dr. Pollock, he was just simply terrific and had such a knowledge.

Paul: Do you have any favorite books?

Well, I'm a great reader and

I know you've read many, many things, maybe there's a few that stand out

Yes, I'm trying to think what I could mention. When I was a kid I read Uncle Tom's Cabin until I read the book all to pieces, I read at nights and that was my great favorite at that time. But through the years, I've been very, very interested in history, it's been my great love, that's why I was anxious to get that museum started. I wanted the artifacts preserved not for commercial or for tourists but for the people of this area that the artifacts and the treasures would be retained. But I'm quite partial to some of the books of the Upper Peninsula; I'm one of 'em; I especially like "Lady Unafraid" and I've always wished that they would do a pageant on that when they had the L'Anse celebration, that they would do that instead of always this one on Father Baraga. I don't know, I just have so many books that are favorites that I really can't say that one is more of a favorite than another. Although this year I read "Eleanor and Franklin" and I thought it was a great book and I'm so glad
that she was the one that was the "big" person in it all the way through. I'm quite partial to Adele Roge's St. Johns' books because they are factual books and I think she's a great writer. And has had a great life; I like historical novels and am very partial to historic novels and to history. I have quite a collection of Upper Peninsula books and I used to loan them out, I don't do that anymore, not even to my best friends, because I don't get them back. And I did the history--I had a committee which wrote the history on our Trinity Church for their 100th Anniversary; and also helped on the history of Houghton when they were celebrating their centennial.

Paul: Well, I want to thank you very much for your time; we'll take a break now.

(end of tape)
Suomi salutes the people who make this area great.