FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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Henry Luokkanen
August 6, 1973

Wallace Anderson

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This is an interview with Henry Luokkanen at his house out between Eagle River and Eagle Harbor right on the shores of Lake Superior. The interview is on the 6th of August and conducted by Wally Anderson.

I: Henry, to get the interview started off let's get a little bit about where you were born and raised and what have you.

R: Well, I was born in Finland at Tiirkoski, it's a province of Ollo, and I came to this country in 1900.

I: What year were you born in?

R: In 1897.

I: In 1897.

R: Yeah, I was gonna say that in 1900 I was three years old. And I came to Fulton, that's a suburb of Mohawk...what we can say it today.

I: Thriving city then, though.

R: Yeah, so and that was about the time when the Mohawk mine was being developed and discovered and Gay Mills was gonna be built just about that time and the Gay Railroad from Mohawk to Gay. And we lived down in Gay for sometime after that and there used to be a coal dock near the Gay Mills, about two miles away from the mills where the coal boats used to come in for the Mohawk and Wolverine Mining Company and the Gay Mills...and we lived at the coal dock. When I was just a toddler I used to see the coal boats come in there being unloaded.

I: What were your folks doing? Or what was your dad doing over in Finland? Was he a farmer over there?

R: A farmer, yeah...no trade.

I: No trade at all?

R: Well, he had a trade...he was a shoemaker, but he used to do that more or less in spare time because at that time the shoemaker business was mostly making shoepacks and that's about it.
I: Well, what caused him to come over to this country? Do you have any idea? Did he ever talk about it or anything?

R: Well, like most of the others, they got away from the taxation. The taxes were running up too high and the lure of the money in America. That was one of the big deals.

I: How did they know about it? Were there some relatives that had written back?

R: Well, there were some people here already and they wrote back and forth and they got the word. That was about the time when the heaviest influx of immigrants from Finland came right about the turn of the century.

I: Do you remember anything at all about the boat trip over?

R: No...no...I was only three years old so I don't remember nothing.

I: Well, when you got over here then and then did you go to school in this area?

R: Well, the only schooling I had was at the Gay School...I had two years of it from the age of six to the age of eight. And then we moved on the farm where there was no school.

I: Where was that at, Henry?

R: That was about two miles east of Coffer City (???) around Trarock Valley mostly...the upper valley. And I started working in the (???) when I was eight years old and I've been working ever since.

I: What did they have you doing at eight years old in the bush?

R: Well, I had a brother that was two years older than I was and we were two on one end of the saw and my father on the other end until around noon every day and afternoon when dad started splitting the blocks and piling the wood (???) we kept on sawing for the rest of the afternoon as much as we could. And that's the way we spent our time. And we came home in the evening and we made the wood for the home and haul it in for the night so that we don't freeze overnight.

I: What was he cutting wood for? Was this wood for fuel?

R: No, we were cutting for contractors...there was a lot of wood contractors them days because the towns were...the people in towns were all using wood for fuel. So there was a good market for wood...cord wood...stove wood and that's what they were doing. Different ones had teams of horses and they'd haul...they'd buy the wood from the choppers, whoever had the land and the bush to chop, and they'd sell it in the town.

I: I suppose all this time you were growing up with your folks coming directly from Finland that very little English was spoken around there.
R: There was never any English spoken, all Finnish.
I: There was all Finnish?
R: All Finnish, yeah.
I: Did your folks ever learn to speak English?
R: Well, my father learned enough to get by, but my mother never learned any. She was a homebody...she was never out where she would be mixing up with anybody like that.
I: And how did you learn English?
R: Oh, picked it up here and there.
I: You did a good job...you speak good English.
R: I picked it up along the way.
I: You don't have any Finnish accent or anything like some of these people do, you know.
R: No...yeah well, I still saved my Finnish language though.
I: You still speak it.
R: Yeah, I remember an occasion when we was down in Hancock one time and there was a bunch of girls come from Finland...maybe you've seen them, they're gymnasts and they had a program in the Hancock High School.
I: I don't remember that.
R: They were an athletic program. And after the program was over, we went to the Michigan Tech Memorial Building in the Finnish room and they had coffee there and refreshments and of course we had a chance to talk to the girls then; and there was a bunch of us sitting around a round table there, big round table, and a couple of them girls could get around with the English language and we were there talking forth and back and then one of the girls that spoke English there...there was some in the group that didn't speak Finnish at all, so she said that this man speaks very good Finnish. So, I got a compliment there.
I: Well, when you were married then and raised your own children, did you teach them Finnish also?
R: Their first language was Finnish...everyone of them
I: Everyone of them.
R: But, there's only one that can get along at all now is Eleanor, the oldest one.
I: It's kind of dying out, and it's a shame

R: Yeah it is...it is. It should be preserved, but it's one of those things that you can't do anything about.

I: No, I guess not. And it isn't only Finnish, it's almost all the other foreign languages...the same way.

R: All of them.

I: It's too bad.

R: They're all going like that

I: Although maybe the last five or ten years there seems to be more of an interest developing.

R: Yeah, there is now. There is some interest awakening, but it's almost too late. It should have been done before, I think.

I: Yeah, I do too.

R: Yeah, I had an Uncle that lived in Fulton...one of the boys was still in that log camp...and that was one of Bowman's camps...Bowman used to have them camps over in Boujack and he had a railroad from Boujack all the way to Fulton and that's the same railroad that went to the Klondike. That's where Bowman was chopping cordwood and stuff to all the mine boilers were using cordwood. And they hauled them log camps, some of them from Boujack on a flatcar over to Fulton. And my uncle settled in one of them and he lived there until he died. That's a long time...and he died at ninety-four...was ninety-four years old when he died. And there is one of the youngest boys still at that same camp. Big round logs. I remember a time when Bowman used to have big barns over there in Fulton. They had oxen. I remember when there was two of the big oxen there yet roaming around. They wasn't doing anything...nobody owned them, but they were just hanging around the old barn until they died. In fact, a pig killed one of them.

I: A pig?

R: Yeah, a boar. He got under his belly and ripped him open

I: I'll be dog gone.

R: He killed one of them oxen...that's the story anyway.

I: What were they using them for originally...to haul the wood out of the woods?

R: Yeah and breaking roads

I: Breaking roads?

R: Breaking roads for horses.

I: Well, you came over here just at the turn of the century then,
EVT 1~31

didn't
R: Yeah, nineteen hundred
I: The areas a lot different.
R: Oh yes, you bet it is.
    lot more people.
R: Yup, you bet it was a lot different
I: Well then did you go down to work in the mines or did you work in
    the woods most of your life, or what?
R: Well, after...no...well, I was about fifteen years old...sixteen
    years old I would say when we sold the farm down there and we moved
    to Ahmeek. My dad put up a shoemaker shop there and I worked with
    him in the shop...the shoemaker shop for two years and then I went
    to work for a carpenter contractor for awhile...I even worked on
    some of these Eagle Harbor houses down here in 1916...painting and
    repairing and after we got out of that late in the fall when we
    quit that kind of work, I got a job over at Ahmeek mine on surface.
    I worked there for some time and then during the war, World War I,
    I went to work underground and I worked underground til the war was
    over and there was a shutdown for some time...for a year or so, I
    think. And after that I went back in to my company again, but I
    went to work on surface.
I: Were there a lot of farms then out in that Traprock Valley by...were
    there a lot of Finnish farmers when your dad first had his farm out
    there...when you were first living out there?
R: Just about all Finnish farmers.
I: Were they working at the same time?
R: Some of them were...some of them were working in the mines
    and farming?
R: And farming.
I: Most of those farms have all died out, haven't they?
R: Yes they are...there's very few people living down there now.
I: What kind of crops did they try to grow then?
R: Well, it was mixed. It was grain and potatoes and hay...all mixed
    up.
I: And dairy products too, I suppose.
R: Yeah
I: Dairy cows and milk and cheese and uestilla.

R: 

I: That's one Finnish word I know.

R: Yeah, then when I went back to the company again I worked on surface, why I ended up at North Ahmeek...that's the biggest mine and the highest producing mine in tonnage that this country ever seen here. That's North Ahmeek, three and four. And there's two shafts in one building...that's right there where that Patrick's Furniture Factory is now...by Mohawk.

I: Oh, right there on the corner 

R: Yeah...there's two shafts in one building. They used to send out as high as fifty...fifty ton cars of rock to the mills in one day. That was the biggest mine that was ever around here. But of course, it made it the biggest because there was two shafts in the one building.

I: What kind of work were you doing?

R: I was on surface then...I was surface foreman there.

I: In that farming country out there, were there other people from like Italy or Croatia or...?

R: There was...I remember there was some fellows got a farm down there or started a farm down there, but they didn't do much on it...they were Italians. But it seems to me as far back as I can remember...I don't think there was a woman in there...was three men...but then there was one Polish family that lived right next door to us on the next forty of land and that was the Patricks. That was the old folks of the Patricks that's running that furniture...but that would have been (?) Patrick was his father and it was Nick's folks that had that farm down there.

I: So most of the farming then was done by the Finnish people. Was that true for the rest of this area up here?

R: Yeah, just about. There was very little of other people in farming but the Finnish. I don't know why, but I suppose it's something...a throw back from when they lived in Finland. They used to live off the earth, you know.

I: Yeah, I suppose they came over here and continued the same style they had before...same style of living. How did the different ethnic groups get along together?

R: Very good...didn't have no trouble. Nope.

I: I know this is always brought up in some of the histories of the area about whether they'd have the big fights between the different ethnic groups.
R: Well, they used to be some, but I don't think that that was very much though. That was only when they went out drinking, you know Drunken brawls, you know...

I: Younger guys out around the dance halls and stuff.

R: That's right, yeah.

I: Well, what did they mainly do for recreation and that back in those days?

R: Well there really wasn't recreation at all as we know it today

I: Had no TV sets to watch.

R: No TV sets and there was no time for anything like vacations or picnics or anything like that, it was hard work for a living. Like I know when we was living down in Gay, why I was eight years old when I left there and I know my father was making forty-two dollars a month working in the mill raising and keeping a family so there wasn't too much time for recreation. Them days you could have a... you could own a piece of net and throw it out in the lake and get some fish for yourself...there was no law against that in them days But, then you always used to plant potatoes and have a couple of cows. Well, you had your milk and your potatoes and you had some fish and maybe there was some animal in the herd that was gonna be slaughtered for the winter's meat...well that's the way you get along, you know.

I: Yeah, well I suppose having cows and things like that you couldn't go very far because you hadda be home to feed them all the time and take care of them.

R: Oh yeah, you hadda take care of them. When you got cows you gotta take care of them everyday.

I: Well, how about the Sundays then?

R: Sunday was church day...yeah it was a church day.

I: They must have had quite a few churches throughout the area then too. There's a lot of them still standing.

R: Yeah, there was a lot of churches

I: Yeah, you've seen a big change in your lifetime.

R: Oh yeah...yeah...what change...there's an awful big change

I: With the car and the airplane. Now the people landing on the moon

R: Yeah!

I: I don't think anybody ever dreamed of that back then
R: No...no...no...it isn't too long ago when I would say that they'll never do it. But, they do'd it!

I: Well, it's hard for people who haven't lived then to picture what it was like.

R: Yeah, but you say like talking about the cost of living today...I would say that if you figure it percentage wise, it isn't any higher than it was fifty years ago. No, because my father used to make...like I say, forty-two dollars a month. That was salary, not hourly wages...that was salary...feeding heads at the Gay Mill. But then, we had a big family and we had one or two boarders all the time whether we had room for them or not, we had them. And I remember I had a book...something happened to it and I don't know what happened to it, I lost it somewhere...we used to get the groceries by the month in the store and used to get paid by the month too. Well, every month you'd pay up the store bill and I looked through that book some years ago when I still had it and there was very few of our store bills for the month that was over sixteen dollars. The highest was eighteen dollars. So, now you figure that percentage wise to wages of today and the prices of today and the wages of fifty years ago and the prices of fifty years ago, and percentage wise they're not any higher.

I: Maybe...probably lower because that would be that probably you were paying about forty percent...say sixteen dollars out of forty...you were paying about thirty-five percent of your monthly income in groceries then and I think groceries today only cost you about twenty percent.

R: That's right, yeah. You're making from thirty to fifty dollars a day...

I: Some people are.

R: Well yeah they are right over here at Homestake now...about forty dollars a day...getting four seventy-five and five dollars an hour.

I: I think maybe the difference though in living is at that time your cost of your house and land perhaps wasn't in the same proportion as it is today.

R: No, that was way down...it was way down.

I: It's like you say remember when you were telling me before about these people from Baldwin Islands and then going over to Tapiola and that area and then homesteading where it didn't cost them anything for their land.

R: No, it didn't cost them nothing for their land. All they had to do was get it registered. They had some tough times over there too. Well, you have...when you go out in the woods and start living like that, it's tough...it's hard going; but it seems to me that those people even though they had to work so hard to get what they got, what they got they appreciated.
I: I think that's true much more so than the kids today.
R: Oh yes...they don't appreciate nothing now.
I: No, he's ten years old and he figures he should have a bicycle...
R: Then a motorcycle...
I: ...motorcycle and everything else. Yeah, I think this is true.
That's kind of an interesting story you were telling me about that those people. Did you say that those were the first Finnish settlers here?
R: Yup, the first people settling at Otter Lake. They were the first ones to come in on the one side they called Oscelle(??), translated that's a step...and then when they settled there and were in there a year or so, they started coming around the other side, Tapiola side. That's real interesting, that book is.

T: And they went from Baldwin Island by water.
R: By water over there. At one time they were going over...one group was going over and they hit a storm so they hadda go in wherever they could hit land and they got all sloppin wet by the time they got on land, cold fall weather and made a fire to dry the clothes out and then the storm settled down by morning little bit then they take off again.

I: Yeah, see they'd have had to come up through Torch Lake, Portage Lake and then into the Sturgeon...
R: And hit the Sturgeon and then up the Sturgeon.
I: And portage past those falls...I don't know...that must have been quite a trip. And no outboard motor or anything to push it.
R: Oh no...no...nope! Homemade makeshift boats too and everything else.
I: Well, when you were living out there in the Traprock, where did you go to the stores? Where were the stores located?
R: Well, Alloway was the first place, but then Copper City was built after. I hauled a lot of timbers from our place on our farm for Post for the homes in Copper City. I remember that place when there was nothing there...no houses.

I: So, you'd come right up the hill then where the road is now and just right up to Alloway.
R: Yeah, right up to Alloway. That's where our Post Office was in Alloway and that's the nearest store that we had.
I: Was that that Peterman's store?
R: Yeah
I: Right there on the corner.

R: Yeah, well it's been torn down now...right next to your place.

I: I don't imagine you got up there too often...that's quite a trip up there.

R: No...well, whenever we had to go and get anything we'd go always with the horse; and we used to haul wood to families from our own (?) land and on the way back we'd bring the groceries, what we needed.

I: Didn't have any delivery service then.

R: No, not down there. They had delivery service around town...every store had it. They thought they couldn't make a go of it without it and maybe they wouldn't either. They all had delivery service.

I: Yeah, Charlie Miskim...I guess the first places he worked he was doing delivery service in Laurium for a store there.

R: Vivian's Store, I wonder. That was a big store where the Quality is now. That was Vivian's before.

I: No, it wasn't Vivian's...he told me the name of it but I don't remember it...finally went out of business.

R: Oh. There's a lot of instance that could be told, but they don't come to your mind. Really should have had a couple of days of time to mark down a few important spots...can't remember.

I: You should've kept a diary all that time...go back and have a real history that way.

R: Did they have any guys around that were real characters?

I: Real characters?

R: Real characters?

I: Yeah.

R: Well, there were some...there's always some.

I: Can you remember any of them?

R: Well, I remember some that used to be in Fulton. Used to be a character that was called Ustiri (?) and then there was another one Rayagoldi (?)...oh, they were really characters.

I: In what way?

R: Oh, roughening and drinking and all that sort of stuff, you know; they were no bother to anybody but to themselves that's all. I remember Copper City the first building that was in there was a saloon. The same thing with Ahmeek Village.
I: The saloons were the first buildings

R: And I remember the time when Ahmeek Village had nine saloons and right up in Alloway and Phillipsville there was one, two, three, four, five in there.

I: Must have been quite a problem for those guys particularly when they came over to this country and they were baching...no wives lot of them...there must have been a lot more men than there were women.

R: Yeah, it was like

I: Making money and they just go out

R: And it seems funny them days, all of the wages were so small. Everybody had money...everybody had money. Now, most of the people are broke all the time. Yeah!

I: I don't know why that would be

R: I don't know.

I: What would a boarder pay, you know, for board and room back then?

R: About sixteen dollars a month, board and room. Yeah, that's what it was.

I: Well, then the rest of his money was clear other then buying a few clothes and I don't think people bought.

R: No, you didn't buy much clothes like the way they do today. They'd have probably one good suit and workclothes, and that's all they got. But most of those fellows they were fussy about their good suit, though. They was all hand-tailored. There was a lot of tailors around here them days.

I: Why was that?

R: I don't know. They just wanted to have a tailor-made suit.

I: Give you a little more prestige maybe.

R: Yeah, that's right.

I: Well, I suppose shoes too then.

R: Yeah

I: Couldn't just go to the store and buy them...shoemaking must have been a pretty fair trade.

R: Well, shoes too, they were cheap...four five dollars you get a good pair of shoes.

I: 'Ell, do you remember anything about the big strike up here then?
course, you weren't working for the mining company up here then

R: No, I wasn't working then yet; but I remember we were living in Ahmeek then...we moved into Ahmeek from the farm 1913 and that's when that strike started, I guess, in July of 1913.

I: Things must have got a little tough when everybody was

R: That was a rough time, yeah. I come almost to being in that Italian Hall disaster too.

I: You did?

R: We was supposed to go up there and then for some reason or other we didn't go...didn't get in it.

I: You were lucky. I imagine feelings ran pretty high around here when that happened.

R: Oh yes, very very high.

I: Well, they had troops stationed out and camping in that Ahmeek and around that area too, in Mohawk?

End of Side A

I: They had National Guard people in?

R: They had troops in Alloway and Ahmeek and they had lots of them up in Calumet.

I: And how did they get along with the local people?

R: Good...they didn't have no trouble. No, the regular troops...the National Guard that was here...never had any trouble with them. Then they had some of those imported deputies...compeak or com-men or something (???)...

I: Yeah, strikebreakers

R: Strikebreakers...had trouble with them.

I: ith that Wydell Gang...

R: Yeah, Wydell men I meant to say. One time I remember there was a railroad coach supposedly full of strikebreakers to work in Ahmeek Mine. It came down to Ahmeek...there used to be a depot in Ahmeek there...it came down to the depot there and it was gonna back in from there to the mine...they had bunkhouses at the mine...and that's all the far it got. They shot that coach full of holes. There's nobody yet today knows how many got killed or how many got wounded or howmany got hurt in the coach.

I: Well, how...what did they do with them?
R: They backed the coach up back up into Calumet and nobody heard no more about it. I don't know what happened then. But I was over in that depot the next morning and Tony Strepp was the Depot Agent then and he showed us some places where the bullets from the coach had gone into the depot and through his filing cabinets and different things.

I: Regular gun battle, eh?

R: Yeah, like a regular gun battle.

I: Must have been like that out in the old West

R: And then...yeah...and then when that coach was going up...there was just a locomotive and one coach...the coach went away...went back to Calumet and he started off from there, and there used to be a Morgan's Grocery Store right there where the Catholic Church is there now in Ahmeek on the opposite side of the road just across the street from where that restaurant burned down, there used to be Morgan's store there. There was a guy with a deer rifle with a full magazine and when that coach was going up there he emptied the rifle in there yet when it was going up the hill. So, I don't know if he hit anybody or not. Never heard nothing...never heard a thing about it.

I: Man, I'll tell you that must have been some days around here to...

R: Yeah...and one night...we used to live in a house right up on the last street towards Ahmeek Park there facing Alloway and they had those National Guard men around the Alloway Mine and I heard...I was sleepin one night...heard some bullets going...heard some firing and I heard some bullets whining over the house...wheew, wheew them bullets went over and then the next morning we found...right by old Alloway there, they found a horse dead.

I: A stray bullet probably.

R: No, they shot at him...but they couldn't see in the dark what it was and they thought it was somebody sneaking around over there...the horse was just muching around over there...they shot at the noise and they got the horse.

I: 'ell, did many of the families move from this area after the strike?

R: Lot of them moved...lot of them went away. Lot of them went on farms too like that Tapiola area and them places there, they got a lot of new people. It says in that book there even that during the strike they got a lot of new people down there.

I: Did many of the Finnish families go back to Finland?

R: No, I don't think so...I don't think of any that I can think of...none that I know of.

I: How about during the depression days during the 1930's? Did many of the people leave the area then to go back to Finland or any of those places?
R: No, not to Finland but there was a lot of people moved into different areas of the country. I don't know of anybody that went back to Finland.

I: I suppose a lot of them went down to the cities...Detroit

R: Lot of them went to the cities, yeah.

I: You know another thing that I've been interested in finding out about too is back in those days when you got sick you didn't run up to the doctor's office all the time...

R: Yeah, that's one thing too. Nowadays you get a black toenail, you're up in the hospital. It wasn't like that in them days. The doctor used to come home and take care of you. It was a rare case that had to be taken to the hospital. But, most of the cases the doctor used to take care of at home. Doctor King from Ahmeek, he could tell you a lot about that, but he's dead a long time ago.

I: People had a lot of home remedies they used too, didn't they?

R: Yeah...they had a lot of home remedies...I don't know...and all the babies were born at home. They never went to the hospital for that

I: And some other woman would come over and be a mid-wife...and take care of them.

R: Sure...sure

I: Yeah, I know, they was talking...and I think they said the man was from Fulton too...Fulton or Mohawk, in that area someplace...used to be a bone setter. He wasn't a doctor or anything like that...

R: Sure...No, I know him...from Mohawk. That was Jack Jacobsen...???) they used to call him in Finnish. But I knew him and in fact, his wife was a little bit related to us through my mother. Well, he was a good man...bone setter...very good.

I: Did he...he was no doctor though, was he?

R: No...no, he was no doctor...and then there was another fellow over on the Highway District, that was Hancock, he was called Tetola (?) and he was a good man for running sores, something that didn't want to heal. He had something that would heal them. He was very good for that.

I: Like a salve?

R: I don't know...was some kind of ointment or salve that he put on and it'd heal them.

I: Well, did they have people going around doing that cupping (???) then too?

R: Yeah, there was some woman doing that.
I: Did you ever have that done?

R: Not me...but my folks did. I seen them have it done. Used to warm up the souna and go in there and cut you full of holes and put the old cow horn on there and give it a suck and it'd fill up with blood. It'd fill up with blood then they'd fall off. I don't know, they'd swear by it. They said that it helped when you get sore joints and sore muscles.

I: I suppose it would relieve a little bit of the pressure...blood pressure or something.

R: Oh yeah.

I: Can you remember another home medicines that they used?

R: Well, no, not particularly. That cutting...that was a big business one time. That was mostly women.

I: Yeah, and that lasted quite along time too...I mean in World War II people were still doing that.

R: Yeah...my father he was a crackerjack at stopping bleeding...I don't know how he did it, but he did it. You get a cut that didn't want to stop bleeding, he could stop it. He'd stop it...I don't know how he did it.

I: Did he have something to put on it?

R: No...

I: Pressure?

R: Just pressure and he'd figure around it a little bit first and the first thing you know, it'd close up and stop bleeding.

I: I know I've talked to one fellow that said that they used...what was it balsam? The sap?

R: Pitch.

I: Pitch or something like that that they'd put on when they were working out in the bush.

R: Yeah, they'd do that out in the woods...yeah, I used to do it. I was told...of course, I wasn't even born when that happened...that two brothers...older brothers...they were out in Finland then yet, and they were splitting a birch log and that birch bark was always gettin in the way and he couldn't see where he was gonna strike with the axe; and one of my brothers had the axe...of course they had their own kind of axes them days, it had a narrow blade...curved a little bit like that with a wooden handle on it. One of the brothers they went down to clean that birch bark away from there and he came down with that axe and did him right through here.

I: Right across the back of his hand.
R: Right across the back of his hand with a narrow axe. You could see the cut...it wasn't through, but you could see it red they said, right on the bottom.

T: On the other side.

R: On the other side and he fixed that hand, by golly, his fingers were just as good as ever.

I: Boy, you'd think that that would just.

R: Yeah, all the bones were cut, the cords were cut.

I: Tendons were cut and everything else.

R: Yeah...and he fixed that hand and he could do with that hand just as well as any other. So, I don't know what he had, but he had the touch.

I: I suppose there were quite a few accidents and stuff happened out in the bush.

R: Yeah...oh yeah, but not as much as you would think, though with all them sharp tools and stuff in there. There wasn't so much accidents.

I: There must have been a lot around the mines too.

R: There was lot of accidents in the mines years ago, yeah.

I: And no insurance.

R: No insurance...no nothing.

I: If a man got hurt and couldn't work, he was just up a tree.

R: He was just out of luck, that's all.

I: Well, there's been quite a bit of change since then.

R: Yeah, there's more men got killed in the mine them days too. I don't know, it seems like labor was cheap so if one got killed there was three four men looking for a job. So, they didn't care too much about it which was not right of course.

I: Mining companies didn't want to spend much money on safety devices either.

R: No they didn't because they didn't have to without any pressure. Not until they put the pressure on them.

I: Long as they were getting the ore out that was all they were interested in.

R: That's it, yeah. Like I read a lot of those old books like Boom Copper and different ones...no matter what book it is they have a
report of the different companies...well, the thing that they emphasize is how much money they made; but they never mentioned how many men got killed to get that, no. You go into these old cemeteries like Eagle River and Cliff and different places, why sixteen year olds and fourteen year olds killed in the mine. Eagle Harbour cemetery there's some.

I: You know, I went into that Cliff cemetery yesterday in...I guess that's in two parts...one section is up against the base of the cliffs there...I didn't go in there.

R: Yeah, there's about one acre

I: Yeah, but I was in on the other one...the one just off...

R: Right by 41

I: Right by 41 there...and all the headstones...well there's maybe twenty or twenty-five left...lots of them knocked down, but that must have been the Catholic one on that side because they were mostly Irish and German...

That was a Catholic cemetery and most of the bodies were taken out of that and brought into Lake Linden cemetery...lots of them were taken out. But there's one or two graves in there yet that's kept up every year.

I: There's one in there that's particularly kept up...I could see.

R: Yeah...yeah...that church that's in Phoenix...that white one there, that used to be right at that cemetery. The foundation is there. They moved it down to Phoenix. Yeah, the foundation of that church is still up there by that cemetery.

I: Yeah, I did see some rock about six - eight inches...

R: Yeah, in a foundation form...

You couldn't see all four sides...only about two sides of it that you could still see in there.

R: And years ago where you go on that old Cliff's Road, you could see that church in there plainly and you could see that headstones and that white fence around the cemetery. Now you can't see nothing...it's all overgrown. You could see the white fence around the cemetery by the church.

I: I wonder why that wasn't ever kept up more

R: I don't know; but most...of the bodies are taken out of there, I guess.

I: Well, when they took them out did they leave the headstones there or did they take the headstones too?

R: No, I imagine they took the headstones too when they took the bodies out.

I: So the ones that are there...the headstones that are there...
the bodies are still there?

R: Them bodies are still there, yeah. Because there's another cemetery across the road from the Eagle River cemetery up on a little ridge there...all of those are taken out. They are either robbed or taken out because they're dug out...nothing but big holes here and there where they had been. Have you been in that one?

R: 

I: Yeah...boy there's some big pine trees in that one at Cliff.

R: Yes there is.

I: Some big pines in there.

R: Yeah...and that other one below the Cliff rocks, that all poplar...there's a big clump of poplars growing in there.

I: I think that Michigan Tech has an archeological team in there now or something doing some digging. I think I heard something about it. Well, did Phoenix have a big cemetery too? There must have been a lot of people living in that Phoenix area too.

R: Phoenix don't have a cemetery. I don't know of any cemetery for Phoenix proper; but they used to use that Cliff cemetery and Eagle River.

I: Oh! How about up around Central or Delaware?

R: Central don't have any...Delaware don't have any.

I: Because those were pretty big communities

R: To my knowledge they don't have any...must have used the Eagle Harbour cemetery. I don't know of any cemetery up there in Central or Delaware.

I: They had quite a few people living in those areas.

R: Yeah, there was a lot of people in there. Maybe that's something I don't know anything about.

I: Well, they could have taken them down to...there's an old road runs right up through there didn't it?

R: Yeah

I: The old Military Road. Did they have different ethnic groups living up in those areas of Central and Delaware and that area, or were they just a mixture of everybody like...

R: 'ell, it was mostly Cornish.

I: Cornish?

R: Yeah, it was mostly Cornish people; but there was...there was Finns
in there and some French; but a Frenchman, he didn't want to go work in the mines. He was always working on top somewheres. He was a teamster or something like that...he always wanted to work on top.

I: I wonder why that was?

R: I don't know...they didn't take for the mine. Even in the last...the later years, you'd hardly see a Frenchman working in the mine. He was always on top and that's why like down in Lake Linden where the mills were, that's why that's a Frenchman's town because they go for the mills and stuff rather than the mines.

I: Instead of the mines.

R: Yeah

I: Well, you know I thought about it and I've asked you, but I never got an answer for it, why did so many Finnish people work in the mines...they didn't much mining experience in Finland, did they?

R: They didn't have any...didn't have any. But they were that kind of people...they'd try anything once. They'd go where they thought they was gonna make money, that's all.

I: The Cornish, of course, they were miners from England.

R: Yeah, they had some mining experience

I: And I know they brought some of the Italians over to work in the mines because they had experience in rock masonery and thing like that in Italy and Sicily.

R: Yeah, the Italians they were mostly...most of the timber bosses underground they were Italians. I don't know why that should be, but that's the way it seemed to be. Like in Ahmeek, there was Jim Maretto and Tony Roba...they were both Italians...they were two very good timber men, but I don't know of any Finnish timber bosses and the Finn is a wood worker.

I: He's a wood worker...you'd think that

R: Yeah, he's a wood worker but he never got into the timber boss business in the mine. He never got there.

I: I wonder why?

R: I don't know...I don't know how they figured that out; but the Italians they were in there...as the timber bosses. Tony Roba I knew him good and I liked him, he was a very good man.

I: How about the Croatians then? Did they kind of specialize in anything?

R: Well, Croatians they were...in most part they were trammers and Finns were miners, machine operators, mostly. But, the Croations there
were some of them operating drilling machines too; but in most part
they were trammers. They load the cars and get the rock out.

I: And the Cornish ended up as the bosses.

R: Well, the Cornish man he ended up as the boss all the time. Some of
them were machine operators.

I: Do you think that is because the Cornish men had the mining experi-
ence or because they spoke English and got along better?

R: Well, there was some favoritism in hiring and stuff like that
because the bosses in mostly was Cornish...English people.

I: Yeah, the bigger wheels.

R: Yeah, they were the big wheels

I: Well, do you think it was from too the fact that they could
English?

R: That could be too. That could have been a big help for them guys.

I: You know it must have been kind of strange down in those mines with
Croations and Finns and Italians if they couldn't talk...you know, if
they hadn't learned English.

R: Not that long...they were like a bunch of ants working together...
they were pulling the same string all the time. They got along good.

I: Of course I suppose they all learned...enough English to get

R: Yeah...you learned one and each others language enough to get along
like when I worked in the mine for some time there, I had Croation
partners, why I could get along with them in there Croation just as
you get along today in English.

I: It must have made difficult working though, you know, with the
different...

R: Well...but it don't seem to bother. It moved along alright.

I: Well, I suppose. Each one of them had different backgrounds and
different ideas and you put them all together.

R: That's like there's a story about the Cousin Jack...the Cornish man...
his partner fell in the shaft and the boss came around there and
of course everybody else come around there too, but the boss went
and asked him what happened. "Well," he said, "I don't know; but my
partner went to step on a plank and the plank wasn't there and down
goes my partner, plank and all."

I: Oh, I bet there were a lot of funny stories back then

R: Oh, yeah...yeah
I: I suppose there were lot of stories where the Finns would poke fun at the Cornish and the Cornish would poke fun at the Finns.

R: Yeah...lot of stories about the Cousin Jacks too. Yeah, no matter what happened well we'd say he's laughing no matter if it happened or not.

I: Yeah, I don't know whether I read it or heard it or something, but someplace I've heard that about the turn of the century or a little later between then and about 1910 when Calumet was really booming, that there were fifty-three different languages spoken in Calumet.

R: Yeah, that could be...that could be very well.

Did't have many Indians working though, did they?

R: No...none that I know of...none...none that I know of.

I: Just not about to get them down in that.

R: Nope

I: Well did many of the Indians stay up in this area or are they all down in L'Anse...L'Anse - Baraga.

R: No, they were all gone...I don't know that I ever seen one...not a native Indian from here. I don't think I ever seen one.

I: They were all down in the L'Anse area.

R: Yeah

I: Must have been some living up here at one time

R: Well, Fort Wilkins, that was supposed to have been built for protection for the settlers from the Indians and they didn't need it at all.

No...they're building quite a museum up there now.

R: Oh yeah...yeah, that's quite a place.

I: Do you think that mining will ever come back up here?

R: Pardon, mining?

I: Do you think it will ever come back?

R: Oh yes, sure. I don't know if I'll ever see it, but I know it's coming back. There a lot of copper in here...there's more copper in the ground here now than there's ever been taken out. There's a lot of places here where there's copper...lots of it.

I: Did C & H ever shut down a lot of these different...you know when they bought out this little independent mining companies, bought
out their shafts and stuff out, did they close them up knowing there was copper in them?

R: Well, they were already closed up when C & H bought 'em. All these around this area. But they did explore some of them...they explored the Cliff in the later years and Phoenix and also Central. But they just worked so much and I don't know what they found or if they found anything, but they worked so long and then they quit. Was it Central...they found a lot of copper in there; but I don't know if it was in paying proportions or not.

I: I suppose at the price that copper is today, that.

R: Oh, it would be now. Oh yes!

I: Well, it will be interesting to see how it develops

R: I sure would like to see it...like this Homestake now that's starting up...I'd sure like to see them going good. And I don't see any reason why they don't. I think it's gonna go alright.

I: How about the shaft that they're working on? Was there a lot of copper there?

R: There's a lot of copper in there...that's one of the best shafts there is right now.

I: Well, did that one go down thirty-six levels? You know where they pumped out, or did it go below that even?

R: They're going below now.

I: I know they're going below...they're going down to a forty-fifth.

R: They're going down to a forty-fifth and then they're going down to fifty-fifth. That will be in the next stage.

I: It was never mined below the thirty-sixth before by C & H was it?

R: No...no...they're going down with the shaft from there, down to forty-fifth and drift to a ways, I suppose, according to what I read in the paper.

I: Yeah, kind of an exploration.

R: And then when they explore that then they go down ten more levels. That's gonna take some time to go down twenty levels. They're in for some time anyway.

I: Well, they must have some pretty fair reason to believe that there's something there or they wouldn't be spending that much money on it.

R: No, I don't believe they would. They know what's there. But Ahmeek No. 2 had what they call a fisher vein...it wasn't a regular copper vein at all, it was an independent vein but of solid copper...mass copper. I handled the heaviest piece of copper that ever came out of the mine...out of Ahmeek No. 2, on surface, and that weighed
fourteen ton four hundred some pounds...one chunk of copper, pure.

I: Boy, that's a big piece of copper.

R: Yeah, and that was cut from a piece underground that engineers estimated at three hundred tons.

I: Pure copper!

R: Pure copper...one chunk. And there's a picture of that...part of that piece down in the Arcadia Mine in that store there, right on the backwall there where they have them jackets...there's a picture of that part of that mass showing from the rock that they blasted the rock out from both sides of it, you know, and get it out there. And then they have twist drills, same as they drill steel with, they make holes in there as close together as they can and then they fill them up with dynamite and lift that piece loose. And that's the way they cut that piece, that big one offa there. That's the heaviest piece I ever handled and that's the heaviest piece ever come from in the mine. And that was two feet thick and four feet wide and six feet long. Three sides of it was just as square as a block and one end kind of tapered down to a thinner end, but the three sides were just like a block cut out of a...like a stone block.

I: And the rest of that piece is still there.

R: No...no...they took it all out.

I: Oh, they got it all out.

R: Oh, they got it all out, yeah. And Mr. Potter was Superintendent at the time and we were loading that chunk on the flat car on surface to go down to the smelts and he came over there and he asked me, "When you gonna ship that out?" "Well, that's going out this afternoon from here but I don't know when it's going to the smelts...it'll probably stay in Calumet until tomorrow or something like that," I said, "I don't know." Well, he said, "I want to be down at the smelts when they get that down there because I want to know how much that piece weighs." So anyway, he got the weight there...he went down there and then afterwards he told me it weighed fourteen ton four hundred and some pounds...I don't remember what it was.

I: That's a lot of pure copper in one chunk.

R: That's a lot of pure copper and three hundred ton in that one chunk was estimated. And there's a big piece showing from the wall in that picture down there.

I: I wonder if there's any more like that down there

R: Never know...you never know.