Subject Matter: Pelkie History

Respondent: Wilho (Buck) Maki

Comments:

I: October 3, 1974, and I'm sitting here in the kitchen with Wilho Maki, called Buck Maki, over here in Alston, and we're going to make a little oral history tape, we don't really know what we're going to talk about yet but we'll get going. Now, you remember Urho Erikainen, eh?

R: Oh, yes, yes, and he was a great story-teller, too...you know, I think he got most of this, he must have been to every house over here, hey?

I: He was for a while.

R: Yeah.

I: Do you ever remember him coming by?

R: Yes, yes, he was around here, too, he was trying to get the history from Turunen...and I don't know how much he got of it, I don't think she talked very much about it to him, see, 'cause I think her husband, no, see, her husband was dead already, she was married again, see.

I: But do you remember this guy coming over and telling stories?

R: Well, I heard him, I've heard him tell stories, well, he'd go out sometime, I remember that years ago, even when he was younger, well, he'd go out visiting, he'd stay till midnight and he could tell one story after another...of the old days and all the happenings out in the woods and all that, it was really interesting to listen to him...that it was really something.

I: Guy's had it pretty hard since then, you know.

R: Yes, after he got, you know, it's too bad he couldn't finish that book, you know, of his, he could have, if he would have had the money he could have probably done it...but he'd go out and get some articles written down, then he'd have to go back in the woods and work 'cause he didn't have any money, see...but he always had hopes of getting that book, like he told me one time, even, that when he gets that book ready, he'd say, he won't have to worry about work anymore but he never, he was never able to finish it...it isn't too many years ago when he was around here yet, you know.

I: He used to work around here?

R: Yeah, he used to work out in the woods, he used to saw logs and...

I: I understand he was a pretty good worker, too.

R: Yeah, before he farmed there before, then his brother took over the farm...and
yeah, everybody enjoyed his stories, there was, and there was a way that he
said it, even, you know...that it made it interesting...and there was lot of
comical parts, too, but I can't remember all that stuff that he said, you know.

I: Yeah, he had a certain magic about his story-telling, that he could captivate
his audience...

R: Yes.

I: ...and you just had to listen to it.

R: Yeah, and a lot of people, it don't have to be much of a story but the way
they say it, you know, it's interesting, so...

I: That's one thing I've been talking to about the older people, years ago peo-
ple used to tell more stories.

R: Yeah.

I: Like people were sources of entertainment for one another.

R: Yes, they used to visit a lot...you know, and then they'd tell their stories,
people...before when I was younger, even, you know, some neighbors and that,
maybe twice a week, even, they'd come over, you know...and they always had
some kind stories to say, you know...but now after television come on, well,
obody visits nobody, it's very seldom that they visit.

I: And now the television tells the stories and the people don't.

R: Yeah, the people sit there and watch that and say nothing, but before, you
know, neighbors would come over and there'd be coffee and they'd be talking,
there was no radios, well, they would never listen to no radio or nothing,
you know, when I was young...and if I could only remember all that stuff when
I was younger, even, all them happenings but, you know, I can't remember them
anymore...my dad should have been living yet.

I: Well, when did your dad come into this area?

R: About 1910, I think, he moved to Pelkie, he died just three years ago.

I: Where was he from?

R: Finland.

I: He came right from Finland?

R: Yeah.

I: Where in Finland?

R: He came from Kauhajoki...I can't remember what "lääni" (province) it is in,
you know, what...but he had a lot of stuff, too, that he could, he had a good
memory and he was at Winkler Nursing Home, that's where he died then, see.
I: What did his dad do in Finland?

R: His dad? He was a shoemaker...he made shoes and clothes, he made clothes, too, you know, he was whatchacall that now in English...

I: Tailor?

R: Yeah.

I: And a shoemaker.

R: Yeah...and my dad, even, used to make some of them choppers, you know, he had them forms cut out of cardboard, my dad used to make them out of deerskin and hides, you know, at home, even, before...'course my dad left home in Finland when he was 13 years old.

I: Did he come straight here?

R: No, he worked up there for a while and then he came to, he went to Hancock.

I: Where was he working there?

R: At the mine...at first he worked for certain people, then he couldn't talk English at all, you know, and he had a heck of a time.

I: Do you remember anything he used to say about those days working in the mines?

R: Now, what the heck was it, he lived in Isle Royale, Houghton Sands there, somewhere around there, and he went right around to Ripley over there, he worked over there Ripley, he used to walk there day and night.

I: How did he like that mining business?

R: He didn't care for that...then he went to Rockland...and that's when that big strike, maybe you heard about that strike.

I: Copper Country strike?

R: Yeah, that big strike when lot of people were killed, even, you know, they shot lot of people there...and then from there that's where he moved away...that's a homestead that my folks had, he homesteaded that.

I: Tell me what you remember about your dad saying what went on in that strike and...

R: Well, one of my uncle's brothers got killed there...but gee whiz, I wish I could remember that...I wish he would have been around, even, he could have...

I: Well, do the best you can, just...

R: 'Cause anything old like that that happened long ago he could remember it, just like yesterday.
I: What do you recall of...

R: They had, my mother, even, they had just moved to, they hadn't been to Rockland very long; when they moved up there when that strike, they had to get out of there, you know...people had, women had to be behind locked doors. I guess it was pretty wild there for a while...there was lot of shooting going on, too, they had to leave from there then...they had just moved there, too.

I: Did the company bring in some goons to...

R: That I can't remember.

I: But he left because it was just plain dangerous?

R: Yeah...yeah, that's that what they call that big Copper Country strike that time, you know.

I: You said he didn't like it in the mines, didn't like that business.

R: No.

I: What didn't he like about it, do you remember him talking?

R: No, I can't remember...yeah, he didn't, and he wasn't in the mines very long 'cause at first he, oh, he worked for some of them...higher people and stuff like that, outside, you know.

I: O.K., he came into Pelkie, then, in 1910.

R: Somewhere around there, yeah...and, see, I was born in '13, my brother was born in 1912 and we were both born here so, yeah, about 1910 or 1911, that's...

I: What was Pelkie like at the time?

R: It was pretty small...it was pretty small then, there wasn't too many here yet. 'course there were some, there had been Frenchmen there before, you know...there were lot of old log buildings there where the Frenchmen had lived and...see, when you homestead a place you got to clear so many acres a year...that's how we started...and when he went to work out in the woods then, my mother used to clear land...then one of my brothers...they done most of the clearing then, see.

I: Your mom, a woman, out there clearing land, that's pretty rough work, eh?

R: Oh, yeah...and she had nine kids then at the end, you know, there was nine of us.

I: Clearing land and nine kids.

R: Yeah...see, I always remember that when I was born my mother missed one milking, you know, you milked cows morning and night, she missed one milking when I was born 'cause she didn't have time to lay in bed.
I: You mean, she would be having these children when she wouldn't miss a milking?

R: Yeah, she missed one milking.

I: But generally she wouldn't even miss a milking.

R: No, no, see, she done most of the milking there, too, 'cause my dad worked out. I know he worked up on the Sturgeon Hill there, a lumber camp there, he worked there and he'd walk from home, you know, it's a long walk...but I'll remember that, he worked there 110 days, he got $110.

I: Weren't exactly top wages, geez.

R: Yeah, I know one winter, the only money they had for the whole winter on the farm there was 35 cents, that's the only money they had for the whole winter... the way they got their stuff from the store, they had eggs and butter, they'd churn butter, and they went to the store and traded that for food...that's how rough it was there then.

I: You wonder how they could make a go of it, really, when you stop to think about it.

R: Yeah, we had, you know, hand-me-down clothes and we were barefoot all summer, we never wore shoes in the summertime...we used to get those crossfeet then, your toes would crack and that stuff dry up and crack, my mother used to soak them in hot water at night then...they were all the same, every house.

I: It was hard times then.

R: Yeah, yeah...but of course a dollar went a long ways them days, too, you know... but I guess they used to eat plenty of venison them days, you know.

I: You know, I just wonder about the women, that's really something to raise a family like that...

R: And they were tough, they were tough...yeah, they really were tough them days, well, they had to work...every house it was the same thing, the women worked besides the men...you know, what else could you do.

I: Lot of those women died young, too, you know.

R: Yeah, 'course my mother lived to be 86, so that wasn't too bad...my dad lived to be little over 90...they both died at Winkler Nursing Home.

I: It just seems that a lot of them died young because the strain, just the physical strain of having that many children and having to work so bloody hard was just too much.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: Both of my grandmothers died young like that, you know...gradually their resistance went down and they got something like pneumonia and died.
R: Yeah...my sister Hilma would know quite a bit about this, too, you know... she's 69 years old...she was born in Finland, she came from Finland with my mother.

I: Where was your mother from in Finland?

R: Same place, same, Kauhajoki.

I: What about her dad, what kind of line of work was he in, do you know?

R: That I cannot remember...my sister would know all that, she lives up in Aura.

I: O. K., tell me a little bit about what the downtown area of Pelkie was like in those early days.

R: Well, there used to be a saloon there but that was, I can’t remember that... where that Post Office is, the one in Pelkie, that’s where...

I: Tom Bond's Saloon, yeah.

R: Oh, you know all about them.

I: Oh, yeah...I'm just wondering what it was like, if you kind of shut your eyes and imagine what it was like when you used to walk through there barefoot, you know.

R: Well, there was two stores there...and of course there was a railroad depot there, too, you know...train used to run through there.

I: Who used to work in the depot, do you remember the man who used to work there?

R: No, I cannot remember that.

I: Did you ever hitch a ride on the train, sneak a ride on the train?

R: Oh, yes.

I: Where did you used to jump on the train when you...

R: Almost anyplace, that thing traveled so slow, you know...it went right next to my home there, there's about a quarter of a mile away from my home that track went, it went every day, it came over here to Mass City, you know, they'd pick up logs and they'd bring the groceries and stuff like that, you know...my sister lived in Froberg then days and it cost 7 cents from Pelkie to Froberg for train ride, you got there for 7 cents...my wife used to come this way to Alston here 'cause her uncle here was a logger, she used to visit here, see...so...

I: What did it cost her to come here?

R: Somewhere around the same thing, I guess...and then you could bum a ride, some-
time when it's starting, you know, you just watch, watch out, there's lot of kids used to bum their way on there, that train didn't go very fast, either, you know...'course when we were kids we used to bum rides on spare tires...
we went to Pelkie on a spare tire...you know, before, they older cars they
used to have that spare tire on the back, on them old touring cars.

I: Yeah.

R: Sometimes there were as high as three kids on one tire...there was a hill there
close to where I lived and when a car was climbing up that hill it slacked up
pretty much, see...we were able to catch it.

I: Whose car did you use to like to catch a ride on?

R: Well, there was a, I can't remember all the cars but there was one, he used to
be a blacksmith, he had a Chadder...it was a big touring car, you know, I re-
member all them little windows it had on the back of it, it had a big wheel
on there then, too...there used to be sometimes three of us on that one tire...that was fun, you know.

I: And you'd see a car going by and kids hanging on behind.

R: Yeah...then we had another place over there close to Pelkie there, that was
there next to Reuben's land, it was sandy there, you know, there used to be
ruts there just, you know, where the cars go over, you know...we'd fill them
ruts up a little bit and then the car would come along and we'd just juggle
there, you know...then we'd catch a hold of them there, see.

I: Aha, so you'd slow them down.

R: Yeah.

I: Boy, you buggers were smart in those days...well, how would you hop a ride on
this train? Where would you...

R: Well, it stops, then days it used to stop almost every siding and all the sid-
ings were close together, see...because they'd stop to pick up logs...there
was logs almost on every siding, people used to log lots them days, you know,
but there used to be all kinds of loggers all the way through...you know, in
fact here, even, right behind our land here, right in our land there used to
be a siding there where they used to load logs from...they were just, everyone
of them just few miles apart...they'd stop, too, and they'd pick up cream cans,
you know, there were farmers, well, almost every siding there used to be a
cream can or something like that, see, they had to pick that up...see, that
was brought to Bridgeman-Russell in Hancock...on the train.

I: I understand, too, some farmers used to just go out to the tracks and the
train would stop and...

R: Yeah.

I: They'd stop for a cream can.

R: Yeah, oh, yes.

I: Isn't that something? I doubt if today's train would stop for a cream can.
I: No, no, they wouldn't.

R: Well, weren't these conductors trying to, I mean, wouldn't they rap you across the knuckles or so if you...

R: Oh, yeah, if they seen you, oh, yes, but you had to do that on the sly.

I: Did you ever get caught?

R: No, I didn't...then they used to have them hand-cars...you know, what they traveled with, well, they used to steal them, too, you know, ride on them.

I: Would they chain them up at night or anything?

R: Yeah, but they'd break the lock on them...they hit them with a rock and the lock would open and then the nights and they'd go back and forth along the railroad track.

I: Go like a bugger, eh?

R: Yeah...well, some of them there used them push-carts, you just, you had to push them and run and then they'd go for a heck of a long way, you know...but them hand-cars that they pumped, you know, they had them right in Pelkie at the depot or somewheres, see, you couldn't get a hold of them...it was all fun.

I: Did you ever get one of those hand-cars?

R: No, no, I never rode in one of them.

I: But the push-carts.

R: Yeah, yeah, that's what they used to haul the rails with and stuff like that, you know...just like what they call a trailer nowadays, you know.

I: Well, what about these stores that were in Pelkie at the time?

R: I can't rem...

I: Ruona had one?

R: Yeah, and there was a Funke that run a store but I can't remember when he run that...and then Matt Oja had a store there.

I: That's the one you remember most?

R: Yeah.

I: What was it like, I just want to...those old-time stores, you know.

R: Well, everything came in barrels...the candy and crackers and everything else came in barrels...and you go in the store with a penny and you get a full bag of candy for one penny...it was that cheap then, see...you know, there was one farmer there had two daughters, two little girls, and every time he came in
the store he gave each of the girls a penny...they went home with two big bags of candy...I always remember that...now try and get it, hey?

I: I think so.

R: Crackers used to come in barrels and toast and...

I: "Korpua" (toast).

R: "Korpua", yeah...and almost everything was loose...it was cheap...that I can remember easy enough...and then they had, every store had that medicine cabinet...like they had in the old days, there was no drugstores, you could get your stuff from there, you know, some kind powerful liniments or something like that...lots of, there was that "kolinkiroppi", that's real powerful stuff, you know, lot of them old lumberjacks used to buy that and then drink it, boy, that was strong.

I: What is this stuff, now?

R: "Kolinkiroppi".

I: What was that like?

R: Well, that's just like, almost like liniment...you know, that strong liniment, I don't know if you've ever seen but it had quite a bit of alcohol to it, see, and, boy, did that stuff stink, you could really smell that...you know, them days they used to drink anything at all, you know, this, my father-in-law's farm, you know, Reuben's dad at the farm there, there's a silo there, in fact, there's two silos there, well, but them days there was only one silo and they had one lumberjack working there and they had corn in the silo...you know there comes, when you put corn in the silo they put a little water in there, too...and then after it starts fermenting in there some of that water starts running out and that one guy, he was drunk every day, and they could not figure out where he's getting these drinks from...so one day Turunen caught him, he was drinking that silage juice...and that's alcohol, just like corn squeezings, you know.

I: Sure, it's fermented...that guy would really tie one out there, eh?

R: Yeah, yeah, he was drunk every day...he was an old lumberjack, he's dead now.

I: Who was he, do you remember?

R: Yeah, he was Leo Saari, he was from Elo...I think he was Ernie Saari's, do you know Ernest Saari from Elo...well, I think that was his uncle.

I: Do you remember another man over there, used to work at Turunen's, was a teamster, had a bad leg, crooked leg, little guy, but really good with the horses, they kept him on there, you know, that's all he could do was drive horses because he had that bum leg.

R: I cannot remember his name.
I: You know who I'm talking about, though.

R: Heinäkoski? There was a Heinäkoski had a wooden leg...he had a stiff leg, well, he lives in Pelkie, then there was a, now, I cannot remember his name... then there was a Savikoski had a bad leg, I don't know, did he drive team or not...oh, he had so many of them men...I think she would remember all that.

I: Do you remember any of those old lumberjacks, were there any real characters in there that you recall?

R: Well, that Saari Leku was one of them, he was a dandy...they used to call him Leku, his name was Leo, I guess.

I: What kind of a guy was he?

R: He was a big man, he had a bum arm, even, like this, I don't know what had happened to it, couldn't straighten it out.

I: You mean, it was just, the elbow was in a half-cocked position and it was frozen there?

R: Yeah, he was a teamster...he used to drive team...they had a lot of them teams, like Turunan there, he had, I don't know how many teams he had, you know, he had teamsters from...you know, I think we should go and talk to her, too.

I: O.K., we will, we will.

R: And if nothing else, she can put it on there in Finnish, see.

I: What was this Leku like? I've heard of him, he must have been quite a character.

R: Yeah, he was a single man...and he liked his drinks...but he was a good worker and then he was so comical, you know...he had the darndest sayings, that they really got a charge out of him...and I cannot remember that guy with the crooked leg now...what the heck was his name.

I: Back to the store...what else was that store like, what other kinds of medicines and liniments were there...in that medicine chest, what kind of a medicine cabinet was this, was it on the wall?

R: Yeah, on the wall or someplace they had it on top of a counter, it was just, you know, a few feet wide and a few feet high and they had different things in there...then another thing happened over there, my wife, see, when she was a kid they had at the store, now and then they got them samples they give away free, you know...and my wife was just a little girl then, see, she didn't know, she thought it was candy...she went to the store and there was, you know, it was free to take, you could take some, it was Exlax samples...she took it home, you know, and that was a big family there, too, and then they had workingmen there and so she had give everybody a piece of Exlax...that night, all night long there was a line waiting to get into the can, outside can.
I: Everyone at once, eh?
R: Yeah...everyone that had some they got diarrhea.
I: All at once, too.
R: Yeah.
I: And a long line-up, holy smokes.
R: Yeah, the workers and all.
I: They weren't used to Exlax.
R:
I: What was that train like that you used to ride on? Where would you kids ride on it?
R: You could ride on, lot of them rode on the cars or else every train, every car got them steps on you can climb on, see...there used to be flatcars, there used to be oilcars...not too many oilcars but them days they didn't use too much fuel, you know...and where as that fuel was brought to Felkie there, too, and then in the wintertime there was a tank, a bulk tank, was on the sleigh...you know, Fordson tractor on front...with half-tracks and then runners on front, that's how we used to deliver the fuel...and they didn't have no pumps or nothing, everything was measured out with five-gallon cans...when they'd deliver, he'd fill two five-gallon cans and carry them and put them wherever you wanted to put them and that's how they measure them, every time you took five gallons he marked it on the door, there's a outfit there that you turn, so many gallons.
I: I'll be darned.
R: Boy, that was cold work, monkeying with gas wintertime, then sitting on that cold tractor...that's where that stove is from, one of them guys that used to drive that... it gas.
I:
R: Bill Tammela...but he's died many years ago, though, I bumped that from one of his stepsons.
I: What kind of cars did you like to ride on most when you were hitching a ride as a kid?
R: Oh...flatcar if you can get a hold of one.
I: You can get a flatcar, that was the best ride?
R: Yeah...but you really had to watch, you know, that you don't get caught...but it went so slow, you know, you could have jumped out almost anyplace.
I: If they saw you, eh?

R: Yeah, them tracks, you know, they weren't the best and the train went so slow that...and where you'd have to stop so often, too, you know.

I: I think maybe the conductors might not have really cared all that much whether the kids jumped on or not because I talked to one that worked there, a guy named Toivo Ojala...he worked many years on the railroad and he said they just kind of turned their backs.

R: Yeah, I know Toivo...yeah, he just retired not long ago, yeah...oh, you got some stories from him?

I: Oh, yeah.

R: Yeah, he used to live up here White Siding, I think.

I: Well, how did your parents make a go of it, then, geez, if they only had 35 cents some winters, how did they...

R: They made it, there was no ins, there was no payments, there was no, what you could get from the stores, see, they traded for butter or eggs, we had a few chickens and some cows and...people used to make them days used to make butter and bring it to the store and trade it in, they used to make butter, they made it into a ball like that, put it in a clean white towel and carried it to the store like that...then they weighed it over there and they give you so much for it.

I: They wouldn't give you the cash, though.

R: I don't know, I don't think so, you traded it in, I suppose someplace they probably did but...

I: Do you recall at all what you got for a ball of butter in those days?

R: (No), that's been a long time ago, you know.

I: Well, what about clearing that land, did you do any of that work, too?

R: I did, yeah, when I was a kid, you know, after I got a little older I helped clear, too, you know.

I: What was that like, clearing land? That must have been a heck of a job.

R: Yeah, then a lot of trees we'd take down with a team of horses, we'd put the chain high up, see, on the tree...and that way you'd get the roots and all, see...and then you had to chop around the roots and...we had to do that all our spare time...'course everybody had to do that them days 'cause lot of them places they were all just...all woods, they made clearings out of them...but that's hard work.

I: Holy smokes.
R: And those days there were lots of logs, timber, burnt it out, you know, it was all
burnt, just...that, nowadays they don't do that anymore.

I: Beautiful hardwood burnt, eh?

R: Yeah, yeah...see, there used to be pine there before.

I: And there was no market for hardwood at that time.

R: No, no, they used to take the pine out.

I: Geez, I bet if you saw a pile of those logs that were burnt now they'd really
be worth a lot of money.

R: Holy cats, yeah, it's really something the way that woods have been wasted,
eh, timber has been wasted...but now they're, 'course they're wasting it now,
too.

I: Right, but they really went through here and cut that pine out of there.

R: Yeah, then the fires went, some fires have gone through, too, you know.

I: Do you recall any fires when you were a kid?

R: No, not close to our place, anyway, I can't recall them, I can't recall them
very good...what that would be.

I: Well, what was it like farming in those days? How many cows did your pa have?

R: We didn't have too many, I don't know, them days we had maybe seven, eight,
nine cows...and I know we used to, the clearings weren't very good then, they
used to go all over with a hand scythe, you know, and pick hay from wherever
you could get it...and then popple leaves we used to take in the summer, too,
when the popple had the leaf on, used to cut them boughs, tie them together
and we'd feed them, even, for the cows in the wintertime and for the sheep,
the sheep liked them.

I: You had your own sheep there?

R: Yeah, we had five sheep there.

I: Would your mom make her own wool out of that?

R: Yeah, we sheared them and we had a spinning wheel...I don't know what happened
to that spinning wheel, what she done with the spinning wheel, used to make
the wool.

I: What did you have to do to do that, I've never...

R: I don't know, after you got that wool, what I can remember of, it had two brush-
es with peaks on them and you had to go like this on there and fluff it all up.

I: Kind of work the brushes against one another with the wool in between..
R: Yeah, yeah.
I: ...moving brushes in opposite directions?
R: No, it fluffed the plow real thin, you know...and then she had the spinning wheel, she put them on that...I can't remember how the heck that went...yet we had five sheep that we got quite a bit wool out of them.
I: And she'd get her yarn and then she'd make...
R: Knit, yeah...everybody used to knit them days.
I: And everyone had their own sheep? Just about?
R: No, no, everybody didn't have their own sheep then, there's just a few that had sheep...and then we used to send lot of that wool, we used to send it to the woolen mills, too, you know.
I: Sell it.
R: No, send it up there and they made the yarn.
I: And they'd send it back to you then.
R: Yeah.
I: Where would you send it?
R: I can't remember, was it Minnesota Woolen Mills or...was it Minnesota or Wisconsin, which one, I think...

SIDE TWO

Who did he work for?
R: He even done some, he worked for Turunen.
"Where was this, what camp was this?"
R: That was at that homestead camps over there in...west of Pelkie.
I: Where August Pelto had his homestead there.
R: Yes.
I: And there were evidently five other families.
R: Yeah.
I: Do you know much about that? Do you know who those families were?
R: No, no, I don't know.
I: Ever walk back in there?
R: Yeah, oh, yes, I used to hunt in there...my dad used to haul groceries or grub to the for Turunen's camp up there with a team of horses...up there at the homesteads...that was his job and then he used to skid logs up there during day and then he done little bit logging himself, even, my dad did...before.

I: Well, what was his camp like in there?

R: I can't remember them camps, I know there was a house there, I think that was the office that time when he had the office, Turunen had, you know...there was camps all over, they just...

I: Did you ever work in one of those camps?

R: Oh, yeah, I worked, I started 1933 and I quit the woods, I think, in '42

I: Who were you working for?

R: I worked for Matt Oja for about 11 years...I worked for Wilbert Poyhonen and for Sirard, Leclaire and Ruona.

I: Where was Oja's camp? At the time?

R: At the dam and up at Skanee, two different places.

I: What were those camps like? What was it like living in one of those camps?

R: Just...it's lot of fun...like in Arvon there was over 100 men there...in them camps, you know...stink...wintertime, especially, when everybody hung their socks to dry, you know, but it was lot of fun...they played cards at night and you get good meals at a lumber camp...that's where you can eat...and then after supper, even, they used to have big trays on a counter for an evening snack, they had a hardtack pile there, you know them big, round hardtacks...and some salt fish, beef, anything you want to take...every night after supper before they go to bed they'd go and get a lot of them old lumberjack's they'd have a round piece of hardtack like that, you know, butter on there, and chewing at that in the bunkhouse then.

I: Getting the crumbs on the guy underneath you, eh?

R: That's one thing about a lumber camp there before, you got, there were good meals...wages weren't much but at least they fed you good, you know...and I drove team couple winters and I drove truck for I don't know how many years, logging truck, and I skidded logs and...

I: What was it like driving a team?

R: If you're interested, if you like horses it's nice but if you don't like horses, well, it's no good 'cause you wake up at 4:30 in the morning to feed your horses and harness them...and about 7:30 at night, that's the last time you go in the barn, you only get that 8-hour wages, you do that on your own, see...and the time I drove up there in Skanee I got 27 cents an hour...and I had to pay my board from that yet so...
I: What was your board in those days?

R: I think it was about 90 cents.

I: A day?

R: Yeah...so you had to work many hours before you could pay your board.

I: Some people were making money in those days.

R: Yeah...and for driving truck we got 30 cents an hour them days...and no time and a half, though, but we put long days, you know.

I: Did you drive one of those early Ford trucks?

R: Yeah.

I: What were they like to drive?

R: Well, they're not like they are now...them days there was big timber and small trucks...now they're small timber and big trucks...yeah, it's lot of fun, you know, you're young, single, you didn't care, you know...yeah, I used to like the woods.

I: Did you ever handle a cross-cut saw?

R: Oh, yes.

I: What's that like?

R: It's hard work...but, boy, you ought to, you know, some of them old lumberjacks, even, I tell you when they'd saw I tell you it was beautiful to look out in the woods, you know...they used to make a skidway there where they would skid the logs with horses or with tractors, you know...there was more horses than tractors and one trail this way and one trail this way at an angle and you could see way up to the end of the strip...there's nothing but logs, no tops, that's what you call good sawing, you see...they never missed anything up...they knew what they were doing, you know.

I: You mean they just felled that tree exactly where they wanted it.

R: Yes...and it was never in the way...you know, before when you used to skid with horses you had to swamp, there was a swampers, he had to chop everything off the way so it wouldn't bother the horses...where you get a sawyer like that he didn't have much to do, see...yeah, that was something, I tell you...some mornings, even, 38 below zero and you'd drive them team about 4 miles to work, boy, it was cold...I know one winter I think it was about that for about two weeks straight up in Arvon, over there at Skanee...and I had to go many miles, you know, we had to go to the job and boy, it was cold...that's a long ways to travel.

I: I guess

R: After you get in the woods and start working it ain't bad but like on the road
I: What about watching those men handle a cross-cut?

R: Nothing to it, boy, for them...not a thing, you get good sawyers...and it's sort of interesting when they can get the saw in shape, them long pieces of wood come out, you know.

I: Long shavings?

R: Yeah, then when it's in shape...and it's lot different than in a power saw, you know, when you cut with a power saw that end is so rough, you know...this is so smooth there isn't a mark on it, boy, does that look pretty...that's one thing I don't like about the power saw, it's so rough.

I: Yeah, it doesn't have the artistic thing to it.

R: Yeah.

I: But what about these guys on a cold day working the saw, what would it look like watching them?

R: They don't, they're not cold...they don't have no jacket on, even, shirt on, you know...wedge sticking up in the back pocket, little bottle of kerosene...they put kerosene on the blade, see, slides better, you know, there's no pinch to it.

I: What would be in their back pocket?

R: A wedge in case it pinches, and they make their own wedges there in the evenings and dry them by the stove...lots of them made, you know, dozens of them in advance, you know, that they're nice and dry...then they had a little bottle with kerosene, they sprinkled that on that saw, see, nothing would stick to it then, it would slide better, too...but them guys knew what they were doing.

I: I heard that when you saw good sawyers working together, men who'd worked together for a while, you know, they worked as a real good team, that saw used to sing with a certain rhythm.

R: Yeah, boy, it was a pleasure watching them, you get two good sawyers...just to watch them saw...and every step, every move they made from one tree to the next, it was all figured out...you know, that they never had to walk very far...and the sawyer always done a short day...sawyers were always in already about 3 o'clock...they'd work hard and they'd go in...it ain't like nowadays, 'course nowadays, even, the sawyers go in early, 'course they make a lot of money, too, with them power saws, you know.

I: By handling one of those noisy power saws all day, you've done that, too, haven't you?

R: Yeah, I got a saw here, that's what I cut my wood with.

I: Lot different than handling that...
R: Yeah, 'course this is lot faster and easier.

I: Yeah...I bet those guys would be in pretty good shape after...

R: Oh, yes...yeah, them guys were, then some certain ones they had the same partner every year, you know...they always sawed together, they knew just what's what.

I: They didn't like to break up teams.

R: No, if they got along good, well, they.

I: Would the word ever get out about a couple guys who were heavy-handed on it, no one wanted to be their partner?

R: Well, they didn't last long together if there was heavy-handed, you know...some of them were, they really press on it, too, but that thing would cut some of them old, some of them tough guys, you know...they'd really press on that saw, too, you know...boy, them chains that would fly up...that was beautiful.

I: What was it like driving one of those trucks? Do you remember any things that happened to you? I've heard that young men, young single men, used to really like those trucks, hotrod around a little, you know, with them.

R: Oh, yeah, yeah, they, we used to haul lots of logs with them...and you can't, well, we put on pretty big loads, and then they were just single axle, you know, that the trailer and truck and you had lot of tire trouble and spring trouble...and you overload them and then you'd overload them and you'd get a little ways in the woods and you rolled them over and...

I: Rolled the truck over?

R: Yeah.

I: You've done that before?

R: Yeah...I don't think there's anybody that hasn't...you get a bad slant on the road somewhere out in the woods and over she goes...but it ain't like nowadays when everything's so solid like these new trucks, you know...but them days they were small trucks...like them Fords, '35, '36 model Fords...they were a little truck but they hauled lots of wood with them.

I: What was it like in the cab inside in the...

R: It's just like pickup truck, you know.

I: Floor shift?

R: Yeah, oh, yes...and the brakes weren't the best but...like nowadays they got air brakes...'course you have brakes on the trailer...lights.

I: Did you ever lose control and go off the road with one of those things?
R: Not with a load on, no, but there's lots of them that had...yeah, that's when Disk-hauling were going good...were going strong, we used to haul there.

I: I understand when those trucks first came out that they had to get some truck drivers from Wisconsin.

R: Oh, when they first started hauling with trucks, yeah, they, there came truck-ers from Wisconsin but they had their own trucks...see, people around here didn't have, hardly nobody had trucks, see...so they got trucks from Wisconsin and the drivers came with them, see.

I: Matt Turunen had a problem, he ran into some hard luck.

R: Yeah.

I: What time was it when he, when they broke the contacts with him and he got left holding the bag?

R: He told me that once but I can’t remember.

I: Oh, she'd probably know that over there...when we finish this up we'll go there...well, how did it change as better trucks started coming in? You drove these better trucks, did you?

R: Yeah, I drove tandems, too, you know, yeah, oh, yeah, that's better.

I: Made the job a lot easier, eh?

R: Yeah.

I: What's the most dangerous part about that, unloading those logs?

R: Yeah, oh, yeah, you got to watch what you're doing...I know that there's lots of guys got killed unloading them...taking the chains off and the log happens to come down but lots of that is carelessness, too, you know...you got to watch what you're doing.

I: I mean, you're never careless twice if you make your...

R: No, you can be, yeah, it's, but there you could, them days you could get truck drivers, ask anybody, anybody would drive a truck, you know, it was...it was something everybody liked to do, see, they were, everybody wanted to be a truck driver.

I: It was probably a little easier and more enjoyable work.

R: Oh, it's lot of fun, you know

I: Plus you make pretty good money, too.

R: Yeah, and then you're on the road, you don't have to be, logging, no, it wasn't very, it was 30 cents an hour then...but then in later years it was contract, you got so much per thousand or so much per load or so much per log...but then
when you were on contract, too, well, if you broke down then you couldn't get a load hauled that day, you didn't get paid, either...on contract, see.

I: This is when you have your own truck and you're...

R: No, company truck...I never had my own truck, I always drove company truck, see.

I: Oja's trucks.

R: Yeah...and I drove for Poyhonen and Leclaire and.

I: Well, geez, that sounds like a rough deal.

R: Yeah...we never, them days when you were on contract if you hauled one load or if you didn't haul any load that day 'cause you had tire trouble, you didn't get paid...you only got paid when you were hauling logs...and you had to fix them tires yourself on your own...change them, you didn't have no mechanism come and change them tires for you.

I: What was it like in the Depression around here?

R: It wasn't very good, I know that. I can't remember that too good...course I was pretty old then but...it was rough.

I: Do you remember your folks being really worried about paying taxes, getting money together to pay taxes and...

R: Well, until then, I think not long afterward they had it tough all the while ever since they were on that place, see...until in the '40s, in the late '30s then they started getting up ahead a little bit, you know...'40s...

I: Started to get a little more money for milk, eh?

R: Yeah, and had a bigger herd and we had cattle and...more cattle and more clearing, could keep more cattle...and then he started making headway, see, but like there during the Depression, well, there was that Relief work, WPA, you know...I know he worked, he didn't work many days on that, he didn't get very many days on that, even.

I: What kind of work were they doing around here?

R: Well, WPA? On the road...digging ditches and stuff like that...but some people got it and some didn't, some got more and some got less.

I: That was hard to get at that time, too, wasn't it, to get on WPA?

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: Like everyone couldn't get on it.

R: Yeah, and then they had that Relief, they give you couple of days Relief work, you know...I can't remember what it was, even, how much they paid then...I know
I put a couple days, that's all I got, couple days, that's all I wanted, any-
way...I hauled rock with a team of horses for two days but I can't remember
what the pay was on that...but it was rough, you know.

I: Do you remember your folks really being nervous and having that as a constant
source of anxiety, getting the money together for taxes?

R: No, it didn't bother them too much because they were poor when they moved
there...so they were used to it, see...so it wasn't...bad and then they lived
off the land, you know...they didn't have to buy the land, they got the land
free, you know, 'cause it was homesteaded, so...I can't remember what year
it was when he retired, then he moved over here to Alston.

I: Alston's quite a place here, too, right?

R: Yeah.

I: I understand they used to have a mill here.

R: Oh, big mill, big sawmill...yeah, right below the hill on the left side there.

I: It must have been a pretty big town at one time, I notice you got the big, big
Town Hall and...

R: Oh, yeah...there's that Waino Maskala that lives right across from Yawkey's
gas station there...he's got all kinds of old pictures.

I: Of Alston?

R: Alston...he's taken out, he's got a scrapbook...and he's had that way since
'40 something and he's taken all old pictures and everything from scrapbooks
and he's got many old pictures of Alston, even, there...before when the way
it used to look when the mill was up...I was just looking at that about three
weeks ago.

I: Pretty busy place at that time, eh?

R: Yeah, oh, yeah.

I: Was this a bigger place than Pelkie at that time?

R: It must have been...I never lived here then, see, we moved here in '44...but
that was a big sawmill and there was lots of logs around here then.

I: Well, there used to be quite a few logs around Pelkie, too, eh?

R: Oh, yes.

I: Big log piles.

R: Yeah, the time Turunen even was logging at, there was big deck piles there.

I: Turunen was the big logger in those days, wasn't he?
R: Yeah, them days, yes.

I: Where did Ruona do his logging? Matt Ruona?

R: Yeah, well, he done his around there, too...I think he had, I think some of his logs went to Pelkie, too, I know they used to, I can remember little bit they used to float them logs down the river, even...I don't know, I think that was that Ruona or was that Turunen...they used to float them down the Sturgeon.

I: Do you ever remember seeing any of those river drives?

R: Well, I can remember some of them coming to landing up in Pelkie, they were pulling them logs off the river, that's all I can remember of that drive...but I know they had, I can remember them having them drives but that's all I know about them.

I: Did you ever see a river driver?

R:

I: Now you told me that they used to get a little venison in those days. Can you tell me a few old violating stories? People getting pinched for doing things 30 years ago, I'd like to collect a few of those 'cause they make real interesting reading.

R: Well, I can't remember too much of them but I know some of the guys during the Depression they used to shoot them things and trade them for moonshine.

I: Oh, yeah?

R: Yeah, oh, yeah.

I: Where could a guy trade it for moonshine in those days?

R: Well, there were a lot of bootleggers around.

I: Where were the bootleggers around?

R: There used to be some here in Misula and up in Klo there was two or three of them.

I: Who were they? It's O. K., they won't be prosecuted anymore, no one cares, but just for...

R: There used to be a Andun's place.

I: Andun?

R:

I: Where was this?
R: That was a little past Clarence Koykka's home.

I: In Elo.

R: Yeah, his dad's first place on the left side there was a house farther off the road...and across there used to be a, I don't know, was that a Hill's place or what, they say that was a bootlegging joint, I never was to that place...and then there was one in Felkie over there in Froberg, that Bohto...there was a moonshine place there.

I: You ever been there?

R: Yeah, once or...

I: What was it like?

R: Well, you got a bottle of moonshine, I think it was...I think a pint of moonshine, I think it was 50 cents.

I: That was strong medicine, too, wasn't it?

R: That was powerful...them days they were really busy on Saturday nights.

I: Those guys would make money in those days, too.

R: Yeah, I don't know how they made it but they...there was lots of it them days.

I: Were the revenuers ever around here trying to...

R: No, not that I remember of.

I: So a guy could shoot a deer and trade it in for moonshine, eh?

R: Yeah, and them lot of people used to, you know, for meat, and they used to smoke it, too...I know my dad caught them in traps and snares, even, you know, when he was out in the woods...he'd trap them, you know, with bear traps...or else he had a snare right close to the camp and we had our meat, he used to smoke it in the sauna.

I: Up in the chimney there?

R: No, you didn't have no chimney on the sauna them days, there was no chimney.

I: Oh, in this older type of sauna.

R: Yeah, yeah...you could have a bath in there and you could smoke meat in the same building...so that smoked meat is good.

I: Did you ever violate?

R: Well, not, I haven't, no, that's one thing I haven't done...and there's deer here and now even the boy goes out and you can get a deer any time you wanted to but he won't shoot them, so...
I: Not anymore.
R: No, there isn't.
I: I understand there used to be more deer.
R: Oh, there used to be lots of deer...here in the field, any time you go out in the field you could see deer, you know, all summer long they'd be all over the place, not anymore...but there's a few deer here right now...he seen, last night, even, he went bird hunting, he seen two deer and a bear...right on our own land...just quarter of a mile from here, up there in the woods.
I: But in those days they had to shoot them.
R: Yeah.
I: For food, I mean, it wasn't a sport or a game, it was serious business.
R: Yeah, well, same, well, then trapping, too, they watch you pretty good, you know...my brother and I, we, when we were on the farm there, I think I was 15, my brother was 16...and there was a creek by our house and on two mornings when we got up in the morning there was a muskrat on the porch, the dog had got it and killed it...and that was about the beginning of October...so my brother and I, we skinned them...and we sent them to the fur company in my older brother's name because he was getting literature from that older company, I think it was the Moss and Stefan Company...and so we sent them in his name and we sent them going in October...and I got $1 for my hide and my brother got $1.50 for his hide and then my older brother whose name we sent them in, they gave him 30 days in jail, see, he was underage, if we'd a sent them in our own name, we were underage, nothing would have happened, see, but we didn't know that...we sent them in his name and pretty soon the game warden comes over and takes and hauls him into jail, he got 30 days for it.
I: I bet he liked that, eh?
R: He didn't mind it.
I: Were those hard times when going to jail was a chance to get some free meals and a little rest?
R: Yeah, yeah, they didn't mind it at all, there was quite a few from around Pelkie, even, that were in jail at the same time for violating, you know, so...
I: Who was in jail violating this time?
R: There was from Pelkie there, I can't remember who they were...there was quite a few them days, everybody used to trap 'cause you could get few dollars, you know...and then my brother, the one next to me, that one year he had beaver, he got some beaver one time, you know, and somebody squealed on him, you know, that he got the beaver, that was that Urho Krikainen's brother...and game warden came over and found the hides and he went to jail for 30 days.
I: Geez...who's your brother?
R: Reino, he's dead...both of my brothers are dead, you know, there was six of us, there's only two of us left, so...

I: That's a nice trick to play on your brother, send a...I bet he got a kick out of that.

R: Yeah, we didn't know that.

I: Did you enjoy trapping?

R: I didn't do too much trapping.

I: What did you used to do as a young man, then, for fun?

R: Hunting, hunting rabbits and partridge and them days there was lots of them, you never come back without a bird or rabbits...the woods were just full of them them days...we never, we used to eat partridge and rabbits just about all winter...you could get all you want them days...we'd even go in the deep snow, you know, crawl up there, you know, 'cause we enjoyed it.

I: How would you cook those partridge?

R: You can roast them or...oh, they're good.

I: I know it...they make a good booyaw, too.

R: Yes, the best...that makes the best "mojakkaa".

I: When I get one again that's what I'm going to do with it, "mojakkaa"...little dry when you roast it.

R:

I: Still good, though...but a little dry.

R: 'Course if you could put a little piece of bacon inside of it.

I: Did you used to snare rabbits?

R: Yeah, that was fun, too.

I: You can get quite a few that way, eh?

R: Yeah, but not...all these years we been here, you can't see them trails anymore but at home the trails used to be so heavy you could walk on them, see...no matter how much snow there was...see, they'd run all night long and that's how they keep warm, too...and it's fun putting them snares in and going the next day and there's a rabbit there, you know...rabbit meat is good, too.

I: Oh, you bet...one thing that I've thought of...well, what happened, though, to all of them, there's...

R: Well, the coyote and the fox are eating lot of them...Reuben's brother and I
one time we dug a fox den one spring here back of my place...and we had to dig about 20 feet long that hole was and one place it was 7 feet deep...then we were I don't know how many hours there...and the mother fox wasn't there but we got the little foxes...and we counted the carcasses on there in that den, there was 15 rabbit carcasses and 20 partridge carcasses in that one hole. that's one fox...so just think what a whole bunch of fox eat...

I: Geez.

R: That's where they're gone, see.

I: What do you think about the DNR when it comes to that business, they haven't listened to you guys that know the local area very much, have they?

R: No, no, no, they don't...they don't seem to care much.

I: Has it always been this way?

R: Yeah, but it's getting worse...before they'd, it used to be good before, but...now they don't even care, you know, they're shooting deer, you know, there by my son-in-law's, daughter's place over here now, in the last few weeks they shot two deer from by their place...violating...the other night, even, somebody shot a deer there...they don't seem to care.

I: I don't go for that business, not now, years ago when they had to...

R: Yes.

I: In fact, years ago it wasn't even really thought of as doing wrong.

R: Yeah, like now, even, lot of them, you find a doe out there in the woods with one hind quarter taken out and the rest is there, that isn't right, you know, that leave the rest of it there, you know.

I: Did you used to hunt deer a lot?

R: Yeah, I used to hunt lots but I never violated.

I: Back by the homesteads there?

R: Yeah, I used to hunt up there, even, and then I hunted in our own land here, I...

I: Did you ever shoot a deer out back by the homesteads?

R: No, no...it's a long haul...have you ever been to the homesteads?

I: Never.

R: I haven't been there since I was a young guy...so the last time I been there about 40 years ago, I haven't been there since, I'd like to go there some day, you can get there with a snowmobile now, even.

I: Yeah, well, the building has been burnt down now.
R: Yeah, there used to be that old trapper over there, too, at the homesteads.

I: Do you know Bill Dorphy?

R: Yeah, I used to know him.

I: What was he like?

R: He was an old man, one of them loners, where did you hear that from?

I: Just tell me about him, I've been talking to all these people, I know about these old-timers.

R: Yeah, I guess he was quite a guy over there, I know somebody was telling you about him that when he used to cook his meal, he'd have a rabbit hanging, part of a rabbit in the pot at a time with a string, you know, over the stove, just what he's going to need...he just boiled so much of it...then when he'd eat that part he dropped the rabbit lower and eat some more of it in the pot, you know, cooking pot.

I: And the rest of the rabbit was raw hanging above it.

R: Yeah, above the stove...he used to, we were over here at a pulp tie camp over here on the, near the Prickett Dam...he was there, too, you know, and he'd make pancakes once a week, then it was in the summertime, you know...and he'd pile them about that high, you know...and he'd eat the pancakes all week...that was in the summertime and there was so much flies you could hardly see them darn things...make you lose your appetite.

I: Guy was really rough, eh?

R: Yeah...then somebody had shot a porcupine and one of the guys found it then...him and another guy, they took it and they skinned it, cooked it all night long, they were on call night long and morning they were eating porcupine for breakfast.

I: Did you ever go in there and have a cup of coffee with him?

R: No, no, I never was to his shack up at the homesteads but there's a lot of them that used to go there, you know, they say it was quite a shack...he was quite a guy, I guess...I guess he had a wife and kids in Finland, when he left from there he forgot them.