FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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## Dr. Leonard Murtonen
July 26, 1973

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INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWER: Art Puotinen

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. Leonard Murtonen

DATE: July 26, 1973

A: This is an interview with Dr. Allen Murtonen in his office, bright and early in the morning of July 26, 1973. Dr. Murtonen, we would like to begin by asking you a little bit about your own parents. I understand that they came from Finland. Is that correct?

L: Yes. Of course my dad came separately from my mother. They came over individually, and they met, naturally, then in Calumet. My dad was from __________. And, his original Finnish name was Murtolahti. But, for some reason, he saw it fit to shorten it just to Murtonen. Now, mother came from Vasa, the town of Vasa, a small outlaying district by the name of Musola. And, that's predominantly Swedish. And, as far as I am sure, she knew no Finnish whatever until the courtship of my father, she picked up Finnish. She always did speak Finnish with more of a Swedish brogue.

A: Now, how old was your father when he came? Was he a very young lad, or----?

L: No, he wasn't a young lad. He was what they call a ______. In other words, he was the son of a larger family unit, or an estate, I would presume. And, he didn't have any reason to migrate, because he was comparatively well off. I would say he must have been in his middle 30s when he came here. And, he was quite active as a school teacher in his younger days. The Finnish would call it ______, which was more of a circulating school mite. And, he taught there for a number of years. And, then he had quite a good thing going, what the Finns call a ______, and in fact, he sang for it----in the Finnish church. And, at that time it was quite a job. Why he immigrated to this country, I have never been able to find out. But, when he did come in he naturally came to Calumet like other people---other immigrants of the time. And, he secured work with the C&H Mining Company, and he then finally met my mother at a mutual friend's home---by the name of Gumkaous. And, they finally got married, and in fact, I asked my mother how they were able to work among each other because she was Swedish and he was Finnish. Well----I guess she said that ______. Well----you had to understand that respect. And, finally dad bought a home on Watela Street in Calumet and it is only about four houses away from the so called Halen Church on Pine Street. And. I was born in the home of the
name of Manaco. And, finally, dad bought a home right next to that. And, we remained in Calumet until just prior to the Copper Country strike, after which time we moved to Bruce's Crossing---on a farm.

A: Going back a little bit here----do you recall, roughly, in what year your father came?

L: Well---I don't remember exactly what year, but it must have been in the early 1890s, because I was born in 1896--so, I am presuming that he arrived in the early '90s.

A: 1896, as I recall---was kind of a tough time in many of the mining districts. And, I just wondered if your father ever recollected what life was like in the mines, and what he was getting paid for his mine work.

L: Well----I understand that McCinley, who was president at the time---and the times were considered tough, in a way. But, if a person had a job with the C&H---you didn't know anything about the tough time, because you were working steady, and the pay was reasonably good. In that time the Copper Country was far better than the Iron Country, because the Iron Country was only operated on maybe 5 or 6 months of the year---and then they were shut down, whereas the Copper Country operated the year around.

A: These were really the boom times then, weren't they?

L: Well---I would say that the framework was boom time, but my recollections would be that the Copper Country really boomed between 1900 and 1910. And, then there were factors involved there that caused a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the working class---the miners in particular, so it finally erupted then in the Copper Country strike of 1913.

A: You were---let's see, about 17 years of age at that time, weren't you?

L: Well----we had already left at that time to go to the farm. But, you meant the strike, and that was in 1911.

A: So, do you have any recollections about your early boyhood in the Calumet area? You mentioned that you lived very close to the Heideman Church, did you get acquainted with the Heideman family?

L: Naturally I knew the Heidemans quite well because especially their girl Julia, she was my age--so, naturally we went to the same school, same grades in the school. Whereas, Paul---he was some what older, so he was more advanced in the school. I remember distinctly, the time that he left for Finland, to take up his education in Finland----as a minister. And, George, one
of the boys—he's dead already. He had been in the Finnish
Counsel—and the present Burt Heideman here in Hancock, he
was a little bit younger. His generation is much younger than
I am. Now, the outstanding thing about the so-called Heideman
Church was the great amount of confirmans that they had going
to their confirmation school in the spring of the year. There
were as many as 400 every spring. And, of course we would al-
ways by that church at the time that the kids were hanging
around there—-and we would all call out, "Ripedy, Ripedy, Rip
My Pants!" (laughter) And, we were younger than they were,
and of course they would give chase. They didn't like the idea
because most of those kids that were going there were from the
outlying country districts, and we were more or less considered
citified, and they resented that. Yes, the Heideman Church was
really an active place in those days because the membership was
great, and their style of religious services are much more emo-
tional than what they are today.

A: Right! You ever hear the elder Heideman preach

L: Oh, yes—yes. I recall him very distinctly. He was a very
erect soldiery type of an individual. He was a tall thin man,
but he was very erect and distinguished in appearance. And,
in the wintertime, especially, he always wore one of those
peaked, fur, Russian hats. And, I don't recall what he had been
in the army, in Finland or not, but—one of the things that
I do recollect about Pastor Heideman is that he was quite a
sportsman, and a big game violator. And, he was particularly a
great fisherman, and a lot of the older people would recall a
lot of the exploits that he took part in. But, the most out-
standing one that I recall was at the time there was a farmer
back at old Comley—-it was a beautiful day in the year—-the
farmer was out there clearing land with a double blade axe—-
there was no snow on the ground, it was a nice shiny day—-
and naturally he was chopping away, and he would raise the axe
and come down with the axe, and the sun must have glinted off
the blade of the axe—-and Reverand Heideman was out there hunt-
ing deer, and he shot and killed that man. And, I recall a
friend of mine by the name of Ed Hilley, his Finnish name was
Ed Hillmaki. But, the same Ed Hilley was the father of Buma
Hilley, who had been in Hollywood as an actress. And, he was
some what older than I was, so he was working in this Beckinen's
Funeral Parlor—-taking telephone calls and things like that
after school hours, and I would go and visit him. And, this one
time he told me to take a pail into the back room, and as soon
as I opened the door the first thing that I saw was a body laying
on a marble slab, covered with a sheet, with its feet sticking up
straight——so, I threw the pail in and came right out! (laughter
I understand that that case was settled between the people, and
I guess that Reverand Heideman was supposed to have paid about
a thousand dollars for the accident.

A: Yes. You mentioned the confirmation school the children had.
What about your own public school experiences? In the C&H School?
L: No, our first public school was called the Lincoln School. It was on Watela Street, and at the present time it has been turned into Milfred's Lumber Supply Building. Of course, then, the Lincoln School only had only about 5 or 6 grades—after which we went to the Washington School to complete the grades. And, from there on the high school was just across the street.

Were any of your teachers of Finnish descent?

L: No.

A: Were any of your teachers Finnish? Or, were they the other nationalities, primarily?

L: I don't recall a single teacher in the Calumet school. But, in the outlying section, the so called country schools—I believe that there were Finnish teachers at the time—but, not in the school in Calumet itself.

A: Did you ever get the feeling in the public school that the teachers were trying to play down the ethnic background of the students? Were you discouraged from your Finnish background?

L: No, I don't think that they ever played them down, or did they make fun of the Finnish students. There would be comical incidents in themselves, but not that they were decisive or anything like that.

A: How did the Finnish kids get along with kids of other nationalities in the school?

L: Of course the Finns were practically predominant. So, it was just a matter of numbers—and, there was really no animosity, except, the kids would become angry—and when they would fight the Finn was always a roundhead, or a whitehead, or a Finlander, or something like that, you know.

A: Yes. Well—was most of your playtime and recreation associated with the school, or were there other things that you did for a good time?

L: Oh, there was no recreation on the part of the school. As far as the school was concerned they were just places to go and learn, and any other recreation had to be made by yourself. In fact, like today the school provides the playground, the hockey rinks, and things with that sort of supervised play. In those days there were none of that. The kids would make their own ice rinks, some formed their own baseball teams, and things of that kind. In fact, the kids enjoyed games much more than the kids do today. The games were simple, but they were interesting, and everybody took part. In other words, there were no individuals that were so highly athletic that they predominated the game. They had the simple game, like Duck on a Rock—you probably have heard, or maybe you haven't. (no, describe it) Well—you would—
push a can on a rock, and that was supposed to be better than rotten, and we would stand some distance away, and we were supposed to knock that can off with another rock. And, then I used to play Pom-Pom Pull Away. I have never seen that done anymore. In fact, there are a lot of people who have never heard of it.

A: How was that played?

L: Well---we would form a ring, and we would hold hands, and there was always someone in the middle of the ring, and he would try to break through the ring. And, of course we held our hands so firmly that he wasn't able to do it. And, then there is another game, Mashey Baseball, Scrub Knowk, and Sides, and all of that. Then, another simple game was Teddy. Teddy was nothing else but a piece of broom stick, not more than 2 and a half feet long. And, then Teddy itself would be about 4 inches long with both ends sharpened to a point. And, then we would draw a ring on the ground about 6 or 8 feet in diameter, and we would put the Teddy in the middle, and you would tap one end, the sharpened end----and that would come right directly up. And, then with the stick we would hit that Teddy, now sometimes you could hit that a considerable distance. Well----when we were playing out in the field, and they were supposed to try and take that Teddy, try and throw that Teddy into that ring. And, if you threw the Teddy into the ring, then you became the Batsman, if was so called.

A: I see, that's a very unusual game.

L: I haven't seen it done by any of the kids around here. In fact, I haven't seen it done anywhere, but in Calumet. Well---when it came to sports, Calumet was always very aggressive in that respect, because they had a well organized baseball team. In fact, they belonged to the semi-pros. And, what interested us, as kids, was the fatman's baseball team. The fatman's baseball team was really something, because they were fat! I would say that the average fatman weighed about 300 pounds. And, most of them were bartenders----mostly.

A: That's very interesting that you should mention that. I was just reading in the 1908---I believe it was the Daily Mining Gazette. It was the election of McCinley and Brian----and one of the promoters of there in Laurium sent an invitation to Brian and McCinley to come to Red Jacket and to participate in the Fatman's Baseball Game. And, I believe it was----not Brian and McCinley, Brian and Taft. Taft didn't agree to come, but Brian was going to come, but I guess at the last minute he didn't show.

L: Well----I remember that election. A bunch of us kids were given booms, and these booms were soaked in oil, and they were lit at night, of course. And, we formed a torch light parade. And, we went down the 5th Street, as it was called, and we were calling.
"Rats, rats, Democrats." "Rats, rats, Democrats!" Because, in those days, to be a Democrat was almost sacrilegious because, the Copper Country knew no other political candidate besides a Republican. And, if you weren't a Republican—-you were out.

A: Well—-who primarily constituted the Democratic Party? Was it the Irish, Catholics——or what?

L: Irish, Catholics——yes. But, most of it was underground, they didn't come out too strong, until President Wilson ran. And, that's when the Copper Country really serviced, the Democratic Party. And, it was in the form of a protest vote. And, a lot of the people must have voted for——well, not only McGullen, but Wallace. It was a protest vote. He got such a big vote in Michigan, and most of it was a protest vote.

A: Let's see——I had a question about the Finnish people. Were they then primarily Republican in their ratings?

L: Oh, definitely. Yes, I remember one woman at the time I think Eno Uuhaiio was elected. This was near Hancock. She was coming from the store with a number of loaves of bread under her arm, and she expressed the fact that she had to buy bread because she would starve to death under the Democrats?

A: I understand that Roosevelt came to this area, didn't he? Teddy Roosevelt?

L: Teddy Roosevelt did, yes.

A: Did you see him when he came?

L: I don't recall seeing him. He was supposed to have come with Governor Ausborn. He was really the governor candidate at the time——I remember Ausborn, but I don't recall Roosevelt.

A: You know, in that 1908 election there was another candidate who arrived in town, and that was Eugene Debsen of the Socialist Party. And I guess there was a number of socialists in this area.

L: Oh, this was a strong area. In fact, you might say that the only two parties that amounted to anything were the Republican Party and then the Socialist Party. Many of the people voted for the Republican Party, but deep in their hearts, they were Socialists. And, that was prior to the time before anyone was known as Communists. They were all Socialists, and that is demonstrative of the hall they had. And, frankly, they had big doings. And, a lot of the Finns did belong to it, because the Finns are a lot more radical than the average nationality. Well—-they are anti-establishment, you might say, and rebellious.

A: Very independent-minded, in other words?
L: Definately. And, if he wasn't the farmers in Michigan, especi-
ally around the Copper Country, they wouldn't have the farms
that they have today, if it wasn't for that particular virtue
of the Finns. They called it the Finnish Sisu.

A: How did that Socialist movement begin up here, do you know?
Do you recall anything being said about it?

L: I think it more or less had it's origin in Finland, because a
lot of these Finnish people came here in protest of the regimes
in Finland. Maybe they left Finland to escape the draft, for
instance, and they were tired of being hired hands, at a very
very small amount of money. So, this country really represented
a lot of improvements to them---and, of course when they are
rebellious be nature---they took more kindly to the Socialist
movement. One of the big stabilizing factors, of course, was the
church. They were predominant. And, then there was another
element, what they called the Temperance people. They were a
big factor in the establishment of the Finnish

A: Was there a Temperance Society Hall where---near where you grew
up?

L: I don't recall of any distinct hall in Calumet. They may have
had the individual hall somewhere, but I don't think they had
a building as a whole. It could have been a hall rented for that
purpose, but they never had a building similar to what they had
here on Quincy, and so forth.

A: Well----that hall is long since gone, I would suspect?

L: Well----for the lack of participation, yes----but, I believe the
building is still up.

A: Oh, that's right---I see. I understand that there was a North
Star Society too----does that ring a bell?

L: Yes, the North Star, if I remember correctly, had a building where
the present Gartner Warehouse is. Just below the old First Na-
tional Bank building, there. And, that building had been taken
over by Carl Silfon, who had the photographic establishment. And,
in the back of his building was a large swimming pool that had
been used, not only by The Temperance Society---but, I think
Houghton had some kind of athletic organization at the time. And,
I know that when that building was raised, I think John Salmi
raised the building----and, I know that he took the glazed tile
that had lined the swimming pool and he used that on the front of
the present Coast to Coast Store. John Salmi built the Coast
to Coast store, and used the glazed tile on the front. Of course
that has been covered with something else. But, John Salmi was
the type of man that never bought anything new----if he could
find some used lumber at various places.
A: Did you, yourself attend any of the young people who were with the Temperance?

L: Oh, no. I don't think the young Americans took part in any of that stuff.

A: I see. How about your folks, did they have any contact with the Temperance Society people?

L: No, my folks didn't. They were a little off by themselves, because a lot of the people embraced the Temperance idea, in spite of the church.

A: Oh, I see—and your folks were very active in the church?

L: Oh, yes. And, the kids in those days—they really had to, in the summertime—go to those summer schools, which was always kept in Finnish, you know. And, at the time they kind of resented it, but after it was all set and done—it wasn't too bad.

A: Sure. Which church was it that you belong to in Calumet?

L: Well—my dad was one of the charter members of the Couselates Church. And, at that time the Couselates Church was the predominant church in Calumet.

A: And, that was a protest church too, wasn't it?

L: Well—in this way. If what the nationalists stand for—the Couselates—it wasn't any one group—it would embrace all of the Finnish people, whereas the Suomi Synod was an implantation, you might say of the state church from Finland—and that's another thing that they resented, because at that time, the Suomi church was more dictatorial. In other words, the pastor had much more to say than he did in the Couselates Church, because in the Couselates Church he was a paid preacher—and that's all. He wasn't the chairman of the board, or anything of that kind.

A: Did your father ever say anything about Eino Echman, and—the early newspaperman, and how the original church began? Was he directly involved in that himself?

L: I recall Eino, and I recall his boy—I went to school with him. But, as far as the originality of the church—I don't recall that. But, I do recall some of the early preachers there.
Reverend Mutuenef was one of the earliest preachers that I can recall, and the reason for that is because he always had small pieces of old-fashioned licorice—the stick licorice—it was bitter, but it was good. And, he always had that in his vest pocket—and I would always go with my dad to the Sactery of the church prior to the church services—and he would always reach into his vest pocket and give me that licorice. And, he was a very distinguished type because he had been so called in Finland. But, one of the earliest preachers of the Counselates Church was Reverend Heideman. And, we only lived 4 houses away from him and the church—so, my dad used to be quite a frequent visitor there.

Well—there was no trouble with doctrinal differences in having Pastor Heideman come?

Oh, no—because he was ordained in Finland, and of course there isn't that much difference between the Consolates Church and the ___ Church. And, it didn't make any difference in any of their religious beliefs, or their form of worship, or anything else.

Well—Mandelof went back to Finland, didn't he? (yes) Was he disappointed with America?

Well—of course he was quite an elderly man already. He wasn't a young man, and I remember distinctly that he was quite a bearded gentleman, and had a lot of very gray hair. But, I remember my dad always saying how this Elo Haimo had gone to Wyoming to homestead. And, he had written to my dad that they were in ___ as far as food was concerned, and he finally did go out and hunt deer. And—he shot three deer with one shot!

That's quite a hunting story! Well—you had Elo Haimo and before that Heideman, Menelof—who came after that?

I think after Mundelof—I think it was Vulmehein. And, Vulmehein had been up in Alaska. And, he was quite good, he was multilingual—he could preach in Swedish or Finnish, you know. And, if I remember correctly—He did become a newspaper editor for a short period of time afterwards. And, of course was a name in the newspaper business, the Finnish newspaper. And, I don't believe—tlat the Tyomies, the Socialist paper, was formed yet, in Hancock—back in the early 1900s.

I think the Tyomies came about 1904. So, now that you mentioned the newspapers, do you recall if your parents used to receive several different Finnish newspapers?

Oh—no. Well—if you go a Tyomies newspaper, you were considered a Red—and they were also called socialists.
A: But, I mean there were other newspapers besides the Tyomies.

L: Oh, the only newspaper that was in Calumet at that time was the Pilot----but, then there were other----the Tyomies Adventure came in then, and of course there was the _____________. (all Finnish names) But, if you went to church, you didn't read the Tyomies.

A: Well----didn't the counselates have a paper too? Was it the ___________?

L: Yes, they had a paper that printed in Ironwood, called the ___________.

A: Did your folks get that? (Yes) The Ultalia, I suppose, was quite similar in formate, to some of the other papers----with lead articles, and correspondence from different occasions.

L: But, I think, it wasn't daily I'm sure. It was maybe twice a week, at the most. It was more of a religious paper, rather than just a newspaper.

A: Yes, I see. Well----coming up a little further here. You left just prior to the copper strike, you left in 1913, or 1914?

L: No, we left in 1911. Yes, the Copper Country strike took place in 1913. Yes, we moved to Bruce Crossing.

A: What caused your dad to leave the mining?

L: Of course there was quite an outflow of miners at that time to the different areas in the I.P.----for farming purposes. They all began to get the idea of getting back to the land. And, prior to the strike----you might say that all this Tapiola district and Elio district were much more heavily populated by retired miners. And, they had been working underground for a considerable amount of time, and the work was becoming increasingly difficult. They were expecting more of their workers, and the days grew on, and they figured that they could do better as a farm individual. And, the fact there was the one-man machine----that was the biggest influence in bringing the strike about. Because the machines at that time were really two man machines, when the mine companies expected one man to operate them. Especially if you had to rig up a machine like that, it would weigh a couple of hundred pounds----that was a difficult proposition.

A: Was your dad a miner?

L: He was a timberman. He would stay underground, and they would pick bricks and rocks and there was a tram that would haul the rocks out. And, the timbermen would tumble on and butridge up the ___________, and then they blasted them.

Well----to be a timberman, he must have been quite handy with the axe?
L: Well—you had to be handy with the axe and handy with the rope. And, know how to tie a knot, and have the general idea of construction.

A: You mentioned that when he was in Finland as ________, was this something new that he picked up when he came over here, then?

L: Definitely. Naturally in Finland you wouldn't be a stranger to an axe. Anyone would be expected to use an axe to some degree of proficiency. So, any of the wood working tools would not be strange to any of the immigrants from Finland.

A: How many children were in your family when you moved in?

L: There were seven of us all together. There were three boys and four girls.

A: And, they were all born by that time?

L: By the time we went on the farm, yes.

A: Who sold you the land do you recall?

L: Well—of course at that time there were these colonization agents—and, naturally the South Shore, the new South Shore Atlantic Railroad had a department that was largely under the direction of Mr. Gasberg. And, he was instrumental in inducing settlers in settling along the South Shore at different points because they were interested in the land. Wheather they themselves received land as a land grant, as years ago when the government gave off every other section to the railroad. Wheather they came underneath that or moved out to get the land wherever they found it cheap—and, then they went through the colonization movements to induce people to move on the farms at that time. There were salesmen going around at the time to induce the people to move on the farm.

A: I see. Did you meet Gasberg himself?

L: Yes, I knew him very well

What sort of a gentleman was he?

L: He was quite an aggressive type, but he was handicapped by his dispeachment.

A: He had a lisp, was it?

L: Yes, the Finns called it a _______. (laughter) Yes, but he was a very aggressive type of individual, and an extrovert. And, the Finns looked up to him in many ways because he was intelligent, and _______. Of course he bought our land directly from _______. He was one of those land agents that were being around all the
time. Of course—oh, heck—we were calling them real estate developers, because they weren't interested so much in their own welfare, but they were interested in the fact that they were able to sell this land to the people.

A: Do you recall how much the family paid for the land?

L: Oh, yes—I think it was 400 dollars for a forty. That would be 10 dollars an acre. You could say that that was pure stumps because the Nestle Lumber Company had logged practically all the pine, mostly a pine country, and the Nestle Log Company had to log that out. And, then, of course, a fire was there and burnt all the bristles. So, there was nothing left but stumps and brush, you could say. And, it was definitely flat land, and it wasn't too hard to clear—except for the stumps.

A: How did you clear the stumps?

L: Well—usually by dynamite. They used to have what they called "stump pullers". In fact, we had a stump puller on the farm too, but that was such a laborous thing.

A: What did it look like?

L: It was a heavy cable, about an inch cable—and it had a cap stand, what they call a "cap stand" around which the rope wound and then there was a wooden beam—maybe 12 or 15 feet long, and a team of horses would be hooked to that, and it would go round and round—and then that would pull that stump out. And of course in that clay country it did pull that stump out, but it took up an immense amount of clay soil. So, that was a big undertaking then to knock that clay soil from the roof of the stump. So, if you pulled up a number of stumps, you would have to wait there nearly a year so the weather itself would take the clay loose, off of the roofs. It was a very very slow process, but dynamite was much more quicker.

Where did you insert the dynamite, and how much did you use? Was it just a stick for each stump, or?

L: Well—the average stump would take about a stick, but a big stump would take maybe 2 or 3 sticks. And, if you had a smaller one that wasn't too big, why you could try a half a stick, but that wouldn't be too successful.

A Was the hole bored into the stump?

L: No, you would just take a and , and the hole would be made underneath the stump. So, you would get the auto-charge more or less in the middle of the stump and you could put your stick of powder in there together with your cap and fuels, pank it down somewhat, and you would light it, and of course it would
explode. And, you would always try to get a low powered powder because if you got something too high it would break the stump rather than lift it. And, after the First World War, a lot of that powder that was used in ammunition was put up in stick form, in dynamite form. I don't recall just what that was called at the time, but that was sold by the government and that was sold comparatively cheap.

A: Was there a lot of rocks in the soil?

L: No, there are no rocks, whatever. There are certain areas where the soil is more sandy, where there won't be sunrock—but, as a rule you would have a hard time finding enough rocks in the place to build a foundation for the house.

A: Well—you were blessed—the other people must have had a lot of rocks to pick! (laughter) Well—did your father make his own home there?

L: Well—he was assisted, but there were always some farmers who were accomplished carpenters, you see. And, they had the tools and all of that. Because, when you went on a farm all you had was the clothes on your back, you might say—and, maybe a cow or two.

A: Did your father contract these men, or was there sort of an informal cooperative exchange of labor?

No—they would have barn raising things, and that—but, that was after the farm was pretty well established. And, if you wanted a larger barn—well, then there would be a barn raising where they would all come in and give a hand in raising it. But ordinarily it was generally done by the contract—on daily wages.

Where did you get the lumber for your house?

L: Well—of course there was two sawmills right there in Ewen. two big sawmills right in the back. There was no trouble getting lumber.

A: Do you recall when you planted your first crop? First of all, I should ask you—did you move in the summer?

L: In the spring of the year.

A: In the spring—so, you couldn't really bring in any crops

L: No, not that year—not that spring. Like I said—all you had was a cow or two. Well—then there was the question of getting hay for the cow. And, by Bruces—it was all used up by the horses. And, of course the horses were fed the hay, and all these loggin roads were a very good source of clover—clover
hay. Because the land down there grew hay immensely. So, after the first year or two, all the farmers were able to get enough hay from these logging roads to feed their cow or two, until they were able to clear enough land to raise their own hay.

A: What did you eventually grow on the farm?

L: Well---around BrucJfCrossing it is mainly dairy. Of course, you could grow almost anything---any grain. But, as far as the grain was concerned, it was mostly oats. And, then of course some had a few acres of wheat, which they would grind in the local mill for their flour. Potatoes were only grown for their own use, because ----.

A: Well---you spent your teenage years basically on the farm?

L: Yes, of course I did a lot of work for the lumber company. There were several lumber companies that would operate the year around, so, when the farm was working out----and, I was the oldest boy of the family----so, it was incumbent upon me to help out with the daily bread, you might say. Because I know that I had done a lot of work with the lumber company. And, of course the custom at that time was, if you earned any money at a number of the ----if you earned any money, you would turn it over to the dad, and he would give you something if he so desired to.

A: Now, you said you worked for the lumber companies----were you a lumberjack?

L: Well---naturally you start from the lowest scale, and then, according to your abilities---you rise. I was mostly in a railroad end. Yes, the railroad would haul the logs out in connection with the locomotives,----farming mostly.

A: So, there was no need for you to live in the woods, like the lumberjacks did? You lived at home, and----?

L No,---we still lived in the lumber camp. Oh, yes----you lived in the lumber camp, because the locomotives couldn't travel around like that.

A: Oh,-----I see. So, could you describe a little bit, what life was like in the lumber camps? About how many people were in a typical camp, and----?

Yes, the lumber camps played a big role in the development of the farming communities in the Upper Peninsula, especially in towns like Chassell, and Bruc's Crossing, and Aura. Because the lumber industry was a big thing at the time, and they employed a lot of men, and most often even on a year around basis So, whenever the work on the farm wasn't too exacting, the man would go to the lumber camps in order to earn money to furnish their farms with instruments, and cattle, and so forth. So,
practically 80% percent of the lumberjacks in these lumber camps were made up of the local farmers. And, the camps were typical of what lumber camps are generally considered to be. Usually when a lumber company would go into virgin timber, the first thing they would do would be to build a camp out of the trees that were standing. They would lay tree on top of tree, the timber wasn't dressed—it was really put up in the rough form. It wasn't even hewed, it was just maybe notched at the corner, and then the spaces between the log was maybe filled up with plaster. So, they were good enough to keep most of the winter storms out, as long as the plaster wouldn't fall out. And, they were large—the camps were large because it was nothing to have a sleeping tent—and, it was nothing that they would have bunks for 100 men, even more! And, of course a typical lumber camp consisted always of the cook shack, where the cook did his cooking—and then in connection with that would be the rooms of the dining hall. Then there would be men's shack, where the men would stay, and then there would be the barn for the horses. And, then there would always be the foreman's camp, in which the time-keeper usually stayed with the foreman. And, they always had a little store in connection with it, so some of them were clothed with Mackinaws, rubbers, and mitts and stuff like that—because some of these lumberjacks that came from town were dead broke. They didn't have money to buy them, but they would give them credit at the comissary. And, my personal recollection of the lumber camp had been more or less pleasant, because I was in my younger years then, and I was able to work, and I was able to eat. And, the food in these camps—on the whole, was excellent. I recall that at one time there were about 150 men eating, and there would be a half a dozen of us kids that would hold back, until all the others had left, and then we would start to clean up on the pies. So, it was nothing for each individual, after a full meal,——to eat maybe three or four pieces of pie. And, then they would go out and work, and then we would come back hungry again. That is one redeeming feature about the lumber camps——you could eat, but you were expected to work in the open air. I am telling you——you were able to do away with a lot of grub. And, as a whole——the food there was very good.

A: So, the cook there was a man cook?

L: Always a man cook, and one man would have maybe a cookie. A cookie was someone that did the chores withing the cook camp, but there was always just one man that would do the cooking, and he would make bread. There were no boughten breads, no boughten cakes, or no boughten cookies—everything was really homemade. And, a lot of it was very very good. And, that bread making was a daily chore, and he would always make it in a wash tub. And, I have even seen them work the dough with their fingers feet. (laughter) They had to, because when they had to work up a big tub of dough everyday like that, why——it would be a very difficult job, just with the hands.
A: I hope he washed his feet before he started! (laughter) Do you recall what a man at that camp would get as his pay?

L: Well---usually if you were a good sawer, a teamster, or more of a skilled man---you would get about 35 dollars a month, and your board.

A: How many days would you work during a week----six?

L: Oh, we worked six days. Sunday was the only day off, and you would work from dark to dark. Of course that wasn't too much of a problem in the wintertime, anyway. And then if you were a beginner, and you held two jobs as a profession's work----well, then you would probably get only a dollar a day. A dollar a day was the cheapest, and from there on up----. They had some times when, during the First World War---when we got up to 100 dollars, and your board---of course. And, then at first, everything was just company. In other words, you just worked for the company, no matter what work you did. But, then the piece work started to come in ----you would cut for so much a log. And, then they got what they called these "jippo gangs"----they were used as extra teams, they would snake out the logs, and deck them, and even haul them sometimes. This was all on a piece worker contract basis. But, most of the logs around Bruce's Crossing and Chassell were taken out by railroad trains. They would build these tracks through the woods, and they would be nothing like our present railroad tracks because there would be many of the round holes on the ground---especially the feeder line, but the main line would have to be pretty good. But the feeder lines---especially in the summertime, you would wonder how a locomotive ever went over those tracks like they did. Of course there was two types of locomotives. There was the regular big wheel locomotive like you would see out on the track today, and then there was what they called the Limsies. That was a type of locomotive that was adapted for the woods. I wouldn't go fast, but it was able to pull a big string of cars----no matter how crooked the track was, the locomotive could bend that way. And, some of them were really big locomotives too. They used the smaller locomotives for the feeder lines, and then on the main line they would use the larger locomotives.

A: WELL----you said that your work was directly tied in with the railroad and the locomotives----were you a fireman?

L: Well---I was a fireman, I was a blacksmith---mostly fireman though.

A: I see. Were there any particular problems that the railroad faced? Like falls on the track, a busted track----were there any particular problems encountered like that?

Oh, yes----especially in that clay country

'End of side #2 of tape
A: This is the afternoon of July the 31st, 1973. As I recall in our last conversation we were talking about your work on the railroads. As I understand it, there were several problems in laying track in that particular region, weren't there?

L: Well---Ontonagon County----this is out of Bruce's Crossing, and Ontonagon County is well known for the peculiar type of clay that they had, because when it gets wet there is not bottom to it, and when it gets hard there is nothing much that you can do with it. So, the logging operations with this particular company---was all logging by railroad. And, the reason for the railroad logging was that they could log the year round. Prior to that the logging industry was limited to doing their main operations in the wintertime, and hauling their logs then to a river bank and floating them down in the spring of the year. During the summer then, they just didn't do hardly anything as far as the actual logging operations were concerned. With roadlogging, they could log the year around. Especially then with summertime, because of frequent rain, and the swampy territory, and the virgin timber that you would have to go through before the soil was apt to be soft, rather than very hard. So, it was a big proposition to keep the track above ground. So, it was nothing uncommon, especially if you were going through a swampy portion---or through a clay cut, that the rails would actually disappear in the clay and all you could do would be to lay new ties on the old rails, and new rails on the old ties. Then you could pass over it, and after another few months you would have to repeat the procedure. Of course, in the wintertime, everything froze up, and then you didn't have any trouble at all then with the rails sinking in and cutting into the swamp because of the condition of the log. It was much simpler to log in the wintertime, than it would be in the summer. In Bruce's Crossing, it was all heavy pine country, and especially in Nash-wood, which would be a distance of 10 miles west of Bruce's. The Nestle Lumber Company from Baraga were lumbering there, logging there ----in the pine forests. So, they built a load of logs on one sets of slades, or one set of bunkers that contained 36,000 board feet of lumber. And, this particular load was hauled by one team of horses on an icy road to the railroad station, and then it was shifted to the Chicago World's Fair in 1890 something. And, it took five carloads of logs then, to transport that one load on a sleigh. And, the whole lumber company in the town of Wisconsin, where I worked----they offered, out of Ontonagon County for many many years. And, they set up a regular operation, and this one particular winter, everyday they sent out 25 carloads of White Pine. And, all of this went to Wisconsin for manufacturing. Of course that is all a matter of history, because there is scarcely a pine tree to be seen anymore. Anyway, it was nothing but pure pine at that time.

A: You mentioned Nashwood, that would be presently classified as a ghost town, wouldn't it?
Well---it is definitely a ghost town, yes. Where they used to have a store, a sawmill, and other places of business---well, there's nothing there anymore, except maybe a house or two. That just marks the place where you turn off, if you know which road to take----if you go to Ontonagon, you will go through Nashwood.

In its heyday---how many residents lived in Nashwood, do you recall?

I really couldn't say, but it would be around 100 people, 150 people.

In the various mining operations that were taking place in that area, where Finns a predominant ethnic group that were represented in the working?

Oh, there is no question because it was really a great economic value to the early settlers going on the farm because they could haul-----they could get work in those lumber camps for the reason that they were good workers and they understood the workers. And, the nature of the workers wasn't formed to them. And, the pay was the going rate at that time, and nobody objected to the amount of pay because they were glad to get it.

A: Are you saying, then, that there were some instances where a family would establish a farm, and then during the winter months the father or the head of the household would go to work in the woods?

Oh, that was almost invariably throughout the community that some member of the family would be working in the woods from 15 years old and up. They even took them at that age if there was work for them to do. And, it really was a big economic assistance. And, the companies were very cooperative with the farmers to the extent that they would even let a farmer have a team of horses to work on the farm say for maybe 50¢ a day or something like that. And, you could go to any lumber camp at any time, and they would see that you got a job, even though there wasn't a big demand-----they would find work of some kind for you. They were very good that way.

A: I am kind of curious about the lifestyle and what might be called the customs, or social customs that took place in the logging camp and the logging area. Did the lumber camp have a sauna, for example?

L: No, there was no sauna, as such----in any of the lumber camps that I know of-----unless there has been a very very small concern. Usually there is no sauna, in fact-----bathing was the least of their concern. The big thing, that all the lumberjacks partook of was, those that were most permanently situated----of course the farmers always went home on Saturday night for a bath, and
a change of clothes, and something like that. But, those that were more permanent residents that were working with a camp, they were more concerned on Sunday for a "boil-out." What I mean by that is that they had a big kettle that would hold maybe 50 gallons of water. It was really a big cast iron kettle. They would build a big fire underneath that, and then they would boil their clothes out. They would boil them and boil them and boil them. Then they would hang them up to dry, in fact—they wouldn't dry, they would freeze dry! This was because of the cold weather, there was no house or anything else where they could hang them up. That would just hang them up anywhere, maybe on the clothesline outdoors. And, of course the principle for the boil-out was as a de-lousing proposition. But, as far as a bath house goes, I don't know anybody who had a bath house, as such.

A: Well—starting from the inside and going out, that traditional clothing or garb of the lumberjacks would be what—long Johns, and—?

L: Well—of course everything had to be wool.

A: Why was that?

L: Because of the cold. You had a 100% wool underwear and they were long Johns, of course. In those days shorts were—I don't think they were used at any time. And, then of course there were the heavy, what they call a suel woolen pants and a jacket. The trousers were what the Finns really call a _______. And, in fact—they were made out of such heavy stock that even if you stood the trousers up they would stand by themselves. It was just that heavy! That was really heavy stuff! And, of course the shirts were always wool, and the mitts were always a leather mit with an inner liner. And, as far as the caps were concerned, they were always a cap with a fur trim to turn down for your ears. Although, there were some lumberjacks that I knew that wore a hat all winter long, in spite of the 20 and 30 degree weather, below weather—all they would do would be to turn the inside sweat band, leather sweat band—they would turn that down, and they would put that down over their ears. But, they were tough—most of them were tough.

A: Were there any other customs that you can recall from logging camp life?

L: Well—what sticks in my mind is what determines whether the camp is a good camp or a bad camp. This is the cook, and the quality of the food. My most vivid recollections are the super abundance of food. The cook was always a man, it would never be a woman cook. If there was a woman cook in the camp, you would know that it was being run too economically—and they would cut down on the amount of food that they would serve. The cook wasn't concerned with the economics of the thing as
much as he was with pleasing the men. And, the quality of the food was a big factor in classifying whether or not the camp was a good camp or not. Now, for instance—for breakfast it was nothing to have pancakes and steak. Now, steak makes a very good combination with pancakes, and it is still considered proper to have steak and pancakes out west. Even if you go to a high class restaurant, you can get steak and pancakes for breakfast. It is a very good combination.

Do you recall the names of any of these early cooks?

A: Well—the only cook that I recall was an old old man by the name of Clem Williams. He was from Okando, Wisconsin. Well—he must have been up in his 80s, and he was too old to do timber cruising, and work of that kind. So, they finally honored him by letting him be the cook at the headquarters camp. But, the same Clem Williams was a man that—he could not write his own name. But, he would cruise timber all day long, and come out with an accurate estimate—all in his head! And, if a new man would come into the camp, he would ask them, "Where do you live?" "Oh, I live on such and such a section on such and such a forty." "Oh, yes—I know where that is!" Then he would say, "Do you know where your corner posts are?" Maybe he would and maybe he wouldn't. But, in my particular case, he said he knew where I lived, and then he asked me if I knew where the south-west corner post is on that forty. Well—I'm not sure just where it is, but I know it is somewhere in relation to what we call a "clear click." You go about 10 or 12 feet from the back of that creek to the base of a big birch tree, and you will find a marker there for your south-west corner. And, he hadn't been there for 10 years! And, there was nothing down with a pencil or a paper, but it was all recorded in his mind! Of course, then he got old—and you could often a time visit with the cook in the camp like that—why he would start chewing a rag about something. Maybe he would have a bunch of cookies in the oven, and he would talk, and talk, and talk—and, the first thing you would know the cookies would start burning, and that would attract his attention. Oh, he had a wonderful memory! Otherwise, when it would come to things like that, he would forget.

A: Well—one of the things that is so interesting about the earlier days is the different folk customs, and events that took place. We were discussing earlier about the things like the 4th of July, the sauna, and I think we have some customs that you wanted to mention.

L: Yes, today it is customary to have a bath tub in practically every home. But, I am speaking about the early days in Calumet—this doesn't have any relation to the farm communities—this is in relation to Calumet. And, there were so called bath houses, but they were usually a pay bath house. You know, it would be open to paying customers. So, every family, naturally—wasn't going to these paying bath houses. And, they didn't even have a bathroom, for that matter. In the average household, they
They had to resort to tub baths. Sometimes they used the old wooden washtubs. But the tub that was prevalent in a larger family with at least a half a dozen kids would be a large molasses barrel or vinegar barrel. They're larger than a barrel because I think they hold 50 or 60 gallons something like that. They were cut down one third of the height so there would be two thirds of the barrel left. This was to facilitate the washing process. It would be nothing to have two and three kids stand in the tub and wash at one time, they were small kids so they could wash at the same time. That was usually a Saturday night chore in the kitchen. Occasionally if you wanted to have a treat you could go to the only public bathhouse in the town and that was in the library. Calumet had one of the finest libraries for the town of its size. It was donated by a Frenchman who was a hauler with oxen. I should say oxen because they used to have oxen teams to haul wood and things like that. Well had accumulated a lot of money maybe through C & H stock because a lot of people had become independently wealthy through the C & H mining company stock. So he donated this library to the community.

Excuse me, this was known as the C & H library though?

It was known as the C & H library, it could have had some other name to it but I don't know what it was.

Okay.

It was used to maybe 50 or 60 years as a public library until just recently the books were all sold and it's being used as a mining company office. Anyway in the basement of this library they had about three or four bathtubs. Bathtubs as we know them today. It would cost you five cents providing that you brought your own towel. And if you didn't bring your own towel, I think they charged you another nickel for a bath in a bathtub. So those of us who were getting a little bit bigger didn't feel as though we wanted to get bathed in one of those tubs so we would go down to the library. It was really a treat in those days. Another thing that people find a little delicate to talk about is the passing of the outhouse. Now the outhouse has many different names to it. Some people call them the backhouses. Some people call them Jon's. This is a modern name for it, it's spelled Jon. What really intrigued me this week, was when they had that rock and roll concert in Watkins Glenn New York. They had 600,000 people present, they had 1,000 Jons. They had these spread around that area there. Now with all this construction going on around the country there are all these jons around and they are all serviced by this service company. Of course they are all chemically neutralized but nevertheless it's a necessary thing. Speaking of outhouses, it intrigued me to go to Mackinaw Island to go from the dock up to the Grand Hotel along that road there and there are some beautiful old time houses and the sign on one house says, Jon, Backhouse, Astor lived here.
In otherwords his second name was backhouse

Is that right.?

So that would bring the question to mind what was the object of the back house and it was obviously the name of somebody. But we always termed that as a toilet you might say.

Sure. Was there really an art to making these jons, were there two holers or three holers?

The average backhouse always was a two holer, a his and her proposition. They had a smaller one for a child because the average child would drop in through the larger one. It was a ritual with the women folks because they always did their scrubbing on a Saturday in preparation for Sunday and they always ended up last in the backhouse with the last of their soapy suds and they were really scrubbed clean. That was usually the final resting place for Sears Roebuck Catalog. They were used long before toilet paper was even invented as far as I know.

Were there any instances of Halloween pranks that you remember?

Well that was typical and that was really the outstanding Halloween prank is to dump the so called outhouses over. Then there was another yearly chore that had to be done and that was to empty these things out. Now the mining company always took care of that, they contracted with some individual that would have covered wagons and he would empty them out. They would haul them out to a pasture or an open field and plow a furrow and empty this wagon into the furros and then plow another furrow to cover that. We used to call them Willie Winkers and you were always aware when they had been out around that night because of the aroma in the streets. You might even see it in the streets because they weren't always so leakproof.

Another thing just a year ago, and this appeared on television, in Canada, they were memorializing the passing of the outhouse, in Calgary, Saskatchewan and those western Canadian towns. They even had a parade of all the different outhouses, just to record in history that all the different outhouses existed. It's one of the passing things in our advanced civilization.

Another thing that was very common among the early people in Calumet and that was the milk situation. A lot of people wondered today how they got their milk. Especially among Finnish people they were always great milk drinkers along with the filia. Almost every family had at least one cow and some two or three. Those who had two or three would peddle their excess milk to the surrounding neighbors. They had these cows and it would be nothing to see a 100 cows in a cow pasture and they all belonged to individual people and they were all tagged. They had a metal tag that they purchased from the mining company.
The mining company would put a metal tag on them in the spring of the year and charge you $1.00 for it. Then you could put these cows in a night pasture and another pasture for the daytime. It was nothing to see twenty-five or thirty cows driven down the streets. This would be in the morning and then again in the evening. Most of those young people had a job of driving their own cow and possibly driving a cow for your neighbor. You usually got a dollar a month for bringing those cows to pasture and bringing them home again. It was quite a chore for a kid because you had to be prompt. Those cows had to be brought out to pasture and got from pasture on time. Oftentimes this would interfere with the kids idea of playing around. Then these cows were usually purchased from these so-called cow dealers. Everybody didn't keep their cows through the winter, they kept them through the summer and then in the fall they would butcher the cow. They would eat the meat and they would never butcher before it was cold enough to freeze the rest of the meat. There was always a man known for butchering and he'd go from house to house butchering cattle. Of course this guy wasn't always so sober and they way he would stun the cow was to hit the cow between the eyes on the forehead. They would use a sledgehammer. Sometimes he wouldn't be able to hit the cow right and he'd move and maybe break a horn off or something like that. There was one instance where the cow had been knocked senseless and had the skin half taken off when it attempted to get up and make a getaway. It wasn't thoroughly done away with yet. This one particular butcher as soon as he would stick the cow and the blood would begin to flow quite good he would drink his fill of that blood. I even drank a little bit once on a dare. It isn't bad, it's a little salty.

Now, I was talking about these dealers, they would come in with carloads, of cows, these people would go to these cow barns to look these cows over just like they would go to a new automobile place to look over the cars today. Of course most of these cow barns were on Pine street because Pine Street was considered shoepack alley and that's where most of the Finns would congregate but there were two main barns on Pine street, Mike _____________ and Jim Brennan's. Then Sam Morrin a Jew had another barn on Fifth Street. The people would go up and look at the cows and even if you weren't buying them you wanted to see what they looked like. These cows were picked up from other farming communities maybe down Iowa way or Wisconsin. You could buy a cow for $25 to $40 at that time.

Were there different breeds like Jersey or Holstein?

Well in those days they didn't have any breeds like they do today, it might be a Jersey or Holstein but they would be interbred.

It was a great asset to the community because if you had these five pound lard pails and I know they are larger than a quart and you would deliver a five pound lard pail of milk for five cents. This had to be done at night and in the morning.
Milk was cheap to buy and it was a little extra income for these people who had these cows.

Did anybody own a bull for breeding purposes?

You could find one if you really wanted to but like I said most of the people didn't keep them over winter. Because they would have to haul and buy the hay and that would be expensive.

Sure.

But alot of them did and if you were interested in breeding there was always someone who kept a bull.

Wagons were a big thing in the spring of the year. A horse dealer by the name of McClure had horses and likewise had wagons. He kept Studebacher wagons and they were a beautiful piece of equipment. They were all painted a bright orange color and really sparkled in the sun. People would actually come down to see a brand new dozen wagons out in the field. It was just the simpler thing like that, that people were really intrigued with. It meant alot to them, it meant something to talk about. A subject of conversation and so forth.

Right. What makes the early days so interesting is the fact that there were alot of interesting people. You mentioned some of the wrestlers and I guess a man that stands out in local history is a man named big Louie. Louie Moilainen. Were you acquainted with him at all?

Oh yes, I've seen him.

What impressions do you have of him, his physical stature, his personality and so on?

Well to us kids, he impressed us as being a giant. Occasionally he would come down and do his shopping in Calumet. If one kid saw him it wasn't long before all the kids knew about it. We would follow him. There would be a half a dozen kids following him from store and getting as much of a glimpse as we could. We didn't know if he was eight foot tall or six foot tall but we knew he was alot taller than ordinary people. I think he was about eight feet or something like that?

Yes.

I knew he wore about an 18 size shoe and other clothes in proportion and weighed about four hundred pounds. He owned a saloon in Hancock and they used to say he could stand in front of the front bar and reach onto the back bar and take a bottle off the back of the bar. His folks I understand were just ordinary people. As a matter of fact his mother was more on the small side rather on the large side. He was a well they called him a freak because he was an attraction.

Sure
I guess this was all due to glandular disorders.

Well let's jump ahead from the old time customs and characters and pick up the story about the _________. You said you were there from when?

Well from about 1912 to well say about 1920 or 21. Of course for about three years I had worked in the White Pine Extension which is about nine miles west of the present White Pine. The White Pine Mine was a C & H development and the White Pine was a Wolverine Mining Company extension.

I see

The Wolverine and Mohawk Mine were run by the same company. In fact at that time they had too much money in the treasury and instead of giving it to the Treasury for the government they put it into developing the mine. They put down quite a shaft. As far as I know they went down about five or six hundred feet. There was copper but the vein got very very narrow whereas in the White Pine Mine, the veins are absolutely horizontal. The White Pine extension, they are almost perpendicular. So in a drift say the size of this room you'd probably have three vertical veins. So they were different in that respect so that was never developed. So the copper is still there underground and maybe at some future date someone will get it because the copper is very rich because it's concentrated more. It's not scattered over big areas, it's concentrated more. In fact there's one of the old time mines further west from there at the shores of Lake Superior that was worked maybe a 100 years ago. I know some of the engineers from the White Pine extension and they made a trip over there before. But the trouble with the original White Pine was that that copper was so fine that they couldn't recover it. The only way they could recover it was with this vibrating table. They ground their copper as fine as they could and the table was on an angle and always vibrating and the heavier copper with the water washing over it wouldn't go as far as the rock because the rock was so much lighter than the copper. The portion that was picked up wasn't too good because there was an awful lot of loss. All of that went into the Mineral River and they claim that was red from all that copper. At that time there were only three flotation processes going on at that time. Now there are the flotation processes going on in all of the mills. Wherever they mill copper they use this oil flotation process. The copper from White Pine would go through a 100 mesh sieve and that means there are 100 mesh squares in a square inch. That's pretty fine. Then they agitate it with a detergent mixed with water and this copper is poured in there and it all mixes up. This detergent kind of forms a foam like a detergent does. There's a lot of pine oil in that because it smells distinctly of pine oil. That will come to the top with foam and the foam will pick up the copper and all you do is skim off the foam just like a glass of beer. The foam contains the copper. That's the process they call oil flotation. The oil floats the copper up. One of the reasons C & H let White Pine property go is in 1921 we had a Depression here in the Copper Country.
Even C & H, the first time in it's history they had to shut down for a year. Then the White Pine was sold for taxes and the Copper Range Company bought the White Pine for tax sale. You know how much they paid for that? Eighty Eight thousand dollars. They got all the mineral property and everything else. Because C & H were going along and they thought they were at the end of the vein. They thought this is the end of the line. Well Mr. Chopp was superintendent for Copper Range and he figured that there must have been a fault. You know what a fault is?

A Yes.

That's when a big wedge of rock drops down due to some earthquake or something like that. So when Copper Range took it over, he went over a mile from that particular digging and he sank a new shaft. He went down again and that's where he struck the vein and that's the present White Pine Mine.

A Is that right?

L Yes

A Well in the original extension were you a miner or trammer?

L No, I was no more than a kid I don't think anymore than sixteen years of age. I did work as a miner when it came to sinking shafts, yes. In fact I had quite an experience there too. We used a bucket to raise the rock and after you make a round of blasting, then it's a matter of cleaning up afterwards see. Then when you clean up you have to timber. So as to protect the walls from caving in maybe that six or eight feet you had blasted down. Well we had just got through timbering and I went down with the bucket to pick up pieces of timber and so forth so they could start pumping. Because that water collects in there so fast you always have to have a pump down there. We had come to the surface with one of these buckets, and I was in the process of throwing out these ends and pieces of timber, onto the landing at the collar of the shaft, there was a lander there. He was the man who would signal the engine house so when I got to the surface the lander rang one bell to stop. So the engineer seemingly put his brake on the drum. Well what happened was as soon as I got into the bucket my weight caused that bucket to go down. For the reason the brake on the drum is a tooth arrangement and instead of fitting down into the teeth it was just riding on top. As soon as I got into the bucket my weight started that to roll. I was going down so the lander again rang one bell immediately. Well that attracted the engineer again because he had left the hoist to make some adjustments to the steam pipe or whatever he was interested in. He was working on the valve when he heard the bell and saw that drum revolving so he runs over there and pulls the brake on but by that time I was down 400 feet. I was 15 or 20 feet from the bottom of the shaft in 6 feet of water. I don't suppose anything serious would have happened to me but a good ducking.
I always considered this as a joke because the engineer told me I'm going to give you a good ride sometime. I thought this is the good ride that he promised me. Of course the captain was right there at the time and he went right over to the enginehouse and did he ball that guy out. This happened in 1915 and in 1965, fifty years later, I went to talk to that engineer in Houghton. He was an old man already and had arthritis in his knee so he wouldn't walk very much. I knew the house where he lived and I knew had a habit of sitting out on the porch so I purposely went to talk to him one noon. He was what you might call senile and didn't remember all those happenings.

Sure.

He died maybe a year or two after that.

That's very interesting, did you say you went down to Detroit after your time at Bruces?

Yes. I was township clerk in Stanton Township in Ontonagon County and then I ran for Supervisor and lost out on Supervisor so I wanted to go to greener pastures so I wanted to go to Detroit. Everybody went to Detroit. That was the only place to make money outside if you went to a logging camp or construction or something like that. That was alot of bullwork. Of course at that time the automobile had captured everybody's fancy and I wanted to become a part of it. So I went to Detroit and got a job at Fords at the glass house. It was called the glass house because that's where they made wind shields to put into the Ford Cars. Other companies always bought their windshield glass whereas Ford bought alot of it, but he couldn't get enough to supply his own purpose so he started making his own. Of course he had to start from scratch because he wanted to make a revolutionary process because he wanted to cast glass in a continuous process much like the automobile assembly line. Along the assembly line principle. So there was glass flowing out day and night, Sunday and whatnot. Even Christmas, they wouldn't shut down for nothing. Excepting if there had to be repairs done anywhere on the assembly. It was a very interesting proposition, he first tried to make glass that was polished as it came from the socalled oven. But that wasn't a success so he put a million dollars worth of glass right in the hole. Just because it didn't work out. He was supposed to have experts on this and a Canadian was supposed to have developed this process but he said that it couldn't be done at least he didn't satisfy Ford with it and he went to Canada and I understand he was able to make glass and profit from Henry Ford's expense.

But anyway the making of glass is a very interesting thing. Many people have no idea where glass is made or where it comes from. If you told the average person it was just made from ordinary sand, they would think you're nuts. Of course it had to be a certain grade and a pure sand. It's strange even when it comes to paints, the state of North Dakota puts out two books, one is on oil and the other is on paints.
Now North Dakota is a farming state of course and the farms have been built so often by the paint salesmen, and oil salesmen that the state has decreed that nobody can sell paint or oil in the state of North Dakota unless it gets the approval of the state laboratory. Then of course the state laboratory puts out a booklet of all their tests on oil and all their tests on paint. I happened to be in town at Armstrong Theilman and Mr. Armstrong showed me a book that he had just gotten from North Dakota on the different paints. So naturally I checked up on some of the paints and even on his own paint which was Low Brothers at that time. There was one paint from the Gambles store that did contain a considerable amount of silica. This was placed in there to give body and weight to the paint.

I see

Then regarding oil. I wanted to get a No. 10 Arctic Oil. That was the principal winter oil that people used in the wintertime. I went to this Gambles Store thinking they would have it because nobody else had it. They said we don't have the No. 10 Arctic but our No. 20 will flow like the No. 10 Arctic will. So he said I'll show you and he pulled out this North Dakota book with all the different oils and classifications and the pour index or temperature and their oil did pour at a colder temperature than the Arctic No. 10. That's how I found out about the oil book.

Sure.

And regarding glass, glass is made in a big furnace. It's constantly being fed maybe every twenty minutes. Usually one one side and then on the other side from one side to the other. There's a flow to that glass and by the time it reaches the other end of that furnace which is about a hundred feet long it's already in the molded stage. There temperature is about twenty five hundred degrees and it comes in by big pipes. On one side and then you reverse the flow on the other side. Then you'd have to peek every so often to see that the stuff you put in there was being distributed evenly so it would melt properly. You put in a batch every twenty minutes and in order to get that batch, you'd have to put into like a concrete mixer you's put two or three batches of sand or silica as it was called and then you'd put maybe one wheel barrell of limestone. Then you'd put soda ash and then you'd even put broken glass. This glass would melt before the sand would and that would have sort of a leavening process and it would melt easier. If you break glass and look at the thickness of the glass it will have sort of a greenish tinge to it. You can determine the color of that greenish tinge by the amount of charcoal and arsenic that you put into the batch. Maybe you only will put a few tablespoon fulls of arsenic and a cup of charcoal into the batch and that will determine the greenish tinge. I don't really understand what it has do with it but that determines the greenish tinge to it. So the glass is constantly flowing from the other end and it's flowing like cold syrup would.
It would be a stream about a foot wide and maybe five or six inches thick. That would flow down to a highly polished endless steel table. This would always keep on slowly moving. When it came onto the highly polished steel table, it would spread. Then there was a roll that would spread that further so it would spread that one foot wide stream about thirty-eight inches. So by the time it hit that table it would be chilled enough so it would hold its own weight and then it went into an oven that was maybe a thousand feet long. This oven had rollers in it and flames at heated intervals so as to cool the glass off gradually. So by the time it got down to the other end you could handle it with leather gloves. There would be a man at the other end who would inspect the glass looking for bubbles, dirt and imperfections. Then if there was an imperfection you would cut it off with a glass cutter and throw it away. If you got good perfect glass for about seven feet you would cut it off and stack it off on the one side. This would go on day and night. When that glass would come out it would be about 5/8 of an inch thick. Then that glass was taken down and placed on a bed of plaster of paris. Then there would be grinders, big grinders, that would go round and round and these grinders were fed granite. This is a very tough semi-valuable stone. It was very hard and that was fed as sort of a dust like. Then those wheels would grind that glass down. Then you would get another set of grinders that would act as polishers. They would use this hematite dust like called rouge and use that for polishing. After a certain amount of time it would be turned over and polished on the other side. The same process on the way back. Then it would be picked up and cut into windshield sizes. At that time Ford was using about 5 million square feet of glass a year. This was back in the early twenties. If they used that much then they must use about a hundred million square feet of glass now if not more. Glass used to come in from European countries already polished but not cut into windshield sizes. But he wasn't able to get enough, that's why he had to manufacture his own. I worked there at River Rouge where they put up eight of those units where this one was only an experimental one anyway.

A. This is our third interview with Doctor Murtonen, August 7, 1973. At the close of our last session of interview we were leaving you at the glass factory describing in detail your work there. When did your work terminate and where did you go from there?

Well I was working for the Ford Motor Company in the glass making department in let's say 1922. Then I went to school in Chicago to the National College of Chiropractic. I arrived in Chicago on New Years Day on a bitter-bitter cold winter day. You always think of Chicago as being a particularly big city but on that particular day you could have shot a cannon down Michigan Avenue and not hit a soul. Chicago is funny that way, it's usually full of people downtown and you go there on Sunday and you wonder where have all of the people gone to. They are there for the business hours and then they scatter.
I continued schooling there for several years and then I dropped out for a period of about nine months. I worked in a tire factory and then continued schooling. So I worked days at St. Luke's Hospital on Michigan Avenue and I worked there about a year and a half. I got a pretty good idea how the other fellow takes care of their surgical and hospital cases. I attended all the medical classes that the other students did in the so-called amphitheatres. I saw any number of interesting cases and as well as interesting lectures by well known doctors. After I finally graduated then in Chicago,

What year was that by the way?

I think it was 1925. Twenty-five or twenty-six. I went to Detroit then and took the State Board in Lansing. I took the same examination that md's had taken. With the exception of the material on medical surgery. After that I worked in the Highland Park Hospital as an orderly and then almost four years in the medical clinic. That continued on until 1930 and by that time the Depression had set into Detroit pretty well. Naturally the Copper Country didn't feel the effects of this yet.

Now, this was when?

in 1930.

1930.

Were you in Detroit when the Stock Market crash took place?

Oh yes. That was in 29.

Do you recall the day that you first heard the news?

Well at that time I wasn't really interested in the stock market. It didn't mean a heck of an awful lot to me. The newspapers were all full of that and that was the thing that really precipitated the Depression in Detroit more than it would up here. Eventually then, after about two years then it had an effect up here. I came home to Brucers Crossing to make hay which I usually did every summer. This time when I came home they told me not to be in a rush that they would let me know when they wanted me to come back. So I happened to come to Hancock to meet a friend of mine who I induced to open up an office. I thought it would be a good starting place for a young attorney. When I came up here to visit him he induced to me start an office here. So I thought I would stay in Hancock to weather out the Depression and I'm still here and this is 1973.

You didn't have your office in the same office as he did?

No, we were some distance apart
A Where did you have your first office?

L Well the first office was in the so-called postoffice building. Then I moved to the Cloverland Candy Store Building. After I was there for about nine years, the original office burnt to the ground then I moved into the Leo Roy Building. I was there for almost 30 years. When I moved into the Leo Roy Building the Cloverland Office Building burned. So I told that to Leo Roy when I moved in that when I left there he better watch out or the building might burn and he said I better not leave. But to this day at least it hasn't burned down.

Well anyway in 1930 the Copper Country was not aware of the Depression at all although there were plenty of individuals that were depressed. There were a lot of just ordinary working people who had invested in the stock market because the margins were very very low. They were down to about a ten percent margin. In other words if you paid ten percent of the cost of a share you could get a share. There were individuals who sold out at the height of the market who could have made a hundred thousand dollars. But they didn't and there were a lot of those individuals in Hancock and that's why they were depressed. Anyway the Quincy Mine was still operating and it kept operating until the later part of 1921. It closed down for a number of years and I think it started again within ten years after the closing. In the neighborhood of the second world war I think it operated for a few years and then closed down permanently. Right the Depression was severe, but nobody starved. There wasn't work to be had but nobody starved. If you didn't work you weren't paid very much. If a patient came into a doctor's office and he was now on relief because most people were on relief and they would get an authorization from the office which would allow them to have treatment but nobody got over seventy-five cents for an office call. So nevertheless it wasn't much but enough to keep things going but they didn't require much. It's a lot considering what you pay for a pound of hamburger today and in those days you would get three pounds of hamburger for a quarter. A pound of sirloin steak for maybe thirty-five cents and ham about twelve cents a pound. Potatoes were maybe forty or fifty cents a bushel. All other groceries were in proportion. I know a loaf of bread was only a nickel and it didn't take much to keep going because if you had a five dollar grocery order you had more than what you could carry. Now there's no problem whatever.

A Sure

L So the Depression had it's compensations in that respect. It finally petered out and the conditions in the country began to improve so by the later part of that decade things were going pretty well. We then began to feel the effects of the second war because the European allies began to place orders in this country which stimulated business here.

A Right
Then of course after we got involved in it it really start going.

Let me ask you some questions about the Depression in more detail. How did these individuals as we described having the bottom drop out how did they cope with the situation? Were there any suicides or did they just try to fend for themselves or what happened?

Personally I don't think there were any suicides directly due to that in the Copper Country but there were plenty of them in other parts of the country. There was an individual who had to do with the copper industry directly in the Copper Country. He was the head of the Anaconda Mining Company. His roots were right here in the Copper Country.

Was it Ryan?

Yes. He was married to a Shelden girl from here in Houghton. When his fortune got down to 32 million dollars he jumped from a hotel window in New York. Because he was fearful that possibly he could end up on WPA. That's like a Greek philosopher years ago whose fortune got down to $25,000 and he committed suicide for fear that he would starve to death. So the Depression that way was a great levelers. Because it brought those of the high and mighty down the level of the ordinary individual. As far as economics were concerned there were plenty of well known individuals that were on the welfare rolls. For instance William Nichols whose one of the officials of the Copper Range Mining Company he had been on WPA as a bookkeeper. There were any number of people of prominence who were forced to go on WPA but the people were happy and they didn't suffer anything. They suffered more in mind than they actually did in body. They were denied alot of things but often times that was to their benefit and not their detriment.

How about the average laborer, miner, farmer, type. How did they cope with this depression?

Well they had about the same worries as the other people did. It was hard to get money for services rendered. Even in my own case I would take potatoes in trade, milk in trade, meet in trade, in fact I had a credit for milk as high as sixty dollars one year. You could get all your winter potatoes in return for services rendered. There was one fall a load of wood appeared in my yard without my ordering and I could not find out how that came there or who brought it there. Next spring a man dropped in and told me remember that load of wood that came into your yard last fall and I says ya. Well he said I dropped' it there because I had no other sale for it and rather than take it back home I thought I would drop it into your yard and I'd take it out in treatment in some future time which he did. So there was alot of that trade and barter and you'd have to use your wits in many respects because I know one guy would get maybe half a hog or say a couple of pork loins and maybe he'd cut them up into chops.
A
Were there some shisters going around, shister, peddler types?

L
I wouldn't know because I have never come in contact with them and never been burned. Except there were so called peddlers. Guys peddling brooms. There would be guys going around selling neck ties and things of that kind. Anything to make a dollar. Then of course there were the inevitable guys, the so-called bums, beggars and whatnot because we had quite a community on the Houghton side near the dump a number of shacks and that was known as Hooverville.

A
Why was it called Hooverville?

L
Well they blamed Hoover for the hard times. They would come around and beg for money and of course sometimes you'd feel obligated to give them something. Rather than give them the money outright I'd tell them you go to the Kaleva Restaurant and have a good meal and bill it to me. Because often times if you do give out money to an individual like that you see them going into a saloon and spending it in that matter. I know one guy who came in said he'd like to get a quarter so he could take the bus to Atlantic Mine. I gave it to him a few times but finally I found out that he'd just go to the nearest tavern. You got to be hard boiled and you had to learn to say no. Often times those old fellows weren't able to do a day's work and the WPA wouldn't even accept them because they had no families, they were all single men and they were obliged to shift for themselves.

A
Do you think there was a spirit of cooperation during the Depression among the people when they are experiencing hard times?

L
Oh there always is, people tend to band together during distress and hardship and then they realize that they are all in the same boat and can all hold together whereas in more normal times each goes his own way. They don't have as much respect for the other fellow.

A
Can you think of any community wide projects or individual instances where people went out of their way to help another?

L
At the moment I can't think of anything other than the younger folks would get together and take interest in building their own ice rinks and things like that. Rather than have the community do it for them they would band together and form their own hockey clubs and skating rinks and things like that. But the other activities such as the church activities were more social at that time than they are now. I guess as far as the church is concerned they would rather have you contribute money than put on a bazaar or a pasty supper or something like that.

A
Were you married at the time of the Depression?

L
Oh yes.
When did you meet your wife and when were you married?

I was married in Detroit and married two years before I came to the Copper Country.

Is your wife of Finnish background also?

Yes

Was she a native of the Copper Country?

Well she was originally born in the Copper Country and then her family moved to Detroit and that's where I met her and we got married in Detroit.

So you were really setting up your household during that time of the Depression then?

Well we were already married for about two years by that time so we were an old hand at that. We had no family however until we got to Hancock.

How many children have you had?

We only had three girls and people ask me if I'm sorry we didn't ever have any boys and I say absolutely not because I'm thoroughly satisfied with the arrangement. I think most fathers will admit that a girl naturally favors the father and the boy almost always favors the mother.

Sure.

I've had three very good girls and they're still good girls. Two of them are married. One of them is not married and she's in the Army. She's a captain in the Army and they are all registered nurses.

Oh so they followed your interest in the medical profession.

Well I suppose they were subject to so much of that all their lives they decided to follow the same career. It came kind of easy for them so they could devote their attention to it without being distracted by other things. Even if I say so myself they are good nurses.

Good, well I'd like to pursue this subject of medicine in a little broader context now about Finns in general the the way people cared for one another in the homes when they were ill and some various kinds home remedies. Were there any particular Finnish home remedies that you can recall that families not only tried in the thirties in the hard times but even before that even in your own childhood? Even your own folks were there any kinds of favorite home remedies they would try?
Well there's always a saying among the Finns that if you don't bring about a cure you're doomed to die. Of course the Finns always did have great faith in the curative properties of the sauna and they also depended upon their balsam pitch and pine oil for other curative properties. There's always a basis of truth in all this too, and particularly as far as the sauna was concerned. You can raise the temperature of the body in a sauna. Providing that you have dry heat. When you reduce the increased temperature in the body well that's a big thing in overcoming any infection that you may have. Because there are very few bacteria that will live over a 106 degree temperature. As far as the Finns are concerned they are naturally on the more natural doctoring methods of treating human ailments. I like I said the sauna is a big thing so is the massage and then the blood letting. People have had good results, whether they are psychological or just mental, it's pretty hard to make out. Anyway, people did have a lot of faith in that.

Then there were the Sodersten brothers from Minneapolis who were pharmacists and they had a cupboard full of Finnish remedies that would be distributed around the farming communities, in town and even some of the stores. So if you wanted some balsam or Hoffman drops which they put on a lump of sugar because that was pretty potent. It was about 35% ether. The faith that the people put into the medication no matter what it was I believe was a big factor in getting the results they wanted. I asked the brothers what the composition was but I don't remember anymore what it was. Anyway the composition of the balsam would have no connection with any of the conditions it was prescribed for. As long as they had the faith in the medication it produced results because that's a known fact even today. In so far as medication is concerned if you have faith in it, it's going to work wonders and if you have no faith, it's not likely to have any effect. You can give the identical same medication to two individuals and one will praise it to the sky and the other one will say it's absolutely useless. They both had the same condition but it was the mental reception or condition towards that particular medication. They would have absolutely no results.

The old time doctors come to my mind because I remember way back to when Reverend Heideman's sister was a medical doctor. She was a woman doctor and it was quite rare in those times. That goes way back to the early 1900's. She eventually died. The other Finnish doctor around the Copper Country here was a Doctor Thorsen.

A Oh yes

L He died at a very young age and at that time it was said he became enamoured over some women on an ocean trip and as a result he became a drug addict and as a result of an overdose of drugs, he died.

A Was this Oscar Sodersten?
I think it was his brother. Oscar Sorison again was the dentist.

Now, the reason I'm curious about Oscar Sorison is I read some things that he became very adamant against the Finnish Socialists and he had several run ins.

Yes. I'm pretty sure he was a dentist, but the name of the medical doctor, I don't recall. I remember him coming to the house and he was our family doctor as long as he was in Calumet.

Was he trained in Finland?

No, he was American trained. Another Doctor from that period was Doctor [name]. I'm not sure whether he was trained in Finland or not, but he spoke very very good English. He was what you might call an oddball in a way. He was an eccentric to a certain extent but he was very well thought of as a medical practitioner.

Did he operate in the hospital in Laurium?

Yes, and he was quite well known for his operations in that respect. He seemed to know a lot more than the average doctor at that time because I know when I had an office in the Cloverland Candy Kitchen building I moved into an office where he had been sometime prior to that and in removing the calsamine off the wall there was a large sign printed with a lead pencil in Finnish [pajat]. It was in beautiful, beautiful handwriting, nice enough to frame on the wall. He had written that in longhand on the wall. It had been covered with calsamine but washing the calsamine off it revealed that sign. His home was in Laurium, but he would come to Hancock to keep office hours and he'd usually travel with a horse and on the way going back to Laurium, he'd pick up a couple of women and offer them a ride to Boston for instance. Halfway to Boston he'd tell them to get out and walk because the walk would do them good. So he was an eccentric in that respect. He was considered as a very able medical practitioner.

Then he moved to Bruce Crossing and as he got older he developed more aches and pains and I suppose it was because he wore a fur coat in the summertime. But he had a similar doctor in Hancock by the name of Doctor VanSlyke. He would likewise wear a raccoon coat in the summertime and he would never sleep at night because he said most people die at night. He was afraid of dying. Of course he eventually died.

Anyway this other doctor was in Bruce Crossing during the flu epidemic.

When was that?
That was in 1918. Naturally he was in great demand but he wasn't too excitable, nothing seemed to ruffle him at all.

Could you say a little bit more about that flu epidemic? Were there any lives lost?

Well there were more lives lost in a flu epidemic than they ever in any war.

Is that right

There wasn't a household where the majority of the members weren't involved. It was a strange thing there could be a family of six people and five could be down with the flu and the sixth person would not be involved. He was able to take care of the others. The death rate was much more than ordinary.

Was it winter out?

Yes. That's what killed most of them, not the flu itself but the flu weakened their system in a sense that pneumonia took hold and that's what killed most of them. The flu itself directly didn't kill them but it did indirectly. I know myself I had it and I felt fine until it came time to unharness the horses and of course my dad always helped but I felt so weak all of a sudden that I had all I could do to walk into the house. I was confined to bed for at least a week. I was so weak that I couldn't even lift my head. Then I had a nosebleed that bled more or less constantly or profusely. We naturally called in Doctor Hornbogen and I don't remember exactly what he did at the time.

Was there any particular name given to this flu?

Well it was considered the Spanish flu. Much like recently they spoke of the Hong Kong flu and Asiatic flu and so forth. It was supposed to have started in Spain spread over in Europe and finally to this country.

I see. I have a question, I was home this past weekend and my dad was telling me about this particular Finn who was reluctant to go into the hospital because in his own mind to go to the hospital was where you went to die. Has this been rather typical for a lot of Finnish people?

A lot of them did feel that the hospital was the last resort. They weren't willing to go to the hospital unless it came to the point where it was no longer their choice. They were forced to go. Getting back to Doctor Hornbogen again, naturally because of his eccentric type of character one of the women from Bruces Crossing went to Marquette and I believe she went possibly to Doctor Hornbogen down there. And Doctor Hornbogen asked her don't you have a doctor down your way?
So she made the remark yes, we have an old eccentric type of a guy by the name of Doctor Koivopalo. Right off the bat this doctor told that lady you shouldn't feel that way in regards to him because all of us other doctors could learn from him. Because he was further advanced as far as psychology and a few of the other things than the other doctors were. So when this lady got back to Bruces Crossing she went to him and apologized for what she had told Doctor Hornbogen about him. This doctor was a rough and ready type of guy because I do know that he performed an appendectomy right at home on this farmer's kitchen table. The patient came along fine.

A: Is that right?

L: Sure. So he was gifted in a lot of ways although he was eccentric. He finally came back to the Copper Country again and they had a farm at the Portage Entry and he finally did die there. After he died the family dropped the name of Koivopalo and used the name of Sohdien. Because that was the mother's name and of German origin. The mother was not Finnish, I think she was German. The kids took her name rather than Koivopalo.

A: Are some of the family members still here?

L: Oh yes, there are.

A: That would be a fascinating story to get at, his early days in practice and so on.

L: Oh yes. He was well spoke of and thought of. A lot of people didn't like his eccentric ways but they still spoke well of him. He was a humanitarian in that respect and did a lot of good for the people. He was not only a medical doctor but an accomplished pharmacist and an excellent piano player. The other doctor that we had in the Copper Country was Doctor Home. He originally started in Ishpeming and had a hospital there, then he finally came to Hancock and established a hospital here in east Hancock.

A: An independent venture on his part?

L: Oh yes, he remodeled one of the big homes into a hospital and operated this hospital mostly by himself and this Doctor VanSlyke would assist him a lot. He had a big Finnish trade and he did very very well. In fact he was thought of very highly as a doctor. Then after a period of time he left here and went to Detroit and he was only there a few years when he came back here because when he was here he was a big frog in a small pool and when he went to Detroit he was a small frog in a big pool. He didn't get the attention and pat on the back possibly in the bigger city as he did here. So he came back here. Well he came back to Hancock for a few years and then went to California. Of course when he went to California he couldn't practice medicine anymore because California and Florida are two states where you really have to take the state exam. For an older doctor it's almost an impossibility for him to pass it.
Then we've had other Finnish Doctors here too. One by the name of Doctor Okkama. I think he was Finnish born although he could have trained in this country. He was well known for his dictionary. He wrote the Finnish American, American Finnish dictionary which is still in use. He was well thought of among the Finns although he was more a sedate, reserved person. He wasn't too much of a mixer type of an individual. He finally died here.

Then there was another Finnish doctor by the name of Doctor Sarvela. I think his dad used to be a preacher in the church.

Oh yes, Heikie Sarvela. [Heikie]

I think so.

He was one of the early home mission pastors.

Yes, I think he was from Duluth or some ways down that way.

Well this Sarvela used to be a surgeon in Duluth I think for the U.S. Steel. He finally came into Hancock and he was here for a number of years. He finally died. He was very well thought of.

Were any of these Finns company doctors?

No, not here, we have never had a Finnish Company doctors. They were all just individual practitioneers. Sarvela had been the company doctor in Duluth for U.S. Steel.

When was he hear, roughly what were his years here?

I would say in the 40's. About the 40's to 50's. Since then there hasn't been any medical Finnish doctor after that. Until a Finnish doctor came into Calumet.

Would that be Lepisto?

Well Lepisto's been here for about twenty-five years now. It is Repola.

Oh yes.

Repola had been in Ontonagon and then he came here.

Did the Finns years ago have a mini version of health insurance? Were there certain organizations that were formed where they could pay in to for insurance?
Yes, they had their own health organizations. They were sort of a fraternal organization in which they would pay say a dollar a month and then in case of illness they would collect off of it a dollar a day up to thirty days. Even in connection with the mining company the C & H Mining Company they contributed maybe a dollar a month for the hospital and fifty cents a month was for the club. So in case of illness or when you weren’t able to work for loss of time it would pay you a dollar a day. Then for the dollar a month hospitalization you could have unlimited doctor calls at the hospital and even home calls. In case you were hospitalized it would only cost you $2.00 a day for the hospitalization. So those things were cheap in those days. Then the company hospital really meant an awful lot. As to the Quincy Mining Company and Isle Royale Mining Company they had somewhat similar plans but they weren’t as rewarding or compensating as the C & H one was. It wasn’t a national or statewide but strictly a local organization. It’s just up until the past few years that they were still in operation.

Okay let’s get closer to your own practice. You’ve been here since the thirties up to the present time?

We’ve discussed the different vocations where you’ve served, did you serve primarily Finnish clientele or was it a wide range of nationalities?

Well every doctor gets all nationalities but amongst the Finnish people because of the language barrier they are more prone to go to someone who can speak their own language because years ago some of the old timers couldn’t speak any English at all and maybe they have been in this country twenty-five years already. So if they went to a doctor or a lawyer they would always have to have an interpreter. When you have to conduct business with an interpreter it’s never totally satisfactory. I know I’ve been in a situation where after the call was made the person would say why didn’t you tell the doctor this or that and I’d say why didn’t you tell me this.

That’s right

So to act through an interpreter it’s not complete.

Sure

I’d say I’ve had my share of Finnish patients although I’ve had all the different nationalities,

Are there any ailments that are especially noticeable among Finns that you’ve noticed over the years.
Well I wouldn't say there was any ailment that was characteristic of the Finns to the exclusion of the other nationalities because......

Perhaps I shouldn't phrase it that way. Have you noticed any instances where any particular problem that the Finns tended to bring into to you. Not to say any other nationality wouldn't have the same problem but has there been any occurring problems that you had to deal with?

Well the Finns were doing hard physical labor and anyone who is doing that sort of labor is apt to have back and knee trouble, things of that nature. It's something to do with the nature of their work that would make it more hazardous and make them more subject to the injury. They would be more likely to have contact with these injuries because of their exposure than someone who worked in an office, a more protected type of employment.

Are you saying then you served a number of Finnish farmers, miners, and lumberjacks?

All types, everything from infants to the old person and the oldest would have been about a hundred years of age.

Have you ever had to well let's use the term minister, because you are really conducting a ministry administer care to people who were in mining accidents of any kind?

Do you mean an emergency?

Well either an emergency or long after someone sustained an injury that they received in the mine?

You mean ministering to their physical self and not their spiritual self?

Well it's hard to separate them

Oh yes, alot of them who are acutely injured the mining company doctors would take care of them. But on the farms for instance rather than going over to the hospital right off the bat, they would try a period of home treatment first.

Before Medicaid and Medicare were alot of the common folk adequately insured in terms of health insurance?

Not adequately, alot of times they would carry additional insurance and alot of the times they would find out that their insurance wouldn't cover that particular case. But alot of them had compensation where they worked and if they were injured on the job, it would be compensable by the employer.

Sure.
A What have you found to be the most satisfying aspects of your work as a doctor?

L Well you get a sense of a job well done when a patient not only improves but gets well and the satisfaction of what you have done for the individual. It's a source of great satisfaction, when you've helped an individual regain their health and be able to resume their occupation.

A Sure.

L But you do get into some embarrassing situations and the most embarrassing one that I got into was I was called to a home where a patient a woman was dying. She was supposed to be dying. I probably wouldn't have gone there if the sister to this patient wasn't one of my earliest patients. I felt that I was duty bound to see what I could do. So when I got to the home here was a priest giving her the last rites in the Catholic Church. There were five sisters in this particular family and they were around the bed reading their rosary. I knew a little bit about her condition because it was supposed to be some sort of a heart ailment. She was in bed and more or less incoherent and her jaws were moving back and forth as if she was trying to say something and couldn't. I gave her some medication and she settled down and lived for ten days after that. Now it's not as far fetched as people may think it is. What I did was give medication for the thymus which is situated __________________________ artery and is that allowed that to settle down because that definitely has an influence on the heart. Even today, my wife is subject to a coronary attack. And a coronary is nothing more than the heart muscles crying for more blood. If I bring pressure on that particular area for just a few moments that seizure will stop and it acts almost as quickly as nitroglycerin.

A Is that right.

L Yes.

A Oh my, that's very interesting.

L Just a little pressure and that relaxes the muscles. There's potential there for good and harm.

A Sounds like the sleeper hold some wrestlers use.

L Right.

A Just to enlarge upon your work here, have there been different kinds of community activities in addition to your doctoral work that you've become involved in? Church or civic or something?
I'm more of an introvert on that fact. I'm not a joiner, I've never joined the Masons or Elks or any of the other organizations like that. I have partaken in church work more. I sang in the choir for a good many years.

Do you belong to the church in Calumet?

No here in Hancock.

Which one is this now?

Right now it's called the Gloria Dei.

I see.

The Synod Church

I see, but you were born in to the national church

Right, I was born in the National Church but when we moved onto the farm there was no National Church to be had so we went to the Synod Church.

That was out in Bruces right?

Yes, Bruces Crossing.

Who was the minister there?

We never had our own minister, we always had a director but we had a minister from Republic.

Republic, I see.

And the earliest minister that I can recall was Arvo Mutkonen. I think he used to come in from Ishpeming.

I've always been very interested in Mutkonen, he was always interested in older people and their care, didn't he start a home?