FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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SUBJECT: Hunting and fishing yarns. Reminiscences of the fighting in the Winter War in Finland - he was there fighting.

SOURCE: Jim Nash is a bachelore living alone in what is called Horoscope by the local people. He has a reputation for bullshitting, but he is to darn good at it for me to discern fact from fiction. I will let the reader decide for himself.

I: Let's start off with some bear stories...and try to get some bear stories that you know of that happened. Tell me again what happened a little while ago on this one.

R: Well, I heard the cat holler...and I heard the cat climb up the side of the shed there on the roof and all of a sudden I heard a hell of a thump. That bear were right behind him. I thought it was a wild cat first, you know, that jumped because he hit so hard. So, I just put the yard light on here and I looked around the windows and I couldn't see anything. But, then I figured I heard that heavy thump on the roof so I took the twelve-gauge shotgun and that's loaded with buckshot. I opened the door and he took a swat at me so I just spun around and I landed on my but on the ground there and I fired at the same time. And he growled...so when he growled I ejected and put another shell in...I jumped on the side here and there he was peeling off on the other side of the trailer. Well, when he hit the ground I fired right there...then I fired two more shots at him. He hollered to beat heck and went in the gully there.

I: What does that sound like when he hollered?

R: Just like a human being moaned...identical the same as when a human being moaned...real hard.

I: Did it make you feel funny when you heard that?

R: No...not after he took a swat at me

I: Have you had any other bear around?

R: Well, I had two here this spring. One was right there between the washing machine and that bench there. It started coming at me and I had the twenty-two automatic and I shot it right there...I shot it eight times in the head in broad daylight...about three o'clock in the afternoon and that was only about two hundred fifty - three hundred pound.

I: Remember that one you told me you had a little problem with...you had to hide in the fire once. Was that last year...get in the car to get away from one.

R: Yeah...into the Bronco

I: When was that?
R: A year ago

I: What time of year was that?

R: That was in July just before the berries got ripe. The Bronco was parked right there, you know, where you back up...where you turn around there...only it was parked cross-ways. And, I went to get something from the Bronco and it was eleven o'clock at night and the yard light was on...it came from behind me and it started running after me. So, I jumped in the Bronco and I kept blowing the horn. Uncle Matt came out and he turned around and he took the three-hundred savage...he was scared to shoot because he was afraid it would go through the bear and hit the Bronco. He shot up in the air and he got scared and he run right on the hillside there and I jumped out of the Bronco and I grabbed the savage and I went around this way. I nailed him right there and I took the Bronco and the cable then and got it up on the hill.

I: Have you had any real close calls?

R: In the river two years ago just about this time of year when those white berries, you know, those bushes that are on the side the river that get those white berries that are real bitter, well they eat them and it was just about half mile down from the bridge there...the mother bear with four cubs. They were eating and the cubs were swimming in the water. I came around the bend and one of them cubs gave a squeal.

I: What were you doing...fishing?

R: Yeah...fly fishing...in the evening...about seven o'clock in the evening. And that mother bear took after me and good that I had the weighters on and I went into the deep water...there was a bend there, and I got a piece of sappling and I started pounding it over the face 'cause it couldn't reach bottom...it was just swimming. Well, heck, I turned around and kept pounding it over the head. Finally turned around...cubs got to shore and it swam downstream and took off. That's the closest call I've ever had out here.

I: What's the story? I heard that years ago the bear were different...that they were wild. But, now that you've got dumps...these big dumps...they're used to being around humans more and sometimes they think that where there's a human there might be food...whereas years ago whenever they saw a human they'd just take off. Now they think they might find a lunch around there right? Have you noticed any changes?

R: Oh, a lot of changes. Like that bear at the dump here two weeks ago. I went down there and there was people from lower Michigan feeding candy for them little bear cubs. Just throwing candy three - four feet away and the mother growling just ten - fifteen feet away. What if that kid'd turn around and stumble. That mother bear'd be right on top of him right there or one of them cubs would turn around and
squeal...give out a howl. And there's...last time I was there there was eight there...you can go there any night and see seven - eight - nine bear and the people feeding them, throwing candy, taking pictures.

I: And what they do then is they put it in the bears mind that where there's a human there might be food so then they get so they're not afraid...they come right up to your house. I heard that this guy down in Elo, this...I think it's old man Autio...

R: Yeah...went in the screen on the door...ripped the screen door open.

I: That's what I heard. He heard some noise and evidently he went to the door and opened the door and there's a bear had it's paws on each side of the door looking right at him. He never shot that one though, eh?

R: He said from there on he's got a loaded rifle...but he never used to keep a loaded gun in the house.

I: What do you think about these city people that think...oh you're not supposed to shoot bear...bear are nice and all that...you know, people that never had one right up on their nose?

R: Between me and the city people and DNR...I'm not gonna...if a bear attacks me I'm supposed to turn around and run away and call the DNR and they live trap 'em...they bring 'em fifteen miles out there on the hill and then the next night they're right back. There's no sense to that. And half of the time I don't shoot 'em to kill them instantly. I wanta gut shoot 'em so they go out and die by themselves.

I: So you don't have to haul them away?

R: Yeah...they bury theirselves. They try to get into a mud hole and bury theirselves where the wound is. They lay in that. They get in the black muck and they dig a hole.

I: But, some of these city people that say oh you shouldn't kill a bear and that, they've never lived in the country where a bear came right up to them.

R: I would...right now this mother bear with four cubs here in the swamp...I won't go out there. I got the power saw there...I won't go out there to make wood or anything without the shotgun with me or the rifle. I take the rifle with me.

I: She's right back there, eh?

R: Yeah...that's why I was discussing with Ruthie just today that I was gonna go and pick raspberries...'cause there's a lot of raspberries in there and those cubs have broken everything down. They've eaten the raw ones and broken the stems down...same way there would
have been a few quarts of blueberries there.

I: How many years have you been hunting?

R: Oh, a little over thirty years.

I: You know this area pretty good, eh?

R: Well, I don't need a compass between here and Painsdale and from here to Lake Roland and Twin Lakes...

I: You can go out in the bush there and know where you are?

R: Yeah.

I: How far is Lake Roland?

R: As the crow flies...eleven miles...from this highway from one section to the other it's exactly eleven miles.

I: Painsdale...that's more north.

R: Painsdale is fourteen miles as the crow flies.

I: That's all bush too, isn't it?

R: Only that fire-lane road.

I: What's it like way back in there?

R: Full of hills and all slashed. And, Section 17 and 27 - 28 that matarail (sp) log...that's all brush.

I: Pretty easy to get lost in that?

R: Oh yes...if you don't know the ravines...but long as you watch which way the water flows in the creeks...

I: Oh, that's how you tell?

R: Yes...just watch the creeks which way the water flows.

I: There's creeks back there, eh?

R: There's beaver ponds back there...I've heard about beaver ponds...you don't have to tell me where any are but, are there still beaver ponds where there are fish?

R: Yep...un huh.

I: Have you ever hit into a big beaver pond...I mean where there are fish?
R: A year
I: Tell me what it was like.
R: Well, brook trout...you turn around with one worm you could get five six of 'em.
I: Any size?
R: Eight - nine - ten - eleven inches...twelve inches...they were native brook trout...there were no speckled trout they were native brook trout. I've been wanting to go to one damm out here if I get a good partner and go for a overnight trip between here and Painsdale.
I: I'll go with you later if you want to go...I've got to finish up this work now.
R: It's about a eight-mile hike one-way.
I: I'll go
R: It's a eight-mile hike but it is bad...only about four or five bad hills, you know, for climbing but otherwise, when you get close to Globe...or south...or three miles south of Globe...southwest of Globe where the Copper Range Mining Company had the last shaft and you can come out on the highway there and hitchike a ride back if you want to Painsdale.
I: When you go way into the woods like that do you like to have a partner along?
R: Most of the time unless I figure that I'm going out alone well then I take a high-powered rifle with me...take a pack sack.
I: Have you ever had any close calls not necessarily with animals but you know, injury way out in the woods?
R: Not out here. In Alaska I did...not out here
I: What about the deer situation out here? Years ago there were a lot more deer, hey?
R: Oh...at least five times as much deer. It was nothing to go along the logging roads in the evening just by walking and see eight - nine deer. And now you can walk twenty - thirty miles and not see a deer sign. So, you can figure out what the difference is.
I: What do you think happened?
R: Well, it on account of this doe season...shootin all the does out and what few gets left are shot and wounded as it is and then they
won't get young ones or if they get young ones, well they'll...
the young ones won't live.

I: How come they push that so hard...the Department of Natural Resources?
R: The Department of Natural Resources wants the money and that's all.
I: Selling those licenses?
R: Selling the licenses.
I: That's the big...the sale of deer licenses that adds the most to their budgets, right?
R: That's right...like now for senior citizens, they're raising the price for senior citizens and I don't see where that'd be right. Fishing licenses are going up, deer hunting licenses are going up...I don't even figure on buying a license.
I: You were raised on venison, weren't you?
R: All my life...venison and bear meat.
I: Years ago everyone here ate venison...the families were fed on it, right?
R: Sure and the DNR years ago were alltogether different than they are now.
I: How were they then.
R: Farmers had a big family and no income. They knew that when they shot a deer they'd keep the whole thing and not a hind quarter or part of it and leave the rest of it outin the woods. Like lot of them now days they take the hind quarter and leave the front quarters there. That isn't right. I know I'd pinch anyone I'd get a hold of that takes a piece of meat and leaves the rest of it.
I: I heard that some places out there around Grist Mill Road...I guess they're fairly young guys driving around fairly drunk too...just shooting deer and leaving them.
R: That isn't right. But, then when you get on the Six Mile Creek Road you can't do anything.
I: You hear that noise?
R: Yup...there.
I: You got a bear there right now?
R:
I: Can we see him from here?
R: Go behind the
I: Well, that noise we just heard...when did you first hear him? When you heard that can tinkling?
R: Yeah.
I: Un huh...you keep that shotgun loaded all the time around here?
R: Got two shotguns loaded, got the automatic rifle loaded and I got the three hundred savages loaded. I don't take chances. I'll get Poochie Woochie out here after while...he'll go after it.
I: Okay, you get the dog and track him down then?
R: Yeah.
I: How come you don't go after him right away...like...
R: Let 'em lead...they lead out. They lay down...they dig theirself when they get into a wet spot in the swamp there...where there's muck, black muck, they dig a hole there and they lay down.
I: Where'd you hit that one again?
R: Right in the but.
I: Were you looking for a better shot there...I saw you...
R: Yeah, I was tryin to get him in the head first when he was on the other side of them bushes but I couldn't line the sights on him.
I: I couldn't see him from where I was. I heard the cans rattle then just before you shot.
R: Yeah...that's when he jumped.
I: He smelled you huh?
R: Yeah...he smelled me. Gripe, I coulda turned around and blew his head off if I coulda got a good shot at him. When I went done on my knee there when I was tryin to get him inbetween the trees there that woulda been a perfect shot...but there's those trees about two inches thick there.
I: You've shot many bear in your time, eh?
R: It ain't the first one and it won't be the last one.
I: You still get excited a little when you see them and you got the...
R: Yeah...only thing is that at close range like that...that was only thirty feet off...that when that gun jammed I made sure that I had two extra shells in my other hand I just flipped the gun over.

I: I saw that jamming...that's a bad time for a gun to jam eh? That bolt-action shotgun do that a lot?

R: That's the first time it's ever done it cause I didn't pull the bolt back fast enough.

I: Oh, you didn't get a clean ejection.

R: No...see the empty shell come up.

I: I smelled a real strong odor from there when I was getting close.

R: Well...must tip that dog out here tonight...

I: Later on?

R: Yeah

I: You think you'll find him?

R: Or either leave it be 'til tomorrow morning...when a heavy dew is on the ground that dog will go right up to it, but he won't go...believe me, within twenty feet. He'll smell them tracks and he'll stop and sit down and look at me if I'm coming.

I: He knows, eh?

R: He knows...I shot one here two years ago deer hunting season here in the swamp and I took the dog and it was still alive and it jumped the dog.

I: What did it do to that dog?

R: Oh, the dog jumped over it...dog went home. I couldn't get him back no more although I shot the...finished the bear off.

I: Like that bear right now, that's kind of...it's wounded pretty bad, huh?

R: Yeah

I: But, that shouldn't kill him if you shot him right in the rear, would it?

R: Yeah, but it goes through the intestines. These are magnum buckshots...these ain't regular buckshot...they're high velocity magnum.

I: Oh, that'll go right through him?
R: At that range...
I: So, it went through the length of him, eh?
R: Yeah.
I: So, you figure some of them went through him at that range too?
R: Yeah, and even if they did get caught...go into the stomach, they go as far as the chest cavity. Well, that's all he needs. And when you shoot that tallow up into the intestines, why they don't live long.
I: Like it's wounded out there, how far do you figure it ran from here, about?
R: Three - four hundred feet...five hundred feet at the most.
I: Yet, you don't want to go after it now.
R: No, cause it can buy itself in such a place that can walk almost on top of it and when it's wounded it'll leap from behind you. It'll go right at you.
I: They're dangerous when they're wounded?
R: They are. They're dangerous when they're wounded...that why when the gun jammed there I flipped the gun upside down right away to leave the rest of the shells drop out. I ejected the other one with my hand.
I: I saw that jam.
R: That's the first time that gun's jammed
I: Well, your neighbor down there, he's shot quite a few in this area too.
R: I'm one ahead of him now...two ahead. I got eleven now. I got to tease Ed tomorrow.
I: Yeh, that was only...that bear was only about how many feet from your house...what eighty feet?
R: About eighty feet...but that isn't as bad when they come out there, but when they come on the roof.
I: Yeah, well that's something to be taking about it on the tape recorder
and to have one come right up to your...

R: There's the red cat going after it.

I: Oh, I saw that cat. It started going up there and it smelled something it turned around and ran this way. It was sneaking up behind you and evidently it got close enough to get an odor of that bear and it came right back.

R: They're scared of bear. Boy, I turn around and show 'em a bear claw and they take one sniff at it and underneath that camp they go.

I: They know that...

R: Yeah...bear have chased them out in the yard here

I: About how big was that bear?

R: About two hundred fifty - three hundred pounds.

I: What does a full-grown adult bear...a big one

R: A big one will run about four hundred to six hundred pounds, a black bear. It's gotta be a big black bear at six hundred pounds.

I: Where do they make their dens around here?

R: On the hillsides out here.

I: In the ravines back in here.

R: Un huh...there was a den where you're living now...about a thousand feet from your place they had a den last year.

I: I saw...you know when we had those nice spring days when there was a crust...I saw some bear tracks and I saw some man tracks tracking after it...yours?

R: Yeah

I: I wondered...I hadn't seen any tracks of the whole woods and I couldn't believe it...looked like a bear track and I figured for sure it must be a mistake because, you know, bear all hibernated. Didn't look too big...

R: It was.

I: Pretty big, but I mean it wasn't a real big one. I've seen bigger and heck I just wondered...I wondered who in the heck would be out tracking a bear. What do you think happened? How come that bear got up so early?
R: Water in the
I: Oh, when the snow melts water seeps into their den and gets them out, eh.

R: Un huh...there was one right on the other side of the sand pit there...three years ago. Just about four hundred feet from the highway here. They kicked that out and that's when my stepdad shot that big one.

I: What happened down there?

R: Well, he went through Norman's first and chased the dogs all over hell and Norman went out to chase the bear away...well he came after Norman. Well, Norman didn't have no gun in the trailer...went down to my stepdad's and went around the house and my kid brother called John Alto (sp) that that bear's coming across the field...was a moonlight night...they could see it going across the field.

I: Right towards his place.

R: The old man had that swedish maltzer (sp) ready. When he came in the yard...he was there on the porch and he let go.

I: He get him?

R: Yeah...and that was skinny and that was over five hundred pounds.

I: And it was skinny?

R: Yeah.

I: Must have been a very large bear.

R: 'Cause we took it with the dozer...put a chain around it hauled it out in the swamp out there. We buried it. Well, that was simple to bury...take the snow off and bulldoze with the blade a little and bulldoze around on top.

I: How come there seems to be many bear recently...more than years ago?

R: Years ago, the bears very seldom had more than one or two at the most and now there's lot of bears that you see have three cubs..four cubs...

I: How come you think they're doing this now.

R: Because they're feeding at these dumps

I: And they have so much feed that they have bigger litters now...they can support bigger litters now...more energy, eh?

R: Un huh. Get out of here Skunky...God dammit. That's the one that fought the skunk.

I: I know...stinks like hell.
R: Either shoot the S.O.B. or give him a bath, one of the two. I think I'll shoot him...lot easier than giving him a bath.

I: He looks like he can understand you,

R: I don't know...he don't like that shotgun at all.

I: Oh boy, do these cats head for underneath that old shack there when that twelve gauge went off. Well, that's something...I just can't get over the fact that we were just talking bear and one just came up there right now. That's gettin kind of close for comfort too.

R: That isn't bad...when they swat you and try to get your head off why that's when it's close.

I: You had any close calls with deer? Some people say a deer can be dangerous at times.

R: Only once with an elk and that was my own fault. I broke its spine and I didn't want to waste another shell to finish him off...I figured I'm just gonna leave it. And, I went from in front of him instead of behind and he cut my jacket open with his front paw...brand new leather hunting jacket...just ripped it right open. Well, I didn't tackle him the second time, I just shot. Just outside of St. Marys, Idaho. That was the funniest part of it. I was working out there in the woods at St. Marys, and Howard Makila was cruising timber for the Idaho Timber Company for the Federal Government.

R: God damn that cat. The red one went at it from the front.

I: That skunk was a big skunk

R: Yeah, full grown skunk...and this S.O.B. grabbed him from the hind end.

I: What'd the skunk do...just start spraying?

R: Yeah

I: Let him have it, eh...right from the hind end

R: Well, the cat was hanging on and trying to shake it.

I: No wonder it stinks. When did you shoot that?

R: Just about an hour before you came.

I: I heard a twenty-two shooting.

R: Yeah.

I: Does that bother you at all...that bear there? You think it's gonna
come up this way then?

R: If it would turn on me, it would have turned on me soon as I fired. That's when they get mad.

I: Have you ever heard any stories or knew about when a bear actually did turn on a man?

R: Yeah, here at...it was a year ago and the guy was making pulp on this side of Shingleton and the bear came at him. And, the guy had a small dog and that dog was trying to chase that bear away and the bear...the dog got scared and came between the guys feet and the bear right after the guy. And he turned around and had his power saw running and he stuck the power saw right into the bear's chest. Stalled the power saw into the blade and the bear fell on top of him. Well, he was scared shitless because he was all full of blood but, he was pawed all to heck but he didn't have a scratch, but the bear was laying on top of him dead. Well, I wouldn't argue with anyone sticking a power saw at me full throttle.

I: What about the fishing? You said the deer hunting has changed a lot, well, let's go back to deer hunting. Years ago it wasn't hard to get them, eh?

R: Had no trouble at all.

I: Years ago when you'd get a deer, let's say, oh when does venison start tasting good around here?

R: Well, I don't know. I started eating it when I was a kid during the depression right after first of July.

I: Right about then it starts...

R: Yeah, but I'd never take a female...just take a small buck.

I: At that time of year...

R:

I: How come that is?

R: Yeah, well see the females carry their young and the young ones are still sucking the mother.

I: Oh, I see, just like a spawning fish in a way...the whole chemistry of the body changes and the meat doesn't taste that well.

R: No, un...un

I: So, if you get a buck around that time of the year...about July. eh.
R: Yeah...like a young buck now is good eating.

I: Years ago, how would a person do it? Years ago, everyone around here shot their deer. How would you get one now this time of the year... well now it's August already.

R: Oh, we used to have salt licks.

I: Have salt licks out in the woods?

R: Side of clearings...side of old railroad tracks...these old dumps. Watch high up in the tree or make a little leanto out of wood then pick your deer. Lot of times there'd be five - six deer come to one salt lick and you pick the best one.

I: Was some good venison in those days, hey?

R: Yeah...nobody wasted any of that meat...they took the whole works. And, it was split up around the neighborhood.

I: I know, that's what a lot of people have told me that years ago, neighbors would...if one would get a deer, everyone would have venison because you couldn't store it.

R: Yeah...well years ago I used to go around the neighborhood here butchering cattle. Well, instead of charging them for the butchering, I used to ask them for a little piece of meat and that was your butchering price. They give you a hunk of meat.

I: I noticed that, you know, when filling out that survey, that lot of times you don't charge.

R: No.

I: You got these arrangements like you used John Neimi's tractor you give him a hand.

R: Yeah, when he needs help, well then I give him help. But, it still isn't all people that'll do that.

I: How can you tell? Can you tell the kind of man that'll do it?

R: Oh yeah...un huh

I: How can you tell?

R: By their actions around the neighborhood. They either figure that they're well off and the other person ain't got nothing...that he don't need nothing. That's my attitude toward them.

Stop in tape.
R: In Alston, four years ago, I worked for him for two days and I didn't want anything for wages and I had to call to get ten telephone poles for REA...that if I could use his tractor. He said,"sure...four dollars an hour".

I: After you worked for him, eh.

R: After I worked for him for two days and didn't charge him...then he wanted four dollars an hour for me for half a days work...just to use his wheel tractor.

I: What'd you tell him?

R: I told him, no I cannot afford it...so I came down here and got John Neimi's tractor because those pilon posts were so big that I figured that John's little tractor couldn't pull 'em. But, they were peeled already in the woods...I pulled three at a time.

I: But you can kinda of tell a man like that, eh?

R:

I: What is the kind of person that'll help you and won't charge? And, also when you help him, he won't pay. That's sort of mutual help. What kind of person is it?

R: Well, there's persons that figure that they're better to do than the rest of 'em...that they're more like greedy...that they want somebody else to help them but they won't help anyone else.

I: Do you have any other examples like the one you gave me...you don't have to mention names, but just like you did of people that are like that?

R: Yeah...I had one experience up here on this road when it was first built, I had Ralph Kemppainen's tractor and I pulled three cars out one night from here when they first made that road.

I: Out of the ditch?

R: No, they were stuck in the center of the road

I: Oh, pretty muddy then.

R: Yeah, and I went and asked them 'cause they had a lot of vegetables and that to, instead of charging them anything that give me some potatoes and some rutabagas. Well, they said yeah and I won't tell they charged me for it. And there was two cars...a car and a pickup in one family that I pulled out.

I: Did they ask you what they owed you after you pulled them out?

R: Yeah, I told them that they didn't owe me anything that I asked them
if they had any potatoes and rutabagas. I said that I'd rather take some potatoes and rutabagas.

I: That's the way it used to be years ago, right? I mean, people would help each other but there wouldn't be any money involved.

R: Right...nothing at all.

I: Well, what was thought of a man years ago if he pulled that sort of thing?

R: He was pretty low...when he came around the neighborhood, we didn't think much about him. Like now here, I haven't got anything, but still there's a lot of people come here and ask me for enough...new potatoes, and carrots and lettuce and that. I don't charge for it.

I: But then there's this other thing you mentioned one guy I didn't know who it was...you helped someone and you worked quite a bit and he gave you a buck. Now, why would someone give you a buck? That's really not worth what you did, you know, by any means.

R: Probably he figures that that's all I'm worth.

I: No...no...I know some people like to, well for instance, my father...his brother was helping him once and...building a house...and he'd give him a buck a day or so; and obviously he was worth a lot more and he knew it. There was a carpenter working rightside by side with him and my dad was paying that guy five bucks an hour. But, sometimes people will just give a little bit like...it's not enough by any means but just so that they will have given a little bit. What's going on in their mind when they do that?

R: That's what I'd like to know. I've seen that many a times.

I: Did you ever do that...give a guy just a little...a real little something...like it doesn't even come close to being the actual value but...

R: I've never done it.

I: Do you think that they want to feel like...well I paid him?

R: Yep.

I: In their mind:so that they don't feel guilty?

R: I always feel, I've helped people and I figure that someday I'm going to need help myself...that's the way I feel about it. And I know when I need help I can get it. When they need help, what I can do I'll do it for them.

I: That's the way it was years ago and still is right here, but isn't
it also true that the way it's going now, the way things are going, it's more cash.

R: Yeah, un huh.

I: Have you noticed that?

R: I noticed that all the way...the last fifteen years it's been like that and it's gettin more so right along. Like, now, when the neighbors came for me to next week for me to pour that foundation, he asked me what I wanted. Well I said, "forget about it...we can square that out later".

I: Years ago would he have even asked that?

R: No...I helped him out on the sawmill. I sawed three days with him lumber. I asked for one plank for three days work...oak plank. That was my wages for three days of sawing and on a plainer besides

I: There's a little more to it than that though...when you work with a friend like that, there's generally beer and there's food too.

R: Oh, I had my own.

I: Really?

R: Yeah, everything was my own.

I: Yeah, but isn't it kind of an unwritten rule that when you go to work for a man and you're really not out to make any money, that they should square up a real good meal and that sort of thing?

R: Oh no...nowadays you carry your own lunchbucket.

I: Even around here?

R: Except for like John Neimi here, my kid brother.

I: The real close ones.

R: Yeah...but further out when you go, you carry your lunchbucket.

I: That never was heard of years ago...I've heard of people saying years ago that if that happened to them they quit right on the spot.

R: Oh, I made that deal here fifteen years ago...these potato farmers on the Pike River. I was hauling potatoes and I went in ten o'clock and I said I want my coffee and woman of the house said they don't serve coffee. Well, I said,"I'm not hauling no potatoes either" and I pulled the truck out of there. And they come begged me at eleven o'clock at night to come and haul because they had over a thousand bushel of potatoes on the field. Well I says, "from now on I get my coffee and my meals".
I: That's something though. I know, well even now when my dad...someone works over at my place, they're in on the kitchen table with the family. And, there's a meal too. My mom works hard and puts something out.

R: Yeah, but she was an old maid and she didn't want to...she said, "it's too much bother cooking coffee, making sandwiches or coffee bread", so I just left the potatoes there for one night.

I: But, then there's other people around here, you can't make a deal with them unless you sit down over a coffee table for a couple hours too.

R: Oh yeah, that's true.

I: You know some like that too.

R: Un huh

I: The old timers, I bet.

R: Like Otto Schultz down on Pikler (???) Road...I could call that my second home. I'd never turn around and even ask for coffee or either ask for glass of wine...I'd go down in the basement and help myself. And, I'd take his tractor in the evenings when I wanted to go out to the car well I turn around and take his car and say I'm goin out and I'd go to the gas pump and fill the tank and all he'd say is, "I'll see you tomorrow morning". He give me his car and...

I: And, of course, you'd probably do a lot of things for him.

R: Oh yeah...like now even, she and...you know Rosie Schultz that's got that strawberry field, well I went there and made the parking lot, tanked (???) all that grass down with snowshoes on the strawberry field. She asked me what I want. Well, I said, "when the strawberry picking is good, well save me two quarts of strawberries". Well, she's eighty-four years old...I don't want anything from her. But she told me if I need her tractor, she said you know where to come and get a tractor.

I: You do a lot of deals for equipment, right?

R: Oh sure.

I: Because you're short big equipment like tractors and truck every now and then, eh?

R: Oh yeah. And, I'm licensed...I handle any darn thing there is. I got Interstate Commerce License, I got drivers license and you can't have chauffers license and have Interstate Commerce License. You can either have one or the other. But, I carry my drivers license on account of DNR. And I got my state license from DNR.

I: When did this start to change? You said about ten or fifteen years ago...what do you think it's gonna come to in this area around here?
This sort of thing where every time a person helps another it's always money or, you know, paying for things like where years ago they were just sort of given back and forth.

R: Well, when the older folks, the older generation passes away and the younger generation comes...well it's all gonna be strictly a money deal from what I figure out.

I: You notice that now with the younger generation?

R: Yeah...un huh...all the younger generation's like that. I've seen that through Laird there, on Grist Mill Road...there's one party out there on Grist Mill Road asked me to come and plow this spring. They had forty acres to plow and I went and looked at that field and said there's gonna be trouble on that field that it's wet. Well, they said that they'll pay me by the hour and I said,"what's the wages by the hour"? They said,"seventy-five cents an hour"...for a diesel tractor. I said no that I'm not licensed for diesel tractor and I walked away.

I: What would a regular operator get like that?

R: Four and a half an hour.

I: Have you noticed, and I've heard this said by other people to bachelors in particular around here, by a lot of people they are taken advantage of. Bachelors they figure, you've got the time, you can go and do anything and for some reason you shouldn't be paid quite like someone else should...in fact several other bachelors have told me that...like old widows and older people who need help, they'll call on a bachelor.

R: Un huh. That's true.

You know, like that shit there. They wouldn't try to pull that on everyone. Of course, another thing is too is do you think good-hearted people are taken advantage of?

R: Some are, but some aren't.

I: Do you know any real good-hearted people around here?

R: Yeah, I know quite a few.

I: Could you tell me about a good-hearted man...you don't have to mention his name but about the kind of things he does?

R: Well, I know one...

I: Of course, you can mention his name...that's not a bad thing, is it?

R: Any one of the Waisanen boys...they'll give the shirt off their back for anyone that needs help. They always have and they always will,
I think. And same thing with Charlie Aho. Of course, he was shell-shocked during World War II. He took care of that farm for twenty years for his brother and his brother's takin all his pension. He gets total permanent disability. And he milked as high as...had as high as twenty-eight cattle milking...took care of a thousand chickens and his brother was drinking all the money just 'cause he's the administrator. That's why he sold the cattle out a year ago. He said that he can't take it no more.

I: That's too bad. I know the Waisanen brothers...that home was always open to any lumberjack who had it rough at the time. Lumberjacks would stay there and clear land...that's one of the reasons they got so much of the land cleared is because the lumberjacks around here when they'd drink their money up in Houghton or so and really be looking for a place to stay they'd jump on the Mineral Range Railroad and stop at the Waisanen brother's place and they had a place.

R: Always

I: And they worked there too. Those guys they cared so much about them that they'd put in a little extra effort to clear that land. That's why they got that big clearing and the big barns and...

R: And I don't think that Waisanen house's never locked as long as I know of. They never had the door locked.

I: Of course, one of them is generally home too.

R: Yeah, but they still never even had the door locked at night, never.

I: But, that's generally the pattern up here though, or is it getting to the place...

R: Oh, now everybody's got their house locked. All except me, I think, around here. John Neimi they got theirs locked, Makela's got theirs locked, Aho's (???) haven't got theirs locked 'cause the dog's there and that dog wouldn't hurt a flea...it'll bark a few times and that's about all.

I: We lock ours but I guess we're more used to the city, you know, because in the city you lock the door.

R: Course, anybody come in from that door that they didn't holler my name, why there'd be hell to pay by the time they got through the other door 'cause there's two...one rifle and one shotgun within reach while I'm laying in bed.

I: This is quite an area. I hate to see it change in a way. Does that make you feel kind of bad that...

R: I does.
...that a buck becomes an issue every time two people come together almost?

I can't see that. You know, I was...last summer I went with my kid brother out west and he couldn't believe it how friendly the people are out there compared to what they are out here. In South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho...we went into Idaho and went into a hotel and they had a sign - no vacancy. I walked in there and she recognized me because I used to stay at the hotel there. I said, "you might as well tear that sign down 'cause I'm gonna sleep here tonight and I got four others with me." She said, "I'll make a vacancy." She did. They didn't charge anything for our staying overnight or anything. We had our supper there and breakfast. Norman couldn't figure that out. Then she had told Gene that how I used to come help in the kitchen always when I came from the woods...where I'd wash up and come in the evenings and wash dishes there and just help out.

How many years ago was that?

About fourteen years ago that I hadn't seen it.

And she hadn't forgotten you.

Unt-un

There are some people like that that don't forget a good turn, eh?

There is...that I can go eight - nine different places in northern Idaho and if I'm stuck for money or anything I can go to people...I'll tell them I'm broke straight off the bat and I know I can get help.

But then, how do you think this younger generation is now on that sort of memory of that sort of thing?

Oh, some out there in the small communities, they stick to the rules and regulations.

Ah, what about around here, though...do you think people still remember that sort of stuff?

Well, some. Lot of the younger ones do, but lot of 'em don't, I mean like they don't give a damn.

Like you mentioned a couple younger guys...these two Don's that were talking about...they pretty square on that?

You bet...they'll give the shirt off their back.

They remember, eh?

Un huh...I go to Detroit...you think I can turn around and pay for my room and board when I go out there? Hell no. I can't buy a hat
I: They'd never talk to you again if you did, eh?

R: That's what he said. When he comes down here, well, then it's my turn.

I: That's what it is...that give and take...it's just that it seems that some people, their memory is kind of short when it's their turn to play the other side of the position, you know?

R: Yeah, I've noticed. My uncle's now, as much as I help them, they want everything. I'm not supposed to have nothing. Like Bill Sheara (???) he wouldn't have that farm if it wasn't for me. I helped him build the damn house, built the barn, dug all the lines for the barn...the water mains for the bath house, built his garage for him, just for my room and board.

I: Maybe he was thinking that room and board was enough, eh? Do you think that's what he was thinking or do you think he forgot all about it?

R. I think he forgot all about it. That's what tees me off about most of my relations. I've got a few damn good ones. I've got one uncle in Newtown...he hasn't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of...it's Henry Sheara (???) and he said when this place is sold share the money that comes...it'll cost me one dollar to have it legalized...they'll hand the check right over to me.

I: Does it seem that there's a difference between, on this thing we've been talking about, between the guy that has a lot and the guy that doesn't have a lot?

R: The ones that got the money, well, they're the ones that want more money and they want everything for nothing.

I: And the guys that don't have it?

R: Well, they're the ones that'll turn around and help each others out.

I: Why is that

R: I don't know.

I: It's been that way, eh?

R: It's always been that way.

I: I think you're right. It always has. But, I wonder why? Do you think once that money starts coming in, the greed...

R: It's just the greed...that's all it is

I: Church and all that business don't make much difference when it comes to that. eh?
R: Um...church don't mean nothing. Lot of people that go to church and are supposed to be one of the best church people there is, well, they're the most crookedest people there is under the sun.

I: There's a few very prime examples without mentioning any names of that right here in Pelkie.

R: I know and there's right in Elo too and in Alston.

I: And everyone knows that around here too...that's no secret either.

R: No...no.

I: Everyone knows that stuff.

R: Oh, and they say that oh it's a sin to drink, it's a sin to drink, but God damn go and look in their refrigerator, go and look on the shelf in the pantry, why there's a fifth of liquor there...

I: Yeah, but here's what they say: "that's for medicinal purposes"

R: Yeah

I: But, then they find a lot of medicinal purposes, right?

R: Damn right.

I: Everything from having the fart to go to that, you know.

R: Yeah, like onewoman told me in Alston, that she has to take it, it's for her rheumatism and stomach.

I: She's a little more honest...or is she joking or is she serious?

R: She was serious.

I: Oh no...I know it, I've run across a few fairly...very religious acting people, their cupboard came open all of a sudden and I saw that brandy in there, you know, and boy when they saw I saw that they shut that cupboard so quick and they lost all of their composure. That's too much. You got a lot of wood there. You selling cord wood?

R: Yeah, oh I got about twenty cords in the woods...just a little ways off on the side of the road there.

I: What do you sell it for a cord?

R: I've been gettin ten.

I: Un huh, that's pretty reasonable

stop in tape
I: Okay, we said, the guy who has a lot wants more to come in all the time and wants to get everything for nothing. What do you think is going to happen? What's gonna happen to the guys that don't have and helped each other out, eventually, huh?

R: Well, the ones that's got everything, well they figure they're gonna ... it's time to buy these poor people out... and they can just force 'em out... get bigger and bigger.

I: What'll happen to the poor people?

R: They'll just have to move out... sell for next to nothing and move out. That's been going on already for a long time like that... syndicate from Chicago that bought all that property in South Laird...

I: Yeah, right over here... just on the other side of the hill, eh.

R:

I: Bought all that up... they're gonna develop it. Then what kind of signs do you see standing up next to the bush there, huh? No hunting.

R: No hunting... no trespassing. They kicked me out of there.

I: You were there before that... you were walking in that bush before any of those guys knew that this place ever existed.

R: Yeah, but the funniest part of it, I was on patrol that day, fire patrol and they told me no trespassing. I told 'em was alright. I don't trespass through here why you just might have a fire out here and who the hell's gonna turn around and fight the fire for you.

I: Did they want you to trespass then?

R: Damn right. They looked in the Bronco... when they seen the piss cans in the Bronco and one asked me for my badge and the other one asked for I.D. Well, I showed my I.D. They said, "you can come any time you want." I went fishing on them creeks there... nobody said anything. And one big black nigger turned around and told me to get the hell out of his property.

I: What about fishing on these creeks? Years ago was it better?

R: Oh cripe... like on that Vasanich Creek there... in the Vasanich clearing coming down...

I: Got a little creek

R: Would be nothing to get a hundred, a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty trout... brook trout... used to come down to the mouth of the river. And if you don't believe me, you ask Howard Mattila. We went in there lot of times... seventy - eighty at a time and we
were ten twelve years old.

I: Decent size?

R: Fourteen - fifteen inches

I: And this was back in what year...when you were fourteen or so?

R: Oh...

I: You said you're fifty-six now?

R: Fifty-two

I: Fifty-two.

R: Oh, thirty-two...thirty three

I: Right in there.

R: Because the big fire was in...the last fire we had here was in 1934 where John Neimi lives. It went all the way to Limestone Mountain. Bill Moilenen set that on fire.

I: This guy here?

R: Yeah...like he asked me for burning permit and asked the Conservation Department...

I: Just recently?

R: Yeah, when he's got those two big brush piles underneath the hi-li (?) I said, "you move those brush piles and you get a burning permit".

I: What do you think happened to the fishing?

R: That's one thing we can't figure out on account of the water. Have you noticed all that slime on the rocks? Years ago we didn't have any...not a bit. You go in these rapids now where there's lot of rocks, well there's just a blanket of it just waving up and down and there's not a damn fish in it.

I: It's not people so much, is it, 'cause, you know, very few people really fish this river hard in the summer, isn't that right?

R: No, it isn't that

I: In fact, this river's really not fished that much now, is it?

R: No, and then there's no deep holes. Well, one thing, this last two years we haven't had a decent flood...we haven't had any deep holes at all.

I: You need floods?
R: Yeah
I: What does that do?
R: The higher the flood the deeper the holes are, you know, in the bends. It digs down in the bottom, and we haven't had any floods.
I: Oh, the water starts moving real fast and just the speed of the water just keeps digging it out.
R: Yeah, digging it out. I remember in the late 20's at Sheara's (?) old place, right now there's about six inches of water and there used to be steady all summer long about sixteen - eighteen feet of water. But see, when they log these river banks, well you haven't got these springs anymore for one thing.
I: How does that happen?
R: Well, these springs dry up when they log the area out.
I: How come?
R: The sun gets out in the woods in the slashing and all the springs and small creeks they dry up.
I: Evaporate it right up, eh?
R: Yeah...like that creek right by the camp there and that other creek that comes in the swamp there...used to always have big mattages of water in there and now it's completely dry again. Fish come up in the spring to spawn and go back down and all the young ones die when the water goes dry.
I: Oh, it's the logging activity that affects it then?
R: I heard that years ago the Otter was the coldest river around here that there used to be grayling in it.
R: Oh, I've caught hundreds of grayling out of there...but another thing what's bad...
I: But, they logged it and then they cut the trees right down from the shore and those trees used to...
R: Shade the river
I: Yeah, and it'd keep the water cooler. But, now the water warms up and the grayling can't live...they have to die or go to Lake Superior.
R: Well, another thing they done wrong, when they planted the rainbow and they planted the German browns...few years ago we didn't have no rainbows out here or German browns, there was nothing but speckled trout and brook trout and grayling in the Otter River. Well, there wasn't any rainbows or German browns or steelheads in it at all.
I: It seems like most of those rainbows though, they go back down into Lake Superior...they only come up in the spring and the fall; and you get these little summer fish then and they changed the limit on that so you can't even fish the rivers anymore, huh.

R: Yeah, but the license fee's goin up right along.

I: I mean, you can't really catch very many ten inch fish there. Most of your fish are gonna be within seven and ten inch, eh? And years ago, well not even a couple years ago that used to be legal.

R: Yeah, seven inches.

I: That's a pretty decent tasting fish, eh?

R: Oh yeah.

I: Well, that's all changed too because fishing is for sport...a money making activity for the DNR.

R: That's all it is.

I: It's not designed for persons like yourself who might seriously consider getting a few meals...

R: Like I think the biggest fish...still is on the records in Mattson. that I caught on this Otter River, is a rainbow...was nine and three quarter pounds...thirty-six and a half inches. I caught that right above the fish hatchery.

I: Big hole there?

R: That right...the first year they had the fish hatchery...on a fly rod.

End of Part I
I: You were saying earlier that you fought in the Finnish-Russian war. That was the winter war, right?

R: 

I: 1939...?

R: 1939 and '40

I: How did you come to go and fight in that war?

R: Well, I done a lot of skiing and then some ski jumping and I was pretty good with skis. And Soumi College they wanted volunteers to go down there and Mr. (???) got in contact with me and he said I was pretty young because I wasn't even of age yet and he said, "you hunted all your life and you know everything about rifles". Well, when I was a kid well I used to...when I was fourteen - fifteen... well I used to go up to this OCS training at Sault Ste. Marie - army officers training - well we had old type Springfield rifles and I showed a bunch of them at Soumi College how to use them. How to dissemble 'em, put 'em back together...well then they had in the Finnish papers from Minnesota and Michigan and Wisconsin. Well they got nine here from Michigan that went.

I: From this area up here?

R: 

I: Do you remember any of those other guys that went to fight in that war?

R: Yeah, but most of them are dead

I: None of them from this area?

R: Yeah well, they was from Pelkie.

I: Some guys from Pelkie fought in the Finnish war?

R: Yeah...Marshall.

I: Norman Marshall's.....?

R: Brother

I: Who was he?

R: I forget what the hell his first name was.

I: Did he come back?

R: Yeah, he come back...but he's dead now. Then from South Range there was this...Paakala...then from Chassell there was Issachsom...there was a Kinnunen from Ontonagon and a Maki from Calumet.
I: What made you go over there?

R: My grandmama always said how nice Finland is.

I: They gave you a pretty good deal too...didn't they?

R: Oh yeah

I: What kind of deal did they give you...you mentioned it a little earlier? Was it four hundred a month?

R: I got four hundred a month plus my expenses.

T: All expenses, eh?

R: Un huh

T: Was that part of the reason you went there?

R: No...no...just to see the country...that's why I went.

I: You wanted to see Finland, eh?

R: Yeah...well I've seen it from one end to the other. When we went to Finland a Danish warship stopped us and they searched the ship because Germany was at war already. Then, well we hadda go to Copenhagen...well that channel to the North Sea was full of sunken ships and German dive bombers came over half a dozen times and looked at the insignia of the boat...see the Swedish-American Steamship Company - the S.S. Tropingwall (???)...a luxury liner...then got a radio call from shore batteries to go into Copenhagen. Went there and we stayed there for three days...that's when I had the time of my life. Well, from there we went across to Sweden then we went from there by rail to Hoppanand (???) and I guess the Russians got a report on that we were coming. We got off the train and they were gonna take us across the ice...across the bay with trucks...about two and a half miles across. Instead of trucks, well we made a run for it and God damn we were just three-quarters of the way across when here comes the Russian bombers and they blew the hell out of that bay. Well, we got to Hoppanand and we stayed there and I was transferred to Olo. And I was at Olo barracks there for awhile and then I was sent to Aalala...from there I was transferred to Lapparand (???) was there for awhile and then I went to Louditsville (???)...then I went to Haanayouct (???) and from there I went to Beevotch (???) and got into a God damn (???) bombardment there...blew the train up but they didn't get any of us.

I: You were mentioning that part of the time or a good share of the time you were fighting on the ski patrol.

R: This was all skis...nothing but skis. You didn't walk anywheres...you were always on skis.

I: What kind of equipment did you have? I know you mentioned that earlier,
for this purpose you had?

R: We had automatic weapons...side arms...small caliper automatic weapons.

I: How long were your skis?

R: My skis were nine feet

I: Oh, you had those long cross-country skis.

R: Yes...cross-country skis and Finnish shoe packs.

I: And they were all white.

R:

I: Even your shoe packs were white?

R: Yeah...everything was white.

I: Your pants were white and you had some kind of overcoat that was white too?

R: Yeah...well our overcoats were in underneath...we had a white uniform over it...our other clothes.

I: And how many did you say were on a patrol usually?

R: Twelve to eighteen...a twelve-man patrol usually.

I: Now, how would you attack a group...you mentioned it before about going down hill?

R: Single handed...one would go one direction...one go the other direction...you'd come in at an angle...you'd have crossfire any direction...a hit and run and then we'd mine the areas. There was places you couldn't touch a Finnish ski stick that wouldn't explode. Well we had a few bazookas that we used for armored tanks...truck callups...we'd wait for them on top of a knoll...when they'd start coming over the knoll why we'd blast the front ones out. Then get the hell out of there in a hurry.

I: How would you do that attack again? You mentioned that you'd go down hill into the Russians when they were coming up...would you sneak up on them...would you see them from far away?

R: Yeah...we'd wait for 'em...to get 'em in a pothole or where there were hills on both sides and the road was down in the valley.

I: And they couldn't see you. Did you ever get real close to them?

R: Well, this was as close as I got...one Russian got me here...one Russian got me there with a knife and that was as close as I got to 'em.
I: There was some knife fighting involved?

R: Oh yeah...there was a lot of hand-to-hand combat.

I: Do you remember any of those?

R: Yeah, but I'd rather not say

I: Un huh...but the idea was to lay in the snow and wait 'til they come right up to you and get them.

R: Yeah, it was all hit and run. But Christ...them kind of odds...well twelve - fourteen men against five - six hundred men, well you don't stay in one place very long; and if they get a chance to zero in on you with heavy equipment, why you ain't got no more chance than a snowball in hell. The worst thing I seen...after the war ended when we came back was when we started from Olo going north on a railroad. And we got off when the railroad ended and took trucks to Petchum (???) through the Artic and dead bodies and dead horses rotting on both sides of the road...Russian bodies. And if you ever talk about stink...well that stunk. They were all bloated especially around Petchum. They had graded some of the horses and stuff off the road with graders and all those grader drivers even they were wearing gas masks. It was an awful sight. Those Russian horses even were so hungry...if you go down there you'll see a lot of them big trees that are still alive because I talked to some people that came back from Zo...(???) this summer and were to Petchum. Well, the bark is chewed off as high as a horse can reach...just to eat the bark because they didn't have nothing to eat because they didn't have no food supply. The Russian soldies even they chopped bark and cooked that to get something to eat because when the Finns left from up there, they burned everything...they didn't have a God damn thing when they came through. That's the nickle mines even...I think that was the most importantest part because see those nickle mines belonged to the U.S. and I think that's where all the U.S. equipment came in there to try to protect them. See, I could talk Finn good and English both and a lot of these that went with me couldn't.

I: You mentioned earlier that one battle on the ice. When did that begin?

R: That was in February 1940...first part of February.

I: Where was it?

R: Lake Laddigan(???) where the Russians lost their track division, the eighteenth division...that was the Red Army division.

I: How many men were in that?

R: Russian division averaged about seventeen thousand men.

I: And you said that this lake was fairly large.
R: Lake Laddigan is the biggest fresh water lake in the continental of
Europe anyplace...about the size of Lake Superior...ever noticed that?

I: No I haven't...I really haven't. Can you remember how that began?

R: Well, those bomber planes...the Finnish fighter planes spotted them
coming through.

I: Were they coming right across the ice?

R: Yeah

I: With what?

R: Tanks...half tracks...

I: What are half tracks?

R: Trucks that's just got the front wheels on and the rest is track and
they're all armor plated. And then...see Russia a number of Model A
Fords...Ford trucks.

I: Made by?

R: Ford Motor Company...in Russia. Russia still makes Model A Fords.
They had the worm-drive Model A's...ton and a half...ton trucks...
three-quarter ton.

I: They were coming across, hey. Could you see them?

R: Yeah...you could see them with field glasses...the Finnish artillery
opened up behind them so they couldn't get back...they opened up in
front of them so they couldn't go forward...then they started chewing
the ice from the corners up.

I: This was all done by artillery, eh?

R: Ninety-nine percent...that's why many years afterward...about fifteen
years afterwards that there's not to be any fish...any sillackas (?) that
come from Finland that they got a Russian beard on them.

I: How long was it before the ice started to break up and they started
to sink?

R: About four hours - five hours when first ones started caving

I: How close were they to you then?

R: About three-quarters of a mile from shore.

I: So you could watch it through the field-glasses, eh?

R: Oh our small arms fire could reach them easily...like from here to
John Neimi's or like from here to Rossbergs the closest ones they
got.

I: And what was the temperature at the time?
R: Oh, in the biggest artillery barge was forty below zero.
I: What did it sound like?
R: Just like a hell of a heavy thunderstorm.
I: You could hear the Russians?
R: Oh yeah...but at the end when we started bombing right close...
   artillery started shooting close to shore why hadda put cotton batten
   or wax in your ears otherwise it'd break your eardrums.
I: You could hear 'em screaming?
R: Yeah...hell yeah.
I: There were a lot of them out there...seventeen thousand or so?
R: Seventeen thousand to a division...record division and full division's
   fourteen thousand six hundred and forty one members...full division...
   that's what we had in 96th Division in American army...I was in 96th
   Division 81st Infantry and Tank Company.
I: Were you glad that you fought for Finland?
R: I was damn glad that I had that experience to go down there. I'd do
   it over again.
I: You would?
R: Damn right, I would. The people were so damn friendly...you couldn't
   go in a restaurant...you couldn't go into a nightclub and pay for a
   drink. You could go to a farmhouse and ask for a liter of milk and
   they wouldn't take any pay for it...they wouldn't take any money. See,
   we had the American flag on one shoulder and the Finnish flag on the
   other shoulder and we had the American flag on our back.
I: How many were there altogether from America?
R: Three hundred and ninety.
I: That fought, eh? That's not a hell of a lot, is it?
R: Yeah, but there was a hell of a lot got left.
I: Any guys you know not come back?
R: Two pilots...they were the best of my buddies
I: Got left over there on Finnish soil, huh.
R: Yeah...at least that colored guy he got it straight. He went into a
   ...there was eight to twelve bombers and he dived inbetween them. He
   caught four of 'em...they got a direct hit on him and he just blew up
   like kindling.
I: How did it feel to come back? Did you feel like staying there?

R: Well, I would have wanted to 'cause God dammit I wanted to get married 'cause I had a woman pregnant...we were engaged to get married, but I was under twenty-one and the Finnish churches didn't allow that and they sent a telegram out here for my mother and my grandmother and they sent the telegram back that no, that they didn't want me to get married. I got a daughter out there in Finland and a granddaughter.

I: They wanted you back here, hey?

R: No, I wanted my wife...I would have wanted to get married there and bring her back. She was a Toukinen girl from Louditsville. Hasn't John Leland ever told you? Yeah, my daughter come out here...she was here three years ago visiting me...her husband.

I: Which church wouldn't do it?

R: Lutheran church.

I: Because you weren't old enough?

R: I wasn't twenty-one and I was a soldier.

I: Even though you were fighting for their country. Do you remember talking to any of those ministers?

R: You damn right...I went to the Finnish consulate about it...the Finnish council as far as they were concerned they think that was the rottenest God damn deal there was. She could have got Class A transportation and everything.

I: You'd think that they would have made an exception to the rule because you were fighting for their country. Did you feel at any time that Finland was your country?

R: Un huh...the way the people out there were toward me and the way I seen some of the people live out there...the poor people and I seen the rich people, but I seen out there even that there was greed between the rich and the poor. That the rich people didn't want to pay the poor people anything for working for them. I used to chum around with the head guard at Louditsville...you probably read about that Gunderswa (?) Prison in Finland...that's a Federal prison. Well there was a hell of a big battle there just a little ways from that prison and all them inmates were ready to turn around and fight, if that fight had lasted a little longer, but they stopped the war. They were ready to issue guns and ammunition for the prisoners. They said that they're not gonna be under Russian rule that they'll die
before they do.

I: Was it the poor people that were fighting?

R: Yeah

I: Always has been that way, huh?

R: Like they say that Manorwhite (???) that he was stuck-up and everything else. God dammit, I talked to him at least two - three dozen times just man to man. He was just like any ordinary person...we had a drink of (???) together...Russian vodka...we used to get all the Russian vodka we wanted off the trucks...we never had to go without vodka...if we didn't get it the Finnish soldiers got it because they figured they were just gonna come through with military equipment and the band with 'em and have a celebration in Finland.

I: The Russians, eh...they were expecting that to be an easy one.

R: Yeah

I: They lost heavily there, didn't they.

R: Oh Christ

I: They lost heavily. The Finns hated the Russians too, didn't they.

R: Oh yeah...if they didn't have a smooth helmet for you at night, you knew it was a Russian...you'd wipe on back of the helmet...if it was rough it was a Finn...but if it was a Russian it was smooth. That's when you had your knife in your hand.

I: You went by that, eh?

R: Damn right...'cause we had the smooth German helmets.

I: Finland was allied with Germany at the time. How did the Finns and the Germans get along?

R: At that time they did but then afterward the Finns fought the Germans...that's when the Germans burned most of Finland out.

End of Side A