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

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

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:
Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:
“Maki, John”, Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>1, 4-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Names of teachers in Hancock</td>
<td>1-2, 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing schools from today to yesterday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities got along</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People stayed in their areas</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign children start school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Didn't know English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father named launch for her</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various towns Jean taught in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married 1938, husband died 1939</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went home for summer vacation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects taught</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size &amp; sections of classes taught</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings on making money &amp; happiness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher's life in Hancock--1946</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Only 12 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting preferences &amp; FDR</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When women's voting rights came--1919</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Mother was strong-willed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence University, 1920's--A strict place</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home remedy--castor oil</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children never missed school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father hired men--kept ethnic groups balanced</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a Finn first moved on the block</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Parents were open-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why she lives in C.C.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday school picnics at electric park</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Very good descriptions of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 strike--She unknowingly got involved with Citizens Alliance as</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>train ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913--A search light on Quincy hill</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Excellent story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father felt mining companies were &quot;short-sighted&quot;</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
<td>Wouldn't allow new industry in area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on mining companies paternalism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons of life today vs. years ago</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining company had no pension plan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living through the depression</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paul: Why don't you tell me a little bit about growing up in the Copper Country; and what your father did and what mine did he work in.

Jean: His first occupation was at the Quincy Mill at Mason when he was a young man. He worked there for a number of years as a carpenter. I wasn't born yet. Then they moved up to the Quincy Hill where I was born in 1906. And they lived there just a few months after I was born when he moved downtown here and built this house.

Paul: This house right now?

Jean: This one, when I was 4 months old. So that he no longer was working with the Quincy Mine; he was with the Hancock Mine then. And that's why he had to move away from Quincy.

This house must have been refurbished somewhat then since that time.

Jean: Well, basically it is the same as it was. But it's not been structurally changed at all.

Paul: Internally, new electrical things. Water pipes or anything.

Well, not too much in that; no. It's pretty much the same.

Paul: He built it himself?

He and his brothers-in-law built the house. The fireplace has been added since the house was built. But basically it's the same house so I've lived here then all my life with the exception of the years that I was in college, and teaching. I went to school here in Hancock the whole 12 years; started school in the old primary school building.

Paul: Where was that at?

Jean: It's been torn down; it was the building next to the St. Joseph's church.

Paul: Oh, yes. Remember some of your school teachers from that early time?

Jean: Oh, yes. Alice Kennedy, she wasn't my teacher, but she was there in the building, she's still living here.

Paul: She's still living?

Jean: Yes. And my first grade teacher was a Miss Martin. She's since been gone from here. My second grade teacher was a Miss McLain and she came from a farm up on the Hancock Canal. My fourth grade teacher was a Miss Wycoff and she came from Portage Entry.

Drove all the way up here?

Oh, no, she didn't drive, she lived in town.

Paul: That's about 1910.

Jean: That's right, about 1913-14, something like that. And my fifth grade teacher was a local person, Miss Chamberlain.
How do you remember 'em all?

Oh, I remember their names; and then in the sixth grade I had another Miss Kennedy, Mae Kennedy.

Paul: Were they strict? Tough?

Jean: What do you mean "strict" and "tough"?

Paul: You know, the only thing we have to compare with is today.

Jean: Well, we were made to obey; we didn't think of jumping up out of the seat or walking around in the room or anything like that, or talking out loud or anything like that. We just went to school and learned our lessons and recited when we were called on, didn't recite if we didn't know.

Paul: What were some of the courses that were different at that time than today? What other things were taught that aren't taught today?

Jean: You mean in the elementary schools?

Paul: Elementary and secondary.

Well, in the elementary school we had a music teacher who would come once a week and then the regular room teacher took over the rest of the time; the same with the art teacher, there was no gym program at all.

Paul: Everybody walked to school, that was enough exercise.

Jean: That's right. And as I recall the music instruction, was back in the 6th and 7th grades. We sang part music and we read the music but know it, we just didn't learn it by rote; we read the music and sang, not simple songs but well known things from operas and operettas and things like that; some of those songs still stay with me after all those years; and I think in that way you become familiar with many of the classics.

Did the students get along pretty well, I'm talking about different nationality students now. What is your nationality background?

Jean: Well, my father is of German background and my mother's people came from Cornwall. As a child I never heard of any differences between nationalities, we were just told, we were Americans, and that was it.

Paul: Children got along well, they didn't have any problems.

Jean: I didn't hear anything about that, if you didn't get along well, it was just too bad, you didn't have any friends, that's all. There was no "if-ing and am-ing" about who's this and who's that to my recollection and I never heard any discussion about different churches or anything of the kind; maybe we were kind of "insulated" against all things, of course, we didn't get very far from home in our contacts with other children.

Paul: Most people didn't at that time, though.

No, we weren't permitted to play outside of our own yards. We stayed right in the yard here unless some other child had permission to come play here or I had permission to go a few houses away but I never even got around the end of East Hancock when I was little.
I 'spose not until you were in your teens.

Jean: And I didn't get very far then, actually I wasn't around in the West part of Hancock until I was way, way past my teens.

Paul: I suppose it wasn't exactly right for girls to go running, walking around.

Jean: There was no reason to, there was no reason to walk around, my friends lived near enough around here to visit; that's the way it was.

Did they have English classes then to teach the foreign-born students?

Jean: No, but I remember as a child sometimes we would get youngsters in school who were fresh from Finland and they didn't understand a word; the poor kids, when I think about them now, what a thing they had to combat. But these children would come to school, they were sent there, I suppose, the families were told that the children had to go to school; poor little kids would come there dressed different than anybody else, not knowing a word of English.

Paul: That's pretty tough. That's hard to do.

Terrible!

Paul: Did you have any when you were teaching yourself?

Oh, no! By that time it was different. But when I was a child, many a time there were children who couldn't speak English but it seemed, after awhile they got along all right and of course, we all looked at them.

Paul: That's the way kids usually are.

Jean: That's right. As I recall, we tried to say some of the words they knew rather than teaching them our words. To us it was something unique to be able to say some of their words. It wasn't long before they were in the swing with the rest of us but what a handicap to start school that way.

It is, you're a couple grades behind

Jean: That's right and not know anything in the language and just have to pick up with the rest.

Paul: So you really didn't have that much outside activities, let's say you're 12 or 13 years old, what you'd do is, go to school --

Jean: go to school, come home and go to Sunday School and come home from church --

Paul: and that would be it--

Jean: that was it!

Paul: Major social activities had to do with school, or going to school and Sunday School life or church life.

Jean: That's it.

Paul: So whatever social life you'd have on Sundays at the church or some other night of the week

Jean: oh, never a night a week, until I was up in high school and then we'd go to one night and we had to march right home afterward. I guess so, by 7:30 you'd
better be home from school or else. There was no chasing around. Then when I got up in high school the ban notices were lifted a little bit and we were permitted to go to a ballgame occasionally or skating once in a while on Wednesday nights and a school party once in a while. None of this every night business, running around, but we lived.

What other things do you remember besides going to school, any other stories or anything from that time?

Jean: When I was a child my folks had a launch and it was named for me! The Jean S., carried about 30 people and my father and his two brothers built it. It was quite a boat. And we went on many excursions on that, took families and relatives, up to the canal and down as far as the Portage Entry. Occasionally we'd go up the Snake River to pick berries and on very great occasions go out on Keweenaw Bay as far as Skanee. Every year on my birthday in June (interruption) But we usually made our trips to the Canal and had a day's outing up there.

Paul: Go for a picnic kind-of-thing, stop along the shore there.

Jean: Oh, yes. Stop up by the lighthouse which has since been demolished.

Paul: This was in 1919?

Jean: In the teens. 1912-13; even before that because the boat was built in 1909. So we had many years of pleasure on the waterway with that and then my folks disposed of the boat and had a camp up along Portage Lake, and then we went up there.

Paul: Every weekend?

Jean: Well, we'd stay there for a week at a time. My mother, my brother and I. We had a big garden up there and that was the big project to go up there and work all week in the garden. Then my father would come up at night in a little boat. And leave early in the morning to get back to work, took him about an hour to come from Hancock in a little boat.

Paul: What do you remember about outside activities? Do you remember anything going on like I suppose, mining activities, did your father talk about mining activities?

Jean: No, he never talked too much about it at home; once in a while I'd go up there to the mine to be with him.

Paul: See what kind of work.

Oh, yes. He was always on surface. He never went underground. He was put on construction watch on surface.

Paul: Building buildings?

Making buildings, putting up the shafthouses and things like that.

Paul: When did your father die?

He died 20 years ago, 1952, when he was 81. And my mother died in '43 when she was in her sixties.

So they lived here quite a while.

All their lives; they were born here in Hancock too. In fact my father was born just couple blocks over the street, the house is no longer there. Well, I came back
here to live; I taught away from here for 10 years when I was married and then my husband died so I came back here to live.

Paul: when did, where did you go to school? You went to high school, you finished high school when? 19--

Jean: 1924. Then you went to college

Paul: '24. Then you went to college

Jean: Then I went to college at Lawrence University.

Paul: Why did your parents want you to go to college? Most people didn't go to college
And most girls, I wouldn't think went to college.

Jean: Well, I don't know. My parents were thinking a little ahead of the times or something.

Paul: Did your brother go too?

Jean: Yes, my brother went to Michigan State, 4 years; he was a county agent

Paul: So they wanted you to get an education

Jean: Oh, sure, that was always the idea, the plan, that eventually we'd go to college.
I went to Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Graduated from there in 1928.

Paul: Did you ever go back and get a Master's?

Jean: No, I didn't; I taught school for 10 years in the Iron Country, down in Champion.
And then I was married there, my husband taught there too. But then right after that I came back here.

Paul: You lived from 1928 to 1938 in

Jean: I lived in Champion. I'd come home here week-ends but I really lived in Champion.
And I was married in 1938 but the next year, 1939, I was back here because my husband was dead. So I've lived here ever since. So I've been here 30 years.

Paul: What was it like living in Champion? This is when the depression was going on

Jean: Oh, it certainly was during the "depths"

Paul: When you went there in '28 it was pretty good times

Jean: It was, yes. But we had some bad

Paul: What kind of money did you make when you first went out and taught? Can you remember?

Jean: Yes. $130 a month. For 10 months. And I taught 10 years during that time, it was raised $5, to $135.

Paul: By 1938 you were making $135?

Jean That's right. But by 1938 most other places had cut them, way down to a $100 so we were very fortunate down there. We received a much better wage there than up here!

Paul: So your wages at least stayed the same.
We received much better than up here, in Houghton and Hancock. They were working for far less than I was.

Paul: Ya, I think they were working for $80 or $100 or something like that.

Jean: That's right. We were very fortunate to get that wage during those years. And during those years our school enrollment down there increased considerably because many people came back from the city who just didn't have a thing. They lived in anything they could find to live in; in Champion we had many of those children in school and those children didn't have anything.

They just come barefooted.

Well, not quite barefooted but believe me, they didn't have much. Just remember I taught in the high school and these are high school kids I'm talking about and if I gave them a chocolate bar for Christmas, they thought that was great. Now that's hard for anyone to believe who hasn't been through it. But they had no money!

Paul: Like their fathers would have 10-15 dollars or something like that.

Jean: They just had no money and they didn't have much to each.

Paul: Were the iron mines going at all?

Jean: Not in Champion. No.

Paul: So everything was closed up there, too.

Jean: I don't know how some of them got along.

Paul: You lived by yourself then?

Jean: No, I roomed with a family.

Paul: Did you come back then during the summer after teaching?

Jean: I always came back home, and stayed here with my folks for a couple of months.

Paul: What other recollections of what it was like in the early '30's?

Jean: Oh, I liked it then, oh, sure; especially with those children down there. Now, it's another thing, those children are high school kids, and this is in the '30's; none of them had telephones in their homes; they didn't even know how to use a telephone; that's kind of hard to believe, but they didn't; they didn't have running water; they didn't have electricity; many of them; they lived very primitively, during the next 10 years after I was gone from there, I think many of the homes were fixed up, "prosperity" was returning, but during those years that I was there, it was a very different life from anything I had been accustomed to because I had come from this House and went down there where they was just nothing.

Paul: Did you ever try to leave there to get a job some place else?

No, I liked it and I enjoyed my

Paul: What subjects did you teach?
Jean: I taught English and Latin. And then I taught History, too. But I really enjoyed working with those children, because most of them wanted to learn; there are always who don't.

Paul: Were they big classes?

Jean: No. 15 to 20

Paul: You'd have what, 3 or 4 English sections?

Jean: I taught all the high school English; I had 9th, 10th and then I had 11th and 12th combined. And 2 Latin classes. So it was many preparations. Didn't have free time.

Paul: Had to do a lot of that work at night?

Jean: That's right. It was very different from what it is now. We did everything we could to help the kids, and never thought about reimbursement, teacher tenure and all such nonsense.

Paul: I suppose things have changed tremendously

Jean: There's just no comparison. No comparison at all.

Paul: I suppose that's true, not only teaching profession; with everything.

Jean: With everything! Because there's so many people in the world.

Paul: They were, like you said, really tough times, they didn't have anything.

Jean: That's right! They just didn't have anything.

Paul: You walked, and you didn't have a car, and put the car away, didn't use it,

Jean: That's right. I know one Christmas time the teachers all decided to take what we considered the neediest cases in school and each of us would clothe a child and so we had these children recommended to us by their teachers which ones they thought needed it. And I know the little girl I had was probably 7 or 8 years old and I took her intending to get a few things for her, it was in the winter and her shoes were nothing on the bottom, absolutely nothing, there were stockings of a sort that were showing through the bottom and no rubbers, no overshoes, so you started from the bottom and went through and it didn't cost much,

10-15 dollars

Jean: That's right. you could buy everything, the shoes, stockings, underwear, dress, coat, mittens, the whole works! For a few dollars.

Paul: I suppose that's in many ways a tragic feeling when you're working and you have students come in--a 16-year old boy who has nothing.

Jean: Just nothing!

Paul: Were there any people who were well off? Relatively well off?

Jean: In that town, there were very few. Most of them were like that

Paul: I suppose a few business men
Jean: There were a few, and how could they be well off; nobody could pay them

Paul: That's right and all their prices were cut

That's right.

Was there any WPA or anything in town?

Oh, yes. There was that.

So they got a dollar a day, or couple dollars a day.

Something from that

I suppose

I don't thing they were so unhappy, they really weren't!

No, it's unhappiness when you look back more or less

Well, I don't know

rough times

Jean: may be it's a feeling of rough times but there was no—I don't think affluence brings happiness.

Paul: No, I think that's true. I don't think it does

Jean: No, it doesn't

If you make $50,000 or $10,000, you're $130 a month was not affluence but it was decent living I suppose at that time.

Jean: That's right. More than

Paul: A teacher in 1970 can make will make $15,000 is not any better really, there's just as many bills, and things cost more.

Jean: You think you have to have thousand different things you don't really need.

Paul: that's true and you keep buying "junk" I suppose

Jean: I suppose that's it! Everything was down to essentials then

Paul: How was teaching then when you came up here?

Jean: When I came up here, I didn't teach for 7 years.

Paul: All the way through the war?

Jean: So I went back in '46. Well, it was different because by then, there was a "different" type of children, too. They knew what telephones were, they had radios,

Paul: Champion must have been a small town, relatively small. Smaller than Hancock!

Oh, yes, Originally it was a busy mining and railroad town but during the '30's when I was there, it was pretty much on the way out.
Did the teachers get along pretty well?

Jean: Oh yes!

There was no bickering among teachers, too much
I didn't hear any bickering.

Paul: I know sometimes there is, today.

Jean: There were 2 of us and we did everything together.

Paul: 12 in the high school?

Jean: 12 in the whole school; 6 grade teachers, one for each grade, and 6 high school teachers.

Paul: Is that right? Wow, that would be fantastic.

We had a nice high school building, the whole social center was around the high school in the gym.

Paul: You need 2 teachers for one grade now,

Jean: You said it! They're overloaded with administrators, counselors, remedial readers, and what-not! We did the whole bit.

Paul: Put in long hours? Start at 8 o'clock?

We started at 8 o'clock and worked as long as we had to, and if we had to work longer, we never thought anything of it; I used to go to school early in the morning to have a girl's gym class, just because they thought they'd like to do things, take the kids out hiking after school, and go ski riding with them and I don't mean ski riding with all the contraptions they have today, I mean put them on over our overshoe and go out in the woods. And climb the hills!

Paul: What difference then, I suppose, between '46 and '30's.

Many, many differences, and then, of course, being a bigger school, it wasn't the same type of closeness here; I never felt any closeness to the teachers.

Paul: How long did you teach here in Hancock?

Jean: I taught here for 15 years.

Paul: From '46 until '61?

Jean: Um hm, but I taught only in the mornings. Just half-time.

Paul: Oh, did you? All the way through?

Jean: All the way through.

Paul: Just taught Latin? Little bit of English?

Jean: No, I had a little bit of English, too. I taught only in the mornings and I suppose in that way, I didn't get involved as much.

Paul: You were working then for only half-pay or something?
Jean: Oh, yes. And then I had other interests. It was different that it was before I was married.

Paul: That's true, a different kind of life. Things changed a lot after the war bid

Things had changed so much from that time.

Can you remember the first time you voted for president?

Sure, I can. I voted in Champion, in '28.

Must have been about 23 years old, or 21 or something?

Jean: 22. First time I voted.

Paul: That's when Hoover ran.

Jean: Hoover and Al Smith.

Paul: That's right! Hoover ran with "chicken in every pot" or something like that. And then there was Roosevelt in '32. I think a lot of people changed politics, from what I understand, from just talking to people around here that they--most people were Republicans in this area before 1932, and then a lot of them changed during the depression.

Jean: Yes, they did.

Paul: Maybe they didn't vote for FDR the first time, but maybe the 2nd. In '36 or '40 they changed.

Yes, I'm one of the "die hards", I never voted for him.

Paul: Well, there's a lot of people who still didn't, who felt that he was kind of radical for that time, really was a "liar" or something like that.

Jean: I've stuck to the Republican vote ever since I started but that doesn't mean I'm right and someone is wrong.

Paul: Well, at least your open; some people say that they aren't wrong. I think education changes people, make them more open.

Well, I did it because that's the way I felt that was the way to vote, but as I say, maybe it wasn't. how do I know, if I felt it was, that's the way I voted.

Paul: Did you ever become really interested in politics? To become involved?

Jean: No! I didn't. No.

Paul: Not really, just a kind of "voting person"

Jean: That's right. I felt that if women had the franchise, they should exercise the right.

What kind of attitude did people have, let's say in the '30's, towards

I can remember when an amendment was added to the constitution for women's right to vote--1919--I can remember my mother being very adamant in saying that if a woman had the right to vote, she should get out an vote. She didn't necessarily have to vote the same way her husband voted; when she voted, she voted without telling her husband
how she voted.

Was kind of independent? Did she go out and vote then afterwards?

Jean: Always! She was quite independent; I've often thought lately she was the forerunner of women's lib or something.

Paul: She was very strong willed then in some ways,

Jean: Well, she was strong willed in a way, but she'd never go out and oppose--but she felt that women had the right to do certain things, providing they didn't neglect their home, that came first.

Paul: Home life was first

Jean: That's right.

Paul: That's one thing that has changed today somewhat.

Oh, it certainly has!

Paul: Do you remember any problems with local law authorities, or anything like this?

No, I don't. I lived quite a sheltered life, so I didn't run into anything like that.

Paul: There was moonshining in the '20's

Jean: Well, I know they tell that stuff but I don't know anything about it because I had nothing to do with it! But while I was in college, that was the year for those shenanigans but it didn't "touch" me at all.

Was college life pretty good? Was Lawrence a big school?

No, Lawrence is a small college and you were very much under the thumb of the authorities there, but if there were some people who went off and did things they shouldn't do, I don't know anything about it, because my friends were not that kind. I don't say that to say that I was better than someone else but I wasn't with a group of people who were off drinking booze, and even the fellows weren't allowed to smoke on the campus.

Paul: That's the way most of 'em were.

Jean: That's the way it was before. I don't know that there were any problems for running out and drinking, and things; maybe there were.

(end of tape, side 1

What else do you remember from your college days?

Jean: No, nothing except that I studied and went to classes and that was it. I lived in the dormitory and dormitory life was simply all the girls living together in the building.

Paul: You couldn't go "running around"

Jean: you certainly couldn't; hours were very strictly kept; it was a church-affiliated college

Paul: ya, they didn't want you galavanting around because your parents sent you there
to keep you there

You went there to go to school and to learn our lessons and there was nothing to
go away from there. I mean, everything was on the campus; we went to musical
entertainments, things like that, on the campus, and again, there were probably
many girls who lead a more exciting life than I did but I just wasn't that kind.

Do you remember any home remedies that your mother had?

Jean: What do you mean, home remedies?

Home remedies for illnesses.

There was always Castor Oil when I was a kid that was supposed to cure everything;

What other things, can you think of any?

No. I guess we weren't encouraged to be sick very much.

Did you go to the doctor when you were small?

Jean: Not very much, I can remember a doctor coming here for some reason or another.

Midwife take care of her children being born?

Jean: That I don't know—no I was born at home, but I don't—course I'm the youngest
but I know she had a woman in to help her but I think the doctor delivered me.

Probably company doctor.

It was a company doctor and my brother was born in 1900 and I know he was born at
home, but delivered by a doctor. But as for home remedies, I don't know anything
other than Castor Oil.

Paul: That was the primary one, huh?

Jean: And go to bed early and get rest, but we were never encouraged to miss school if
we had a cold or anything—go out and spread the germs all over. You never missed
school, never! You could be on "your last legs" but you had to go to school or you
had to go to work! I don't remember my father ever being home a day from work,
saying that he wasn't feeling well and the days I missed school, I could count on
one hand, for 12 years. We just were not encouraged to be sick. Maybe that has a
bearing on my attitude towards illnesses now, I'm not much of a one for running to
doctors or taking medicine.

Paul: Did different groups tend to be kind of clanish in the area? Finnish groups, Italians?
I suppose the Cornish to a degree, the English:background people?

Jean: Well, I think many of them were, but there again, my family was a little bit
different. And I think maybe that stemmed from the fact that my father was of
German origin and my mother was Cornish. And they didn't cling to any one group.
And they didn't cling just to German and Cornish people, either. Of course, when
they lived on Quincy Hill, they didn't live in the area where most of the Cornish
people were. Well, then when they came down here in Hancock to live, it was all
kinds around here. And I can remember hearing my father say, when he hired men in
the mine, he always made it a point to have a ratio of nationalities the same.
He never favored one group over another. At that time there weren't Croatians,
and very few Italians, but he'd have the German and the Finnish and the English and
I have some of his old "time" books with the names in it and you can tell it by the
names and I have often heard him say that, never let it get out of balance. Sometimes bosses would do that and get their own groups in there and then it would get to be a tight little organization for nobody else to break through.

What kind of reputation did these, let's say the Finns for one, have for school teaching? What kind of reputation do they have in your mind?

Jean: Well, I never thought of them as Finns; they were people! They were here, and some people had Finnish names and of course they didn't go to the same church as I went but what difference did it make?

Students weren't any different than the others.

Jean: I never felt that they were, now whether anyone else felt that way, I don't know. But within my family, I do remember that when the first Finnish family bought a house on this street, 'course my family wasn't much on letting the youngsters hear discussions about things, you were kept by yourself—children were not supposed to hear things that were going on—but I can remember faintly comments by different people; now this family bought the house; now the Finns are coming in here. Well, I distinctly remember that my family did not feel that way. If they wanted to buy the house, well, that was their privilege to buy the house, what difference did it make. In that way, maybe my family were a little bit different.

I think it sounds like your parents were open-minded

Yes, they were, I will say that.

Paul: Might be strict but yet fair.

And I never heard either of them say anything about other churches. Once in a while there were children who would bring up stuff between Catholics and Protestants, but somehow or another at home that was never discussed. Didn't make any difference. We were told some people think one way and some another but it was never added to that that our way was the best way.

Paul: Why have you lived in the Copper Country all these years?

Jean: Why? I don't know, you get used to it, you have to live some place.

Paul: You've got a lot of snow to put up with.

Jean: Oh, well, they've got a lot of other things to put up with someplace else. My home is here so why change it.

Paul: You think the Copper Country is just a good place, then.

Jean: Oh, I do now, the longer I live here, the better I like it.

Paul: Oh, there were times you didn't think it was the greatest?

Jean: No, I don't mean that but now that I'm older I certainly wouldn't move.

I don't mean now. Did you have any consideration of leaving in the '40's?

Jean: Well, back in the '30's when I first started teaching, all young people think it's great to get away from home; I thought that was great that I got as far as Champion, 65 miles away.
Paul: How did you get home?

Jean: On the train. Every Friday night on the train and every Sunday night on the train to go back. Not every week, though, I couldn't afford to come home every week.

Paul: What did it cost? A couple dollars?

Jean: It was about $2 and a-half, one

Paul: That's $5.

Jean: Yes, that was $5 every week so I just didn't come home only on payday, once a month.

Paul: When you had a little bit extra then, when things weren't down so close. What other recollections, reminiscences or stories or other things do you remember? In any area--childhood, good times,

Jean: The old Sunday School picnics at electric park, pile on to the street cars and go out there.

Paul: Where was that at?

Jean: It was between Hancock and Calumet; the Traction Company had built a picnic area with every kind of swing and slide imaginable, when I was a child, before I was a teenager. And there was a pavilion out there, I think it was built for dances, and that sort of thing but the various churches would lease it for a day for themselves and then of course the street car company made the money on taking everybody out there. They'd pile them on--about a hundred on a car, they were hanging on, no rules of safety, or anything like that. When I think of it now, the way they were jammed into those street cars, children and grownups, hanging on the outside and everything, I have seen it with my own eyes. And I've seen trains go over the Copper Range tracks up to Freda Park, that was another Park, with people just hanging on, holding on.

Paul: Did they go pretty fast, 20 miles an hour?

Jean: Well, I don't know how fast they went but anything is fast when people are crowded on to a conveyance like that.

Paul: What kind of attitudes did people have towards mining companies? Father didn't talk about it much at home, I suppose.

Jean: He didn't talk about it much at home.

Paul: Do you have any feelings about it?

Jean: Of course I lived through the days of the strike, in 1913, things were kind of bad then. I was just 7 years old but it was kind of a scary time for a youngster and there was some group that call themselves the "citizen's alliance" and I think, (I may be wrong on this, after all I was only 7) that it seems to me the plot of that group must have been opposed to a strike, to have peace and somebody gave me a button, a white button, that said "citizen's alliance" on it and I wore it to school and that was a big mistake because many of these children, whose fathers were strikers just mobbed me after school; they didn't know why, neither did I but they really beat me up. And somehow or another, I couldn't get that pin off my coat and I put my scarf criss-cross around it so it would be covered and then they all yelled at me all the way down the street because I was covering up my "citizen's alliance".
Paul: What did your mother say when you came home? Can you remember?

Jean: I can't remember what she said, but I probably got scolded for getting into a fight, never mind the "citizen's alliance" or the button or anything; no sympathy.

Paul: Was your dad working?

Jean: He was at the mine and he was deputized and he had to carry a "billy club" which I still have here and he had to carry a revolver and it was kind of scary.

Paul: And that was a strike for a long time, 8 or 9 months.

Jean: Yes, and the state militia was here at the time; it was quite a time

Paul: There were some people killed, I know.

Jean:

Paul: In Calumet, and I think up at Coburntown, in that area up on the hill.

Jean: Well, as always at a time like that there are people who get "hot headed" and do things they shouldn't do, and again, it didn't touch me too closely but that incident about the "citizen's alliance" I shall always remember. And I remember there being a big search light up on top of Quincy Hill and they swiveled that around every night to see what they could see, what was going on where it shouldn't be going on; it was frightening to children to see that light.

Paul: Any other specific recollections?

Jean: I can remember my father always saying, that the mining companies were wrong in that they did not allow other kind of industry to come in.

Paul: Um hm, that they closed off

Jean: so that when the mines would be finished there would be something else to take over. He always felt that was wrong. And he felt it was wrong to not promote agriculture or some little industry because eventually mining always runs out

Paul: and he saw it

Jean: and he could see that many, many years ago and he felt quite bitterly about that, that the mining companies were so short sighted

Paul: Well, he was always kind of independent, because he was a construction man

Jean: that's right, he was independent

Paul: but he worked for them, though, built for them but he was independent of them, so he could kind of look from the outside

Jean: that's right so he could get a different point of view.

Paul: Well, that's interesting; lot of people say that, later years

Jean: They say it later but I can remember hearing him say that when I was just a kid and it didn't mean anything to me. Well, I suppose it means something

Paul: What kind of feelings did your father have later in life, when he was in the late '40's and early '50's?
Jean: He still felt that the mining companies had made a mistake.

Paul: Did he feel that the union was a good thing that came in?

Now that I never heard him discuss. He did feel that there was a need for improvement.

um hm, never really talked about that

Jean: But I don't think he ever was in favor of any unions; he felt that there could be improvement made without that sort of thing, but it should have been done by the mining companies voluntarily; I don't think he felt, shall we say, the working man needed to have all the privileges and give nothing because the company is carrying the load of responsibility too.

Why do people call the mining companies "paternalistic"? That they were like the "big father" or that they kind of "ran" the elections, or not ran the elections but had "influence" in them and that they never do little things for people but in some ways that they were not taking care of them but yet not really the best thing always, there were kind of cross-purposes at times.

I suppose. But I think the people that worked for the mining companies certainly had a lot of privileges when you think of medical care for $2 a month or whatever it was, I don't know

Paul: Ya, it was very cheap

the whole family, all the medicines you wanted or needed, all the care that you needed, that in it self, the company provided housing and very low rents,

Paul: that's right, $5 or something

Jean: that's right.

Paul: Although houses were all the same

Jean: well, they were all the same but so were other houses the same at that time; not only my father, but my grandfather before him had that same feeling about mining companies should have allowed other things to come in.

Paul: What happens, when the mining companies bought up all the land?

Jean: That's it!

Paul: They closed it all up

Jean: That's right.

Paul: all the towns, most of them are built on mining company land

Jean: That's right.

Paul: And they still own it today.

Jean: They still own the mineral rights

Paul: Underneath here?

Jean: Underneath right here; there's nothing to say that they couldn't come drive a shaft
They'd probably have one coming down anyway from on top of the hill

no, they'd go the other way

that's right, they do go the other way

nothing comes down under the lake. Many people think the town is undermined but it is not. It isn't like in the iron country.

What other kinds of differences and social changes do you think that there were that were really primary, really significant changes in your lifetime that have made the biggest differences?

Well, as I said awhile ago, social life, if you want to call it that, was strictly within the home, within the families, relatives,

church life

and church. And now my social life, if you want to call it that, wasn't too much in the church either, it was more in the home.

Cars made significant changes.

Cars made the big difference when people could get away from homes and such and they've been getting away ever since! I don't know what's home now but a shelter to many people.

Like to sleep.

A place to sleep! And an address.

Things have changed.

Very different.

Do you think some of the changes have been for good, though? Because generally we've been saying negative things about the changes here

Yes, but I suppose the overall picture, man must progress but you don't see that has it always progressed though?

Is it always progress? Sometimes what is progress is so veiled with something else that we can't see it for progress, like tearing down buildings for roads, and all that, we might say, no, that's not progress but maybe it is. We're here today, we can't see into the future, what's progress and what isn't. And I don't mean by that that I hold with all the tearing down of everything, but sometimes you have to tear down in order to improve. We certainly can't go back to a different way of life.

No one would accept it

Nobody now would, even we who can remember that wouldn't, maybe we think it was so glamorous and it wasn't; we knew nothing else so.

How did people make it through such hard times, we know that those who were born, like I was born/after that time, knows anything about the '30's.
Jean: No, that's right. Well, like anything, you face what you have to face. Whether it's illness or hard times or pain or anything, what comes to you, you have to face it and accept it.

Paul: What did your father do during that time? He's retired now?

Jean: Well, if you call it retired

Paul: semi-retired

Jean: the mine closed and he was through. There was no retirement plan or any kind of pension; that's another thing he always said about the mining company; they had nothing, when you were through, you were through! Like my mother's father was killed in the mine when she was 12 years old, well, what does a widow have to do then? She has to go out and scrub floors or look for another husband; she took in roomers, my father put in all the years of his life for a mining company; so did my grandfather; they didn't get anything when they were through.

Paul: Now they at least got some of that pension.

Jean: But they had the satisfaction of having done a job well and they were reimbursed while they worked.

Paul: Well, when your 65 or 60 when you retire, or when you're out of work, it doesn't always sense back to looking at a building.

Jean: No, but you always had the idea that you had to save it for your future

Paul: Ya, that's true, people don't really want to save today.

Jean: No, and we had to! That's been instilled in me, that's what I've always heard. You always had to put something in the bank for your future. And it's a mighty good thing we did follow that policy.

Paul: The '30's would have pretty tough.

Jean: That's right. They certainly would have been. And they were! We didn't have too much of this world's goods, we had our house, it was paid for and everything.

Paul: Had a garden, I suppose

Jean: Had a garden in the backyard and mother made our clothes as well as she could, sure didn't have any extras. Lived all right.

Paul: Did your dad ever go back to work? No?

Jean: No.

Paul: Because he was all ready elderly, by the time the mines re-opened in '39 or '40?

Jean: that's right. He did go back for 3 years. They wanted him to work out at Mohawk. And he worked there from '26 to '29 and then he was through, the mine closed. So he was 59 at that time. And he never went back.

Paul: He never went back after the bad depression, because there was a short depression in 1920-21 or something like that.

Jean: that's right
Paul: I suppose it was a kind of a...

Jean: That's when the Hancock mine closed down, when we lived here; then he was out of work and my brother was in college at that time and that wasn't too easy either but then after that, in '26, he worked for 3 years and during those 3 years he kind of caught up with himself financially, to make up for those bad years but he never worked after that.

Paul: Any other special reminiscences you want to place on tape?

Jean: I don't believe so. (I don't even want to hear this).

Paul: Thank you very much.

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