FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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Esther Ojala & Lyle Ojala  
July 24, 1973

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SOURCE: Esther Ojala (R)
        Lyle Ojala   (R1)

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Art Puotinen

I: This is an interview on July 24, 1973, with Miss Esther Ojala at her
home at 721 Water Street in Hancock. We'd like to begin, Esther, by
asking you a little bit about your parents and grandparents. Now, as
I understand it, it was your grandparents that came from Finland to
this country, is that correct?

R: Yes, my grandparents and father and mother both came. My father was
about six years old and Mother was in her teens when she came over
with her parents.

I: What region of Finland did they come from?

R: Now, I'm not sure.

I: The central or northern portion?

R: Wait now, what was the name...Lyle, where did our parents come from
Finland?

R1: Oh, from way up north. Good morning.

I: Good morning.

R: This is my sister Lyle.

R1: And from ???)...very far up north

I: I see, very good.

R: Lyle is the one that's kept up her Finnish

R1: Well, I worked in the bank for forty-eight years here in Hancock and
there were a lot of Finnish people to begin with, so I acquired a
Finnish vocabulary enough to carry me on at work and then one for...oh
ordinary conversation; but I'm not that good at it.

I: Well, maybe you'd like to join us here

R: She can sit there.
Oh, I don't know what I could add to this.

R: Oh yes you can...things that I forget.

I: Do you recall for what reasons your grandparents came here?

Well, I remember grandfather telling us that he didn't like czarest rule and he certainly made patriots...made us children feel that we had to love this country when he came. He lived on a farm here up on the Canal Road and on Sunday when he wasn't working, he'd take us for a walk and there used to be a channel for a lighthouse just coming out where the channel was dug in there, and we were allowed to walk in there and it was a narrow path and he said, "Keep right on this path"...(Finnish translation).

R: Really, almost holy ground.

It really was as far as grandfather was concerned

R: And he kept that fence in repair too that it was never...the wires were just straight and cut the grass or the hay from it very carefully.

I: Did grandfather come in the 1890's?

In 1881...they came in 1881. And Mother's parents came ten years later in 1891. They all came with their family...they didn't...they brought their young family with them.

I: Oh, that's very fine. I understand that years ago sometimes the man would come by himself and have to leave the family behind and that certainly was very difficult I'm sure.

R: Yes, they would send what they say, tickitee. Then when the people, the immigrants were coming over here, my father took an interest in the immigrants and very often we had them overnight until they found their relatives and picked them up.

R1: People had a lot more room in their homes then than they do now.

R: For visitors.

I: Now, was it grandfather or father who was the lay preacher?

R1: Grandfather...our father's father, he was a lay preacher. Grandpa Ojala he was a great preacher. I've gone to hear him...oh I used to go with Grandpa...I was the oldest in the family so I always felt that I could go anywhere and they were good, they would take me. So, I heard him preach. I didn't when he conducted a funeral...I don't remember that very well.

I: Was he a very passionate type of person when he preached?

R1: No, very calm. He was not like some...I remember some of the early
ones with a lot of hell and brimstone; but with Grandpa, it was...

R: He was a very gentle man

Rl: Yeah, he was and very deliberate

R: He had a red beard and we would pull it.

Rl: He was good to us kids.

I: Was he a tall man?

Rl: Yes, he was a well built man.

I: Now, if he was a lay preacher then he had regular employment someplace else didn't he?

R: On the farm...worked on the farm.

Rl: It was...then they had...they belonged to this Apostolic Lutheran Church and they had only Rev. Heinninen here in Calumet. So, he had a big territory to cover; but Mother and Dad met at Oscar and they had a big lumbering...it was in those days, the lumbering was the industry. I was born in a log cabin in Oscar and the three days after I was born I was baptized because Rev. Heinninen had come there on Sunday to conduct services and such a storm came up that he was confined there for three days. So he went on skis all over the area there is there any unbaptized children and of course we wouldn't expect to have it that soon, but while he was there they didn't want to wait and be snowed in for the winter...

I: So he came to your home then

Rl: So, he came to the home, yes. The oldest school house is used as a church then...there weren't churches in them days.

I: And the worship services were held in the homes then?

Rl: No...no, they had this little church here on Franklin Street...that has been there since...go on with your...we won't delay you...

I: Well, Esther, maybe you can mention then the experience that Grandfather and Grandmother had when they first arrived.

R: Yes, they landed in Houghton and they were to...the bridge wasn't there they had to cross over with a boat and, of course, Grandmother was worried about living conditions here and she was sure they were going to starve...the children were hungry and Grandfather kept telling her that she didn't have to worry. Oh yes, she was sure they were going to starve. They landed on the dock and got off the boat...there was a paper bag on the dock. Grandfather picked it up and turned to Grandmother and says, "Look...here is a loaf of bread. The Lord has provided for us".

I: Well, it shows that they were out to make the best of their new homeland
From the very beginning they knew there were going to be a lot of hardships, I'm sure.

R: And then, my grandmother in Houghton she had gone to a fortune teller to find out if their life in America would be a happy life. And the fortune teller had told her that she didn't have to worry, that the son would be born in America who would take care of her all her life. So, she was willing to come. And she did have a son born in America and he did take care of her all his life.

I: Is that right. Well, that's very interesting...was that pretty common for some of the older Finnish folk to go to fortune tellers?

R: No, but Grandmother did that.

Rl: That was Mother's mother...but not here...I don't know what they did in Finland...that's the only story we've heard.

R: Yes, that they told us about that.

I: Do you recall any stories that they may have mentioned on the trip over...what was the ride over like? They came by steamship and...?

Rl: Oh, it was a...

R: It was long...several weeks it took them...it was a long and an arduous trip.

Rl: Very very hard trip and there was poor food and no food

R: And they carried with them...we had them years ago...feather pillows and quilts that they had brought with them.

Rl: Well, they knew they could not buy it and they had small children so they had to carry their bedding along with them.

R: My father's mother in her last illness, she was preparing to come to America all through that period when she was in bed and she was packing her things..."Well, we must take this quilt." So, you see, they were full of anxiety when they left and they still carried over with them.

I: Well, when your grandparents did arrive and they found the loaf of bread, what was the next step? Did they have relatives here in Hancock?

R: 

Rl: Well now, I don't think Grandpa Ojala did. He went out and got...I don't know what means he had, but he got a little farm here on Portage Lake. But Grandpa Harju a brother, a bachelor brother that had come here before. So he kind of provided a place for his family and that was during the Cleveland Depression and Grandpa got...the only job he could get was cutting cordwood for stoves and he got fifty cents a cord. Just imagine...fifty cents a whole cord and for stove size. That was up at Oneeko, up here where the airport is that where his brother had...he
had bought a little farm for himself, the bachelor brother.

I: I see, was the stove wood sold to companies then?

R1: No, it was for people who...it was for themselves and everybody had a job there years ago...this was years ago...there's a little bit up on the range yet, you can see in the fall there's a great big row of oak...top (?)' exactly the thing you'd put through a machine. We call it security.

R: Maybe we'll be doing it with our shortage of oil and gas.

Yes, that's kind of disturbing, isn't it

R: Yes, it really is. Father attended school up in Keweenaw County then They moved from...ah, Houghton. Lyle, before he had the farm, he lived in Keweenaw County.

R1: Yes, that's right...they went to Keweenaw County and Grandpa went in the mine for a little while and then he didn't like that, so he got some farmland here.

R: But Father worked in the mine when he was fourteen years old.

I: As a water

R1: Waterboy...said he was a waterboy

Did he ever tell you about the conditions in the mines in those days?

R1: Well not so much. I think it wasn't...

R: It was hazardous because he took us in that old cemetery up in Keweenaw County and he showed us the ages of these people that were killed in the mine and they were very young. Some were fourteen...and ten years old...were killed in the mine, etc. Child labor.

I: I see, so perhaps it was the working conditions that finally drove him to what? Start a farm then?

R: Yes, and he...my father didn't work in the mines

R1: He didn't take up farming either. He worked for awhile when he was a young man, then he was on this Alliason's Lumbering at Oscar. See, there's a little...did you ever go by Oscar Cemetery?

I: No

R1: That's an interesting place to go...you see some of the pioneers there and it belongs to Albert Eliola now...he's in California; but his people are in Oscar and he's put up a little marker there mentioning the founders...

R: The three founders of the community...it's a little in front of the cemetery as you enter it, there's the monument.
I remember the time when it wasn't called Oscar...it was called Ojabetta and then Oscar...my memory wasn't as good as it was seventy-five years ago.

T: Last summer I had an interview with Jack Rohenen and I understand that he passed away.

R: He did

He settled an argument up there for me once. I said that I remember when Ojala buried a man up here...they used to call him Tuskafarri...was a nickname for him and he had a great big white beard. And I was seeing him and I thought they were burying Santa Claus. Then I (?)...and he's buried in the Oscar cemetery. Well, the (?) girl said, "Oh no, that's been so long before your time...you're talking about things that people have told you, not the stories you've remembered". So Jack...they asked Jack and he said, "Absolutely" he said, "that's right that he was at the funeral too". There a little wooden marked up there for Tuskafarri.

R: Dad went to school up in Keweenaw, but Mother didn't go. Mother taught herself her English and she could read the newspapers and write her...she'd write in English to me, but she always called it her "butcher English".

She wrote her list of groceries she'd call into the store, so for now like eggs would be eks so you certainly knew what she meant so she wrote letters to us. She didn't master...she wouldn't write her "butcher English"...well then write a "butcher English" letter for us. She said, "No, you've got to learn to read Finnish". And Mother spoke very good Finnish too. She read a lot.

I: Did she read...did your parents have English language newspapers in the house?

Yes, oh yes and she read them all and she even read English novels and books, history books.

I: That's interesting. So it appears that your parents were very interested in education.

R: Oh yes, very much so.

I: For themselves and also for you.

And us children had to get.

R: Yes, there were eleven of us.

I: Eleven? How many boys and how many girls?

There were seven girls and four boys; but some had died younger but there are only four of us girls left now and Esther and I are the oldest.
I: Is that right

Rl: Our brother died just a week ago.

R: But Mother...you see provide we had to pay for our school books and supplies. There were no free text books then. She would start planning early in the year putting so much aside from Dad's pay check for books so when school opened we came home, told her how much we needed, she had the money ready for us.

Rl: Pencils and paper and...

R: And we had to take good care of our books because they might use them the next year and they went down to our...

Rl: They went down the line.

I: Well, where did you go to school then?

R: Hancock

I: Hancock, now the farm was over in Oscar?

No...no, on this side of the lake but we never lived there to school age.

I: Oh, I see.

It was more or less...Dad would have a job in town during the winter and we would go up there where my Uncle lived with the grandparents. So it was just a parttime farm experience we had. And there was no school and that's one reason then why we moved into town.

R: But I couldn't speak English when I started school and Lyle would tell me that I could not talk Finnish on the school grounds, I had to talk English. And here the little school...

Rl: We went to Ryan School.

R: I didn't go to that one, I went to Central. And there was a great big rain barrel in front and I said to her, "Oh look" in Finnish and she came and slapped me on the mouth. And I said I would...I made up my mind to not talk English again. So, I let her talk all she wanted but I would not talk English.

I: You mean in school?

R: No, with her or the people I was playing with; but in school, oh yes, we talked English in school.

I: How did the different nationalities get along together at school?

R: Well, my recollections that I didn't have any difficulties, but Lyle had a lot of them.
I was always punished. The Finns were kept down. I don't know, Esther must have go in with a different group or something. But Father tells about when he was a young man he wouldn't go out after dark alone...very far in the street. He said...the Irish were the ones that were after us...He said, "Oh, here's a round head", said, "let's get him". And he said the big cowards, he said they wouldn't come one at a time, there'd be a gang of them. So he said he kept away from them. And yet he got to be a friend of the Irish in this town.

R: They called it the Copper Country Irish.

No, but he was the Irish Finn.

R: Yes, the Irish Finn but the Copper Country Irish is what they called the Irish.

Rl: But Dad was the mayor of Hancock

I: Abraham...is that right?

Yeah, that was our father, yes

I: No kidding, well I've read about him, yes. Well, that was your father.

Yes, that was our father, yes. Both are gone, but if Father were living, his birthday was on New Years, he would have been a hundred years old.

I: When was your father elected?

That was, I guess, from 1911 to...oh he had...I don't know, I can't remember.

R: I think it was 1911...he was still...

Rl: When we were in high school.

R: high school...

Rl: Was 1911 to I don't remember how many years. He had more than one term.

I: I know, I've done a little research in Suomitar during the time of the Copper Strike...

R: Yes, he was mayor then.

He was the mayor at that time.

R: I remember how we worried as youngsters during that strike because he was mayor and up in Dodgeville they'd had a murder...

Not Dodgeville, Painesville
R: I don't know where it was...and I used to worry for fear someone would get my father. They had these parades up the street and Father said they could not march unless they carried the American flag in front of the parade and I thought Oh, they're going to get him for doing that.

Now I found it...the Apostolic church was established in 1896.

I: Yes...well that was the year Suomi College was formed too.

That's right, yes, was the same time.

R: Yes, it was near.

I: Well, that's very interesting about your father.

R: The Front Street from the bridge up was paved during my father's

It was a big gully with a wooden bridge over it and something went over it and the bridge broke. So they had to start...

R: The bridge shook and I used to be afraid to walk on it because there was this great big gully. And they washed the sand from up on the hill to fill that gully and build that retaining wall and paved the street and then those walls down below the street.

I: I see, so that was done under his administration.

R: Yes.

I: I see. Your father's political background, was he Progressive? There was a Progressive party at that time, I think.

R: There was at one time...I think when Theodore Roosevelt...Dad was. He met Theodore Roosevelt at the time, I remember that.

Rl: Dad and Uncle Jake went out strong for Roosevelt at the time and the Progressive party; and, of course, they were defeated and that was it for Dad.

R: I remember Dad came home from that meeting with a great big bandanna handerchief with a cowboy hat in the center and said, "My hat's in the ring".

Rl: Yes, Teddy Roosevelt, you see pictures of him, he was such an out- doors sportsman. He would have a red bandanna around his neck, that's where you'll see pictures of him that way.

So Teddy Roosevelt definitely did come to the Copper Country.

R: Yes

Rl: Oh yes, by train. And I remember the train went out at eleven o'clock
at night all the way from Calumet. And I know...Dad and they all met him at Calumet and these men hadda ride back on the train here then. We had two trains out of here.

I: What ever got your father interested in politics?

Rl: Well, he just was interested in public affairs, I guess and then...

R: He was alderman for awhile too

Rl: Yes, he was on the city council; but he was really one of the first of the Finnish. As I said, I felt that I was just kind of shoved around because I was Finnish and we were called "round heads" and a few other things. I think one of the nicest things I heard was a girl, she was so sad, she was marrying a Finnish boy and she came up to me and said, "My mother said she didn't want me to marry a round head". But, you know what I told her, "Mother I can't see any point in your head either." Boy, I wish I'd know that when I was under...Esther says I'm too nationalistic about it.

R: I never had that feeling at all. Maybe I was shy.

Rl: Well, you know, they'd jump rope, you know, the two'd hold and then take turns holding; all right, I was allowed the "turn forevers". They'd come up and say, "Will you turn forever?" That meant I trummed and turned and turned. Never get a chance to jump. I thought, the day will come. I was more antoganistic about it than Esther was. Esther was quiet, she was too shy.

I: What as youngsters growing up...where there some Finnish social groups, temperance activities or what did you do for social life?

Rl: Went of Sunday School.

I: I see

R: Well, summer school in the summer.

Rl: Yes, we always had a Finnish summer school

I: Was that held right here in the church?

R: Right in the church basement. I remember Lyle went in the morning and I went in the afternoon. She was older and she went in the morning and then she could play all afternoon and I had to wait for the afternoon to go. And I didn't like going at all.

Rl: They didn't want you to get your clothes dirty

R: But we had a man teacher.

I: Mr. Hudvulla?

R: Yes, and he...I remember he was teaching us to write Finnish and he
"(?)" and then we were to go on and write, "(?)" I didn't know what that meant. So I had the horse and the cow and the pig and all the words...and he came with the ruler and hit the desk and he said, "You know a cow doesn't do this".

Oh he had discipline all right

I: He was a pretty authoritarian..

R: Oh, very!

He had a great big huge sign that was up in the front that we had to look at all day long...(?)

R: And he...when I read the Legend of Sleepy Hollow years afterward, that old Ichabod Crane was always Mr. Harvulla.

I: Was he a lean person?

R: Yes, very. He wasn't too tall, but very thin.

I: Miss Escol mentioned that she received confirmation instruction from Mr. Harvulla. That Hiddiman had so many things to do that he didn't have time to conduct all the confirmation instructions so he appointed a layman.

Well, that's right, I remember that.

R: But I had the old gentleman when I went.

And I had the young Paul the year he'd been ordained at Synod when he came back here.

I: Well, what did you learn in summer school besides the penmanship?

R: Finnish grammar and catechism, Bible history.

But so that we would read and write fluently, that was one of the main...that we learn to read and write, why they'd follow up in Sunday School.

I: Did the summer school draw only young people from your church or were there other Finnish kids from homes that were not so church minded but sent their kids so that they would maintain that Finnish...

None that I know of.

R: I don't remember of any, just mainly the church.

Rl: Was kind of tight-laced then, you kind of stayed within your church

I: Yes, now was this summer school experience just something distinctive about your particular church congregation, or were there other Finnish groups doing similar things like this for their kids?
Oh there were others, yes.

I: Did you ever attend, I guess it was called, the (?) Hall?
R: No...they were very...our grandparents were very strict with us. We didn't go outside of our own little circle very much.

I: Was this strictness due to religious ties?
R: Religious, yes. And we couldn't go to the movies...
And we couldn't go to the (?) Hall..
R: ...to dance!
I: That's where most of the Finnish dances were held then.
Rl: Yes, of that group, but not church people.

I: When was that hall built? That was before the strike, wasn't it?
R: Yes, it was built before the strike. See, they had a newspaper they published here.

I: We talked about how the kids from the Finnish families got along together with Irish families. How did kids from the church families get along with the kids who were from non-church families?
Rl: Well, I don't think among the children there was any division.
R: No
Rl: Because we had Catholic neighbors we played with and from the Congregational church and Methodist church and we were all together.

R: I used to play with a little Catholic girl, we played school up in her attic and she was always the one to be the teacher. She was always a Nun because she went to the Catholic school. And one day she was teaching me all the Catholic words, transubstantiation...transubstantiation...she didn't tell me what it meant but I had learned to say that word and I don't think she knew what it meant either, but she taught me the word.

I: That was pretty heavy stuff for that age.
R: And I've never forgotten it. Then she went on and said, "Catholics only go to heaven". And I began to cry and I said, "I'm not going to play anymore", and she said, "Oh, Sister said, Cathol-es first, Lutherans second". That spoiled the game, though, I left...I didn't play school with her then after that day.

I: Well that's one of the very interesting things about not only this town but the whole area. There were so many different nationalities it's about as cosmopolitan area as some of the bigger cities.
R: Well, I think in Calumet one time they said they had eighteen
nationalities in their high school

I: Were the...what nationality were most of the teachers? Were they English?

Well I'll tell you among the Finnish and the Irish there was one ambition and they were large families, but at least one had to become a teacher.

R: A great many of mine were Irish. I only had one Finnish teacher, but the rest were all Irish that I had.

They were, but the Irish had the same thing that they had...the Kennedys, the O'Bourkes, the McManns and on and on and on it would go. And then with the Finnish people it was the Escolas, Eillolas, the...

End of Side 1

I: There were Irish and English teachers, as you recall, and some Finns. How do you recall the Finns did as students in school? Did they work hard?

R: Work hard and they did very well and they established the reputation as Finns as being good students and good scholars. And even to this day I check on the honor rolls and you'll find that very very often the valedictorians are Finns. We had three valedictorians in our family.

I: Is that right.

R: I was an honor student too. Lyle was an honor student. Well, we all have been on the honor list. Then one of my sisters was salutatorian at Northern and there's an interesting thing in connection with her, they began to give these tests to get your IQ and she took the test and the Professor came and asked her if she would take the test over. So she said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, I'd like to have you take another test, not the one you just took". She said, "Well, why?" He said, "I'll tell you afterward". She said, "Well, if you'll tell me afterward, I'll take it". And she took it. And he said, "The reason I had you take it over is that your IQ was the highest ever recorded at Northern"...up until that time. And he wanted to verify it with the second test and he said, "The second test came out the same". She was very bright; but she only lived to be thirty-three.

I: When did you yourself first think of becoming a teacher?

R: Well all...from playing school ever since I was this high. I enjoyed school very much although I was shy and retiring; but I could sit back and smile and I loved my teachers very much and they were good to me and I enjoyed it. There were some favorite teachers.

I: Like who?
R: I remember there was a third grade teacher by the name of Miss Mackus and she must have taken special interest in me because she'd single me out for little things because I was shy. She'd put me in a play... I'd never volunteer myself like some. But she put me in a play and she would invite me over to her home after school and she gave me a little tea cup and a little table because I had learned the words or something as a prize. And she taught me to embroider...taught me handwork. We were getting a new baby in our family and she'd heard about it and she wanted me to embroider a set of pillow cases for my mother and I did; so when the baby came she would have these new pillow cases.

I: Well, you graduated from...

R: Hancock

I: In what year?

R: '17...1817. Right during the war.

I: What was it like here in Hancock during the war time? Did a lot of the fellows go off?

R: Oh yes, right...see! we had the Naval Reserves here and most of the boys of the Senior Class or a good many of them belonged to the Naval Reserves and of course they were called out for active duty and during graduation they had their chairs on the platform with flags draped over them. We had our commencement speaker was an old Civil War veteran and the commencement exercises were held in the old Lincoln Hall, the one that burned down; and we had our commencement there. It was so hot and my...and he talked so long about the Civil War and how the soldiers marched from Fort Wilkins all the way down through Green Bay to some Fort and he was in that platoon that marched.

I: Well, the Lincoln Hall before World War I was a Germanian Hall.

R: Germanian Hall and that had to be changed and all the German text-books in high school were burned, they couldn't teach German.

I: Local here?

R: Locally, yes. They used to teach German and French and Latin

I: Was there some sort of Federal....

R: No, that was just, I think, a local ruling to show their patriotism by burning text books.

I: Was it a City Ordinance?

R: I think it was just a school ordinance.

I: I see. Well you, after graduation, you went directly to college?
R: Yes, my father sent me to Northern and then at Christmas time I took this little school in Leminga because Mr. Lee said I would be doing my patriotic duty by taking this school of sixty-three children. I taught in the front of the school and the assistant taught in the back. She had first, second and third and fourth grades and I had the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades and we had to get them ready for State examinations. We had to teach all subjects including orthography and agriculture. The children knew more about agriculture than I did because they lived on a farm. I remember in the spring after the snow had melted, the children came to school very regularly, but when the snow melted some of the boys were absent. So I asked them why they were out of school on those days. Well, one of the boys said, "Well, we had to stay home and pick rocks...yes, my father was plowing and we had to pick rocks". Well afterward I realised that was so because they had these great big heaps of stones that they picked up. Soil was so rockey...glacial deposits and they had to help their parents. But the attendance was very regular and in the Leminga School they were all Finnish children and they had a rule there that you could not speak English...I mean Finnish. They had to speak English. That was the way they learned it and Mr. Holman was the Superintendent. He lived in (?) but he supervised all these little rural schools around the township. He would come down to Leminga on a motorcycle; but he'd stop about a mile before he reached the school so he could come in without our knowing it. There was a kind of a vestibule in front of the school and then the classroom and he would stand in the classroom and listen to see what was going on in the classroom. I had...we had to get them ready for State examinations and I remember we had Wilson's fourteen points that we had to explain to those children. I didn't understand all of them myself; but they had to know the fourteen points so it was mainly memory work as far as they were concerned. They had to know all the words to the Star Spangled Banner because that would be their ranking test...all verses...and the punctuation and spelling and they had orthography tests that they had to pass too.

I: What is orthography?

R: Study of the origin of words and the little markings and the pronunciations. And penmanship counted very much too. The winter months were quite hard in that little school because during the cold weather frost formed up the walls and we couldn't take off our overshoes until about noon. The poor little children that sat around the stove would almost roast and those near the walls would almost freeze. We had the kerosene lights and one big American flag up in front of the room so this assistant and I decided that we were going to get some music for that school because they had nothing. So we had a box social, invited all the young people of the community and we earned enough money to buy a little victrola but no money for records yet. So Dovers gave us one record free and of course we brought records from home; but the record they gave us was called "The Girl I Left Behind"...a war record. And Mr. Bath was County Superintendent at that time and he would call at least once a year at your school; and he came and saw our victrola, so we told him how we got it and we said, "Would you like to hear a record?" So we played "The Girl I Left Behind" and afterward we found out that he had come from
England and he had left his wife in England. She never came to this country.

I: Oh no!

R: But he was a very aristocratical gentleman...he had very gray hair and stood straight as a Pine and he would tell the children "Toe the mark...toe the mark!"

I: You mentioned the Superintendent by the name of Mr. Lee.

R: Yes, H. D. Lee of Northern, he was Superintendent of Schools here in Hancock all during my high school days and from here he went to Waterloo, Iowa, and from Waterloo, Iowa, went to Northern as Superintendent of the Training School. He was a very good administrator. So Northern had him in their Training School and he had critic meetings and so he had criticisms and at that time we weren't allowed to bob our hair. Our hair had to be long. He told us that he would not recommend any girl...there were no boys at Northern then...who cut her hair. It was undignified. We had to have our hair done up and our skirts had to be so many inches below the knee and they dictated everything that we wore. You wouldn't get by with that today.

I: No, that's right. You mentioned that you had an assistant at the Leminga School, who was that?

R: The first year I had Helma Harry, she was from Dover...the Dover Creek up here; and then Nan Eillola was there the next year as my assistant.

I: You were mentioning a very colorful scene when you first arrived there with your father, would you describe that.

R: Oh yes! Father had hired a horse...it was Sunday...from Misula's Livery Stable. We started out and it was a very stormy cold day. I had a jug of hot water around my toes and a great big bear rug over me and when we got to the Leminga Corner, Father had to take a shovel and shovel a path for the horse to get through because it was such a big drift there. We got to Leminga and the house that I stayed...you had to stay at a house where there were no children...and there was only one house that did not have children, was Macallas and was not too great a distance to the school; but in the winter we went on snowshoes across the field. And the children came on skis to school. There were no buses in those days. And then, of course, the house that we stayed, we had a room upstairs, was an unfinished room and no heat up there, was a cold room, but we had tons of quilts over us and we put on mittens and a cap and stockings and a great big bathrobe over our nightclothes to keep warm. And when we woke up there was frost and ice on the blankets where we had been breathing and had to crack that off first. We stayed well though and enjoyed it.

I: Well, those Copper Country winters were really fierce.
R: They were fierce.

I: Was there any particular year when there was a fantastically large snow storm that you can think back?

R: Well, they were all more or less with snow; but some years were like last year that we had here where the snow wasn't too great.

Stop in tape.

R1: Well, pulled by a team of horses, it was heavy enough to press the snow down and the streetcar track was in the middle so there was this little opening for the streetcar and you could almost just touch the top of the streetcar from Calumet.

I: Is that right

When all the snow was removed.

R: I know one of the anxieties as children was crossing and be sure that we could get across because it would get icy before the car came. Well, we enjoyed the cars in the summertime because if we had a nickel we could get on in Hancock and take a ride over to Franklin Square and back again if you didn't get off for that nickel, Took us to the end of the campus.

R: Well, isn't that Franklin Square?

No, Franklin Square is where you get on College Avenue.

R: Well, where it turns around there where those big rocks are

Well, it went that way. It went that way and came back on College Avenue and for five cents if you didn't get off you could get right home again.

R: That was our Sunday afternoon amusement if you had a nickel.

I: Were there a lot of people generally on the car?

R: Sometimes, it depended on the hour; but like in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon, we'd take it.

I: Now was the car, trolley car, was that run by one of the mining companies?

R: No, that was a company attraction car. Where Thornton has his offices in West Hancock was the old...

Was the car barn. People still call that the area car barns.

Coffee chatter
I: Well, how long were you at the Leminga School then?

R: Three years and then from there I went to Franklin Township. I used to take the streetcar from Hancock and we'd get off at what was called the Electric Park, and walk through the woods to Highway, it was called at that time beyond Boston; and that school was supposed to be a Standard School. It had two rooms; I had one and the other teacher had the other room and they were to get inside toilets, but they weren't put in yet. And the room that I had they had a lot of discipline in that school, and for the first two weeks I came home and cried. I said, "I'm not going back tomorrow". But morning would come and said, "I'll try it another day". They were fighting, those youngsters were constantly fighting and if I'd turn to write something on the board, they'd throw an eraser or something at me. And if I opened the window, one of them would jump out. So, one morning I was thoroughly disgusted with them because up in Leminga I didn't have to raise my voice; so I thought "Well, it's this or I'm going to quit." So I got up and told them that if there was one fight in this school, I was going to be right in the middle of it. And I said, "I mean it!" So the children quieted down and we had our arithmetic and then we had our break for recess and two of the boys, the minute they got in the vestibule began to fight. So I went out and grabbed them and I bumped their heads together and brought them back into the room; put one in the boys' toilet room and the other in the unfinished girls' toilet room and locked the doors there so they couldn't get out. Dinner time came, I put their lunches under the door and after school I stayed 'til five o'clock. I missed my four-thirty street car, stayed 'til five and take a later car and I could hear sobbing. So I opened one and I said, "What's the matter with you?" He said, "I thought you had gone and forgotten me". So we had our little talk, he was perfectly subdued so he left and said good-by to me and I took the other one out and we had the same session and that cured them. And that was the first year that their eighth grade had passed the State examinations.

I: Is that right. Just because you took them by the.

R: By the butt.

Stop in tape.

I: You mentioned that between terms you'd go for some special training to some different schools.

R: Yes, well in my work, for instance in Newberry, we were part of...I was Elementary Principal in Newberry for thirty-two years...we were part of the University of Michigan Experimental Schools. They were experimenting on standard tests and we were one of their schools that they chose because we were small...seven hundred students, so they felt they could get something from that; and we had these standard tests and all these terms that they had on them...error of probability and all that...that was Greek to me; so I decided well I've got to go and find out about that. So I went to the University of Wisconsin and took a course in Educational Statistics. Then
another time we were interested with the State Health Department... the children's health. They were having some... before Cousins came in with his children's program into the community. The State Health Department had a County Nurse and so we were interested in how children grew. So I went to the University of Minnesota and took a course at the Child Guidance Institute there for growth of children, educational growth and physical growth. Then I had gone to Columbia because I wanted to know about reading. Reading was important. And Dr. Gates was at that time being quoted so much everywhere, his method of teaching. So I went there to find out about Dr. Gates' teaching. And I went to National Teachers' College and I liked that about the best of any because I felt they were advancing in their ideas of education for children. They had a little chance to experiment because they were a private school rather than State supported and I enjoyed their approach to child growth and style of child training. So I went back there for several courses in psychology and then we had so many children that had to stay in school during the noon hour and in winter it was a problem to know what to do with the children because we couldn't send them out, it was too cold. So I took a course in dramatics, court speaking and handicraft so that I could introduce those during the noon hour. So we had a little... down in the basement we had a little place and we had a place where the children could go down and make some things. We had paper and left overs that they used for handicraft and then the auditorium where they had little plays, we'd invite all of them to come up there; and then another little room where they had games to take care of them during the noon hour. And my interest... after I got my Life Certificate with... the studies were not for a degree but for my work. The things that I needed and the school needed in order to have an up-to-date little school. And that's why I stayed in Newberry because each year had some interesting little project for me beside the actual teaching.

I: I believe Fr. Reinhart served a pastorate in Newberry.

I: 

R: Yes he did. And he spoke very highly of the local people and what was being done there. I suspect you had quite an interest in education with the State employees at the hospital and their children there, many attending your school.

R: Yes, that's right. And the State Hospital was very helpful. If we... see we had no psychologist... if we had a problem child, they would help us out. They'd take them and give them their tests up there and make their recommendation to us. And the State Health Department too; for instance, one little girl in the kindergarten. The Mother thought she was dull and the kindergarten teacher had me come in and observe her too. We found out that she wasn't dull, that she was deaf and the Mother hadn't discovered that. So we... I talked it over with the Health Department; so the Health Department made arrangements for that mother to take that little girl to Marquette for ear tests... hearing tests. And they recommended that she be allowed to go to Bay Cliff Health Camp; and so she went to Bay Cliff Health Camp that year and learned lip reading and also got a hearing aid and how to use that hearing aid. And that little girl has...
become a teacher herself.

I: Is that right. My, that's fantastic

R: And the mother never forgot that. She said, "I was so sure my Helen was just dull, couldn't learn". But she hadn't realized that it was her hearing. There were other cases where we were able to work with the State Health Department and the local County Health Officers and during the epidemic of polio, Newberry was hit very hard.

I: Well, when was that?

R: Oh, that was in the thirties. I don't remember the exact year, but it was in the thirties when polio was going around before they knew the Salk tests and all that. And Newberry was hit hard, they had many deaths and every day there was one poor little child being taken to Marquette to the clinic there and to the hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, and the nurses there had to do artificial respiration, you know like you do, and the fellow in Newberry invented the first pulmator. He took a vacuum cleaner and with that he learned the rhythm where they press the chest down and up and he made the first until they could get the regular. And they used that to relieve the doctors and the nurses that were working on the children. Alba Morris was the Superintendent at the hospital...children's hospital in Marquette and she was a very good friend of mine. I worked with her for six years when I was away to summer school at Bay Cliff Health Camp. One year I was in charge of dramatics there for the children. One year I was in charge of the Sunday School for the children. Another year I was assistant to Miss Morris, she was the camp director and another year I was in charge of the cardiac children during the night. And another I had charge of the boys' dormitory at night.

I: Oh, that was a good one.

R: That was interesting because that year every year we had a birthday party that included birthdays for everybody. Henry Ford that year was up at his Huron Mountain Club and we knew about it so Miss Morris had my group write a letter to him inviting him to come to our square dance because he was interested in square dancing. So he accepted our invitation and came with these beautiful people, Mrs. Ford along too; and they came and watched us square dance. Miss Morris put me in charge of Mrs. Ford and the children were very interested in them. And one little girl came up and said, "Mrs. Ford, is that a real diamond you've got?" And she looked at her grinning and she said, "I think so, would you like to look at it?" And the little girl said, "How beautiful!" But they were very fascinating people to have. Then Henry Ford came after...during the next week during the day. He wanted to see the camp during the day. And he took a lot of the children who had...in need of surgery down to his hospital in Detroit for special treatment. They were his guests and he would call on them at least once a week to see how they were getting along or if there was anything they needed and he gave us a whole library of books for camp. And he took care of dental needs of the children.
We had a doctor who would come in from Marquette and a dentist who stayed right there and fixed the teeth of the children. But he said that if there were any special needs for correction he would take care of them in Detroit. So we brought them down there and some of them came back with braces. He was very interesting. Then he came back to sign all their guest books. They had autograph books and he would sign them and he took a whole afternoon to sign...we had over a hundred children...and sign their books for them and then he played his jews harp for them. He was interested in a little jews harp and he was pretty good at it too.

I: About how old a man was he at that time?

R: Oh, I couldn't tell ages. He was still very spry then. I know he told us how Dr. Campbell from Newberry was a friend of his and I was telling Dr. Campbell about that afterward that I'd met Henry Ford and Henry Ford said you were a friend of his. He says, "Yes" he remembers that very well. He was at Newberry and he took him for a ride around the country roads and the car didn't work right. So, he said, "I know what's the matter with this" and he said, "We're gonna make that correction on these cars next year". Something in the bumps that they had.

Stop in tape

R: Alba Morris, she was a gem. She had a way of bringing...making you feel you could do anything. Just the way she approached it, you could do it. You didn't say no to Alba Morris, you did it.

I: Well, you worked in Newberry during the thirties which were really the hard times in this country.

R: Yes, and we had during the Depression, we were paid. We were lucky in Newberry. We didn't get raises and got cuts, but we got our pay. We had an old German on the School Board and he got the idea that they should have only local girls teaching there because of the Depression and we should be sent back to our own town. Let each town take care of their own. Well, they figured out how many they'd have to take in Newberry and they couldn't possibly have that many positions for them. So then he gave up that idea and we were glad.

End of Tape 1

I: You were mentioning the children from the lumbercamp.

R: Yes, and they didn't have work...their fathers were out of work and of course there was no relief in those days and in the fall before school opened some of the children couldn't come to school because they didn't have clothes. So we had organized a committee called United Service and they were women from each of the churches and they got clothes for these children. And then we had a fund that was raised for shoes and I would go with the County Nurse to find out why these children weren't in school. And if we found that it was lack of clothing, then we sent these United Women to find out
what clothes they needed and they would get the clothes from rummage sales and so on, and then they'd buy shoes so that the children could come. Then we found that they didn't have any lunches and they hadn't had breakfast a lot of them and we found them back of the stores... the grocery stores where they would throw out their bananas or cabbages or onions and the children would rummage in those; and when we found that they were eating those we organized a hot lunch of our own. See there was no hot lunches then in schools; so we organized our own...women of the community took turns in preparing the meal and we asked for donations. The farmers would bring in potatoes and carrots and the women would fix up whatever they had and maybe the stores would donate a soup bone or something and we were able to feed the children, give them a good meal at noon and that was done in what we call the Community Building because they had facilities there. We didn't have those facilities in school for hot lunches then. And we did that until the government began to have hot lunches. Then we could hire a person and set up kitchen in our school, set up a lunch room in our own school. And then the Milk Program came in and the children got milk; and we had the right to recommend who should have the free lunches and who should pay. So that way we felt that everybody who deserved it got theirs, whether they were on welfare or not. Some of them were large families that needed that help.

I: I remember reading in a periodical called the Agricultural World or something that I think it was around 1936 or '37, now were you still there then?

R: Yes

I: That some of the lumberjacks came in town and there was quite an incident.

R: Oh yes! They would come in on Saturdays too and we didn't go out on the streets. Friday night was our night to go out. But Saturday nights were pretty wild. The Murphy House and the Greasy Spoon... a street in Newberry where they would congregate. Then some of them...I remember one of the men telling me that his friend was coming into town, that he had his payday. He said, "He would come in and he'd give me his payday all but a dollar or two, and he would go out and spend that. Then he'd come back and when he had too much he told him...don't give it to me if I've had too much." So, he wouldn't give it to him and sometimes he'd get quite angry at him for not giving it to him; but Monday morning would come around after he'd slept and he had to go back to camp he'd thank him for not letting him spend his whole money. Some of them were quite wild. Up in Seney they used to say they got almost to killing when the lumberjacks came into town. We had Indians also. The Indians were quite a problem because they were rather shiftless. I had a boy in my room come the first day of spring, he'd be absent and we'd know where he was. He was out in the fields. One day too, I saw him getting ready to go out so I had a little Ford coupe...so I went along and let him just stretch out under the tree to take his coat off and stretch out and I says, "All right, come on Robert, you're coming back to school". And another little fellow was very
there in the morning but he wasn’t there in the afternoon. So I called his mother and she said, "Yes, I sent him". We had an attendance officer and I sent him to look for him. He found him under a tree. He was just a second grader. So he brought him up to my office and I said, "Why didn’t you want to come to school today?" He said, "Oh Missus, I wanted to come but my feet kept going".

I: Oh, that’s interesting. Did you stay in Newberry until you retired then?

R: Yes, I stayed until I retired and then I wanted to do something so I went and asked Fr. Boushway if I couldn’t help the Sisters because I knew they had reading problems.

I: That’s at...

R: At St. Joseph’s here. And I knew they had large classes and you haven’t time to give individual attention, so I asked if I might help them with their reading because reading is one thing that I’ve stressed in the school very much. So she said, "I’m not going to let you teach reading, I’m going to let you take a grade". So, I taught eight years over there and that got to be my fifty years of teaching.

I: Is that right. Now, is this the original Ojala home?

R: No, we’ve lived here forty years.

Rl: Forty-eight years...she doesn’t like figures. She likes reading but not arithmetic. There’s one thing about this house, this was...I just don’t know when it was built, but it’s a long long time ago. One of our brother-in-laws...I always think I’m the mother of the family when I talk...his grandfather built this house but never lived in it and then he sold it to a man who was an official up in the Quincey Mine and he lived here for years and years and then he moved to Oregon and then he rented this house. This house has never changed hands except from the original owner to us in 1925.

Stop in tape.

I: So, some of the lumberjacks...

Rl: Some of the lumberjacks would come in for Saturday for the weekend and they had their payroll, they’d come in the bank and cash it. Some would have accounts and said well, "I’m not going to spend all this so they’d put it in their account". Well, the bank would open on Saturday and Saturday evening so they would be back, the money was gone by then. Well, with some of them I tried to persuade them to leave their money here, well some of them got so obnoxious and noisy that you couldn’t help them. Then some of them who I was able to hold out on, they’d come in Monday morning and they’d (?). But oh there were some I remember in particular, I just thought, here he is again. And then other customers here around, my grand-
father Harju, he put his money in the Ruppe Store. That was where the Northern Sportswear is now, that was the Ruppe Store. And they would accept money from people and they'd pay a certain percentage and then they'd have food credit at the store. You could run your credit to any extent and they paid dividends on it. So grandpa had enough and then he built homes, Ruppe did, he financed homes. So grandpa did his through the Ruppe Store, he built his home and it's still there and occupied over by the high school.

R: Mother's father.

My mother's father

I: Are you related to the Harju's...Matt over in the Falls area?

No

I: There are a lot of Harju's. That's a common name.

Yes, that's a very common name. Just as Ojala's a rather common name around here, but my father had only one brother and he had only one son that is living too. Now our John is gone and John had two sons, so...

I: I've seen your father's name spelled as Abram. Was it Abraham or Abram.

Well, it was always...I think maybe it was Abraham to begin with, but shortened to Abram here. I noticed in the modern translation of the Bible, you see Abram.

R: Well, there's an explanation for it in there some place. I read it Why it was shortened.

I: One question more we've been trying to ask too when you mentioned about the lumberjacks coming to town and having them kick up their heels on Saturday, how was the level of crime or vandalism? Did the law enforcement officers have everything pretty much under control?

R1: Well, there was none of the juvenile delinquency, not to the extent that we would hear about it. Somebody would probably raid somebody's apple orchard or something like that, but not real bad. And we did...see people staggering along the street.

I: So drunkenness was a problem.

Was a problem and they always said that the Finnish did not know how to drink.

I: They knew how to drink but they didn't know when to stop.

Yes, they know how but they didn't know their limit. And then they played cards...they were all called saloons, they didn't have the fancy name tavern for them...so we went out a lot and played cards were not allowed to play
at home because that was a sin.

R: It was a saloon game.

I: Now were these cuppaka's, I guess that's what they called them.

R: 

I: Were they owned by the Finns or were there other... 

R1: There were some Finns...there was Tuscarora Street was full of Finnish

R: Well I remember as a child how I used to worry about wooden-legged men. It was right after the war wasn't it?

R1: Oh no, Esther, these were former...they were lumber...

R: ...injuries, but they had lost their legs and they would be beggars and they would come around and see, there was no welfare, so they would beg and the people would help them out. And we had many of them come to our door because they knew my dad was a public officer.

R1: Well not the later years so much as the earlier years

R: Yeah, but they came then too and the immigrants, they'd take them in...Mother and Dad would take them in and if there were no more beds left they'd put them on the floor with carpets and pillows to sleep on the floor.

R1: Until they found a place...those that didn't have relatives. But we didn't have any relatives come from Finland after our grandparents came here. We lost all contact after that. They were so busy earning a living so there was no word so we don't know.

I: Was your father acquainted with some of the people associated with the college for example, Jasburg and McAmber, J. T. McAmber?

R1: Well, he wouldn't have been associated with them so much, but he was well acquainted with them.

I: Well then did you as a family attend the Apostolic Church?

R1: 

I: And your father was active...was he...

R1: Well no, my father wasn't too active in anything outside of his politics and his business. He was just another...

R: Citizen

R1: But Mother was very active. She taught Sunday School there...

R: Until everyone had attended. We had...two brothers of mine,
Saturday night you had to get ready for Sunday School and they were studying their catechism and one of them...which commandment is Thou shall not covet?

Rl: Well it was like the explanation, he said (?), you know, that expression.

R: And he...the one brother turned and said, "What do you suppose that means". He says, "I guess that means you're not supposed to go in other people's houses and wash their clothes". So Mother heard that and she came out, she said, "Now you go up to the college and get an English catechism".

Rl: She said that it was foolish for us to try and teach it and they're not getting anything out of it. So then from there on we went to English classes. But they did try to preserve the Finnish as they could with the children.

Stop in tape

I: Esther, you wanted to mention about the children's fund.

R: Yes, Alba Morris was really...she had been traveling around the Upper Peninsula from the Health Department and then she heard about the children's fund...Cousins finding and starting the Children's Fund of Michigan. He put, I think, seventeen million dollars, if I remember correctly, into a fund that was to be spent within so many years...I think it was ten years time...for the children of Michigan. And the reason he did that, they were having a strike at General Motors and the strikers were out in front of the plant and he saw them turn a hose on these children and he said, "That must never happen again". So he wanted to repay these children of Michigan in some way so he founded this fund to take care of their health. So, Miss Morris heard about that and she said that she wanted to be a part of that, so she went to the Cousins' fund, the founders of it, and asked if she couldn't work up in the Upper Peninsula. She was a Red Cross nurse at the time and they said, "Yes, she could". And she was leaving so, "You didn't ask how much you want". She said, "I don't care about that, I want the job". So she came up and she and a woman doctor, Dr. (?) went around the Upper Peninsula examining children in the schools. And they found that there were a lot of children up here that if they could get oh six weeks of good care, they probably would not be ill and have these childhood diseases that they had. They could get at the root of it before it really got to be a problem. So they decided they would have a camp for children, take them in summer months and they searched the Upper Peninsula and they were riding one Sunday afternoon and they saw this great big old abandoned house and farm. And they investigated and found it belonged to a Reynolds family, very wealthy family from Chicago and they had lost their money during the Depression and it had just gone down and they were ready to sell. So she had the Children's Fund of Michigan buy that farm and they started up Bay Cliff Health Camp as it is today. And we
had the privilege of sending our children there and did a lot of work. We had a dentist that was full time right in the school building and we had these nurses that came up and Dr. Goldie that came in and examined the children. Then from their examinations and those that could stand it, were sent to Bay Cliff Health Camp. They had some who had had rheumatic fever and they felt that if they had been physically up to par they probably wouldn't have caught the rheumatic fever. And then they would have the people with hearing and vision difficulties and all these poor little kiddies that had after effects of polio, limping and arms that wouldn't work and so on, so they would get treatment and therapy and they could help them. And it was the most fascinating camp because you had all the different types. Now they've had cardiac camps and orthopedic camps, but here they took speech, hearing, everything and all these children lived together. You may have a group of ten children, maybe you'd have one cardiac, maybe three orthopedics, maybe the rest were speech...normal, could carry on normal activities. But the children got so that the one with the heart condition would say, "I'm not as bad as he is and I can use my hands". And the one that had maybe something wrong with his arm would say, "Well, I can run and that poor little kid can't run, can't go in swimming like I can." And so it gave them a perspective and an attitude for their own disabilities which was really wholesome. And the children's fund took care of all that. Then, of course, with Infantile Paralysis Funds additional help and then the local communities began to help out. Now it's an all year project, I guess. But it was really rough...I stayed in what was the chicken coop. We called it the crows nest. That was cleaned out and we had bunks up there where we slept in the chicken coop...the crows nest. And the cardiac children were in a house it's quite paradoxical because the Reynolds would not allow any children on their farm. They had prize dogs and they raised prize dogs and horses on that farm and now the farm is overrun with children. And we had so much fun. We had the beach and when it was weather, we had one of the boys test the water or the counselors test the water to the temperature, and that was announced at breakfast table. If the water was warm a certain type of flag would go up and then we could go for a swim. And every morning we had a weather forecast there. One of the campers would announce, read in the paper..."Today it will be 80 degrees!" Miss Morris was a woman with lots of ideas and lots of pep. She herself was a twin and there were twelve children in the family that she came from and then her twin sister died and she had several children, she took the youngest and raised them and they all turned out very well. The Children's Fund did do a lot of good in the Upper Peninsula. Then, of course, the funds ran out...they had to be spent in that amount of time.

I: Were the funds ever used here in the Copper Country?

R: Oh yes, each county could send so many to that. But we were so close to it in Newberry that we really I think got those that really deserved it and really would benefit by it. I remember one little girl that came back. She came...we sent her there to build her up because she really wasn't sick but she wasn't well. And she just
loved it because she had a bed of her own and when she came back she began to lose the weight. We'd check these children and send a report back to the fund, how they were getting along. And she was losing weight and we asked her why she was losing weight, why wasn't she staying this way. She said, "I can't sleep in that bed, there's so many in it". See, she wasn't getting her rest. So, we scouted around and we got a little cot for her to put in her little tar paper shack where she lived.

I: Well, it's been a very very good life and a lot of significant personal relationships.

R: Well, I've found it very interesting, I still find it interesting.

I: Oh sure. Do you ever go up to the...oh the school is closed now

R: Yes, it's closed now. It was a very nice little school and we didn't have but about two hundred children and living there in those surroundings was like a little happy family. It was nice for me because I didn't have the full responsibility.

I: Well, thank you very much Esther.

R: Well, you're entirely welcome.

Stop in tape

Rl: Yes, the First National Bank of Hancock, maintained the Foreign Department and they sold Finn marks and advertised oh in the Canadian papers and the...there were a lot of Finnish publications throughout the country, and they run ads in the news, and we wired our rate of Finn marks per dollar. And then they would send remittances to the bank (?). And Emil Tolenen was the originator and he had charge of that. Then Emil...let's see, what did he do? Well, Emil became ill and he gave up the bank; but they continued that but it wasn't as big a deal as it was when Emil was there; but for years and years we sent an awful lot of money over to Finland and then people had relatives over there and would help them out. And then some built up bank accounts for their visits over there. When there was a favorable market, the market fluctuated, the number of Finn marks for a dollar, they built up bank accounts and interest. And that went on and on well after the First National Bank closed, why the bank did not go into that.

R: Didn't you have a customer at a prison in Minnesota that used to send you money? The one that, you remember, thought you were a man?

Rl: Oh, he wasn't a prisoner

R: Well, there was some prisoner too that you told me about.

Rl: Well there were various kinds. I don't remember a prisoner, but I remember this old man coming and he was a regular sender and this day he came in and he stopped and asked one of the men where
Mr. Ojala was. Of course they all didn't know the pronunciation in the bank, so he says, "Well, right down there". So he came down here and (?)...a great big laugh and he says, "This is fine". He says, "My wife told me sure to go to see Mr. Ojala and give him my regards and thank him for how well he's taken care of my business". He says...I was young in those days, you know...He says, "Now I can go home and tell her I met a nice young Finnish girl". But for them it was big business.

I: Were you involved through the bank...I think there was some kind of Finnish program...Help Finland Program that was war relief in around the...during the winter war time.

Rl: Oh yes, and that is where people personally helped their relatives and their friends. They would send these tremendous...we would make out a money order...we had special money orders for that...and we would give them a receipt and we would cable it over or air mail.

I: Were there ever any goods sent over?

Oh the Suomi College had a big program on that. They collected and sent a lot of packages of clothing...good used clothing.

R: And my mother had a coat and someone told her to put...

My Auntie Emmy, had been there, she put it in.

R: Yeah, but Mother didn't put it in and she got the nicest letter from Finland thanking her for the coat that she received.

Oh, we had even (?) accounts that we paid that you could draw a check on it...in Finland out of your savings account in this country in dollars and convert it over there. Instead of carrying regular travelers checks if you were going to Finland, we gave them these checks that they could draw against that savings account at the First National Bank of Hancock. And then Emil opened another bank account in Finland, but that didn't go so long because Emil got ill.

I: Now was Emil Tolonen was he related to...there was an early minister named Carlo Tolonen in the Suomi Synod.

I really don't know whether he was or not.

I: Tolonen I guess is a fairly common name too.

Not quite as common as some of them. No, Emil had some sisters. I know one of them was a teacher and then he had a brother that was a lawyer and his people were just ordinary, but they educated some of their family. But Emil was sharp, he was a very bright man. But he had not been to Finland. He was born, I think, in this country, but he decided that...he made a pretty penny out of it too, we
weren't in it for our health.

R: That was the day before they devalued the dollar.

Rl: Oh yes, the dollar was worth quite a bit. And then, oh after the war, the Finn marks they got to be about thirty for a dollar because for awhile they were very depressed, you know, after the war.

I: After the winter war?

Rl: After the winter war, yes. But I don't know what the rate is now. I'll have to stop in the bank someday and see if they keep those cards anymore.

How did the stock market crash affect the local banks here?

Rl: Well, the First National survived because at that time because they were in this corporation, see. So they had plenty of money to stand behind them. But the Superior Bank had to freeze some of their funds...impound them...and it took awhile...I went back to the Superior in 1941, and during that period they paid out the balance of what they paid percentage wise to get their depositors...so no one lost any money in the Hancock banks or the Houghton banks; but they did impound the funds. But First National Bank had funds from the corporation, they didn't have to do that.

I: Now, are you talking about the F.D.I.C. or which corporation?

Rl: No...no, the First bank's stock system which owned the bank. See, they bought the bank and gave you so many shares of their stock for First National Bank's stock. This was in 19...just before the crash. So the people got a good deal on it at the time, it would have been no good later.

I: Well, it's very interesting.

R: These are old tales.

Stop in tape

I: We were trying to find out a little bit about Mr. Hanchett too.

Rl: Well Mr. Hanchett was Hanchett and Lochlan, they were a law firm...(and I was in high school at the time and one of our classmates died of an injury. So, we went to the funeral...he was buried in Houghton in the Jewish cemetery. That's the first time I knew there was a Jewish cemetery in Houghton. He was a Jewish boy. And Mr. Hanchett's daughter was in high school so he took, I think there were five of us in an open touring car and we went to the funeral in that. And that was the first time I had an automobile ride.

I: And this was in 1919?
This was...

R: Before 1919

Before '19 because I was in high school. It was about in 19....

End of Side 1