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>Moved from Ottawa to Detroit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Finn-Irish marriage</td>
<td>1,10,11</td>
<td>Mentions Von Platen-Fox lumber comp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression--Getting food (Mass City)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A good informative talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community worked together</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic groups, Baltic Mine, 1902</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913--Mine wages and working conditions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early formation of unions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became an American citizen 1936</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The depression &amp; patriotism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Republican area--office holders worked for company</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining company gave land to churches</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Irish Hollow Church--Rockland 1840's</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia's parents came from Finland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother ran a boarding house--Lake Mine</td>
<td>6,7</td>
<td>Good account, factual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister would come to boarding house</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Name was Rankila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 Strike--Christmas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbercamp life</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home remedies--Wizard oil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauna--Rolling in snow</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lualla Davey, her first teacher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Why kids liked her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the English &amp; Finnish language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic relationships</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's philosophy on life</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative by Jim O'Meara</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lumbercamp</td>
<td>1298</td>
<td>Very good factual description--A long narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A leaky camp roof</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>Humorous experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting a tree--A greenhorn</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>Good story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasshoppers were a problem</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a wind-powered generator</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An inexperienced deer hunter</td>
<td>1302</td>
<td>Good anecdote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to understand an old Finn</td>
<td>1302</td>
<td>Funny story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otter Siding in the early 30's</td>
<td>1303</td>
<td>Gives names of families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A deer hunting story</td>
<td>1304,1305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting bear</td>
<td>1305,1306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinning &amp; eating a bear</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag gun-trap for bear</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>Good story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on bear being dangerous</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview with JAMES & LYDIA O'MEARA
by Art Puotinen July 13, 1972

Art: I'd like to follow up our conversation, Jim, by asking you--your parents were in Ottawa, Canada, and you left there and went to Detroit.

Jim: That's right.

This was quite a momentous change in your life, you were leaving one country and coming to another and beginning a new life and this must have been something that really stands out in your mind. What kind of feelings did you have coming into Detroit to begin your new life?

Well, it was quite a decision to make in the first place to decide to go to Detroit 'cuz I had been out of work 9 months previous to that. And being out of work it was quite a problem to scrape up enough money to get the train fare. But I was fortunate in having friends from Ottawa living in Detroit at that time so that I was going to their place to stay until I could find work. And they put me up, but Ottawa not being near as large as Detroit, it was rather a big change.

Art: '28, that was just on the brink of some difficult times for America and you also met your wife in Detroit.

Yes, Lydia and I met in Detroit at the Graystone Ballroom. Of course it's not like it's today. The Graystone Ballroom in those days was considered a very fine place.

I think this has to be one of the more interesting match-ups; here we have an Irishman getting acquainted and finally marrying a Finn. Was there any kind of feeling on the part of Irishmen that you knew and Finns that Lydia knew that this was either a good idea that an Irishman and a Finn should get married or were there some mixed feelings?

No, I don't think so. When I first met Lydia, I asked what her name was and she said "Sowko". Well, in Detroit with a great number of Polish people, and I was boarding in a house adjacent to the Polish section, it seemed anybody with a lot of "S"s", "K"s" and "Z"s" was Polish so I thought she was Polish. Of course it didn't make any different whether she was Polish or Eskimo or what but it was hard to believe and that was the first time I had ever met a Finn. As to my friends which were mostly Irish in Detroit and most of them came from Ottawa as well, they didn't seem to say anything about it; of course it wouldn't have made any difference anyhow. But afterwards they found that I had married a very fine girl. (Of course I straightened her out). Laughter.

And you had a couple of years together in Detroit?

We were married in '28, August 7, and that same year----in 1929 we went home to Canada on my vacation and then the following year we came up here to this country on her vacation and that's when I got acquainted with her relatives. When we went home Mother was rather curious to know what a Finn looked like but she told Lydia and Lydia could tell you also, that she was a little bit skeptical about me marrying a Finn but after they got acquainted, she told afterwards that was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Art: So you finally moved to the Copper Country during the depression?

Yes, on Decoration Day weekend, 1930, we stayed a week and then we went back to Detroit AND I worked until the later part of July and I got laid off. Because that was after the crash and the depression was coming off. So we had a few dollars which didn't amount to very much but with the piece of land we're living on now, we were very much interested in obtaining it.
2.

From whom did you purchase it?

Jim We purchased the land from the Von Platen-Fox Lumber Company. It used to be Camp E; it was logged during the winter of '25-'26. But we figured we better get something or else we wouldn't get anything. So in October of 1930 we made the down payment and signed a land contract for the land and then on the 5th of November, 1930, I went back to Detroit; Lydia had been working at the Bell Telephone Company down there, and we both came back up here to stay then. That's when we first took up house over here, which is a long time ago.

Art: During those depression years up here, I imagine a lot of people were out of work and trying to find shelter and food and whatnot, you mentioned the local township supervisor.

Jim: That was Lesty McGeggy. I'm not sure if it was the spring of '31 or '32 that he was elected as Supervisor but we had heard--like you mentioned, the depression was such up here particularly for us who had just moved up and moving up in any part of this country in the fall is a very bad time to start because you don't have the opportunity to have a garden. Springtime is better because then you can raise a few things. But anyhow we moved up here and the first winter of '30 and '31 we took care of a farm for some friends of ours from Mass City, people by the name of Garrick, and they had a few cows there and so we got by that winter but then the second winter was a bad one for us particularly because what little resources we had were down at a low ebb, in fact, it was pretty tough to find ammunition to go get some meat. So my brother-in-law who was staying up here with his sister, mentioned that someone had gotten a grub order from the township supervisor, so I got out the old skis I had made and we went cross country over to Rousseau, about 10-12 cross country through the woods and I talked to Mr. McGeggy and he could see that I had been over-exercising myself getting there, but he was kind, had me sit down, gave me a meal which looked like heaven, of course, but anyhow he gave me an order for about $8. It was a small amount compared to today but that order was sufficient to keep us going for a long time. I got 2 if not 3 grub orders from Mr. McGay and by that time the county had more or less inaugurated a work program, I think the following year, doing a little road work. We were getting only $2 a day if that much but nevertheless whatever we got was welcomed by us. That's only one example of how things were.

Art: Yes, and you indicated that during these depression days people really learned how to pull together.

Jim: Yes. I remember one time one of the neighbors had a birthday so we decided we would try to get a birthday cake and all get together at our house and I know one of the women had a little bit of flour, one of the other neighbors had 1 or 2 eggs he donated, someone scraped up a little bit extra sugar and spice, and we called that a community cake. But we all got together at our house that night and we played cards and had coffee, we always managed to scrape up coffee someway or other and we had quite a party.

That's really a remarkable incident indicating that people even in the midst of hard times can work together. One of the things that has fascinated me about you and your trading post here is the tremendous amount of mining lore and artifacts that you have on display as well as the knowledge of the early mining days and you were showing me some records about different kinds of ethnic groups that composed the employment force.

This particular statistics as shown on this particular paper does not refer to the Lake Mine area. This, I'm quite sure, was the Baltic Mine. And it would be, I would say, in the early 1900's, probably '02 or '03.

What ethnic groups are represented here?

Jim: There's Cornishmen, Finns, Italians, Austrians, Germans, Irish, French, Poles, Belgians, Swiss and Scotch. It looks to me like the Irish are one of the minorities. There
3.

are 317 Finns, 164 Cornishmen, 229 Italians, 41 Austrians, 22 Germans, 22 Irish
33 French, 9 Polea, 2 Belgiums, 1 Swiss and 2 Scotch.

Art: That's really an interesting mixture of nationalities and in those early years, a lot
of these people didn't even know how to speak English; I know that was true of the
very early Finns.

Very true

How did these different groups get along together? In the mine?

I'm not too well familiarized on how they got along together on the job but it would
seem to me that usually the Captains or the Superintendents, in order to have harmony
in the mines and all the works, they would try to pick out 2 of the same nationality
working as a team. Maybe it didn't always work out that good because I've heard of
partners quarreling underground but it would seem to me from the records that I have
that most of these nationalities would stay in a similar/boarding house; the Finns
in the Finn boarding house and the Irish in the Irish boarding house and so on.
But I guess when they got to drinking it mixed up the nationalities a little bit.

Was tavern life pretty strong in those days?

Jim: I think the tavern was one of the main meeting places in the old days but that's before
I came up here. Judging from old newspapers and other methods of research I've done
I would say that the tavern or saloon as it was called in those days, was one of
the great meeting places of all the different nationalities.

In those early years, labor was not organized as it is today, that was one of the
controversial issues of bringing in the union, and you gathered quite a bit of information
about the 1913 strike, is there anything that stands out in what you've read or from
some of the old timers you've talked to?

What little bit I've learned in reading old records, newspapers, and other items of
information, I think behind the whole thing was a little bit of this red element and
I believe they were the cause of stirring up the whole trouble; but there were strikes
in the Copper Country before that, for more money. We all know that the miners in
those days weren't getting very much wages; in 1913 the day wage would be approximately
$2.50 a day. That was for a long day; they only had 2 shifts in the mines in those
days; one shift for finishing up the blast or else someone would go in and blast the
workings and then they waited just long enough (or not always long enough) for the
fumes to clear out before the other shift took over, so that they were working a minimum
of 10 or 11 hours a day, so when you figure $2.50 for 10-11 hours a day it wasn't a
very great salary. And in those days there was no compensation; the only compensation
that I've learned about through the records is that the miners had what was called an
"aid fund" and every pay a dollar was taken out of their monthly pay and went into the
"aid fund" and if any member was injured or got killed or were totally incapacitated,
then there was a certain amount of money taken out of that "aid fund" and given to the
family or widow. And we all know whenever a miner got killed in a mine the company
would employ the oldest boy of the family, maybe he was just old enough to be water
boy or some other light job, but usually that was the case. I know of one instance
here, my wife's brother-in-law father, he was killed in the mine and he was only 12
years old and he got a job as water boy. That was in the old Belt Mine here at Lake
Mine. Then as the country progressed, unionism more or less brought in safety measures
and compensation also.

I think the union came into this area around '42?

I'm not familiar exactly when the union did come in but I think it was either before
or just around that time. Of course the depression years was a very poor time to try
create a union in the mines because work was a low ebb and men were so plentiful that men wouldn't even think about joining a union; if they could get a day's work they were very happy about it. But I do remember in Detroit in 1935-36, I got a job working in a stamping plant and the UAW had just formed earlier that year. Now it could be that other unions were also in the process of becoming unionized in this country.

That certainly has to be one of the colorful chapters in this area's history, mining and bringing in the union, employment; but it was very interesting what you said about the company employing the deceased's eldest son; suggests perhaps that the companies were concerned about their employees.

I believe the companies felt they were obligated to do something for the family; of course it wasn't the best way in the world to do it but perhaps that's all they knew of in those days. Because the children didn't go to school as long as they do nowadays; like myself, of course I was not in this country, I was only 12 when I had to leave school in Canada but in this country I've talked to people who had to leave school around the same age because some of the boys were big, strong enough to work in the woods, or else work around a mine when they could get a job, but they had to do something to help the living of the family. Of course there's a big change today!

One of the outstanding things that has happened in your life, according to you, is your becoming an American citizen; what year were you naturalized?

I was naturalized in Detroit in December 1936, in the Federal Building

In that pre-World War II era, and during World War II itself, were people pretty patriotic?

I think they were, very much. There were a lot of gripes about how the country should have been run which is even more so today, but the fact that we were in the depression and gradually pulling out of it, in '36, I think that was the start to get out of the doldrums, that was an indication that people were more satisfied, they knew that better things were coming, they couldn't be worse than they were in '32-'33 but there were people complaining just like they complain today. People complain about taxes and taxes in those days were so negligible compared to day, but there was also the fact that a lot of people had lost their holdings because they couldn't pay their taxes especially in Detroit; there were thousands and thousands of people owning property there that just had to give them up. But I think that everyone in general was more patriotic, very much so.

Looking at this particular area, I've been told that in early years it was very heavy Republican-oriented or belief, was there a shift in '32-'36 toward FDR and the New Deal?

Oh, definitely. I'm quite sure that FDR was the main reason for so many so-called "die hard" Republicans changing over to Democrat, or else if they didn't change completely, let's say they were "lukewarm Republicans" because it would seem to me in the older days and judging from/only the mining records but township records which I've come across over the years, when you go through the records you will find that so many people voted Republican because they were working for the mining company; and in most cases you will find in the old records that the township offices were held by members of the mining company; perhaps the township supervisor was the clerk of the mining company, or he might have been a superintendent of the mining company, or the treasurer of the township might have been one of the clerks of the mining company and in going through the old records, you'll find that time after time.

Does that suggest there was some kind of encouragement or even pressure placed upon the mining employees placed by them?
Oh, I believe so. In talking about working in the stamping plant in Detroit, I remember in '36, even before I obtained my citizenship papers, Landon was running then, but the company tried to give the workers the impression that if you didn't vote for Mr. Landon, they were going to be laid off work. And they were handing out these Landon buttons so most of us would throw them in on the press and step on the machine and it would come down and flatten 'em up; then throw 'em in the scrap boxes. But that's only one indication, of course, that's back before Roosevelt really got going. I've heard a lot of old-timers, people who worked in the mines and most of them passed on, some of them remaining around here, mention that they expected you to vote the Republican side or else you wouldn't be working.

What are your recollections or what have you heard about the role of the different churches? Lots of the churches received land from the mining companies to put their buildings on; did the priest, pastors generally tend to follow mining company practices?

No, no, I don't think so. It may be possible that in an unknown manner the mining companies saw to it that a certain pastor was given that certain area but little bit I've learned through pouring through records and readings, I think once the mining company donated the land to the church, that was the end of it. I definitely think that the mining company knew that you couldn't just keep these people down, that they had to have faith in God one way or another, whether they be Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, or whatnot; and I think you're going to find that, too, all over the world today, that people gotta think the way they think God is helping them. I know in one case in Mass, there was a plot of land given by the Mass Mining Company to what would have been the Marquette Diocese of the Catholic Church and they did have a chapel in Mass but not for many years, but up until about 1960, I know definitely that particular piece of land was still in the name of the Marquette Diocese so the mining company never wanted it back. I don't think they'd want it back because they always managed to give the church a piece of property where it wouldn't interfere with any mining if they ever did any mining there. Now, there's one exception: the old Irish Hollow Church at Rockland which started in 1840's or '50's, and the cemetery is on land where Minesota, Michigan and Rockland mines operated, but they never made any attempt to use that land once it was given to the church but the mining operations were in under that land. It could be that no doubt there's copper in that area and incidently, I might mention that US-45 which goes from the Rockland junction over to Rockland (that was the old US-45) where the power line crosses the highway, right near mines, that's where the old Irish Hollow Church is and actually the highway goes right through where the church used to be and just misses the Irish Hollow cemetery.

(end of tape)
I'd like to begin, Lydia, by asking you about your parents; where did they come from in Finland and when did they arrive in this country?

Lydia: 1877 was my mother's and she came from Laikia, Vaasan Laani; and my father must have come here in 1903 or '04 and he came from Merijarvi, Oulunlaani.

Did they get married soon after he arrived?

Lydia: When my mother's first husband died, she took in boarders; my father's brother was boarding at my mother's place so, of course, he was there and I imagine he boarded there too. And then after several years, they got married.

You were a small child when she was running the boarding house?

Lydia: From 7 to 10.

Do you have any memories of that boarding house? How many boarders did your mother have?

Lydia: The most I think was 35. Besides our family of 10 children and mother and father.

So that's close to 45-50. Must have been a good-sized house.

Lydia: It was; there were 2 parts to it; the men's part and our part. But they'd eat in our part.

So you had was was called the "poika talo", all men, and what kinds of occupations did these men have? Were they miners?

Lydia: They were miners. and when some officials or salesmen would come to the mines, they'd come stay a night, in the men's part.

Where was the boarding house?

Lydia: At Lake Mine. Right close to the main mine.

I suppose these men were pretty hearty eaters, what type of food did you mother prepare was it typical Finnish?

Lydia: Mostly roasts, and lots of stew. and pasties

Were most of these boarders Finns or they men of different nationalities?

Lydia: Most of them were Finns but there were other nationalities. There were Italians, Croatians, Irish, not so many English because they had their own boarding house.

How did these men get along with each other and different nationalities, how did the Croatian miner get along with the Finn miner?

Lydia: They got along. And they got along fine at the boarding house, too

Was there a pretty big turn-over of these men or did you have the same boarders for quite a long period of time?

Lydia: We had them for quite long periods but of course, some would always quit the mine and leave.

Did very many of them get married?

Lydia: I don't remember of any, outside of the ones that married my sisters, the young boarders
I've read someplace where a lot of men who came to this country, there were a lot of men but few women and the opportunities to get married weren't that many. So I guess the woman had the choice in those days.

Lydia: But when we first moved there, there were only about 14 men because their part was all in one section and they'd have to sleep in the same room just like an old lumber camp and maybe some would want to read or play cards and the others wanted to sleep, so mother kept after the mining company so long that they put up a second story on there and made rooms and that's when we increased men.

Art: Did the mining company build the boarding house?

Lydia: Oh, yes

Art: And your mother was leasing it?

Lydia: No, you could have it for nothing if you boarded their men. That was like an accommodation for the men. But they paid mother the board. $15 a month, board, per man.

You mentioned that on occasion one of the Finnish ministers would come, was that on Sunday nights?

Lydia: Not necessarily, any night that was convenient, mostly Sunday because usually the men would be gone to town and you could have supper early and there wouldn't be so many there.

What type of activity? Did he have a full service or did he just read scripture and give a little sermon?

Lydia: He'd read and give a sermon and they'd sing, much like in the olden days, they had church.

Did they sing old Finnish hymns?

Lydia: Oh, yes

Art: What was the pastor's name?

Lydia: Rankila.

Art: And you mentioned that your mother was a good, strong Apostolic Lutheran, and---

Lydia: she was broad-minded, though; she let us have music in the house; the real strong ones were very strict. They wouldn't let you have any kind of phonograph, or piano, in the

Art: I suppose they didn't allow card playing.

Lydia: Oh, no. That was out.

Art: And dancing was really far gone.

Lydia: But mother would let my sisters and brothers have their dancing there in the dining room, it was big too.

Art: Did she ever have any problems with the miners going out and getting good and drunk?

Lydia: Oh, yes, she had to call / the sheriff several times. They would want to fight; and another thing, she let them play cards but not for money; and we had to haul our drinking and cooking water about a mile, so any one who lost, had to go and get a load of water with a yoke and 2 pails and bring it in the house, so that was their "money".
When they didn't do it, did your mother have to carry the water sometimes?

Lydia: Yes, we had a horse and we had 4 or 5 cows, chickens.

Did she milk the cows?

Lydia: Her and us children, and my dad helped too.

And your dad was doing what type of work while your mother was boarding?

Lydia: He was working on surface, I don't know what kind of work, probably in the dry house. Of course he'd help her in the evenings and I had 3 older sisters that helped there, too.

From the boarding house they went afterwards to a lumber camp. Is that right?

Lydia: No.

Art: Lumber camp was before that?

Lydia: Yes. During that Copper Country strike in 1913. He couldn't sit around and see the children go hungry so they got a job as cook and cookee in a lumber camp. At least we had food to eat.

Art: During the copper strike, that was a pretty rough time, do you remember anything about it?

Lydia: I remember it, yes, although not very much of it, I was only 5. But I can remember Christmas we didn't have enough candy for every stocking so Santa Claus left the bag in the middle of the table and left a note that he ran out of candy, so we'd have to share that.

I've seen pictures of that strike of women demonstrating and read in the newspaper about all kinds of threats of violence, was it pretty frightening that time?

Lydia: It was, I remember before we even moved out of Redridge, the men were afraid to go even close to the stamp mills but when we moved to the country over here, we didn't see that.

Who were they primarily afraid of? The union men?

Lydia: I wouldn't know.

I suppose the whole community was "up in arms"

Lydia: I know my father was afraid to go get the paycheck, I don't know how he got it though.

So it was quite a change when you went into the lumber camp; there was no threat of the violence and it was a new way of life. These lumberjacks, were they all Finns?

Lydia: Mostly but not all

Art: There was a variety of nationalities. Can you recall what the day was like in a lumbercamp? Did the men get up real early and go out?

Lydia: Yes, they'd eat in the dark, the lamps had to be lit when they were eating breakfast; it was one big long building where the kitchen was and the eating room was, and there were bunks on each side, and we slept in those bunks. But us children were always put to sleep in the upper bunks so that we couldn't get down before the men ate their breakfast. We slept up there, had to stay up there even if we were awake, until they were gone. I don't remember if they came in for dinner or lunch but for supper they'd all come in and again we had to go in the upper bunks so we wouldn't be under their feet.
What were these lumberjacks like? Were they pretty gruff old guys? Nice to you?

Lydia: They were nice to us. We were never allowed to go into their camps, they had their separate camps.

Was that pretty dangerous work?

Lydia: Oh, yes.

And they were just using axes and saws and horses; I suppose there were a lot of changes for a man to hurt an arm or a leg.

Lydia: I can't remember any one getting hurt there; I guess when you're a lumberjack, you know how to be careful. Sometimes in other camps a load of logs would fall on top of a man and kill him.

Art: How long were you in the lumber camp? Just for a short period of time or a couple years?

Lydia: No, short, not even until the strike was over, not even until the strike was over, more like one winter. And then we put down payment on this little farm and when the strike was over, we went to Lake Mine and started running the boarding house.

Art: In the wintertime was it pretty cold in the lumber camp?

Lydia: No, we didn't notice it, we had so big stoves and they were cooking all the time and they had those great big box stove heaters. They put about a 4-foot piece of wood in it.

I've heard it said that the lumberjacks work real hard in the woods in the wintertime, then when the spring thaw came, they really let loose. Is that true?

Lydia: We didn't see that part because when the camp shut down, we moved, too; but they did do that, they drank most of their money and---

Was the lumber from mining company property, do you remember?

Lydia: No, it was Northland Lumber Company.

Do you recall where the lumber was sent? Did mining companies buy some of this lumber for their own use or was the lumber shipped from the camp to some other area?

Lydia: That I can't remember because I was so young.

Roughly that was in 1913-14. Do you have any recollections of World War I?

Lydia: Oh, yes

Did anyone in your family go into service?

Lydia: My brother and my brother-in-law went. He was one of the boarders that married my sister. My mother died while they were across.

I bet she worried about them quite a bit.

Lydia: Oh, yes

When your mother passed away, she was about how old?

Lydia: She was 42 or 43.

So she really died at quite an early age. Did she have some serious ailment?
Lydia: She had a miscarriage.

Whenever there was an illness in the family, what did you do? Did you go to the doctor or did mother and father have some kind of home remedy?

Lydia: Well, we had to be real sick before they called the doctor, but have you ever heard of wizard oil? They used to put a few drops of that in sugar and hot water and afterward when I grew up I found out that that was supposed to be used externally only. But it cured us!

One cure I learned of was to put them in the sauna.

Lydia: Yes, that was true and when you were in there, they wrapped you up in quilts and brought you inside.

Did your mother have a sauna in the boarding house?

Lydia: Yes

Did the non-Finns take a lot of saunas, too?

Lydia: Most of them did, and they liked it.

Did the lumberjacks take a bath and roll in the snow?

Lydia: There wasn't a sauna at the lumbercamp.

I mean the miners.

Lydia: No, no. They didn't roll in the snow.

Have you even known any Finn who has ever rolled in the snow?

Lydia: Well, I know one, but he's dead now. (laughter) I never did see him but they claim he run back in the sauna and then back in the snow.

Did he die of heart trouble?

Lydia: I don't know what he died of. Died in Detroit at his son's place.

I'd like to ask you a question of you and Jim. He indicated earlier today that you and he met in Detroit. One thing that intriques me about your relationship is that you are of Finnish background and he is of Irish background. What was the reaction of your Finnish relatives when they heard that you were going to marry an Irish young man?

Lydia: One of my sisters didn't like it at all, but my brother liked Jim so he thought it was all right.

Do you remember the wedding ceremony, it took place in Detroit, was it?

Lydia: Yes

Was it in a private home or church?

Lydia: In the rectory, Holy Redeemer Church.

Art: So we have an incidence of a marriage that is of mixed nationality, so mixed religious faith and seems to have held up very well.
Lydia: Jim said we could have been married by a Lutheran minister if I wanted to but I knew what it would mean to Jim because the Catholics were so much more strict he wouldn't have been able to go to communion or things; so I knew a lot of Catholics so I thought it was just the same to be married by a Catholic priest and he told me that if he doesn't "turn out good, bring him back". (laughter)

From Detroit then you came up here to the Copper Country and as I recall what Jim said, it was right during the depression. Do you have any early memories of when you moved up here? Here you are a newly-wed and you make this big move to the Copper Country in the heart of the depression, what were your feelings when you got up here? In the fall and winter was just about here.

Lydia: I was "coming home" I guess. I was working in Detroit and I foolishly quit my job as telephone operator and neither of us thought the depression would last as long as it did and Jim was over here and I was over there so that didn't go very good. I was used to hard times so it didn't hurt me so much, just put up with it.

From what you've described about your experiences in the lumbercamp and the boarding house, your family was used to hard times of various kinds.

Lydia: In making the best of everything.

In looking back to those depression years and even before that, what do you recall as a really "good" time? That you really enjoyed with Jim or in your childhood?

Lydia: I think the best was when we were at the boarding house because we weren't allowed to take any money or even associate with the boarders and I imagine they wanted to give us children something, so they gave it to mother. Those are the first Christmases that we ever had any toys bought and a real nice Christmas tree and really had so much to eat and new clothes and 4th of July we had a little extra money and we'd trim up the house; the boarders did all this and we had a great big flagpole with the biggest flag in Lake Mine.

Art: How about school days? Living at the boarding house, where did you go to school?

Lydia: We walked about a mile to Lake Mine. We had a nice big school.

Art: Do you recall who was your favorite school teacher?

Lydia: Yes, my first one and she was wonderful.

Art: What was her name?

Lydia: Lualla Davey.

Art: Davey, What national background was that?

Lydia: English. Her sister and brothers live in Rockland yet. She must have been extra good because any of her pupils that stop here now even, they'll talk about her and say that "wasn't she wonderful", and she was.

Art: What was wonderful about her?

Lydia: She was strict but she was kind. And she used psychology, she'd say, now, children if you learn your lessens real good, we'll get through, naturally, earlier. So if we get through on time, we'll go to the location and see how many pieces of scrap we can find, and she'd have a big burlap sack and us kids would run to see who could get more pieces of dirt. We'd clean off the roadway to the location.
So you sort of helped to clean up the side of the road.

Lydia: And in the wintertime she'd read us stories or else we'd blow bubbles. She'd use an empty spool of thread that she'd boil in soap, to sterile them I 'spose, and then we'd have a big basin of soap and water, to see who could blow the biggest bubbles.

Did your mother and father speak Finnish to you most of the time?

Lydia: Yes.

Art: Where did you first learn English to speak, was it at school?

Lydia: No, see I had so many older sisters and brothers so I knew all my ABC's and a few words to read. I was almost 7 years old when I went to school. Because when we were in the lumbercamp, there wasn't any school around there.

Art: Did your mother and father learn to speak English?

Lydia: My mother went to school over here, I think she went to about 5th or 6th grade. So she knew how to read, write and speak English. But dad not being able to speak, and grandma and grandpa, we weren't allowed to speak English to grandma and grandpa because they couldn't understand it, it would be an insult, or dishonor. I know many times when I didn't know how to pronounce a word, I'd spell it out to one of my sisters, my mother would tell me what it was. I'd look at her, I couldn't understand how she doesn't talk English, still she can read a word that spelled out.

When you started going to school, did you find that you got more and more familiar with English and used Finnish language less?

Lydia: About the same. Because we spoke English to our young friends even before we went to school.

When you went to school did you have friends with children of other nationalities, did the Finns mix pretty well with the other kids?

Lydia: We got along. Of course there were a couple of "stinkers" in school who used to make fun of us Finlander roundheads, cotton-tops, but not very many. But I had a girlfriend, one of English, one was Croatian, and there were some Finns, and French, so we mixed.

How did the Finns get along with each other?

Lydia: I didn't hear of any troubles. They stuck by themselves, "leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone".

Art: Did your family belong to any Finnish organizations? Temperence Society or cooperative?

Lydia: When we lived in Redridge, my uncles and some of my sisters belong to Temperence. They used to have socials, and get-togethers and dances.

They had dances at Temperence?

Lydia: Maybe I'm wrong but I remember them talking about dances. Maybe it was just a Saturday night dance that they used to talk about.

Art: Was there a co-op store near the Lake Mine?

Lydia: Not at that time, there wasn't. But there was one in Mass afterward. We didn't belong to it.
Do you know anything about the co-op in Mass? There was quite a bit of controversies surrounding those? There was a co-operative that was a neutralist co-op and the other was commonly called "red" co-op. What do you recall of the community around 1920 when the mines began closing? What happened to the various Finnish families? Did most of them stay around the area and try farming, or did some leave?

Lydia: Some left but the ones that we knew, they bought land and started farming, cleared the land, and started from nothing. But most of the other nationalities moved somewhere else where they were mines working.

Iron mines and other areas?

Lydia: A lot of the Finns while they were getting ahead in farming, worked in lumber camps.

Do you recall any favorite sayings or stories that your mother or dad used to tell you in Finnish, homespun philosophy-type stuff?

Lydia: My dad used to try to tell us, because we were left as small children at home and mother was dead and they had to go to lumbercamps to work, and one time we got into a hassle with neighbor's children—they were the ones really that started on us—and we weren't going to let them get the best of us so the other Finn family sided with us children and we got into a kind of a hassle there, and someone must have told Dad when he came home, because he gave us a kind of a speech and he said that, "don't try to get even with them, let them do what they want and God will take care of them and God will take care of you, they can't hurt if God is on your side." I think that's one reason our family is—lot of people say, we're too soft, we let people put things over on us. We're taught that when we're small, that don't fight back.

Art: So you still think that is kind of your philosophy or outlook on life to get along with people?

Lydia: I think it is. I always think you don't get anywhere if you're going to argue and fight. Maybe they'll get wise.

As you think of the Copper Country now as it is and the different people here, what do you think that the area needs the most?

Lydia: Well, I think work -------

(end of tape)
EVT ~29g

SUBJECT:

SOURCE: James O'Meara

COMMENTS:

R: Gives me a chance to think of the time when Libby and I moved into this place way back in November of 1930. At the time we moved here there was the old lumber camp which we had purchased from VonPladden-Fox Lumber Company. It consisted of two men's camps, blacksmith shop and the big horse barn. Now these camps, the men's camps, they were the living quarters of course for the lumberjacks...each of those was twenty-four feet wide by thirty-six feet long. They only had one door and that was on the front side or the side facing the highway...well it was just a country road in those days, wasn't a highway; and then on the south side there was a window about three feet wide...or about three feet high and about six feet wide facing on the south side. Oh yeah, and in the front, this door...the door was about...oh must have been four feet wide by about six and a half feet high and then directly above that in the gable end there was a window about two feet square which served to give a little bit more light into this camp. These camps as I said, were for the lumberjacks, and each one of those camps had sleeping capacity for forty lumberjacks. Both sides of the camp were homemade wooden bunks with straw in them and each camp contained forty so that entire camp was housing eighty lumberjacks. And then there was also the portable cook camp which they transported from different camps as they finished logging one they'd go to the other. Well anyway, Libby and I made one of these...fixed up one of these camps into living quarters that fall. Well, the camps being in twelve-foot sections, in otherwords the cross timbers that held the roof were twelve feet apart so that when we put a partition in under one of those cross timbers it gave us a kitchen area twelve feet wide and twenty-four feet long. Well, then that left the front part of the camp twenty-four by twenty-four. This we used as a living quarters and a bedroom. Now for this particular camp they had for heating...they would have a big barrel stove in there made out of a fifty-five gallon steel barrel and then directly above that they had a ventilator which was made of...just like a window...only it was constructed so that when the cover was down over it that it wouldn't leak. This was about three feet square and was operated by a long pole from within and believe me from some of the fellows that stayed in this camp, they told me that when the men were all in camp especially after a long hard days work and their clothes were hanging up to dry, it got pretty steamy in there. In fact, I guess it was more like a Finn sauna bath.

That first winter of 1930-31 was a very mild one. Was very little snow and not much zero weather. In fact according to the records I've looked over since, that winter it seems we only received about eighty-seven inches of snow and that was the entire snowfall of the
winter which I don't think it has ever been equal since. But then in the summer of 1931, the tar paper roofing on those camps started to give way to the weather. When they made these camps they didn't intend that they should last any considerable length of time, in fact I believe they had only planned on logging the winter of 1925 and the winter of 1926; but we moved in in 1930, so by the time we had moved in there after four or five winters why they weren't in the very best condition. But as I said, after 1931 that tar paper began to give way and whenever there was a shower of any duration, we always had a fine musical program. This was created by dripping water being caught in various size cans, pans and pots. Sometimes it sounded like a marimba band so that if we'd only had a tape recorder in those days, we could have really found something worthwhile to broadcast.

As the summer advanced and the tar paper gave way to the rain and the weather, things became quite unbearable for my wife Lydia. I recall one occasion when her girlfriend was staying with us during the berry picking season, I was sleeping on the floor in the kitchen area. Well, Lydia and Annabelle...that Annabelle, that was her girlfriend...they were occupying the bed in the other part of the camp. After midnight the rain started pouring...well I got kind of fed up with my area so I crawled in under the kitchen table...that was about the only dry spot at the time that I could find. Well, it wasn't long before Lydia and her girlfriend came into the kitchen and crawled under the table with me. Well, next morning Lydia gave me an ultimatum...get a new roof or she's leaving me. Well, I went to Greenland and after a heart-to-heart talk with Emil Treadeau...he was the hardware store owner there at that time, I persuaded him to let me have enough rolled roofing on credit and without any down payment so that I could fix the camp. And if I recall correctly, that roofing amounted to twenty-eight dollars and I didn't have any down payment, of course, so I paid him off a dollar at a time or maybe two dollars at a time until I had it all paid up. And since I was practically a stranger to Emil Treadeau, I always thought he did me a great favor in trusting me.

Being Irish, of course, I was green...I'm still green, but in those days when I first came up here, I think I was greener than grass and not knowing much about woodwork, I had to learn most everything that was necessary to keep going. Well, anyhow, that same fall that I mentioned that we moved in, when this VonPladden-Fox Lumber Company, when they finished logging here they had left some mighty fine trees all around this campground and, of course, me being green and stupid, I decided that they had to come down; but one day we wanted to get some firewood so I picked out, of course, one of the biggest trees in around camp, happened to be a big yellow birch...oh it must have been at least three or four...close to four feet on the but...so Lydia and I decided we'd cut the tree down. Well, I found an old crosscut saw in the blacksmith's shop...it wasn't too dull but then it wasn't too sharp either...so Lydia and I started away...pecking away and sawing on that tree...this was in late afternoon when we started, well it's a good thing too that there wasn't any wind blowing that day...it seemed quite calm as I remember; but Lydia and we'd saw for about one minute and then argue for about five or ten minutes...she kept insist-
EVT ~300

ing that I put a notch in that tree. I said, "What do you mean, a notch?" Well, she said, "I remember when my dad would dump a tree he'd always put a notch in it so that it would fall down." I said, "Ah, what are you talking about, it'll come down...don't worry, it'll come down." Well, this went on and on and we kept sawing away and resting and arguing and finally after considerable length of time had elapsed, low and behold we cut right through the tree. Yes sir, went right out the other side of that three and there the tree still stayed up there. So, it was getting late in the afternoon by this time, so we decided well, we'll leave it there. So anyway the next morning when I got up I went outside and there the tree was on the ground. It seems like during the night the wind had come up and blown the darn thing over and if it wasn't for our guardian angel I guess both of us would have been killed that day. Every day, if I happened to mention anything about that tree, Lydia recalls how she laughed until she was almost sick looking at that tree standing up there and me waiting for it to come down. Even today in recording this she had a few giggles over the event.

Yeah, she likes to talk when the tape isn't running. So, I suppose, she wants me to do all the talking. Soon as I shut this tape off she starts to talk.

Now, during the early 1930's, some of the older folks may remember that we had quite a few years in a row that was quite dry and up in this area particularly in this 1931, 32 and 33 area, in around those days, we had a lot of grasshoppers. Fact is people were using this mixture of molasses and this other pesticide in order to destroy these grasshoppers. But I remember, I'm not sure was it the summer of '31 or was it the summer of '32, when the township and the county had instituted a sort of a work-relief program for county road work. We were working on what is called the Rousa Road...now they call it the Dishnaw Road...but this was close to Rousa in the Rousa area. But we were there in the ditch making ditches and back slopes, and like I said the grasshoppers were really severe pests in those days. And I'd gone to work that morning with my...well, when I came up from Detroit I never had much working clothes, was usually some of these suit coats and pants that I wore...and I'd gone to work that day and it looked like it might rain and I wore a gray suit coat or a coat from a suit that I owned, it was, of course, pertnear worn out then anyway. But, I remember hanging it on a fence post when we started work in the morning and it got quite warm during the day and actually, some of those fence posts were just crawling with these grasshoppers. But after the day had finished and we were getting ready to go home, I went to get my jacket or my coat off that fence post there, I hardly recognized it. All around the collar where I'd sweat, of course, and around the cuffs of the sleeves the grasshoppers had eaten all of those back at least two inches so that it looked more like a lace effect than the actual coat.

When I started reminiscing about things that happened here at Otter Siding years ago, so many things come to mind that I believe it would take a tape two miles long to record everything. But one thing in particular that comes to my mind, when we were living in that old men's
camp that we'd fixed up, I think it was the second summer we were there. The first summer we cut windows to give us more light, of course, and then in the back or the south end of the log structure, I cut a doorway...a sort of a kitchen door; and during the summer we got a pet toad. Well, this was a good-sized toad, in fact about the largest toad I'd ever seen; but I can't remember just what we nick-named him. Yeah, I just asked Lydia what we nicknamed that toad and it was Oswald. Well, it seemed that every time we'd go in or out of that doorway...kitchen doorway, Oswald would be hanging around there, he was catching flies actually, he was a great benefit to us. But anyhow, this went on for a number of weeks and then early one morning I hadda get up and heed the call of nature and go outside and I'll be darned if I didn't step on poor Oswald and believe me that was quite a feeling to step on a big toad like that. But, that was the end of Oswald.

In recording this material, occasionally you'll hear a sound in the background, well what that actually is is Lydia washing dishes and rattling the dishes in the sink; so if any of the extraneous noise interferes with this broadcast or taping, we will have to charge it up to her.

During the early thirties, I think it was somewheres around 1934 or 1935...maybe '36...of course we didn't have electrical power...no power line coming up this way, in fact the power line went as far as White Siding coming in from the Sturgeon Dam area; but we didn't have any electric power so we had to depend on kerosene lamps and as far as radios were concerned, we had to depend on the old battery radio which I had acquired...I don't know just how I got it, it seems to me I must have made some kind of a horse trading deal with someone. But, this battery radio, of course, operated off a six-volt wet battery or car battery...a couple of D batteries and a C battery; but it seemed always when we wanted to get a particular program like the Shadow or Inner Sanctum or some of those kind of dreadfuls, the battery would be dead. So, as I recall it, Charlie Maki...the late Charlie Maki of Hazel, that's down towards the Pelki area...we found out that he had gotten electricity and he had no use for the wind charger that he had. So, I contacted Charlie and I bought the wind charger from him. I just can't recall what I paid for it or how I paid for it, but I do remember that it was way up on the very tip of this roof of these big barns which...oh it must have been forty- fifty-feet from the ground level and if I had to do it today I would never climb up there to get such a thing; but I did get it that day. We brought it home and of course we couldn't wait to have any kind of a tower made to hold it, so we needed a battery charge in this six-volt battery so we could listen to the radio; so we put that up on the roof of this old lumber camp or this camp we were living in. Well, it was all right when the average wind was blowing say at ten or fifteen miles an hour wind and it would actuate the propeller-driven generator and it was made in such a manner...perhaps some of the older folks will remember them...if it got exceeding a certain speed, why it would go sideways and the governor actuated the propeller so that it would turn sideways and slow down. Well, during the night we had a thunder storm come up and that wind charger started taking off and shutting off and taking on and shutting off and it sounded and felt like the entire roof was gonna come off of
that camp. And I hadda get up and get dressed and go out there and turn that dog gone thing off entirely and the next day we took it down off the roof.

In the many years of taking care of deer hunters, we had two hundred and thirty-four deer hunters over a period of, oh I'd say over a period of twenty-six or twenty-seven years. But I recall one year, this young fellow came up deer hunting with his dad...it was his first time deer hunting, of course, but the first morning he was very lucky in shooting a beautiful buck. Oh, it must have been about a ten-point buck probably weighed a hundred eighty-five pounds or so; but I had shot my buck oh maybe within a half hour of the time he had shot his; but perhaps a mile away in another direction. And when I come out of the woods up from opposite the house here, in looking down the road I noticed two or three hunters along side the road in a group there and so I took a walk down there and I found out that this young fellow had shot this buck. Well, in asking him about it, at where'd he shoot it, I found out it was perhaps close to a mile north of the highway towards Mineral Range Railroad tracks or where the tracks used to be and at that time we had... oh the snow was right up to our knees...it wasn't real wet snow, but it wasn't too easy walking through it. Well, after we chewed the rag while there...This young fellow...I can't think of what his first name was...I said, "We better get that buck to the house and hang it up". He said, "Yeah, I guess so", so he started to drag on it. So I said, "Waid a minute," I said, "You gonna drag it like that?" He said, "Sure, why not...it's just a little ways to the house". I said, "Maybe you better take the guts out of it". Well, then he suddenly realized that there was sumethin he had forgotten to do. He had dragged that big buck I guess from near a mile from the highway, had dragged it through that deep snow all the way out to the highway and hadn't even taken the guts out of it. So, we all had quite a laugh at that young fellow, but of course that's part of the experience you learn and gain when you do this deer hunting.

Earlier in this taping I mentioned about grasshoppers; but I recall when I was...oh, the first winter I was working for Elmer Heikkinen of the Nisula area, and one of the fellows that was working there with us was, his name was Otto Ranka...old Finn fellow, very fine gentlemen; but of course he had quite an accent and we used to get quite a kick out of listening to him talk; but I remember one time during lunch time we were sitting around the fire and we got to talking about how bad the grasshoppers were and he was telling me, he says, "You know, I remember one time up in South Range when the grasshoppers they stopped the rain." Of course...at that time I hadn't been very used to this sort of conversation, I didn't understand how some of the old timers were butchering up the English as you might say, of course it was my stupidity rather than theirs which made it so hard for me to understand them. But, I said, "What do you mean that the grasshoppers stopped the rain? How could the rain stop?" He said, "The rain...the rain, I mean the rain, you know, I mean the rain that goes on the rack." I said, "What do you mean, the rain that goes on the rack?" Well, finally after he started fuming and I was sort of getting more mixed up myself trying to understand him and Elmer finally told me...he said, "When he says rain, he don't mean the rain that falls out of the sky, he means the rain that goes along the railroad track". I remember during that same conversation with Otto Ranka when he kept insisting that the grasshoppers stopped
the rain, I said, "I don't know how it could stop the rain...you must be mistaken." He said, "I know, I see with my own ears".

At this time I just would like to make something clearer. When I think of these old fellows and the way they spoke, their accent...and naturally I don't try to pass any aspersions on them. They were doing their best to converse in English, in fact I believe they deserved more credit than I would get because I wasn't trying to speak in Finn at all. In fact, right to this day I know very little Finn words; not that I am proud of it not knowing, but I should know more because being married to Lydia for almost forty-six years and ninety-nine percent of my friends are Finn...I don't believe there's any reason why I shouldn't be able to converse in Finn; but it's just one of those things I guess that like I said earlier in this taping...being green and stupid...

End of Side A

R: Like I said, being green and stupid...I should have learned it; but I just didn't. I do remember during WPA days when I was working in the ditch with...well, most of the fellows I worked with were Finns. That's when I really learned a little bit about the Finnish language. Of course there were some words which we all learned first which shouldn't be learned, but generally speaking I was able to understand more and get along better with the...especially old timers who had so much difficulty in talking English; but after I quit the WPA and I went down to Detroit to try and pick up a little job there and earn some money and then in coming back up here...over the years I got away from what little I had learned.

During the early thirties, this area which we call Otter Siding, we had fairly large population. We had...oh let's see, there was the Horning family...Mr. and Mrs. Horning and two or three children and a brother-in-law with them, then there was Jack Hayes and his wife, and there was a fellow by the name of Savola and then there was a family by the name of Reed that stayed there with Jack Hayes' for some time. Then, of course, right on this side of us there was old Mike Garbey...an old timer who has of course passed away since; and then down beyond him was another small farm and there was the...Arthur Crusher and his family. He had...oh I don't know...three or four children I believe; and then to the west of us there was another family there...well there was a mother and a boy and a girl; and then farther beyond that was a man by the name of Fred Beachem...bachelor he was living there; and then on the opposite side of the road there was a family by the name of Saari and then there was...up on where on what we call Forest Highway 16, now...there was a farm over there occupied by and owned by the Pansic's...William Pansic and his mother. And then right on the corner of 38...where 38 and US Forest Highway 16 is now, was Lydia's brother, Matt Adamson. Him and his family were there. He had a number of children. And so that, within a mile area of this place here we had quite a number of people.

All of 1930 in the month of October...that's before Lydia came up here that's before I went down and got her...she was staying there and still
working at the telephone company in Detroit and I was trying to get things organized up here after purchasing the property...at least making a down payment on it...this Arthur Crusher's wife, Roma was her name, she had a baby that it only lived a short while and died. And I remem-
ber Arthur coming over asking me to go to Greenland which was...oh about eleven miles...from here, to go to the undertaker over there, Jack Driscoll was the undertaker at that time, so I had that old '28 Chevrolet at the time and we drove over there and talked to Mr. Driscoll and Art Crusher made arrangements for a casket and funeral. Well, then I believe it was either that same night that this storm started because the day of the funeral...in fact the 18th of October...the storm had quit already and we had about eighteen inches of snow out on the road in front of the camp here so that when the baby had to be taken to the cemetery, Art Crusher he had a team of horses, he hooked up the team of horses and the bob-sleigh and I remember riding all the way to Greenland with Art Crusher and that little baby's casket to that funeral in Greenland.

I mentioned previously about the first winter being up here that there was such a mild winter. Now, this heavy snow storm that I just taped which ended around the 18th of October and eighteen inches of snow, all of that snow had disappeared by the start of deer hunting season. In fact, on the fifteenth of November there was just a trace of snow on the ground and I remember in the late afternoon of November the 15th, 1930, we were hunting in our...rolling up our shirtsleeves and walking around in the woods. In fact, the next day or two we were picking dandelions...we had such a mild spell. All the snow had disappeared and it remained that way until I believe it was around Christmas Eve when we got another fall of snow which wasn't too great, so that we did have snow for Christmas.

And then to show you what can happen in this country, after just relat-
ing this mild deer-hunting season, I remember one deer-hunting season and this happened on a Thanksgiving Day too. It was when the storm had quit. We had one of those old fashioned two or three day storms so that we had, oh, a good two feet of snow on the ground and then my neighbor, Jacob Dickson of Motely, that's about a mile and three quarters from us here where he lives; of course, this was...I can't remember the exact year it was...but it was about in the late thirties probably; but we hadn't got a buck yet and, of course, we were still anxious to get a buck, get some meat for winter. And the day before we had talked about going into this certain area to look for deer because they usually hung out there in that kind of weather. So, I walked up the main road which is now 38 towards the Motely Road, and I met Jack...Jacob, we called him Jack...right at the corner there and we went further west up what we call the Motely Hill and then we started in south going towards...we figured we go back of what we call Storm's Lake. Little swamp in there where usually the deer would yard up in the bad weather. Well, we decided that we were gonna go down to Storm's Lake and look into that swamp. Well, anyhow we started and this must have been about nine thirty or ten o'clock in the morning when we started in there. And after we got started in this was in the hardwoods too, it was fairly tough going all right, but
it didn't seem near as bad as what it looked, of course. And we got in there about a quarter of a mile or maybe a little better than a quarter of a mile off the main road and we noticed...we came across some deer tracks which were heading towards that swamp. Well, of course, that raised our fever a little higher and we decided we'd follow those deer tracks, they were bound to lead us into that swamp. We kept on going and of course as we got down more towards that swamp, it seemed like the snow was getting deeper and deeper. Finally got to the point where we were taking turns in breaking trail. Jack would go ahead for probably hundred feet or so, and then he'd wait and I'd catch up and I'd go and break trail. This kept on until...oh it seemed like it was getting around two in the afternoon and we were quite a ways down in off the highway until finally it dawned on us that we had better get out of there. So, we decided we'd let the deer go and instead of back-tracking on our own tracks, we decided to head straight north out to the highway which we started to do. Well, I think we got out to the highway getting close to dark. We had only probably from where we had turned back...I don't think we had more than three quarters of a mile to go directly north to get out onto the highway. Of course, the highway wasn't plowed then either; but, like I said, it was...must have been close to around five in the afternoon because it was starting to get dark already when we finally got out onto the highway. And we were completely exhausted. In fact, before we got out onto the highway, was more than one occasion when we just flopped down in the snow and rested for ten or twenty minutes to get our strength back. Of course, we had gone out there without even taking a lunch or any kind. But even today when I get to talking with Jack about that hunt, he says, "We sure were a couple of fools that day when we went in the woods after deer".

In speaking previously about people that lived in this neighborhood of Otter Siding, in years gone by in the early thirties, I mentioned one of our neighbors, Jack Hayes...or John P. Hayes as his correct name was. But in those early years in the thirties, there was a prevalence of black bear in this area. I think that was on account of the good crops of apples and berries we had every year. But this little incidence relates to Jack Hayes and his wife. One fall, he'd been troubled by bear coming in and climbing up into the apple trees and breaking down the branches and ruining his apple trees and he'd been on the watch for them. But apparently they were a little bit too smart for Jack because they'd never come in early enough in the evening for him to get a good chance to see them. So, anyway, this went on for a week or so and then finally one night after they'd gone to bed, they happened to hear a sound outside and they went out with a flashlight and sure enough there was a bear up in one of the apple trees. So, Vernie...or Veronica...his wife and Jack, they got together and he got his 30:30 rifle out and had eleven shells...they were telling me afterwards...they had eleven shells left in that box of 30:30 cartridges. So they went out there and Veronica or Vernie held the flashlight for Jack, and Jack took a shot at that bear and fired and that doggone bear didn't seem to move an inch. Well, she said "Better shot again", so he shot again and he shot again and again so finally they had exhausted all those eleven shells and still the old bear just wouldn't come down out of that tree. So, being without ammunition and disgusted, of course, they thought, "Well, let him go" and they went back in the house and went to bed. Well the next morning when daylight came and they got up and went
outside, here was the bear in the tree. It seemed that first shot must have killed it or just about killed it and it got wedged in the crotch of the apple tree and it couldn't come down unless they had pulled the doggone bear down.

When I speak of bear, it reminds me of the time when we had...oh this was about 1940...’41, in around that time...we had a few cows, small herd of cattle. Back of one of these cabins we have here, we have a leanto woodshed there and we had three to four young calves...oh they were just three - four months old and they used to go into this woodshed during the day to get out of the...away from the flies. Well, this morning I had taken the cows about half a mile down the road to a forty-acre piece we had we used for pasture and walking back just as I got close to the house where this big horse-barn used to be I happened to glance behind there out towards the back end of the clearing and I saw this pretty good sized bear coming in towards the buildings. I figured he was gonna come in after those calves; so I sneaked around and slowly got in around behind one of the old houses...them log camps and I hustled into the house and got my Remington Automatic Rifle out and well, I was in quite a hurry, of course, I slammed some shells into the gun and I started running then towards...I figured I’ll go into the old blacksmith's shop and shoot through one of the cracks in the walls at it; but as I running to go towards the blacksmith's shop just as I rounded the end of this cabin where that woodshed was, there was the bear right in front of me. Well, you've probably heard this saying, "coming to a screeching halt"...well, I believe that's what I did right there that time because it seems like I skidded about three or four feet when I came to a stop. Of course, the bear was just as surprised as I was...but I guess I regained my composure before the bear did because I got a shot at him and I killed him. But he was only about eight or ten feet away from going into that woodshed where those calves were.

Well have any one of you people/skinned a bear? Well, I have and that's when I lost my taste for bear meat. You know, you skin a bear up the stomach...you skin off the hindlegs and then you rip them up or cut them right up the stomach right up to the bottom of their jaw and you slit the skin, of course, up the front paws and then you peel the skin back. Well, when you start doing this and of course you have the bear on its back, you think you're skinning a human...at least that's the impression I got when I was trying to skin this bear. I did skin it, of course, but it seems like when you're skinning, especially around the chest part and up in the underside of these front legs. You know a bear is built so much like a human...the muscles seem to be on the same side of the legs as the muscles on a human are. So, like I say, that's when I lost my taste for bear meat.

Although I must say that I have eaten bear meat previous to this occasion I'd mentioned, and I found that in most cases a bear that has been hanging around your clearing, around any of these farm sites and especially in the late fall before they go into hybernation, they've been feeding on fruit all summer and apples mostly in the fall and also cherries and thorn apples and all kinds of good clean fruit; and the flavor of the bear unless it's some real old old timer, it's usually...
pretty tasty meat. It tastes something like pork and it looks a lot like pork when you're cutting it up; but the best tasting liver that I ever tasted was bear liver. The same Jack Hayes I mentioned before, they at one time had gotten a bear...oh that was a huge thing, that was probably four - five hundred pounds at least; but that had been going in and bothering their pigs, in fact it tried to steal a pig one night. But in all the commotion it let the pig go. But one of the other neighbors living across the road Irving Hornig together with Jack Hayes, they had set a bear trap for it where it used to go in under the fence. It had dug a regular trench in under the fence in the pigpen and had gone...that's where it used to get into the pigpen and there was also apple trees in that pigpen too. But they had set this trap there and oh it was just when it had got dark that evening they heard the darnnest commotion out there and, of course, the bear had gotten caught in this trap and they had a piece of hardwood log, was eight feet long and maybe six or eight inches in diameter as a drag and that doggone bear had managed to get from in under that hole in under the fence and was trying to drag that entire log together with the trap into the woods. By the time he got into the woods, why this Irving Hornig had shot it. But when that bear was cut up and well all the neighbors in the neighborhood of course got shared in on that bear meat, but that liver I had was sliced up and fried and it really was good.

One more bear story and I'll quit these bear stories then. This one is about the time when we were working on the WPA over near Wassa Siding and Eddie Kemppainen was our foreman at the time, he lived at Simer there, and of course he was very excitable person, at times at least and that morning when we went to work he was all keyed up...he was telling, "Boy...golly," he said, "you should have seen the big bear". He spoke awful fast when he was excited. It was kind of hard to understand him for awhile, but we finally got the gist of what he was talking about and it seemed that he had woke up about eleven or eleven thirty in the night and heard quite a lot of racket and squealing of pigs...some pigs he had been raising, and he looked out the bedroom window from upstairs and he heard the pigs squeaking and there was this good sized bear and he had one of his pigs...was pawing around the pig just like a person carrying a baby and he was getting over that fence and getting through the fence and then under the fence...getting away with that pig. And he did too...at least he got as far as the woods which was maybe a hundred and fifty feet from there on the opposite side of the road. By the time Eddie got his rifle and took a shot at him, well the bear had dropped the pig there and fled into the woods. So, we were telling Eddie, "Well, if you don't look out he's gonna get the rest of that pig and he's gonna get all your pigs if you don't get rid of him". So, he didn't know what to do so we suggested that he set a trap...a gun trap for him. So, we had heard about it but one of the fellows happened to know all about it and so they did. They got this barrel, this old wooden barrel, and part of this pig that was torn up, they took a part of that and placed it inside of the barrel. Of course, then he bored a hole in the back end of the barrel and and the twelve-guage shotgun with buckshot, they set that gun there...this was just before they went to bed, of course, they didn't want anyone else getting into it. And then, of
course, they had the trigger...a piece of string or wire, I don't know for sure which it was...fastened to the meat so that when the bear stuck its head in there and grabbed that meat, why he activated the trigger and fired the shotgun. So, by golly the next morning when Ed came on the job, he was all excited again. He said, "We got the bear. we got the bear!" So, of course, when we were quitting work that evening, everybody had to drive over there and see the bear. Well, believe me that was a pretty good sized bear. I would say it would probably weigh about five hundred pounds and of course it had most of one of those pigs inside of him so that he was barely able to go in and out of that barrel; but when he had reached in for that piece of pork, the gun fired and that buckshot got him right straight between the eyes. And that was the end of that bear.

With all this talk of bear even up until the present day, all the bear I've seen and scared up in the woods over forty-four years, I've never yet come across one yet that stood face to face to me...not that I wanted one to do so; but I've heard a lot of stories of how bear will attack people but in this country up here, if you leave the bear alone, don't bother them and of course, don't go near the bear cubs in the springtime especially, because in all probability the mother of the bear is right around there and you're taking a chance because once those little cubs let out a holler, old mother bear will come there to protect them and she's pretty mean then. So the best thing that I'd recommend is to keep your distance. Leave those bear alone...don't bother them. And those so-called tame bear that you see in some of the parks, don't take any chances. No matter how tame they may seem, there's always the possibility that they might turn and do some damage either to you or to children.
Memoirs of

CHILDHOOD DAYS

My parents were originally from O Henry, Ardmore. After they married they moved to Ardmore. My father worked as a carpenter. Mother and Father raised 5 children. Whenever anyone became ill, we called Dr. Smith who would make house calls and treat the patients. The toughest problem we faced was finding work. As a family we took part in church activities. The teacher who influenced me was Mr. Jones from the St. Ambrose School. The good times we had were playing baseball, fishing (Shamona).

MAKING MY MARK

When I started on my own, I lived and worked in Ardmore. Since then I have worked as a carpenter. The first time I voted for U.S. President Wilson in 1928. Getting married on May 7, 1935 in Ardmore. The local minister often visited the people in our neighborhood. For a good time we used to go to the movies. When the mines began closing, the community looked up to our town. My biggest accomplishment was becoming a Funeral Director. The best time of the year was fall because of the hunting.

REFLECTIONS

Today my feeling about life is what about yours? In this area we need more industry. Visitors who come here should be given something to hold. I believe in what Frank McKinney taught. My prediction for the future of this area is that we need something to hold the visitors. Collecting these memories about bygone days is very good.
Suomi College  
Folklore Album  

Father  
- John  
b.  
c.  

Mother  
a.  
b.  
c.  

Suomi salutes the people who make this area great  

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.  

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.  

Child  

Child  

Child  

Child  

Child  

Child  

O'Mearas live in Houghton and Ontonagon counties

Ontonagon and Houghton County's James O'Meara has now been a United States citizen some 51 years. Actually, he came to the States on June 18 so just the other day marked one of his anniversaries in the States.

Born in Ottawa, Canada, Jim now prides himself in his new location at Nisula. He and Mrs. O'Meara, the former Miss Luana Stukke who was born in Redridge, now reside on a 73 acre plot which, strange as it may seem, is located partially in Ontonagon and, obviously, partially in Houghton County.

The former resident of the Algoma mining post site near Lake Mine greatly relishes his present home in that at one time it was the camp of the Van Paken Fox Lumber Co. camp in the area.

Jim much appreciates the tranquility behind his location. A confirmed historian,
O'Meara well is informed about the old Mineral Range branch railway which used to operate in the area harking back from the 1880s to the 1890s. He says the right of way still is much evident in his region and that it easily can be discerned and walked over.

He says that the old Mineral Range line is on the right side of the highway near his residence as one moves from Ninilchik to Lake Miss. The mill line is just about one mile from his residence. Because there at one time were many other in the area he, along with others, classified his residence as located on "Older Siding."

When it comes to analyzing the total acreage the couple owns on both sides of the highway it is 110, James says. He and Mrs. O'Meara own on many acres of land and have a small farm where they enjoy growing vegetables. He keeps no animals but he and his wife enjoy cycling and walking on the land.

Most of the O'Meara residence is four miles from Ninilchik and some 10 miles from Miss. The residence is small and private, and there is little opportunity for the couple to make a sizable income. The animals on the farm are cows, and they grow vegetables as well.

O'Meara's post office is this building on the highway, which caters to a large mail clientele. There is a special delivery route which proceeds out of this building.