FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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SUBJECT: General history, including everything from early attempts at commercial crop farming, the sadder effects of the Kohotas monopoly of the fruit market, how to keep from catching a cold when you've been caught in a cold rain, early organizing of the Coop

SOURCE: Alfred Pelte

I: Let's just start by talking about when your dad came here.

R: Oh, to Pelkie?

I: Yeh, when he first... when he came to America, where did he come first?

R: Ishpeming, Michigan. He came to Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1900

I: Did he work in a mine there?

R: He worked in the mine there for three years.

I: That was iron mining?

R: Iron mining, yes.

I: Do you remember what company he worked for?

R: Cleveland Cliffs.

I: And, what made him come up to this area?

R: Well, he was having certain amount of health troubles in underground work and so he decided to try something else and so he went around looking for possibilities of homesteading because being such a short while in this country and so forth, he hadn't gained much capital. He had already while, before he was married right away when he came from Finland, I guess he had invested in a small house in Ishpeming. So, and then he sold the house... he happened to get... there was a man that had filed a homestead in Nisula... two year... in 1901... and he didn't want it then, he was going to let it go. So, my dad took it over. He refilled it and paid the guy a couple of three hundred dollars for his efforts on it... he had a small cabin on it and so forth, and he had already a couple of acres of clearing on there because you have to... in order to be able to claim a homestead you had to develop at least one acre a year.

I: That was right in the contract.

R: Yeh, that was right in the government contract. So he had his two acres on there and so forth, so he was able to support a cow out there already anyhow, and I guess four-foot fire wood and railroad ties were in demand at the time.
I: This was in what year now?

R: In 1903.

I: 1903...where was the demand for the railroad ties?

R: Lot of it locally...there was a lot of like even on the mineral range here, there was a lot of side tracks going in. The main line was in already.

I: And that came in at 1900.

R:

I: Was that connected from Mass to Keweenaw Bay around 1900?

R: Correct...but they hadn't established the side tracks yet, and that stuff for people along the line to make use of it. They were for mostly, I think they just pushed it through to get iron ore from that city to Keweenaw Bay.

I: You mean copper ore.

R: Yeh, or copper ore, yes.

I: Yes, there was a stamping plant..

R: Yeh, there's stamp mills in Keweenaw Bay.

I: When did the side track come into Pelkie here?

R: Pelkie and Alston were some of the first ones. I think they were in right away, practically when the main line was put in they put in these side tracks because they were section terminals also, you know. They used to have section foremen and section crews that would maintain the track and even put in these side tracks, you know, and Pelkie had a section house. There were two section foremen in Pelkie.

I: Oh, this was section crews that would work on the track.

R: Yes.

I: And they had these guys living in Pelkie and also in Alston?

R: Alston...no Pelkie and White Siding...White Siding that's where it was...there was none in Alston. And then there'd be two foremen like...this Peterson house here in Pelkie, you know, this side of the Coop, that's a former section house. And there'd be two families living in it, it'd be split, you know, and one foreman would be west of Pelkie, halfway between White Siding and Pelkie...his division would be, and the other guy would go half way from Pelkie toward Keweenaw Bay. And then there was one in Keweenaw Bay that would come this way.

I: Do you remember who some of the section men were at that time?
R: Yes, well...

I: Some foremen?

R: Foremen...well, old Jacob Peterson was one in Pelkie...

I: Was he related to any of the Peterson's here?

R: He was grandfather to...Laase's father or grandfather to this young Peterson. And then there was a Fred Lytikainen...this here Elmer Lytikainen's got this house across here, he was a foreman on one section here. And then there was another Lytikainen out at Keweenaw Bay.

I: How many men were on each crew?

R: Oh, five - six men in a crew.

I: Did you ever work on one of those?

R: No

I: What was it like...what kind of things did they do?

R: Well, they layed side track, they'd put in ties, they'd put in ties and put in the rails and put in the switches.

I: Build and maintain the railroad.

R: Yes...and in the winter time they'd usually lay part of the crew off because all they could do in the winter time was keep the crossings and the switches clear of snow.

I: That train would run year 'round though, eh?

R: Oh yeh...we had two trains a day here lot of...we used to have a ore train and a regular freight train. And railroad freight train would have one or two passenger cars behind it.

I: Do you recall the names of the trains?

R: Well, they were just by number. They were Mineral Range but they would have a number.

I: What time would they come through? Do you remember that?

R: Oh yes. They were stationed in Mass City...at the round house in Mass City and it would come through here around 9:30 in the morning going East into Keweenaw Bay and then it would come back mostly around two o'clock because they made connections with some passenger trains in Keweenaw Bay that were on the south shore that were running from...all the way from St. Ignace this way. And, they were scheduled that way.
And then there would be a regular ore train that would haul nothing but rock from Mass to Keweenaw Bay.

I: I found it very interesting, in learning about the history up until this point that it was actually the railroad coming through there that made it possible for people to make a living. They could then ship butter out of here to the market and that made it possible for the Pelkie Creamery to operate. And then, also, it was possible to get out a few heads of cabbage through the railroad, otherwise it wouldn't be very possible.

R: Oh no, not in the early years... well, I don't know how much cabbage they raised here before, around 1907 or 1908, I believe it was pretty small amount, but then they started and they started increasing and increasing and there was one year, I think it was somewhere around the first World War period, just before or just after, that they shipped a hundred and two railroad cars of cabbage out of these two sidings... Froberg and Pelkie.

I: And, where was that bound? Copper Country?

R: Mostly to the Copper Country

I: Because they had miners there of Austrian and some.

R: There was Austrian...

I: Hungarian?

R: Austrians and Hungarians and Germans and Polish and

I: And they loved their sauerkraut.

R: You betcha.... I've delivered as much as five hundred pounds of sauerkraut. well I mean cabbage and even some bigger families and some that had boarding houses would take three quarters of a ton, fifteen hundred pounds and make it into kraut

I: Oh, they'd make it in massive quantities?

R: Yeh, they'd make many kind of them twenty-gallon barrels of it.

I: So, it was the mining town then that gave the market.

R:

I: When would you say... when did the cabbage growing and selling for the Copper Country start? Obviously after the railroad. There wasn't any trucking our hauling...

R: No... no... they didn't truck. Well, I think.

I: Well, there weren't roads, were there?

R: No, there wasn't decent roads even, you couldn't get them out. We
delivered a few loads when the roads were real bad yet if we happen to have some left that we didn't have a full car or something to ship, why we'd store it until the first snow came...you know until enough snow so that a sleigh would ride good and we'd load it into a sleigh on a mild day and take two and a half – three ton on a load...we'd horse it to the Copper Country.

I: Now this was when your father had moved to the Froberg area.

R: Oh yes.

I: And, when did he move to the Froberg area now?

R: Fall of 1912.

I: Then he grew cabbage right away, didn't he?

R: Oh yes. First couple years not so much because that place was in the still...when he took it over there...it was still all stump clearings. One stump long side the other one although they made hay out of it.

I: What kind of stumps were they?

R: Mostly hard maple and birch and...

I: So there wasn't much pine down there, huh?

R: No, it was all hardwood stumps.

I: Do you think...the pine clearings...the big pine forests didn't extend down to the Froberg area then, did it?

R: No, only once in a while you see a great big pine stump and even a few trees yet. We bought some land on the Sturgeon there that had some...a few pine on it. They were so monstrosities, I don't think they were able to move them with equipment they had them days. We had one that went over four feet on the stump. Was four feet after...on the end of a sixteen foot log. Four feet in diameter.

I: There were a few, but that wasn't the main area.

R: No, so it took a couple of years...couple three years to blast all them you know...dad wasn't progressive that...he didn't like to be circling stumps, you know, he'd get rid of them when he...before he plowed any of them fields down, you know, well he made sure he got rid of them stumps first.

I: Did he get them out with a team of horses?

R: Blasting.

I: Blasting?

R: Well, you'd have to break them up with dynamite
I: And then pull them out.

R:

I: After blowing them out with dynamite, could one team of horses get them out?

R: Oh yeh...you learnt in quite a hurry to size a stump and figure, well, that one's going to take a half a stick and that one's gonna take a whole stick and that one's gonna take two sticks. Once in awhile you'd have to give it another blast probably if there were some bad roots or something but most of the time the horses could handle it after you once got it...maple stumps were...birch were harder...but maple stumps, most of them split pretty easy, you know. You get that blast in the right place and it would break it into three - four parts. They'd be there but they'd be open in the middle. Well, you could hook a chain on one portion of the stump and pull that out, and hook it on another portion and pull that out. Then you'd rub the dirt out of them and load them on a stone boat and haul them away. Pile them up.

I: Then burn them someday.

R: Yeh, then you'd let 'em dry there a year or two in a big pile and burn 'em. We used to put a jammer...lot of times if we didn't want too many small piles, we'd put a jammer...you know what they used to use for leading logs...set one up someplace, you know, and then pull 'em up with the team into that pile. We'd have a stump pile fifteen - twenty feet high.

I: And, then you'd burn them all at once

R: Yeh, burn the whole pile at once. Usually in the fall when the snow came.

I: You'd burn them for safety's sake.

R:

I: Was it uncommon in the fall after the early snows to go around in the countrysides and see huge fires.

R:

I: That was normal to see that

R: Yeh, sure, there'd be people burning brush and burning stump piles and that, you know, they wouldn't get no runaway fires then.

I: Every now and then in the evening or during the day would you hear blasting in the area?

R: Oh boy, was just like miniature war at times.
I: You can remember as a kid hearing that blasting.

R: Oh yes, because that blasted so much even myself. We used to...I used to set as high as four charges...four different stumps. And, when I'd get 'em all loaded and I'd have the fuses ready and everything, why I'd... then I'd grab my...used to mostly use a carbide lamp for a light. Get one started, run to the next one get that started, run to the third and the fourth one and then run like mad to get out of range.

I: How far would you have to run to get out of range?

R: Oh, three-four hundred feet

I: And then all...

R: Then you'd be lookin up...there'd be stump pieces all over in the air.

I: How did you finally get that one big pine stump out? Did you ever get that one out?

R: No, it's still in the woods

I: That's too big...that one was too big, 'eh. Uhro was telling me when I had the chance to interview him that one stump...he recalled it taking thirty-four sticks of dynamite...one of those huge stumps.

R: Oh yes. Yeh, see if that stump would have been on high land it wouldn't of took hardly nothing because...on clay...because pine on clay, you know, their roots didn't go deep. I pushed over so big stumps with bulldozer that I had an awful time to get next to the stump because the roots were so scattered. Why, see, by the time I had the blade against the stump, well the crawlers were on the roots. But, I've piled lots of 'em with a bulldozer back in '36 - '37 - '38. I cleared lot of land for farmers with a bulldozer. But, on river flat like Erikainen place is, most of that's down in the river flats, you know, well that's soft soil. Them pine roots they go way down or otherwise they wouldn't stand up there. They'd fall over.

I: So, tell me a little about the cabbage farming. It started then around the 1900's.

R: Yeh, I'd say around 1906 - 1907, probably that they first realized that it was a good cash crop.

I: When were the peak years, would you say?

R: It was before...a little while, in the late teens and the early twenties.

I: The peak years.

R: Yeh, the peak era.

I: 1917 to 1922 or something like that?
R: Yeh, well up to 1925 I'd say.
I: Those were the peak years
R: Yeh.
I: When did it peter out?
R: Well, it started to peter out then after that depression
I: Right after?
R: And during the depression because those old Austrians and all them that was real kraut users, they started to die off. And the younger generation didn't do it. And another, until then, kraut used to come in them ...like I said even them commercially made kraut...used to come in twenty and twenty-five gallon barrels. And then about that time, the canning companies in Wisconsin started to put them in small cans that were convenient to the consumer. And then, that homemade kraut diminished from the scene.
I: Right...when people wanted kraut they bought it in a little convenience can.
R: Yes, sure...and there's plants for instance, in Green Bay, that was then Green Bay developed area...developed that cabbage raising program because they had the canneries there already. Because there's a lot of canning going on in around Green Bay and Seymour and in through there there's a lot of canneries there where they can pickles, and beans, peas, and what have you. There's many big canneries there and lot of them been up a long time. And, so that's what put the kibosh on the kraut business here, you know. The cabbage that's raised here, well right now ninety percent of it is for direct table use as salad and stuff, you know, the way they eat cabbage without krauting it...souring it.
I: And that's a small market
R: Yes
I: Small use for it.
R: Yeh, small use for it
I: I see. Did the cabbage growers form any associations for marketing?
R: They did have on quite a few years.
I: When did this start? What year?
R: Oh, that started in around, I'd say, 1914 - 1915.
I: How did it get started and what was the nature of this association?
R: Well, I'll tell you it was like that, you know, that there was some years that seemed like there was...the farmers were sort of afraid that they'd have too much cabbage or else with that the market would flood or something like that. They'd get panicky and they'd all...every individual farmer would go to the store and also go to the wholesalers like Hodis (sp) and Godfrey & Sons and different ones that were wholesalers, you know, in cabbage.

I: Was most of it sold through wholesalers?

R: Biggest percent.

I: Around what percent would you say?

R: I'd say sixty percent.

I: And the rest was in small stores in the Copper Country.

R: Not small...well they were small stores, but there...my dad used to sell a carload to a store in South Range even, another one into Copper City.

I: Plus to individual families even.

R:

I: Were there very many orders to individual families direct

R: No, because it was hard to...them days yet, you know, you didn't have good enough trucks or good enough roads to get out there. You'd sell it by the carload into the stores. Well then, each one would be cutting the other ones throat, you know, I'll sell you for so much a ton and I'll sell you for so much a ton and that, you know, well pretty soon they wasn't getting nothing for their cabbage. So, they formed an association then, you know, and then they'd have three or four men in the association that would talk for the whole group and deal with these wholesalers.

I: Who formed this association? Who was responsible for doing it, as you recall?

R: Well, some of the main ones were Otto Lundeen (sp)...

I: How is that last name spelled?

R: Lundeen...and Olie Olsen and my uncle, August Pelto and my dad, Edward Pelto and then they were usually the four leading ones in it. My dad used to be, lot of times he'd be the...he's the boy that'd go downtown and start talking to these wholesalers because he had, already while we were in Nisula, he had a small store there that he used to operate when the...few hours a day, you know, and he knew lot of these wholesalers and that, you know, well he was pretty good at negotiating with them. And, then naturally there'd be some of them, I guess. Well, then after the big...then after we got better trucks and better roads and everything else, well then the association broke up again and...
I: Why did it break up?

R: Well, because Green Bay was getting so powerful and then these here wholesalers was taking advantage of it... didn't want to pay the local farmers hardly nothing for them, so, I'll tell you that there was many a year that the wholesalers were just about out of the business. The farmers sold direct to the stores then, but they'd hold a couple of meetings and say well, was going to be... that would be our price. Well each one would go sell to the different stores, you know, but they had to hold that price... so that they had made an agreement on price in a lot of cases. Nobody was gonna under sell the other.

I: Well, it started to fall apart... the association fell apart though?

R: Yeh.

I: And why was this?

R: Yeh, well it was mostly because... well the demand fell already for cabbage.

I: Oh... by then the older Hungarians, Austrians and Polacks... they were dying off and the demand wasn't there.

R: Yeh.

I: Do you recall any of the prices for cabbage?

R: Well, I think the least we ever sold any for was $8.00 a ton on cars.

I: And when was this, do you recall?

R: I'm not quite sure, but I think it was the year of 1922.

I: The lowest price?

R: Yes.

I: And the best price...

R: The best price we got when we were shipping by rail was $15.00 a ton... three quarters cents a pound. But there was...

I: What was the average then?

R: Well, say a $12.00 average.

I: And how many heads of cabbage are in a ton, roughly?

R: Well, you can figure at about three pounds a piece, something like that. Well, I'll tell you, there's an average acre of cabbage would produce around ten ton... ten to twelve ton per acre they used to figure.
I: And the best cabbage country was the Sturgeon Valley there right in Froberg. But, did people outside of that area grow cabbage too?

R: Ah...a few of them tried it but they weren't so successful.

I: Is there something special about the soil in the Sturgeon Valley that is especially conducive to cabbage growth?

R: Well, it's so rich. Cabbage takes a lot of energy out of the ground ... it demands a lot in order to grow right. You could tell soon as there was a few there that were on the...out of the area below our place and then elsewhere even, if they didn't have this river flat soil, there cabbage would be like this...where the cabbage out in the river flat were like that big.

I: Like basketballs.

R: Yeh, like basketballs compared to...and they liked big cabbage a long as they were making kraut out of it. They didn't care for...they wanted big cabbage because there'd be less peeling, less handling and there was more usable cabbage product per pound.

I: I noticed that they built the storage bin over there on that old railroad road connecting Froberg Road and Hamar Road. There's an old store house there...

R: That was potatoes...that was just for potatoes. I don't believe there's anybody stored cabbage in there to amount to anything.

I: When was that built? Do you recall?

R: I think it was built in '32 during the depression. The government sponsored some of them.

I: Federal government?

R: Yeh, and, you see, there's another one in Pelkie here that stockyard...that was built for potato storage.

I: During that time was there a lot of potatoes being grown and sold?

R: Quite a few...quite a few

I: Where were these being marketed?

R: They went all over. Chicago market an awful lot...Milwaukee and Chicago by the carload.

I: Do you recall who was growing...what area was growing potatoes...tell me a little about the history of the potato market like you did with the cabbage market.

R: Well, the potato market it was good here until the railroad pulled out.
I: From the beginning?

R: Right from the beginning, yes. They had quite a bit of luck with it because potatoes is different than cabbage, you know, potatoes you can ship them for months and months and months as long as you have a storage place like that one over there. But, cabbage is harder to store in good condition.

I: It can be done but it's costly to do it, right?

R: Yes, you've got to have the right humidity and right temperature and everything else or otherwise it'll start wilting and everything where potatoes don't. But, as long as the railroad was running they'd load out oh...carload every week or carload every couple of weeks out of them warehouses and ship 'em over to the big market. But, then when the railroad pulled out, why they had to do something new.

I: The farmers then would haul their potatoes to the warehouse?

R: Yes.

I: Someone ran the warehouse and kept track of how many potatoes each farmer brought there?

R: Well, not too much track of how much they brought...they'd rent the...bins. It was divided into maybe twenty bins or something like that like that Froberg warehouse even. Then there was an association and you could rent bins. You figured you had a thousand bushel of potatoes well you'd rent bins.

I: And the farmer would then rent a bin in the warehouse and haul his potatoes there and store them there.

R: Yeh...and the association then...he'd pay a certain amount rent for that bin because they had to heat that warehouse see; and the association, it was sort of a non-profit organization but they'd have to get their expense money some way. So, they got it by bin rental and then also renting the grader. They'd have a potato grading machine, you know, that when they were being shipped, well then they'd just grade 'em.

I: How would they be graded?

R: Conveyors that potatoes go along and the smaller potatoes fall through and fall onto another chain and the bigger ones stay on the top chain and so forth, and then there'd be two - three guys watching for defects and pick the defective ones up and then they'd put them in hundred pound sacks and load 'em in box cars.

I: How many guys worked at these places...at these warehouses?

R: Well, sometimes more sometimes less...it would be a bunch of potato growers get together and that was a cooperative affair there again too, you know, they'd help one another.
I: Who was responsible for getting that association together?

R: Well, they had this money available from the government for these ware-
houses, you know. They were WPA or whatever you call it...these relief
programs...they were trying to figure out work so people would have some
work and that was...they'd just as soon have 'em out there building them
a building as digging ditches someplace with a shovel. Well, that's how
that came about and then...I guess then farmers had to put a little
money in it themselves, you know, just enough to show interest. But that
was about all. Yeh, that was quite a thing then...Emo Pelto used to grow
quite a few potatoes and Bill Narhi used to grow quite a few and John
Usitalo used to grow a lot of potatoes over on that railroad grade over
there toward...close to Hamar. You know, Mrs. Ramsey's on the place
now if you've ever been to see her.

I: I was there.

R: Well, that was the Usitalo farm.

I: What about the Pelkie area here?

R: Well yeh, Burt Lane used to grow quite a few and some of the other
farmers...they had this Pelkie warehouse pretty well filled in the fall.

I: In (???) area?

R: No, not so much in the (???) area because the soil wasn't...soil is too
heavy there for potato growing outside of Emo Erickson's old place out
there and some of those other that were on the Sturgeon Flat, but after
it turns into red clay there, you know, well it ain't no potato
country. It's nothing but grain and hay there anymore.

I: What about out toward Kappin (?) area?

R: Well, I'd say that no. It mostly involved this Sturgeon Valley.

I: And, some of the Pelkie area

R: And some...quite a few up on Section 12 up there on Bellaire Hill.

I: And out toward Hamar

R: And out toward Hamar, yes. And then up on Bellaire Hill there like
Sirards raised quite a few potatoes and Jaffetson raised quite a few
potatoes and lot of them others that they'd haul them here to the
Froberg warehouse.

I: What about toward Clemenfees (?) and up toward Horoscope (?) there?

R: No...nothing. Alston and Nisula raised a few...quite a few at times,
Andrew Turunen in Alston, he used to raise lots of potatoes...many
thousands of bushels a year he would have.
I: What about right in the Pelkie area from Turunen's on, you know from mostly south of the Coop and that toward 38...that area...was that potato growing area?

R: It would have been potato growing area but I can't recall that there was hardly any of them grew very much potatoes...well Erikainen he was quite a big...but he would not sell any through the association or anything like that, he'd peddle his own.

I: He was a truck farmer.

R: He was a truck farmer...he was a peddler.

I: They nicknamed him Rutabaga too.

R: Yeh, yeh and so...but up along...a few farms on 38 and then in through the rest of it why they...but...

I: That's interesting. Do you recall the prices they got years ago?

R: Oh...some of them prices were so bad that there wasn't any price. I remember...I forget now when it was...what year or anything but...they shipped out two - three cars into Chicago someplace and they left owing for freight.

I: Do you recall when this was?

R: No...I can't recall the year.

I: They didn't even make their freight bill.

R: No.

I: That's not what you call a profitable activity.

R: No...they'd go on the auction block...them potatoes in Chicago, lot of 'em; and if they happened to come in a lot of potatoes in at one time, well you know they didn't have no orders, well they call the auction block, see. Well, nobody would bidding...everybody had enough and nobody was bidding and lot of potatoes in the side track and they'd have to start paying the mileage on them cars and that was a rough racket them days. They wasn't organized well enough right through the whole potato deal, see.

I: They were just organized here.

R: Yes, organized here and they didn't have the other end organized. They didn't have...they weren't in good enough cooperation with the brokers. Because they go...potato goes lot of times...

I: Did a wholesaler buy them from here...from these guys?

R: Oh yeh.
I: Then who were the wholesalers at the time?

R: Well, Kahotis used to buy quite a bit. He probably...he wasn't too big then that he is now, of course now I think about...I don't know how many states he's in, but he's all over the United States. He grows all his own apples even already and everything. He's got thousands of acres of orchards in Washington. He's got apple orchards in Lower Michigan...he's got citrus orchards all over the south and all over. He don't even buy very much of that kind of stuff anymore...that's all...he grows it all.

I: And he's got the wholesale end of it. Does he have the retail end of it?

R: No, he's strictly wholesale; but he's got the monopoly on that, boy. He's got headquarters...pretty big headquarters in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and he's got trucks...I don't know how much trucks he's got...hauling between Texas and Florida and all them states south and then into Benton Harbor...it's kind of a distribution point in Benton Harbor where he again spreads 'em out into Chicago and Detroit and all over.

I: But, at that time he wasn't that big. He was more local.

R: Oh no...he was...

I: Did he start here?

R: He started right here in the Copper Country. He was just a vender first, might as well say. The he bought...he bought out...no, he joined in with Peoli...that was another fruit and vegetable wholesaler...he joined in with Peoli and then I think...

I: Do you recall when they joined?

R: No, I can't remember the year...that's a little rough for me. I was out of the game then already quite a bit.

I: From what I've heard, Kahotis never gave the farmers much of a shake at all.

R: No...no sir.

I: He took them to the cleaners all the years that he dealt with them.

R: And dirty deals he done. I'm telling...I'll explain you one deal even, if you want to...want it on tape. I don't know.

Put it on and we'll look at it after...when it's typed up...and if you don't like it, you can cross it off then.

R: Well, Old Man Franzer had lots of strawberries...Copper Country was great
for strawberried at that time...lots of strawberries.

I: Even here?

R: All over. They...in the Copper Country area they produced more than they consumed. That had to get outlet. Well, this particular year, Franzer had about seven acres of strawberries. And he was getting nervous about it.

I: Do you recall when this was?

R: Yeh, that was in about 1933.

I: Okay.

R: Me and old John, we went into Hanook and we took orders for the stores for strawberries for the next days delivery for $2.75 a crate...sixteen quart crate. And well we came home...picted and packed the berries, we had about...we didn't have too much -- it was the first day of picking so we only took orders for about thirty crates...and next morning we bring the berries out there...well the first place we went was Sundquists. Oh, the manager come out...he says, "I don't know, I suppose I'll have to take 'em" but he says, "I'll be stuck with 'em." He said, "Kahotis been around peddling strawberries to the stores for $160 a crate." That's only two thirds of the price the stores were happy to pay for us. Well, I knew right away what Kahotis was up to. He went and bought berries from Bayfield, Wisconsin, paid them $2.25 a crate in the field and hauled them into the Copper Country and sold them for dollar and sixty here, to knock the price down. Then he turned around and bought berries in the Copper Country for a dollar and a quarter, hauled them into south...starting from Iron River, Crystal Falls, Iron Mountain, Ishpeming, Negaunee, all over and sold them for three and a half.

I: What a dealer?

R: Yes sir. But I fixed him to a certain extent. I told John, "never mind, we'll get rid of your berries and we'll get rid of them for a price". He said, "what are you gonna do?" I said, "never mind," I said, "give me all the berries I can fit into my Model T Coupe". I had a Model T Coupe. Well I packed in seven cases in there and I head for Crystal Falls and Iron River. I knew Kahotis was charging $3.50 a crate. He had some berries...he had four hundred crates of berries in storage in Iron River in the wholesales. I took orders all through those stores for $3.25...25 cents less than Kahotis' price. I had orders for a hundred and thirty cases when I went through with that Coupe, you know, that...I knew that Kahotis was going to try to hook me, so I didn't collect for them seven or eight crates I had with me, I said, "well here's a little advance already, I've got 'em in the Coupe". I said, "you can pay for them tomorrow when I deliver". About two o'clock in the afternoon I called old Franzer and I says, "you can get all the pickers you can," I says, "I want a hundred and twenty crates of berries in by tomorrow morning to come in here." We got to be in Crystal Falls at eight o'clock
in the morning." He says, "you crazy". He says, "you must have give 'em away." I went...he come with me and we went out there, you know, and he was just a flunky...he didn't want to but...he didn't even say those were his berries...I was selling 'em as my own. And when we got through and I gave him the money for them berries, well it amounted to close to four hundred dollars for that one load which was a lot of money in 1933 during the depression, he didn't believe it. He didn't know what I was getting a crate...I wouldn't even tell him before we had made that first delivery. I like his emotions, you know...he was a quite a card the way he'd express himself and I used to like that...well then a second... and I had orders there then when I was delivering then, then I'd take orders for the day after, you know. I'd leave one day in between, you know, I'd peddle like...I'd deliver like three times a week. And, the second time I went but there, I had the cop after me. He was going from store to store finding out if I was peddling. Storekeeper says, "no"... he says, "he takes orders and delivers". And one of Kahotis' salesmen had been with the cop. They were trying to fix me for peddling. That was illegal in the town. They had a no peddler policy. Well, they couldn't get me on that. He had this...they told me then in Iron River in one store there they told me that Kahotis had three hundred and fifty cases of berries rot in that warehouse. I felt quite satisfied.

I: I can imagine. To get back a little toward this railroad and the possibilities that it made for the people here, what about the logging? It was after...when the railroad came in about that time that it was possible to start marketing this hardwood out of here.

R: Yeh, yeh that's right. Well then at that time, hardwood didn't have any market value excepting for cordwood and mining stalls.

I: At that time, around 1900.

R: Yeh, all the way up to 1915...no it was during the First World War when the railroad company then decided that, you see the railroads went more or less under government control or something or government subsidized or done something about it, and they started taking hardwood railroad ties.

I: Up until that time, what type of wood was used for railroad ties?

R: Cedar and hemlock...tamrack and stuff like that; but not evergreen...but they wouldn't take spruce or balsom or anything, but they'd take hemlock and cedar, but they preferred cedar because cedar didn't rot so easy especially for side tracks. Because side tracks didn't have the traffic and cedar's soft wood...it would hold alright in the side track for the slow moving traffic and that rail traffic, but they preferred hemlock on the main line because the rail wouldn't chew into the ties so fast.

I: There wasn't any market for hardwood before the railroad came in.

R: No.

I: Because they couldn't get it out of here...it wouldn't..
R: That's right...that's right...there was no market for it.

I: They sold it then?

R: But soft wood, they drove it along the rivers down to the mills.

I: The pine?

R: The pine and then some hemlock.

I: Hemlock floats?

R: Yeh, oh yes, hemlock will float.

I: Do you recall logs going down the rivers?

R: Absolutely...I pertnear drowned on a log rafting on Otter.

I: Oh they did a lot on the Otter?

R: Oh, quite a bit...Otter and the Sturgeon both.

I: Where were the camps?

R: Oh there was camps all over

I: Like along the Otter, where were the camps that were hauling them into the Otter?

R: Well, there used to be a camp...camps up back of Larsen's up there.

I: When was this?

R: Well was in the teens and then there was camps...two - three camps on the Amske Ridge between Santi's place and Otter Lake up in that rich country up there.

I: Do you recall who was running these camps?

R: Yeh, there was one camp that was run by a fellow by the name of Belmer...

I: Which one was this, which camp...do you remember?

R: Yeh, he was more on the Sturgeon side up there. Then there was Gunder Carlson had camps there for years and years and Edward Carlson.

I: In the Amske area.

R: Yeh...and they had the first camp not too far from Santi's place...not but a mile and a half down there.

I: What about the camps behind Larsen...who was running them?
R: That I don't recall who was running them camps. But they had camps because they had logs come past our place and they had to come from up there.

I: Then you saw a lot of logs coming down.

R: You betcha.

I: Do you recall the river drivers coming down in the spring with them?

R: I don't...they were mostly guys that...strangers to us, you know, they weren't local people or anything like that. Lot of 'em were strangers. Used to be that oh...hardened lumber jacks, you know, after the winter work was over...logging was over then they'd go and drink their stakes and then they had three - four weeks again of driving, you know, float them logs down.

I: So, the river drivers were the ones that had drank their money...

R: Yeh...the lumberjacks...

I: And went back to work right away.

R:

I: And the men who were not at their home on the farm during those times.

R: That's right.

I: Generally bachelors, right?

R: Yeh, that's right. Single men would be the fellows, generally all of them.

I: Can you remember them going down the river with those logs?

R: Yeh.

I: Can you remember any experiences or stories about them going down in the spring?

R: Yeh, well I remember one of the Carlsons...Lennick Carlson, for instance, well he went...you see, you'd get a...if the logs would jam up in the river you know, start jamming up...they'd jam up pertnear to the bottom, and there'd always be some kind of a key log that would stop and hold...hold this whole thing. That log would get stuck on an old stump or something, you know, and pretty soon another one is behind it and another one in behind it and well, lot of times they'd have to blast that key log.

I: The trick was looking at that jam and finding the key log.
R: Yeh, well they'd be running along them logs in the river there all over, you know, well close to the jam it wasn't bad because they...it was pertnear full to the bottom, but further back where they were floatin' it was a little more tricky to get on 'em...where they'd loosen up where they could row.

I: On these jams then, what would happen is that they'd be stacked from the bottom...

R: Yeh, lot of times..

I: ...and way up in the air sometimes?

R:

I: Do you recall any big jams?

R: Yeh, we had 'em in one curve below our place there when we had one there where it was such a pressure there with all these logs and this water behind, that some of them logs was standing straight up on end.

I: This was in the Sturgeon?

R: No...Otter.

I: In the Otter.

R: Yeh...and

I: How many feet high was it?

R: Oh, fifteen - sixteen and one time this Lennick Carlson went out there, he had a couple of sticks of dynamite in a bag and he was gonna...he was lookin around where the key log is and he was gonna blast it. And, just when he was gettin close to the front of the jam it broke loose by itself and the logs started goin down the river and he fell in. He must have been in under there a couple of three minutes and all that whole jam of logs went over him and then we finally seen him in the brush along side the river bank...he started to pull himself out from there. He didn't believe it himself that he was alive.

I: Lot of men lost their lives just doing that

R: Oh yeh, quite a few.

I: From what I've heard, one guy would generally volunteer. No one would ever...the foreman or anyone of the crew would never ask anyone to go out and do that; but some guy would always volunteer and he would leave all his belongings to the other men and he'd walk out there alone and find the log, set the charge and run like the dickens over those logs and try to make it back.
I: And it's easy to slip and fall and lose time and the jam can go and a lot of men died doing that.

R: Oh yes, quite a few.

I: That was the rough one...one of the most dangerous things. You once mentioned to me stories about early in the morning seeing those guys get up and take a dunk.

R: Yeh.

I: Where was this?

R: Well, they'd have to get wet anyhow and so instead of gettin wet an inch or two at a time, they'd just as soon get wet all at once.

I: And they were wearing light woolens, huh?

R: All heavy woolen clothes.

I: Oh, and they jumped in with the heavy woolen clothes on?

R: You betcha.

I: They'd say, "we're gonna get it anyway, we might as well get it now".

R: Yeh, yes sir.

I: Did those men ever get sick in those days?

R: Never. Between lumberjack tactics and whiskey I think they kept themselves well. See, there's one secret I learned years ago about that getting wet and drying yourself out. You'd never see them guys...see they'd mostly tent along the river. They'd have couple of tents, they'd have a cook shack and a man tent there and they'd be going along with the logs and move down a few miles down and then work both ways again from there, you know, watching them logs. Well, they had a lot of men occupy these...in places where these logs would want to jam they'd have a couple of guys in a bad curve or something...they'd have a guys there with a pipe poles that if a log lodged someplace before anymore had time to come they'd keep them logs moving.

I: Oh, they'd have a crew stationed at the trouble spots then, in the river.

R: Sure, they'd have men stationed all along the river in these trouble spots. Otherwise that river would've been plum full all the time. Them logs would have going down in batches. Well, then going back to this...their tactics on keeping themselves wet, they...them guys would never clothes...all of their clothes...when they come in at night. They'd take the top clothes off, hang them to dry, but they'd leave one pair of socks on at least, you know, and their underwear, and they'd
probably pull on a lighter pair of top pants and they'd have a hot tent. They'd either sit around in that tent or roll themselves up in their blankets until they were dry.

I: They'd roll themselves up in their wet clothes?

R:

I: Why wouldn't they just jump out of their clothes into some dry clothes?

R: No...no sir...that's the secret of it. They say that getting cold or something like that...that won't cause you a cold or pneumonia or anything like that, it's the too quick a change from cold to warm.

I: So, what they would try to do is gradually get warm.

R: Yes...their body heat and the heat in the tent would dry their clothes right on 'em. Their body wouldn't have any kind of a shock. Quite a few years after then, I had a cousin that was cruising for Cleveland Cliff Mining Company, he was running lines and watching jobbers that were around Cliff property and that, you know, and checking that they don't cross over the lines and that, and they'd be survey a lot of areas and all that kind of stuff, there was quite a crew and that (???) perpetual cold all the time, hacking away all the time and he didn't know what was wrong. Then one time they were surveying up there back of Skanee in some small...some kind of a hunting camp up there that they used for headquarters to stay in, you know and back...there was about a five man crew, I guess, four or five man crew, and the big boss from Marquette happened to come and visit them and see how they were coming along and he stayed a night with them and had been raining that day, kind of late in the fall'd been raining that day, and that cousin of mine he had stripped himself right down and changed right from underwear up...well soon as he got in. Well, the boss had told him, "now I can see why you're coughing all the time" he says, "you're asking for it" he says, never do that". And he told him exactly what these river guys were doing. He says, "never peel off completely...leave your inside underwear at least on and shirt and heavy underwear and your one pair of socks on if you got more in your boots, and if the camp ain't warm enough" he says, "so that you can dry sitting around why roll yourself in your blanket for an hour or hour and a half". Toivo said that in a month and a half he didn't know he'd ever had a cold. You'd never believe that but there's logic to that.

I: Did they ever take a bauna (sp)?

R: Oh yeh, lot of them did.

I: How did they make them in those days?

R: Lot of them just...lot of them just...wouldn't be no baunas (sp), be just straight whiskey, but other than that they'd have hot water and sugar...brandy or whiskey with it. But, they were a rugged bunch of
individuals, boy.

I: You worked at camps, didn't you?

R: Oh yes, I was a (???)? (logger)

I: What was it like at the camps?

R: Well, most of the time your chuck was good. The pay wasn't the best, but they'd always try to see that the old lumberjack had plenty to eat and good to eat.

End of Tape I

R: Yeh, and the living accommodations were...you might as well say lousy. All they were were board boxes in most places, years ago, you know, that was before the State put in a law that they had to have steel bunks with mattresses and springs in 'em; but...

I: When did the State put that law in?

R: In the thirties sometime...early thirties. But, until then it would be just a board box with lumber for a bottom and they're double deck built out of wood, them bunks...then all you'd do is go in the hay barn and take an armful of hay and fill that box up with that and throw a blanket over it...lot of guys would tack their blankets down so the hay wouldn't work out of there...the bottom blanket, and then that's where you sacked. That's where you slept. And, then there was a lot of camps, you know, if there was camps with...that had a, we say that it was a some guy that lived in the area himself...the jobber or logger and he had a fairly steady crew of men that there wasn't too many transients and shifters, well, then the camps would be pretty clean. But then, there was lot of camps where there was...the men would come and go and come and go and come and go...well it would be...they'd be so loaded with bed bugs and cooties that if you had an awful time to get a night's rest out of them, and your clothing...you'd be lousy from the top of your head down to your toes.

I: What does a bed bug look like?

R: It's a red thing...about...it's almost round about, I'd say, around eighth to three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter across the back.

I: Pretty hefty bug then, eh?

R: Oh yes, you bet your life.

I: Did they bite?

R: Oh, did they ever. They'd take a chunk out of you everytime.

I: Really?
R: Sure.
I: And, they would lodge in your bed.

R: Sure, and they'd... lot of times you could clean your bunk out and... especially if you was in the top bunk... lot of times the bottom too, you could clean your bunk out and try to disinfect it and everything, and why what the heck, the next man didn't care if... maybe the guy above you or your end... they wouldn't take care of their bunk... then bed bugs would crawl along the top and bunks... they'd drop right on you.

I: It was best to get the top bunk then.

R: Yeh... it was a lot better for that reason to get a top bunk than a bottom bunk. Yeh, oh they had... camphor was good for keeping them away from your area. I remember one time even I went into Hoppla and Reilla Camp (sp) up close to Mass City, and that camp was just loaded with 'em. Lot of transients in there. Well, I was there about three weeks or so... in the fall, and I came home then for a weekend, and we went in on a train so I didn't work that afternoon... we got in there about one o'clock Monday afternoon... I didn't work that Monday afternoon anymore... and so I brought a stick of dynamite and a couple of bars of camphor with me; and I chipped the camphor off the bar and get that in under... in amongst the hay in my bunk and in between my top blankets and in around my pillow and all over, then I'd cut that stick of dynamite in two and put a half a stick under and the other half of stick in the foot end. You know, I didn't have a bed bug or a louse in my bunk all winter. The other guys on both sides of me they were scratching their clothes off.

I: Where did you hear that one from?
R: Some oldtimer... there was a lot of homemade medicine in those days.

I: Did you ever hear of guys steaming them out with a locomotive?
R: No.

I: I heard that sometimes they built a lumber camp next to a railroad, if there was one near by, so they could get in their grub and things like that and their chow, and often they would hook up a hose right to the steam outlet of the locomotive and steam out a whole camp and just shut all the doors and windows except for one little opening and steam that place out... make it hotter than any sauna ever has been and the bugs would be crawling out... soon as you'd open the doors the lice and the bed bugs would be running right out of there... stampeding right out of there. They used to do it that way too. Eva Larsen was telling me about that.

R: Oh yes... yeh... especially the Finn lumber camps... if there was a lot of Finn lumberjacks... I know we were in one... it was the winter of '27... '26 - '27... I was in Liskala's (sp) camp up near Motely up there close to Mass City... we built our own sauna out there... the men did. That was
our weekend project. Boy everybody got...they wasn't goin home, you know, that sauna would be hot all day Sunday. They'd be delousing themselves in there.

I: At the Finn camps was there generally a sauna around?

R: Well, if the camp was big enough, you know, if there'd be enough guys would chip in and if there was wood available...stuff available to make it out of.

I: How did the day start in the morning? Let's say, in the winter time.

R: Well, we used to get...the breakfast bell would ring around a quarter to six...between five thirty and quarter to six and then you'd start rolling out right after breakfast you'd start rolling out and well, you'd get a good ten hours work. That used to be the day. And your pay varied...them days in the twenties...it used to vary from forty-five to sixty-five dollars a month and board. So, you could say that it was just around that two dollar mark, the average would be around the two dollar mark per day plus board.

I: After the breakfast bell, you all filed into the camp. What would happen then? What was it like?

R: Well, you'd have your breakfast and most camps...if men worked far enough that they had to carry a lunch bucket for noon meal, then after everybody had ate and the guys had more or less dressed up to go to work, well then the lunch gong would ring and they'd have all kinds of lunch meats and bread and pies and different things on the table and you'd take your lunch bucket and go over there and make your own lunch. And plenty of coffee available if you had a thermos bottle you could take coffee...lot of guys in the summer time especially...lot of guys in the summer especially they didn't care for coffee so much, they'd make a cold tea and have that. And then you would fill your bucket as full as you wanted to and take what you wanted of it, you know, it wasn't a put up lunch.

I: And then you'd hit the trail.

R: Yeh, you'd hit the trail...lot of times you'd have to walk a mile...mile and a half to your job.

I: Do you remember the crosscut days...days of the crosscut saw?

R: You betcha...I pulled one plenty but I never hired out as a sawyer...I was always on other jobs. I'd either drive team or drive tractor or scale logs or top load or do something like that, you know, I'd always try to get a job a little...that well, better paying end of the...and I knew most of the loggers and they'd give it to me too.

I: What were the best paying jobs for a woodsman then?

R: Well, sawyers were all on contract. They'd work on contract. See, they'd
get so much a...either so much a foot, lineal foot of logs or so much per thousand feet...board feet, you know log scale. And they were, usually, they'd do a little better than a company account man, but they worked hard. They really work...sweat it out. But, they made a little more money than the company account man.

I: What was the next best job?

R: Well, you'd...driving team was about the next best paying because them guys would be involved seven days a week. They'd have to feed their horses over the weekend and everything and they'd have along day...they'd have to be out there four-thirty in the morning in the barn to feed their horses and brush...curry comb down and harness them and everything to get 'em ready go to work, see. And in the evening then about eight-thirty they'd have to make a trip to the barn and give the horses some water and some camps they'd just feed the oats then and some camps it would be the oats earlier.

I: The man would take care of his own horses.

R: Oh yes, yes, absolutely. There's only a few of these companies...camps...like (???) and a couple of other that had twenty - twenty-five team of horses in the camp, well then they'd have a barn boss. Then, all you'd have to do is harness and unharness your horses. Drive 'em in...put 'em in the barn and pull the harness off in the evening and that's all you'd have to do, the barn boss would have to take care of the rest of it.

I: What kind of horses did they use then?

R: Big draft horses...there was a few belgians around but they were...I don't know what breeds they were, but...or anything like that, but most of the camp horses would weigh anywhere from 1700 to 2,000 pounds.

I: What did a horse cost in those days?

R: Oh, from two fifty...from two hundred fifty all the way to three hundred fifty dollars a piece...young horses, say four year olds...four and five year old horses.

I: When do you start working a horse?

R: Well, they usually figured that a horse should be four years old before you put 'em in to heavy work in the woods. Some farmers would buy younger horses even for...but field work is never hard on a horse as logging.

I: How long would a horse last in logging?

R: Oh, some of them'd last five - six years, but you could figure that by the time they were ten years old they were plugs already, they were done for because they work 'em hard and feed 'em hard, you know, well that shortened the life of the horse.
I: And they worked them hard, didn't they?

R: Oh yes.

I: They took care of them though.

R: Un huh...

I: I heard that a horse was sometimes valued more than a man.

R: Oh, absolutely... them days they didn't have to pay for a man but they had to pay for a horse.

I: When you got a young horse, how did you train it?

R: Well, some of them were harness broke already, but I've started horses that you could see that they... if they ever had harness on they had it a very few times because they'd feel kind of strange with a set of harness on. And, some horses were nervous nature otherwise even, and other horses again, you know, they'd be just as timid and mild as ever, you know, they'd be nice handling right from the start. And, lot of times if you got a horse that had one of them that was pretty well broke in already, well the other one would go along a lot better. But, if you got a pair of them that just came off the prairie, why you had some fun on your hands sometimes.

I: What was the next best paying job? Or, the best job up there? So far we've said that the sawyer was the best and then the teamster. What would a teamster get in those days?

R: Well, mostly the teamsters got about sixty-five a month.

I: And the sawyers were...

R: Sawyers were on contract and they were making as high as a hundred dollars a month although they were paying a dollar a day board.

I: And this was during...

R: In the twenties mostly... yeh in the 1920's and even into the thirties you know, the wages didn't actually go... start going up before the second world war... they didn't start going up very much. They went up a little bit after then... then when the tractor era came, say just right after the depression, you know, the horses... they didn't use too much horses then anymore, the horse logging was petering out then and they started to use crawler tractors for skidding and stuff.

I: Is that when they started coming in, right after the depression?

R: Yeh... yeh.

I: What did those first ones cost?

R: Oh, they were up close to two thousand dollars then... them days for a
say a Allis Chalmers WM and stuff like that.

I: Did that make any changes in the way the logging was done?

R: Well, it made a certain amount of changes. Then the bulldozers came in at the same time, you know, they'd have better roads and then it developed into truck hauling.

I: At that same time.

R: Well, before already

I: Oh, when did the truck hauling...

R: Well, we had the first truck hauling into Pelkie here, at...in 1929. But old Pete Hiltinen in Nisula, he truck hauled logs with Model T Fords already in 1927...

I: What kind of trucks were these?

R: Model T Fords...they was just...they wouldn't put many logs at a time on 'em, but then things was shuttling back and forth all the time, you know. They wouldn't pull anymore than a team of horses would, hardly that much, but they were moving many times faster.

I: And that really changed the logging.

R: Oh yeh...that was a big change in the logging, you know, that's when the logs started to come out lot faster and less man power almost and come out faster because the trucks were so fast, and then it changed...during the actual horse days there was very little logging done in the summer time. They'd do some cutting in the early fall already they'd do some cutting in the woods and deck the logs...pile the logs up in the woods, but the hauling wouldn't start before sleigh hauls...before they could start...snow came. And they'd have around three months...little better than three months to get the logs out and then it was done for until the next fall. There's lots of logs in storage them days, you know, there'd be logs decked in the woods and there'd be logs on the sawmill...on the railroad tracks, there'd be logs on the sawmill yard...big decks of 'em because they'd have to...the mills and that would run twelve months a year but they only could get logs in about four months, so...

I: But, the trucks changed that.

R: Trucks changed it, yes. Then it went down to about a nine month operation right off the bat, you know, they could haul...but first, you know, the trucks were small and single axle and that you know, well they'd...they had to have a favorable season, you know, either the dry in the summer or the frozen time in the winter.

I: What kind of jobs did the bulldozer knock out?
R: Bulldozer would make the main road in the woods.

I: But, did it eliminate other man power?

R: Oh yes. Well, you'd have to have a crew of many many men clearing that right-of-way with axes and saws, you know, and get rid of that wood and get a road through. Where after they got bulldozers in, you know, well I even drove in 1937 - '38...ten years I drove bulldozer in the woods, well we'd dump the trees and push the whole tree roots and all out into the side and grade the road with the blade.

I: Did the guys who used to have the responsibility of clearing those roads were they called swamper?

R: Swamper was a man that would clear skidding trails in the woods.

I: Oh, the trails that led to these roads

R: Yes, yes...the skidways

I: What were the guys called that made the roads then?

R: Well, there wasn't any special name for them...for the guys then, you know, that made them roads, you know, they were just road builders and they'd get...lot of them were on contract too...they'd get so much a foot for clearing that right-of-way.

I: Do you remember how much they would get?

R: No, I couldn't recollect that and I never was in it so if I'd of built a road...foot a road for wages, well I'd know what it was. But, I never did. But, then there was the maintenance men on the road, you know, during the horse days especially and even after the trucks came in...in the winter time...even there's maintenance men that would keep them roads fairly smooth...if it developed a deep chuckhole or some-thing, they'd have to fill it up and so the loads wouldn't tip. And, they called them road monkeys. Like when I hauled logs with these ten ton caterpillars for Hilliard into Hazel there why then we had to have men in the sand hills...you'd have a bad down hill, you know, where the sleighs would push when we'd have a four and five sleigh freights behind one tractor, well they'd jack-knife the tractor...you'd have to have men on the hills that would sand the hill down so the sleigh runners would stick so they wouldn't push too hard. Oh yes, I've had one of them ten ton caterpillars jump four feet untouch snow and head for the brush...with five sleighs of logs behind me.

I: Do you recall the early days...what Pelkie looked like when they were loading logs in the downtown area?

R: Oh boy...it was in the spring about the time when breakup came...it would be so loaded with logs that you'd be wiggling in between the log piles and stuff to get through.
I: On the street?

R: Right on the street, sure

I: How high were the log piles?

R: Oh, some of them weren't too high but others were again they'd be pulp piles there just as high as the guys could boost 'em, you know, out of the sleigh and bark piles...they had...one spring we had a thousand cords of pulp...er bark, hemlock bark right in Pelkie.

I: And that was shipped off to tanneries, right?

R: Yes...correct.

I: And where were these tanneries, do you recall?

R: Well, there were a couple of tanneries in northern Wisconsin where they went, and one big tannery at Sault Ste. Marie that bought lot of that bark.

I: Would men be peeling them here in the downtown area?

R: No...they'd peel them logs in the spring in the woods. They'd cut the logs and peel the bark and then pile the bark into piles and then they'd skid that bark out with a jumber or stone boat like outfit and team of horses and they'd skid it to the main roads and then haul it out. And then it would be...sometimes it'd have to lay here quite awhile because they didn't want to freight...the freight was always so much a hundred pounds when they were shipping it, you know, well the drier the bark got why the less freight they'd have to pay.

I: So you had big piles of bark out there.

R: Oh yes...and saw logs, mining timber, flat timber, railroad ties, mining ties, everything you could think of in wood products.

I: So, Pelkie was a pretty busy place in those days.

R: Oh man...there was many million feet of saw logs and wood products left Pelkie.

I: Were there a lot of people in the town in them days...I mean working all the time?

R: Oh, yes...there was an awful tribe of professional lumberjacks even that didn't do nothing but logging...logging camp work. Well, Matt Turenén alone used to employ hundred and fifty men and more. He'd have as high as three logging...three big logging operations going at one time. Well, one winter, at least they told me so, that he had sixty team of horses not all his own, but were farmers even with teams working for him and then his own teams. But, he had a high...as close to twenty team of
horses himself.

I: I understand that this was just a center for lumberjacks...that there were a couple of bars there, there was a Thomas Bond had a bar there...do you recall that?

R: Tom Bond's bar...sure I know that's right where the Post Office is now.

I: What was that like?

R: Well, it was just a small saloon and Alston had...that's the next closest place where there was a saloon was Alston.

I: I thought a man named Gauthier had a saloon there on this side of the tracks right where Ralph Ketola's gas station is.

R: Well, that's been before my time. There hasn't been no...Tom Bond's place was the only one when we moved to Pelkie. When Gauthier was here, he had a grocery store here.

I: There was another Gauthier, though, at Ralph Ketola's gas station...where that is now, he had a bar there.

R: Oh.

I: Would there be a lot of fights there...would that be kind of a wild place.

R: No...no not extreme.

I: I've heard tales about lumberjacks and how they would break their wages up and...

R: Oh yeh...there'd be guys put three months...they'd go three months into lumbercamp and wouldn't draw any money and they'd draw their check and go to a place...but they'd mostly go to Hancock or Houghton or them places where they could go from one bar to another and like that and they'd...about two days and they'd be broke and usually 'round the holidays like Christmas time would be a dandy, you know, they'd go out there. There's some of them they'd leave three - four days before Christmas, they'd be back in camp by Christmas, they had drank their stake. But, I think there was a lot of rolling going on in that, you know, either some of the other lumberjacks or the barkeeps or somebody when they'd drink 'til they fell asleep, you know, why they'd clean 'em out. And then they'd do an awful lot...then there was a lot of these barflies hanging around, you know, that were...lived right in town, you know, well they'd be hanging around the bar and a lumberjack come in without a...with a roll, you know, well he'd buy for the house as long as he could say the word. Well, and the drunker they got the shorter they'd short change 'em. I even heard a story from up...I think it was up in Hearly, Wisconsin, there was one of two bars there, you know, where a guy'd get drunk and
you know, they'd roll him and take his money off of him and take him in to the alley and then bring him in behind another bar...not their own, but bring him behind someother bar to sleep, you know, and then when they'd wake up from there, well they'd walk in and well, they'd be in another bar...well then the jacks would blame that bar for it...and not the one that had done it. Oh that was a rugged life.

I: Where was the market for the wood? Where would this wood go?

R: Well, I'll tell you there was big sawmills, there was a sawmill in Ripley.

I: What was the name of that sawmill, do you know?

R: Tyer (sp) Lumber Company. There was Wooster Lumber Company in Chassell, there was...

I: Nester in Baraga, right?

R: Nester's first and then Louie Hilliard(sp) took it over.

I: How do you spell that last name? H I L L I A R D?

R: Yes...and then there's...well there's an outfit...Habard (sp) was in Pequaming and I forget what the name of that big sawmill was in L'Anse...the Ford bought them...Ford bought L'Anse and Pequaming in the twenties. Just right sometime right after the First World War.

I: And Ford, at that time, wanted wood for automobiles.

R: Automobile bodies, yes.

I: Where was the wood used on the automobiles?

R: Well, the automobiles all had wood frames...body frame. All the frame work in your body was wood.

I: What kind of wood was...

R: Hardwood.

I: And by hardwood, do you mean maple?

R: Maple and birch and stuff like that. And it was shaped and made and then all wooden floor boards. Also, the L'Anse plant here had a big floor board department there where they made nothing but Model T and yet Model A floor boards.

I: Did that give a lot of employment here?

R: Oh yes...there was a lot of men working in these mills. Then, far as the lumber industry was concerned in them days, majority of the married people...majority of the people that worked in the sawmills and stuff these here,
they were married men, see, and they'd live in the town where they worked.

I: I understand a lot of the French people from this area and a lot of the Swedes went to work in the sawmills.

R: Yes...married family...married people they'd go there. It was...your woods force, especially in the earlier days, you know, well it was more single people than married people...married men...single men.

I: There was an exception, though, when farmers would work parttime

R: Oh yes.

I: Almost every farmer out here worked parttime in the woods and parttime on the farm, right?

R: Yes...and that's where the...well their farms were small, they'd probably have four or five milk cows and stuff like that, you know, well they'd use a lot of their farm product right at home. It wouldn't be...there wasn't hardly enough, but then they didn't have to...they were so well organized with these farm products that they didn't have to buy too much from the outside. They all had their own meat. That was the first thing a farmer would...one of the first things was...first was dairy products, that would be number one, to get their milk and their butter and their buttermilk and all that stuff at home so you didn't have to buy any of it. Next came the meat. They'd slaughter once or twice a year...they'd have couple of pigs growing and they'd slaughter a cow or something and then they all had chicken...there wasn't hardly a farm in the area that didn't have a couple of dozen chicken.

I: There was a little venison around in those days.

R: Well, and then there was a little venison, but not too much of that, and I believe there's more violating going on now than there was then. And, although there was some homesteaders that lived further in the woods, you know, well I don't believe they'd eat venison twelve months of the year. But, they wouldn't waste it. When they needed...when they run out of meat they'd go in the woods or else in the summer time the deer were feeding right in their clearings, they'd clunk one off and skin it and salt it down, smoke it, whatever they done with it to preserve it, but it was made good use of and if there were two - three homesteaders in the area, they'd split an animal...give it to their neighbors, you know, and they'd all make use of it and then pretty soon it was the next guys turn to knock one off.

I: That way it wouldn't spoil

R: No, that way it wouldn't spoil and you'd have...you could use actually fresh meat for a few days.

I: From what I've heard, there were many more deer then.
R: Well, there was quite a few, but there's...and then they'd have their vegetable garden, you know, they'd make sure they had...and people weren't as vegetarian then years at that era as they are now. It was more just...well the more stable thing was meat and potatoes and good homemade bread. But, they'd have the stuff at home so about all they'd buy is their flour and sugar and coffee and a few staples like that.

I: I've heard that many even raised their own grain and brought their grain to the gristmill.

R: Oh yeh, you betcha...there's lots of them raised their own wheat and barley and ground their flour...had their flour ground out of it.

I: How did they make money off the farm, though?

R: Well, as far as cash was concerned them days, the farmer didn't need cash only what he went and hired out.

I: In the woods

R: In the woods, and he'd get a little bit if he had surplus or had enough cows so he had cream.

I: When did commercial farming start then? I mean commercial dairy agriculture not the...

R: Well commercial dairy started...that's one thing that I can't remember exactly when did they build this...

I: Cheese Coop?

R: No, the creamery into Pelkie...that came first.

I: On my information so far, I have 1910 or 1911.

R: No, it wasn't that early. No, we were here already when the creamery was put in here. They were shipping their cream to Hancock to Bridgman Russell...

I: At first...

R: At first...and then to Lake Superior Dairy in Houghton.

I: How much did they get for cream in those days?

R: Well, they were paid according to the amount of butterfat that was in it. And, it would be around twenty cents a pound...twenty-two cents a pound and like that for the butterfat content in that cream. If it was, say...a five gallon can of cream would weigh forty pounds...if it was a ten or twenty-five percent butterfat in it, there'd be ten pounds of butterfat in it...in that five gallon can. Well, would get around two dollars, two twenty and like that for a five gallon can of cream.
I: Okay, when this creamery did come in...I'll find the date and make sure of that...what kind of operation was that?

R: Well, it was...it employed three - four men and they'd pasturize the cream and churn it into butter and sell the butter.

I: Out on the railroads.

R: It went out into the Copper Country mostly by railroad. It was packed up in, I think it was sixty pound packages to a carton.

I: How did the creamery organize and develop?

R: Well, it was cooperative right off the bat, you know, they kept a organizational meeting and people bought shares...ten dollars a share, I think it was for it, the farmers and they put up the building and got the machinery in it and hired a butter maker...a professional butter maker...then it went...this creamery went belly-up then, or they were starting to put in cheese factories, quite a few cheese factories then, you know, yeh, I think it was before that cheese factory era already that competition got so great and people start to ship to Bridgman Russell and different places so much cream that the operation became pretty small. An inefficient operation because it was done by hired help, so there was...it went into more or less like a bankruptcy, I guess, and then there was five of six people here bought it.

I: Do you recall when this happened about?

R: No, I can't remember the years, but it was...I'd say it was in around between 1925 and 1929.

I: That this happened.

R: Yes.

I: Yes, now looking back at my notes I see that it was after 1910 or '11 when the creamery came in.

R: Yeh.

I: I just remembered those numbers, but it was sometime after that.

R: Yeh, and they was Matt Ollila, Sander Kinnunen from Alston, my dad...

I: Ed Pelto.

R: And my uncle, August Pelto, and then a Nels Plough from Minnesota.

I: How is that last name spelled?

R: P L O U G H...he was the butter maker and he became the manager of the creamery...he was also manager and butter maker and they bought it. And
they made a go of it for years and years.

I: That's a private operation...

R: As a private operation. And, that Flough, he had been working in Minnesota a lot, and he knew a lot more than these local people did about storing butter and that, you know, in June month and that when butter had its natural color in it and everything else, well they'd store up quite a bit of butter. They'd ship it into Duluth for storage. Well, there was near a double difference in price. Well say, that in the summer time if butter fat was twenty-two cents a pound, in winter time it would jump to forty. Well, they made money with their butter that way. There'd be a shortage on the butter market as it was, and there was a good demand for it and they'd really...and they stored it in tubs...about fifty pound tubs, and then that butter would be shipped back here, and then they would reprocess it and put it into pound chunks and then sell it out. Otherwise in the winter time, you know, they would have had to probably lay some of the men off...people off even, because the cream was...milk production was a lot lower and there wasn't enough local cream coming in to keep the people working. But, they had... they worked on this butter then, you know...reprocessing that butter so it was quite steady employment.

I: Did this give the farmers then a chance to make a little money through their dairy operations?

R: Oh yes, they made a little on it...and there'd also be a quite a bit of eggs going out of here. People'd...everytime they'd come to the store, well you know, they'd have a couple of three dozen eggs with 'em...

I: And what would they do with these eggs then, give them to the store-keeper?

R: Yeh, exchange it for food.

I: What was the value of a dozen eggs?

R: Oh, anywhere from twelve cents a dozen up to...different times of the year, up to thirty — thirty-five cents a dozen because then chicken weren't as raised and fed as they are now with all these chemically loaded egg mashes and stuff, you know, that make them a near a year 'round producers...them days, you know, the chicken was still closer to its wild stage.

I: So, the creamery kept going...do you recall when the creamery finally collapsed there? You said it...

R: Well, when they built the cheese factory into Pelkie then, it didn't last long after that. It lasted for awhile. But then, first when they built the cheese factory...

I: Do you recall when this was...when they built the cheese factory?
If I remember right, it was right in during the depression in 1931 or '32 because seems to me the cheese factory was there already when I went to work for the cooperative in 1934.

I: I saw an old check from the Pelkie creamery dated 1936.

R: Yeh...well see, first when they put up the cheese factory, for many years they didn't have a churning there. They sold their cream, you know, whey cream...as they called it...the butter fat was still in it. There was only a few...little bit of butter fat in cheese, see. Cheese gets left...or that butter fat gets left in the whey and then they separate it...that whey, with a cream separator and took that butter fat out of it. And this cream, then it was...they sold that cream to the creamery here until then finally they happened to change cheese makers again, and the other cheese maker that come in...

I: Do you recall who he was?

R: Seems to me it was Weis...his name was Weis.

I: Do you remember how that was spelled?

R: W E I S

I: German?

R: Yeh...and when he talked to board of directors to get a pasteurizer and a churn in for the cream, and they started...the cheese factory started to make their own butter...churn their own butter.

I: So, the cheese factory at that time was making both cheese and butter, and that put an end to the creamery.

R: Yeh...the creamery was in bottled milk for awhile there, before it folded over. They started handling bottled milk even already.

I: Where would they sell that?

R: Baraga and L'Anse mostly.

I: Do you recall what a bottle of milk went for in those days?

R: Oh, twelve - fourteen cents.

I: How big were those bottles?

R: Quart

I: Pretty reasonable in those days.

R: I wasn't doing very much...the only way I was...well I worked in the Coop for three years, from '34 to '37. And, that's when I got acquainted
with a lot of this kind of stuff, you know. I be to work and I'd listen to all them farmers gripes.

I: When did the cheese factory collapse?

R: That...that dropped from my mind what year it was.

I: Why did it collapse?

R: Well, they put up this big Coop cheese factory in Dollar Bay. They used to have these little cheese factories all over, you know, and the overhead and the maintenance of all these cheese factories was so high, that they decided to put up one big one.

I: Who is they?

R: The...these different cooperatives, you know, and different outfits; you see, so they put up a cheese factory in Dollar Bay then, Copper Country Cheese...and started trucking the milk.

I: Then it was a more efficient operation...

R:

I: ...because it was larger.

R:

I: I also recall some people saying that there was poor management here at the time and that might have been responsible failure and eventual decline of the cheese factory.

R: Well, somebody...some of them could blame it on that, but that cheese factory was always, at least to a certain extent, under the store's director's thumb...the cheese maker himself didn't have too much to do with it...in that, he was just responsible for the cheese making and that.

I: And that was mainly John Polkala.

R: Polkala wasn't here yet then. Carl Kempeinen was the manager, I think, in Pelkie then.

I: Also, I heard that there was some kind of attempt of the unionization of the employees there.

R:

I: And that that might have contributed to the final decline also.

R:
I: There were several factors.

R: Yes, yes, several factors took place.

I: Do you recall anything about the unionization of the employees there?

R: Well, yeh, they had a couple of strikes there even, and there was a couple of real agitative minded people working in there.

I: Do you recall what kind of wages they made?

R: I can't... I don't believe I even ever heard what they were making, but it was only a couple of bucks a day or little better, you know, what the help was getting.

I: They were striking for higher wages.

R: They were striking for higher wages and this and that, you know. A cheese factory is an awful hot place to work in the summer time. You just can't keep it cool enough because you've got to bring them great big vats of milk up to a hundred and sixty degrees in order to pasteurize it. Then you... after you get it up there, you cool it down and then you throw in your curd or I mean your renit (sp) and that makes the changes that develops a curd in the milk and all that stuff... and then it... and you're always sterilizing and using hot water... an awful lot of hot water and stuff like that, well you know, when the temperature's eighty or ninety outside and you're working in a building doing around that hot stuff, you know, well you're pouring sweat all the time... all day long.

I: I can see why they wanted a little bit more money then.

R: Yeh...

I: For doing that hot work... it was like being employed in hell, you know. Do you recall at all the expression used years ago when all the people here spoke the Finnish language... other tongue... person of the other tongue said in Finn... dois an gillianen (sp)... how do you pronounce that?

R: Dois gillianen (sp) they pronounce it... or it's just shortened for dois and gillianen (sp).

I: Dois an gillianen?

R: 

I: And what did that mean?

R: That means a person of another language, actually.

I: Who was it applied to?

R: It was applied to Swedes... anyone that was/ an American born or that wasn't a Finn. Swedes, Norweigian, French, what have you.
I: Was there in the early days mistrust of people with the other tongue?

R: Not too awful much...only mostly the French. The Scandanavians (sp) were very good, you know, they were trusted...the Swedes and Norweigians and that type were in the area...but look out for some of them Canadian—Frenchmen. They'd steal anything that didn't squeal. We used to have to...like when we were logging even...we did a log of logging on the Froberg siding, and the Frenchmen done a lot of logging from up on Bellaire Hill there. There was the Kokko's and the Bellaire's and the Visina's and the Sirard's and all these. And, you couldn't leave anything on that landing boy, I'll tell you, if there was one of them Frenchmen made a trip there ...brought in a load or something...your stuff was gone. They'd steal your deck and lines (sp) and cant hooks (sp) and skidding tongs and whatever you had...lot of times you could try and hide them even, and they'd see your tracks going someplace, they'd go in there and investigate and sure enough they got it. I remember one spring we were loading logs out there, and they stole over a hundred foot long chain, decking line...on me then. Different things like that. One spring we had a bunch of telephone poles there and we were...we were peeling them in the spring...it wasn't even sleigh haul anymore...and we thought, they got no business coming down there. I hid the peeling irons and sliding tongs and stuff like that, you know, we had to pull them poles around, you know, scatter them in order to peel them. Huh, one morning we went to work and all that stuff was gone.

I: I heard that other than in the French area though, I heard that years ago you could leave your tools in the woods generally.

R: Yes

I: That you could leave everything there and you'd come back and it'd be there untouched.

R: You bet...you bet.

I: Little different than that now a days, isn't it?

R: Oh, to a certain amount, yeh. It isn't...you'd never hear of vandalism them years...nope. But there was some of them had that stealing sickness in them pretty bad. But, as far as a vandalism or breaking anything on you or something like that, there was so little of that that it didn't amount to nothing, you know. You could, like...well, there's like the lumber camps in the spring and that you know, lot of guys they wouldn't even have a watchman in them, you know, when the camp was shut down. Others again would have a watchman...they'd put a watchman in, but it was mostly on account of fire. And lot of them lumber camps even they raised a lot of pork...there'd be a lot of food waste in the camp, you know. I know Bill Rouma even...up there on the back of the Red Rocks...he'd have eight — ten — twelve pigs there all the time. And, every so often they'd slaughter one...fresh pork in camp. Well, they had to be fed...them pigs had to be fed.
I: So, they had a man there feeding them.

R: Yeh.

I: I heard that that was Bill Dorfey's (sp) job a lot

R: Oh yeh, he used to do a lot of that.

I: Do you remember him?

R: Yeh...I remember Bill.

I: What kind of man was he?

R: There was some guy, I'll tell you, boy. He was happy all alone out there. He was a good trapper, good man on skis, but he sure lived a skimpy live. I'd like to know where he had some of his money stacked away because I know he had some. I got a kick out of him one time, you know, he was so...I don't know if you'd call it practical or impractical...one time, first it was in the fall of 1929, I went to haul logs for Hilliard, and with one of them big caterpillars, Matt Ollila's camps and Ollila and Mattson were logging closest to Hazel siding. That was the first camp I went. And I was supposed to get a freight from Weisanens. Weisanen brothers were logging a little about a mile and a half — two miles away from there...they had their home set up over there, and I wanted to find out where I turn off to go into Weisanens...and it was in the evening about seven — eight o'clock...I was grabbing night shift. Was a little shack there with lights on in the camp yard there...close to the camp yard there, and I walks in there to ask, I though it was probably an office or something...small office...heck it was Bill Dorfey's baching shack. He was cooking himself a rabbit stew. He had potatoes in an open pot cooking in there, boiling, and he had hung a rabbit, skinned a rabbit, cleaned it and he had the front end of that rabbit in that stew pot, and the rest of it was above there. I said, "what are you doing there, Bill"? Oh, he says, "I don't need a whole rabbit for that stew", he says "I just dump the front end of it in there. Next stew I make I put the rest of it in there".

I: Was that you that one time that was telling me about the time he skied down that coyote.

R: He skied down many of 'em. I seen him ski one down.

I: Tell me about that.

R: In Tapiola...or Elo. It was over at the Simula farm...I went to Simula's...he baches there alone on the place, and they had a barn right next to...quite a ways from the house, a hay barn...just a hay storage barn, and we seen a coyote come from the river hole out there...the Otter River runs close by...the north branch of the Otter runs right in through there, you know, and he was in that...I seen him...we seen him from the house window. I was there delivering groceries from the Coop, and I seen that coyote come up from the river hole and hear for this hay barn.
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Pretty soon, old Dorfey comes after him on a pair of skis like mad. And the coyote headed for that hay barn and the coyote tried to get under that hay barn but it was so packed in the bottom that he couldn't get there, and all that coyote done was crouched right there next to the barn. Well, you know, old Dorfey comes up to him and he turned his ski stick around... he had... about that long piece... eight or ten inch long piece of steel pipe on the upper end of one of his ski sticks. And just gave him a good whallop with that over the head and that's all. Killed that coyote like... clubbed him right there, he didn't even shoot him. Pretty soon he started skiing toward the house dragging the coyote. He had both ski sticks in one hand and put the coyote in the yard... we looked it over... a good sized one... coyote.

I: He had a pipe on the end of the ski pole just for that purpose.

R: Yeh... and any times he finds a pair of fresh coyote tracks, he says within twelve - fifteen miles he's got the coyote... he says he's got him tired by then.

I: That man must have been in incredible physical condition to do that.

R: Well, he was a small light man. I don't believe he weighed over a hundred and forty pounds. But, he had lots of energy.

I: He had that special combination of (???) and determination.

R: Yeh.

I: I understand that camp of his was something to see... the inside of it.

R: Yeh... yes sir, especially sometimes of the year when he'd have pelts all over the place hanging from every rafter and everything else, you know, and you know there's a quite an odor to them when they're drying anyway.

I: He'd have them right inside the...

R: Right inside, sometimes he'd have the innerds and the carcasses of different animals just laying in the corner of his shack.
SUBJECT: On how to make ice when you live next to a river and the temperature hovers below zero.

SOURCE: Alfred Pelto

COMMENTS: I made this very brief interview while driving into town (Houghton) with Alfred Pelto, a seventy year old native of the Pelkie area.

R: It's a known fact that ice that is built out of frozen slush is not as strong...hasn't got the breaking resistance of rubberized...that is frozen from pure water...that it's almost like glass. That has a lot better breaking strain than ice that has been formed from slush.

I: What do the Finns call that fall ice? Is there a name for that rubberized...?

R: That's the only nickname I know for it or any other name I know, but some just call it clear ice.

I: Is it clear too? I mean...

R: Oh yeah, you can...I've seen it, been on different lakes and places and even on the river sometimes where you can see through it it's so clear. But it all depends on how clear your water is where it freezes out of.

I: That can be thick too, can't it?

R: Oh yeah. Yeah, well we used to cut ice years ago, you know, before the refrigeration days, you know, when you used to...you have to cool stuff with ice. Well, we'd go and cut ice. Sometimes we'd have eight - ten inches of clear ice and then we'd have...it had formed that first. Then you got snow on top and that snow would start...get saturated where there'd be enough snow it'd form a pressure and it would get soaked with water and that would freeze again and we'd have maybe eighteen inches of ice with six inches of that kind of slush ice on top and twelve inches of clear ice.

I: It was the clear ice that you wanted then for that?

R: Well yes, but we used to take it all...sometimes if it looked real porous well we'd knock some of it off.

I: You call that porous ice honey-combed ice, right?

R: Yeah...yeah...that's right. It wouldn't store as well as clear ice.

I: It'd melt first, eh?

R: Yeah...oh yeah, we used to take...well we'd figure about a
fifty pound chunk a day for the icebox.

How would you cut that stuff?

R: With a saw...old crosscut saw, what they use for falling trees and stuff, a big crosscut.

I: And you'd put one handle on it, huh?

R: Yeah, one handle.

I: And you'd cut out a block.

R: Yeah...they used to...see in the old days they used to have for sawing lumber and stuff like that in the old country they used to have big saws like that that they'd have...the log would be up on a like a horse or a sawbuck or whatever you wanna call it, and they'd have one in under and one man on top...sawing, you know, up and down like this. And then they used to joke how it was when they'd saw ice. A lot of times they used that...they used to call them plank saws. They'd take one of them plank saws and cut ice with that with only one man of course, but they used to always joke that...well, who'd you have sawing from in under.

I: How would you get that block out of there then?

R: It comes out easy. See that block is...all you have to do is chip the edge of that ice a little bit to get a little slope on it wherever you pull it up and you just put a pair of ice tongs on it and bounce it a little bit and you can jerk it up on the ice because it's buoyant, you know.

I: Oh yeah, once you cut it.

R: Yeah...so that's what it takes.

I: Is that the Sturgeon River?

R: Yeah

I: Right down by where you used to live?

R: No, by Emil Pelto's up there between Emil's and Kamarainen's right there under...we used to mostly take it from under that bridge because there wasn't a cement cover on that bridge and there wouldn't be any contamination going through see, waterproof cover. And the snow wouldn't get in there, so we'd have a lot of that clear ice out of there. Well then sometimes if we took it elsewhere, why we'd every so often during the winter we'd go and clear the snow off...make like a small miniature skating rink in there. Then when it came time to cut, that's where we'd cut it and we'd have lot of that clear ice because we wouldn't have that frozen snow on there.
I: In the Finnish language what did they call that clear ice?
R: They'd call it glass ice...plusiata (???)
I: And what about honey-combed ice? What would they call that?
R: That's hortikoia (???)...hortikoia is the same as honey-combed.
I: Un huh, and that's what they called it too.

in tape.

R: In the wintertime, you know, it'd get a thaw so it would raise water on the ice. Then that water would freeze on there. You'd get clear ice. That's one way...we'd get on a pair of skates and we'd skate down to Otter Lake, down the Otter and we'd come back up the Sturgeon.

Stop in tape.

R: With the smoke stacks on all them mines, you know, was about a dozen mines around, you know, and if you get a...happen to have a heavy atmosphere that smoke...called coal smoke coming down you know from a dozen big smoke stacks. Was some smell to stink.

I: What mines would it come from? Would it come all the way over to Pelkie?
R: No...no...but that...in the hollow in Hancock used to be a dilly for it. It'd be almost as bad as getting into that factory area in Detroit.

in tape.