FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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SUBJECT: Family History, Biography, Church History in Pelkie

SOURCE: Alfred Pelto, December 4, 1975

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Michael M. Loukinen

I: This is December 4th, 1975, the interviewer is Michael Loukinen and the interviewee is Alfred Pelto from Pelkie, Michigan. We're going to be talking about the Pelto family history and then we're going to move into the history of the churches in the Pelkie area. Okay, your father's name was...?

R: Edward Pelto

I: And when was he born and when did he die?

R: He was born in 1878 and died in 1958.

I: Un huh, and where was he born in Finland...or where was he from in Finland?

R: In Merkarvia, Finland at Turu and Pöerinlaani.

I: And your mother, her maiden name was Ilmi Aho and when was she born?

R: 1884

I: And that was in...?

R: Virrat Vaasanlani, Finland.

I: And when did your father come to America?

R: In 1899.

I: And where did he land first...where did he first come?

R: He came directly to Ishpeming.

I: And he worked in the iron mines I gather?

R: Yes, he worked in the iron mines for three years

I: At the time, what was the company that was hiring him?
R: CCI...or the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company.
I: At that time there were the owner.
R: Oh yes.
I: Did your mother come with him?
R: No, they were married in this country in 1902.
I: Oh, she came afterwards.
R: Yes, she came in 1901.
I: Had they known each other at all in Finland?
R: No...no, never seen each other.
I: Well, where did your mother come initially when she first came here?
R: Came to Ishpeming also.
I: And that's where they met
R: That's where they met because her father had come here in 1894; and he worked here and there were very poor Democratic times in this country for them years...for I think it was four years after he came. So money was hard to come by and it took him about six seven years to get...accumulate enough money to send tickets for his family.
I: What did your father's father do in Finland? How did he make a living? What kinds of work did he do?
R: I'm not quite positive, but I think he was mostly a fisherman; but he died when my dad was nine years of age.
I: And what did your father do then?
R: She...his mother took care of them for a couple years and then he had an older sister living in Tompari; so he went to Tompari then to his sisters and he stayed there especially in the summertime. He'd go there every summer and they used to use child labor out there them years at that time already on construction work. They'd carry bricks and mortar on the big buildings upstairs, you know, many stories high and they were paid so much a brick and so much a square foot of mortar and there were boys and girls carrying that mortar as soon as they were big enough to carry that minimum limited load.
I: That's real piece-work for you!
R: Yeah!
I: Why did he decide to come to America?
R: Well, that had been his dream for years. His brother, his older brother was here already.
I: Oh, and who was that?
R: August Pelto
I: Ah!
R: And he already had a family of four boys.
I: Where was August living?
R: In Ishpeming.
When did your father leave Ishpeming?
R: In 1903.
I: And he moved to?
R: Nisula on a homestead. Took a homestead from Nisula and he bought another man's homestead rights, he didn't file for the homestead himself.
I: Who was the man who owned it?
R: I can't remember the man's name. That is something that I don't know if I've hardly heard it because it was just a book transaction you know, they didn't even know each other I don't think too well.
I: Where was this homestead located?
R: Two miles southwest of the Nisula siding, railroad siding.
I: Well, what did he do first? How did he make a go of it there?
R: This place was started a little bit already. He had been a year or so this former owner on the little plot of clearing. And I guess they bought a cow so they'd have some milk right there and even if they had to buy the feed. Anyhow, it was better than going elsewhere looking for the milk. You had the milk home, so... and a good cow would provide butter and everything else for the family. And then my dad purchased a horse right away and he started logging little bit because the homestead law at that time was that you had to clear at least one acre per year, farmable land. So, he took out mostly railroad ties because it sounded from them anyhow that a railroad tie would pay more money. It
involved more work in making it and so forth...you know, it had to be hewed into a tie instead of a log just saw it...well it had to be hewed and so forth, so they were getting proportionately more money for their labor see.

I: Did your dad do all of this himself or did he hire a few men to hew the ties?

R: Well, he didn't hire too many. Mostly he had one man hewing; but this man worked practically year round hewing and it didn't pay from out there...from that distance to haul too many railroad ties in the summertime. That was done in the wintertime when...so you could use a sleigh instead of a wagon. And then they tried to make enough money during the winter with this logging operation so they could try and improve the farming end of it...of their homestead in the summertime.

I: Well, how much did he improve the size of his herd?

R: Well, coming up little by little. I think they had about...well, we stayed there on the homestead for nine years; and we had about...I think we had eight or nine milk cows by that time already and we had seventeen acres of clearing on the place. And the rest of the 460 acres was mostly big saw-log timber. But he had taken all the smaller trees down for making the ties and saved the big ones.

I: What logs did they use for ties, hemlock?

R: Lot of hemlock...well, the hardwood log market really just opened up around 1912 and '13 and them years. Until then they didn't...you couldn't sell hardwood only for cordwood. There was a lot of cordwood being made because was very little coal coming into the area. Well, even the mines and everything used wood for firing for making steam instead of coal.

I: Well, you dad had some kind of a store down there too, didn't he?

R: Well yes, during the last he had an operation...I think it was around 1907 and it seemed to affect his heart I guess so much that he wasn't to do too much hard work anymore or at that time anyway and us kids were getting big enough so that we had to be taken to school. So, he made an arrangement with the Township school board that he'd haul us...me and two of my neighbor kids to school with the horse. Was too far for us to walk...little kids just starting school.

I: What school was this that you were going to?

R: The Laird Township School of Nisula.

I: Now you mentioned us kids at the time...what kids were born by this time and in what order were they born up until you left Nisula?
R: Oh, my brothers you mean...and sister?
I: Yeah.
R: Well, my brother Walter was two years younger than I am, he was there...he's next to me; and then is my sister Marie, again two years younger...she was born in Nisula; and my brother August was born in Nisula. There was four of us kids.
I: Was August two years younger than Marie?
R: Approximately
I: So they were spaced about two years apart.
R: Just about two years apart...twenty-two to twenty-four months.
I: Un huh...and you were also born in Nisula.
R: No, I was born in Ishpeming.
I: Just before they left.
R: Just before they left for the homestead.
I: Were any brothers born before you...or sisters?
R: No, I'm the oldest.
I: Okay...so then in Nisula they had four kids...you had three brothers and one sister.
R: Yeah
I: Well, how did this store work out then?
R: It was more of a...see, he arranged this store business then so that when he had to drive that two and a half mile to drive us to school that two and a half miles, well he hated to go back home and then go and come and get us again. Well, he had seven hours on his hands right there in the village.
I: He was the school bus driver...
R: Yes
I: ...with horse and wagon.
R: Yeah, so he started. He rented a warehouse and he started taking grocery orders around the country and he'd have the groceries come in by train and he'd just fill out these orders. He didn't have no counter sales at all. It was all just ordered and delivered. I think he had one route that he made only once a week and he had two routes that he made twice a week to the farmers and homesteaders.
I: What kind of circle did he go in in those days? How far east and west...?

R: Oh, he'd go about three miles...I think he drove just around nine miles...eight or nine miles always during that day. Well, then them stops consumed quite a bit of time. You know, going into people's yards and go in and deliver the groceries and take an order for the next week and so forth, you know, well that consumed a certain amount of time.

I: Okay, and then he moved to Pelkie.

R: Then he moved to Pelkie. He decided that he wanted to get to a community where he a little more chance in a few different ways and then one thing was, sawmill company made him a very exclusive offer for his land because it had so good mature hardwood on it. And in fact, they built the sawmill just a quarter of a mile from our homestead and the buyers, my dad knew them buyers quite well, they had said that if they couldn't get his four forties, they wouldn't even build a mill.

I: Who were these buyers?

R: It was Herb Klassen...that's the name it went by. The Herb Klassen Sawmill, but he had some outside backers.

I: And this started in around what year?

R: He started building that mill in 1913.

I: And your father moved to Pelkie the year earlier, right?

R: Yeah, in the Fall of 1912

I: Okay, just briefly can you tell me without dwelling on it too long, what was Nisula like during the time you were living there?

R: Well, there was quite a few people coming in. Nisula area hadn't had so many of these old timers in there already that had come in in the 1800's like Pelkie did. Pelkie area, lot of these places around Pelkie were started in the 1800's where Nisula was quite unsettled until the Finns started coming in there around 1896, 1898 and them years. They were the first ones to come in there and there was a few other nationalities there. There was like a few Frenchmen...there was Frank White and Bill Glinn and Bob Burns and a few of them old timers that had been in there at the turn of the century.

I: What kind of industry...or not quite industry, but businesses were there? You said in 1913 there began to be a sawmill. The railroad went through Nisula.

R: Yeah, oh the railroad was through and they put a railroad two miles down into that sawmill...that sawmill was two miles from
the Mineral Range in the woods and they put a spur in there or what they call a sidetrack.

I: Was there another sawmill in Nisula?

R: Yes, there was a fellow by the name of Nisula who the town was named after, the village, he had a sawmill there.

I: August Nisula

R: August Nisula

I: What kind of a man was he, as you remember?

R: Well, he was a man who liked to have his finger in quite a few different things... as far as I'm concerned. (chuckle)

I: He was quite an operator

R: Yeah, he had... well, he was the Postmaster of Nisula in the first place although I think it was his wife that done most of the Postmastering (chuckle)... and then his son-in-law by the name of Abraham Maula had a grocery store. Yeah, and old August Nisula he run the Post Office and he run that sawmill and he done some...I think he done some real estate handling and different things like that.

I: Were there any churches there at that time?

R: There was... I can't remember the exact date when the Nisula church was started, but that congregation or church was built... but that congregation was established in the 1800's.

I: Were there any saloons there?

R: No, not in Nisula. In Alston there was... if I remember right, there were two saloons in Alston at one time; but now in Nisula.

I: All right, so in 1912 your family moved to Pelkie... this right down in the Froberg area?

R: Yes, on the Otter.

I: Un huh... and how did your dad get this land? Was this another homestead or...

R: No... no, there was a party by the name of John Jokipii that owned it; and he had bought it in partnership with a good friend of his from Calumet and they thought they were gonna farm together. And I guess it didn't turn out so well and this other man wanted to get out. So, John was kind of forced to buy him out and he bought him and then John's wife got into pretty poor health. So, they more or less had to give up farming and they put it up for sale and so that's how dad come around to buy it... there was quite
a bit more clearing than on...on this place than we had on the homestead. So we were right away...we brought our cattle from Nisula plus what was here on the Jokipii farm that we bought; and we were able to handle them all.

I: How many acres did your dad buy there?

R: Was first to start with only eighty acres but then there was another forty acres available right next to his place across the road which had ten acres of good clearing on it and the rest was all standing hardwood. So he latched onto that right away.

I: Do you recall any of the prices paid for that land way back then?

R: Yes, I have a little understanding. My dad paid 3,300 for Jokipii for the farm.

I: For the 80-acre farm

R: 80-acre farm...and there was a team of horses and five or six head of cattle...milk cows. And then he paid $700 for this forty across the road then that he bought from Bill Erickson.

I: And what kind of business did he go into then?

R: Well, he more or less stayed on the farm there. We done quite a bit of logging from then on we...mining stalls and cordwood and whatnot. We started to clear that portion that timber was on that Bill Erickson land...well, we started to log that out so that we'd get some clearing out of it which we did too. One year we used almost a half a railroad car of dynamite blasting stumps. (Chuckle)...so there was a lot of noise going on around there for awhile.

I: I imagine...and the same time that was marketable hardwood

R: Yes

I: Lot of it was made into ties?

R: Well, we made hardwood ties and we made cordwood and mining stalls and roller blocks and all that type of stuff out of it; and then later on in 1919 my dad bought a portable sawmill and he started to...and the hardwood ties were in big demand after the First World War...and he started to go around the country with this sawmill then for a quite awhile. But in the meantime he had been a manager in the Pelkie Co-op even and helped to organize the Pelkie Co-op back in 1916-17.

I: Can you describe the part he played in this.

R: Well, he was President of the Board of Directors and he was also General Manager for awhile. The Co-op was so poor when they first started out...they had the building because it was all practically
done with free lumber and free labor...the building. The Co-op they didn't have only $500 capital to start buying stock. So, my dad suggested to the Board that he had a good credit rating with the wholesales in the Copper Country...all the grocery wholesalers...so he suggested to the Board that he'll go and do the first purchase. That he thinks that he can swing quite a credit deal in the Copper Country. And he went there...he put in $500 of his own money plus the $500 the store had and they gave him $2,000 worth of groceries. Gave him another thousand dollars worth of credit and that's when it started rolling...that was the start of the Co-op.

Stop in tape.

R: And then my dad didn't want to stay with it in that capacity too long because he had too many other things that were falling back. In the first place, I was only fourteen years old and I had to practically take charge of the farm. Had to quit school...I was in the eighth grade that spring, but I had to quit school before school went out and I got left without my eighth grade diploma and everything because I had to take the team...start driving team.

I: Okay, well now that we're on it...why don't we sort of zero in on your...the tracks you've walked in a sense. So, you're driving team before you completed your eighth grade.

R: Yeah

I: And your dad found you more valuable driving the team than in school...right!

R: Kind of...of course, he never drove the team after that to amount to anything. I kept them lines winter and summer for four years.

I: What was it like driving team?

R: Ahm, lots of hard work and long days. That's all I can say...hauling pulpwood and stuff. Summertime wasn't so bad...you'd work long shifts in Summer time, but you was mostly riding implements.

I: Meaning...

R: Whether we had a sulky plow and it was on a disc harrow...you're sitting there and all that kind of stuff. Well, you're mostly riding excepting then when you're taking in hay and stuff like that; but even then we were advanced in equipment from the other people who had come in later than we did. We had seed drills, we had a team mower, we had hay loaders and all that kind of stuff. Well, for instance, in the spring I'd be three and four weeks just on that seed drill all over the country planting. Other people would come to our place and do our...fix our fields
up so that when I got home, I could plant

I: Oh, because you had the equipment

R: Yeah!

I: ...people would help you out with some of the work...the things they could do and you'd cooperate.

R: Same thing haymaking time. I'd be from lot of times four-five days straight from four o'clock in morning until eight o'clock at night sitting on top of the mower...going from house to house.

I: Was this mostly in the Froberg area?

R: Yeah, right just both directions from our place.

I: Did you go on up the hill?

R:

I: Hamar and...

R: No, never had to go there. I had Posto's and Kostimo's...two Bokto's and Kostimo's and Jokipi's and John Lehto's and Escola's, Narhi's, Olson's, Konanin's...some of them places.

I: Ahm, who were these two Lehto's? What were their first names?

R: Lehto's...there was only one Lehto...John Lehto.

I: Oh, and what was Konanin's first name?

R: Charlie, yeah. He lived right there next to...kitty-corner from Kaino...Kaino Johnson.

I: Who were the two Posto's?

R: There was August Posto and Emil Posto.

I: And where were their farms located?

R: Just north of our place...my home; and there was an Andrew Saari just behind...still north of them even.

I: That was already in Elo on the other side of the river?

R: No...no

I: Oh, still in cabbage country?

R: Oh yes, still on the Cabbage Road. Yeah, and I think if I remember right, I took care of for about three years anyhow...I took care of all the mowing on seven or eight farms.
I: In that area.

R: In that area. Well then most of them only had...they only had one horse. Well, two farmers would team up their horses and then they'd go to our place and take in the hay at our place.

I: That was a pretty cooperative neighborhood.

R: Oh yeah

I: Your farm was kind of the center of it because you had the advanced equipment.

R: That's right

I: And there was sort of...you ran the equipment in exchange for their labor at the time.

R: 

I: Well, that should have put your farm ahead real quick

R: Yeah, that was...it helped.

I: Your dad must have been quite an operator to figure that one out.

R: (Chuckle)...yeah. Yeah, we had...I forget now, but International Harvester Company, the salesmen they...when we bought the first seed drill in 1913, well they were able to say just how many were in the Upper Peninsula there was so few seed drills.

I: So your dad was kind of forward thinking in this area.

R: Oh yes.

I: ...that it paid off for him. That must have been some neighborhood in those days. Well, how long did you work on the farm then?

R: Well, then in 1922 we bought a thrashing machine and I had already given the team to my younger brother...Wally then, you know, Wally had the horses. I was helping on the sawmill and I went out with the thrashing machine and all that stuff and more or less...I wasn't home too much then anymore. The sawmill was...we were gone out someplace. I'd be boarding where I'd be working with it and so forth and so that was in...well I actually took over the sawmill in 1923. I was in Detroit...I went to Detroit that spring of '23 and my dad had wrangled a big tie job from Bruce's Crossing. Well, he couldn't handle that job...get away from home. So, he wrote me in Detroit that if I'd come over and take over that sawmill.

I: Where were you working in Detroit at the time and where were you living?
R: I was working at Briggs.
I: Briggs...where was this? What did they make there?
R: Briggs was the prime manufacture of Ford bodies, car bodies.
I: Oh! Where was their plant located?
R: Plant was located on Luciner Avenue on the East side. Was right close to the Grand Blvd.
I: So you weren't there very long...about one year, right?
R: No, I was there only five months...five months.
I: Five months?
R: Yeah
I: What was it like down there at the time?
R: Well, nothing to brag about. There used to be a saying going on around there..."Ford can't kill you, try Briggs".
I: It was pretty rough
R: Yes, sir! They really worked you.
I: What kind of work were you doing?
R: I was hanging doors.
I: Those doors were kind of heavy in those days, weren't they?
R: Oh, all wood grain doors. It wasn't the weight of the doors so much but it was...they didn't come the best of two fifty even as you didn't weld them on or anything like that. Them doors had to be wood-screwed into the frames...the engine.
I: They didn't have assembly lines, did they?
R: Oh yes, you bet your life.
I: And you had to keep up.
R: Yeah
I: You didn't care for that very much, hey
R: No, greenhorn go in there, you know, and start...and they'd usually try to give you a helper for a few hours; but some of them jobs were so that would take you days and days to catch up...or I mean to catch on real good. I know when I went even into Briggs there, why there was a fellow on the other side on the line...he was there
five months already and they had to still give him a hand once in awhile.

I: Were there a lot of Finns there?

R: Not too many...not in there. Finns were heading for Ford's a lot and it seemed like they were getting a job from Ford pretty regular. Lot of the Finns were going into Ford's. I didn't care to go to Ford's...I didn't even look for a job in Ford's. You know when you go there, they're like that...well, you start looking around and I had an uncle in Detroit at the time and he was a carpenter. He was doing carpenter work and he's the one who told me, "Why don't come down there." I stayed with him and he was staying down toward town right where all the factories were. He says, "You can stay with me," he says, "And right here," he says, "most of the Detroit car plants are within walking distance practically." There were two big Studebaker plants and there was Briggs and there was Murray Body and there was Fischer Body and there was Burroughs...all them within walking distance.

I: Just to refresh the person who might be listening to this, this was in what year?

R: 1923

I: 1923, okay.

R: Yeah, so then I came back here and I went to Bruce's Crossing, I went there and put up the mill there. I stayed in Bruce's most of the summer then sawing lumber and ties. And in the fall I came home and we had a small logging job of our own, I was in there all that winter. The following winter then, the fall of '25, I went back to Detroit again and I stayed there eight months again in 1925. Came back in June of '26...I went in November of '25 and that trip I worked in Murray Body and times have changed a lot since then. We were...I was on contract then at Murray's and we made good money in the paint shop.

I: Where was Murray Body located?

R: On Russell and Clay.

Were there a lot of Finns around there where you were?

R: Not too many. There were some in some departments, but not in my department. There was only three or four of us.

I: Right from this area?

R: Well, my cousin was working there and then there was two guys from...I think I kind of remember they were from South Range.. working there. But the foreman in that paint shop was an old Copper Country native by the name of Alec Rowe. His brother I think was a Sheriff of Houghton County at one time.
I: What kind of work were you doing?
R: I was mostly polishing paint...car bodies.
I: How did you like that job?
R: It was good job otherwise, but it was hot. A hundred degree air blowing on us all the time
I: Phew!
R: That was a sweathouse. Sortof a Finlander was the only one that could take it (laughter ...with his sauna background.
I: Did you have hanging up somewhere next to your work station cedar switches...
R: Well, most of the time we just had...we'd wear overalls and a real thin chambray shirt. That's all we'd have on. Of course we used to wear a light rubber apron because your clothes would get awful dirty on that, you know, when you was polishing them even using that pumice stone. Well, that was dusty.
I: Where were you living at the time?
R: In Detroit?
I: Yeah.
R: Well, I was staying in that same area on John R just below Grand Blvd.
I: Did you ever get over to that Woodrow Wilson area?
R: Well, once in awhile I'd go down there. We had some of our neighbor boys were staying up there and I'd go and visit them sometimes during the weekends and that.
I: What was that area like? Is that a little Copper Country there?
R: Well, yeah there was a lot of Copper Country people there. That's where most of those seemed to land...families even, you know, they'd land up there. You know, lot of them they...well then the single guys they'd part near always find an extra rooming place, you know, in amongst Copper Country people. But I always, when I was in Detroit, I never believed in using a car or a streetcar even to travel to work. I figured that was my most important thing was that going to work and that was something that had to happen six days a week. I always tried to find me a room or place to stay within walking distance of my job. I didn't believe in standing around on a street corner waiting for a streetcar or waiting for someother ride. No sir, that was against grain for me. I wanted to get so that when I pull out of the door, I could
take the sidewalk and walk to work. It'd take me probably a quarter of a mile to a half a mile to walk to work. Well, that was nothing when a fellow is young.

I: Well, when did you leave Murray Body? You said in '26 you left. you were only there for about a year.

R: Well, I'll tell you...I don't know what caused it...but really I've never been able to stick around Detroit too long. That was my second trip only, but I started to hanker for more elbow room. I didn't care for city life enough. I thought it was an all right place to go a make yourself a little stake, but never plan your future there. That was my opinion all the while.

T: Could you pinpoint what it was you just didn't like about it or what it was that you missed?

R: Well, I'll tell you...it was too big for me, right off the start. Your friends would be up in a different area...they'd be scattered all over and all that kind of stuff. Well, I didn't care for that and I, of course, then it seemed like in the summertime especially...I didn't mind it there in the winter because your winters are kind of stale anywheres, you know, even for a single man like I was single yet them days. Was kind of stale anywheres, but then when summer comes along, I thought that there was lot more social activity around here than there was up there.

I: So you came back in 1926.

R: Yeah.

I: What did you do then?

R: I started working for my dad again.

I: What were you doing this time?

R: Sawmilling

I: Back to the sawmill. Was this a portable sawmill you were working with?

R: Yes, was a good-sized sawmill.

I: Where would you go on your sawmilling work?

R: Oh, I went...a lot of the farmers were at that time, they were starting to prosper more and they were building big barns and everything else like that and renewing their houses and they'd take and cutting logs from the woods and I'd cut it into lumber and then they had it planed and made houses and barns and stuff out of the logs.

I: So the farmers generally would get the logs and pile them up...
R: Yeah

I: And when the logs were dried out enough or...

R: Well, they didn't have to be dried to be sawed. Cut them just as fresh...better fresh than dried.

I: They'd call you and you'd haul your sawmill over to their place?

R: Yeah, there were usually a whole bunch of farmers would get together so they could make it worthwhile for me because I used to have a...if they didn't have a certain amount of logs, well I had to charge them a setup fee; but if they had a certain amount of logs in there, I think we used to have 30,000 feet was the amount, you know, that they had to have 30,000 or else we...

End of Side 1

I: You mentioned you had to have 30,000...

R: Board

I: ...board feet or else you'd...

R: ...charge extra like for a setup fee, you know, because it didn't pay us to spend a day or day and a half setting up the mill and for a small bunch of logs.

I: Did you travel very far with this outfit?

R: Oh, all over. We used to go...like I said before already, we were at Bruce's Crossing and round there and Nisula and then Covington, Watton and all the way through there.

I: Would you go home at night or would you stay.

R: No, I'd usually stay there by the week and come home weekends.

I: Un huh...how did you transport this thing? Was there a truck that pulled it?

R: By truck

I: Okay, this was in '26 and '27, right?

R: Yeah.

I: How long did you do this sawmilling work?

R: Well, I done that and then went, in the fall of '28, I got married and then we went to Detroit again.

I: Back to Detroit.

R: Yeah...things were kind of quiet around here, so I wanted to go
to Detroit and try it over there; but then...well, we were there a year, little better than a year and then the Depression came. I was working in Chevrolet's when the Depression hit in December of '29. And I was layed off...well I stayed there a couple months and then things didn't look promising at all, so what did I do but head north again. I was here about three days and I had a job that everybody envied money wise. Times were hard then already you know, they were paying only a buck and a half and likd that a day at the lumber camps and I was getting...I got a job driving big caterpillar tractors hauling logs into Hazel Siding getting four dollars a day.

I: That was good money in those days.

R: You bet!

I: Ahm...was that your own tractor?

R: No, I was driving their tractor...big Caterpillar-60.

I: Who were you working for?

R: Baraga Lumber Company or Loutie Hilliar was the owner of it, but it was the Baraga Lumber Company.

I: And how long did you do this?

R: Well, that was only a winter job, see. Well, I didn't mind that. In the spring I went back on Dad's sawmill again and I was on that during the summer off and on and monkey around and I even run sawmills for someother people. I run Pine Creek here...Pine Creek Thrashing Company had a little portable. I sawed a few jobs with that and Bill Ruona had a portable sawmill...a pretty good-sized portable...I run that for him a few times. And then I was two winters on this tractor hauling these saw logs and that petered out then, they run out of timber out there. Then I worked one summer...the summer of '32 I worked at Building the Prickett Damm. There again I had pretty good...I was getting...well, they were paying thirty-five and forty cents an hour and I was getting fifty cents an hour for there all the while I was there.

I: There were quite a number of local people employed at that time.

R: Oh yeah, that was a fast job. That was done in a hurry. I even sawed all the form lumber for that damm project. Quarter million feet of form lumber.

I: Wow!

R: And then I was off a few weeks, two - three weeks, something like that because it was spring breakup and they...they couldn't get gravel...they couldn't get the road to hold so they could haul
Gravel to there from...the was all...for concrete work was all shipped by rail to the Hazel Siding from the Copper Country was washed gravel and the trucks couldn't haul it into the damm site, so they couldn't proceed with their job until it dried a little bit. That's where I hadda stay home too. Then I went to work for them and I worked for them almost until it was finished.

I: What kinds of other projects did WPA...was that WPA Project?
R: What?
I: That...
R: Damm?
I: Yeah.
R: Oh, no...that was UP Power Company contracted that price to build that damm.

I: What kind of WPA Projects were there around here during the Depression?
R: Hardly nothing but roadwork. There were gangs here and there... quite a few gangs digging ditches by hand and brushing out by clearing out the right-of-ways and all that. I'd like to see today even that they'd put these relief guys brushing out these road sides instead of having it grow into an over-the-road deal like it's almost doing in places instead of sitting on their fannies drawing their fancy checks.

I: In those days there were really quite a few young men working on this right. Where was this work done?
R: Well, all over the area. Well, there was two crews around Pelkie here. The job was...let's see now, how would I describe that. The job was running steady but the men worked fourteen days a month. They'd have to stay away the rest of the month, then again work fourteen days.

I: How much did they get for these jobs?
R: I can't recall exactly that hourly or day rate; but it was something over two dollars a day that they got wages out of it because I remember I was one fourteen-day trick on WPA during the whole Depression. I called up the administrator and I told him, I said, "Well, my cows have quit milking too." I didn't have any (laughter). He said, "Well," he said, "I guess we can put you on some place," He put me on a roadcrew over here and I worked one fourteen-day trick and I was layed off then, you know, I got my waiting period and I got other work inbetween time and I didn't have to go back.
I: Un hum! What was your dad doing these days?

R: Well, he had a truck on WPA. They had to provide so many trucks, you know, also, so he had a truck on WPA. Sometimes he drove it himself and sometimes the boys would drive it.

I: That was his own truck.

R: Yeah, his own truck. He hauled...it was a dump truck with a canopy over it and he'd haul a certain bunch of men to the job and home again and then they'd lift the canopy off while they were on the job and he'd move dirt with the truck.

I: So he was truck driving then for the roadcrew...he was driving truck for the road crew.

R: Yeah

Okay, well then what did you do after this period when you were skidding logs for Loutie Hilliar and working on the sawmill then? You said the log skidding lasted only two years up until about 1932 or so.

Yeah, the fall of '32 I went to Ishpeming and I looked after a logging job...small logging pulp and logs for my cousin and I was there most of that winter. That was after I left Price Brothers...Price was on the damm job well I went to Ishpeming then and I stayed there that winter and in the spring then again in the spring I went to work for Bill Ruona.

I: Back here in Pelkie.

R: Yes, but we were sawing lumber south of 35 out there...or I mean 38. We were at Silver Mountain...foot of Silver Mountain go in from Alston south. And I was in there for him for two years. And the summer of '34 then...

I: What were you doing there? You were sawing...

R: Well, I was a Sawyer...I was a Sawyer and foreman at the same time.

I: Okay, did you have a big crew over there?

R: Oh no, there was...well, with the woods crew there was about twelve of us and we cut a lot of switch ties and stuff like that for the railroad...some mining timber and anything we'd get orders for.

So that lasted until '34.

R: Yeah, well...yes. Then in '34 I put in an application into the Co-op and I got a job there, Pelkie Co-op, as a truck driver and I was in there until August of '37.
About three years.

Yeah, I drove long distance mostly between here and Ashland and here and Duluth. Hauled cheese from the Cheese Factory to Ashland and go empty to Duluth and pick up a load of groceries and hardware and come back. And sometimes then that was every other trip. Every other trip we'd load empty cheese hoops in Ashland and come back just from Ashland. So that was twice a week that would take place and sometimes during the rush milk... when the farmers' had a lot of milk, three times a week we had to haul a load.

And then that way you'd stay overnight

No

No?

No, I'd...I had a choice. They allowed me two days for the Duluth trip but I could make it in a day if I wanted to and get the next day off.

So you pushed her.

I pushed it because I was building this house. I started this in '34 and I was building this house doing most of the work myself and we moved in here amongst the two-by-fours. It wasn't even finished inside. I had just closed the outside so it was...so you could heat it and we lived here just in three rooms. There was only three of us...a daughter and me and the wife.

Ahm, when was Jean born?

Jean was born in 1930

And at that time you were living...you were up here

Yes

Jean was born in Pelkie.

Yeah.

Where were you living...back on the farm still?

We were staying at Perander's. We hadn't established a household since we had come back from Detroit. We came...I came from Detroit in November of '29 and Lena stayed back...she stayed in Detroit until January of '30...and then she just came because she thought that maybe I'd get a call back to work into Detroit and we'd still stay there; but as long as things stayed bad over there, why then she decided to come here and then Jean was born in February.

Well, what year did you complete this house then?
R: This house? I done most of the completing in '37.

I: And then what did you do?

R: Then I went to work for Ford Motor Company.

I: Back in Detroit?

R: No, here.

I: Oh!

R: Here in Alberta and I worked for Ford Motor Company for a few months only...it was only a freak job. Henry Ford himself had designed a small sawmill, very fast portable, that could be setup in two hours and he had it built in Iron Mountain in the Ford Machine Shop, that big machine shop at the Iron Mountain plant. Then it was hauled into Alberta here by...back of L'Anse and... for testing and it was in July when they brought the mill in. Henry Ford, Edison, Firestone and Kingsford from IronMountain were supposed to come here for summer vacation then in August and according to all plans, they were supposed to have that mill in full swing when Ford came. Well Ford did not have a man that could run that mill so they came and recruited me from the Co-op.

I: I bet you got what salary you wanted because they wanted you so bad.

R: Yeah, and it took me about four hours to get that mill operating right and Ford...they finally got ahold of me on...let's see now, yeah, it was on a Saturday...Harry Hirt come asking me if I'd help them out. He says, "It ain't the idea that you can't do it," he says, "We don't even think that way," he says, "if you will just come." So I went over there that Saturday night and I had to in the first place I hadda see the head millwright for all the Upper Peninsula operations. Then I hadda go and see the L'Anse Mill superintendent and talk with him and he says, "Well..." then I got sent to the doctors for a physical and go to work on Monday morning. I went to Alberta, seven o'clock in the morning...eleven o'clock I had that thing purring like a kitten. Lumber coming out of the backend like mad. Ford was coming in Thursday...Ford and his party. Well they only had a small deck of logs there...Tuesday we finished them logs...what they had then. So, they got all excited..."Oh, we gotta have logs here when Ford gets here!" So, we hadda start logging Wednesday. Oh, that was a farce if there ever was one...the whole deal. (Laughter) So then we had quite a deck of logs there and old Henry and his party they came over there and he come and asked me what I thought of it, you know, and we were hobknobbing there and I told him, I says "Well, the whole deal is still too young to give you a real good verdict on it, but," I says, "so far after I been getting the bugs out of it, why it's been working good." Well, he was up here for two weeks and about every other day he'd come up to the mill there and he'd be asking me question after question after question. He was a sawmill bug by heart...heart in old Henry.
I: He knew his stuff too.

Oh, you betcha...and then we were...sometimes we'd be sawing and sometimes we'd out of logs and any old thing there, well it was just an experimental thing or deal...the whole thing. I'll tell you after a little while what his theory was. Then about three days before he was ready to go back he comes up to me and he says, told me, he said, "I'm gonna give you one month," he says, "to figure out all the bugs in this thing and call in the blueprint guys from Iron Mountain anytime you want and they can come here and re-draw what you want and what it is now. And," he said, "then I'll put it in the mill and we'll test it out and see that it's good and," he says, "then we want to re-draw the whole mill and build five more and put one in behind every logger in the woods to salvage." Stuff that didn't pay to be hauled to L'Anse, they would have been sawed into lumber in the woods and the lumber just hauled out. Well, L'Anse was having trouble with us. They didn't know where...how...they wanted to mix the lumber in with the L'Anse Mill production and they would have to start making some changes in L'Anse in order to get that lumber to feed it into the lumber transfer so that it would mix in with their lumber. We then, I had made out a requisition on some stuff I would have wanted this and that...one place there they had a reduction on a belt...I wanted that into a bevel-gear drive. I wanted an extra saw and I would have wanted more power and all kinds of things I was asking for and I gave this requisition of mine to that head millwright of the Upper Peninsula two days before Ford left. Well I told...when they were on their way out, they still stopped there...the whole party. Firestone didn't come there all the time, but Kingsford and Ford, them they'd be there, chauffeur and stuff. Then when they were on the way out, I told Ford now, I says, "Well, I wrote out some kind of a requisition already to start with," I said, "What I want". He says, "Yes, I know. I signed it...I okayed it personally.' Mr. McDonald showed it to me and," he says, "Well, I'm gonna put my signature on it." And so they left and I thought everything was gonna be just like he said. Was about ten o'clock in the morning. Two o'clock that afternoon, Soli from L'Anse and Johnson from Iron Mountain drove up to the mill and said, "That's it. Shut her down." I said, "What do you mean? Ford was here three hours ago giving me orders what to do." "Yes," he says, "it's an awful fine idea, but it's too much of a headache for us." He said, "That's the end of it." I shut everything down...I pulled the mill into Alberta...I had to wash everything, all the sawdust and grease off of it, painted wherever the paint was worn and put it on a big trailer and hauled it to L'Anse and drydocked it over there and it was there for many years. Nobody used it.

Well, who were these other men the guy from L'Anse and the guy from Iron Mountain?

R: They were superintendents. Johnson was superintendent of all Upper Peninsula operations and Soli was the superintendent of L'Anse Plant.
I: What was Johnson's first name?
R: I can't remember.
I: Okay...you mean, they just over ruled Ford?
R: Oh absolutely, hundred percent
I: What if the old man knew about that? He couldn't have known what was going on.
R: No, he didn't know until two years afterwards when he came to visit L'Anse the next time.
I: You didn't bother telling him?
R: No.
I: How come you didn't tell him?
R: Well, I didn't want to have them fellows get into trouble. I figured that I could...I would have...even if Ford would have made them start over again and start that operation according to his will, I would have been in a hot spot. They could have made it heck for me.
I: There were some real problems too...I mean, that could have caused them some real problems.
R: Yeah, sure.
I: They weren't just kidding.
R: Yeah...well then, when Ford come after...come up after two years, boy I'm telling you, he fired a whole bunch of them guys. Soli got his walking papers...Johnson stayed on. Soli got his walking papers and there was a fellow from the mill in Big Bay, he got his walking papers and he really raised cain around there.
I: Did he get in touch with you at all?
R: No, but I got it all along the grapevine. I got it from Alfred Johnson that lived here on 38...a little ways up from Arvo Kerranen. He was...he worked in the service at Ford's at the time and he was a time for Ford Chauffeur around the mill yards and from one place to another and he's the one who told me all about it...what happened.
I: Oh, I bet Ford was mad.
R: Oh, was he ever...was he ever! So then I didn't care. I went driving bulldozer for Bill Ruona then after I got put out. Well,
I didn't get laid off. They were gonna lay me off right then and there. Tompkins the Alberta superintendent told me, "Well, that's it." After I got that mill cleaned up and that.

I: And they could have layed you off too.

R: Well I told them, I said, "Listen here..." I says, "You didn't hire me." I says, "You aren't gonna fire me either." So he says right away then, "We have to wait for Mr. Soli then." You know, Soli was Superintendent of L'Anse and this Tompkins, that Alberta superintendent, didn't have anything to do with hiring me. Soli's the one that talked me into going there. So, I waited for Soli... it was about ten o'clock in the morning when he was going to tell me to go home, you know, well I waited until about three in the afternoon and Soli comes along. I told him, "Soli, what kind of a deal is this? You personally told me that if I can handle that mill while Ford is here, I got a job with Ford as long as I want to work for him." I says, "And now I'm gonna get the kick out of here already." Well, Soli told me then, he says "No, you aren't gonna get kicked out." He says, "You go to L'Anse." So, the next morning I went to work in L'Anse then and I worked there... I was in the service... worked in the Service Department there for a couple of months and then I was a little while on dry lumber and things like that... I was on afternoon shift all the time.

I: This was at the Ford Mill in L'Anse.

R: Ford Mill in L'Anse, yes. Well then they laid the afternoon shift off altogether...just the day shift got left. They laid off everybody on afternoon shift.

I: When was this? What year?

R: That was in '37, late '37 and the whole thing only lasted about two and a half months.

I: Lot of action in those months.

R: Yeah, I think it was about the middle of November when I got finally laid off then from L'Anse... or was it the end of November. It was pretty close to Christmas. But Bill Ruona heard that I had been laid off from Fords, he was here the next day wanting me to go and drive bulldozer for him. So... and I didn't care so much. I made just about as good at Ruona's as I did at Ford's. I was only getting six bucks a day at Ford's. Well, Ruona was paying me... I was getting fifty-five cents an hour on board which amounted to almost the same thing.

I: Where were you working at this time for Ruona?

R: Back of the Red Rocks in the woods up there making logging roads. I worked for him all that winter, all the next summer, and all the next fall of '38; and then in '39 I went to... I took on a couple of sawing jobs with my dad's mill yet in '39. Then in '40 I went, in winter of '40 I went and sawed ties for Bill Ruona at Pike Lake with my dad's mill and then I went from there... I was all over.
I was in Mohawk and I was all over. I was one whole winter for Ray Alrich in Gay...that was '41 - '42 winter and summer of '42 everything started to go kind of haywire around here, so I went to Detroit all during the war.

I: Back to Detroit.

R: Back to Detroit and I worked exactly one year in Detroit right to the day.

I: Where were you working this time?

R: Packard's

I: Where was this plant located?

R: On Grand Blvd...on East Grand Blvd. I was Master Mechanic on these PT Boat motors...building these PT Boat motors.

I: What kind of...describe that a bit

R: 

I: Tell me a little about that.

R: That motor?

I: Yeah and well especially where you were working on it.

R: Well, it was a great big V-12 motor. It was kind of a skeleton-type motor. It weighed only eleven hundred and twenty pounds and it developed thirteen hundred and twenty horsepower.

I: That was quite a motor for its day, wasn't it.

R: Oh yeah, salt water cooled to fresh water, and fresh water cooled the motor and all that. I worked there a year on them and then I had a job pending over here. Matt Oja was supposed to start a big job in Tapiola. But he was buying his timber from a Longier Company of Marquette and they were awful slow in making the deal on the land...deal on the timber lands. So it took one whole year before that went through. Then in June of '43, Matt Oja sent a telegram that..."The deal has come through...you can start thinking of coming back." So, I made a trip here on the end of June of '43 and we got into an agreement with Matt, but he wasn't still ready then to start operations. So, then on the 13th of August, I quit my job at Packard's and I hopped in car and came over here. I'd sent the family up here already the month before and then I worked five years for Matt Oja...from 1943 until 1949...six years. I cut seventeen million feet of hardwood in Tapiola.

I: Where exactly? Did you move around in Tapiola?
R: No, I had the mill set up two miles west of the Tapiola stores... that's where the mill was. One place all the time. Then our sawdust pile caught fire from spontaneous combustion and you figure that there was lots of sawdust from seventeen million feet. So, we could not get that fire out. It was mostly smoldering just but we were pumping water into it for weeks and weeks from the river with two big centrifugal pumps. We couldn't douse it, so all I could do was pull the mills out. About five - six days after I got my machinery out of there, poof...the building burnt. Big...the building was fifty by ninety-six.

You mean once this fire started in the sawdust pile you just couldn't get it out there"

R: No...no sir!

I: It was so deep in there?

R: Deep in there and it was so hot. We pumped water in there and it just steamed. It was so hot inside it wouldn't even receive the water but still there was no flame.

I: Was it dry and hot at that time of the year too?

R: Huh?

Was it dry and hot?

No, it was in the fall...was later in the fall. But look at how... of course you haven't heard much of it, but the fight they had in Ontonagon with the wood chips. They had part near all of Upper Peninsula over there fighting...their fire departments over there pumping water into a huge weed chip pile that caught on fire and that started from spontaneous combustion.

Right in the enter

Sure, right in the pile. I told them they were gonna have trouble when they started stock piling Ontonagon. I told them..."I've had plenty of experience with that, I know it." I says, "You'll never be able to get it tight enough to get all that air out of there and if you can't get the air out of it,"Isays, "It'll get gas...the wood chips will form gas and they'll combust."

'49 were at 1949.

eat

Time of the Korean War

Yeah, well in '49 I made a trip to California in the fall of '49 then after we pulled the mills out...machines out...I decided to make a trip to California.
I: At this time Jean, your daughter, was living out there?

R: No, she wasn't living there yet. In fact, she wasn't with us even. She was in Chicago at the time. And I almost shifted into California. I was gonna go with a good friend of mine from up there...we were gonna go into the logging business. We were gonna ship my machines up there and we were gonna start cutting lumber at Fort Bragg (?), California. But Waino Kolmela got me talked out of it and I went then, spring of '50, I setup for Waino Kolmela in Toivola and I cut five million feet for him. I only cut three summers for him. Well, then his timber petered out... he didn't have no more timber and the lumber markets weren't too good, so I pulled out of there and I was pulping for the winter in my own woods out there on Froberg grade.

I: You weren't working for you dad these days, you were working for yourself.

R: No, when I came back from Detroit in '43, I bought the mill...one mill from my dad and then I got more power on it and so forth, and then I bought another mill. I had practically all the time... duration I worked for Oja and when I worked for Waino Kolmela, I was operating two mills under the same roof. A left and a righthand mill and the logs would go up in the center and we'd roll them both ways and lumber came out of the back...cut on two carriages.

I: Okay, you worked three summers in Toivola for Waino Kolmela and was it '53 this ended then?

R: Yeah, it ended in the fall of '52.

I: Okay, and then what.

R: Then spring of '53 I shipped into North Dakota for Veneer Company of Marshfield, Wisconsin.

I: And what were you doing there?

R: I sawed two million feet of cottonwood out there...in the Garrison Dampies and the job was supposed to last eighteen months. They had seventeen million feet of timber there under option from the government; but it turned out that it didn't pay for them. They had figured the job...in the first place, they had such poor cost estimating and on top of that, the railroad company didn't stand behind their word and couple of their loggers went bellyup, so they hadda give it up.

I: Did your family move out with you?

Yeah, just part of the time. I moved there in May and Laina just came there in...Laina came there in July.
I: Well, at this period now...1950...and again you considered leaving and in '50 you almost went to California.

R: Yeah, I was going to go the spring of '50. See, I was in California the fall of '49, and we had made plans with this fellow I was supposed to go with he'd fly up here and drive one of my trucks back to California with part of the sawmill on and I would drive another truck with the rest of the sawmill and then I would have gotten somebody to come with the car...Laina and the car.

I: Well, you considered going all the way to California and then in '53 you went all the way to North Dakota. Were things not so good here in the sawmilling business?

R: Well no, it wasn't too good and they had some pretty lucrative offers there, you know, on that job and I thought I'd come out pretty good on it; but...because they paid the freight on the mills. I shipped most of it by rail except one small truckload...it went my rail on railroad cars and they paid all the freight and everything so I didn't have too much moving expenses; but then when the job turned sour on them, why they could buy that grade of lumber locally for about sixteen - eighteen dollars less a thousand than what it was costing them to get it from North Dakota because that job they had... Well, in the first place the railroad company, for instance, Soo Line had promised to haul the lumber for them for twenty-one dollars a thousand and it was costing them thirty-two.

I: So the railroad renigged on them.

R: Yeah! Well then that one logger, he was supposed to get...well, he offered to log it for twelve and a half dollars a thousand to the mills and it turned out he went belly up and they got a lot of other loggers there and they had to pay them sixteen and a half and seventeen. They hadn't figured anything for hauling and loading the lumber from the mills thirty-two miles to the nearest railroad track. Well, that was costing them a pretty penny.

I: So you were only out there eighteen months.

R: Yeah...no, we were only out there five months.

I: Oh, it was supposed to go for about

R: Yeah, the job was supposed to last for about eighteen months. We were supposed to cut...between two mills we were supposed to cut seventeen million and we only cut five million.

I: So then you're back again in '53, same year.

R: Yeah, same fall I...then I bought that piece of land there where I had the mill site and I setup...
I: Set it up at Pine Creek.

R: Yeah, I setup the mill there and it was there ever since until I sold it.

What kind of work did you do there?

R: I mostly...well, for first when I setup in '53 until '59, I sawed mostly popal...for...I bought the boats (?) and I sawed the lumber for Hamar Box Company in Chassell. They built...they had a good-sized box plant there there them years. They were making all kinds of crates and boxes. Well then, that business petered out...everything started to go into paper instead of wood...stove crates, all that stuff, you know, refrigerator crates, different things, they used to go into thin wood-slatted frame boxes and then everything started to go into paper so he lost all his orders.

I: When did this happen?

R: That happened close to '60's...started to peter out in '57 and then all the way from there to '60. So then I changed into hardwood and I started buying hardwood and sawing that and I sawed that then until I went then...the market...

End of Tape 1

This is the second tape, continuing with Alfred Pelto, December 4, 1975. We are now in the year 1957 when he is starting to shift to hardwood after the paper crates came in and eliminated the need for softwood for making cartons and crates and you said the hardwood market...you shifted to hardwood for awhile.

R: Yes, I was on hardwood the remainder of my operations until 1965 and '66. That year I had almost twenty thousand dollars worth...twenty or thirty thousand dollars worth of lumber laying in the yard for almost a year and it deteriorated and I lost a lot of money on it. So, I forgot about it and I went to work for Celotex in the meantime and I was mill superintendent for them for over three years. And then I retired from there.

I: Where were you working at the time, that was...?

R: Michigamme

I: And you traveled every day?

R: Oh yes, forty-nine miles one way.

I: What kind of sawmill did they have going there?

R: It wasn't much of a mill when I went there first. In fact, it was just an old relic and they had been trying to force...run it, you know, and they...two different supposed to be real educated foresters and that, you know, and they had run the thing...well,
eleven-twelve thousand dollars in the hole in a short while. Well, it quit then and they got after me to go over there and I went out there and, well the big shot from Chicago come over and asked me, he said, "Well, this thing is so and so much in the hole...how can we make it start making some money?" I said, "You gotta spend money first. You can't make money with a bunch of junk like this." I says, "You gotta put in better machinery." So, I spent about twenty thousand dollars in a few months there. We automated the mill and made a good automatic mill out of it and eleven months after the time I took over I had it on black figures...and made money hand over fist for them for all the while I was there. I layed off half of the crew and we doubled pertnear our production because everything was automatic. Push button carriages, nine-saw gang slashers, everything else. What we couldn't buy, we made.

I: It was three years then that you worked there.

R: Yeah

I: And you retired out of the sawmill. How come you quit that job?

R: Well, Celotex sold over to Mead Paper Corporation. They sold all their timber and the woods operation including that sawmill; and I figured...I was so close to retirement age anyway, that I figured that now was a good time to get out but I still had to stay over three months over my...that I was supposed to quit the first of the year that year and I hadda stay until April before they found a replacement for me.

I: Okay, you're about sixty-two years old at this time.

R: Yeah.

I: And you're out of the sawmill business, and then what did you do?

R: Well, I done this and that for a little while during the summer and in the fall then, I had...ever since 1939 I had maintained my electrical license. I'm a licensed electrician...I got master's and contractor's.

I: You started to go into that line?

R: I was doing a little electrical work more like a pasttime than anything else.

I: And you probably did a lot of that work in the sawmill yourself.

R: Oh yes, all the time. Well the Allwoods...Jacobsen bought out the Baraga Mill and they were starting to rebuild and remodel. They didn't have no contractors or nothing to do the electrical in there. They hired a few electricians from White Pine...White Pine was on strike and they had three or four White Pine strikers over there tearing out old stuff and starting a little on the new stuff and the State Inspector happened to come along. He says, "Who's got this job?" Well that fellow that they had in charge
of that rejuvenation, he says "Nobody...we're doing it on our own." Well he says, "There's gotta be a contractor and a master on here." He says, "Well, there ain't any." He says, "Well then, pack up your tools and get out of here." (laughter)

I: And that's where you came in

R: Well then they got into an awful muddle then and then a guy happened to be there and he says, "I happen to know of a guy if he'll take it that's got a master's and a contractor's license if you can talk him into coming here. He's ready to retire." So they come and talked to me then, the clerk and that Wagoner that had charge of this remodeling, they came over to see me and talked me into going in there. So, I took the responsibility there and I took that job. I was in there from November until May then. And then I got into a little argument with the owner and I quit there then. There was a couple of those guys, you know, that they thought they knew it all and when it come down to brass tacks, they knew very little. So, I couldn't go much of that when I had to sign for everything and be responsible for everything, I kind of wanted it to go my way irregardless of who was paying for it. And well, I had a fellow that had worked for me most of the year...the mill was running already. We had the mill going and everything was in good shape. There was a few changes they wanted made and that and then they would have wanted me to stay there as a maintenance electrician and do other maintenance work too. They knew that I could handle everything from forches on, you know, and arc-welders and everything as a maintenance man including electrical maintenance. Well, I thought that that was...they expecting a quite a bit from a man there so...especially a new millwright that there's bound to be bugs and things breaking and running out of line and all that kind of stuff. I says, "I'll take my walking papers." And I assigned the job over to another guy; but he didn't stay there long...he left there too.

I: That would have been a big headache, eh?

R: Yeah, and I was only a few months short of sixty-five anymore, so I says, "The dickens with it." I applied for my social security three months before my birthday and so that my checks would start coming in right away and we took our social security. My wife was sixty-two when I was sixty-five, so we both enrolled at the same time and start getting our full benefits...our benefits...I got my full benefit and she got her forty-percent...forty percent of my half. Yeah, she got forty percent of what I got.

I: Well, you were also in the insurance line.

R: Oh yes, I inherited might as well say, a small insurance business from my dad when he passed away although I had taken care of it for him already about a year or so too...a year and a half before he passed away and it wasn't too big or lucrative the way it was, but
then there was an agent in Alston by the name of Victor Loco that happened to die and I bought his accounts and then there was a fellow in Otter Lake...at Otter Lake there by the name of Ed Noasko and he wanted to get out of it. So, I bought him out, combined the three small agencies and that gave me a pretty good insurance racket.

I: What year was this when you ended up with all three of them?

R: I can't quite recall but I think...let's see I got my dad's...it was signed over to me in '58 and it was around '64 then when I got Loco's and about '66 when I got Ed Noasko's. So that gave me...I got close to three hundred policies out now even. Keeps me going about two days a week and I have kept up my electrical contractor's and master's license and I do a little moonlighting on that too. (laughter) But not too much...only when I happen to feel like it.

I: And now you are seventy-two on November 11th

R: Yeah, I was.

I: You still working a good forty hours...no, more than forty hours yet.

R: Oh, some weeks sixty...some weeks thirty. So that about takes care of the whole history until now.

I: Okay, one thing we didn't get down systematically are your brothers and sisters. You were the oldest...you were born in 1903.

R:

I: And your next brother or sister was...

R: Walter

I: And he was born...?

R: In 1905.

I: Can you give just a brief history of Walter. He went to school in.

R: Well, he was in the second grade when we left Nisula and came to Pelkie. And then he finished eight grades here in Pelkie.

I: In the Pelto School?

R: Yeah, in the Pelto School.

I: Okay, and after he was out of school then?

R: Well then he started to help around the farm.
I: He worked there for...what was he doing, working the cattle and doing the...

R: Yeah, chores for about three or four years and then he took over. he got old enough to handle the team, why then he took over the horses.

I: Un huh, and he worked in the logging business for quite awhile.

R: Yeah, farming in the summertime and we always had some kind of a small logging operation in the wintertime.

I: Did he stick around here?

R: Quite much. In 1926 he got pluraisy bad and the doctor sent him to Arizona for a year for lunging, you know, to try and get...his one lung wanted to dry up on him and it did too.

I: How long did he stay out there?

R: One year.

I: And did he come back then?

R: Nope...no, but anyhow in that light air and that, it held some of its capacity. They were afraid that it would just shrivel right up and wouldn't take any air.

I: Well, where did he go from there?

R: Came back home.

I: Right back to the farm?

R: Sure.

I: And then?

R: Well, he was on the farm until oh...and he worked off the farm here and there, you know, but he stayed home mostly until then when he got married in 1930.

And he married...what was her maiden name?

R: Sigley Hukkala

I: That's right...and then what did he do?

R: I can't quite recall, but it was during the Depression, you know, and they were...he was on WPA part of the time and he'd pick up jobs here and there and we had quite a bit of work on the farm even, but they lived with my folks a quite a bit there during the Depression until times got better and then he went to Detroit and they were in Detroit an awful lot...in and out just like me.
I: Back and forth... when things were good... in Detroit. And then when things were bad in Detroit, back on the farm.

R: Yeah.

I: Where did he work in Detroit?

R: Oh, he worked different places there. He worked an awful lot... he worked in Hydro-Manufacturing Company and I forget then... mostly on tool and die and jig and fixture work.

I: Well, did he stay in Detroit there?

R: Stayed around quite a bit, yes. He went permanent... or on his last trip he went in '49 and he was working for me... no, 1950. He was working for me in Toivola and he left there and he went to Detroit then and he stayed in Detroit until he retired.

I: And he retired just... what year did he retire?

R: Two years ago.

I: Un hum, and now he's back up here.

R: Now he's back up in Chassell again, but he's lost his wife since.

I: Okay... and your next?

R: Marie is my next... that's my oldest sister.

I: Okay, and what year was she born?

R: She was born in 1908.

I: Okay, and kind of summarize her

R: Yeah, yeah well she stayed in Pelkie on the farm and worked in the creamery in Pelkie a lot. See, there was a creamery in Pelkie and she worked there quite a bit doing some bookkeeping and then all butter was hand wrapped them days and she was wrapping butter a lot. And then she went in 1926, she went to Detroit and she just about stayed there then. She'd come home just for a little while during summer vacations and that and then... but I can't remember what year she got married, but she was working down there pretty steady anyhow.

I: Where was she working?

R: Mostly housework

I: Domesticcal trade.
I: And who did she marry?
R: She married a Rudolph Alsenius from Dollar Bay.
I: And they stayed in Detroit that whole time?
R: Yeah, they were practically there the whole time. They were here for a few months during the later part of the Depression and then he was here for a year in '47 and '48. He was here for a year then. His father was in kind of bad shape and they hated to put him in an old-age home, so he quit his job in Detroit and I gave him a job out here on the sawmill. I was working for Matt Oja in Tapiola at the time and I gave him a job and they lived in my dad's other house on the farm and they took his father with them and they lived there. Well then, the old man got into worse shape, kept getting more and more...needed more and more professional care and then they put him in an old-age home in Laurium and went back to Detroit in '49.
I: Okay.
R: And they stayed there ever since then until...well, he died in...Rudy died in '57, but my sister's been there and is there yet even.
I: Okay, and after...
R: And she works...well, while Rudy was living even already, she was bookkeeping for some big grocery chain there first, one of the head bookkeepers and then she quit there and and she was working in Sears Roebuck's for awhile and then she quit Sears Roebuck and she got a job in Ford's at the Ford Hospital. She had charge of patient's accounts for years and years then in Ford's and she just retired now in July...at sixty-seven years of age.
I: And you next...the next one after Marie was.
R: The next one is August
I: Okay, and he was born...Marie was in 1908 so August was in 1910.
R: August was in 1910
I: Okay, and what's his story?
R: Well, I'll tell you, ever since he was able to go and work outside, why he worked for years in the creamery in Pelkie. Him and my sister Hilma both. They worked in the creamery for a long time. Gus was assistant butter maker and Hilma worked in the wrapping department and the two of them. And then he...
I: Marie worked in there too, huh?
R: Yeah. Marie worked in there sure because my dad used to always
affiliated with them things quite much and in fact he was part
owner after that...the creamery was a cooperative first and they
couldn't make ends meet there and then there were seven individuals
bought it and my dad was one of them.

I: Do you happen to remember the others? And when they bought it?

R: I can't recall the year. No, that's the worst thing...I can't
recall the year but it was just right, if I remember right,
during the first...very first of the Depression. And there was
my dad, August Pelto, Albert Pourila and Arvo Pesola, Matt Oja
and Sander Kinonen.

I: Okay, and so...

R: They hired butter maker and a manager from Minnesota.

I: Plough?

R: Plough, yes, to manage the thing.

I: Nels Plough.

R: Yes, Nels Plough.

I: Okay, so Gus was working there for awhile.

R: Oh yeah, he worked in there and he even went butter maker's school
in Lansing, you know, while he was working there one winter when
there wasn't too much...cream was down and production was down
well, they sent him to school. The creamery sent him to school
and the school didn't cost much, only board and room but he had
very good marks in there. He even, out of fifty some odd students,
the top student got a trip to St. Louis to represent dairy
manufacturing from Michigan State in the United States Conference
of Dairy Manufacturers and he was sent there as a delegate.

I: Un huh. How long did he stay working there for the creamery?

R: Well, I can't recall that very well because he followed the
cREAMERY business for a long time in Detroit yet.

I: Oh, he went to work in Detroit then.

R: He went after he got through school, he got left in Detroit

I: Who was he working for there?

R: I can't remember who he worked for...it was a small creamery
outfit on the East Side that he started with anyhow. It wasn't
a very big outfit; but he was one of the inventors that invented
the process of churning butter out of homogenized cream and milk.
They couldn't make that in the homogenization process the fat molecules are whipped up so thin that they don't want to gather up again. And him and a couple other guys they...while they were in school, they figured out a process that they could manufacture butter out of that, you know, because there was a certain amount of...some milk and stuff, you know, was coming back sour. Well, that milk wasn't spoiled...they could still salvage the butter out of it, the butter fat. But until then they had not been able to get it.

I: Ah ha, so he was in on that
R: Yeah, so he was in on that.
I: So he stayed in Detroit for quite awhile.
R: Quite awhile.
I: When was this that he moved to Detroit would you say'
R: I can't remember but it was in very late 30's
I: Okay.
R: Yeah.
I: And how long did he stay in this line in Detroit? Just about.
R: Well, until around 1941 or...'41, I think, then he went to work for Chrysler Corporation.
I: And what was he doing there?
R: Well, he was in the Press Plant first but he ended up in the Press Plant too afterwards; but then he was during the war Chrysler had a contract to make some bomber wings and he was foreman on the riveting lines on the bomber wings. The government even pulled him out of Chrysler and sent him for a year into Texas to pusha wing job down there.
I: Where in Texas?
R: In Dallas.
I: Then he...
R: Then after he got through there after the war ended, well he didn't come back to Detroit. He stayed there and he worked in a lumber yard there for about a year or so afterwards and then he quit there and made a trip to California, him and his wife, and then they come back to Phoenix, Arizona, and from Phoenix then in the summer of '49
or was it '48...it was '48, they came over here.

**I:** What line of work did he follow from Texas to California to Phoenix?

**R:** Well, he didn't do nothing. No, he was just loafing for pertnear a year and then he come here the summer of '48 and he worked for me for a few months until the weather got cold and one fine morning a flock of geese going overhead in November and he hollered for me, he said, "Come here Al." I said, "What have you got over there now?" He says, "See them doggone things over there," he says, "Yeah," I says, "I see them." He says, "And I'm here yet." He says, "I'm supposed to be ahead of them." Laughter...Next morning he quit...next day he quit and he jumped in the car, him and his wife, and they drove to Florida. Laughter! Stayed there for the winter and Spring he come back and then he rehired into Dodge and (laughter) he stayed there until he retired now.

**I:** After August then there was...?

**R:** Hilma

**I:** She was born in...August was born in 1910.

**R:** I can't remember Hilma's age exactly but I think 1915, yeah because she was the first one born in Pelkie and we moved here in '12.

**I:** So what's Hilma's...what tracks did she go in?

**R:** Well, she's the one that's dead of the bunch and she stayed pretty much on the...outside of working at the creamery, she stayed pretty much on the farm until she got married.

**I:** And she married...?

**R:** She was quite young when she got married...I can't remember her age, but she got married to a Carl Bokto.

**I:** Oh, one thing we forgot to mention was August's wife name

**R:** He was married to a Betty Huttala.

**I:** Okay, so Hilma married Carl Bokto, next-door neighbor

**R:** Yeah, next-door neighbor.

**I:** And what happened then?

**R:** Well, they had two boys...they had three but one died...but they got two boys living and...

**I:** They lived in this area?
R: Not very much. They went to Detroit.

I: Well, what did she...what line was he in there?

R: Well, I can't remember exactly what he was doing, but he was working in some small shop around that Woodrow Wilson area there and he got to drinking so much that they separated then. Well, then she went on the rocks too. Her family fell apart...the younger one of the boys stayed at his home and the older one stayed at my home, so they didn't have a family at all. Well, Hilma never married afterwards...she was in Detroit all the while and she even died there. But Carl remarried then...in fact he's remarried twice since. He divorced his second wife too and now he's married the third time.

I: What did Hilma do after they separated?

R: She was mostly doing restaurant work.

I: She worked around Woodrow Wilson area?

R: Some, yeah. She done quite a bit of restaurant work...different restaurants in Detroit. She followed that up pretty well.

I: And when did she die?

R: I think it was in '55.

I: She wasn't very old.

R: No.

I: Forty-two years old.

R: That was right

I: Okay, and after Hilma?

R: After Hilma is Helga.

I: Okay, Hilma was born in 1913 so Helga was born...

R: I think 1916.

I: Okay, describe her...

R: Well, she stayed at home all the time. She never went anywheres until she got married. Then her and her husband were in Detroit for a little while during the war.

I: Who did she marry?

R: Ray Niemi from Chassell.
I: How old was she when she got married or when?
R: Boy them dates is hard for me to hang onto.
I: Well, you're doing pretty good.
Yeah, I can't...I'm starting to lose out now
I: All right, so she married Ray Niemi from Chassell and then where did they go
R: They settled into...they stayed on the farm first after they married; they stayed on the farm there because there was none of the other men around, well the old man...my dad hired Ray to work on the farm there for I think about a year.
I: Was this during the Depression period...
R: No, after.
I: Oh, after.
R: After, yes, and then they built the house in Chassell and moved there and they've been in Chassell ever since just about...then only they went for six...no seven summers into Wyoming...no, Montana.
I: Just for the summer?
R: Yeah...he'd go out there to make pulp in the summertime. They'd go about first of May and come back just for hunting season up here.
I: Would she go out there with him?
R: All except one year. I guess they bought a little...I don't know if is one or two-room somekind of a cabin...shack over there where they could live in during the summer. There were there and then when they come back from there, well that job...timber petered out and that job petered out altogether, I guess, over there....the contractor was from Ishpeming that was running that job by the name of Erickson and he gave up; and then well Ray went to work for (?) Brothers in Michigamme. He again made pulp for them for many years and then was about I guess two years ago I guess when he retired now.
I: They still live in Chassell.
R: They're still in Chassell. He works at kind of a side job, he works maintenance man for the Chassell Water Company.
I: Do they have children?
R: ne boy.
I: Okay, after Helga.
R: Is Leonard
I: And Helga was born in 1916, so Leonard was born in.
R: Let's see now, there's a little longer space inbetween them two.
I: How much younger is he than you?
R: I think Leonard's around fifty-two now.
I: That would make it 1923.
R:
I: Seven years after Helga was born.
R:
I: And what's Leonard's biography?
R: Well, he stayed on the farm like all the rest of them until they were old enough to blow the coop; (laughter) then he worked for me all during the war. I had him deferred from the Army...he was my sawyer when I worked for Matt Oja in Tapiola. He was my sawyer and I deferred him...I got a deferment. I had such a good production rating that I could deferr practically anybody I asked for. I had two sawyers, both on deferment; but I was the second highest producer per man-hour in a three-state area of lumber.
I
R: In my mill class, that was from the five to twelve thousand foot per day class.
I: Quite a record.
R: Yeah
I: So Leonard was working for you as a sawyer.
R: Yeah, and then when I quit Matt Oja, when I had to pull out of Matt Oja's, he got a job with Malcon in Crystal Falls.
I: What line of work was that?
R: He has spent...he has had charge of parts and ordering. All ordering that is done at Malcon at Crystal Falls there...big implement and truck dealer and anything...parts, implements, trucks, anything that's ordered, Leonard writes out the orders.
He stayed in Crystal Falls.
R: And he lives and stayed in Crystal Falls.
I: Somewhere along here your brother's and sisters pretty soon should have the opportunity to go to high school in Baraga. Did any of them go on beyond the eight grades?

R: Just my youngest sister Toine that is next to Leonard.

I: Okay, who did Leonard marry?

R: Leonard married Irene Torro.

I: From?

R: Tapiola

I: Tapiola.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, and then there's Toine.

R: Then there's Toine, yes.

I: And when was she born? How much older is Leonard than she?

R: There's only about two years or so difference in there.

I: Okay, that would make it about 1925.

R: Yeah, I think Toine is getting to be just about fifty years old.

I: That's make it right.

R: 

I: Okay and then she was the first one to go on to school in Baraga

R: Yes

I: So, what's her biography?

R: Well, there isn't much to it. She was around home...she didn't go out and work as long as she was home. She stayed at home pretty well. Then during the war, she went to Detroit and she worked in Detroit then all through the war and little after even.

I: What kind of work did she do?

R: She worked in the factory...factory work

I: What factory?

R: I think she worked most of the time in Woodall Corporation.
I: What were they making?

R: It was mostly cloth fabrication for the Army. I don't know what it was...different parts, but they were made out of plastic and cloth and different things. I think like probably airplane parts, the cushions or whatever it was and different things like that.

I: Okay, when did she marry?

R: She married in '47.

I: And who?

R: Married Bill Alsenius...Marie's husband's nephew.

I: And they lived in Detroit

R: They lived in Detroit ever since they got married. Well no, they lived in Hancock for two years...or Chassell they lived rather, but Bill was in Hancock first and then they moved to Chassell.

I: What years were these?

R: I think from '49 to '51

I: There was a little recession then.

R: Was he layed off?

I: Un huh, and they stayed there. How many children did they have?

R: Two children.

I: Two boys...and then...now right now he's working...he'd working for the Detroit School System.

I: Printer?

R: Printing Instructor...he was for three years the only person
working for the Detroit School System in an instructor's capacity without a degree. Finally they had to give him some kind of a degree. (laughter)

I: Ahm, now can you think of anything we've omitted from your family history. You know, we talked to your mother and so I didn't ask you much about that.

R: No, there isn't too much only that as far as the home farm was concerned, it was always kind of a...what would I call it...a sanctuary for everybody that was in rough shape, you know, financially and so forth...homeless or something like that, they'd find their way to our place.

And there was always enough to do there to keep them busy.

R: Yes, enough to do and enough to eat. It was no big surprise to have fifteen - sixteen people put their feet under the table.

I: That must have been quite a place in those days.

R: You betcha! One time for over two years even, the (?) family were at our place. The man was...he got left into Canada and they kind of lost track of him out there; but his wife who was my mother's sister, see, and there two boys and two girls. Well, that's four right there already...or five right there besides ten in our own family...fifteen plus my grandmother, that was sixteen.

I: That must have been a big house.

And lot of times we had two sometimes three men working for us.

I: What a crew that must have been.

R: Sure

I: That's good that there was a farming place like that because there were the lay offs and don't know what would happen.

R: Yeah

I: And there was a place where they could go

R: Yeah, lot of times there wasn't much wages for anybody, but everybody had something to eat. I have to give the old man credit...my dad, you know...that he was a quite a manipulator to keep things up.

End of Side

I: Okay, now we've talked quite a bit about the family history. I understand your father was an Apostolic Lutheran...I'm not sure of
what type he was, but perhaps you can tell us a little bit about his own history, about his own views, about his participation in the Apostolic church around the Pelkie area and say something about the Apostolic history in general.

R: Well, as far as I can remember the Apostolic background, I know that my dad and mother both belonged to the Apostolic Church already when we were in Nisula and then over here. Well, we had ...I can't remember too much where they had their church meetings in Nisula...there wasn't too many, but every once in awhile they had a get-together and it was in families over there.

I: Un huh, in the homes.

R: In the homes.

I: Who would come around and speak or would someone?

R: There was quite a few of these lay ministers that weren't ordained ministers or anything, you know, like we used to have fellow by the name of Kujala and he lived just a few miles down from us, you know, up there from Elo down on the Otter there...that place there. He was a quite a lay preacher.

I: Did you know his first name?

R: Andrew

I: Andrew Kujala...and there were others?

R: And then there was Heinnonen...old man Heinnonen.

I: Otto Heinnonen.

R: No, his name wasn't Otto, it was Otto's dad.

I: Oh, and his name was...?

R: I can't remember his first name. That would be Greek to me.

I: That would be Adrian Heinnonen's grandfather

R: Grandfather

I: He was also a lay minister?

R: Yes, lay preacher; and they used to mostly like Kujala and Heinnonen and them guys and even the Heideman...old man Heideman when he'd come around, they'd have their meetings in the schools already. See they was pretty well established every couple miles apart they'd have these small school houses, you know, like we have a record here even of these small school houses. They were
built in the early part of this century.

I: Like the Pelto School

R: The Pelto School, the Pelkie School here and Hazel School up there, Waisenen's belong to that church and a good many of them they had them there in the school houses before they were able to establish churches.

I: This is essentially the Apostolics that did this.

R: Yes

I: Okay.

R: And then my dad never was a really that kind...I don't know what you'd call it, but that kind serious or narrow minded church member and then when the split came in there, then he joined Michaelson's church. He dropped the Heideman church.

I: Okay, can you recall when this church was built? I know it's built in 1918, but do you recall the building of it or some of the people who?

R: No, I don't recall too much because at that time in 1918, I stayed pretty well at home yet...you know, I was fourteen years of...fourteen - fifteen years of age, you know, and I didn't get out enough. I was too busy, you might as well say, right at home see.

I: Do you recall the Old Man Heideman?

R: Yes

I: Did he ever stop by your house over there?

R: Oh yes.

I: Tell me a little about what you remember about him. Any stories about him.

R: Well I'll tell you...he was a regular card, if it went to that. You know, whenever he could play a joke on a guy, he'd do it. Yes sir! And he didn't care about his appearance or nothing. I remember one time, that was in the 20's sometime, they were having church meetings here in the church. And Old Man Heideman was supposed to be the speaker. Well, Heideman was a great hunter...rabbit hunt, oboy, he especially enjoyed rabbit hunt. Well they waited for him that evening, it was evening church, and they waited for him there about an hour and a half or two hours in the dark yet, you know, waiting for him to come in. He was
late. Pretty soon he comes in, you know. He had his old hunter jacket on, you know, and a rabbits head was hanging from one side of that (laughter) and old rubber boots on. He just came in... left his gun in the shed, you know, he went waddeling right through the church and up into the alter (laughter)...

I: And started speaking.

R: Started speaking as if nothing happened. (laughter)

I: What a character. He didn't go for any of this pretense.

R:

I: Any of this

R: No, there was nothing about that. And he pulled some dandies whenever he'd get a chance. I remember one time, my uncle said that him and... I forget who the other guy was... they went to Calumet... they went to peddle cabbage or something like that and they stopped at Heideman's. Well, it was close to noontime and Heideman asked them to stay for dinner... I don't know if his wife knew anything about it, but he had asked them. Dog gone it, you know, Heideman told them to come for lunch and they went to lunch and they were eating away there and Old Heideman says, "Don't fill yourselves with the first course, there's usually the second course comes at the parsonage." That second course never came. (laughter) Stuff like that. He always liked to pull something like that on people especially on his best friends.

I: Did he ever pull one on you?

R: No, I didn't... I was a kid yetthen, so I didn't know him personally.

I: Did you ever recall seeing him hunting?

R: No, I didn't see him in the woods, but many a time... see this used to be great rabbit country from here into the back there before it was cleared. Nice popal in there and willow, you know, which rabbits like. A kind of swampy area. Nine times out of ten he'd stop his car right in here someplace, you know, start walking along that fence line right there. Down in there he goes, boy.

I: Well okay, the old man died sometime around 1912, I think, I don't have the date exactly. Do you recall that?

R: Old Man Heideman?

I: Yeah

R: Oh, he didn't die that early.
I: Ah, when did he die?

R: No, he died...I think it was in the late 20's or sometime in the 20's.

T: Well, even before that time, young Paul would...Paul Heideman would go around with him and help him out.

R: Oh yes, and Paul more or less took over. He had...the Old Man he lived to a pretty ripe old age, you know, and he kind of left the responsibility to Paul then. I was even...when I was confirmed, it was in 1919...1918...1918 when I was confirmed.

I: Was that in this church here?

R: No, in Calumet.

I: Oh, you went to Calumet.

R: Yeah, Heideman's church in Calumet. Well Paul...I didn't even see the Old Man at the confirmation at all except that Sunday then when we were confirmed. Paul and his sister and Old Man Fredrickson were there taking care of the confirmation.

I: Okay, you'd say he died sometime in the 20's.

R: Yeah.

I: Probably the late 20's

R: Yeah...middle or late 20's

I: Well, what kind of a man was Young Paul?

R: Young Paul again, he was more...he was altogether different from his dad. He was more rigid in his ways as far as I'm concerned.

I: A little more doctrinaire?

R: Yes, absolutely. He was probably far better educated than his dad was; but I don't know if that went to his head or whether it was just his nature but he was far more punctual in every way, you know, and was like all that...you'd never catch him coming in to a church service in his hunting togs and all that although he liked to hunt. Him and Matt Oja were just like that all the time.

I: Oh, Matt would be a good person to talk to then.

R: Oh yeah, about that. Yeah, and I think there were in financial enterprises together even and everything along because Paul was no poor man...that man was worth some dough.
I: What kind of a show did he run? What kind of an enterprise did he...

R: He didn't have nothing but his church work.

I: How did he run that? He was here when the split occurred, right?

R: Oh yes, sure. Yeah!

I: Can you tell me what you know about that. I've been piecing that a little together from...oh, your mother, the Tepsas and here and there.

R: Well, this is a kind of a situation that is more heresay than anything else; and I hate to condemn anybody or put any blame on anybody or something. But I understand that most of it happened on account of the Old Man.

I: Tell us what you know and we'll put it down as heresay.

R: The Old Man was supposed to have done something...I don't know what it is. Anyhow, it was something that the church body felt that he should have asked for forgiveness from the congregation or the church body. He wronged in some way.

I: In 1928 or 1927?

R: Yeah, somewheres in there; but this was already so that Old Man Heideman I think was dead then already, see. But the situation come up anyhow, see.

I: And people were talking about it.

R: Yeah and that's what caused a lot of that split.

I: People found out that perhaps the Old Man didn't live the way he should have.

R: No, no he...it was against all church etiquette.

I: So the people were talking about this and that seemed to start it up.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, and what do you recall then?

R: Then they started. Well, there was different ministers coming here to keep church members in church meetings and that stuff like in here even, in this one church.

I: Oh, was it felt that because the Old Man might have done something
wrong, that perhaps Paul might not be the best suited...or there just an interest in having other speakers?

R: Well, when they started to side up, you know, some were calling the whole thing Paul's...you know, all the accusations and everything... Paul's and that, and they started...there was Michaelson and this Michaelson gang then, you know, they were on like the Old Man's side where the rest of the public then were on the other side and, well, Paul would have church meetings here and some of the other Apostolic's would have church meetings here, you know, same building but at different times.

I: And it also was probably due to the fact that Paul Heideman had such a big thing going that he couldn't be here all the time.

R: No, big following and big area

I: How often did he come here?

R: Oh, probably once every two months or something like that

I: Well, initially in 1916, there were services every Sunday, right? People from Tapiola and Alston came here.

R: Yeah, there were quite a few

I: And in those days the Old Man Heideman spoke just about every Sunday, right?

R: Yeah...yeah, he was here a lot

I: Did anyone else speak?

R: Oh yes, well they'd have...I can't recall the names of some of those people, but there was...I believe Michaelson was in here then already. And there was a couple others...ministers from the Copper Country that belonged to Michaelson's church.

I: Oh, even that early.

R: Yeah

I: And occasionally lay speakers too, right?

R: Yeah, sure and lay speakers quite often

I: Okay, there was the beginning of dissention and they were holding different meetings.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, then what happened?

R: Well then that Heideman side, they had a majority here and they
were more or less in control of the church...you know, of the church affairs otherwise, you know, like there had to be in the church...financial affairs and everything, you know...the management of the church. And well, the others didn't care as long as they weren't kicked out. Well, when their minister came they had their church meetings there just like anything. But then in the 30's sometime, I can't remember when - the exact time, why it happened they were either negligent in attending a meeting or else something happened there that Heideman's side, they got left in the minority.

I: At an election

R: At a...at a church annual meeting; and the other side won out on a couple of affairs, you know, something that was controversial and they put it up for vote and the Heideman side lost out. They got so mad...Old Man Wanttaja was the chairman of the Church Council...

I: This was Andrew Wanttaja?

R: Yeah...he walked out and all his church members walked out after him...I guess he told them to go out and then he put up a ballyho that they got kicked out by all the rest of them.

I: But it was a voluntary thing

R: Yeah, sure. Yeah, but they felt so insulted because they lost.

I: Because they had had the majority for so long.

R: Yeah

I: Okay, well there's this...there's another heresay thing you probably heard yourself was that the Heideman group often thought that they were locked out.

R: You would, huh.

I: You know, you've heard that said.

R: Yeah, I haven't heard that they were locked out, but I've heard that they were put out.

I: There was a controversy over the church property then. The Heideman group took the issue to court, right? To see who owned the church building?

R: I was...we weren't here at the time. See, we were gone to Detroit...living there I mean for awhile...or Ishpeming or some place, so I didn't follow up that part of it.

I: Okay.
We weren't...in other words, we were out of residence here, so that is something that...you know, if I'd have been around here, I'd probably have a recollection of it as being we're so close to the church here; but being that we were...most likely this happened in around '29 when we were in Detroit.

Okay...is there anything else you can add or clarify with regard to this Apostolic history? We know that in 1932 then they built this other church and they called it the First Apostolic Church.

Yeah, they called them the First Apostolic Church.

That was some pretty sad times during that split, wasn't it?

I mean there were some sad feelings...hard feelings. Some families even split...you know, the man went one way and the woman went the other way.

Oh, there was so many families split...it isn't even funny.

Can you recall some? The ones I recall now are the Tepsa's and Oja's and Lappala's.

Well, my uncle, August Pelto...he went on the Heideman side, my dad is on the other side...was on the other side.

Both your dad and your ma went to Michaelson's side.

Yeah! And there's some others too, but I can't think of them all of a sudden like that...you can't catch all of them and I don't even...there's a few families that I know were split that I didn't even know it at the time or for long afterwards, you know.

Laho's?

Yeah, some of the Laho's...well, the Laho's, they split first John Laho's. Matt Laho's went right away both of them to Heideman; but John, he again was a Michaelson's, you remember. Well and then there was the Kuopustm.:...they were split for a long time, but they finally did start going to the same church.

You mean husband and wife?

Yeah

How do you spell that last name?

K-u-o-p-u-s

Un huh...where were they from?

They were originally from Alston, but they live right there...he
moved that house and put it up right next to Ma's...that little	house where Mrs. Whatchacallit lives now...Liuska.

I: Do you recall any of the..

R: He sold that house then to that Moilanen.

I: Do you recall any of the discussions or arguements or things that
they used to have, for instance, between your father and his
brother?

R: No, not too much. No, it was more right off when it went that way,
they ignored each other more than anything else.

I: Oh, it caused hard feelings to the point where..

R: Yeah, sure

I: ...they couldn't quite tolerate each other for a little while?

R: Yeah, they tried first to I suppose, but both were sure of them-
selves, you know, that they couldn't...(laughter)...that they didn't
even want to discuss the matter or in a lot of other ways even, act
pretty cool.

I: But they would still visit each other.

R: Oh yes.

I: But that was a subject that was...

R: Yeah, they'd never bring that subject up.

I: Right. Do you recall anything else about those times? Would the
people from the different groups kind of ignore each other in the
streets and not talk to each other or...

R: No, not too much; and then the Heideman gang, you know, they were.
although they knew well enough that like me and Laina even, we
belonged to the Kero church then already. Well, they were trying
to...especially the Mrs. Jokipii and Mrs. Heino and they would
every little while come over trying to get donations from us for
their church...out of the times were so hard you couldn't hardly
give nothing for your own church.

I: That was a rough period

R: Yeah, that was during the 30's...early 30's.

Stop in tape.

I: Okay, we're now starting to talk about the Faith Lutheran Church
history and Emil Tervo, who was resident pastor here from 1927
through 1933, is the first pastor that Alfred remembers. What do you remember about that man? What kind of a pastor was he?

R: He was a very punctual man and he had good sermons; but he was quiet in his private life and otherwise even. He was...in other words, he was very much a man of few words. He was sociable all right and all that, but whenever...if he didn't have to talk, he didn't; but a very punctual man in his church work.

I: Do you happen to recall anything during his pastorship here?

R: There isn't...let's see. There isn't too much that I can recall because then again...there again, we were gone part of his time, see, although he married us...Tervo did. We got married in the Kero parsonage, he married us in '28 and in fact, I think we were the first couple...one of the first couples that he married and...but then we went to Detroit, you know, about a month and a half after we were married we were gone to Detroit. But then when we come back during the Depression, we visited them quite regular and were good friends of theirs. And when they'd go out on a trip or something like that, they'd always bring the girls to our place and the boys would go to her mother's place in Ironbelt, Wisconsin; but the girls, they were sure to be at our place always.

I: Who were the girls, do you recall them?

R: Yeah, well the older...but the younger one Bertha, she's married to a minister in California now; but...

I: Do you remember the boys?

R: Yes, there was Stanley and Richard. Richard is the oldest of the whole family and Stanley is next and then is the two girls.

I: Where did the boys go?

R: Richard is still around...well, sometimes he lives in Ironwood and sometimes he lives in Iron River; but...

I: Stanley?

R: Huh?

I: And Stanley?

R: Stanley's in Chicago. Yeah, he is a commercial artist by trade.

I: And Richard?

R: Richard's an electrician.

I: Okay...do you recall Tervo's wife's name?
R: Yeah, that was Bertha

I: Oh, I thought...oh, a daughter was also named Bertha

Stop in tape

I: And the next pastor there was who?

R: The next pastor was Arnie Juntunen

I: Okay, he was there from 1934 through 1938 just at the tail end of the Depression.

R: Yeah, he came January 1st, '34...and we were living in the parsonage at the time. Tervo left earlier in the fall and then they didn't want to leave the parsonage empty; so they asked us if we'd live in there. They didn't have no prospects of a minister.

I: And they wanted it heated.

R: And they wanted the parsonage taken care of. So, we moved in there. We were living in one of my dad's houses up on the Sturgeon up there and it wasn't the best place to live; so we moved into the parsonage and we stayed or we lived there and then when Juntunen came, he was a single man and well he...then we boarded him until then in August of that year, he had a girlfriend...his wife was his girlfriend, but she was in New York and she came back then from there in the first part of August and they decided to get married. And when I moved into the parsonage, I moved with the agreement that I'd have to give a thirty-day notice before I'd move out...eviction notice and it was on the 10th of August that Pastor Juntunen told us that he'd like to have us out by the first of the month. I said, "Impossible!" I said, "We've got thirty-days eviction time," I says, "And we're not able to move before then." Because, when we went into the parsonage, I had told Laina that we were tired of moving...we had moved about three or four times since we got married...I says, "Next time we move, we're gonna move into our own place if it's only a tent." And that's just what happened. Then we, on that evening of the tenth, he told us at supper table...well I jumped in my car and I started running around the country looking where I could buy a piece of land. I went to see Turunen first...I was trying to get that place where Kooivanen...Matt Kooivanen lives...that block there, but Turunen wouldn't sell it at the time; so I came to see __________ and he says, "Sure, I'll sell you a lot there." Right here, you know. Well, I bought the lot from him and then that same night I went to my uncle's down there on the farm there, there were two of them staying there and they were both carpenters and had lots of house plans. We started going through some of their house plans over there then...

I: You got into action right away then.
R: You bet-your-life boy, I didn't fool around.

I: You had it up to the ears in that.

R: Yeah, so we picked out a house plan but we rejuvenated it a little bit. It had some silly frills in it which we didn't care for and times were hard in 1934, boy. So, we started to build and I copied the plans and made what changed I made and I made three sets of plans and I brought them to three different carpenters to bid on, roughing in from the ground up and then I gave the carpenters four days times to let me know. Well, I had three bids on this and Matt Usitalo, I took his bid and he started to work the next morning.

I: Okay, let's get back to Juntunen. What kind of a man was he?

R: Well, I'll tell you. He wasn't the worst only he was awful young, see, right out of the seminary. He had a lot of these kind of what would I say, them kind of fool-hearty ideas, you know. He was gonna put a gas station in the church yard and everything... or was it in front of the parsonage or where was it, you know, to raise some extra money and all that kind of things, you know, he was that kind of...awful daydreams for a minister, you know. He was...

I: What other kinds of outlandish suggestions did he have, that you recall?

R: Well, that one time he started pestering the congregation...we were due for a new roof on the church. He started pestering us that we should put a copper roof on the church which would have cost about five times as much as a regular roof in that kind of times when there wasn't hardly anything to eat even let alone buy a copper roof.

I: So he was just kind of young and foolish, huh?

R: Yeah, sure. And then he liked to travel...he liked to go all over and I'm telling you, was he a crazy driver.

I: I've heard that

R: I came with him one time...we went...there was one minister ordained, one left that was kind of a shirttail relative to me, ordained in Ishpeming and it was in the wintertime in February... one of the worst storms for the winter. He insisted on going to that ordination...it was in the evening and I had to...he wanted me to come with him. Boy, I sure was glad to get home. One hour and fifty-eight minutes with a Model A from Ishpeming to the Kero parsonage in that storm.

I: Bad roads...?

R: Oh, rough roads and narrow almost like dirt roads and you couldn't
see ahead of you ten feet half the time...curves...crooks, holy boy! I'm telling you.

I: Oh boy, that's a record for that...you couldn't do that now really

R: Huh?

I: You could barely do that now in that kind of...

R: Not with a fifty-five mile limit, you couldn't.

I: He must have been...how fast do you think he was going?

R: All that Model A was good for was sixty - sixty-five - seventy.

I: In a storm...and on slippery roads.

R: Yeah, slippery roads.

I: And he kept it on the road?

R: Yeah...Model A.

I: What...oh wow! Well, what kind of a speaker was he?

R: He was a good speaker otherwise, but he...I don't know what they call it. He was one of these here "men of law" type. He wanted to lay the law down all the time for his congregation. He was always laying the law down.

I: What they should do and should not do?

R: Yes, that yes. And accusing them for their...you know, now...

I: Their short comings?

R: Short comings and all that and the way they were living, they were just like a bunch of pigs in a swill hole and everything else he'd tell them. Him and that Mykkanen, they were a couple of dandies, boy. Sometimes he get Mykkanen to give him a hand, you know.

I: Where was he from?

R: Republic...there's still a Rest Home in Republic, Mykkanen Rest Home.

I: It sounds as though he was just a little young in experience. He thought he could...

R: That's right, yeah.

I: Little green behind the ears. Can you recall anything else about
his stay here?

R: No, no very little about him.

I: What about Wilho Hannonen next?

R: 

I: What about Wilho Hannonen?

R: He was here so little while that he was kind of a hard man to reach. I didn't get to know him personally too much although I had...when he left here, Hannonen, I...we then toward I come to know him pretty good and I even...he give me...he really treated us royal. He had brand new rugs even, one for the living room here and one for the dining room here...they were just the size that would fit here...he sold us them two rugs. He must have paid around four hundred bucks for them, he sold them to us for a hundred and a quarter and I got that desk in the front porch...it's got one of them block wood tops, even in there...he had paid I think ninety-five dollars for that desk. A fellow, friend of his on the East Coast someplace had made it for him...custom made, sold that to me for ten bucks.

I: What kind of a minister was he?

R: He was a good minister. Sure, he was a very good minister; but he was a nervous man...very nervous man.

I: How did he get along socially in the community?

R: Not bad...but his private life he was...he was nervous man. Well I understand come in and told us that.

I: Ahm, was he married?

R: Oh yes.

I: Do you remember his wife's name?

R: Yeah, it was...Martha but I don't know her maiden name. She was Martha Marcoux then afterwards, she married a Marcoux.

I: Martha?

R: Yeah.

I: Was he very strict? Did he...what did he preach?

R: Oh, he was a good preacher. He preached the Gospel as close as it can be...a lot better than lot of ministers we'd had before and after. You know, they're here and they're in their sermon, you know, and they only take a few pointers out of the day's text where he'd follow the text a lot closer and try to explain it. That's one
thing.

I: Oh, right during the sermon?
R: Huh?
I: Right during sermons?
R: Yeah, that's what I like about him because just like my son-in-law used to say, Herb, he used to say, he says he likes a minister that will explain the day's text for the congregation. He said, "That's what they're for." He says, "Lot of us, we can read that text and we don't understand what it actually means in all its depth." He says, "That's where a minister is educated for that." He says, "To explain the exact meaning of that text."

I: And Hannonen you felt did that pretty well.
R: Yeah, I thought he done pretty well on that and that's when we started to go alot into the English language then.

I: No, not that soon I don't think.
R: No, it wasn't during his time, no...no, it was later
I: Do you know how he came...these pastors came to be called here do you know how Hannonen was called to be here?
R: No, I can't remember.
I: What about the next one, John Juntilla? Do you remember
R: Yeah, what kind of a...
I: Juntilla...he's married to my cousin, second cousin.
R: Un huh!
I: His wife is a second cousin to me.
R: Yeah, Juntilla, if I remember right, Juntilla was called here from California.
I: That was Group, I think.
R: Group, but Juntilla was either before or after, but Juntilla was in Readly.
I: How did he come to be called? Who wanted him?
R: I think at that time, there was...the place was open and he more or less applied for it. He was at that time during Suomi Synod
time, we had two methods of getting a minister. We had one method where we'd announce the parish opening for that the ministers apply if they wanted to come, see. Another one was like a more honorary method where we'd send calls to different ministers and then they could reject or accept.

I: Okay, what was he like as a pastor?

R: Juntilla was a very nice man. He was a very nice man and he spoke a good sermon and all that; but his wife was a trouble maker.

I: She...

R: Although she's my cousin, second cousin.

I: She was rather knowledgable or trained herself in theology, wasn't she?

R: Oh yes

I: She gave some lectures or sermons.

R: Not sermons but little lectures, but our best woman or the two women were for helping their husbands along were Mrs. Korvonan and Mrs. Koski.

I: Both of them did a big part, but how did your cousin fit in? She did a lot too.

R: Well yes, but she was too stubborn in her ways, you know, like she just about broke up the women's group and the Sunday School and everything else with her doggone whims. I didn't have no respect for her.

I: She just wanted her own way or did she have crazy ideas?

R: Well she had both!

I: That must have been a combination.

R: Yeah, you betcha, you betcha. She'd get something into that fool head of hers and she wouldn't give in one nickel.

I: Ahm, do you remember the way Juntilla used to speak?

R: Well no, not too much; but he was...otherwise he was always...always acted very humbly and he tried to bring that out in his sermons even, you know, that people should humble themselves and all that. That was his point very much.

I: That probably went over fairly well around here...

R: 

I: ...because of the tradition in Finland of the
R: Yeah.
I: There was a lot of resentment about those kinds of people
R: You betcha.

End of Tape II

I: I'm sure that the practice of Juntilla's where he acted very humble went very well around here. Was he well liked because of that?

R: Oh yeah, as far as the parish was concerned, you know, they certainly hated to see him go; but then again from the other side, you know, they were happy to see her go and that's when I got elected into the Church Council during Juntilla's time. I was thirteen years and I was supposed to be an alternate and I just want there for curiosity's sake to the first meeting and what do they do but they everybody turned down the secretary's job and I hadda take it and attend every meeting and here I was only supposed to be an alternate that if somebody else didn't come, well they'd call me in. I got stuck on there for thirteen years.

I: Were some of these previous pastors not too humble? I mean, did some of them give that impression that...

R: Well I'll tell you, as far as these older ministers were concerned, I have heard very little about them because I just joined that church in '28 after I got married.

I: And many of the older people were gone
R: Yeah, those are before my time
I: Okay, what about...
R: I used to go in the church picnics or something like that, you know, out there and this and that, you know...for different purposes.

I: What about Arvo Korhonen? 1939 to 1945, through the war years.
R: Yes.
I: What sort of a man was he?
R: He was a great man and he was the life of the party all the time. Kind of like Nelson was?

R: A lot in that order and he was a jovial man in his ways otherwise. He'd have little jokes and this and that, you know; but he was also serious.
R: Oh yes, wonderful

I: So he really had a good personality

R: On one hand he could really be a good person in a social setting and on the other hand, when he had to be serious, he could do that too.

R: Yes, absolutely

I: How did he speak?

R: And his wife was a very active member or person in her way

I: And what contributions did she make?

R: Oh, she was the choir director and she took care of all the women's activities and she, once in awhile if he wasn't feeling too good, she'd like...you know, them days, we used to only have two services a month; but we'd have some kind of a program the other two Sundays. She used to always try to have big part and sermonettes and everything else for those programs.

I: So she put in a lot of work on that

R: Oh man, did she!

I: She knew her stuff too.

R: Yeah, sure she did.

R: She was a well-liked person. Korhoven...Korhoven again, he was...he spoke a good sermon and he was very much of a humble type of man like Juntilla.

I: He got along well with the people

R: Oh yes, wonderful....but then Koski again, he was one of these in-line men, very much...strict in his ways. Very...in his own ways and he wanted to see a lot of that in the congregation too.

I: Was he...did he preach the law that much like...

R: Yeah, quite a bit.

I: ...like Arnie Juntunen?

R: Yeah, a certain amount...yeah, but he wouldn't come out that direct with it, but you could feel it.

I: He was just a little better at it

R: Oh yeah
I: But he also demonstrated it in his personal life.
R: Yes, oh yes, very much.
I: He practiced what he preached.
R: Yeah, that's right.
I: What kind of strict lines did he suggest they had to follow that you recall?
R: Well, in the first place he stressed prayer a lot and he stressed also behavior and so forth.
I: Specifically, what kind of behavior?
R: Well, in the first place he tried to stress tea-totalerism.
I: Oh!
R: Yeah.
I: Prohibition.
R: Prohibition, yeah.
I: He pushed that quite hard.
R: Yeah, he pushed that a lot and otherwise...he had served as a seamen's pastor a lot...San Francisco. He was a seamen's pastor. He had been there for years and years.
I: He probably saw a lot of alcoholism and that's where he got that.
R: Yeah, I think so. And he hated to see these sailors come into port, you know, and they were married men with families someplace, you know, and they'd come down there and raise cain and all that, you know. That went a hundred percent against grain for him, you know, that kind of thing...still he had to.
I: What did his wife do?
R: Do now?
I: Do in the church?
R: Oh, she was...she directed the choir and she was a very good fluent speaker.
I: Oh, that's right.
R: Yeah, she was a very good speaker. She could speak! Lot of times
you know, because Franz was quite a bit older than her, you know, and he was getting up in years already. Well she'd...lot of times, Franz would get up in the pulpit just and or else on the altar and read the day's text and she'd speak on it.

I: Oh, she'd give the actual sermons.

R

I: And that went over okay?

R: Oh, you bet.

I: So she made a big contribution; but on the other hand she didn't upset people.

R: No...no...no!

I: People liked her contribution. She was in demand all around the Copper Country, wasn't she too.

R: Oh yeah, sure. A very talented woman.

I: Did she do anything with the choir and with the ladies' groups too?

R: Yeah, oh yes

I: So at that time, Pelkie got two pastors in a sense.

R: Almost

I: Did they have children also?

R: Just the one daughter...Phillip Puuri's wife.

Right

R: That's all the children they had.

I: They even liked it so much here they came back here after he retired.

R: Oh yeah.

I: In fact, he lived...where did he live when he retired?

R: Ahm he.

I: He bought a house here somewhere

R: No, he didn't buy no house here. He got out of...he was semi-retired
when he was in Canada...up there in.

I: Saskatchewan

R: Saskatchewan at

I: What kind of a.

R: And then from there he retired and moved into Hibbing, Minnesota. She had a sister and a brother down there; but then they decided to come here anyway.

I: What about Lauri Bikkosaari...from 1958 through 1964? Here quite awhile. What was he like?

R: Oh, Bikkosaari was...oh well, I admired the guy. As far as his personality was concerned and all that, wonderful man.

I: Good friendly man.

R: Yes, very. And a man with a broad judgement. He could analyze things in a hurry.

I: Quick thinker, huh?

R: Yes...and I was on the Council all the while while he was here; but that when a lot of the church work started to go into two languages.

I: He had a language problem?

R: A little...his English was short.

He was from Finland.

R: Oh yes, sure. He had been twenty years or something like that in Canada just all Finnish up there...very little speaking he had to do in English before he came here.

I: Well you seem to sense that he had a certain problem here. What was it?

R: I don't know exactly what it was only he was a little bit...if there was any problem, I didn't feel it as a problem but some people did, I suppose. He was from the old-type of church and he wasn't too fast to...or too anxious to start modernizing in other words, you know and come along with all this new paraphernalia that they have now.

I: Such as...? This new paraphernalia that you're talking about is what?

R: Changing liturgy habits and all that kind of...you know, they've got the whole church service just about changed over from what it
was and added on and they wanted to leave something out. Why man alive, they even want to change the Lord's Prayer.

I: Well, this had a lot to do with joining the LCA too, right? Because it was during his time that the Suomi Synod merged with the other churches who were talking about forming the LCA.

R: Yeah...yeah.

I: And he wasn't all for that then, was he...because that's when these changes came on.

R: Yeah. No, he wasn't completely for that, oh no!

I: What was some of the discussion about that? I gather there were some people for it and some people really quite opposed to it. Can you kind of tell me what the pros and the cons were.

R: Well, I'll tell you they were afraid, lot of people were afraid and they knew...they knew that it's gonna come about that we'd be paying far bigger synodical dues in a big organized church than we were paying with Suomi Synod. We were paying seven dollars per member...was it six or seven dollars into Suomi Synod. Right away when the merger came, it went to ten per member.

I: Per year.

R: Per year, yes; and they said that well, it was only for the first year when it was first organized, that there was a lot of organizational expenses...that it would come back to the old limits. Ha! It's been keep going up and keep going up and up and up and up...right now even, like now they're hitting us for ten percent what more than we paid last year and we paid thirteen hundred in there then.

I: Just you?

R: No...no, I mean...

I: Total congregation.

R: Just our congregation which is about a hundred members.

I: What other problems did some people see?

R: Well then, we didn't like...a lot of them didn't like the idea of that property clause. We don't own our church or our parsonage. That's owned by the Synod...Wisconsin-Michigan Synod.

I: Wisconsin-Michigan Synod...is that the same as the LCA?

R: Yes, sure...that's the portion of it
I: Oh, it's sort of a regional.

R: Yeah...yeah, there's about twelve-fifteen synods in the LCA.

I: And what's the synod that you're in here? The Wisconsin...?

R: The Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Synod. Then there's one in Minnesota, and there's the Illinois Synod, there's the Iowa-Kansas Synod, and there's the Lower Michigan-Indiana-Ohio Synod and there's oodles of them. Then there's about three on the West Coast, way down on the Coast and some inbetween.

I: Fifteen altogether

R: There are more than that. I just hit right off the hope, you know; but I don't know how many there is actually.

I: So that was one problem.

R: Yeah.

I: What other problems were raised? Doubts that people had or...

R: Well then at that time, we were very concerned about what's gonna happen to our Finnish language at the time of the merger.

I: But already there were sermons given in English, right?

R: Oh yes, but then we didn't know that whether there was gonna be a Finnish branch at all in this new Synod. We figured that they're gonna shove us a English minister up here someday that don't know know the first thing about Finn and we won't have any available.

I: And they did

R: They did too! They give us a little leeway there, we had...well, of course then Nelson couldn't speak...well neither can this one, but at least we got Hollanen from Hancock and we were having some...we were lucky to maintain a few Finnish-speaking ministers in Suomi College that would come here and speak in the Finnish language.

I: What other problems were there? You mentioned the property clause, the expected increase of costs in terms of members' dues and the expected loss of the language with respect to having a pastor who could speak Finnish.

R: Yeah

I: Those three things. Was there also the feeling that it was kind of a loss of control...that some...
R: Yes, quite a bit of that, you know, that loss of local control.
I: Some big shot far away in Chicago was it? Is that where he is, the leader of LCÂ?
R: Well, our Synod's head office is in Milwaukee.
I: Someone over there can call the shots.
R: Yeah, sure...and they do too!
I: Was this mentioned as one of the problems of it?
R: Certain amount, sure.
I: Were there any other issues...
R: Well...
I: ...that troubled the people?
R: No, not so much because then there was a lot of people that were worried even if they didn't say nothing, but they were worried what's gonna happen.
I: The idea that there would be a lot of changes made from the outside...
R: Yeah
I: That weren't compatible
R: Yeah, that's true and they figured that because it was more...the whole thing was more in a nationality-wise deal see. There were the Swedish Lutherans, the Augustana...there was the Norweigian Lutherans...
I: What were they called?
R: Just the Norweigian National Lutheran Church.
I: Okay.
R: And then there was the Danish Lutheran.
I: What were they called?
R: If I remember right, they were called the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. Then there was the Suomi Synod and then... actually it was five churches that merged together.
I: I only have four...Swedish, Danish, Norweigian, Finnish...
they call that now...that Canadians and Americans together, you know, this here...it's like a synod within a synod...that Raymond Wargelin became the head of it then and talked to these ministers from Canada...lot of Finnish ministers from Canada even.

I: Well, who were those people who were for it?
R: Well mainly, they got the Wargelin's into it. Old Man Wargelin even spoke many many times on it. Came to our church even as a speaker as they started to develop that. He was saying how they had been planning on it for years and years; but he's been holding back, that he said that the time wasn't right yet but then he was saying that now it is, see. And a quite a few others, you know, and local people then. There was a certain amount of them that were closer to...very much them kind people that weren't even too fluent in the Finnish language anymore.

I: New people who had come in.
R: Yeah
I: Voltz's and Fugenschuh's...well, maybe not those people, but people like them.

R:
I: ...or people who had lost the language.
R:
I: And they were for it
R:
I: What advantages were there? The pastors were for it...they'd all get a better deal out of it.
R: Oh yes, sure...pastors get a better deal and they were trying to push that so much; but I always said, "That's hogwash that when you get a bigger group, a couple of million or so forth, that the administration don't cost so much per person." You know, per member, that the administration of the whole deal don't come to cost so much; but that's a lot of phooy. It's costing more. They got delegates from Washington and another one from Maine and a third one from Mississippi and a fourth one from Florida...they keep meetings three or four times a year and get together in the one place...you can't tell me that there isn't expenses there.

I: That's right, you gotta pay for it too.
R: Yes sir!
I: So Bikkosaari wasn't all that hot for all this, was he

R:

I: Judging on my own understanding of this as I'm beginning to learn more now, I think that's been at the root of some of these problems; ever since that started you lost a lot of the conservative people out here in Kero and you're finding more and more problems right up until this day.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay, after Bikkosaari was through, John Group...he was a young man too.

R: Yeah.

I: What kind of a pastor was he?

R: He produced a good sermon and all that, but he was one of these easy going guys and let-her-slide, you know. He wasn't too enthusiastic about anything. He tried...he took care of the sermon part of it and all that, but he was quite lax in other church activities. There wasn't any mid-week like this fellow's got half a dozen different...he's got Bible schools of different kinds and adult educations and all that kind of stuff during the week...one and two hours a day, you know, Tuesdays, Wednesdays afternoon, Wednesday night and all that...and Group didn't hardly have any of that...very seldom. There was choir all right, and that stuff but he didn't believe in all this here, you know. He considered I think anyhow, that the people are well enough educated and should be well enough educated in their Biblical things that they don't have to be...have everything indoctrinated so much.

I: And ah...his wife, what did she do?

R: She had four boys to take care of. She got two of them here and she had two when they came here...she had plenty of...she had very little chance for church work.

I: Group also was...how was he socially with the community? How did he get along?

R: Group?

I: Yeah

R: I think he got along very well.

I: So he was pretty good on that part of the deal.

R: Oh yeah.
I: And so maybe he made up for it in that area.
R: Yeah
I: In the visiting part...going out and seeing people.
R: Yes, he was very...he was a sociable type of a man.
I: It's hard for a pastor to be everything.
R: Yeah
I: Like this one here now he's teaching these courses; but if he weren't doing this he'd be able to go out and see the people and stay in touch.
R: Oh sure, yeah.
I: Hard to do everything. He was good at that though, eh?
R: Oh yeah.
I: He could also speak Finnish in conversations.
R: Oh yeah, he could talk quite a bit.
I: And his wife did also, right?
R: Oh his wife was a very fluent speaker of Finn
I: Well that helped a lot, didn't it?
R: Yeah, her parents...her father especially I don't think he could talk even real good English.
R: Oh yes, they visited many times. They were good friends of ours personally. They'd come to our place every time they were here and I gave them rides to Minneapolis even and everything else. They had some of the family in Minneapolis...her...I think her daughter...one daughter or was it one or two daughters lived in Minneapolis. They were from Allendale, Minnesota.
I: Okay, and then there's Nelson. He was just here. He came in 1970...'70 or '71.
R: He came here August the 1st, 1970
I: Okay, and well, what kind of a pastor did he end up as in comparison with all the rest...like, I know him.
R: Well, I'll tell you...he was right out of the Seminary too. He was just mostly learning his ropes while he was here, I'd say.
I: Kind of like Arnie Juntunen?

R: Yeah...he was quite great for bringing in some of these new ideas in a lot of things in church and he got quite a few of them across too and then he was also...these new ministers. You know, our older ministers, they used to have the guts to fight the Central Organization up there in Milwaukee; but these new ministers here like Peters here and also Nelson and these guys, they're for it. They're a hundred percent for it. They've been indoctrinated into that right in Chicago.

I: Right in their school.

R: Huh?

I: Right when they went to school.

R: Sure! So that they're a hundred percent for that...they have lost all conservatism.

I: When did this start? Well, Bikkosaari, was he the last one who was kind of sceptical about this?

R: Yeah.

I: What about Group?

R: Oh Group, he wouldn't come out too much with his

I: So he kept quiet about it

R: Yeah, yeah; but he was still...he didn't listen or pay too much attention to what was given the orders that were given from down below.

I: He paid more attention to what was coming from the Central Organization.

R: That's right.

I: But he didn't come out very publicly and push it very strong.

R: No, no.

I: Nelson really pushed that, didn't he

R: Yeah, oh yes and they wouldn't let you say one word against the Central Organization or their domination of parish activities or of parish life. Where some of these others, you know, they'd say...well lot of them used to say like even Bikkosaari used to say, he'd say, "That's for congregations with thousands of members instead of congregations with less than a hundred members." He
says, "It's a lot easier for a congregation with seven - eight hundred members to keep up a church and a church organization than it is for one with a hundred members," which is true. He realized that because he had worked in small congregations ever since he left Finland. Canadian congregations, you know, they was all small congregations where he had worked; but lot of these ministers, they don't realize that at all.

I: Did Nelson have any other contributions?
R: Oh...
I: He was one of the first pastors here that kind of openly consume alcohol, wasn't he? Or did Group?
R: That what?
I: That would consume alcohol.
R: No Group wouldn't touch it.
I: So, Nelson was the first.
R: Nelson was the first one to.
I: That sure didn't help a lot.
R: Oh gees, and how...you bet.
I: He was breaking a long tradition.
R: You betcha. He was a man...I talked just as comfortably as I talk to you. I did not...I didn't beat around the bush when I told him...had to tell him something, I'll tell you. They, did they laugh at the Post Office once. He hadn't been here too awful long, but I was working with him and we were fixing that parsonage area there and everything else and then his wife was getting ready for the boys, you know. They had twins and the doctor had announced to them that they were going to have twins. And we were at the Post Office and I can't remember who brought it up, but there was only me and Ralph and Joe Maki and the minister and he started saying something, he said, "Well," he says, "We're gonna have our family increased pretty soon." I said, "Yeah, I heard you gave her both barrels." Laughter!

He didn't know what to say about that one

R: He says, "Yeah, I got kind of careless." Laughter!

End of tape.