FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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Interview with Arvo Pyorala

Art: Arvo, we'd like to begin here by asking you about your recollections of your own father and when he came to this country -- I wonder if you might say -- you recall roughly that he came around 1882 and he started working as the teamster?

Arvo: Ya. Ya, he started, if I remember right, he started with the Johnson Brothers up in the Liminga area and he most generally was interested in horses and he was a kinda of, well, self-educated veterinarian as far as the horses -- he'd shoe his own horses and he shoe horses for all the neighborhood after he come on the farm. Of course, he met his wife at the lumber camps, his wife was a kinda a choremaid and after they got married, it wasn't long before they got along into a farm. I guess, they lived in Swedetown for a while and that's where I was born. And they bought the farm in 1903 and when they come here, my dad had to chop a clearing for the house to be built on because it was so--just a clearing that the lumber companies took the big timber out.

Art: Did it take quite a long time to make that clearing?

Well, it took him about 2 weeks, of course, there was no bulldozers them days; it was all hand work and he didn't even have as much as a horse so they had to just use grub hoes and pics and shovels and axe and saws to get the stumps out and make a clearing to build a little house on it; and then that was about 2 years before they moved in here; then they moved here in 1905. I always remember mother saying that I was crying in the buggy when they were coming thru the rough roads, old bush roads, that's all it was, I was 2 weeks old when my folks moved on the farm here.

There were several children in your family, quite a few, as a matter of fact; I'm just curious in those early days, did your mother go to the hospital to have the children or was there a Finnish midwife, or how did that take place?

Arvo: Well, my mother never went to the hospital! She never had a day in the hospital in her life, not for childbirth or anything else. And she went to the doctor's about 2 or 3 times in her lifetime and she had a midwife. Every time that she had a child, it was the neighbor's lady that come here as a midwife. As a matter of fact us older children had to have our birth certificates certified afterwards because they weren't recorded in the county books at that time.

Would you say that this is pretty typical for a lot of the Finnish families here, the midwifery?

Arvo: It was, it was, it seems that they helped one another; my mother would go and help somebody else and they in turn would come and help her then. It wasn't only one that knew the midwife, it was pretty-near all the way thru that they all could help one another in a case like that.

Art: Do you think that looking back at your mother and father the reason that they didn't go to the hospital, did it cost a lot or were the kindda' suspicious of hospitals or did they believe that they could take care of all the health problems themselves?

Arvo: Well, they believed in the doctors but the whole trouble was, like I mentioned the fact that there was rough roads them days and the doctor would come in a case of emergency but it would take a long time, you'd have to go downtown with the horse and wagon and then ask him to come down so that way they just got to living by themselves and helping one another the best they could. And they did have a lot of home remedies then yet besides, I know myself I drank a lot of pine tar and honey
when we had a cold or something like that and brandy for anything that was really serious so that's the way we all learned.

Well, you started a farm here, what kinds of animals did you have, you had cows?

Arvo: Ya, of course, the first thing they had to get was a horse and a hand plow and then a few cows; 'course, the living income off the farm wasn't much them days, it was 3, 4 cows and my mother used to make the butter and churn it and --

Did she milk the cows, too?

Arvo: She milked them for a while but then the boys grew up, we started milking the cows ourself then, she didn't have to go in the barn at all after while.

And your dad was working as a teamster then besides having the farm?

Arvo: Ya, he used to go and do odd jobs like for the mining companies and in the wintertime he used to work in the woods with the team and then another thing that he used to do was plow these roads open with the team. They used to have 4 teams in front of the plow or a big roller and they'd roll the roads hard so that people could get to town on these winter roads. And, of course, the wages wasn't too much, it was $5 a day for a man and 2 horses, of course, everything helped them days and also, a lot of other small income, few chickens and then he used to haul some wood downtown, chop a load of kindling; people would ask for a load of kindling and he'd chop a load of kindling; and maybe get 50¢ for a load of kindling; leave a little earlier so he'd have time to deliver the kindling before he'd have to go work for the company with the team.

Art: You were mentioning about your dad, selling stumps What was that story again?

Arvo: Well, that's what the kindling come from! They'd sell the stumps and they'd load them on the wagon and bring 'em to the family, they'd get 50¢, pretty fair-sized load, they' have enough kindling for the whole winter. They'd chop these stumps up into kindling, there were cedar stumps and some tamarack and pine stumps, well, they'd dry all summer when we cleaned the land, well, they were all piled up in big piles and what we didn't burn, we'd sell. Sold downtown!

Art: Did any of the men in this farming community work in the mines underground?

Arvo: Oh, yes! There was quite a few that, especially in the wintertime, it seem like the mining companies didn't object to that that the farmers worked in the wintertime. I know quite a few that worked in the mine that, I'd say there was only, well, in the long run my dad got to being pretty well self-supporting off the farm but I'd say that 75% of the farmers in thru here years back, used to work in the mines in the wintertime. Because they didn't have enough income off the farm. They wanted to earn extra money to buy maybe extra machinery and stuff like that.

Art: Were they, did they get pretty good wages, were they satisfied with the working situation there?

Arvo: Well, I suppose, they didn't expect no better than what they were getting so they were satisfied with that 75¢ a day, what they used to get them days first, and then it got up to about $1.75 after a while. Well, if you made $100 a month in the mine, that was pretty good wages. But, you know, everything else was cheap so they didn't expect anything more.
One question I forgot to ask you, where did your dad get the land? Who owned the land before he did?

Arvo: Well, he bought it from Morrison. Morrison was a big land-holder here and he used to job these out; they'd take the big timber off of it and they didn't want the land and they just sold it to somebody who was interested in buying it.

Was it pretty cheap in those days? Pretty inexpensive to buy?

Arvo: No, it was real cheap. I can't really remember what he paid, I think it was around $1 an acre what they paid for land them days but for a matter of fact, I know my dad mentioned something that he still had to borrow money at that time to get this 80 acres that he had.

Did your dad ever say anything about the various strikes that took place?

Arvo: Yes, the Copper Country strike in 1913, I can remember that strike myself. Not all of it but some parts of it, I remember, my dad had the habit of taking some one of the children along every time he went to town with horse and buggy and I know that one particular day, I always remember that, we went downtown and the strikers were there and we got stopped by the Calumet police and there was certain routes that even the farmers and their horses could go on. And I always remember that! And then I remember the disastrous Italian Hall fire where all these children got burnt and trampled on, they didn't get burnt, they just got trampled on, there was no such thing as a fire, it was a false alarm. And they got trampled going down these steps because the door was locked that they couldn't get the door open and they still think to this day that it was--the mining companies' own stooges that hollered this false alarm. And that was a disastrous strike as far as the families children are concerned.

Was that strike hard on everybody or was it especially hard on Finns, how did the Finns come out on it?

Arvo: Well, the Finns were just as hard hit as everybody else and the whole trouble that the strike went the way it did, because there was too many different kind of nationalities there, it wasn't like nowadays that these union leaders when they hold a meeting, they can talk to the whole group in one language and they can all understand it but them days there was Croatians and Italians and Finnish and they just couldn't get them organized well enough to--

Art: Was the only problem, language or did they, or couldn't the Finns get along with the Italians or?

Arvo: No, it wasn't, it wasn't language, so, it was the language most of it that—the nationality as far as the mines were concerned, they got along alright in the mines, of course, they had a little squabbles; them tavern brawls, you know, amongst the Irish and the Finns--

Art: What, I'm curious, what was a "tavern brawl"? That's a new one for me

Arvo: Well, it was, it was designated more, well, let's say, for instance, the blacks and the whites, years back they had those special places where they meet. Well, it was the same way with the saloons what they call them days, that this place was designated for Irish and the other place was designated more for Finns. Well, if the Irish would walk into the Finnish tavern, or vice versa, so then there would be a fight. I don't know what it was but they just couldn't get along drinking
together

Art: Well, how, what kind of fights were they, just fist fights or knife fights? Pretty rugged?
Arvo: They were rugged; they were cut-up, you know, the olden days, the Finnish especially they used to carry them puukko's along and there was a lot of them puukko junkkar'i's you know, they'd really get into quite a few blood-spilling brawls.

These taverns, when was tavern life really swinging, was it on Saturday nights or after the lumberjacks got thru with their drives or was it all the time?

Arvo: Well, most generally Saturday nights and the biggest swing was in the spring when the lumberjacks come into town, that's when they used to really hit it up pretty well.

How did the, well, I guess this was not your experience here in Boston, the school that you attended, was mainly Finn.

Arvo: Yes

You never did go to a school where there were other nationalities present or--

Arvo: No, not too much. I attended the Woodland School here and it was mostly all Finns. There was one German family, I remember that their name was Cook and them Cook's children learned to talk Finn just as well as I could. They just picked it up; we had Sunday School, they even took their Sunday School lessons in the Finnish language.

Is that right? Who, when you were here in Woodland, who, what was your pastor's name? I mean, who was the man who served you at that time? Was that Autere?

Arvo: Rantanen was first and then Autere.

I see.

Arvo: Ya. Rantanen was, as far as I can remember but I went confirmation school Autere was minister at the time, but Rantanen was here before Autere.

What, OK, I was going to ask you some more about church life but I guess I'll pass on from that, I was curious, you mention that there were so many in your family, did your mother and father have any kind of special way of bringing you up so that everybody got along together alright? Who was, who "wore the pants in the family?"

Arvo: As far as I was concerned, it was both. My mother and father were both real strict and then they had, they used a lot of discipline on the whole family and as far as woodshed and stuff like that what they talk about, we never did a real good whipping that I can remember but only them lil' hair-pulling from back of the neck and that hurt enough (niska karva) and all :Dad would have to do, is just look at you and just open that one hole on that belt buckle and that's all that was necessary, we knew where we belonged, what we had to do. And my dad was real quick on the draw if we didn't do what we were supposed to do.

Art: You mentioned a person living in this area, who, I don't know if this was when you were older or in your younger days, who knew a lot of Finnish sayings, I'm sure your dad has said a few of them to you,
Arvo: Oh, a lot, my dad did and ______ them old sayings in Finn, you know, when they used to predict the weather, my dad had quite a few and then I always remember Charlie Kinnunen. He had all these sayings, he knew everyday in the calendar like Heikki and Eric and Urpa and Juhannus and they're all some kind of markings for weather: on Heikki's day if it was nice, Erkki would be with a sheepskin coat on, and

Art: How did that sound in Finnish?

Heikki, Heikki, paita pällä
Erkki turjus, turki pällä, that's the way they used to say it.
And then there was a Vappu day, you know, and I guess Urpa's was:
Jos Kukko juo mäystästää vettä Vappun päävänä
Sitte härkkää juo Urpanuksesta joestta.

That's the way they used to say it and I know quite a few that I can't, you know, it's hard to memorize all them but there was so many, and I know Good Friday used to be that if the wind was from a certain, especially if it was from the North, they'd say that it would be a cold, cold summer and I kindda' marked that thing because this summer hasn't been nothing too warm and we had a real cold Artic wind on Good Friday this year, I can 'member that just as plain as day! And I just take some of these, I don't know if it means anything but it maybe just happened that way but it was, and they say that it blows from that same direction for the next 40 days most of the time, what it is on Good Friday and it has been that, it's always been that same North wind all the time.

Mentioning the North wind, brings to mind that thought of snow and you said that one of the big problems here people got riled up because the snow plows didn't go thru, how did the Finns weather these long winters up here? What did you do in the wintertime?

Arvo: Well, of course, they didn't get so much riled up during, the old folks, because they had their horse and sleigh and they could always get to town because the roads were packed down and the snow would be blown off the road so they could get into town but it was after they started keeping these roads open, you know, and most of the farmers had automobiles that, that's when they really started getting riled up because they couldn't get the transportation out here. A lot of times the mail wouldn't come in for a week at a time, you know, because they couldn't get the roads open so they had quite a skirmish sometimes with the Road Commission and calling in everybody, having to say about it but, of course, you can't blame the County always neither but you know human nature how it is, that they want service and if they don't get it, they get riled up about it. Like I mentioned they packed these--before the county took over the roads, they were all township -- took care at the time and when the horse and sleigh was going, they used to make the roads, they didn't use the main roads at all what they used in the summertime, they just cut right across the shortest way like the crow flies, then they'd pack the road down to downtown, then they'd keep that road panned down and that's the one that the township would pay the farmers to hitch these 4 teams in front of a big roller and they'd roll it down and pank it down. Then when it got so high it wouldn't drift in. They could always get to town and then we had the transportation of skis and snowshoes. We didn't have no snowmobiles them days like they have now. I wish they would have had such things then, they would have really come in handy. Especially to call the doctor, why, it wouldn't take no time to get a doctor, if we would have had the snowmobile.
How did people manage? Was there a lot of deaths because the doctors couldn't get out? Home remedies probably didn't fix up everything.

Yeh, it didn't. There was a lot of deaths from tuberculosis. I remember Dick Carrier. And scarlet fever. They were things that especially took the young'uns so fast that they just didn't have time to get the doctor here. And during the flu panic right after the first world war, there was tremendous loss around the countries; for a matter of fact there was some doctors that wouldn't even come out in the country because they were scared of getting the flu themselves.

Did you lose any of your own family in that?

No, we didn't lose any of them in our own family but we had a good sauna and the old saying that, old saying in Finnish that "sauna on köyhan apteekki" and my dad always, my dad never was a drinking man. He never drank and he hardly ever smoked but he always had a good brand of brandy in the house. And if we'd get something that he'd see that was really serious, that's when we'd go in the sauna and he'd get us a big cup of hot brandy "punna" what they used to call them and that settled one of my brothers from this flu, he had it bad but he was in that sauna with dad for about an hour and I guess that saved his life.

Did your dad belong to the Finnish Temperance movement or—?

Arvo: No, he didn't belong to no temperance movement but he just didn't drink

Arvo: he just didn't care. He'd take a drink to be sociable but I never seen my dad that he was in a stupor or anything like that.

Well, you mentioned the flu panic after World War I, was it around 1922 that you left the area then?

Yes, I left

and you went down to Detroit, was it?

Arvo: Ya, I went to Detroit and I tried to get into Ford Motor Company at the time but he wasn't hiring so, I went to Pontiac and I got a job with the Wilson Motor Car Company. They used to build the Wyllis Knight at the time.

What is the Wyllis Knight? Is that some kind of special model or

Arvo: It was a special car them days. There's no such thing now anymore. They come out with the -- I think there's some connection with the Wyllis Jeep right today and the Wyllis Motor Car Company. I'm quite sure that it's about the same.

I'm curious as to why you went down there? Was there unemployment here in the Copper Country at that time, or did you just sort of want to strike out on your own?

No, unemployment was bad in this part; the mines were starting to close down already then. And then, of course, another thing was this $5 a day was enticing when Ford Motor Company just raised the wages from $2.75 a day to $5.00 and that kinda' enticed me to go down there.

Art: Did that, thinking back, was there a number of other young fellows like yourself going down about that time, too?
Yes. Lots of them. There was quite a few. I think right after the World War, if I'm not mistaken, the statistics showed that there was about 15,000 left the Copper Country in that one year when Ford Motor Company raised the wages to $5.00 a day.

Art: Did Ford send up any representatives up here to try to get men to go down there or did you just hear about it in the paper?

No, we just heard about it in the paper and mouth to mouth and that's all.

I bet it must have been quite a change for you to go from the Copper Country, and this area, down into the big city. What, how do you feel about that?

Well, it was really exciting to see all them skyscrapers and stuff like that of course, and then there was transportation and quite a bit of automobiles in the cities them days already although around here there wasn't too many yet then. But when I went to Detroit and going to Detroit now, a person wouldn't even think that it was the same town any more because when I went there, Woodward Avenue was paved and mostly all the side streets were just gravel or muddy road but you couldn't even get through that even with a car. Then they had the street cars and the turbance would still run into Pontiac and all the way thru to Flint and all that is now discontinued. Same as with the street cars over here.

Did you find it kind of hard to make friends, were there other Finns from the Copper Country that you associated with, or who did you, were your social acquaintances down there?

Well, there was a family that our neighbors, one of the neighbors' lads that was married over there and I got into boarding with them in Pontiac and there was quite a few other Copper Country people in Pontiac and then as well in Detroit of course, when I went to Detroit my sister was there in Detroit so I lived with them. She had quite a few roomers there from the Copper Country. Of course Detroit always has been that it's hard to make friends with strangers that you can live in some neighborhood 2-3 years and you won't even know your next-door neighbor.

Is that one of the reasons why you moved back into the Copper Country then, or was it because you had relatives or --

Arvo: Well, in a way it was that I wanted to get away from that hustle and bustle and get out in the open. I'm more for that recreational type, you know, that I like to hunt and fish and then the fresh air, and it's different kind of climate here. Detroit is that hot and mucky all the time.

Now, you, did you meet your wife down there then?

Arvo: No.

You met her up here

Arvo: I met my wife when I went to work for her grandpa!

Which was --

Arvo: Which was Nygord. Her mother's folks.

I see. And that was up here, now.

Arvo: Yes, that was here
What type of work was that then?

That was on the farm. I used to help make hay for them and milk the cows and stuff like that. And she used to come over there visiting, and first thing you know, we start dating so that's the way I met her.

And you got married in, let's see, you told me what year was that,--

1934

Right in the heart of the depression. What kind of wedding ceremony did they have in those days?

Arvo: Well, I managed to have a lil' bit money so we had a house wedding and a reception and of course, some people brought gifts and stuff like that but the saddest part of it was, we got married in June and in October I went hunting, pheasant hunting, when I come back the house was leveled with fire and we lost everything. Only thing that we had was the clothes that got left on our backs so we had to start all over again from scratch.

You didn't have any insurance

No insurance or nothing, I didn't have time to get insurance.

Did the--your neighbors chip in and help you out then?

No, the only one that helped us is friends of ours from Copper Country up here would give us a couple of clothes that we got started on. But that was during the depression and nobody had much money, it was no use putting up a collection or anything. Just everybody had to be on their own.

Art: What was it like during the depression here in the Copper Country? Just about everybody was out of work and --

Arvo: Everybody was out of work and they were on this here WPA job and they were getting that $30 a month but it seems like when I used to come here from Detroit, they seemed to be happier here than they did in the big cities. It just seemed like they got along pretty well--farmers would butcher their cattle and they'd divide the cattle amongst each other, they would be cause it was no use selling the cattle because you didn't get only $10 a piece.

Art: There were a couple of things you mentioned, Arvo, that would be interesting to pursue. One was a train hold-up that took some, place some years ago.

Arvo: Oh, that was before my time but my father-in-law related it to me, related to me, because he was 94 when he died last winter and he remembered a lot of them old incidents and he explained it to me and in my memory, it comes to me that this train was coming in with the company--mining company's payroll. And these robbers had planned it so that they had piled a pile of ties on the railroad track, then when the train stopped they walked in there and held up the train and they had a horse and wagon waiting for the loot but they didn't get very far, I don't think before they got caught. And when they did get caught, it was local people. There was one person especially that was working right in the McCarthy's Blacksmith Shop where they hired--they had a delivery stable there at the same time and they had hired a horse and wagon, he was one of the fellas that was mixed up, there was 3, 3 persons that held up that train and I don't know how much time they served for it, but they did get, I think ---
Were any of the 3 men Finns or

No. They were Irish. It was McCarthy's Blacksmith Shop so they were Irish, Irish descent most of them. And -- that's all that I can explain it.

Art: Do you recall around what year that was?

Arvo: Oh, that was around the 1900's, before the turn of the century, I think

Art: It must have been one of the early railroads then

Arvo: Yes, it was. Mineral Range they used to call it at the time, I guess, before Duluth, South Shore and stuff come in.

And was there anything else on that you wanted to say or should we move to the next--

No, I don't think there is nothing I can recall now but my grandpa said nothing else that train, of course, that was the only train robbery that they ever had around here because somebody had been inquiring at the radio station if they ever had any big robberies around here and that was the only one that they really recall that was any big one.

Art: This brings to mind the question about the law enforcement in the old days. Why weren't there more robberies? Were people better natured then or was the Sheriff's Department that tough? Or what --

Arvo: No, the whole reason that was explained to me and many others about these robberies like these banks and everything, they were open, wide open, that there wasn't much guards or cages or anything, see, this is a kind of bottleneck and the only escape they have here is that one bridge that goes over the Portage Lake canal and I think that's the whole reason that they didn't have no more robberies especially on this side of the canal and, of course, then when you get further out on the other side they did have quite a few robberies as far as not too much in Houghton but then again in Marquette and thru there but not around here so much, because they really didn't have a good way to get out of here. That's the whole trouble.

Do you recall any of the old sheriffs? Or policemen? Were they pretty well known?

Yes, they were pretty well known when they got elected, they most generally held office for 2 or 3 terms. I can remember Paulson, he was a Finnish fellow, and then we had another Finnish fellow by the name of Salmi, and then there was a few Irish--O'Brien was in there for a while and they were all nice fellas, they got along with the district, they sure didn't have much trouble here with--as far as enforcing the law. They were obedient but only place where they were called most of the time like I mentioned the fact about the saloon brawls that that's about the only incidents that --

Well, it sounded as if some guys would carry knives, did anybody carry hand revolvers with them?

Arvo: Not too many at the time, no. Because I don't know, a knife was at that time, I don't know really if it was an unlawful weapon even because they used to carry it right in their boot or what they used to call a saapaas them days. It was stuck right in there all the time. Of course it was in the open so I 'spose it was lawful to carry one like that but revolvers, I don't think very few carried them because they knew that there was a bigger fine for using one of them than there was in a knife.
I was going to ask you also about this dynamite blast. We were talking about it it gun powder and explosives here.

Arvo: Oh, yah, that happened in Keweenaw County. And at that time they used to haul the dynamite from Houghton and Hancock with teams of horses and that was most generally in the wintertime when it was good sleighing and they could put a bigger load on the, for the horses. Well, the way I have heard this story there was 3 team loads and they had been hauling this and they decided to stop at the tavern in Phoenix or saloon they used to call them them days. Two of the teams stopped but one of the teams went on by itself so in the meantime when they left from there, they went down the road about a mile-and-a-half and there was a big explosion and all the horses and teamsters and everything was blown up into pieces that they picked up horses jawbones in the woods and they even found one of the teamsters' watch hanging on a tree limb. And after investigation the only thing that they theorize what happened is that the 2 teams were going on and the 2 guys got to sitting side by side in the wagon drinking and they say that in places the road was bare. And they say that the steel runners must have ignited a spark from a rock or something and this was caused the explosion of the 2 sleighs and they were so close together that they both just blew up at the same time. So that's the story of the dynamite blast. And that's been told quite a few times!

What, I didn't catch the year roughly, about what time?

Arvo: That was before the turn of the century also. That was -- they just closed down that "cat" factory up in Keweenaw County not long ago. They used to make all the fuses and mining caps there in Keweenaw County but they just closed it down now when the C&H closed down; they had that little factory going all the time and the same way then, they had the biggest powder company up in back of Ripley there that closed up not long ago that used to make all the powder for the mining company.

Art: Did, do you recall any incidents earlier of miners that you knew? You know having trouble with blasting powder? And caps, getting either injured or killed, was that pretty common?

Oh, that was common, I know so many of them. There's one that just died a little while ago, I think he, he was crippled up more than anybody, they didn't even expect him to live and that was Gust Waarala. He lost his leg and pretty near all his fingers from both hands and one of his eyes and but he managed to get along alright, he put up a small confectioner's store in Boston location and he pulled thru and his son-in-law is still operating that store, they made a bigger store out of it then afterward and his son-in-law is still operating that store in Boston and he come along good although he got crippled so bad; and then there was quite a few others and in the old days, they didn't have no kind of insurance until this here Michigan Compensation law come into effect, it was just on their own, they didn't get nothing for it if a person got killed in the mine, well, if the company felt like paying the funeral expenses that's all the family would get out of it. But then after the Michigan Comp come in, then it was different.

When was that? Around 1920 or 1912?

Yes, I think right after the strike it come out.

Art: Oh, right after the strike.

Yah, you were mentioning about the Finns in the mining company and organizing the cooperatives. I wonder if you could go into that a little bit, how did
the coop get started here?

Yes, well, the coop got started—most generally these mining companies owned their own stores and they start talking and holding meetings about this here organizing their own cooperative stores because they heard it was a coming thing that they started that in Finland years ago and well, it was really originated in England, I think, the cooperative movement was originated in England by the Rocksdale people. And then it moved out to Finland, Sweden and Norway, I think Swedish is more, the country of Sweden is more organized with the cooperative movement than any other country right now. They have apartments and their own funeral homes and everything in the cooperative. Anyway, I'll go back to this organization of the cooperative movement in the Copper Country. Of course, after they started holding these meetings, the mining company got wind of the organization of these cooperatives and they send these stooges in and if they recognize any of the attendance at these meetings and they were working for the company, they'd blacklist them and they'd get fired. Just because they were afraid that this is some kind of subversive element that is coming into the Copper Country.

Were the stooges Finn?

No, they were mostly other nationalities. Of course, they might have been some stooges that come right in with the meeting, you know, that were working for the company but it was hard to recognize it then so, but it went along and after it got going they had cooperatives organized in Calumet first and then in Hancock, and Chassell and South Range and Toivola and L'Anse and Pelkie and Baraga; they had one in pretty near every town, but now lately, the competition is so keen that most of these have closed up although they still have one cooperative store in Calumet which is the Consumers Co-op and there's one in Chassell which is a branch of the Calumet; then, of course, they have a big co-operative store in Pelkie which does an enormous, I think it does over, done over $2 million of sales last year. That's about the biggest co-operative there is around here. And then, of course, they had--the fishermen got into organizing the fishermen's co-operative and that operated for quite a few years and then they started—got into a petroleum industry and which is called the Northern Cooperatives, well, that is still operating and for a matter of fact, I got a mention it that I'm the president of the board of that Northern Cooperative so I know the operations of that company pretty well, and they're really going strong; they paid out 7% rebate on the consumer rebates and then when the farmers got bigger here, they started shipping quite a bit milk and these independent companies come in like this Stella Cheese and Bridgeman-Russell, well, they were big companies and they were robbing the farmer out of the butterfat always so then the farmers talked it into organizing their own co-op creamery, which they did, which is operating right today in Dollar Bay and it had 700 members at one time, but then of course the farming around here is diminishing most of the small farmers are going out of business and the younger generation doesn't want to take over the old farms any more because there's long hours and when they can go in the city and make $20 in 8 hours, they're not going to work on the farm from daylight to dark, but it's still functioning good and then again I gotta mention the fact that I was instrumental in that company, I was a secretary of the company for 12 years on the board so--

Art: You've been very active, I'm kind of interested, how did you yourself/get interested in the cooperative movement? When, can you recall?

Arvo: Well, I got interested in most generally as a kid! Because my dad used to always say that when we'd go downtown to buy our stuff from the cooperative store that that's our store, to buy it from there. And then when I went to Detroit and then when I come back on the farm, I got interested in the cooperative movement and I
started attending the meetings and first thing you know, they wanted some directors elected on the board so I accepted the nomination as a director and they voted me in as a director and I been serving as a director of the Consumers Co-ops Store for the last 10 years but now I retired because I'm getting kindda' up in age so I thought I'll have the younger people get active in that stuff.

Art: When you were mentioning the organization of the cooperative movement in the Copper Country, about what time period was that roughly? In those early days?

Arvo: That was around 1918-1919; I think 1915 right after the strike, that's when they started organizing the co-op. But most of the co-ops that are around here, they're over 50 years old right now.

You mentioned your dad saying that it was "our store". Now did he mean that as a store for the just the Finns, or did other nationalities join in the co-op there?

It was that the other nationalities did join after, after the place was organized and they started looking for more customers and enlarging the store that they had right today, they have just as many other nationalities as customers as they have Finns and as members of-- it come a long ways.

Do you have recollections of, I think it was in the 30's, there was quite a squabble among the cooperative movement which way it should go, you know, whether to be neutral or whether it should be geared toward socialism or--

Yes, I remember that squabble--as far as I'm concerned I attended one of the meetings in Superior, Wisconsin at the time when it was in getting re-organized and they were weeding out all these "subversive" elements in the co-op, the Ty&emies had quite a bit to do with that and they did put up some stores and organize some stores, they was one organized in Mass; there was 2 stores in Mass, one was the Settler's Co-op which is still in Mass, and the other one then was the one that they didn't want in their organization and that's not operating today anymore and there was few others, there was some people that might as well say a "handful" that they tried to overthrow the co-operative movement, whether it was a put-up job or a paid job, that these competitors were trying to mix it up with some--something that would like they were going to overthrow the government or something like that just for, might as well say to destroy it. There was this tax equality associations which they formed at the time and they were all against the co-op organizations and stuff like that so I think--

Some of those Finns went back to Finland, too, or didn't they, to Karelia?

Arvo: Yes, they did. There was some of then went and then there was some in some areas that they even went to Russia and there was some that we never heard anything more about them after they went over there. And some of them did have a chance to escape from there and when they come back here, they said that it wasn't as--like eating gold from the plate like a lot of people said when they left from here to go to Russia. That it's, of course, at the time, you know, it was depression times too, at the time and anybody that picked up a soap box and had a pretty good gift of gab, you know, you could get some followers. And I think that's the whole thing in this country right today, if we have good times, we're not afraid of the communism organizing too much but I remember during the poor times, it was already starting to build up quite a bit in this country, you know, because the people look forward, well, that maybe he has something there that we have something better and that's the whole trouble with the people like in China; China under the leadership of Chi Shek, well, they didn't have nothing; well, then when the Communists started pushing in there and offered them something better, well, the Chinese turned over
and they—well, we can't lose because we might get something better. And that would be the same thing in this country.

One of the questions I asked you on this sheet, was the first time you voted for president, you said you voted for Hoover, you evidently were Republican in those days. Did you change then when the depression came around and FDR took over.

Arvo: To be honest with you, I made a mistake in the first place that I voted Republican the first time I ever voted and after that I been voting Democrat ever since and I'm not ashamed to admit it either! (laughter)

Art: Ya, that's one of the interesting things, you know, that is debated, that, you know, where were most of the Finns politically and you read in some of the early statements, papers about most being Republicans and I guess in FDR's time, quite a few changed over--

Arvo: Yes, there is quite a few now that turned over but there still is some of these "die-hard" Republicans that they're even ashamed to take that there social security check because Roosevelt is the one that got that thing going.

Art: Laughter) Is that right?

Arvo: Yeh, that is, I know a few here, around here that really don't want that check but they take it anyhow. But there really is some of these "die-hard" Republicans. Well, of course, I can see where that come in, you know, at the time that they come in from the old country they all said "Oh, se Democrat aika" well, that was Democratic times and that was the poorest times that the United States ever had. That was under (I can't think of the president now) but it was a Democratic president.

Art: Oh.

Arvo: And that's where the Finnish turned against the democrats at that time and then of course, the mining company too, you know, the mining companies were the big dictators here and they just about told you that if you don't vote for the Republican party, we're going to, if the Democrats get in, we're going to close the mine down. So--

Art: Well, was there any, I mean, maybe that was a rumor, but was there any way they put that kind of pressure directly on a person?

Arvo: Yes, they did, they even put the, they even put a notice in your pay envelope that you gotta vote for this man. Of course, it was still a secret ballot when they voted but there was so many got scared about it that they thought, well, they're going to find out some way that I voted for a Democrat and they turned around and voted for Republican So that's the way it is; the same way with Ford Motor Company, I remember I was working at Ford Motor Company when Roosevelt got elected and in our pay envelope there was right in the envelope that "why change horses on the middle of the stream"? That your best bet is to vote for Hoover. And that was from the Ford Motor Company itself.

And that's when you voted for Hoover then--

No, I didn't vote for Hoover the second time. I voted for Roosevelt. I wasn't working for Ford when the first time when I voted for Hoover.
Well, you came up here to return, let's see, in 40-

Arvo: 1942

Right after, right during World War II period. How, what was it like here in the Copper Country during World War II and --

Arvo: well, it was, it was really, like every place else that you could get a job pretty near anyplace. The mines were operating good and the wages weren't so bad and for a matter of fact, I even worked for the mining company on surface for couple of years when I first come here and tried farming for a while, I had a bunch of cattle that -- but then after a few years, we give up the cattle business and I went in the restaurant business, the wife she got more interested in the restaurant business first; she had the Farm Lunch and about mile-and-a-half down the road here, and then we had a chance to take over a small lunch room in Hancock: The Blue Star Lunch which we took over in 1955. And we operated that for 3 years, then from there we moved to Chassel. Course, then when we moved to Chassel we had to abandon this place and this place where we are staying now was vacant, from Chassel we moved to Baraga and we stayed there for 8 years so might as well say this place was vacant for 10 years which is the homestead of my old dad's place, this is the place my dad come from --

So you're living right then on the old homestead?

Arvo: Old homestead, yah.

Now, earlier you mentioned that you reared it must have been about 20 children or so?

Arvo: Yes, we had a boarding home here too. We had 36 children altogether, (14 years and 36 children) so we done quite a few different things to keep the wolf away from the door so--

One thing that impresses me about your wife and family, you've been involved in all kinds of civic organizations and you're interested in the community, what sort of got you thinking that way, was it the cooperative movement? What --

Arvo: Well, I don't know what it really is, we're both that kind that we both like to help the human being like her, she won't say "no" to nothing. She was a 4-H leader for 20 years and she was with the Home Economics movement and she belongs with this here Arts & Crafts Society and now she is in the Postmistresses Club and, you know, all that civic movement like that, it seems like, I don't know, we just like to mingle with the people and it seems to me that the more you talk with different people, you get, might as well say, "self-educated". Like myself, I just went 8 grades of school but I feel as though if I finish the high school diploma because I just self-educated myself, talking to people and listening to people especially in politics and world history and stuff like that, you can learn more by just listening to people than you can studying. So that's my theory of mingling with people.

Yah, do you think this attitude is pretty typical of the people up here in the Copper Country? You mentioned there were many reasons why you left Detroit to come up here, clean air, you know, the out-of-doors and probably one reason was the people--

Arvo: Yes, that's another item too that the people are more friendly. You can mix up with the people although there's some in the neighborhood that might not always agree with your ideas and your way of thinking but that's in all localities as far as that's concerned but at least they'll listen where in the
cities they won't listen to you even though you do try to talk and you ask them a question, they'll turn away from you. So I think that's the biggest part right there that that we enjoy it here--

Art: Thinking back, you know, your boarding house, how many children--what was the most number of children you had at one time here?

Arvo: We had 6 at one time.

You had 6. Let me ask you a question that I, the same question I asked of you in your own family, what did you do with these kids for a good time, what kinds of activities did you share with them?

Arvo: Well, we'd take them to picnics and take them out for different kinds of rides and in them days it wasn't such modern as it is nowadays, children seemed to be more satisfied with a little bit less enjoyment than what they want nowadays. They didn't realize the fact that there was so many things to be had as people do nowadays.

What do you think is the biggest factor in changing the attitude of the young people, has it been TV or just too many things like you said?

Arvo: Well, I'll tell you, I think the biggest thing is TV for one, it is advertising on TV and also on the radio, and another thing this integration of schools. Where they join and they don't have no more of this country schools no place and they all go to them big schools and even the country children that were more obedient at the time, are getting to be because they hear more from the city people. I know my own boys when they were young: Oh, I'm not going to do that because I don't have to, the people in town, they don't have to carry wood, they don't have to get the cows, why should we do that kind of stuff? And I think that's the biggest problem with the children right today that they all go to the big city school and they're in bigger groups over there and there's always some instigator in the group and they all follow the instigator. Children are funny that way.

Art: You think, we're talking about your dad and mother, you know, about the kind of discipline they had with you and your little brothers and sisters, do you think that you have had a harder time disciplining your children than they had disciplining you?

Arvo: Yes, I do because there's another thing right now that the law is against you and they're more in favor of the children and that's where your discipline comes in

For example--

Arvo: For example, you cannot use the woodshed tactics on a kid nowadays even how mean he is because the child knows that and the first thing you're landing in jail and the kid will laugh it because I read in the paper for instance where the parent was arrested for cruelty to children just because he pulled his belt off and give him a few slaps across the back, of course, maybe it was a lil' too hard that the child want and pulled his shirt off in front of the judge and seen the blue marks on his back, well, of course, I had a red mark across my back although I didn't get too many big whippings but you only have to hit once with switch or

(end)
Memoirs of

CHILDHOOD DAYS

My parents were originally from After they married they moved to Harper County in 1883.

My father worked as a tenant. My brother called me out of emergency.

Mother and Father raised 14 children.

Whenever anyone became ill, a doctor called in case of emergency.

The toughest problem we faced was how to manage such a large family.

As a family we took part in farm work, chores, etc.

The teacher who influenced me was a Mr. Johnson, married to a librarian.

The good times we had were on July 4th, horseback rides, and blue heaven at Christmas.

MAKING MY MARK

When I started on my own I went to Detroit, Michigan, and was there until 1942.

Since then I have worked in Detroit.

The first time I voted for U.S. President Herbert Hoover in 1928.

Getting married was in 1932 in Detroit.

The local minister often talked about the people in our neighborhood.

The people in our neighborhood were mostly from Germany. They had a good time and generation them.

For a good time we used to have community parties, dances, and picnics.

People got riled up here when people started moving away mostly to Detroit.

In our community we looked up to was Charles Johnson.

My biggest accomplishment was helping start the Boys' Home.

The best time of the year here was Christmas.

REFLECTIONS

Today my feeling about life is to accomplish what I can.

In this area we need more small businesses because the big corporations are not fair in business.

Visitors who come here should look around the environment, agriculture, and industry and help.

My prediction for the future of this area is to develop new methods of farming.

Collecting these memories about bygone days is a great source of knowledge.
Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

Suomi College
Folklore Album

Father
a. John Pyykkö
   b. Oiva
   c. Nuotia

Mother
a. Lydia Kangas
   b. Annika
   c. Suhtila

Name of person

Father
a. Erkki
   b. Kaarlo
   c. Hannu

Mother
a. Hella
   b. Noora
   c. Ulla

Child
a. John
   b. Paul
   c. Mark

Child
a. John
   b. Carl
   c. Kate

Child
a. John
   b. Carl
   c. Kate

Child
a. John
   b. Carl
   c. Kate