FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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My name is Signe Seppala and I was born in Wakefield somewhere at the Comet Location in 1904. My parents were Hilda and Elias Noopela. My dad came from Finland in 1899 from (???) and he first came to Ishpeming where he worked...I had never known that there was a gold mine in Ishpeming, but I saw this in the Detroit Free Press that there had been some work in a gold mine of some sort like that, and that's where my dad first worked; but this was closed soon and from there he went to work in the mine in Bessemer and then to Wakefield and then he came to Covington. He had two sisters in Covington. My mother came from (???), Finland, in 1900. Hilda Koski was her maiden name. Her father lived in Covington, Eric Koski, so she came to her father. She stayed in Covington for awhile and worked and from there she went to Minnesota, stayed there about a year and a half then, came back to Covington and met my father. They were married in 1903 in Ishpeming at the parsonage. Then they went to Wakefield where Dad worked in the mine and I was born there; and it was about in the later part of 1907 when they came to Covington again and he started working in the woods...it was all woods work...and clearing land like all the rest of the people in Covington did at that time. And the roads were very poor...there was a railroad. The railroad had been built somewhere in the nineties...1890's and I remember the boxcar that had been fixed into a depot and a very poor road to the home where we went. My father had been there helping Grandpa build the place where we went. I didn't like it too well around there...it wasn't finished, it was two-by-fours. My father was building steps into the house then a couple of days after and he went a got me a pair of shoes and them I didn't like at all. They were these moosein-type...we called them shoe packs and that was about the only kind of shoes they had in the store then, so I had no choice. My mother put them on and I took them off and threw them in the mud. I wasn't gonna wear those kind of shoe packs. My father picked them up and cleaned them and Mother put them on and tied them real tight and good on my feet so I couldn't get 'em off. So, I don't remember if there was anymore about it, but I was very unhappy with my new shoes. There was no way out, just hadda wear them because there was no other shoes in the stores...nothing like we had in Wakefield.

I: Now, were you the only child when they came to Covington?
R: I had a brother.

I: You had a brother. Now, will you tell us about your brothers and sisters.

R: Well, I had a brother when we came to the farm. He was retarded; he lived to be five years old and he never could help himself. He didn't speak. And then soon after my brother Eli [sic] was born, then Urho was born, and Toivo and my youngest sister Martha. And one of the little babies died right after birth, so there were seven of us, but five were living and grew up on the farm where we were taught how to work. There wasn't much time for foolishness. As soon as we were able to, we had to help do work around the farm and in the garden and in the barn and learn how to milk and help Mother. I was the oldest one, so I had more responsibility than the others babysitting and taking care of other things and looking after the younger ones.

I: Now, going back to Wakefield, do you know the name of the pastor who had baptized you in Wakefield?

R: Yes, Pastor Petter Worli baptized me in Wakefield and my mother and father were very active in the Evangelistic Church in Wakefield. That was the Finnish church and they were Christian parents. Very very dedicated in bringing up their children in the way people brought up their children in those days...teaching them the Word of God and the Ten Commandments. I was very young when we were in Covington, my mother and father were having Sunday School in the house and oh, about twenty, twenty-five children come every Sunday morning to the house and they had Sunday School for them. I was too small really to take part in it, but I was interested in seeing the others and pretty soon I learned my Commandments and the Finnish Bible history. Then in Covington there was only one church at first. That was the Soumi Synod and everybody took part in that; but then they started building this Finnish Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church which is known as the (???) that my father had very much to do with organizing this church and was very active with that in Wakefield. And the two churches broke away...and Soumi Synod built the church in town and then Mr. Huutala donated land for this Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church and so the two churches were being built. And the Soumi Synod had their church services, first church services in 1908 in October in Covington and the following year, later in the summer then at Cleo the Evangelist Lutheran Church had their church. And they were both very active. They had their Sunday Schools and Luther Leagues and they used to get together especially in the summer at least once a week to have a sort of a Cottage Meeting...we call it now, and they would sing and have coffee. They were great meetings. Everybody went...whoever was able to walk because it was a lot of walking...miles...and those who had a horse they put the horse in front of the wagon or would drive.

I: Now, do you remember any of the pastors in either one of those churches...their names?

R: Well, some of the first ones in Covington were (???) and they were
with the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church and the very first
pastor that came to Covington was a pastor who came from Republic.
I forget his name.

I: Well, maybe you'll remember later on and we'll stick it in. And
both of these churches had Sunday Schools and etc.

R: Yes...church work was very active at that time and that was about the
only activity in the community. There weren't any other organizations.
Of course, earlier this Temperance Society was very active and their
meetings were here earlier, but that died away. That's where they
first had their church meetings was at this Temperance Hall which was
up on Huutala Hill...we used to say.

I: Now, what can you remember about school...attending school in
Covington?

R: I started school when I was seven years old because it was quite a
ways from school, about a mile and a half and we walked. I guess
Mother felt kind of sorry for me when I went to school, she didn't
want to send me too early. I only spoke Finn and it wasn't too long
and I learned how to talk English and get along with the teachers
as we had to have an interpreter...I talked Finn and the teacher
didn't know what I was talking about. I guess that's the way it was
with all of us.

I: Was it a one-room school?

R: Yes, it was a one-room school. All the eight grades were in one room
and I remember there was seventy of us when I was in the first and
second grade and one teacher.

I: Do you remember her name?

R: Emma Youngren and then came Alice Shay and then there were the Stinson
girls, Miss Helen Stinson and Miss Elkie Stinson and so on. But they
were great teachers. They had a lot to do with moulding and making us
to what we are today. They were great.

I: Now, at this school, how was the school heated?

R: There was a big heater in the corner in school which took a lot of
wood in there. Some of the bigger boys poked the fires and take care
of them; but lot of times our lunch was frozen and the sandwiches were
frozen so we tried to melt them at noon and thaw out our milk.

I: Yes, did the teacher stay there at noontime with you?

R: Yes, the teacher stayed at noon and looked after us. There was one
teacher who was boarding in town and she used to go for lunch, but she
didn't stay too long...she came back. That was a long day for the
teacher. They were there about eight-thirty or quarter to nine and
we had school then until four o'clock and classes one after another
and it was interesting in a way...you could learn already what you
were gonna have the next year as the classes were ahead and that was
a great help because it didn't take too long if you were busy to study the lesson you were supposed to have done yourself, you could listen to the next grade and what was going on in the room all day.

I: And did some of the older students help the teacher then, help the younger ones with lessons?

R: No, there wasn't much help from nobody. It was the teachers who did everything. Some of the older boys sometimes needed discipline and they had to stay after school, but the teacher had to look after the big boys maybe more so than the little ones.

I: Did you have a special Christmas program at school?

R: Every Christmas we had a Christmas program. It was a great event. We had plays and recitations and songs and they were great.

I: And many parents came.

R: And we used to have it at the old town hall and all the parents came that hall was just packed.

I: And Santa came?

R: Yes, and Santa came and there was candy. We didn't get too much candy them days from home, but this candy at the school...I think the School Board bought the candy and we enjoyed it. And the candy was probably the only candy in the early days that we did get for Christmas.

I: Now, can you remember anything else from younger days about Christmas and going to church and Sunday School programs at Christmas?

R: Yes, and we used to have, every Christmas Eve we had a Sunday School program and in both...all the churches they were having Sunday School programs. We have very precious memories of those and then on Christmas morning the Christmas service was early in the morning...usually five - six o'clock in the morning. In the neighborhood everybody would hitch up their horses and those who didn't have horses and sleighs would take the neighbors and everybody went to church...children; and would be cold but we took quilts and blankets and wrapped ourselves up in them and to church we went.

I: Was there a Christmas tree at church?

R: Yes, Christmas tree and in church there used to be oranges or an apple for the children at the Sunday School program.

I: And did you have candles on the Christmas tree?

R: Yes, we had those candles...there were no electric lights at the time...and it's surprising there were no tragedies, no fires.

I: And Christmas morning then, since you didn't have electricity at the church in those early times, then you had candles in the windows.
Candles...and then they had these hanging lamps from the ceiling, but nowadays I don't think anyone would see very much with those lights after we've had all these electric lights.

But, there was plenty of singing and so on.

Oh singing was the greatest and it was real Christmas.

Now, going back to your school, did you have any special program at the end of the year at your school?

Well, there were special programs for eighth graders, those who were graduating from the eighth grade. In Covington we didn't have a high school until, oh way in the thirties, and then the big school burned down and they started transporting the children by bus...first they were brought to Kenton and from there to L'Anse and they've gone to L'Anse for the last thirty years I think.

I went through the tenth grade and I had to leave school. I liked school very much, but my mother was not too healthy and then she felt that she needed help at home. I finished my ten grades and that was all the school...of course after my children went to high school I learned a lot from them.

But your children then went to L'Anse High School

Now, we have you as a young lady. What were some of the things the young people did around Covington in their later teens?

The boys played baseball very much during the summer...there were baseball teams in Watton and in Covington and the French had their team and the Finns had their team and they played baseball every Sunday and people would gather over there and watch them play and cheer for them...the French for the French and the Finnish for their teams.

Much competition.

Were there cars around that time? Do you remember when you saw your first car...that was before you were an adolescent or teenager.

I was very young when the first car came past our home and the engine made an awful loud racket and it was enough to scare anybody. I took a hold of my brother next to me hand and we went under the bed and there I tried to say all the prayers and tried to teach him because we had heard Mother and our aunt talk so much about these headless horses starting to come and then that would be the end of the world...well, I figured this must be it with all that racket and that thing coming. It was veterinarian from Kenton I think that was going somewhere in the neighborhood and he came on our road. The roads weren't too good, but he made it with his big machine. Anyway, that wasn't the end of the world...that was the beginning of what was to become...preliminaries.
Now, how did you travel then? Quite a few people would come into Ishpeming...did they come by rail?

Yes, we traveled by train. There was a very good way of getting to Ishpeming and Marquette by the Duluth Southshore Train. There were two trains...two at night and two during the day. One came this way from Covington to Marquette in the morning about nine o'clock and it went back at four o'clock in the afternoon. And then, of course, the night trains were not being used that much, but they ran between Marquette and Duluth and if you wanted to go to Duluth or Arnway or that way, well it was nice to have all that transportation. The first car in the community was by Hutala's...they bought the car and they had a truck...they owned a store out by the Leo Church there...and they were the first ones that owned a car in the community. But then it was several years after when they started getting cars in the 1915 and 1920 and like that.

in tape.

There are all kinds of people all over the world I guess from Covington who have made very well with their education, doctor's degrees. There's Dr. Helen Putala or Mrs. Powell, she's in Detroit now, she has a doctor's degree and there's Dr. Arvid Jacobson, he worked hard for his doctorate in mathematics and he taught at the Ann Arbor University and my brother was the only one from Covington Township who went into ministry. He was eighteen years old and when he got through with his eight grades, he went to work in the woods with Dad cutting logs and doing woods work until he was eighteen; and then he went to seminary in Springfield and there he finished his high school and college and seminary and I think he done it all in six years. He was very brilliant in school and things came quite easy to him and then he got his honorary doctor's degree from St. Louis, Missouri, and he has been in that field for forty years and in the Missouri Synod. Now he is retired and lives at Moose Lake, Minnesota, with his wife Hilda. He's very well and keeps busy with a little farm out there and he finds all kinds of work to keep him busy. He has worked very hard for the Missouri Synod in the forty years that he was in that field.

I: Now, what about your sister, Martha?

R: Well, then my sister Martha came to school here in Marquette and went to teacher's college here for two years, she was eighteen years old and she got a job in Covington teaching; so then she taught for a few years and then she went down to Ypsilanti for two years and she got her degree there and she's been teaching school most of her life. She's married to a retired Army Major and lives in Tampa, Florida, where she has taught school for about fifteen or twenty years, and is waiting for retirement. Oh, I just am not able to count how many girls and boys who have made it so wonderful with their education. What about this Alto boy, he's got a...there's one of the Alto boys, he was one of my favorite Sunday School students, he's a veterinarian here in Marquette...and oh, there's so many others, I just can't think of them right now.
I: It seems that almost every year one of the honor students at L'Anse
High School...

R: Was from Covington.

I: Was from Covington...and quite often a valedictorian or salutatorian.

R: Yes, that is right. Then one of my boys, Reyno, he went to Soumi
and Ruddy went to the Northern here...both them brothers are general
agents here in Marquette and Roy, the youngest one, he graduated from
Ann Arbor University and majored in chemistry and he is working in
California in Walnut Creek and he works with Shell Chemical Company
he was with first, but I can't think of the name now of the company
he is with at present; but he has done very well in that field.

I: Now, going back, where did you meet your husband and when did you get
married?

R: I met my husband...he was my neighbor, and I got married in Ishpeming,
Dr. Rooutala, he married us at the parsonage. We made our home in
Covington, of course, that's where we had been. He came from Finland
in 1904, and after we were married he was in the logging business for
three or four years and then he put up a store in Covington which we
had for thirty-six years until his health started breaking and we had
to sell and get rid of it. And he was very active in more ways than
one...he always took part in all the Soumi College collections when
they were starting to build a little more to Soumi College, he was a
Captain in the Covington Township for organizing and raising funds
and they used to drive to Hancock to Soumi College meetings every few
months to report and find out how they were coming which, of course,
after all came out beautiful and we were very happy to be there at the
dedication of the new building. We lived by the side of the road and
for years and years the pastors of Covington used to come over after
Sunday morning services or whenever they came to Covington then, and
we'd have dinner for them and they'd stop when they were going by.

I: So your house and the store were sort of a parsonage.

R: Yes, the church was right across the road from us. I was with the
Soumi Synod for, and then of course the L.C.A. for the last few years,
for forty-eight years that we were married. I took very active part
with my husband in church work and have very pleasant memories of the
days when I taught Sunday School. I was Superintendent for thirty
years and I didn't look for any thanks or anything for it, it was such
a pleasure to go Sunday morning to Sunday School and see all those
children. The biggest enrollment we had the last few years that I
was there was around sixty-five and seventy; but now wherever I go I
don't need to know the people anymore, they come and they greet me and
they say, "Oh, my old Sunday School teacher", and that is a great
reward and I just enjoy it and I beam all over when they remember me
after all these years and they greet me.

I: Now, when you first started with Sunday School, most of the Sunday
School was in Finnish.
It was in Finnish at first for quite awhile...from 1920 until...oh in the forties it started going English. The Swedish Lutheran Church was getting to be very small and they were having a hard time getting a pastor, so they wanted to send their children to our Sunday School and they also came to teach; so little by little we started using altogether the English Sunday School lesson materials and it wasn't always easy because the older people thought that we were really breaking away from the real Lutheran faith and we didn't know what we were doing. It took time for them to understand that we can be taught in English just as well as we can be taught in Finnish.

That God isn't only Finnish

Yes, I was with the 4-H Club for about ten years and especially during the Depression days. We had vegetable gardens and canning club and then learning how to sew little things for ourselves. That work was going on very very well. I went for three summers to Chatham with my group when they had 4-H Club Camp there and then there'd be sometimes as many as ten going to Chatam of the 4-H Club groups and took part in what was going on over there.

This was at Camp Shaw?

Camp Shaw, yes.

You said that your husband had been in on different activities within the Township and Covington.

Yes, he was a Township Clerk for quite a few years, but then he was a secretary and treasurer.

Now, tell us more about some of the jobs. He was with the school board and some of the other jobs he held in the community, besides taking care of the store.

Well, it was in the church and my husband was Notary Public for about thirty-five years and he didn't charge...it was all just part of the work that went on the side; sold hunting licenses and fishing licenses in the store and then after he retired and quit they started paying for all that, so that was all extra work. He was always happy to see the hunters come around in the fall and sell hunting licenses and bird licenses and etc. They did business in the store and that was something he could do.

I remember years ago when I went to Children's Bible Camp at Lake Nesbitt and Luther League Camp and your people from your store
brought us groceries.

R: Yes, that was real nice to be able to do that and see that they had enough supplies out there.

I: Oh, we always ate well. Now, when did you move to Marquette?

R: Well, my husband died in November of '69,....

I: He had been ill before that.

R: He had a heart condition for about ten years and he was here at St. Luke's Hospital and whenever he was ill and it was possible, we came to Marquette and he came to St. Luke's. And this time too he was there for seven weeks before he passed away. And my boys Reyno and Rudy were already living in Marquette and they had been here for several years and after my husband died I moved to Marquette and it'll be five years in January that I've been living in the Pine Ridge Apartment which has been a wonderful home, and many good friends, and our apartments aren't too big, but you just have to learn how to put your things in places where they belong.

I: Yes, and then you have Reyno's family and Rudy's

R: I have all my grandchildren except Roy's three boys in California, they're here in Marquette and my children have been very good to me and I have made many wonderful friends and I have been a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church. Pastor Seepala was here at the time I came, and he was a great dandy friend and I've been adopted and taken in to the Redeemer Lutheran Church very very kindly. I have nothing but kind things to say about all the friends I have made and I did have good friends in Marquette when I came here like this master, Elma Ranta, who has taken time to come here with this tape.

I: Well, I've known you all my lifetime and your parents from Covington.

R: My parents were very good friends with the Ranta's and Elma gives me rides to church, etc. and visits. We have great times together talking about our...

I: Well, we always enjoy the time to come and see you.

Stop in tape.

I: Now, let's go into politics. What do you remember when you were in school about politics?

R: Well, we did get excited about politics, especially during an election and there weren't very many democrats, but my dad was a democrat and, of course, I thought that he knew what was what...he was right, so there was another student, a boy, who was a democrat and all the rest were republicans. Well, Wilson and Hughes were running and we thought well that he had no chance. But the first morning after the election the teacher came to school with the paper
and it said that Hughes had won; and oh, everybody cheered and they were so happy and us too, we didn't say anything...just waited with Thirst and Stinson and thought that's it. Well, the next morning, Thirst and Stinson came to school with a paper and it had big headlines, "Wilson had won"...so we laughed and we were happy. We had won in the end anyway.

I: Now, what about politics and Township jobs and County jobs, etc. What was Election Day like in the Covington area?

R: Election Day was sort of a holiday for everybody. Nobody went to work and it was a day when everybody went out to vote.

I: And people were interested?

R: They were interested, yes. Even if it was the Township Highway Commissioner for which my dad used to run and he got in quite a few times. He was Highway Commissioner at the time when the road from Covington was being built to Nestoria.

I: Do you remember when you first voted for President?

R: Yes, I remember that very well. I was quite young...I think I was...well the first time I had to be twenty-one; but I had been married already for three years when I went to vote. And who was...I think Harding was running for President at the time, that was before Hoover then I was a Republican and my husband and his family were Republican and I went with him.

I: So, you took that side at that time.

R: Yes

I: Now, going back to the time of Hoover, do you remember anything about Depression times...hardships that people had in the Covington area?

R: There were many hardships during the Depression. There was a shortage of a lot of food and people were hard up. Like in the store even, food wasn't available and people wanted a lot of credit. My husband used to say that it's easier to take care of one family than to take care of maybe fifty families and try to see that you get something for them all who were your customers and you wanted to do the best you could for them.

I: What types of jobs...WPA and them...do you remember anything about that in the Covington area?

R: WPA was the main occupation. There wasn't much of anything else to do.

I: What types of jobs did the WPA do in the Depression?

R: Ford used to have logging camps way out beyond Covington in the woods
and they had school and there were some teachers there, they were trying to give education that way to some of the young people that wanted to continue their education; and road building.

I: What about C.C.C...did you have C.C.C. Camps?

R: Yes, but I don't remember too much about this C.C. business, what type of work they did or what was done with that. I remember the road building and such much better.

I: Now, did you know anything about the camps that were made at Lake Nesbitt? Had they been made about that time?

R: Yes, that was the time they were made...they were built there.

I: And many of the churches rented those.

R: Yes, for years and years. Now they are gone to ruin and I don't think they are being rented anymore, but for years and years the different churches would rent them for Luther League and Women's...

I: And Sunday School camps?

R: And Sunday School camps.

I: That's where we went.

R: And then we used to have these young women get together for Bible Week, so those camps were being occupied all through the summer. You had to give them your application early to get there. I think they were being rented at a very modest price.

I: How did the different nationalities get along, or were most of the people Finnish in the Covington area?

R: Well, when I came to Covington as a child, there were quite a few French. French were the first settlers and there were quite a few Swedes and then, of course, the Finns were the biggest majority. I don't know, they had a hard time getting along and talking with each other. I don't think the older people had much trouble, but the boys in school sometimes would get into some real fights with the French. The Swedes didn't care to fight too much.

I: Now, what about marrying into the other nationalities? How did the parents like that?

R: Well, the Finnish parents didn't like it and I don't know if the other nationalities did either...and there wasn't too much of it. There were enough Finnish people in the area to marry with the Finnish and I guess the Swedes stuck together but I don't know about the French. But I don't know of any Finnish young people that did get married to the French...there might have been some that got married with the Swedes.

I: But in those times they stuck by the Finnish people.
I know my parents would have collapsed if I had ever gone with a French or another nationality except a Finn.

Now going back, in the Copper Country in 1913, they had a copper strike and would you remember anything about the copper strike? What did you hear about it in Covington?

Well, I think everybody who listened at all would hear about it and then about this Christmas party where so many were being killed and then my father bought one of those...what do they call...those telescopes for things you look at pictures with...and everybody from the neighborhood came to look at those pictures of the tragedy and what went on. I don't know what's happened to that thing, I wish I had it yet; but having moved a lot, so many things that should have been saved have been getting lost along the way.

As to newspapers, do you remember the names of any newspapers that your mother and dad bought?

Well, I remember one paper...I think right from the beginning until it was being printed no more was the Altiia...that was the paper that we had at home and, of course, the Michigan Farmer came from Lansing and there were a lot of good things in that, recipes and such. So, that's about the only papers I remember from way back when I was a child. Of course, in school then we had different papers that we took home.

Were your parents interested in formal education?

Yes, they were; my mother especially. She would have liked to have seen all the children get a good education.

Did your mother and dad like to read also?

Yes, it used to be the custom in our home. We'd all sit down after supper at night by the kerosene light and we'd read...everybody would sit down and Mother would read; and that's the way we read the paper even, mostly everything was read. Nowadays there's so much being published of everything. There's too much available. In them days, there wasn't too much available. You read thoroughly what you did get into your home and it was worthwhile reading. It wasn't any of this trash you pick up from Honders nowadays.

What do you remember about medical help and so on that people would get in Covington? Did they have home remedies?

Oh, there were home remedies. There were liniments and all kinds of things. Well, aspirin was already known then and I don't remember the names of all the things that we had. And then there were doctors when the roads got a little better, Dr. Winkler would make home calls and Dr. Secoff from Michagamme, he was always ready and willing at all hours of the night. We were the only ones that had a phone for quite a few years with the store and people would come at all hours.
of the night when they were sick or when babies were being born, then
the doctor would come. Dr. Secoff from Michegamme and Dr. Winkler
from L'Anse, and you could say it was almost time for the mortician
when somebody went to the hospital. You didn't go to doctors for
every little thing, you doctored at home. I know we used to have this
some kind of linament, was called Hanfer's Balsam and when we got any
bad cut of anything, well Mother would tied it up and pour some of
that and that was real strong. It would really burn. But, it must
have been really good medication because we never had any infections.

I: And when people got sick they had these home remedies. Do you rem-
ember what they used for a cold or so on? Do you remember the flu
epidemic of World War I?

R: Yes, but we had a first aid man, he was the Post Master in Covington,
Nelson Peterson, he was Swedish and he was very good as a first aid
man and when during the World War I this flu epidemic, everybody went
for flu shots and they didn't cost anything...they were just given.
So, I think that helped a lot.

I: Now, when the doctor did come from Michagamme, did he come by train?
at first

R: Well, in the early years, 1901, '02, and '03, they used to come on
the freight caboose, anything they could catch ahold of...the quickest.
This Dr. Secoff from Michegamme was usually...if he didn't get on the
train, would come on the freight and the conductor and so on on the
freight would be very accommodating to the doctors, they'd take them
in...bring them and leave them off at Covington and somebody would
be at the station to meet them and bring them with the horse and
sleigh. But the snow used to be pretty heavy out there at times
when the horses even would just wade in the snow. If I had been
really smart I could have taken down a lot of things and given a
real story, because I remember so many times about the things and
trips that Dr. Secoff had made to Covington...so with all the things
that went on way back when they'd sit in the store and it was a good
place to listen to them; but when you're young you don't stop to
listen to all that...what the older people have to say.

I: Yes, that's the real oral history, that would be

R: If I had taken down at least some of the things the older people were
talking about in the store, I could write a book.

I: And stories that your parents could tell.

R: Yes. The first Finnish family that came to Covington, that was Ellis,
John Ellis...I think some of the boys are still living in the L'Anse
area and then Putalas.

I: Do you know about when these Butalas came...the Ellis?

R: I'm not sure.

I: Was Ellis the same name or did they change it?

R: They took Ellis. You know so many changed their names when they
came, but John Butalas, that was his name really. He must have come
here in 1899 because they were pretty well established here already
when my mother came from Finland in '99...or my father. My mother came in 1900.

I: But there were several families there at that time.

R: There were already quite a few families in Covington...Finnish families. There was my grandpa and oh, there must have been a lot of them.

I: What was your grandfather's name...Koski?

R: Eric Koski...and then my father's father had come to America oh, maybe before 1890; and he lived around the Wakefield area and then he stayed with us in Covington, but then he got pretty close to ninety and he thought it was time for him to go back to Finland and that's where he went and he lived to be about ninety-five years old.

I: So, he went back to Finland?

R: He went back to Finland

I: So he could die and be buried there

R: Yes, I remember when he said goodbye and he cried and he hated to leave us children on the Noopala farm, and he says, "I will not come back." We loved him very much. So, I saw both of my grandfathers, but I never saw either one of my grandmothers.

I: Were weddings and funerals big occasions in the community?

R: Yes, very big. Especially funerals...everybody left their work when somebody died and they went to the funeral and the old cemetery was about five-six miles way way out in the woods. I don't know why. Now the new cemetery is just a little ways from the main highway...not far from Covington. But that old cemetery, that's where my little brothers are buried and I remember when they were being brought over there...it was so far and the road was so poor...horse and wagon.

I: That has changed quite a bit.

R: Oh yes...and then they didn't have morticians...the neighbors would make a little casket like for my brothers even and painted them...they were cute; but there was no one to take care of them. My husband even, he had a truck and he took care of this Mr. Peterson, this first aid man, used to fix the bodies and somebody would make a casket or then in the later years, he would have them in the back of the store...my husband would take care of bringing them to the cemetery with the truck. There weren't hearses and I wouldn't be able to tell you who was being brought by a hearse...I must have been married already when hearses started coming around.

I: But before that, someone within the community got the body ready for.

R: Usually my husband...he'd go with Mr. Peterson at night or anytime
with the truck and lot of times in the wintertime when you couldn't get into the farms by truck, they'd take a sleigh and pull by the sleigh and fix the dead on the sleigh and haul 'em up to the road and then put 'em on the truck.

I: Then the funeral service was at the church.

R: At the church, always.

I: And they would have...the Finnish people would have coffee after.

R: Yes, at the church there was always coffee and a get together then after which they do now too.