FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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Eugene Sinervo  
April 23, 1975

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SOURCE: Eugene Sinervo, April 23, 1975

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Elma Ranta

R: I am Eugene Sinervo, presently living at Deerton, Michigan...halfway between Marquette and Munising. I was born in Palmer, Michigan, which is in Marquette County and of course at the time I was born there, my home was Munising. My mother went to Palmer to have me with her sister so that my home actually was Munising, Michigan.

I: And now your parents, where did they come from?

R: Yes, my father came directly from Finland. His home was Kosanskoski, that's near Govalla. And he came to this country...first of all, in Finland he did have a job in the papermill. I think he worked as a machine tender or I think that's what they called them on the paper machine and that's what he had worked probably two or three years in the paper mill there so that when he came to this country around 1910...maybe 1909 too, I'm not sure but in that period. And I understand that he first came to Pequaming...that's near L'Anse. He took me up there one time later and showed me these shacks...I had never been to Pequaming. Quite interesting...it was Ford's...one of Ford's lumbering towns, I guess sawmill towns, and this is where he evidently spent the first month or so until he found out that there was a papermill in Munising. Well, this interested him because he knew papermills and he felt that he had a chance to get in there because he had experience. So, he worked his way to Munising...I don't know if in the Munising area...I think he worked a short periods of time in a sawmill and I know at one time this already was getting up near...let's say, I would say 1913...when he had even worked in stone quarry. I think that they quarried the stone or such buildings as the Lincoln School in Munising which is still standing...very beautiful stone. They quarried it from a place they called Paul's Point just off Munising toward Grand Island; and he evidently then shortly after that got into the papermill and this is where he worked his whole life until I believe he was disabled in about 1950...'48 or '50, in those years. Of course, he passed away in 1952. But in the meantime he spent his whole life in Munising and in 1915 he married my mother. My mother's name was Ellie Letrorunda when
she left Finland and her home was in Inkerolinen near, I think, near Erokoski and that's between where my dad lived and between there and Kotka. So, she had come to...to my mother's sister had come years ahead of her and was in Palmer and this is the reason then my mother then went when she was gonna have a child, well she went to Palmer to be with friends or to be with her sister...so that was in 1916 when I was born; but my mother took care of the housework as any good wife in those days. She was a good mother and she took very good care of the family. Dad was a wonderful provider and all through their life they were both very active in Finnish gatherings and so forth. Both...my mother especially...couldn't speak any English. Toward her older years she could get by, but it was very hard. She could understand a lot more than she could speak. My dad, however, could get along. By the time I had grown up, he was getting along pretty good; but could speak and he'd get stuck on a few words...but he worked himself up also in the papermill to the machine room...he became head of one of the machines. And through the years...in fact we get a kick out of talking to some of those old-time papermakers. They have come out with little stories like...oh yeah, Olie Sinervo's valves is still hanging up to the one he doctored...or the gauge that he fashioned is still there working like a charm... And at one time, his interest of course, as far as his job was...he was interested in it because he always was looking for improvements as far as machinery...what would make the job easier...what would make a better grade of paper...he was very concerned about paper grade and quality products. So he had (?) and I can remember this way back to when I couldn't even understand yet what he was doing...he was drawing something all the time at home and it ended up then already I was in high school and he had been working on all those years to make a machine that would facilitate the drawing of paper when it comes off this big paper rollers or these paper machines. It was a some kind of a drag there that stopped the machines from going any faster and that was because they couldn't dry the paper fast enough. So he had designed this machine which was a huge...which was in effect a huge vacuum cleaner with heat and so forth that took out a big percentage of moisture. Well, being one of those old-country Finlanders, never really having been taken by anybody, he was trusting. All through his life he was one of these kinds. If someone stole something from him, he would just turn around and say, "Somebody took it because they needed it." And evidently worse than he did. So, the same thing happened with his invention. He showed it to his buddies, the supervisors and so forth in the papermill and they were very happy to give him fifty dollars and he was very happy to get fifty dollars and that was the end of it. And they've been manufacturing those machines now since 1938 in England. Every papermill in the world has those machines and somebody is making beautiful royalties.

All right, we're going to...I'm going to ramble on a little bit about the early days way back as far as I can remember; and as far back as I can remember...I can remember being involved with the Finn Hall which I understand my dad was very instrumental...in fact
I think he almost started building it single-handedly; and he negotiated for the land and the lot and of course, this was before I knew. I think that was shortly after I was born; but however, through the years he took care of this place and naturally he had a lot of help building it. Amongst some of the people...were men and families that I remember in Munising that were very active in the Finn Hall affairs and building it and taking care of it were people like Ussinen...Unite Ussinen who is a shoemaker in Munising and he had come from Finland as his wife had a they even had brought over with them a grown son already and then they had two more sons...two more sons and a daughter or a couple of daughters while they were in Munising. They had quite a family and they were interested and active. And there was Arvid Aho who for years had lived in Munising, him and his family. They had something like a daughter, I think, and about three or four sons; and there was Evert Mikola and his wife Liami. She had been previously married I think a...to a Beltonen. But all of these people were very active and interested in Finn Hall affairs. And there was Kujansuu...Nestorie Kujansuu and his family. I think he had a family of about a dozen...four or five girls and about the same amount of boys...or six or seven boys. I know it was a big family; and he had also worked in the papermill. Most of these did. Then there was Jake...Jacob Siltova, he was very active. A papermill worker but very active in the Finnish Hall doings and there was a man named Locksall...Evert Locksall who worked for the city of Munising. It seemed like ever since Munising started because I'll bet you today yet they go down the City employees...and this Evert incidently is still living and I'm almost certain that they still go and ask him where is the water pipe on this street...where is the sewer pipe up there on that street. He probably hasn't even been on the job in the last twenty years because he's retired. He's up in the years...up there on that street, he still is living there. Very good man...never married. He was one of these men that was very instrumental in getting and keeping the boarding house going all those years...Finnish Men's Boarding House and they had quite a large one of those in Munising too. Was just called the the Boykatello which means boys home, yeah. And this was interesting. And the visits that my dad and I, my dad being one of the boys earlier on, I suppose he every once in awhile would want to go someplace like on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday...like in the wintertime, he didn't have a car to pack up and the old man would load the two kids...I had a sister...and load us onto the polkokilka, kick sleigh, you know, and away we'd go down the street over to Boykatello...it always was the first stop. And there you would have...I can remember walking in the Boykatello and all these guys were friends because we just all knew them because we were together in Hall activities and then besides that, we had a sauna... My father had a commercial sauna in Munising; so if there was anybody that had any Finn in them, they naturally looked up the sauna in Munising and that way we became known...got to be friends with them. There was many other men too. There was, let's see...there was Lumpenin and I think it was Muttie Lumpenin. He ran a huge...or quite a large boarding house for Finnish men and I understand that before he
established this boarding house in Munising, he had operated out at Coalwood Lumber Camps. Coalwood is in an area that you can't even find on the maps anymore today, but it was one of the largest lumber camps during the Pine Days way back close to the first of the century when they first cut these huge pines. Well, this Muttie Lumpenin, I understand, maybe this was some kind of a contract affair or something, that he ran the camps or he ran the boarding house or maybe he ran the big cook shack.

I: Excuse me, but where is this place?

R: This Coalwood...Coalwood is south of...almost directly south of Munising. It's near Stillman...that Stillman can be found on the map because it's on the railroad line, LS&I, I think runs there. And Stillman is two or three miles east of Stillman along those same tracks. This I know for a fact because I have with my father, although it's many years ago, he took me to these places where I seen these ruins...already them maybe holes in the ground. I don't think you'd find much there anymore, not even holes in the ground. But, this is where the place is and it can be pinpointed on maps. There's very very few people who know where Coalwood was located; but I think I can walk right to the place...and it wasn't a small town, it was quite a lumbering village as the as there were. There were a lot of them, of course, but this was one of the largest. Well, this Muttie Lumpenin he run this...it was quite a large boarding house and that was on Munising Avenue right next to the Boykatello. Directly across from Muttie Lumpenin on Munising Avenue right in the Cherry Street area, there's...across the street was another boarding house, Buckmannin. I don't know what their first name was, but there was...seemed like there was always a little...when a man would get in trouble with something or say something or get in an argument with somebody in one of the boarding houses, he would kind of move across the street to this Buckmannin and then visa versa, you know, and then finally somebody would get in an argument or something and they'd move over to Lumpenin and then, of course, there was always the Boykatello too. So, these men keep changing from these three. It was quite a pattern. It was fun...it wasn't...was never looked on as anything serious, it was just one of those things. If you can't get along with somebody, move; and this is I think made for happier going for everybody. And all of these men, all these Finnish men and so forth, were very active in the Finn Hall. In the Finn Hall we had...during the wintertime especially, I'd say about once a month they had some kind of a big drama, a big...big production plays. They had some of the finest scenery I've ever seen in theatres they had in these halls like in Apen and Rock. And we used to get to those halls because they would have turns for these different plays. Sometimes the players or the Finnish people in Munising would put on...or rehearse this beautiful play and they'd put it on in Munising. And it was so good, went over so big, that they would go and show it the next week or the week or so later or month later in Hibbing or in Rock or Ishpeming. Negaunee had a hall, I think, and I think at Ishpeming
they had one. Anyplace in the U.P. where there was a little crossroads in a town, there was always a Finn Hall; so these people they were like little visiting groups from one to the other. When they hit onto something good, it really got around. And occasionally the older people would take the kids along and occasionally we would get to stay overnight at somebody's farm in Chatham or Eben or in Rock and this was quite a thrill. Although Munising is small town, it's still a city. We weren't acquainted with cows and horses, but this way we did. I know that anybody my age group, these fellows and girls and young fellows and girls that are my age in the group and they grew up in places like Munising and Ishpeming and Negaunee and Chatham and Eben country and Rock and you name it...and Marquette, those people whose folks were active in the Hall affairs, in the church affairs...same way with the church affairs although they were two separate groups in lot of ways they still worked together and they were friends. Well anyway, these people my age, they are very rich in history because I know so many people in Chatham and Eben and Trenary that I know them from way back. I haven't seen some of them for thirty-forty-fifty years almost, you know, but I can remember the names of people. Every once in awhile, one will crop up..."Hey, I remember that! I wonder is that's the same one?" And you go back, and sure enough...and then when you get around to meetings and different things when you're involved in modern community affairs, every once in awhile you run into somebody from Eben that, "Oh yeah, you remember we used to go out? Remember that night you slept over, we went maple sapping the next morning and we got lost in the woods?" And all this kind of stuff. And at the halls, they didn't just have these drama things, the Finnish people felt very strongly that they had to get the young people interested in the hall. To them...to my folks, evidently us...the children...were getting away from and didn't want to follow the old folks and all that was old hat. They wanted to get...I don't know what we to do, there was nothing to do really except bum around on the streets. That's pretty much the same story today that children don't want to do what the old folks did, but it was a little different in the sense that there was nothing else to do and they did succeed in making some of those Hall affairs so interesting, that some of the young folks did get involved. For instance, they started in Munising, I remember, they started an athletic club and it was the same old gang that had put on the plays and flower dances and you name it, and they did it. And it wasn't always to raise money...well, raise enough money to pay the light bill and wood for the stove. But these athletic groups, they were really something. They raised funds to buy some gym equipment and all sorts of things, and themselves uniforms they fixed up nice and I tell you, they were really something to see...some of the pyramids that they used to build, human pyramids were really something...and acrobatic stunts of all sorts. They were fantastic. And then they had competition...in the summertime and wintertime, racing and track meets and swimming and this type of things. And summer picnics were held...there was never really a good place around Munising for these picnics, but they would hold these...I think they would call them U.P. Wide Finnish Picnics and what it'd end up to, there'd be probably three-
four-five-thousand people at some of these, big affairs. They used to have them in Eben, they used to have them on the other side of Ishpeming...I can remember going there to a Finnish picnic quite often; and all over the U.P. I even remember going to one as far as Hancock.

And among some of the other interesting things that went along in the circle, the hall...this Finnish Hall, my dad...very interest to me because my dad was a director of a Finnish Band for many years and in Munising we had a very wonderful band. The name of the band was Sointo. It was very active for many years. It was one...just about every community in the U.P. had their own Finnish Band. I believe there was one in Marquette and Ishpeming and Negaunee I'm sure, and I don't think Eben had one, but they had a beautiful big hall. But there was competitions amongst these bands and when they had the picnics, they asked if they could have a parade in these towns where they had these picnics. So as a result...I can remember one Finnish picnic and I believe it was in Hancock, I believe there was eight bands and I mean beautiful bands. They were bands, brass bands, just terrific, and every one of them first class in their own right. They were well-uniformed and really something to be proud of. The Munising Band, for instance, took first place several times. I can remember how proud my dad was of those little certificates and so forth and mention they got in papers and so forth. My dad was very active in that and I, of course, never...I never could see...my art and...or my talents were bent in another direction and at the time, when I was younger of course, my dad didn't know it and I didn't know it either. I didn't know, but all I knew was that I didn't want to have anything to do with music. I loved to listen to music and my toe would go right with the Old Man's, but that's as far as my interest went. I didn't want to have anything to do with blowing on one of those things. But I was forced into it. I had to sit with that band every two nights a week when they practiced in the Finn Hall and this probably set me against music more than anything. I had to go there and I had to practice and this continued all the way through...I played. If I had to, I could play. I had to play the soprano saxaphone and I could play it, but I'll tell you, I could forget anything about music just that fast and I did, soon as I had the chance to. But as a result, I played in the band. I played in some of the parades and I had to go to every practice. I couldn't miss a single one because my father was the director and I even had to join the high school band and I had to play in that until I graduated in 1936. But my talents then were inclined...and as we found out later, I was to be more in the art field...more in the graphics field and I've been successful in that.

And one of the other activities at the hall, they did try to get a library going. I remember there was probably a twelve-square foot, maybe a little more, area of shelving which I can remember building up slowly with some books. But that evidently was quite costly and just never really grew from that point. But there was a small collection of books and I'm sure they got read.
Some of the other activities at the hall was during summer months there for all the Finnish children and this was also a must...if your folks were Finnish, you went to summer school and these ranged from...some of these years we had a First Summer School which was two weeks and there were some years we had two of them in a row and they called them...I don't know if there was a Junior School and a Senior School, it seemed like it was the same teachers; but this also went back as far as I can remember having to go at least these two weeks to summer school. And they taught us how to read and write Finnish. This was their prime goal. And we sang Finnish and we... little bit of how to work and play together, but it was to keep this Finnish language alive among these children...and I've never regretted this. Like today I can read and write...not write so good anymore, it's getting slower; but I can do it yet and I can also speak Finnish, enough to get along. And this is all because it was taught to us. It was kept alive.

End of Side A

We went to these summer school to learn, like I said, the Finnish language primarily and we did. We had to keep up on our Finnish language at home because like Mother didn't understand any English as I was growing up, Dad did, he knew more because he worked...had been using English in his work...but he knew more; but even for him, Finnish came much easier so we naturally spoke Finnish. Spoke Finnish at home, in fact...an interesting little sight in here...I was in second grade. This is hard to believe but it's the truth. I was in second grade and one day the teacher walked past...after school the teacher walked past the house going home and in front of some other older boys, this teacher said, "Well, hello Eugene." You know, I had never known that my name was really Eugene. It was Elginie and the older boys that we played with, I was Helkanine because they used to hear my mother "Elkanine", you know and they thought my name was Helkanine and that was it. And then when the teacher walked by and said "Eugene," this was really something, you know. I found out my name was Eugene and so did all the other boys. But this is the truth...I don't know how to this day how they ever passed me through first grade or as far as that goes, through kindergarten because I sure didn't know any English; but evidently they felt that I know what I had to know in Finnish, and that was good enough and that the English would come by itself which it did. Not so good, but we get along.

I was just trying to think of some of the other names in Munising. There were lot of them and of course I can't think of all of them but there were a lot of Johnsons, John Johnsons and Henry Johnsons and, oh, there must have been at least twenty or thirty single old men or these bachelors, the men that stayed in these boarding homes and I probably never did know their right name. It was guys like Gatonbaa, Pusimutti was one of the most colorful ones, and Heitonemutti...I never knew his real name, you know; but they were real woods
workers and a big bulk of their time they spent in Munising and in these boarding houses. Ah, some of the other names...what are they? Ah, there was Salos, there was the one Salo...I mentioned Pusimutti, Heitomutti...well, I can't think of any more right now.

But another interesting fact then...now I mentioned that we used to go...well, my dad used to write. He used to like to write into the Finnish papers and he'd go out and dig for stories. And a lot of times he found some real good material in lumber camps. So, we would would take off...I can remember we had just gotten a Model T car...I can't remember the year but I know I was very young and I think it was either...it must have been early spring because the roads were very muddy and we drove out...this may already have been this Coalwood Lumber Camp that he took me back to because it seems as though it was mostly Finnish people. And when we got there you could see all kinds of horses and logs. I was a little tyke probably hardly able to get through those mud ruts, you know, trying to get to that board walk or plank that was laying across in front of these bunk houses. And this one place, we had gone there during the afternoon and the fellows started coming in from work around for supper time, I suppose. So we were invited to have supper in this big cook's shanty...it was a huge long, two-three rows of these long tables in these tar-paper shacks. Probably feed a couple hundred men in there at one time. And I remember going in...lot of clatter, lot of noise, laughing and talking and everybody eating and I was so busy gawking and being handled and talked to by all those lumber jacks and I can always remember then, it started getting evening then after the supper and everybody dribbled back into their own bunkhouse and we went into one of them too. My dad was talking to one of these fellows and I was getting sleepy and my dad kept trying to drag me over to come sit by him there on that bench. I always wanted to go over there by that long bench by the bunks, that was in front of the bunks and that was closer to the stove too. Great big oil-barrel stove going full blast and then it dawned on me why Father wanted me to sit by him. He didn't want me to crawl all over under the bunks or anything because I was sitting there and this guy was sitting by the...closest to the stove and he was picking these little bugs off the bench and putting them on that hot stove and they would pop, you know. Well, they were bedbugs and every time we came back from these lumber camps, my mother, she'd have a little fit, you know, to take me down and scrub me and for days go through my hair looking for lice and always found some too because I must have been so full of bedbugs when I'd get through because those guys would just snap them off those wood benches, you know. (Laughter) But that was the life in those lumber camps those days. My dad would then, of course, come home and write these stories and I have an attic full of his old writings and someday I hope to reread them and lots of them I've never seen, I've never read and there's a lot of...he made some funny attempts at fiction at times; but mostly he was very interested in human...I mean the man and was of course very interested in history as I've always been. But he was always very interested in getting man to work
together and to cooperate and was a very strong leader in the Cooperative Movement. He organized the Co-op store in Munising years ago and was very active on these types of things. Getting man to work together for his own good.

I: How successful was the Co-op Movement in Munising?

R: In Munising the Co-operative store was very successful. For years and years it was the largest and best store in Munising. And then gradually through the years...I think it would still be there but there was a few years that they weren't able to get good management and I think this is what brought it down to second rate and these modern super markets came in and they were new and so forth. But it finally had to close; but it was at that time then a branch of the Trenary store. This...I was very active in the Co-op. The Finnish people and the Cooperative Movement were synonymous too. They were on in it. They brought it here and they started it and they kept it going and I naturally fell into this myself. I still am today. But I was for ten...thirteen years I was a board member of Central Co-operative Wholesale in Superior, Wisconsin. I was very active in Mutual Service Life Insurance which is a Cooperative Life Insurance Company out of St. Paul. And today I am on the Board of Directors and have been already for fourteen years of the Elger-Delta Co-Operative Electric Association. Now I live closer to Marquette and I've worked in Marquette. I've been active in Co-ops in the Marquette area. I've been on the Board of Directors of the Co-Op Society of Marquette and all through my life there's been one Co-op or credit union all the time and this is fine. I like cooperatives. I think it's people working for themselves, trying to make things better for themselves.

I: Could you tell us now what you did when you graduated from high school and where you've lived in that time and what your job is today.

R: Kind of...we can touch on that. In '36...I was an early graduate. I mean, I never had the ceremony. In '36 I had enough credits...I may have been a credit or so shy, but in '36 my father decided he was going to go back to Finland. He hadn't been...he had been away from Finland since 1910. He wanted to go back. Well, his father and mother were still living in Kosanskoski and he didn't want to go back without making a tie. I can remember him discussing it very thoroughly with some people. He wanted to make a tie, a permanent tie between his children and his family in the old country and this he certainly did. He done that in 1936. He brought...my mother and my dad and my two sisters...we all went. Of course, Dad couldn't afford it but he felt that this was the most important thing in his lifetime that he wanted to do; and I certainly agree that it was because since then I've made several trips to Finland and I have very close ties there and thanks all to my father. So, I left high school in '36. Of course, those were tough years. They were
really... from there on it was really rough. There was no work... this is where I started to get into the graphies or into the art field as in monkeying around in the garage painting signs on nut and bolt boxes with a little dinky dime-store brush and some pine tar. This got me interested enough so that I started painting signs in my spare time and after a few years I was doing a pretty fair job of it. But those were lean years and I worked in gas stations and I was doing a little bit of everything. I worked in the Woodenware in Munising for awhile. I tried several times getting a job in the paper mill and my dad had enough influence so that he got me fired every time. Didn't want his son in the paper mill. There was something about that he'd rather see me unemployed that be in the paper mill. And then in 1940, I was already then twenty-four years old and I got married to a girl from Munising, Dorothy Kregeski. I was a hundred percent Finnish and she was about a hundred percent Polish; but we've gotten along very nicely. But shortly after... let's see in 1940, then we worked for awhile... the wife and I worked in the Munising hospital. I was the all-around chore boy and male nurse... the only man in the Munising Hospital with about seven nurses and a couple cooks and head nurse and a couple of laundry ladies. I worked for all of them including the doctors. I even drove the ambulance... the old Model A Ford, you know. It was a very interesting year and a half or so that we stayed there. Didn't make any money. We got room and board, but we ate well and I learned a lot. I learned an awful lot. In fact, I was called on once to deliver a baby in an elevator, things like that. I learned a lot about life. I learned about death. It was rich, very rich year and a half that we spent there. I had the opportunity there to go on to be a doctor by sticking with one of the... Dr. Schultz. He was going into the Air Force at that time and I did have the opportunity and I've often said that I should have taken it because I think I would have like it. But I didn't. I went into other fields. We left in 1942 then. We went to Superior because there was a job opening there in the Art Department... or the Central Cooperative Wholesale because my dad had been so involved in Cooperatives and I was interested in cooperatives, we found out through channels and so forth that there was... Central Co-op was going to put in their own little silk-screen department... their own Art Department that would make posters and so forth for all of its co-op stores in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. So, I wrote up there... I don't exactly remember if I wrote or if I called somebody... and they said that they would like to talk to me. That, "Yes, there's talk about that." And the only thing is that if they could find somebody suitable to help them start a department like that. Well I told them, of course, that I was the best sign painter in Michigan, all this and that (chuckle), and I went over there and I got the job immediately. And that was really a big step in my life. For the first time I had a real job then that paid me for eight hours of work. And wasn't much, I think it was ninety-six dollars a month. But that was pretty good money... 1942, we went to Superior and we established ourself there. We rented for awhile
and then we finally started to buy a home there. In 1945, I was called into the service. I went into the Navy, drafted, and I had to leave my two sons and my wife in Superior and it was a very sad year. But the day...the minute I was sworn into the Navy in Milwaukee, I decided I was gonna start working right now to get out of this thing which I did. Well, it took a year, but I got out and that too was very rich. It was hard times, it was very hard for my family and they lived in Superior and they couldn't be with me. I was very fortunate at the time, I ended up in Washington D.C. I was a Specialist 5 in the Bureau of Personnel and what it means was I was a...I was one of the people who took care of all personnel records and we done this by IBM machine systems, tabulating machines and so forth. I was one of these machine operators which...it was quite a job. Took a little training and lot of bluffing and I became...I just set my mind to it that they weren't gonna...because if they found out I didn't know anything about IBM, I was afraid they were gonna ship me to sea on some washtub or something. I didn't want that, so I learned IBM machines forward and backward practically in two or three weeks by night work and cramming a few books and tearing apart a few machines. I very shortly passed a lot of my buddies in rank. So war years, I got to spend a year in Washington D.C. during a war which in itself if quite an experience. I learned a lot of things that have made my life much richer from that angle from being in Washington, from learning about government and so forth.

I came back from the service, back to Superior. We stayed in Superior until '52. My job...I loved my job very much. I got very involved in my job and then all of a sudden I start getting... naturally by working overtime, there too we got involved in Hall affairs. The cooperative group of people were the type of people who wanted to have...they wanted to do things together. Everything they wanted to do, do it together. Let's go gardening and garden a whole bunch of us, the employees...out of four hundred and some employees at Central Co-op, we had our own gardens. We had cooperative camps and clubs all over the place. We had drama groups and art classes and you name it. They were cooperators...they were all from this group of Finnish people like my folks were. They had this thing in them that they had to do things together. And they did. We done fantastic things...productions and stuff in this Finn Hall. They had Worker's Hall in Superior. But all of a sudden I got homesick. I didn't know this of course, but overwork and my folks weren't well...getting up in the years and especially my mother was very ill. This inside of me made me very sick. Finally the medical doctors... I was having all kinds of problems in Superior...so finally they, well one of the psychiatrist's says well...told my wife, "Why don't you take this sonny home. He's homesick." That was it. I've been beautiful ever since. We moved back to Munising. My folks both passed away right at that same time and then I moved from...immediately from Munising there was nothing there for me, so I found some work in Marquette. First
of all I was the advertising manager for Trunella and Rupp, the furniture store. I was there about four or five years. Meanwhile we moved halfway between Munising and Marquette to Sand River where I'm located now. We've build there, established here and that's where I'm gonna stay. We have a nice place on the shores of Lake Superior. And from Trunella and Rupp, I took a job with...television came to Upper Michigan. Frank Russell put in a television station and I was the first employee to be hired by Frank Russell to put in his television station because Frank felt that the station was only gonna be as good as his artists were. I was very fortunate to be in on the ground floor. I helped Paul Anneck, the chief engineer for Frank Russell...he's still with him, put in television. We helped set up a lot of the equipment and really got involved in it and I spent ten years with WDMJ-TV which during that time became WLUC-TV and we put out into the township and put big studios out there. I worked up from the studio artist all the way up to station manager and there was no place else to go but out, you know. So, in 1956...no, I'm mixed up now. I went there in 1956. It was 1967 I think got out of there and anyway, I was sixty and since then I've spent a couple years at Globe in Ishpeming; but I've been at Northern Michigan University now for about eight years. I'm the Graphics Artist there...or the University Artist and take care of Television Art and art that's used for instructional purposes both by faculty and administration. The President, for instance, goes down to the State Budget Hearings, he always goes with a big packet of my charts.

I: And you enjoy it!

R: I enjoy it very very much,

I: Now, let's go back. While you were at the TV station

R: Yes...

I: About 1962 or so, you were one of the people that started the Finnish TV program

R: That's right, Elma. We...that was a kind of thing that...I thought of it, you know, in the back of my head for year...ever since the day I went to work for Frank Russell in television. In the back of my head was this thing gnawing that, hey, we gotta get a Finnish program on. So, it was quite a joke. Everytime Frank would see me or even I think Falore (?) at that time was one of our bosses..."No, we're not gonna have a Finnish program!"...before I even had a chance to say hello, you know, this was...but it became kind of joke with them. It was no joke with me. The more I thought, the more serious it got. Finally one day after we had moved out into the township, the...John Morgan...no, John Borgan was the station manager at that time...I approached John. I says, "What about
getting a travel agent here or something...", we had just listened or we had got the tape or we had listened to something where it says, "Hawaii Calling". You remember that radio program? Hawaii Calling and Arthur Godfrey used to put this on. Well, this is what. I says, "That shouldn't be Hawaii Calling. Not up here in the U.P. That should be Finland Calling or better yet, Suomi Kutsu, you know, like they say it in Finnish." And right away well then I remembered well who was sponsoring this Hawaii Calling...it was travel agencies and air lines and this type of thing. Right away, "Hey, all we need now is a sponsor. "Hey John, if I get a sponsor for a Finnish show, can we have a Finnish show?" "You and your old Finnish show," he says. "You get a sponsor, you can have your Finnish show." That's where it started. I immediately contacted the only travel agency in those days that there was even around anywhere in the U.P. was Tom Quails Advertising Agency...or Travel Agency out of Iron Mountain, I believe it was. So, I don't know but I think he flew from Iron Mountain up to Channel Six because he was there the very same day, he was so interested in what we were offering. He says, "All the Finlanders in the U.P. want to go back to Finland and you can sell them all a ticket." So, we put on a half-hour show...I don't remember the exact date...we could look it up.

I: I think it was about 1962.

R: Yes, it was about that...'62. And we started this half-hour show and in those days...television today is completely different then it was those days. Those days we done everything live camera. There was no tape...you said something and you pulled a blooper, it was gone. It was on the air. There was nobody gonna sensor you, you know. So we done...I tell you, we passed a few of them. I went on that first day I heard...Quail...I heard that...first of all, let's see. We started this show...I think this was something like Monday when we talked about starting this show and this Quail says, "Okay, fine dandy, I'll buy the show for the first month or so and I want every Sunday morning." Boy, then we got busy. "When can we have it," you know. I was gonna take three-four weeks to plan this thing. "Oh no, I want this next Sunday!" So, we had less than a week...much less than a week to prepare any foremat or anykind of a dialog for a Finnish show. So, what you see like the title, Suomi Kutsu and Finland Calling, this all came out right then and there in that one sitting and it went over like a terrific fire cracker. The second week's show...the mail was so fantastic from that first week's show...and the phone calls and everything, that we increased it to one hour the second week. Sunday morning, one hour live show all in Finnish for Finglish...that was it. And I think it was the fourth week of our show when we went to two hours and we had more sponsors than we could handle. Everybody wanted to climb on the wagon then and be part of that "Finlanders' show that's on every Sunday morning". The churches weren't too...the ministers were having some problems and they were making it plain to us that we were in direct competition with their church services and we tried to remedy this by changing the time and so forth, as the years went by and then finally incorporating even a little segment...and
a little sermon. But this was very rewarding and that's why...

I: And I think I can remember in '62, it was black and white only.

R: Right!

I: And I think you had had it for two weeks and I came on the third week...

R: Yes.

I: ...and how alive it all was.

R: It was

And then when you started getting more sponsors and you had this notebook...

End of Side B