FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

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Suvanto, Price Arvo
February 15, 1975

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Interviewer: Elma Kanta

R: Well, my name is Arvo Suvanto and I'll try to reminisce a little about my kid days in Finland and also a trip across to this country and some of my days, earlier days, here in the United States. My father and mother both were born in Finland. My mother comes from (?) and my father from (?). And we lived in Helsinki and a place called (?) which was a co-operative apartment and it was a large place...I don't know how many family residences there were in it, but it was a quite a large...several entrances into the place, you know. And this also was a cross place where my father worked, these apartments. My father worked at the (?)...it was a Finnish railroad machine shop and of course this (?) has a different name now, it's (?) now that place is. Well, we had a lot of fun there when we were kids.

I: Were you born in Helsinki?

R: I was born in Helsinki, yeah, and two of my brothers also, Laurie and Urieu. I have another brother that was born here, Sulo; but there was three of us born there, myself, Laurie and Urieu. Of course that's the names they had then. Of course, with the kids in Finland, you know, they had slang names, you know, like myself, I was called Akee over there by the kids. The parents didn't do that, but the kids like myself they called me Akee, my brother Louie was called Luahkee and my brother Urieu was called Urkee. Well anyhow, there was a lot of kids, you know, in the same cooperative apartment. We weren't short of friends, we had all kinds of companions there, you know. And oh, this was in the yards one day, there were these gateways, you know, and they'd have these wrought-iron gates and of course at nighttime they were closed most of them, but there was a couple of smaller gates that were open for use at night. Well, these gates were held open by these iron bars or iron hook that heavy hook there and brought onto the side of the building. These buildings were made out of...they were wooden buildings made out of heavy timbers, but they were finished off nice, you know, with nice siding and everything...they were really nice looking buildings; and one day we were over there playing...you know there was a crash bar up there...see kids were going through calesthenics on this crash bar up there...and while we were there one of these kids mother called him and told him to come in the house. So the kid goes in the house and a little while later he comes back and he said that his uncle and aunt had been on the Titanic when it sunk over there in the Atlantic, see. So...but this message that his mother had got was that his aunt had come out of it okay but they didn't know anything about the uncle, see, how he had
made out. So...and then the same time on this same (?), you know, that was just, you know, just when they were preparing for World War I there was in back of this railroad shops there was some rocky hills back in there and there was quite a large area that was all just vacant area there, rocks and ravines and gullies and what not, and then now, of course, the last time I was there, why that's all residential and a factory area there now. But, these soldiers of the Russian army, they were back in there and they would have these war games, see. They were shooting blank cartridges up there and they'd have cavalry charges and they'd have cavalry charges and everything else and of course that was interesting to us kids, see. So then when they'd get over these games, they'd come marching past the apartment buildings there (?) and us kids would be standing there on the side of the street there hollering, " (?) " with our hands out. " (?)"...I'm not sure that I'm saying it right, but that's what I think we said anyway and we were begging for them to throw these empty shells, see. They were blanks that they would shoot but they would save the shells, see. So, we were begging for these empty shells. Well, that's the way life went on around there. I think I spilled more blood upon that hill up there than any of the Russian soldiers because a kid threw a bottom of a beer bottle one time and caught me right here on the heel and by golly I don't know how many stitches they had to take to stop the bleeding. But then here in 1913...well around that same year my father working on the railroad, you know, he was entitled to a railroad pass, see, for making trips on the different parts of the Russian railroads and all the way into Russia. So we were supposed to have gone...we did make quite a number of trips, we'd go on these (?) trips, you know, on these midsummer nights...these trips they had, but they had these gondola open cars, you know, and they had these...you know how they have in (?) these birch trees and branches all over and the bands playing and the orchestras and people singing, you know, on these moonlight...well, it didn't have to be a moonlight because there was a midnight...almost midnight sun. So, we'd go on trips like that...we went out to Ammatra...that's before Ammatra was dammed up the way it is now and different parts of Finland. But this 1913 we were supposed to go to Leningrad, to Piettrabee...at that time it was Pietrabee, we were supposed to go over there but in the meantime my uncles here in the United States had been getting together to get us to come over to this country, see, the United States.

1: Now, where were your uncles here?

H: Well here, they were all in Marquette. There was...the oldest one was Nii Savoula, then there was John Savoula and then there was Oscarie Savoula and Mattee Savoula and Caula Savoula. Five brothers my father had here in the United States. And their father had been here already years before that, but he had gone back to Finland. Well, they had promoted this...that we should come to the United States. So, in 1913...that was in June that we departed for this country and oh there was a little manuvering around to get everything organized for the trip, you know. Well, eventually the day came that we left. That was the first time I ever road in an automobile. My father called a taxi to drive us over to the (?)...I think that's where we got the ship at. And there was all the people there to bid us bon voyage and say farewell, and there was my uncles and aunts and my grandma and cousins. And I'm sorry to say that's the last farewell for my parents for their folks because we never
got to go back. I wish they had and the intentions were to go visit some day, but they never got around to it. Well then, of course, they give you all kinds of goodies, you know, when you board the ship there and everybody was all loaded down with all kinds of cakes and fruit and candy and what not, you know, so then we departed. We went to...from Helsinki we went to (?) and they took on some more passengers and cargo there and then of course we departed from there for...on the Baltic Sea into Copenhagen, that was out next stop. Were going across on the Baltic Sea, it was...I don't think it was much of a storm, but it was a squall enough so that the ship started to roll and pitch a little bit, you know, and the funny thing of it was, all the adults got seasick, see, but none of the kids. Cripes, all the kids were in good shape, you know, And here they're in the salon', ship's salon up there with their goodies, you know, and their tables are loaded with this stuff...well, when they got sick they just forgot all about the goodies and got into their rooms, you know. So here us kids had a good time over there helping ourselves to all these goodies over there. Well, eventually we got to Copenhagen but we didn't get to go ashore...none of us went ashore. They just put on some more cargo and passangers there I guess; and there was an old fellow down there, old bewhiskered old codger down there selling fruit and he had a long pole with a little net and a little leather container up there that you put money in and he'd raise up this net with this pole and then you put the money in there and you ordered what you wanted whether it was oranges or bananas or whatever. Well, sometimes there was arguments there because the people were different money, you know, and they were probably some of them short changing him and maybe he was getting sometimes more than he should have for that matter. But anyhow every once in awhile he'd blow his top down there, you know. So then anyway, we departed from Copenhagen eventually and we were bound for//@ Hall, England, across the North Sea. Well I can't recall whether there was anything about the weather on that crossing there, it seemed like we got into Hall without any incident. It seemed to me like it wasin the evening we arrived in Hall and at that time Hall was cobblestone streets, you know, was an industrial sea town, you know, and when they took the passengers off the ship, I think they took us to a hotel. I believe we stayed one night in Hall; but they had these long...it was kind of a stage with a long wagon with the seats running fore and aft, you know, and there was a stairway in the back of the wagon, see. A team of horses pulling it and you went up into this wagon on the steps leading from the rear of the wagon and by golly while we were on our way, here comes a couple of guys running over there to the back of this wagon, they hopped on and sat down on a seat back there. They were going uptown or wherever we were going and they were talking Finn, these two Finnish sailors. So then we...I think it was only one night we stayed in Hall and the next day we were on our way to Glasgow, Scotland, on the train. And I was, you know, it was in June, you know, it was beautiful and nice running through the English countryside there...

I: Now, about what age were you at that time?

K: I was ten years old. I was born in 1903 and this was 1913. Well anyhow, of course I remember a few things about this trip, you know, not too many; but I remember I must have worked up a heck of an appetite on that trip anyhow, because I remember once...one place over there was an elderly lady come over with sandwiches and tea or milk or something, anyhow, I think I had mutton or beef sandwich or something and tea. Boy
is that ever good, holy Christmas. I know on them mglish trains bow
they are' they have them compartments, see, they weren't like American
coaches. So eventually we got to Glasgow and they put us up in a hotel.
We stayed there over a week. The ship that we were supposed
to have taken, we couldn't make it; so then we had to wait until we got
back to America. So eventually we got out to sea and it took us about
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days to get to the pot.
sea that is running out there, but it was...well I can't recall that we
we...well, I recall that I think there was some day that they wouldn't
allow us kids out on deck, there was a pretty good squall that day; but
outside of that we used to run all over the place. Wonder we didn't
jump over the side there because they had these seats and benches along
side the railing there and us kids running around and hopping around
and wresting...there was this kid there, I don't know what nationality
this kid was, but he was one of our chums there, you know, we'd wrestle
around a play around and he had a...he might have been from France
because he had a coin there with what looked like Napoleon embossed on
the coin there, but I couldn't be sure because I guess a lot of them
countries had these prominent men on coins, you know, with these cocked
hats, you know. So, but anyhow we had a lot of fun on that trip and I
recall seeing ice bergs, when we got over towards Newfoundland area
and Greenland, around that neighborhood, you know there was ice bergs
floating around...I think that was around the area where the Titanic
went down; but I don't think we even lost any time I mean on account of
ice bergs, but we did see some floating there. And then we come up the...
I always like to say I'm the first one to sight land to these people,
but I probably wasn't. I recall seeing what looked like a big cloud
way over on the horizon and it turned out to be entrance to the St.
Lawrence, see, and that's the way it is. It's kind of a high land
around through there. And we come up the St. Lawrence...yes, it's
really nice in its way, the St. Lawrence, but for people coming from
flat country like Finland there then to see these hills and at that time
of the year, you know, I know from because I had a pilot's license for
down through there, mate's license. My license I can take a ship all
the way to Ampecosti Island; but even then...I was there...we were there
about four years, '61, '62, '63, and even in July and August...well not
so much in August...but even in June and July you'd see snow in the
ravines and up in the hills and big waterfalls coming down from the
mountains, you know, and I recall Mother saying when she was looking at
this land and wondering what kind of a land are we coming, well anyway,
it looked pretty rough. You know, to think about climbing them hills
and they'd get in and out of. So, mother was kind of worried about it
anyway. We then got to Quebec eventually and we went through the
quarantine and examination there. There was a Finn in there too. There
was a Finn working in that place there...well I can't recall just how
long it took us to come to get to the United States, but we come by the
way of the Canadian Soo, that's where we entered.

I: You came by train from Quebec?

M: Yeah, we came by train from Quebec to Marquette. But I think during our
trip there was several of these ship companions that were on the same
train with us because some of them came to Canada. I can't recall any
one else coming to Marquette from that group, but there was some came
to Canada...different parts.

I: And you took the South Shore from American Soo to Marquette?

M: Yeah, the South Shore and we boarded the South Shore at the American
Soo and arrived at the Marquette South Shore depot over here...I don't
know exactly what date. It couldn't have been very far...it must have
been about the 1st of July, around that time. And the train...I can't
recall too much about that train ride, but although my mother says that
my brother Louie said, he woke up one time and he looked out through
the window and Louie says, "(?)" we'd been riding for a long time, see.
"(?)" Louie was saying. You know, some of that land, you know I've
been training, you know, on the boats, the lake boats up around and
through that area like in the Curate and up around the Trojan bay area
and it's really barren, you know, scrubby trees some places and some
places even had to haul dirt in to make a cemetery, I guess... one place
over there; but it's not all like that but in certain areas. There's
like in Little Curate they have three great big like soup bowls, maybe
they're about ten - twelve feet in diameter. And three of them right in
rotation there that were made by glaciers. You know, the glacier had
been rolling rocks in there and made these bowls and you know, it's
that kind of terrain, see it's that barren rocks. But, you know, it
wasn't all like that. A lot of nice fertile nice looking areas in
Canada too. But anyway, eventually we got into Marquette and of course
we went right up there, we stayed up for a short while with my uncle
matt, up with uncle Matt Savoula on Rock Street. And I remember a
lady, I can't recall her name, but they were Finnish people living up-
stairs of Matt Savoula's at the time... this was quite late in the evening
already, I think as I recall that we arrived into my uncles there and by
golly this woman came down from upstairs and she said she couldn't help
herself because she heard such plain Finnish down there. She had to come
down to see who they were down there. But you know, like myself, I got
a heck of a kick out of hearing little kids speaking Finnish, you know,
when I got to Finland. Yeah, I sat on a bench over there waiting for a
bus one time, I think I let about a half a dozen buses go by... there was
a bunch of kids playing there... I just wanted to hear them kids talk.
But anyway, I think it was the next day... it was a beautiful summer day,
that was in July then already, and I recall somebody sent us... I don't
know if it was Mrs. Hilda Savoula... uncle Matt's wife or who it was, but
anyhow, they expected us to go to the store. Surreus had a store down
here at the time where the fire hall is now, you know, down on the corner
of Third and Rock Street... that used to be Surreus store. Well, we went
down there to get something, anyway, and I remember walking down Rock
Street and at that time there were a lot of trees along it, you know,
the maples and a few other trees along there, was really a nice summer
day, you know, and we were walking there and I seen squirrels, all right,
climbing up the trees and all over, squirrels; but I was looking for
palm trees. I always had the idea that if you come to the Americas you
were bound to get palm trees, but I couldn't find a palm tree nowhere.
So... well eventually through hard work and frugality, why we had our own
home.

1: Now where did your father work then?

My father worked in... well, he worked in different places. He worked at...
well, he worked on several jobs and I think he even worked some place
building a lighthouse around here. I can't recall which one and he
also worked one time, I think, at Sandburg's mill down there... you know
there was the Sandburg's mill that was the Keystone Hardware Factory and
there was a 500 Hardware down in south Marquette, down there. He worked
there, he worked up on the docks, the ore docks and then the last place
where he worked for quite a number of years with the South Shore shops...
railroad car shops. And my brother Louie worked there too for over
forty years in the lower yards, the car repair department too of the South Shore. Of course it was the Soo Line when Louie retired there.

I: And you started school.

N: Oh yeah, then we started school. I wound up...us kids we wound up I think all of us in the same grade to start with. I don't know whether it was the first, second or third grade; but anyway Louie and I, I think we went in the same grade anyway. I had already gone to three grades of school in Finland and Louie had gone to a couple of grades too.

End of Side 1

N: The first school I went to in this country was in the Fisher Street school down there on Fisher Street, but I was only there a short while I was...Louie and myself, we were both transferred over to the fourth grade in the Alcott School, Miss Lane's room.

I: And where was the Alcott School then?

N: The Alcott School, that was right on...it's a catholic school there now, but it was right there on the corner of Fisher and Fourth. And well I went to three grades of school. I went to fourth, fifth and sixth in that school and you know, us kids we had a little difficulties with the language to begin with and I don't know, I think I was the last one to get to speak English of all three of us. My brother Louie and well later on Joe, that was my brother Laurie, somehow he got the name of Joe from translating, you know, going to school. Somebody translated and then he wound up instead of George, he wound up Joseph. So, they called him Joe. So, of course Laurie was...well they called him Laurie, but later on they started to call him Louie, see. But, outside of the earlier part of our school days when we couldn't, you know, speak English or understand English, we didn't know friend from enemy, you know; and considering everything, we got along pretty good but once in awhile there'd be something come up, you know, where a little hostilities that didn't amount to much. One time I recall, I think at that time I was still going to that Fisher Street School, but there was a bunch of us kids going down the street and there was a black boy coming up the street. His name was Albert Gains, you know the Gains' house down here where the Gains family used to live, well Albert Gains was coming up the street and one of these kids on the side of the street where I am, he hollers over "Nigger" he says. Well Christmas, here comes Albert Gains by golly with a big long plow handle stride over headed right for me, see. Well creep, I didn't know what this was all about. I didn't know that "Nigger" was fighting words but when I seen the way he was coming, why land I took off and you know, in Finland, you know, the kids were pretty well trained in running and their hero at that time was (?). He had taken a gold medal in the Olympics in Stockholm, I believe. So I was able to keep ahead of him all right. But eventually, he turned out to be one of my best friends, this Albert Gains. Matter of fact, you know Joe Earlisk, I was talking with him well last week and he told me he had a picture of us kids taken over there at the Alcott School and he said I'm standing right along side of Albert Gains.

I: Were they some of the few blacks that there were in Marquette?
Yeah, there were several...there were about three or four families; but remember...you wouldn't probably remember, but there was old Joe Schmidt, the fellow that used to promote the dog races here. He was a black man, he was a barber and then, of course, there was Bragston, he was also a barber. And the Gains...old man Gains, he run a delivery service here. He had a horse and wagon and you know, kind of a livery service there, you know kind of a transfer and moving and everything in that line. And matter of fact, I used to go down occasionally to Gains Rock to visit them over there. I got along real good with Albert and all of them. He had...oh, there were several boys and girls in that family. But anyhow, after a while after we got better with the language, why God we had a lot of friends and we got along real good as far as I can recall. We had no difficulties. But, well things went on like that. Well then, of course, in Marquette, those were still horse and buggy days...there were a few cars; but those were mostly horse and buggy days yet and I did get summer jobs. I used to work for old Bob Blandiomer, you know, he was quite a real estate man around here years ago. And he had a old gray mare and he had a truck garden over there at Anderson's farm. They had their own farm too, Blandiomer's up there where the Orchard Rest Home is now. Later on it was the Emigard Dairy after them...well VanderBoom was there too. But old Bob Blandiomer, that was his old home. And that home that they moved down, they moved down the county road is right there at Anderson's...where Ray Anderson used to live. He's got a new place now; but that's the old Blandiomer home. Well, I used to deliver his produce with this horse around Marquette here and then I also delivered, with horses I deliver for Belts Grocery. They had a kind of a produce store right there along side of Dell Theater. And I delivered the produce for them too. They had two horses I used to use there. There was one horse I used to use in the morning and there was a young horse there they called Babe, and you know it was really a...family raised him and it was really...it was a good horse, you know, and it was kind of spoiled, I think. But anyhow I think I didn't use him right. You know when I was delivering groceries there sometimes, I don't know sometimes I'd be coming back from delivering...a lot of this stuff was delivered up on the hill, you know, around Bridge Street and around there because they were about the only people could afford that stuff from over there...so I recall, I know these kids were getting out of school and a lot of them were friends of mine, you know, and they'd pile on the sled, see, I know this was mostly in the wintertime, you know, they'd get on the sled. And of course the kids would holler and roust around and this horse didn't like that. By golly, you know I'd come back over to the store and wait to make another delivery...I'd go in to start to load the sleigh up or the wagon, whichever I was using...and I put a weight on this horse see, one of these weights that you put on the bridle and this horse would start raring up to beat heck, you know, right in front of the store. He wouldn't do anything like that until it got in front of the store...rare up to beat the band, you know...and right off the bat this grocer he would tell me, "What have you been doing to Babe now?" Yeah, this horse would give me away, see, that I was mistreating him or something. And he'd get revenge too. I'd take him in the evening, you know, I'd take him to the barn or the stall overnight, and I had to put a sweat blanket on him. Well, he'd get revenge until I wised up to him. I had a kind of a long lead on his halter, you know, he was unhalteried and it was a box stall, but I usually...first I tried to put the sweat blanket on him without putting that strap on him at all to hold him in the corner. But, I'd reach around
him and he'd grab me by the leg, bite to beat heck. Until I got...in fact I had him up so short he couldn't do it. He tried to push around in the corner to get me really tight in there, but he couldn't reach me. But later on I was in California then and both of these horses died in a fire there at the residence where they had that barn.

I: Now then, you said that you had worked on the boats.

R: Oh yeah, I worked on the boats for about forty years

I: And those were ore boats?

R: Ore boats and also deep sea. During the war I was on deep sea. Matter of fact, I was on deep sea already in 1925.

I: And then during World War II you were.

R: Yeah, World War II I made a round-the-world trip. Matter of fact, it'd probably be two or three trips because we shuttled around the world see during the war. I have ribbons for Atlantic, Pacific and the Mid-East Mediterrannean; but in Marquette in those days, why lot of people had cows yet. Matter of fact, we had three cows and right across the street from the post office at that time I think there was a kind of a news stand on the corner and there was two Chinese laundries there right on Washington Street and right in back of this news stand was a barn... cow barn and I used to take that cow to pasture and back from the pasture in the summertime to the barn; and that was Ussitala Mienka had a saloon there and it was there cow, see. They had me to take it to the pasture.

I: Now, this was a Finnish saloon.

R: Yeah, that was a real Finnish saloon, I'll tell you.

I: And their names were what?

R: Ussitala Mienka and now that's...

I: And where was that?

R: Right there where Remolard's is now.

I: On Third Street

R: On Third Street just below the Town & Country Store there. It's Remolard's Bar there now. That was Ussitala Mienka and you know who that used to be? I read a book while I wason deep sea sailing during the war. They had these paper-covered armed forces books and I picked up one of these books one day and I think we were out on the Pacific, and I started looking at this book and it refers to Marquette and it was the "Trail Blazer" by Stewart Edmond White...the name of this book. And it mentions Marquette in the logging days, you know, and it mentions St. Mary's Hospital but at that time it was right on the corner of Renick and Fourth...they still have a...it's posted there, you know, that that's where it used to be and then it mentions the Denny Hogan's
Saloon. I asked one of his grandsons one day, I told him about this
book I had read. You know, I used to know Denny Hogan, he was a police-
man here, see. An old gray-bearded Civil War Veteran... was a policeman
here in town. And I mentioned that to him one day about reading in this
book about Denny Hogan's Saloon. He said, "Yeah, he had a saloon right
there where Remolard's Bar is now. Sure, so yeah, this old Denny, he
used to round up these lumberjacks that'd come in from camps, you know,
they'd have a good time... probably blowing their whole winter's earnings
and probably all they had was a clean pair of socks in their pocket and
ready to go to camp and they'd go on a big drunk, you know, and here old
Denny would round them up. Sometimes he'd have a whole gang of them
right around the... remember they had an old... they had a great big
round radiator with a marble top used to be in the South Shore depot
there, and here they would be in the winter, winter mornings over there
or nights, there'd be Denny Hogan with a bunch of hung-over lumberjacks
waiting for the train. You know, they'd go to these different camps.
If they didn't have a camp to go to, he'd line up a camp for them. Oh,
there was all kinds of characters around here.

I: Now, when did you retire? Did you retire from the ore boats?
R: Yeah, yeah I was first mate on the Gartland Fleet, that was in '68 I
retired.

I: And then you went back to Finland to see what it was like in what year?
R: Well, I went there in '69

I: Had it changed any?
R: Oh, God Almighty! You know, but I'll tell you something. You know like
this area where I used to live, one of my cousins... my cousin Vianno
there in Helsinki, she took me over there to, you know, to this place
where we used to live at but I could have found that place myself. Yeah,
I could have but although there wasn't that old hill where they used to
have these war games... that wasn't there... that was all populated area
then; but I could have still found it. I don't know, I think it might
have been one of them churches there that I would have used as a land-
mark there because I know I used to go by this church quite often going
to school.

I: That (?)
R: Yeah, (?) that's where it was... I think it was anyway; but...

I: Were you impressed with what Finland looked like when you went back in
'69? After all those years?
R: Oh God yes.

I: Have they gone forward?
R: Oh, I'll say so. By golly, they looked really industrious and well, you
know, I didn't see that there looked to me to be any kind of hardship
around there. Everybody seemed to be...of course, I imagine there were probably people that weren't fareing so well, but what I seen around there, I was really impressed. Nobody ever put the bum on me, you know, like panhandlers or anything. No, nobody ever did.

I: And then you went back in

R: I was there again see with you and your sister in...that was in...

I:

R: '73, yeah

I: But you did enjoy going back.

R: Oh sure, and I want to go back again. I only hope I get my wife to go with me next time.

I: Good

R: I know, she hasn't got any relatives there that she can recall, see. She may have, but you know...I know, I havemore relatives there than I expected to see. Sure.

I: So it had gone forward. Now, what about Marquette? Has that changed from 1913?

R: Oh yeah, it's changed quite a lot...sure it has. Although, you know, like in certain areas it's still, you know, a lot of the same old homes outside of putting a new siding on them and anew roof on a lot of these old homes, but Marquette has changed, you know, it has changed quite a lot just the same.

I: It's been built up.

R: Yeah, it's been built up and, of course, now with these shopping centers, I just wonder what's going to happen to the downtown area of Marquette. I would have liked to have seen that shopping center come right downtown here, keep the business downtown like in Louisville, Kentucky, I saw where they put the mall was built right in the heart of the city.

I: But it's gone west.

R: Yeah, it's moving west all right; but it's nice. All these shopping centers are real nice, you know, like the Marquette Mall is a beautiful place and the rest of them; but I just hope that the downtown shopping area is kept up. Now like I've seen in some of these cities like when I was up in Duluth there the last time, the last trip, I stopped over and I stayed over in that Hotel Duluth there overnight, and I had some business in the Union Hall there and good God, I went for quite a few blocks...it was empty stores there with doorways cluttered with broken glass and paper and oh, cripe. Really looked tough. I wouldn't want to see that downtown here.

I: Do you think it was hard for people to come and not understand the
language and did they have to take the harder jobs then?

R: Well yes, it was, of course it was like that; but you see...

I: There were a lot of Finnish people.

R: Yeah, not only Finnish, people were clannish in those days. They were different nationality of people...they were all pretty clannish because, one thing, they didn't understand each other. You didn't know whether you had a friend or who you were talking to, see. Lot of times maybe somebody was really friendly, but you didn't know that. For instance, I'll tell you a story about a fellow about a Finn working and he came from the old country and had only been here a short while and he's working on a job and he's really working, working hard digging a ditch. And he's working to beat the band and a fellow there who was a boss on the job, he goes over to him and he says, "Hey John, take it easy." So, the fellow keeps on working but he worked faster. So then he goes and he later on the boss see him again and he's really going to town, this Finn there shoveling and he says, "John," he says, "Take it easy, we've got a lot of time." So the Finn still works, but he works still faster. So holy cripes, he's really belting it to it, you know, and so the boss comes to him again and he says, "Oh John," he says, "Take it easy, take it easy. And the Finn threw down the shovel and he says, "Take it easy, (?) " . So see, you didn't know who your friends were.

I: But were there quite a few Finnish people in the area that you knew and where you lived?

R: Yeah

I: Where was you home now?

R: On Fisher Street...I had two uncles living right close, two uncles and there was Letomaki's lived right close. Oh, there was at least three Finnish families besides ourselves there; and there was...I think the biggest problem was the language problem, see.

I: English was difficult for the Finnish.

R: It was, yeah, it was; but that was the biggest thing was, you know, you didn't...

I: They had to make a living and they didn't have time to learn...

R: Oh yeah, that's right. Oh sure, they were working...you know like my mother, for instance, coming from Helsinki there was a lot of difference living in a Finnish city than living in a Finnish country place, you know. Like, you know, coming from the country area in Finland coming here, why it was nothing new to them. It was better here, see. But you coming from the city in here where people still had cows and wood to chop and carry water...lot of places yet they had to carry water...

I: So, she felt she was going backwards.
R: Yeah, you didn't have the facilities like you had over in the Finnish city.

I: So actually Marquette was more backward in 1913 than Helsinki.

R: Well it was, yes, because you know a lot of them were still like pioneers. Of course, a lot of them even went out to build log homes in those days; but of course it wasn't that tough, you know, but you know like my mother she worked in different...she worked in a bakery there where one of my uncles was a foreman there in Helsinki and she also worked for that Arabeesa China Factory, yeah she worked there and, you know, I think the Finnish, you know well not only in Finland but any woman in the city, they probably were a little more independent than they would have been in the country area. So, it was kind of new to my mother, you know, of course she was used to hard work when she lived in her home, you know, at Tursa, but then from coming like from Helsinki over here and then you had to go back to the cows and milking and wood chopping. Of course my father and my mother and us boys, we (?) the wood. Well, we also had gardens too. Yeah, we had quite a garden area and of course, after awhile you get to like the stuff, you know, after you get into it again, you know. Like myself, I was never much of a gardener, I used to hate to weed the garden. My brother Louie, gee my brother Louie...a greenhouse was down in our area...neighborhood at the time over there, and the De-Morris's had it but then old Mr. Roberts married Mrs. DeMorris and he started to run the place and boy he liked to hire my brother Louie to work because Louie could really plant onions and all that kind of other stuff over there; but I could never do it myself. Oh, that was an interesting neighborhood. I really enjoyed living down there.

I: And your own home now is quite close.

R: It's right the same place where the first home we had was I was still living there, right there. Of course later on we moved...my folks bought that home on the corner of Seventh and Fisher. Of course that's gone now. My father used to keep that place looking nice; but the people that bought it, he was sickly and he wasn't able to keep it up, so it's kind of dilapidated now. It doesn't look too bad though, but well like my place now, that hasn't been kept up either. Well like, I was sailing when I was sailing in the summers, I couldn't do much in the wintertime around the home and I've been trying to get a few things done around in the recent years; but I think most of my time I've been going fishing, I think.

I: So you've enjoyed retirement.

R: Oh, I sure have.

I: And you've been in good health.

R: Yeah, I can't complain on that. What used to get me, you know, we'd come into different ports...fellows, sailors that had retired, you know, and they'd come over there moaning about they haven't got nothing to do. Well good God, I haven't got enough time. No kidding, I haven't got enough time.

I: And there are a lot more things for senior citizens going on now too.
R: Well sure. Like a place like Marquette, you know like for instance that Pine Ridge over there, that's handy to the library and the town and everything.

I: And we have an excellent library.

R: You're darn right, it's a very good library.

I: And that Historical Society.

R:

I: And the library is really...

R: Yeah, sure.

I: And all the Finnish books that they have.

R: Sure, the whole upstairs is full of them. I go over there...I've got several books from there right now. Yeah, I go quite a bit. I've been trying to do a little painting and stuff like that, you know, and the library...

I: Do you go fishing in the summertime? Do you go river fishing?

R: No, not river fishing, but you know, when I was sailing on the lakes, I never bothered the fishing very much. I did a little bit on the St. Lawrence down there, but one day my brother Louie, he came over with a ten-pound lake trout he'd caught out here on the breakwall, you know, at the island. He came over with that big lake trout, he said he got five of them that day... he got his limit. I thought, holy oh Christmas, you get fish like that up here.

I: So you started off.

R: So I said by golly, I gotta go get some gear. I went over to...I went into a sporting goods store down there and I bought myself a fishing gear down there.

I: Did you have luck?

R: I did. The first day I got three. That was probably the worst thing because by golly the bug bit me then, I was out there from then on.

I: Yes, and it's nice around here in the summertime

R: Oh cripe, and you'd be surprised how many of them retired fellows are out there fishing. That's a...

I: And swap stories

R: Swap stores and by golly, you work harder over there fishing than you'd ever work any place else. If you had to do that for a living, oh boy, you'd really holler. Darn right. But, it's a lot of fun. Gee, when
you catch fish especially. Sometimes, of course, like last summer wasn't so good, but oh here for a couple of years I was really doing good. I got quite a few there last summer.

I: You had beginners luck.

R: I guess so, yeah. Yeah, that was a probably...probably if I hadn't been quite so lucky, I'd have probably got more work done at home.

I: But the work is always there at home.

R: Yeah, the work is always there and I don't know, what the heck, you only live once. I might as well have a little fun with it too. Yeah, it's really...it's a good pasttime, I tell you. When you connect with a good fish there once in awhile, you know, there's a lot of times there's a lot of fun over there too, you know. I seen one day over there last summer, there was a whole bunch of guys. There must have been at least thirty of them lines up along there, along the breakwall there fishing and it was a real nice day. Nobody had anything, and just as I was going there why there was a woman walking ahead of me and she had a big sun bonnet on, you know, with a ribbon tied around her chin and she carried a pillow under her arm and a fish pole, a fish rod, you know, and she walked past most of them over there but then further on down there was a couple of guys just between 'em. So she went and she put her pillow down and sat down on the pillow, threw it in...first strike she got an eight pound trout out of there.

I: And all the fellows had nothing.

R: Sure, nobody had anything.

I: That's women's liberation.

R: Sure...the first cast she got a nice eight pound lake trout out of there Holy cripes! They couldn't get over it. I think that was the only fish that was caught there that day.

I: So, retirement keep you busy

R: Yeah, oh yeah. I got more projects around than you could shake a stick at right now if I'd only get around to doing them. That's a cinch...I don't have any problems about how I'm going to spend my time. Of course I took, you know, them movies I took in Finland, I still got to edit a lot of them. Lot of them I did it already, but there's still a lot to do. I got movies of kids over there...well they were little tots and now a couple of them are already married and I haven't even been able to edit them together yet. I've got to get them together one of these days and show them to the family. I had even a couple of shots of you and your sister in Sautola Airport there in Helsinki.

I: So now you can start planning on another trip

R: Well, I tell you, I am; but it may not be for a little while yet because like I say, I got all that work to do. I gotta start doing some work around there; but I sure want to make another trip there. I believe I'd like to spend a little more time around Helsinki this time.