FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homesteading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing Land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Chores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling Butter &amp; Eggs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats Eaten in Winter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagon Loads of Suckers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush Fire</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Work</td>
<td>8-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of Cream from Milk</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeman and Russell</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardest Chores</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberry Picking</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Neighbors</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Burns - Neighbors Help Out</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation - &quot;Pulling Sane&quot;</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic on Otter Lake</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Dorphy</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lac la Belle</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbercamp and Bedbugs</td>
<td>21-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Duties</td>
<td>25-26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Cabin</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonfires</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Own Garden</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood-bread</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry-picking</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaughtering Animals</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping Meat</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemade Bread and Other Things</td>
<td>36-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit Orchard</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorelines Full of Logs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbering for Spare Money</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling Milk and Cream</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Potatoes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid's Games</td>
<td>44-46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is anyone here a home steader?

Oh ya,

My grandparents were

Where did they homestead?

Aaske Aške

How long ago was that?

Idon't remember how far back but they homesteaded and got their first land from the Homestead Company.

Do you remember what some of the requirements were for homesteading?

Ya, you had to clear I guess it was five acres a year or so.

Five acres a year and did you also have to build?

Ya, you had to build your home there and live there.

Year around?

Did anyone else/s parents homestead?

My uncle homesteaded and also my grandfather and my father purchased a forty of land from my uncle. After he had homesteaded his land he got 160 acres and he divided that among his children a forty a piece.

Was anyone involved in clearing the land? Taking off the brush.

They have to do it themselves

How did they do it?

Well with hard labor, of course there's still stumps left there but it had to be opened.

Well the early homesteaders when they came here, there wasn't any demand for logs or timber.

No.

They had to cut it all down and burn it up
What they couldn't use in firewood they had to burn up.

There was no market at all?

No, nothing

We're talking about the very early 1900, like around 1900

Even before 1900

Up to that time there was only a market for pine. It wasn't until 1907 or 8 that hardwood began to come in.

Then first they started with birdseye maple mostly.

Where was that going?

That was Askel anyhow and I don't know what they done around here. My uncle was a logger them days.

Well did any of you clear land?

All answered why sure.

Tell me about clearing the land, what's it like to clear land.

Hard labor.

Well the first year we started clearing you take a sharp axe and cut the brush all down.

I did that when I was a kid

Ya, and saw the bigger stuff with a cross cut saw. Use it for a cow pasture for a while until the stumps started rotting and then clear it some more.

Then you plant potatoes and you would get potatoes too

It was good soil right away.

And clean too, as clean as could be.

Then you put in some oats what they would call hay oats in that time. Then they would put some hay seed in with the oats. Then you keep that for the cows in the winter time. It wasn't let go too ripe or nothing so the straw wouldn't get too dry or heavy.

Then the following year you couldn't see the guy in the hayfield, the Timothy was so high you couldn't see him walk in the field.
Because the soil was so fertile
So rich
You couldn't see the top of their heads.
A grown man's chin?
Of course you're a tall man maybe they could see the top of your head but me they couldn't see it.
When did you move out this way?
Well I moved out this way in 1909. We built a house which they later tore down and they cleared all that land, 60 acres which was nothing but bush and swamp. It took a lot of hard work with forces of dynamite and everything else. Can't make out.
People say how hard the work was, I mean they emphasize the hard labor. What was it like, what kind of chores and work had to be done in the early days?
Well they come to this place as far as I know they worked in the mines. Well they went from one cow to two cows and then between working in the mines and then working in the woods.
Oh so they lived on the farm and they also worked in the woods and in the mines.
That's right.
What was happening to the family while they were out, how did they get along? What did the children have to do, it seems like it would be pretty rough.
Children used to work them days, they weren't just bumming around. We all had our jobs.
What did you do?
Well, the barn work, take care of the chickens, horses and everything. And haymaking time we had to help because everything was done by hand.
And the kids did it, how old, did the boys and girls do it?
Ya, everybody.
The girls milked and the boys did something else and then when my dad and my brother went to the lumber camps I had to saw all the wood and go to school.
I How old were you then?
R I was only about 13 years old
R I was the man of the house at home.
I Did the women generally do the milking?
R Mostly
I What about the chickens, who had to fetch the eggs?
R Well, I did, I had to take care of the chickens too. I had to work way late into the evening.
R Our family only had two of us boys so we had to do way extra work.
I Did women have to work in those days?
R They were the work horses.
I Can you remember your mothers working? Describe each one.
R Well I'll tell you me and my mother went into the woods and I'll bet it was twenty below zero with a cross cut saw to cut wood because my dad was at the lumber camps. Me and my ma sawed poles and then hauled it home with the horses to make wood.
R They also milked the cows and none of this push button stuff and no washing machines or dryers or nothing. They had to do things on the scrubbing board.
R Churn the butter too. I churned lot of butter like this between my legs and going up and down like this.
I Was that generally a child's job churning the butter?
R Well whenever anyone was idle they could take a turn on it
I That was one of the few ways of making cash at those times right?
R Ya, if you had a few extra pounds of butter or eggs you could take them to town and sell them.
I Did you sell them generally for cash or would you give them to a store and trade.
R No we would trade.
I Could you get very much with a pound of butter and some eggs in those days?
About 15 cents a pound for butter.

What year was this?

Oh, I couldn't remember, maybe about the 14's or 15's.

Well even in the year 36 or 37 it was only about 15 cents yet.

That's when we came on the farm from Calumet when I was first married and we came on the farm. Right in the bush, I built my home there first and started clearing the land.

Who generally took the eggs and the butter to the store for trading? Whose job was that in the household.

Well anybody who happened off to go and get groceries well they took it to the store and traded it for groceries. Butter or eggs for whatever you had to get.

So there wasn't too much cash around so more trading went on.

No there wasn't too much cash around.

I'll tell you them days this salt salmon was twelve and a half cents a pound.

My father-in-law Jacob Saari, you know him, well he had an orchard there and he used to tell me they would load that wagon loaded with apples and they would follow that river road because I don't think '41 was here yet, all the way to Chassell unload and then stay over night and come back again the next day.

That little orchard was started by VanGrauten. He was here right after the Finnish settlers came and he was the one who introduced horticulture to the Finnish people. The Finns didn't know anything about apples and that was something they had never seen or heard of before.

And Baumgartner showed them how to produce good orchards.

Yes, yes

noticed that all the farmers around here have these older orchards right next to them. That was one of the first things that was done.

Right.

Well what kinds of meats were eaten in the winter? You had a storage problem obviously with meat because you didn't have modern refrigerators.
We butchered late enough into the fall so that it would freeze then hang it up and let it there in the cold.

What would you butcher?

Cow or a pig.

What or when would the meat start to spoil?

Well you had to get rid of it before the weather got too warm.

What would you eat then in the summer?

Well, it was ham and salt pork and fish and lots of fish. And violated deer.

And in them days we used to catch .......... and salt them in big wooden kegs.

At this time of the year we used to catch suckers and they would come up the Sturgeon river and we would trap them and catch them by the boat load.

Wagon loads.

Ya, wagon loads of suckers and we would salt them down and we had a special process for curing them with salt. You salted them down good until all that slime came off and then you packed them again side by side in a new clear brine and then you would put a big heavy rock on top and that would compress the fish and they wouldn't even be half the size when done, and they were solid.

They went down so tight that you couldn't hardly pull them apart.

And they were tasty

You ate them during the summer?

Right and we used to smoke alot during the spring time and the summer. We would make smoked fish and our sauna caught fire many times while we were smoking fish.

There's one thing that you mentioned about this land clearing that you first spoke about, well there was a fire that helped to clear the land around 1907. They had taken all the pine out and the rubble was left and you can imagine what pine needles are like when they are dry, it was just like a tinder box. The farmers out here in Elo just west of the cemetery there they must have been clearing land there and my aunt's husband. The fire started by his house and it just swept through with the wind.
The few settlers that were located there, they had to flee for their lives and this Niemi he decided to stay behind and see what he could do to protect his house and he sent his family away. It was three days before he could go out there and anyone could go out there and see how he made out. I think the ground was so hot you couldn't walk over it and it took three days before the first people could walk out there. The house was gone and they couldn't find him anywhere.

I know where he was.

Finally they looked into the well and he had crawled down into the well but he had sufficated there too.

What was his first name.

Well Niemi

He lived right there near Elo or on Horoscope?

No that was Elo and directly west from the Elo cemetery

Now where did it start exactly as you can remember, was it further south than Horoscope?

I don't know exactly where it started but it swept through this whole area, Elo along the Otter River and way up to where the Otter crosses the road there towards town.

Yes and it swept the other way too.

Over by Horoscope?

Well you go through the woods there and you can see all those pine stumps burned. They were too green I suppose to burn.

Back by the homesteads there, in that area?

Ya, back by the homesteads there.

When the fire went through all that was left was charred stumps and all the farmers had to do was gather up that stuff there and start plowing. After the fire they grew hay year after year after and right after the first world war and even before the second they started dynamiting those stumps out of there. Can't make out.

Could you hear explosions in those days?

Oh, all over

See they wanted to blast before it gets too dry.
When the ground is kind of wet it blows up easier.

Up until then they had to use hoes mostly for working up the ground so if you used a plow you just circled around the stump but after the stumps were removed they got better machinery. They were able to farm on a bigger scale then.

Can I say one thing here? Do you remember who had the first grain drill in Tapiola?

The first what?

Grain drill, you know planter?

Your dad and I worked that first spring I was driving team for your dad. I worked ten hours a day and planted on two farms that spring. the horses got so tired they were nipping at each other walking in that soft field.

That's right,

You mentioned after the first world war, can you give a more specific date when this acid was available to the farmers?

I think it was in 1922 when the government let that acid out.

Ya, I think it was already in 1920

Ya, the government let it out and you could buy it pretty reasonable.

What did the women do then while the land was being cleared?

Women?

Ya, and children, women especially?

The women never ran out of work, they darned clothes or knitted socks or anything. They had plenty of work.

In most families the barnwork fell on the women. Women milked and of course the children had to help in the barns, carrying water and so forth.

Can any of you recall specifically your mother going through an average day in the summer or the spring, can you recall, or can you describe to us.
Do you mean how many hours a day?
I mean what happened when she got up in the morning?

First thing was to light a fire in the stove, put the coffee pot on and get the breakfast going and call the gang come on and get it.

So she got them going hey?

Then everyone got up and went to work.
Where were people sleeping?

They had beds, everybody had beds.

All in one big house

Some upstairs and some downstairs. There was no livingroom in those houses, just a kitchen and the bedrooms and everyone who visited stayed in the kitchen.

Oh, there were no livingrooms.?

No

The house was a place to eat and sleep and that's all

Right

Okay, the gang would come stumbling down the stairs, sleepy eyed and gather around the table, what would be a typical breakfast?

Oatmeal and eggs and pouru and more pouru.

And a cup of hot coffee to get you going?

Ya,

Then the men would go out and start clearing the field right?

Lot of times they had to fix sleighs and wagons and there was all kinds of work. They never ran short of work, never.

Ya, but what I'm trying to do is get descriptions of what had to be done. Simply because lot of those chores aren't done now.

Well lot of those same chores are done now but they are done with machines and everything.
Okay, what would the mother do then after the breakfast was served? Would she go to the barn?

Ya, and take care of Thurston.

Was that before breakfast?

Some places it was before and some places not. I always liked to go first in the barn and have my breakfast after. When the cattle are tied up to the wall they can't get it themselves you have to give it to them.

Well we usually got up at 4:30 and 5:00 at the latest and the first thing you always did was head for the barn and feed the animals to make sure they got something to eat. If you didn't have time to do that the women would do it.

Then if you wanted to go over to Houghton or Hancock you had to take the horses and go there.

So the women would do the shoveling of the manure too then?

Oh ya, they shoveled their share of it too.

They took their turn.

Oh ya

Where I come from the men never milked, only the women

I never knew how to milk until I came up here and someone said can you milk. I never said nothing but I said I'll follow you and see if I can. But boy was I slow, I hadn't done that for years. The women were really like slaves when you come right down to it, they really worked hard.

Okay after the women milked and cleaned then what did they do.

Then all the milk had to be separated

Further back they didn't have any separators they had to use a spoon. Put it in dishes so the cream would set on top and then take it off with a spoon.

There was nothing wasted from a cow.

The only thing that was wasted was the womb of the cow

They didn't bottle that up or can it.

The womb and the horns, that's the only thing they didn't use.
Mrs. Kiitala who lives on the corner gave birth, brought the kid in and went out and finished milking.

That's right they were still making kids in those days

Oh yes, they didn't neglect that.

What were the names of the first separators, the brand names?

were the first ones.

And that made the women's work alot more easier for separating the cream.

Right,

What would be done with the cream then?

Well first before they started delivering it, they had to make it into butter.

Well didn't the picture change a bit when the creamry came into the picture?

Sure.

That was in 1917

That was all right then, you could ship it off to the creamry

Would that have to be done every day around here?

They would only ship cream not milk.

Okay in 1917 they got a creamry over here, would they transport the cream to the creamry every day or how often

Where was the creamry?

The Pelkie creamry.

You're way up in the future now.

Oh, we're way up in time now.

The first creamry was in Hancock, Bridgeman Russell, they got the cream from the farmers and if I remember right, they made a pickup from the farmers once a week.

I think in the beginning it was once a week and then it went to two times.

When was this?
I: What dates was this?

R: Bridgeman Russell, I don’t know or I wonder what date that

I: So Bridgeman and Russell made it possible for the farmers to make a little something?

R: That’s right.

I: Off the herd.

R: Right.

I: Up until then it was simply used to feed the family right?

R: Right.

I: Okay and then after a while it became possible to sell milk.

R: Ya, because the cheese factories came much later, when did come in the thirties?

R: Ya

I: Okay, to get back to these chores now, I don’t doubt for a second that you people really did have to work. What chore did you hate the most, or what was the most rugged chore that you had to do?

R: Well what I hated the most was sawing wood.

R: I think the worst thing I hated was cleaning the barn, we had a lot of cows I’ll tell you.

R: Well you know, there was a lot of work and no machinery to do the work, it was all done by hand.

R: I know for a young boy there’s nothing more tedious than pumping water in a five gallon can and that had to be done morning and evening, before he left for school and when he came home again.

I: That took some time didn’t it to pump a barrel?

R: It was one of those pumps that took better than half an hour to pump it full.

I: That doesn’t sound like much.

R: You try standing there for a half an hour and watch that barrel fill with water.

I: Wasn’t there any other hard work?
I remember that I used to help Mr. Saari make hay for 35 years and that's hard work, pitching and unloading and loading and unloading in the barn. Oh boy I was dead every night.

I dreaded cutting with the hand sythe. Before they could dynamite the stumps the hay around it had to be cut by hand. We always figured that after the sun came up it would get plenty hot so we always tried to get up before four in the morning before it would get hot and just enough light so you could see and you had to get out there and finish up before the sun was up. That was really hard to do.

You're talking now about three or four o'clock.

Ya,

In the dark right, or just about dark?

Ya, just about dark or light enough so you could see what you were doing. But you had to get out there early enough so you could be done before the sun was up.

I tell you it was easy enough to get up to go fishing before the sun was up.

I understand there were fish around here in those days

Oh there were plenty of fish then.

You're talking about Otter Lake now?

Right, Otter Lake was a beautiful lake

We have to remember to bring up the matter of berries as a food supplement.

Oh ya

That used to be a pleasure to go out on a berry picking trip. After the timber was cut you'd have wild berries growing right around your place. There was blueberry's also on the farms.

Didn't sometimes large numbers of people go on a blueberry picking?

Yes.

There used to be alot of berries out there on the Baraga Plains and that was in the twenties. That was when the first Model T Ford was made and the people could drive out there further and pick berries on the Plains. They were so thick out there.

Well who would go?
Who would go on those things, didn't someone have to stay home and take care of the farm?

Yes there had of course to be a skeleton crew to stay at home and take care of the stock.

Well lot of them were more willing to stay at home than to pick berries.

Describe a typical blueberry picking venture? How did you do it? I imagine you started going around in August right?

Well they got a crew together and went and kept berry picking until it was time to eat.

What would they eat out there, what was there to eat?

It was something that you brought from home and the coffee was the number one item.

Well what would you eat out there, there would be no way of preserving anything.

Sausage, break, can of beans, crackers or sardines.

So that was regarded as some sort of treat and a lot of fun?

Right

Would more than one family go?

Yes, sometimes groups of families went. It would be more like a picnic or outing maybe. You could visit there while they were picking berries.

Lot of them enjoyed it like a picnic

They were so plentiful then. You just dumped them into a pail.

Okay you got a pail then and dumped them in. Was someone there cleaning them at the time?

No, they just dumped them into big cartons, or pails or

They also had big boxes, they had big wooden boxes and they had shoulder straps put on them and they carried them on their backs

I was about 13 or 14 and we used to take three or four days and we would go. We used to go around Rice Lake.

That's where my wife used to go.
Well lot of people looked forward to berry picking time, it was like a picnic. They would go and stay for two or three days.

It was kind of a relief from hay making wasn't it?

It was after hay making.

You mentioned on a hot August day that after berry picking your kitchen was like a sauna.

I remember earlier days when I was just a very young boy before I could even pick berries myself we used to enjoy berry picking and would go out on every opportunity. But in those days I don't even know if we had those mason jars. You just didn't have the money to buy them.

You put them in crocks or in jugs.

The only place you could preserve them in was the discarded whiskey jugs. They used to sell whiskey in gallon, two gallon or three gallon jugs. They would put those berries in these jugs. There's one incident that I recall.

When mother had finished her work and had nothing else to do, the kids were gone out and dad had gone somewhere. There were alot of berries ripe on the other side of the fence so she went out there and got a whole mess of berries and she put them up in these whiskey jugs and it kind of bothered her conscience because she had done this on Sunday. Very many weeks later we were all sitting in the kitchen there and she went into something that looked like a basement except all it was a opening in the ground below the floor with some steps and a trap door. So she had these sitting on the top step. All of a sudden there was a terrific explosion under the trap door and the trap door jumped up a little bit. We were wondering what in the world was going on. Somebody opened the trap door and here that jug had exploded. It almost blew the door off. All her Sunday work was gone to waste. When that happened she said that's enough no more berry picking on Sundays.

Berry picking must have then been a relief for the women of the house to get away from the housework and get out and visit with other women.

That's right they used to have alot of visits picking berries together.

That's another thing that I heard talking with the older folks around here that visiting was alot different. Even though everyone had to work as you say there was somehow more visiting. Or people were more inclined to get into visiting.

They didn't neglect seeing each other even though they were busy.
They still had their social hours to go and visit in the evening.

Distance was no problem if they wanted to go they went longer distances. Even from here to Askel, they thought nothing of traveling that far.

Well everybody was happy and we couldn't expect nothing better.

That's right.

For that matter, they saw more of each other than we do today.

In them days, it was neighborly love and I remember one time during the strike time the Calumet strike time around 1913. It was about two weeks before Christmas and our house burned down. We had everything ready for Christmas. My mother always made sure that everything was ready. We had presents sent to us from relatives in Calumet and Hancock and Houghton. My brother, mother and I went to visit the uncle's place. On the way home we saw that smoke and we thought my dad is burning some brush fire. We only had a little snow on the ground and when we got closer we saw that the house was on fire. So the house burned down and we had to go and live with my uncle who lived on the other side of the road. My dad had gone to ....... place and while he was drinking coffee there he happened to look out and there the house was on fire. That was the saddest Christmas I ever had.

Did your neighbors help you out then?

My dad had lumber because he had a saw mill there and then he got a little insurance about $90.00 for the house. He bought the windows and doors for the house and the neighbors all chipped in and in January we were living in our new house.

They got together and built you a house.

Right.

In the middle of winter?

Ya

Did neighbors build one another's houses in those early days here?

When the first settlers came they all got together and built each other's houses.

They were always having barn raisings and building bees.

Well what did you do for fun, you told me that you did some hard work. I guess I'll agree that you might have done a little bit. What did you do for fun?
Well fishing for one thing, and hunting squirrels, well fishing mostly was our fun. I used to enjoy it anyway. Berry picking was fun too. There was no baseball games yet.

You could go sane pulling.

What is this?

You could go Portage Entry or you could go to Toivola around the Misery Bay area and pull sane for herring.

When you say pulling sane I don't know what that means.

It's like a big net and one end was left on shore and a couple of guys would go out in a boat and made a big rounder like that and brought the other end on shore and then the men would start and pull it in. They sometimes got so much herring in there they couldn't pull it in because they were afraid they would break the net. They had to leave some out.

Would they try to row back in and get on land and then pull it in?

No they would pull from the land.

Was this a big crew of people doing this,

About four or five.

I understand it was more possible to live on fish then than it is now. I mean in these rivers there were more fish?

Ya

Like the Otter River?

Ya and Otter Lake was really filled with fish then

There used to be a picnic on the 4th of July or midsummer's day.

Where would you have a picnic around here?

That would be at the Lake Shore

At Otter Lake

Right.

Describe that, what would people bring and what would they do?
Each one brought some eats there and they went swimming.

Then they got together and bought some ice cream and bananas.

If you got a bottle of pop that was really a delicacy.

So on 4th of July you got your bottle of pop.

We'd have boats and row around and have alot of

An apple or an orange them days was really a delicacy

I understand there were more dances in them days. Where people would get together, was this for the younger people?

There used to be a platform there near Askel and then there was a hall here on top of Otter River Hill here.

I don't know if anyone remembers Jimmy Controto, he was an accordion player. Boy that guy could play. He had girls sitting on both sides of him talking and going with that music just the same.

He didn't get mixed up.

He was from Calumet.

Were there any outstanding characters that you remember, I'd like to get some descriptions of some real characters. I understand there was a real character that lived back of Horoscope there by the Homestead. I was going to talk to a man who evidently knew him quite well. The guy's name was Bill Dorphy.

I used to know, the guy used to live about four miles in back of Horoscope.

Back by Charlie Waisanen's clearing there?

Ya, not too far and everytime he would come along would have some skins along. I remember one time he had a wildcat's skin spotted like a leopard. He would come around and talk to my brother-in-law and could that man give stories. They used to call him Baron von Chausie.

Baron von Chausie?

Why?

It's the book about the greatest liar. When he would come in the yard the dogs would all come around and sniff and bark and the hair would stand stiff on their backs because he would smell for animals

He was a character
I know my dog wasn't friendly with him.

He used to come and buy bread from me when I lived in Horoscope.

Did any of you ever spend a rainy day over there in the bush in his camp?

We spent some evenings over there, well I'll tell you during the Depression time it was nearly legal to shoot a few deer because they told you right in the office, you know where to get your meat from. We went deer shining lot of times and we would stop off at Dorphy's camp. I was a brother-in-law had a coffee pot on his belt and everything was in there. We just needed to heat the water. So we would have coffee out there and one time Dorphy put the cups out for us or he started washing out the cups. He put the water in there and shook it around the cups and threw it behind the stove. Then he took an old shirt because it was an old lumberjack camp and he wiped the cups in that old shirt. So I went and laid down on a bench I said I don't want any coffee now. I could have drank it but I didn't dare to. They were drinking coffee there at the table and Bill here was running his finger nail around the edge of the cup and I asked him afterward, what did you do that for? He said I had to get a clean place to drink from.

What did the inside of this cabin look like?

There were wood piles all around and there were just pants all around the wood piles. Then he had food on the table and it was all covered with cedar bark. The roof was leaking so bad. Then he had props all over that you had to go around.

I never knew him personally but a friend of mine who is dead now had some business with him. He had cut the tip of his thumb off and he went to work and took a needle and thread and even through the nail he sewed that thing back together. I'm trying to think of another major operation that he did on himself but I can't remember.

That was his rupture I guess.

Yes, I think it was a rupture.

Ya, it was pushing out all the time.

He came to work and slit it open and sewed the membranes together and it helped. Of course it wasn't a fancy job like a surgeon would do but it helped.

Where the rupture was pushing out, he split it open? And then he went back and pushed it in and sewed the membranes together and sewed it back up?

Right.
Didn't infection set it?

No nothing happened.

He probably had some of his own remedies that helped him too?

Ya,

I understand the man really was quite a trapper

Oh ya,

I remember one night we went there and knocked on the door. Dorphy asked who is there? We told him who we were my brother's name was Abel and the Moilainen brothers. The door was tied with hay wire from inside. He couldn't untie it from the dark. My brother-in-law said shall I pull it open? He said go ahead and pull it open. My brother-in-law told him wasn't Dorphy mad or scared who was at the door. He said no I got iron nerves he said.

When we went to the door we thought that he had a companion in there because he was talking all the time. He'd talk and answer himself and talk and answer himself. He kept on like that.

We asked him what were you doing in here when you were up? He said I was eating, in the middle of the night.

Were there any other characters around here that you remember?

Did anybody know ...........?

Oh I heard of him.

What was he like?

My dad took me up to Lac la Belle one summer, the trains ran up there then. She ........ all over the place and then she wanted to make coffee for us. I couldn't drink that coffee. But she was very very cordial. Glad to have company. She was the talk of Keweenaw and Houghton County at that time.

What did they say about her then?

Well everybody went up there to see how dirty the place was, it was really dirty.

She lived with the chickens.

Ya, she lived with those chickens right in the house
They were even on the bed posts when I was there.

My uncle went there, he worked in the Calumet mines and in them days there were no cars so he used to go over there by bicycle. There used to be a bunch of guys who would get together and go there with bicycles.

They figured they were going to have dinner up her place. Two or three times they went there for dinner. Well they ordered hard boiled eggs and some philia and you know what philia is. So they didn’t know if they were going to eat or not so there was a window and a river running close by. They took that plate of food and threw it out the window and said look I ate so much already.

Is there something else that you remember?

Well there’s alot of it but you can’t remember it all.

What about working in the lumber camps, did any of you ever try that?

Oh ya,

I drove team for your dad many years

I went to Detroit and was working and a fellow there asked me if I wanted a job sawing wood. At a lumber company and I was supposed to be helping him. I had worked in the mine up there in Calumet in 1916 and 17 so I knew how to saw. He used to sweat like nobody’s business and I asked him what’s the matter are you sick. He said no you’re so darn heavy on that saw. I stayed there from November until March the breakup time. I was down to about 117 pounds then. I used to go to dances every night down there and the doctor suggested I should stay out of that town so I came up here and then I was 143 and I've kept on going and never been down since then. There were 84 men to the camp and upper and lower bunks. We used to have to buy new underwear every month because of the bedbugs.

Lice and bedbugs, it was the same way everywhere.

They had a cook there and the eats were wonderful. We had a fellow sitting on the end of the table and he would only cut the pie into six pieces and you were hungry after working out in the woods all day. They would all eat as fast as they could so they could get the pie and my partner was a slow eater and he would always miss the pie. It only paid $65.00 a month.

And that was when

Fall of twenty and spring of 21.
Sixty five bucks a month.

That was good wages in those days.

Earlier it wasn't that much was it?

No it was thirty or thirty-five.

And you're talking about what year?

Let's see that was 1923 or 24.

We thought that was good pay.

What was it like after you would come in, what would you talk about? What was the camp like?

Well you got up before daylight and had breakfast. Then you would come in at night and the lights went out at nine o'clock. You would just visit with the guys and talk and play cards.

When they were in the Ontonagon area and White Pine, here, they would stay in that area and then they would come in and drink every drop and they would even give them credit so they would come back and drink again. There was one man from Wisconsin and he said I've been trying to get into Ontonagon for five years and never made it yet.

Okay that was one group of workers in the camp but there were also these part-time farmers who in order to get some money to pay off their farm would work in the winter right? When would you generally go to the camps?

Usually in September you started building the roads and getting ready for winter hauling.

In those days the logging operations were different from what they are now. This is what you call hot logging now because everything is taken to the mill before it is cut. In those days you cut the logs in the fall and skidded them onto decks beside the road and they were left there until the snow left the road and then they were taken to the rivers. Most of the timber that left here was either taken to the Sturgeon or the Otter Lake and then into Chassell. Many lumber companies have shipped their lumber down the rivers to the bay where the river comes into Portage Lake. They had a boom there accepting each company's logs. Then those big tugs would haul them to the mills outside of Chassell. Wooster Lumber Company was really the biggest money source for around here.

Weren't the men often paid in some kind of company script?
If a local merchant owned a store they were given some kind of credit at the store and they were never really given any cash?

Some time they got something that was just as good as money. It was some kind of a guarantee from each company that said you had that much coming. You could get credit on it.

I think next to the Wooster Lumber Company was the Prior Lumber Company and that was in Ripley. I worked quite a bit for both.

I can see now we're starting to get into another thing, we just sort of bounced around from this early settling to logging. Okay let's stop right here now.
When did he come?

In 1909 he came from Europe.

From Finland?

From Finland, yes. He located in Hancock on Schafter Street. He worked in the mine there and was making a dollar a day. He worked about 12 hours a day and I was nine months old then so I don't know exactly what it would be. He sent for us when I was 13 months old so we came to America when I was 13 months old.

You said that he borrowed the money?

He borrowed the money from a friend. So that he could pay our way here and eventually he paid it back but he couldn't make that much money in those few months that he was working to bring us here. When we got here my mother was a dressmaker and she would make clothes for me of course and for some of the neighbors and she was getting about thirty-five cents to make a dress. My uncle owned the home so we didn't have to pay rent for a while until we got established. When they got enough money, then they paid the rent afterwards. From there we went to Boston and we stayed in Boston for a couple of years and when the Boston mine went, we went to Painesdale. He was a miner there in Painesdale for quite a few years because I went to ten grades up there. In the Painesdale High School. After that he worked in Trimountain Mine until he was quite old and then when the mines all shut down he was let out.

From there he went to Isle Royale and he worked there for fifteen years as night watchman. He was 75 years old and he was the oldest man on the island. They said now that the government took it over he couldn't work there any more because he was too old. So he had to quit when he was 75 years old. So he lived to be 83 then. That's when he died when he was 83 years old.

Did your mother ever have any other jobs besides being a dressmaker?

Well she made carpets and she made her own looms. My father wasn't a very good carpenter so she took and hacked out her own looms. She got .35 cents a yard for making rugs. She also crocheted and we had two cows most of the time and she sold milk, and butter.

She made the butter?

She made the butter.

Who milked,

She did because we were never allowed to go into the barn. There were six of us and not one of us knew our own cows.
We didn't know what our own cows looked like. Once my mother was real sick and she wanted the two younger kids, Vivian and Bill, she said you go up and get the cows because she had a very sore throat and she couldn't get to the pasture where we had those cows. So they went and got the cow and Vivian and Bill said gee that cow was hard, he just didn't want to come home and they couldn't figure out why that cow didn't want to come home. So mother took her milk pails and goes into the barn and here it's a black cow. We had a red cow. She said no wonder that cow didn't want to come home because it isn't even our cow. So my mother had to bundle up and take the cow back to the pasture and here's the poor old lady waiting and wondering what happened to her cow. Our cow was still in the pasture. And here mother was bringing this lady's cow back. So that's how much we knew about cows. She would never let us get anywhere near. She took care of all that barn work, she planted potatoes, rutabagas, and carrots and she took care of all that by herself. Well after I was married, mother used to make her own hay. Remember those old people used to have that .......... and they would go along the sides of the roads and make hay and put it in these bundles like. Then when she had to bring the hay back, we didn't have a car or anything so she got a sheet and she put all that hay in the sheet and threw it over her shoulder and that's the way she brought her hay in the barn.

What was it called?

It's a sythe, I couldn't think of the word sythe. She made all her own hay and of course my father after he got through in the mine, he would go and help. But then my father's job was at night to go and make wood. So my brother Arnie and I were on one end of one of these long cross cut saws. We were allowed to make wood from along the roads, we had to get a permit from the company in order to get this wood. So after my father finished work in the mine and we got through with our work we had to do at home we'd go in the woods at night and we would make that wood. Arnie would be on one side for a while until he got tired and then I would take over and that's the way we made all our winter's wood. My father carried it on his shoulder home. It was in big long pieces and when we got home he would cut it and chop it. When my mother would wash clothes, she'd wash clothes, bake and scrub floors all at one time. That way she saved water and heat. She could bake while she had the boiler on the stove to wash clothes and then when she got through and she had alot of nice soapy sudsy water, then she scrubbed the floor.

That's really efficient management.

That's for sure.

I guess you had to be efficient. Did she have to draw the water?

Well no we had water in the house. It was just cold water and there was a long pipe in the sink. You used to be able to put a bucket underneath there.
Well then you would have to put the water in the bucket and fill the copper boiler and then when that was heated, you got your scrub board and scrubbed and then put the wash in the boiler and boil them and rinse them and then hang them outside.

Did the kids help do the wash?

Not really, only me mostly because I was the oldest and I always got everything. I had to do the dishes and whatever little washing, never heavy washing. My mother got her first washing machine when my brother Arnie was 16 years old and he got a job in the mine. The first thing he bought with his wages was a washing machine. When was that?

I think that was around 1925. But my mother didn’t believe in the washing machine, she thought that didn’t wash clean. So what she did was she washed it, then she put it in the washing machine and still boiled the clothes.

You were so used to it.

Well ya, you didn’t think the clothes would get clean with nobody scrubbing them. If you think that’s interesting, you should see what happened when we first came to Otter Lake.

When was that?

That was in 1937 when we bought the place down here and it was 1938 when we first came here and it was nothing but muck and trees right down to the road. There was only room enough to put a card table there so we could have lunch there. So when we came in 1938 we had to build our first shack. So what we had to do was we had a big long crosscut saw and I was on one side and he was on the other and we cut logs so we had a place to build the first place. When we started we didn’t know one end of a board from another. We didn’t know anything about logs. So in order to start building we just put four posts up. We never knew you had to measure from corner to corner and this way. So our house was always on a rectangle. So in order to wash, I didn’t have a washboard, or machine. So Hap had two rocks in the water with a board on top and I washed all my clothes with a brush. Then I would put them in the boat that we had and take them in the middle of the lake and rinse them in there put them back in the boat and bring them up and dry them. The best thing I thought was if I could only have a washboard. That seemed to me to be the ultimate thing was to have a washboard. So my mother for my birthday she bought me a washboard. So then I had a bunch of kids who used to like to stay with me, I had six kids who at one time stayed with me. So my sister’s youngest, her daughter Connie came over to me and asked what am I doing.
I said I'm washing clothes. She looked at the wash board and said do you wash with that and I said yes. So when she went home she told her mother you should see the nice portable washing machine Aunt Ty's got. You should have one like that because wherever she goes she can wash clothes with it. I think when we got our first place we were lucky. Because no matter which way I looked it was our land. In the city you have one little house and a little square of land that you have to take care of. Ninety five acres of land and one little shack sitting there. But you'd be surprised the fun we used to have. We never had a radio. We made our wood and that's what we heated our house with. I used to have as high as twenty-five people come from town to visit. I was able to manage to cook for all of them and I can't figure out how I did it. What I did was come to Karvakko's and get some stew meat and a soup bone and we had a lot of vegetables because everybody gave you vegetables. I would make a big pot of stew and put dumplings in it and I didn't care how many people there were the pot was always on the back of the stove for whenever they were hungry. They'd have the stew or else I'd make a big batch of spaghetti sauce. I always made my own bread and pies and cakes and everything. Pancakes was something we made a lot of because we used to have four boys who came from town and they used to help us clear the land. So I would give them pancakes in the morning and they used to try and see who could eat the most pancakes. Then they were so tired they couldn't work. They had to sleep it off. Then at that time I was living on social security and I was getting $13.50 a week.

Social Security?

Not Social Security

No unemployment not social security. That was in 1939. I was working in a grocery store in Detroit, I worked there for five years. Then I was laid off for a while until they got another store because they sold this to the Wrigley Brothers. So when they layed me off they had to give me that unemployment. There were six of us living on $13.50 a week.

You mentioned that you and Hap built your own place.

Right

The two of you did that together

Right.

Could you talk a little bit about the labor and what you did and what he did?

Well we couldn't afford to buy lumber. So we went to Ahmeek and we bought an old house, and a barn. We tore that down and then these boys that were staying with us, my brother Earl Pajunnen, Paul Castor Eino Maki and Carl Polo.
These four kids, when were they going to school and then when they had time off they would always come over here and stay with us. So they went with Hap to Ahmeek and tore the barn and house down and we built our first house from that. Then the barn, we used that for our sauna. Because my father said we had to have a sauna.

That was the main thing

Ya, that was the first thing we had to have. Then we bought a house in Trimountain on Fifth Street and we used part of that especially the outside to put the siding on for that first house. Then after we got those up we had company come from Detroit and we didn't have no place to put them. So we bought a livery stable from South Range and in this livery they had one of those old fashioned what would you call them?

Oh do you mean what they used to sell bakery with?

No,

It was like a cutter

Ya, a cutter but with a top on it and red velvet inside. There was two seats and two windows on each side. Well they told us we could have that cutter if we bought the livery stable. So we took the cutter and we used to keep that right in front of the lakeshore and when anyone wanted to go swimming they could use that for a changing room and put their clothes there and go swimming from there. Then we built the other little place for the boys. That was built out of the livery stable. After we got that done we got company, Hap's folks came up here and different people from Detroit came up here because we had a place for them. We got so much company we still didn't know what to do so we had to build another camp. So Hap went into our wood, he cut down some trees and took them over to Ylitalo's mill and he had lumber madeout of that. So we had the other little shack made that way. So that's how we got into the tourist business. We had no idea that we would ever get into the tourist business. We just wanted a place that we could come to. Work in the winter in Detroit and come here in the summer time. So then people started to come and wanted to rent the place so we rented it for about five dollars a week.

When was that?

That was in 1940. So then Hap always wanted a nice log cabin. We bought the logs from .......... in 1941 during the war. So during the war you couldn't get any materials so we had to leave the cabin sit there. They had about six logs up. It was 1946 before they could finish it after the war was over. Then they finished it and I guess Mr. Herbia came and helped on that because Hap had never done any work like that before. When we'd do that we'd have to get out there and hue those logs and you know how Helmer does it. I was out there fixing the logs too.
We put one log on a day, that's all we could get on. Then after............. came he put on that one big pole the rafter on. Then they started on the roof. When we got that done, we got the roofing paper from co-op's and we had quite a few men who came to help us and they didn't charge anything. I had to be the cook then. I had to be on the ground there and measure the paper and then go up the ladder and hand them the paper. Everyone was hollering watch the cook so she doesn't fall off or we won't get any dinner today. We didn't even get the inside fixed or anything on that before Hubie Karvakko got married and he wanted to have his reception there. He's the first one who rented it for $6.00 to have his reception there. So then little by little Hap was fixing the inside. He would put the poles inside and the cross pieces and we didn't do a very good job cause everybody from Chicago arrived and they wanted to rent it so he just put it up temporarily. It's still temporarily from the time he put it up until the time we sold it. We never had a chance to live in it.

I

No

R

No we never did.

R

I thought you did once

R

We started one day and we thought we would live in there. Someone from somewhere's towards Lansing came by and said you're living in our house, get out of there. So we had to take all our stuff and go down in the basement. Of course the basement was put in afterwards that was in 1958. We had to take dynamite sticks and blow it out from underneath there because it was so hard clay. So we blew that out and then we had to go with a wheel barrell and shovel that all out and haulit back out.

I

Did you do that?

R

Oh yes. We had to put the cement blocks underneath because where the lake came up it would have probably washed them away. So I took the wheel barrell and I would go up and I would put five blocks on the wheel barrell and then Hap would be putting them up and I would have to be handing him the blocks as he was putting them up. That's how we put the blocks up. Joe Hilenbrand wanted to practice before he everknew how to lay blocks he practiced on our place. That's where he learned to block on the back wall. My father said he put blocks up in Finland and he knows how to do it so Hap said go ahead let's see how you put them up. My father got a block and the mud and he got it all lined up and when he got down to look at his work Hap said how come there's holes that you can look right through. Here he put the block the wrong way. They had to take the blocks off and Hap said well if they do it in Finland that way I don't think I had better do it herethat way because the walls would be full of holes.
So then he had to show my father how to do that. Then in 1960 we thought we would build those four modern units because they wanted indoor plumbing and they don't like that anymore where they have to go outside. So Hap and I started and I started to dig a ditch 72 feet long and 16 feet wide. Before I got through with that I got real sick and I got a gall bladder attack. I landed in the hospital. So I never did get that ditch dug. So little by little he worked on it by himself until he got it all done. He did all the plumbing and everything.

So you did quite a bit of the work around there building.

Everything except our new house now. Of course with that we had it built but we did most of the inside and other things ourself. But it was fun and you know when you're young you don't really mind it.

Bonfires you know and we had to get a permit to have a bonfire. And then all the neighbors would get around there and they would tell jokes and stores and as soon as it got cool enough so we could roast weiners we'd have great big long sticks and we'd roast weiners out there and it was alot of fun. Of course some of the weiners fell in the fire.

They were cheap themdays.

Ya, they were cheap. They were about fifteen cents a pound or something like that.

When were you clearing?

When we first got there in 1938 and 1939 and 1940 and 1941. We cleared the land there. And like I said it was nothing but a mud hole and everywhere you went it was nothing but snakes, those little grass snakes. They used to call that ..............because a finnish person can't say white. It was a White who owned that place so they used to say hibe. It was called White's Bay. That used to be a nice bathing beach there and the kids always would swim in the nude.

They used to streak.

Can't make out tape blurred.

My dad was the boss over there. They used to make cordwood there and great big hayfields. Like you were saying they used to make the hay by hand. They had a crew of men working all year around. In the summer it was hay making and in the fall and winter it was cord wood making. My two oldest sisters and a brother were there and I was born here. I was born in Elo after they moved here in 1906 and I was born after that.

Did they homestead?

My dad bought a forty of land out in the wilderness
There were no roads, they used to travel right through. From here they used to cut across Mantta's and then over to Niemi's place. When I was a real little kid I can remember the maples all over and all you could see was a narrow roadway where the people used to travel. You didn't see anything until you started school in the little red school house up there on the hill in Elo. We used to walk about a mile and a half to the school house. We didn't think of it summer and winter. Of course we weren't allowed to go to school until we were seven years old.

What did your parents do when they came here?

Well my father used to work in the lumber camps. Mother used to stay home with us a bunch of us kids.

How did she manage while she was away? What were her chores and what were your chores?

She always had a few cows. She took care of the cows and the house but she had it a little easier washing clothes.

Did she have a washing machine?

She didn't have a washing machine but it was otherwise convenient. I didn't know of any hardships like that around there.

How was it convenient?

Well everything was handy right there in the house. Of course she used to fire with wood like everyone else did with the boiler.

Did she raise a garden?

Yes always, she had her own meat, potatoes, vegetables, and we didn't have to buy anything, not even our own flour, we raised our own grain for flour. All they had to buy was sugar, coffee and salt. And of course the baking powder and stuff like that. Other than that everything was home grown. Besides she used to make carpets like her mother and she used to sew all of our clothes and for all the neighbors around the country.

They had to do that to make ends meet.

Did she preserve food in the wintertime?

Oh yes,

How did she preserve food?

She used to can it. And in the wintertime they would slaughter meat for their supply and slaughter in the spring time and can that.

Did your mother save the blood from the animals?

Yes always.
Ya, we had lots of blood bread which in a way is good for you I guess. It was a healthy food and everybody had blood bread. They used to have potatoes and meat and put this blood bread in with this then.

Sounds like she used to do the same thing.

I didn't like it at all

I did. I used to like it warm

We never cooked it with potatoes, we used to cook it with milk.

I should tell you about the schools. We had to walk to the schools two miles from Trimountain. At that time there was no way to get the roads plowed. So in order for us to go when it was real real bad and we had a storm we had long underwear and we had long stockings and we would have to take them and whirl them around like so and then our shoes and boots and on top of the boots another pair of stockings. We would go on our hands and knees and walk up to the main road like skis. Otherwise you would get up to your waist in snow and you couldn't go anywhere. So we would crawl until we got to the main road and then once in a while the teamsters would go through with there horses. Well they would make a little path so we could follow that path all the way to the Painesdale school and we would stay in school all day and take one little sandwich to school with us. Sometime I wouldn't take any because I was ashamed of that black bread that we had at home. My mother would have a big piece of black bread with lots of butter and not much meat of course. To take that out of a lunch box where some of the English people had nice fancy sandwiches I'd rather not even have anything to eat. All day long we'd be in school without anything to eat. Then coming home sometime it was so bad that we couldn't even see our way home. We went to school like that from the fourth grade up until the tenth grade. We never had busses, we walked summer and winter regularly rain or shine it didn't matter.

That's what we used to do but then when Doelle's first school was built we were transferred to Doelle. We had busses to bring us there then.

What year was that?

Gee what year was it when the Doelle school was built. I can't remember, Helmer would remember when that was.

They had heaters like this and I don't remember what they used to put in them and you used to put your feet on top of them like this on the floors.

Do you remember when Peter Creek used to run almost across the road and the horses used to go in Peter Creek so they could get a drink of water. I used to be so scared when we would go there because I was always afraid of water. I would always walk, I wouldn't go with the horses.
I let the horses go past there and then I would walk. Once Edna and I, they came over to sell potatoes, mother let me go with them one day to stay here for a week. Edna and I practically walked from Painesdale to Anna's farm here. That's a good fifteen miles if not more. We walked that distance because we didn't want the horse to get too tired. I don't think I was more than ten years old then.

Did the women do any slaughtering?

Well my dad did all the slaughtering. The pigs, cows, or bulls that they used to have for meat. Mother used to kill the chickens and pluck them.

Remember Mr. Komulus here,

Ya

Well he was a butcher. He used to come to Painesdale and do all of our butchering.

My dad used to do most of his own butchering though.

We used to go and pick berries. That was our summer's job. Every summer, first the wild strawberries, mother used to make jams and jellies and put them up in bottles.

Next came hay making time.

Then came raspberries.

Was that your mother who did that?

Ya, my mother. We all went into the woods and we all picked enough so we all could have enough to put up for the winter. Then we had cherries trees at home which was nice. We put up cherries and applies. We dried applies, hung them on a string in the upstairs and dried them.

Ya mother used to do that too.

How about blueberries?

Yes, we always put a lot of blueberries up.

Not only that we used to walk into the swamps back of Usila's to pick blueberries.

We picked cranberries in bogs in Painesdale. You had to be so careful because in those bogs there was quicksand in there. How us kids ever managed to get through there without falling into that quicksand I'll never know.

Was that a big part of your winter diet?
Yes, berries were. Everytime when we had company come over mother would make one great big cake without any frosting on. Then she would put berries on it and thick thick whipping cream. That's one thing, we ate good when we were kids. We always had homemade bread, lots of butter, we had buttermilk and all the milk we wanted to drink.

And lots of whipped cream if you wanted it?

Yes, and lots of whipped cream

If you wanted to make it

Not much meat, if you had to buy it. I think for six of us she would buy a two pound roast. And that really had to stretch.

At my home we always had lots of meat because dad made sure he always had something to slaughter.

We just had those two cows always so we didn't have much meat and then we raised pigs too. But the trouble is we made pets out of our animals and we couldn't eat them after.

I'll tell you what happened after I got married. We took a little piece of land and we had a little calf and we were going to slaughter that for winter and you know our son who was six years old said boy am I going to eat that meat and you know when that was slaughtered he would not eat one piece of meat. He said oh you killed my pet.

Right, We had a pig and I called him pinky. He was a little pink thing when he was born so I used to keep a pink ribbon around him. It was so funny because when I came back from school you know with five kids in the house you couldn't do much studying. So I would take my books and go out into the woods. I would take pinky with me. She'd go into a little pit like and I would cover her over with leaves and then I would do my studying there. Then when I got through Pinky would be snoring there and I would always pretend that I was going to leave her. So I would get up and walk away and you know I never got very far before Pinky found out I was gone. It wasokay when she was small but when she was big I used to try and get on top of a fence so she didn't run into me. She got to be such a pet than in Trimountain Store when I would go to the store, I'd never notice but pinky would follow me. Then she'd be there by the door and somebody would let her in and that darn pig would come into the store and I felt like two cents every time I saw that pig because I didn't want to admit that pig was mine. Once when I had to go upstairs to get some material for a dress here pinky came upstairs. I had to pick the pig up and take her downstairs. I was hoping that nobody would see me with that pig. Then she got so she went to the mine to meet my father. Because my father would always save a piece of bread for her. So at 4:00 when she knew my father would be coming from the mine she'd sit right there and wait for him to give her the piece of bread. Then she'd walk home with the men.
When it came time to slaughter there was nothing but fat practically because my father used to feed that pig so good. None of us would eat her. In them days they put it down as salt brine. We didn't have any way to keep pork. So they made salt brine and they put the meat in salt brine.

In a barrel

Right and then you would take that meat from there every time you wanted meat. We wouldn't eat it so my aunt Mrs. Kuusisto used to walk from Painesdale to Trimountain every time she wanted meat so piece by piece she carried that whole pig home because as soon as we saw pinky on the table we didn't want any part of it.

We also had dried beef and in the wintertime it would be frozen

And the pork was salted

Ya, because pork is something that can't be kept for very long. And then if there are any flies and the flies get into it you're in trouble. So that had to be in brine most of the time.

They also smoked it.

Yes, they alot of times smoked it.

My dad used to smoke beef and that used to really be good. They used to have that sauna,

Right, that old fashioned sauna and the smoke would come right in there. I can remember when the sauna would start burning. He got it so hot in there that the grease in there was dripping and naturally it would catch on fire. But that thing is still standing out there.

We used to smoke fish in our bath house near the lake. Hap made racks and we would salt it down for overnight and then when the smoke would come inside you would take a dipper of water and throw it onto those hot rocks and that would cook that fish then. You would run out of there quick so you didn't get all that smoke in your face. Then after that fish was done they would all sit around there and eat fish and bread. That was our meal for that night when we had fresh smoked fish. In those days you really got alot of fish from Otter Lake. Anybody could go out there and catch fish. Even with a safety pin you could put a little piece of worm on the end with a piece of string and catch fish.

Well we were just talking of ways to preserve the bigger animals. Were they mostly slaughtered in the fall.

Ya, mostly as soon as the weather got colder.
Because they were easier to keep?

Yes.

They were easier to keep and you could have fresh meat then all winter. Because it would be frozen.

Then how about chicken, fish and smaller game.

Well, they used to be slaughtered as you would use them up.

Anytime?

If you had company coming over and you wanted chicken dinner, you went and chopped a head off and there it was.

It was always fresh then that way.

Mother used to salt fish too

We'd buy a fresh trout and mother would salt that down and what would they call ............

Fish and potatoes and was that good. When you were a kid and you got a pound of weiners, didn't you think that was really something? A pound of weiners and a loaf of bought bread.

Now we don't think anything of it.

Now when people come from the city and you have homemade bread, they just go wild over homemade bread. And at that time we were ashamed of the homemade bread. My mother used to make those great big round loaves of bread and they would put them right in the bottom of the stove and they got nice and brown see. Then when they came out of the stove, she'd take the bread up against her chest and take the butcher knife and cut those great big long slabs. She'd take butter and butter it and each one of us would get a big slab of bread and butter. So the next door neighbors, would come out and ask can I have a piece of your bread and they'd be eating on one end and I would be eating on the other end. Those kids thought it was a treat to eat that bread.

And here we were ashamed of homemade bread because it was such a long slab.

They would also trade their sandwiches for ours because of the bread
We always had a lot of butter.

We sometimes used to use as high as eight pounds of butter a week.

Now you put the butter on as thin as you can and in those days you put it on as thick as you wanted to.

How about rice pudding, we always had rice pudding with raspberry sauce. They would cook the raspberries and take the seeds out and then put that on top of the rice pudding.

That was really delicious.

I can't make it today, I don't know, it doesn't taste the same. The coffee doesn't smell the same either.

Do you know why?

Why?

It's doped up more.

We used to grind our coffee from beans and you had the real coffee. We never thought of ground coffee bought, weren't they bought in barrels too. Oh I remember it seems to me we bought big barrels of toast.

They used to have those five pound pails.

I remember my mother used to buy Monarch coffee especially and it used to come in five pound pails.

Coffee beans and every house had a coffee grinder.

The first thing in the morning we would have to start grinding coffee.

Oh another thing, we'd sleep and we would have feather quilts on because we would never have any heat night. The stoves would always go out. So mother would get up in the morning and she'd have everything she could think of on her and she would go down and get the fires going and then when we'd come downstairs we'd all run downstairs and see who could sit on that oven door to warm up. We'd dress thereon that oven door.

Kids weren't too sickly then either.

I was never sick and I don't think any of us were ever sick.

When it was cold, it was cold.
Of course in my home, it was never cold, mother used to fire up in
the night. She'd always get up and put a block of wood on the fire.

Well my mother was always so tired. She had babies all the time,
one right after another and then taking care of the cows and the fields
so when she fell asleep she really slept. Of course then my father
worked night shift and he just came right in the morning.

Well my mother was always so tired. She had babies all the time,
one right after another and then taking care of the cows and the fields
so when she fell asleep she really slept. Of course then my father
worked night shift and he just came right in the morning.

We had old fashioned maltex that tasted different that it does today.
Lot's of bread and butter and we all drank coffee when we were kids.
Now a days the kids don't drink it but the first thing, we opened
up our eyes and we had coffee.

And you know they never measured things, a little bit of this and
that and that was it.

Well, they used butter in all their dishes.

Did your parents come from Finland?

My dad did. My mother was born here and he came at the age of 21
and worked in the mines all his life.

When did he come?

I don't know.

Do you know when your mother's parents came.

No

A long time ago though

Isn't that awful, I never did question that.

Just like me, I never remembered days or anything like that

Where did they come when they first came here?

They went to Baltic

To work in the mines?

Right

How long did they stay there?

Well my father worked in the mine for 32 years.
R We lived in various range towns, Baltic, Trimountain, Painesdale and South Range.

I Then how did you get out into the country?

R I got married and been living here 15 years. So I don’t know anything how this area was developed.

R My father was only 19 years old when he came from Finland and my mother came with her parents. She was only 5 years old. They went to school in Hancock. They lived in Hancock before they came out to the farm.

I Working in the mines?

R My dad worked in the mine. Then we moved to Askel and bought the farm from a Frenchman there called Baumgarter. That was the only other nationality here.

R .......... owned property here and he used to live in Houghton because that’s the one my father bought our place from. He was a Frenchman and a bachelor and lived on the farm.

R I’ve heard different old people talk about a party by that name.

R There were about 400 fruit trees on ours when my dad got it.

I You mean when your father bought the land?

R No not that many then but he added alot on it but there were alot of trees when he bought it.

I When was that he bought it?

R He bought that farm in about 1907.

I And there were already fruit trees on it?

R Oh ya and grape vines. He used to make vine wine this Baumgartner did.

R But dad chopped them down because half the time they didn’t ripen and would fall the season short.

Did your family have to clear land?

R Oh ya, he cleared alot of land. I don’t think he had alot of cattle but he had a little barn and I think his barn was the first rock barn in the area.

R I think so.
He made a big barn out of the rocks out of the fields. Then he cleared alot of land but he worked in the lumber camps too. There were lumber camps all around and he could just walk to one, they were so close.

Ya, they were so close.

Where Agnes Ahola lives they used to go all in the back because that was being lumbered.

Did the men when they worked in the lumbercamps was it more seasonal, did they try to work on the farm.

Just winter mostly. Because that's the only time they could haul them out. They hauled them out with sleighs because they didn't have no trucks, it was all horses and sleighs. They would haul them to the river and run them down the river.

They were logging pine then ha?

No hardwood too.

There used to be alot of hemlock too

They used to be big logs that for sure

There used to be great big pine stumps that my dad had to get rid of afterwards.

You know even now, every once in a while a log will come up. It's got the name of who was logging that and come to think of it one of our cabins is made out of all the logs that were taken out of the lake.

Sure theyused to be full of deadheads and they are still full of them but they've been taking themout now. I know we had some people here once from Detroit visiting us and he said in Finland they would take all those logs and evenif they'd beenin the water for 20 years and they would still be good.

I think since somebody found that out here they've been taking those.

 Those shorelines would be full of logs. And that's how they brought all the logs down, they weren't hauled to the mill. They went down the river and some of them if it was flood time they went into Otter Lake.

One night my ....... took a ride on the logs and the ropes broke and the chains and the logs came down on him and he had two broken legs. And alot of internal injuries and we didn't think he would live. So after that I don't think he worked very much. But they went into the snowbank otherwise he would have been killed.

Well did your dad ever work in the camps?
R  No he just worked from home
I  How about your dad?
R  He used to stay
I  In the wintertime?
R  Ya and when he was farther away. We would just be home alone with mother. Well then when he got more cleared he had more hay to sell and he would sell hay, potatoes, so then he didn't work out. We used to have a lot of cows then and mother would make butter and sell it. And cream also.
I  I wonder if the idea of your parents moving here was to get where they could eventually live by farming and not have to work out?
R  That's the idea my dad had.
R  I think so.
R  They found out they could earn more by working from themselves than by working out. I think the most they got was $3.50 a day and I left for Detroit in October 8, 1926.
I  Was that working in the woods?
R  No that was working in the mine
R  All they got was $3.50 for working and I can't remember was it still a 12 hour day?
R  No eight hours.
I  A day
R  Right.
I  They got that much in a day.
R  A day, right. For eight hours work. When Hap came up here and we were married in 1927. Well when he first came up here he was a mechanic and he was going to get a job with Chevrolet here. Do you know they wanted to give him $3.50 a day and he had to furnish his own tools. He couldn't see it. Because by the time you drive from here to town and you eat your lunch there and come back what have you got? So he figured it's just as easy for him to stay home and cleaned out our woods and sold lumber. Everytime we needed money we would let somebody go in there and cut down some lumber and we'd sell it. In fact that's what he's doing right now. 69 years old and he's gone back in to the lumbering business.
We can't get by on our social security.

Well in those days everybody had big dairy herds, I mean allot of cows. The most they ever had at my home was 12 though.

How did they manage in the winter to get all that food for them?

Well my dad raised all the grain they needed and had it ground for feed and all the hay they needed. They had plenty of everything, they didn't have to buy feed like everybody does now.

Who did the milking then when you had allot of cows?

My mother, my brothers and I helped.

Have you been .........?

I didn't have to milk when I was going to school.

I always helped with everything. Making hay, going in the barn but until the electric lights came in then we got a milking machine. Then I didn't go in the barn and then I guess I left home by then too.

I got married in 25.

Have you been married that long?

The whole family went in.

Well not the whole family because there were too many of us but my brothers usually took care of the horses and then when we got the milking machine my brother's took care of it.

Did your father used to go into the barn.

Oh yes.

My father never went into a cow barn.

My father wouldn't either.

Was that a thing with men?

Ya, the women do the women's work and that was women's work. My father believed that he was a miner and that's all he does.

My father always went into the barn. Unless he was working out and didn't get home on time but he always went into the barn.

My father never went into the cow barn.

Where did they sell the milk or was it just cream that they sold?
R Cream mostly. Then Pelkie had a dairy and they used to send the cream there.

I To the creamry?

R Ya. Then when they started hauling milk they used to haul it to the Copper Country Dairy.

R That was before we had a separator, one of those things that took the cream out of the milk and then the cream just went out. Then the calves always drank the milk. Even the pigs would drink the milk.

I Remember when before the creamry came in, your mother sold butter?

R Yes, that's what my mother used to do.

I Well after the creamry came in, did your mother take the cream to the creamry?

R Well we never sold butter in our house.

R You didn't, well we did. Well when the creamry came to Pelkie the mailman used to haul the cream to the creamry. He used to get paid for doing that.

R Oh yes, my father was a mailman for years and years and then my brother took over and they used to haul it.

R Sure, you'd bring your five gallon can to the gate and he'd pick it up.

R Not so much in the winter time because the cows wouldn't be milking so much then.

I Did your parents sell cream too?

R We sold butter before we got the creamry.

I Did the mailman take your cream, or who took it?

R We didn't have a mailman, we had to go to the postoffice.

R Well, they lived closer to the creamry in Pelkie than we did.

I Do you remember who took the cream to the creamry then?

R With a horse and buggy.

I Who drove?

R Mother and my brothers. Whoever was handy.

R Well that was always men's jobs when they were heavy.
The men.

Ya. Mother never used to handle those heavy cans.

Would that be your father's job or one of your brother?

My oldest brother. See at the time they started sending cream, he was old enough to do that.

In the fall it was making wood and the spring making hay, planting your potatoes.

I thought you made wood in the spring?

They would do that in July and August and then in September they would pick the potatoes.

Who dug the potatoes?

The whole family. Everyone got out there and helped.

I have gotten out there and dug as much as 25 bushels in one day.

We used to like that though. We would always try and beat each other for who was going to get the most picked.

Well when we used to come up here from Detroit for a vacation, mother would go in the field and take a bunch of potatoes and all she would do is put them in a pan and shake them up and all that skin would fall off of there and then she would have creamed potatoes.

What did you used to do for fun while in the country?

Well a bunch of us kids would get together and play games.

Duck on a rock especially.

We went to occasional shows.

And the electric park over there in Calumet, they used to have that and go to dances. And the Otter River Hall here.

What year was that?

That must have been in 1926.

That must have been during the years I was in Detroit.

Remember that Viola Turpinnen used to play there. With her accordion. She played Finnish dances and oh that was fun there.

My brother was a regular MC always and boy when him and Eino Maki would get together and they would pretend they were hunters and they would put on a monocle and they were really funny.
We'd sit there for hours listening to them. Then my brother was a poet and he could make poetry just out of anything. Anything that came up he could make poems out of them. Then of course they always called Hap the Simon Legree because he was always after them to get this done and that done. So he even made a poem about Simon Legree. Then at the end he would say he might will that stick but we'd go through hell and fire for him. I'm so sorry now that I didn't copy some of them down. Then when Jiggs died it affected him so much that he made the most beautiful poem for Jiggs. It was printed here in the Mining Gazette and a man wrote tome and asked if he could use that for his dog.

She'd come over here and she'd always have her hands like this on her hips. She'd walk through the woods and she'd go for hours and I didn't know where she was. She'd just keep talking and make up poetry as she went along. But I heard that all my life so I didn't think anything of it. Now I'm so sorry that I didn't copy some of that down. Because it was really beautiful but you know when you're kids growing up you don't think of anything. So my brother Erwin and my sister are both very poetic.

They had these huge rock houses and they were covered with snow and we would just take a piece of cardboard and come sliding down on those.

That's right.

Then we'd make toboggans out of this sheet metal. The corrugated sheet metal and that was the only toboggan we had.

What about barrell stave skiis?

Right

When we'd think about that lightening in Trimountain we'd go down that hill and we'd make great big bumps so they would jump way up high. Then I think if those skiis would have slipped off we would have gone head over heels. Then we'd get on top of the barns or bath houses and see who could jump the fartherest into the snow. Sometimes you would get stuck in the snow.

Sounds like we all did the same hey?

Then in the fall we would go out and play in the leaves.

We'd have a big pile of leaves and we'd have what we call a swinging tree that was the same place I used to take Pinky. We'd swing and then let out and fall into that pile of leaves. You'd go clear up over your head into those leaves.

The kids made the fun themselves.

We never had things to play with.

Your father made the skiis?
My father made all the skiis

Every kid had a pair of skiis.

On moonlight nights we used to go skiing.

That's when we used to go too.

Then we would build a bonfire along the road. We used to go on that county road going towards Arnheim. Today I would never dare go down there.

Did you ever build bonfires along the road to see where you were going?

Oh yes.

Did you ever take a wagon and whole bunch of you would go somewhere to skate?

No

Oh we went on hayrides.

They'd have hay in the wagons and it would be nice and warm.