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)

(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:
Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:
“Maki, John”, Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557
Evelyn Turunen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parentage and first Homestead</td>
<td>2378</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way in which Women were Raided</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chores and Responsibilities</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry- Picking</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in the Barn</td>
<td>2381</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Family Income</td>
<td>2382-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a &quot;Tomboy&quot;</td>
<td>2384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Games and Activities</td>
<td>2385-86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Church Attendance</td>
<td>2387</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority of Parents</td>
<td>2387-88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating In High School</td>
<td>2388-89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Getting Married</td>
<td>2389-90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Schooling</td>
<td>2391-92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Women</td>
<td>2393-94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I: ...with Evelyn Turunen and she's looking at some of the pictures taken in the Pelkie area many, many years ago and she might have some comments on those, and also will be talking about her own biographical history and the history of her family in this area. Do you remember who was the first person in your family who came to this area?

R: Well, my mother and dad lived in Copper Country when they were first married. My dad worked in the mine and his sister was living, the place where I live, it was called Hazel and his sister was living there and I think that was one of the reasons why he moved out there, but they were already married when he moved to the farm.

I: Were they born here or did they come...

R: No, my mother and dad were both born in Finland...my mother was 13 when she came to this country, she had a married sister living in Paynesville, that's near Bruce's Crossing, and she went to live with her...and helped her take care of her family, and then my dad was 18 when he came to this country and he had relatives in Copper Country so that's why he went to the Copper Country area.

I: And neither of your grandparents came?

R: No, I had never seen any of my grandparents.

I: Do you know when your dad left the mine?

R: No, I wouldn't really. I don't remember dates, no dates, because...I'm just trying to think back...who was born at what...

I: Would it have been any time during when they had the strikes and that? That's when a lot of...

R: I think that's probably the time that he would have left and came out and started farming.

I: Do you know where he bought his farm from? Or did he homestead?

R: I think that land, I think he bought it from his sister, now I'm not sure but it seems to me, his sister was married to Esko Kinnunen...and I think he bought the land from him...and that's how he got started...now I don't know if Esko got it as a homestead...but I do know that he had been there before my mother and dad were there.

I: Was it logged?

R: Well, there were some clearings there but I think he did some logging and had
to do a lot of, most of the clearing himself...and it's a real hilly area.

I: One of the things that I'd like to talk about for a little while is the way women were raised, or the way little girls were raised to become women, and the kinds of chores you had to do that were specifically your chores because you were a girl, you know, as opposed to some chores that your brother might have done because...

R: He was a boy.

I: Right, and also the kinds of ideas your mother had about the right way to raise a girl, you know, so that you'd grow up to be a nice person.

R: Well, I was, I'm the youngest in the family and where I've always sort of felt like I'm in a generation by myself because my mother was married late in life, she was 30 years old when she got married and she had eight kids so she was about two months shy of 48 when I was born...so as far as doing a lot of chores, anyway the rest of the family always used to think that I didn't really have to do too much...at least that's how they used to feel that...then, you know, they had to do a lot more at home than I did...and I would imagine by that time things were a little bit different already than when my older sisters and brothers were at home...I can't really say that I had to do all that much...I never had to help out in the barn, in fact, I haven't learned how to milk a cow, I've never milked a cow in all my life...and I really have no intentions of learning, either...so we did have to do, well, during the summer we had to do some work in the yard, when we had a vegetable garden we had to work out there and then during baying we had to help.

I: When you were working in the garden, did you plant, did you weed, did you harvest, what kinds of things?

R: Well, mostly weed and harvest.

I: Who did the planting?

R: I think my mother and dad must have done most of that...and my older sisters and brothers.

I: They did, too?

R: Yeah.

I: Who broke up the ground in the spring?

R: My dad...and then as far as working around the house, well, I had to do dishes and things like that, you know, some light cleaning and picking up, but I do, you know, thinking back now that I think there's a lot of things that I could have done that I didn't do...but then, too, I think I probably did have an advantage because I was the youngest in the family.

I: Do you recall picking berries or gathering things?

R: Yes, we used to pick berries and that I do remember, I have developed a real
I: Who went to pick berries in the family?

R: Well, my mother used to always go, my mother liked to pick berries and if my oldest brother Ray was around he used to pick a lot of berries, but it was usually my sister Ellen and my brother Paul and I that usually had to go, the younger ones.

I: Your dad didn’t go?

R: Not much, sometimes on a Sunday he would go but most of the time he didn’t.

I: And then how did she, how were the berries processed?

R: My mother used to can them.

I: She did that.

R: She did the canning, yeah.

I: Who washed the jars?

R: Well, I think my sister Ellen did that mostly.

I: One of the kids.

R: Yeah...and I think I’d wash some jars, too.

I: But was that usually one of the chores that the kids...

R: Yeah, they had to help with that...but I do remember we did have to clean those berries and I used to think that was just so terrible after we had spent all day out there picking the things to begin with and then come home and sit there and clean them...and then can them.

I: And can them the same day?

R: No, you usually couldn’t do that all in one day...take a couple days to do it.... when one of my brothers was at home, I think he had been away from home and he had come back, and he had gone to pick raspberries further off because I remember we had gone with the car and I thought, well, gee, that’s going to be quite an event because they sort of talked about this being a picnic...and we had been out there for a while and I picked for a while and I got tired of it so I went and sat in the car and he was so angry with me because I ate almost all...
the sandwiches...they really didn't think I was worth bringing along because I ate up most of the lunch.

I: You really had a picnic

R: I really had a picnic, nobody else did.

I: Did the girls usually go in the barn or was that usually the boys that went in the barn or did they have separate chores that they each did?

R: Well, I had four brothers and two sisters and my oldest, the oldest in the family was a girl. I really didn't remember too much about her because she was pretty well, now, let's see, Mildred would have been, let's see, how much older is she than I am...but anyway I don't remember too much about her being at home...but I do remember...let's see, from Evert, Evert and Paul being at home and they used to go in the barn with my mother and dad, my mother always went in the barn...in fact, my mother was always the first one up in the morning...she'd get up before anybody and put the coffee water on and build a fire and put the coffee water going and she'd go in the barn and I don't know what she did in there, throw the hay back for the cows or something and then she'd come in the house and she'd wake up everybody else, she'd wake my dad up...and this was a big thing when we got married, Reuben used to kid me about it, you know, about getting up and going in the barn and then waking him up, and I said, "No way...I wasn't about to do that."

I: Then were her chores done there in the barn? Did she fix breakfast while your dad went in the barn?

R: No, she'd make coffee and then she had the coffee water, I think she had the coffee ready by the time my dad and my brothers got up and they'd go in the barn...and she went in the barn with them.

I: Back in with them.

R: Yeah, she used to like to work in the barn.

I: Was that unusual for women to go in the barn?

R: No, no, I think they all did...and then...she used to come back in the house and then wake us up and we had to, those that were going to school, too, and get us off to school.

I: Then is that when she made breakfast?

R: Yeah, then after...she'd fix a breakfast then after they came out of the barn but I don't know, it seemed they always had to have coffee in the morning before they went in the barn, I always remember that where she'd have coffee...

I: She must have started her day pretty early?

R: She did, she started her day much earlier than the rest of us would...and then she was always one to when cows would freshen, well, she was the one that
stayed up at night and watched the cow.

I: Oh, yeah?

R: My mother was, she wouldn't trust anybody else to do it, it was, that was her doing.

I: She was a midwife.

R: She was a midwife, I think she slept more than one night in the barn...she'd be afraid that something would happen so she'd stay there.

I: I should have asked how many cows that you had?

R: Not many, we didn't farm on a big scale.

I: But you did farm for...

R: Yeah, we had...

I: You sold cream?

R: Milk...or I think...it may have gone as cream at first, I think they did separate but now that I don't remember, either, I remember we had a milk separator, but I don't remember ever seeing it used...but the milk that was shipped, it was shipped out as milk.

I: Do you know where it went?

R: It went to the cheese factory here in Pelkie...but I know that they had shipped cream earlier...'cause that's the only way that they took it.

I: Well, the creamery was here first.

R: Yeah, yeah, but that I don't remember at all.

I: Did your father work out other than on the farm?

R: I don't know...yeah, he did some logging, too, well, mostly in the wintertime.

I: Independent?

R: Independent, yeah...oh, I think at one time he did do some logging, he worked for, I think he worked for a Theiler who was a contractor, a logger, at one time, because I remember he got hurt in the woods...when he was working for him, I remember he fell on his head...but mostly for himself, you know, just taking out pulpwood and logs and that kind of stuff to supplement the income.

I: Was that from his own land?

R: Yeah.

I: And then when he was logging were there certain chores that the rest of the
family had to take over because he was otherwise occupied?

R: Well, no, I don't really think so because he milked in the mornings and evenings anyway, this was something that he did in between... in between milkings or between chore time... but our farm was real, real small, I mean, you know, in comparison to what we're doing now, it was just, you couldn't, I know you wouldn't be able to get along with a farm like that in this day and age, no way... the way it is now you've either got to go at it big or you don't do it at all.

I: Yeah... did they do anything else to supplement the family income? Did your mother sew or weave or do anything?

R: No, not really, she sewed a lot of our clothes when we were little but... I don't think she, I don't know if she ever did any for... you know, for anyone else... I doubt very much, I don't think she had the time, and when they had logging camps in Hazel she had boarders... but this, too, was long before my time, I don't remember any of that... it was when my older brothers and sisters were little, she used to take in boarders... 'cause I remember her talking about having to wash clothes for these guys, wash these big, heavy underwear and she'd chop a hole in the ice in the creek and carry the water and heat the water and then wash all these things out by hand then on a scrub board, and then she'd have little kids to take care of, too, and so I imagine the reason she must have taken these boarders was to supplement the income... but sometimes when I think about all the work I have, well, I sort of think that way that at least I don't have to do it on a scrub board..... that was something that we usually done on Saturdays is cleaning...? although I was, I think in about the first... I think I was in about the first grade in school, either the first or the second grade, when we got electricity, now our neighbors had had it, Waisanen's had electricity as far back as I can remember but we didn't have it... and oh, yeah, my aunt and uncle had it, too, long before we did... but there were a lot of people there in the area that didn't have it... but I imagine the reason that we didn't have it was just the fact that there wasn't the money to get it... and then they must have come in with more lines, too, because then the time when we got it, well, then there was a lot of people that hooked up on it... but it really did...

I: About what year was that, do you remember?

R: I think I was in about, I know it was either the first or the second grade, now let's see... I graduated in '52... that would have been in the... early 40s... yeah, probably about '39 or '40 when...

I: When electricity came through... or a lot more lines.

R: More people got it and were able to afford it because up until then it was just a few select people that had it.

I: Was there something, some reason that people could afford it at that time?

R: I don't know, I really don't know what it is because...

I: How about the cheese factory, maybe it opened up?
R: The cheese factory had been going already then...but I don't know if there was some kind of a government subsidy on it at the time or not. I don't know because like now there's the REA in here, you know, some of the farmers are hooked up on REA but that wasn't REA because I always remember we used to get our electricity through the Houghton County Power Company or something, anyway something to do with Houghton...it's now the U. P. Power...so it wasn't the REA that came through there...but what the reason was at the time when all these people were able to get in on it I really don't know.

I: Why don't we talk a little bit about how you were raised, some of the beliefs that your parents had or that your mother had, of the ways that a girl should be raised, like some of the privileges maybe that you had that your brothers didn't or that your brothers had that you didn't...or weren't there any common sayings maybe like...

R: Tomboy in that respect because my brother, I think Paul was about, he is three or four years older than I am, and then my sister Ellen is older than Paul...so I used to, and I never did have anyone in my own age close by so I used to hang around with Paul all the time so I sort of grew up with the idea that it was O. K. to be tough and I had to be tough to keep up with him...in fact, I used to think it was real great when I could get him down on the ground and beat the daylights out of him...I used to think I was real smart to do that.

I: Did your parents have anything to say about...

R: Well, my mother didn't like that because he'd go crying to my mother all the time and she didn't like that, she thought it was awful because I was always beating up on poor Paul and he was older than I was.

I: You must have been a tough one.

R: And I also remember my cousin, Nina Jolgren, used to come over to visit and in the wintertime when the boys would ski, well, I'd go along with them and they didn't really appreciate it when I'd come and wreck their ski hills for them...'cause I wasn't anywhere near as good a skier as they were and I'd fall and they'd make those ski jumps and they'd make take-offs out of snow and I'd go down on them, well, I'd fall and I'd knock the snow down and they've yelled at me more than once and thrown snowballs at me to get me out of there...and then they used to dare me to do all kinds of stupid things like jumping out of a haybarn...and I was dumb enough to do what they told me to do.

I: You'd take a dare.

R: I'd take a dare...and they were both older than I was so dumb to do any difference.

I: What kinds of games did you play when you were younger?

R: Well, we used to play ball a lot and I remember playing King's Land and I remember playing...

I: What's King Land?
R: I don't think I would even know how to play it anymore...
I: Because I've heard someone mention it before.
R: Well, anyway, it's choosing sides...and then we used to play Kick the Can, I remember that...but I do remember playing ball a lot...you know, get a baseball and you get a bunch of kids together, well, we used to do that...and play It.
I: Tag?
R: Tag, yeah, when somebody would come over and had enough kids, well, you'd usually do that until it was so dark that you couldn't see anymore, you were running into each others and...
I: Hide and Seek?
R: Yeah...and let's see, what else did we do...well, I think in the wintertime we used to play cards, play checkers...like playing cards now, my mother and dad weren't really too excited about our having playing cards in the house because there was something about playing cards that they just didn't really, didn't really like...but this was mostly when my brother Paul and I were at home...we were the only ones at home anymore and they used to tell us, well, if you wanted to play cards, well, do it but not when there was, you know, other adults around...you know, not to do it in their presence because there were a lot of old people that just didn't approve of cards at all...but my dad used to think, connect, card-playing with gambling...so they didn't really encourage us to play.
I: How about outdoor sports in the wintertime?
R: Skiing...and some skating, I used to like to skate when I was little but then I got away from it and I haven't skated for many, many years...but I used to like to ski, I think we did more skiing...
I: Was that down-hill or cross-country?
R: Cross-country...of course it was real hilly where I grew up so there was a lot of hills and same thing with sleighing...sleigh riding, we used to do a lot of that.
I: Sleigh riding with pushing it or...a horse?
R: Well, we used to sleigh ride on the roads
I: Not with the horse, though.
R: No, not with a horse...I don't think I've ever gone sleigh riding with a horse, it was just with regular sleighs...and then some of the kids used to have toboggans and sometimes they'd come over with toboggans and go toboggan riding...and I remember falling off the toboggan and then getting such a hard jar I had a toothache for a couple days.......when it would drip it was almost like a wall, straight up and down, and I was at the end of the toboggan and I
must have been the youngest one and I wasn't hanging on or either there wasn't a lot of room and there was a ditch in under and when I fell I hit that ditch and I really got a hard jar...I do remember having a real bad toothache. we had a few sleigh riding parties on the North Laird hill, the Hazel hill and the North, you know, where the and we'd usually try and get out there before the County came along and sanded it so it would be real nice and slippery and if you were ambitious enough to walk all the way up on the North Laird hill you really got a real nice, long ride all the way down and then we'd usually have a bonfire and...

I: Roast hotdogs?

R: Roast hotdogs and marshmallows up there...I do remember doing that a few times...and that, too, had its dangers and...it was all right if it was a moonlight night but if there was a lot of kids there, well, you could get hit by a sleigh real easily...and the sleighs had a metal strip in the front and I do remember getting hit in the ankles more than once I didn't get out of the way and it was dark and you couldn't see them coming...same kids had flashlights so that would help, you could see them coming down the hill but everybody didn't so you just sort of waited out...try to get out of the way when you thought somebody would be coming down the hill...and I guess we weren't really all that concerned about being run over...not much traffic on that road at that time, either, as there would be now.....we didn't go to church every Sunday because there wasn't, they didn't have church services every Sunday...and we used to go to church in Pelkie here at this old church.

I: Which one?

R: Over here, this one, the one that's converted into an apartment now.

I: Oh...what was the name of that church?

R: That was the Apostolic...that was the...

I: Oldest one.

R: ...oldest one, yeah...and I do remember services as being real, real long...and it seemed like we had to stay there such a long, long time...and I've always had a hard time sitting still for any length of time and I do remember getting my hair pulled quite a few times because I didn't sit still and I wasn't quiet.

I: You had to sit within reach, hair-pulling reach.

R: I sure did...and I remember they used to have these...services, you know, that would last for couple, two, three days at a time and they'd serve meals there, and as we got older that was sort of a good deal because then we could sneak out when they had many services so we didn't go to all of them...but I do remember when we'd go there and I used to think about it that when I get big enough and old enough nobody's going to tell me when I have to go...

I: Did you ever tell your parents that?

R: Yeah, I did, several times.
I: What was the response?

R: Well, they really didn't comment on it either one way or the other, I guess they...

I: Didn't believe you.

R: No, they just figured, well, when I was at home they were going to make me go...but I was married right out of high school and we were married here in Kyro in the Evangelical Lutheran Church...but then I didn't go to church anywhere for many years...we did have a family right away and I had five preschoolers so that was always my excuse, that it was too hectic to take the kids to church and I really didn't have any desire to go, either, I think I still was a little bit bitter about the fact that I was made to go when I didn't want to go and I thought, well, there's nobody making me go now so I'm not going to go until I want to go...and that's just what I did, I didn't go.

I: Did you have to go to all the services when you were at home?

R: Oh, yeah, whenever there were services we had to go...they just didn't take "no" for an answer.

I: Did your parents give any reason that you had to go?

R: No...not that I remember of but it was just the idea that I don't think we even argued with them...you know, about going...that you just more or less went automatically because you knew that you had to go anyway, you couldn't get out of it so it was just sort of an accepted fact that you went.

I: Were parents more, was there the general belief when you were growing up that parents were more, that their word was law than it is now?

R: Oh, I think so...I think the kids were more afraid of their parents.

I: I wonder why?

R: I really don't know.

I: Did they punish them more then?

R: Oh, I don't know, I don't really remember being punished, in fact, the only time that I remember ever getting a licking was once...I'd had my hair pulled and stuff like that but I do remember getting a licking with a belt once and I had it coming.

I: Who was that from, your mom or your dad?

R: My dad.

I: He was the one who gave the lickings?

R: Yeah, my mother used to threaten us and pull our hair but when you really came
down to getting a licking, well, we knew we had had it then when we got one from him.

I: Oh, that's interesting that the dad did that...if you didn't mind did they threaten you with not getting to go places or anything like that?

R: No, I don't think so, I think we just...well, we really didn't go all that much, anyway.

I: Except to church.

R: Yeah...well, there were cousins of ours that we used to visit quite a bit, the Jorgren family, we used to visit them a lot...but I'm just trying to think back when I was real small, I really don't remember...of going anywhere all that much.

I: How about when you got older? Did you get to date when you were in high school?

R: Oh, yeah.

I: What kinds of things did you do on your dates? Were there movie houses around them?

R: Yeah, there was a theater in.

SIDE TWO

R: ...yes, there were theaters, there was a movie theater in L'Anse and we used to go to that...and then while I was in high school I went to Baraga during my eleventh and twelfth grade...and I used to go to all the basketball games and...

I: How did you get there?

R: Well, I used to stay after school mostly and stay in Baraga...one of my girl friends was a Giddings, Mary Lou Giddings, her aunt was a Commercial teacher in the school system...and I used to stay with her a lot...in fact, I spent a lot of my junior and senior year with them.

I: So you could walk.

R: Yeah, we could just walk up to the school and then walk back down to her place after school...so that was real nice and she was real, real nice to me... so it would have been quite inconvenient otherwise because the buses...oh, the buses would go but not on the side roads so you either had to find a ride home from the, from 38 or walk and that was quite a long walk...I know we did do that sometimes and we were, I was going to school in Alston and we'd go to Baraga to a game...'cause at that time, now, you know, that the kids from Alston are going to school in L'Anse but we went to school in Baraga...so once in a while they'd...the Alston bus would go...and I don't remember if they went to all the home games but I know that they did go to some...so if we went to those and we'd go on the bus, well, then we'd have to get off at 38 and...
walk and I remember one night in particular, we spent the night with one of my friends, Marion Kemppainen, and there was a whole bunch of us that walked and it was a real, real cold, cold, frosty night...a real bright moonlight night and we really weren't dressed up all that warm for winter weather because we had been sitting in a hot gym, and by the time we got to her house, well, we were cold...we really felt like we had been chilled through to the bone.

I: Sweat at the gym and then freeze walking home.

R: Yeah, because already at that time, well, jeans were, the girls were wearing bluejeans and bluejeans aren't really very warm when it's below zero...and we wanted to go to the game bad enough so we were dumb enough to walk.

I: Were there dance halls here then when you were in high school, places to dance? I know the older people...

R: I think they danced at the...Roost in Baraga, that one time had a dance hall...but I think as far as high school kids, about the only dances there were the school dances...cause I think by that time the Pelkie Ball was closed...I think the time that I was in high school...I don't think there was any around the Pelkie area.

I: So kids mostly went to basketball games for entertainment.

R: Yeah, and then they used to have the dances at the school.

I: Was that often that there was...

R: They had school dances? No, not really, not very often.

I: Mostly games and theater for entertainment?

R: We chaperoned at one school dance and I'm really hoping that they'll never ask us to come again.

I: After you got married and had kids did you do things differently than your mother did? Did you have any ideas that were different maybe because times had changed or something, different ways that you raised your kids from the way that you were raised?

R: Well, when I grew up I really wasn't around...see, I was the youngest in the family so I wasn't around little ones...and then where I had five pre-schoolers at one time, so I just had a bunch of little kids, you know, all of a sudden...so I don't really know if you know, if things were all that different...because I, well, I did do some babysitting but I think if maybe I would have been an older one in the family and had younger sisters and brothers, well, then that I would have grown up with little kids I might, you know, be able to make some comparison...but like I said that I don't really feel that I had all that much to do when I was growing up...being the youngest in the family I think that they let me get by with more than the older ones did.

I: You had more freedom than...
R: More freedom, I think, than the others did...although I do remember some of my nieces and nephews doing some things that would really get to me and I used to think about, well, if I had kids I wouldn’t let them get by with that but they did.

I: When you had kids they got by with it.

R: They got by with it...especially having them that close, too, well, you just didn’t have all that much time to spend with each one...and I think the kids grew up a lot quicker, they had to...they had to learn to do things for themselves at a much younger age than if there would have just been one or two of them...they had to learn to be self-sufficient at a young age....kids now even with, well, with our youngest one, with Danny...

I: What's that, oh, your son?

R: Yeah, our youngest one compared to what it was like when the older kids were his age...like before he started to school, the year before he started to school, well, he was just bored...and I think I spent more time trying to entertain him and keep him busy...I know than I did with any of the other kids...but he being the last one at home, he just didn't know what to do with himself...but I think we made more scrapbooks and I think I cut out more pictures with him and did more coloring and read more stories than I had ever done with any of the other kids...course there was a time element, too, I had more time than I did with...when the older kids were little I always had a little baby to take care of and a little baby is time-consuming....then a one-room school...in fact, I started to school in Gidding, the Gidding School, and I had, I went there for two years...and then they sent us to...I think they must have closed that school down, then they sent us to Alston which was now the VFW Hall...and I went to school there for one year, and then they sent us to the Laird School...and I went to school there until I was through the tenth grade.

I: Did they close down that other school then?

R: Yeah, they did...but I think that Alston school had classes there for a couple years yet after we left, but I don’t know why they chose that particular grade...to move these kids out...I do remember when I went to Kindergarten, see, when my older sisters and brothers started to school, well, they spoke only Finnish...well, I learned to speak English as well, as far back as I can remember...and I didn’t know too many kids at the Gidding School and my cousin Leland was there and I started talking Finnish to him...and the teacher heard me and she told me that I was supposed to speak English because I was in school so I went home and I told my mother that I couldn’t speak Finnish anymore...that all I could speak is English 'cause that’s what the teacher told me.

I: Oh, I bet that made her...

R: That made her feel real good because that’s all she could speak was Finnish.

I: Really, oh, no...can’t talk to you anymore.

R: So I learned to speak Finnish and English at the same time...which I think now
would be quite difficult to do...to learn to speak two languages at the same time.

I: You mean for kids?

R: Yeah......can speak Finnish.

I: Do you still speak, can you

R: I do, I can speak Finnish, yes, but not...not very well...especially when I'm away from it...my mother and dad are both at the Medical Care Facility in Houghton...so I have to speak Finnish to them, they understand English...both of them do...and they'll speak English when they have to...'cause I have two sisters-in-law that aren't Finnish and they get along famously with them...but it's just that they, I mean, they're not going to speak English unless they absolutely have to...but there just aren't that many Finnish-speaking people around here, that....you don't get around to speak Finnish that much...and I never have been able to read or write Finnish...I can read it in a fashion but it takes me a long time, I've got to figure every word out as I go along and I would never attempt writing anybody a letter in Finnish...but I can get along speaking it in a fashion.

I: Do you remember any kids having a hard time in school because they couldn't speak English at first?

R: No...because by that time I think the kids all knew how to speak English...and then, too, I think just about all the kids that were in the same grade as I was had parents that were younger...see, a lot of these kids had parents that were born in this country...in fact, I think most of them did, there were only very few that had parents anymore that had come from Finland...but my parents were quite a bit older than most of the kids my age bracket...so there wouldn't have been a language problem with them.

I: Do you remember after you went to school and was supposed to speak English then, do you ever remember feeling like you didn't want to speak Finnish anymore?

R: No, I don't think so because we had to speak it at home...because that's what my mother and dad spoke and we just...

I: Accepted.

R: ...accepted it...although I do remember sometimes trying to convey something that we had learned in school to my mother and dad, to my mother, especially, and, you know, really being lost at words and not being able to tell her in the way that I would really have wanted to because I just didn't know how...

I: It was hard to translate?

R: Yeah, and there was never any problem as far as their helping us with homework because they couldn't...and then, well, I suppose of the fact, too, that, you know, they couldn't, well, then they really didn't show as much of an interest in education, either...because...let's see, there's seven in my family and my
oldest brother and myself are the only ones that graduated from high school, the rest of them dropped out.

I: Did your parents tell them that they needed them to work on the farm or did they just...

R: Well, I think my oldest sister, she dropped out because she went to work in the city, she felt that she had to...and then my oldest brother wanted to, he really wanted to go to school and get an education, in fact, he's now an engineer...he was out of high school ten years and then went back to college.

I: He's the other one that graduated.

R: Right, he's the other one that graduated...and when I graduated he wanted me to come to Detroit and live with them and he wanted me to go to Wayne but I wasn't all that interested in school...I just felt that he had gotten his education in such a hard way, I mean, he really worked at it and it took him a long time to get it and that it wasn't...I wasn't that interested and I felt I wasn't smart enough...to go to college...why waste somebody else's money...money doing it, then I thought I would have been obligated to them the rest of my life, you know, for them doing what they were doing, because it would have cost them a lot of money to have me go and...I tried to convince him I just wasn't smart enough...don't waste your money on me...so instead I got married...and I remember while I was in high school, too, my brother used to write to me and he's the one that really, you know, encouraged me because when I first started to school in Baraga...there was a transportation problem and I was really discouraged...the first couple weeks I...every night I'd come home I'd think, well, I'm not going back again, I'm going to quit...but I did go back and then after I had gone for a couple weeks, well, then I would no way have wanted to quit anymore 'cause I kept thinking, "Well, gee, what am I going to do if I don't go to school?"...and I just felt there wouldn't have been anything for me and I didn't feel like I wanted to go to Detroit and start working in a factory or doing waitresses work or...so I think that just sort of was more of an incentive to go there and stick it out...but the transportation problem was solved so that made things a lot better...

I: Did you ever live anywhere other than in Felkie?

R: No, not really...I mean, 'cause I was married right out of, a month after I graduated from high school so...

I: So you've always lived here.

R: We've lived here, yeah.

I: Did any of your brothers and sisters go to the city temporarily to work...

R: And then come back?

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, I have a brother that was in the city for...well, he was in the service,
he was in the city and then he was in the service and then he was back in the
city again for a while and now he's out here, he's been out here for, well,
I think about twenty-some years already.

I: Why did he go in the first place?
R: To get work, get a job.
I: He didn't feel like he could make a living here?
R: There wasn't anything here.
I: When was that?
R: That must have been in the late '30s...30s or '40s.
I: Right after the Depression?
R: Yeah.
I: And then why did he move back?
R: Well, I guess he just didn't like the city life and he wanted to go back out
in the country and he's working as a carpenter...and he likes what he's doing.
I: So he got a trade and then he thought he could...
R: yeah, and then he came back here.
I: I know a lot of women from the general Copper Country area have gone to the
city usually when they're young women before they get married, and have worked
either as cooks or as governesses or as, would you call it a maid where they
do housecleaning and that...
R: Sort of a live-in...
I: Yeah...did you know people who did that? That seemed to be a fairly common
thing for women.
R: Yeah, but I think that was done sort of before my times, too.
I: Yeah, it was.
R: I did some babysitting between my junior and senior year in Detroit, I stayed
with a family, the mother and father both worked and I took care of a four-
year old girl for the whole summer...I wasn't too...well, it wasn't the best
job...it didn't pay all that much but I was one of these, too, that I wanted
to get away from home and the first few weeks I wasn't really too excited
about it but I thought, "Well, if I write home and say I don't like it I'm
admitting defeat" so I stuck it out...and I was quite anxious to get back,
really...I stayed until school started.....our girls have gone through the
same experience, they've gone out for the summers and babysat.
I: To a different area.

R: To a different area... I was in Detroit and, well, Barbie and Anita went to Highland Park, Illinois for one summer and then Barbie went to Farmington the following summer... of course the pay is a lot better now than it was when I did it.

I: Yeah.

R: ...Ida... she used to be... well, she had a real great sense of humor anyway and I guess she was quite young when she went to Detroit the first time to work... she went to work for a Jewish family... and first time away from home, she said she was cleaning off the supper dishes and scraping plates and... she said she had never heard of a garbage can... so she asked the lady of the house where she kept her pigs pail... she said she wasn't impressed with it at all.

I: Oh, no, the lady probably thought she was trying to insult her.

R: Yeah, trying to insult her, she said that it was a garbage can... and at home it was always a pigs pail, that's what you put the food scraps in.

I: Right.

R: But she said you learn real quickly when you go away from home.

I: I suppose.

R: ...more time to do it or because they were so busy trying to earn a living.

I: I wonder if there would have been any general feeling that women were better at handling money or maybe at math or something like that?

R: Well, like as far as travel goes now... we sure didn't do much traveling when our family was young... for one thing you just didn't up and take off with a bunch of little kids, it wasn't all that easy to do and you didn't have the money to do it, either... but I feel that I've seen quite a bit of the country now within the last few years, especially since Reuben has been in the construction business. I think we've traveled a lot, gone down as far as Florida a couple times and we've attended these conventions in New Orleans and Williamsburg and we hope to go to San Antonio, Texas this coming winter... hopefully go to Hawaii in '75, that's where the convention site is in '75 so that's what I'm really, really hoping for, that all goes well and we could do it... and we've really tried to make an effort now, too, especially with the younger ones, we've, you know, tried to take them out because it's something that we weren't really able to do with the older kids... not take them out as much but try to take them...