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**FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT
LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978**

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Eilola, Ray
Pelkie

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SUBJECT: Gardening, subsistence agriculture, old neighbors (now dead) who used to lend one another a hand.

SOURCE: Ray Eilola -- a native of Pelkie, an ex-farmer who has lived his entire life on Eilola's Road. His father was an original homesteader and Ray stayed on the farm. He was born in 1912 right in Pelkie. This interview provides good insight into the methods of cooperation the early settlers devised in order to cope with such a harsh environment.

I am at the Eilola farm. Mr. Eilola is in the garden working. He's picking up onions, harvesting them now...September 14th... a real nice day. He's harvesting the onions and he's putting them into the wheelbarrow. Mr. Eilola had a stroke three years ago and he doesn't work that much in the garden; his wife does most of the work. I know, I've seen her here many times; but he's working right now. He says he helps her whenever he can.

I: How many people are living at home here now?

R: Well, we have right now two boys here:

I: Albert who?

R: E-L-Y...Ely.

I: He owned a lot of it around here?

R: Yeah

I: Who did he buy it from?

R: I couldn't tell you that, I don't know. Most of this land was all homesteaded before that.

I: He probably bought it up from the homesteaders then

R: Yeah, he might of bought it up from the homesteaders. There's a homestead right there just above here.

I: Are these for the most part Finnish homesteaders.

R: No, unt-un, mostly French

I: Mostly French homesteaders.

R: Yeah...they're mostly all French people that used to live up here before this.

I: Do your sons work in the garden at all?

R: Not much.

I: They don't care for it,

R: Well, they haven't much time when they're both out working. That's the only thing that keeps me busy and keeps my wife busy, you know, the garden.

I: Could you explain just why you garden then.

R: Well, for the reason that it adds up to the family budget, you know. Another thing is the produce that you get from the store isn't fresh...it spoils from the store...half of that stuff, you know.

I: That's right, you get fresh vegetables

R: That's for sure

I: Have you had a garden here all the time?

R: Every year

I: Every year'

R: Yeah, we used to have it when dad and mother used to here too.

I: Did the kids work in the garden then?

R: Oh yeah, when we were young we had to.

I: They made you work in the garden?

R: Why sure

I: That's how you learned it too, isn't it.

R: I suppose, that's one way. You had to work in it then, you know.

I: When did you cultivate this year? Did you turn it over in the spring?

R: Oh yeah...it was in April already. Well Don, the boy... what's his name...Mishatecki (???) is the one that cultivated this field so it was ready for planting then.

I: Before you had the stroke, did you used to do that?

R: Oh yeah, I used to help the wife out, but she did most of it because I used to work in the dairy then...machinery and all and I worked in the woods for awhile.

I: When you were farming then, you worked in the garden also?

- R: Yeah, well we had to, you know. I took care of all the cultivating and all that kind of stuff for the field, you know, for the garden.
- I: Who did the planting this year?
- R: Well, my wife did most of it and my daughter...she's at Michigan Tech...Michigan State rather, she was planting here too.
- I: Has the wife always done the planting?
- R: Well, she's liked to work in the garden all her life, you know.
- I: Oh, she really enjoys it, eh?
- R: She really enjoys it, yeah. It's more or less of her hobby
- I: I see...great hobby.
- R: Yeah, it sure is. She sure likes to work in a garden.
- I: There is something enjoyable about watching things grow and then...
- R: Oh, I should say there is ^{especially} ~~except~~ when you see onions like that.
- I: Those are big onions I gotta admit. How do you get them so big...you don't break the tops?
- R: Well, you plant 'em and they'll grow...that's the only thing, you know.
- I: You must have real good soil here.
- R: Well, yeah...our manure pile is right there too.
- I: Oh, you put a lot of manure on?
- R: Oh sure...every year.
- I: In the spring you put the manure on?
- R: Yeah
- I: Cow manure, eh.
- R: Cow manure...rotted cow manure.
- I: That's the best.
- R: That's the best...best for sure. Well, we use a part sack of

commercial fertilizer on it with the cow manure, you know; but it doesn't pay without the cow manure at all, boy. You just don't get the vegetables, you know. We tried it one year. We thought we could get rid of the weeds, you know. You get rid of the weeds you get rid of everything then too, you know.

I: That's right. There's a lot of weeds in cow manure though, isn't there?

R: Oh yeah, there's a lot more; but I mean as far as vegetables it's worth it.

I: That's right...you get both the weeds and the vegetables.

R: Why sure.

I: Do you ever weed your garden? I see you have a lot of weeds in it, you know.

R: Oh yeah, this was all cleaned...this was all cleaned, there wasn't a weed in here until late in the fall, you know.

I: Oh you weeded it earlier.

R: Oh sure...all this, the whole thing was clean, you know

I: How did you weed it?

R: By hand.

I: By hand? Don't you have a little rotatiller?

R: Oh we got a little tiller right there, but that doesn't help too much, you know. You do most of it by hand.

I: Do you do it with the tiller though?

R: Only thing that we do, after all the weeds are picked out, we use just a little cultivator, that's all we got.

I: When did you weed it before?

R: Oh, have to weed it twice a year, you

I: Do a real thorough weeding then.

R: Yeah...two thorough weedings, you know. You have to do that.

I: How long would that take you to weed it?

R: Well, it doesn't take long...it takes about a couple days.

I: Two days?

R: Yeah

I: Who weeded it?

R: Oh, I was weeding here and my wife was weeding it...two of us were weeding it, see. Oh she'd come in here once in awhile and weed some parts, you know, but it'd take about two days, you know, actually to weed the whole thing, you know.

I: When you had a garden at home when your folks were alive, would your dad ever work in the garden?

R: Once in awhile, yeah, he'd work in the garden. He's work with the tractor and all that stuff.

I: To get it ready in the spring?

R: Yeah, he'd get it ready in the spring, you know.

I: Would he do the planting or would the women do it?

R: No, the kids and the mother did the planting.

I: I see. Is that generally the way it was in those days too?

R: Well, that's the way it used to be, you know.

I: What was your father doing? How come he didn't do the planting?

R: Well, he was mostly working on the other field works at the time when the planting was supposed to be done, see.

I: Oh, the big fields.

R: Yeah...planting oats and barley and stuff like that, you know.

I: You generally plant that stuff and the garden at the same time, eh?

R: Well, it's just about the same time, May and June, you know.

I: When did you plant this year? I mean..

R: It was May.

I: Well, you said you cultivated in April; can you kind of remember back just about when Don cultivated it.

R: Well, it got cultivated on the later part of April...then the

second time it was about the beginning of May.

I: Oh, you cultivated it twice?

R: Oh sure, you have to at least two or three times, you know.

I: Oh you cultivated the first time and then you put manure on it?

R: Why sure, and then cultivate it afterward then.

I: Cultivate the manure down in there.

R: Why sure.

I: I see. And you did that in the beginning of May. When did you start the planting then?

R: I think it was the second week of May...I think it was the second week of May...or it was the third...the third week of May that's when.

I: Third week of May...around the eighteenth or so?

R: Around there, yeah...because we tried to get our garden this year early, you know.

I: How come you wanted to get it early this year?

R: Well, just because we thought we'd get early vegetables, you know.

I: Did you do any successive planting? I mean...well you know what that is.

R: Well, we had frost, you know, we had three frosts, you know, and two of the frosts killed everything off except the beets and the carrots. All the beans went, corn went, potatoes went, and the green peppers went.

I: Two frosts killed all of this?

R: Yeah, everything except the beets and carrots.

I: When was the first frost...do you remember?

R: That was in May.

I: Right after you planted...if you planted in the third week of May it must have been in the later part of May, eh?

R: Well, in the later part of May and the first part of June. We had three frosts in June then. One in July.

I: That's right. Right around the fourth

R: Yeah

I: And there was one right...

R: That one didn't do us any harm though...that July frost.

I: But two frosts hurt you bad, eh?

R: Yeah, that's for sure. We hadda plant the corn over again, that's why the corn is late this year.

I: Did you plant almost everything over?

R: Everything except the beets and carrots. Beans had to be planted and re-planted again.

I: Beets and carrots made it through, eh?

R: Oh sure, they always do...they're not tender. But tomatoes and everything else, the forst hit them right down.

I: And you replanted twice?

R: Oh yeah.

I: So actually you planted three times this year?

R: Some three times, some twice

I: Which ones did you plant twice?

R: Well, it's pretty hard to say because some of them were left growing and some of them were hit by the frost, you know.

I: I see, but you had to re-plant three times then, altogether.

R: Yeah

I: Well, it turned out pretty good after all though.

R: Oh it sure did...it's surprising, you know, what it turned out to be.

I: Well, you got a lot of good rains though.

R: Oh yeah. Rain and we had a good...the field looked good this year.

I: What do you do with...you say you store your onions in a dry place and then your carrots and your beets...you put in sand... in sand bins?

R: Yeah, they're sand bins, you know.

I: What kind of sand? Just river sand?

R: River sand...dry river sand...has to be dry though.

I: Dry, just perfectly dry river sand.

R: Oh yeah, it has to be dry

I: Like that beach stuff

R: That's right.

I: And what do you do with your beans?

R: Well, they're canned and made pickles out of 'em...and can 'em.

I: Can them and then you eat 'em directly too?

R:

I: Do you freeze any?

R: No we haven't froze anything yet

I: Most of it's canning, eh?

R: Yeah, most of it's canning and sand.

I: What kind of stuff do you can?

R: Well, beans and carrots, some are canned and some beans are pickled and tomatoes are pickled...of course potatoes are being the way they are, you know.

I: Did you do anything with the corn?

R: Well yeah, last year we sold a lot of the corn...what we couldn't eat we sold.

I: Did you have more corn last year?

R: Oh, about the same thing...well I think a little bit bigger it was last year.

I: Did you have enough corn to sell this year?

R: I think so...if we get another week we'll have lot of corn.

I: Who generally buys it?

R: Oh, people traveling by here.

I: 'ut a sign out on the main road?

R: Don't need to put a sign out on the main road at all, they

see the corn and they come and buy it

I: Oh, the people living around here?

R: Yeah, and some from Baraga and L'Anse.

I: But not the people living right in Pelkie.

R: Oh sure, I got quite a bit of relatives living right in Pelkie and so, they pick up stuff every so often, you know.

I: You have a pretty big garden then, no wonder. Well, what do you generally sell corn for?

R: Well last year, it was a dozen for 35¢ or so

I: That's pretty reasonable

R: You're not kidding, boy.

I: Sell anyother vegetables?

R: Well, no not really. Sometimes carrots and sometimes beets, it all depends on how much you got, you know.

I: Who generally buys the carrots and the beets?

R: Well, the same people, you know. Well, they usually come and buy 'em. We got pumpkins out there now.

I: Are these people your relatives you say?

R: We got some relatives up here that buy them, you know, and some people that come from Baraga and L'Anse.

I: How many different families, would you say, that you sell to? Could you just make a guess?

R: Oh, at least twenty

I: And they've been coming here year after year?

R: Oh yeah, anytime when they have a chance, you know.

I: How long have they been coming here to get vegetables?

R: I don't remember...if there's different ones that come, you know, every year, you know.

I: The word just gets out, eh?

R: Why sure, and another thing is that all the older generation

of people have died already and the new ones are coming in you know...they come again back here, you know.

- I: Is it mostly younger people then that come to buy the vegetables.
- R: No, not necessarily. We had last year a guy that was about eighty-three. He come and bought some apples and some vegetables...he's eighty-three years old.
- I: How many of these twenty- people that come are your relatives or...
- R: Oh, I don't know, not too many...if there's...around Pelkie there's...I got two sisters who are living in Pelkie.
- I: Where are they? Do I know them...have I met them?
- R: I don't know. Maybe you know Waino Maki's and Mrs. Polly Maki...
- No, I don't know.
- R: Lived right in town there, right across from church.
- I: Oh yeah, your sisters, eh?
- R: Yeah
- I: Do you have anyother relatives around here?
- R: Yeah, my son lives in Houghton and my daughter lives in South Range.
- I: Oh, Don lives in Houghton.
- R: No, Glenn
- I: Glenn...oh I didn't get him.
- R: He's the oldest one of the boys...the oldest one in the family.
- I: How old is he?
- R: He's thirty-one now, I think.
- I: Oh, you've been blessed with a good family...quite a crew.
- R: You bet...there's five of 'em, I guess.
- I: Do you give any vegetables away?
- R: Oh yeah, we give some too, yeah.
- I: Who do you generally give vegetables to?
- R: To anybody who happens to be around...like Glenn and Alma

and Jane when they come up here...we give 'em vegetables every time, you know.

I: Oh, your relatives you mean.

R: Oh yeah

I: Oh, I thought you said they buy them.

R: Well, some of them do...some of them...well just like Makis' there, you know, we don't charge them anything, but they pay some amount for them, you know. Same way with Glenn and Alma...it all depends on what we're giving if we're gonna charge 'em anything or not.

I: Well, what do you mean?

R: Well, sometimes you don't charge...you know, and sometimes they come out to visit they go...give 'em the vegetables, you know.

I: Maybe you can explain a difficult question that I have. You say sometimes you charge and sometimes you don't. Could you tell me the times you charge and the times you don't charge?

R: That's impossible to say, you know; because you know Glenn and Alma they come up here and they work on the farm and help me out with certain things, you know, and the same way with Jane and Jim. They come up to the farm and they do this and they do that for us, you know. Well, how you gonna charge them, you know.

I: What kind of things do they do on the farm?

R: Well, they'll fix the car or work on the tractor or something like that, you know.

I: Who would fix the car?

R: Well, either one of 'em. Electrical engineer the other one and the other one is...the one that's my son is a chief electrician at the hospital there.

I: Oh, they've gone into that...that's Glenn that is electrician.

R: He's electrician, yeah. But he's foreman for maintenance all around, you know.

And Don's the electrical engineer?

R: Yeah, Don's the...no mechanical engineer

I: And they come and they help out around here.

- R: Why sure, every so often, you know, like during the summer months they come and help.
- I: If someone doesn't come and help, do you generally charge them for vegetables?
- R: No we...we usually go down there once a week anyway, you know, to visit them.
- I: Oh, when you go to visit do you generally take vegetables with you?
- R: Yeah, we take vegetables with us, yeah.
- I: Un huh, and if they come to visit here?
- R: Well, same way, you know.
- I: Un huh...do you give vegetables to any of your neighbors around here?
- R: Not necessarily to the neighbors, you know, because most of them have their own gardens, you know. Either bigger or smaller, you know. I think we're the ones that got the biggest garden around here, you know.
- I: Yeah, so your neighbors have their own vegetables.
- R: That's for sure, yeah.
- I: What about apples? Do you ever give them any apples?
- R: Oh sure
- I: The neighbors?
- R: Well, whoever hasn't got any we give 'em, you know
Have you given away any apples this year?
- R: Not this year yet, no, because most of them have their own apples nowadays.
- I: Here's another kind of funny question. Why don't you like to charge your sons for vegetables?
- R: Well, what good would it do...what good would it do if I charge them, you know.
- I: You'd have a little extra cash.
- R: Oh I know, but I'd have to pay him then when he comes to work on my place...I'd have to pay him that, see. I'd be

the same doggone this if I take it out of my right hand pocket and put it in my left pocket, you know. Like give it all there...it doesn't make any difference, you know.

I: Okay, if you did that...let's say if you charged, would you like that?

R: No

I: How come you wouldn't like that?

R: I wouldn't care for it

I: Why wouldn't you?

R: No, I don't believe it would be right, you know, for a family...even outside the family we've done it out here before on the farm...I've gone and plowed a field on a neighbors and he's worked someways else on our field then, you know.

I: OH. Can you sort of describe the instance, what you plowed and that, because that's the kind of stuff I'm trying to learn about.

R: Well, I worked at Seppanen's here, Ruuti's here used to live right across...

I: What'd you do for Seppanen's?

R: I used to plow and disc.

I: His fields?

R: Why sure.

I: Did he have a lot of acres there to have plowed?

R: No he didn't have too many acres there, but I mean I had to do it every year, you know.

I: Oh, you did it every year?

R: Why sure.

I: About how many acres was this?

R: Oh, I don't know...sometimes four acres, sometimes three acres.

I: You'd plow them and disc them?

R: Why sure.

I: How come you'd do that?

R: Well, neighborly love, that's all.

I: Oh, I mean, he didn't have the equipment?

R: That's right, he didn't have the equipment to do it. I was the only one with a tractor out here at that time.

I: Oh, when was that? Was that quite a few years ago?

R: 1935

I: Un huh, and what would he do then?

R: Well, he'd come and clear land for us or make wood for us or something like that, you know.

I: And what about the other neighbor?

R: Same thing with him.

I: Rudy?

R: Ruuti...William Ruuti.

I: Oh, I don't know them.

R: Oh, they're dead...both of them are dead already.

I: Oh, I see. What would you do for him?

R: Oh the same thing...go and discing and plowing...do everything for him, you know...size wood and...

I: What would he do then?

R: Well, he'd come up to our place and work on the hay field and make the wood into poles and stuff, you know, ready for getting out of the woods again.

I: Un huh...so he helped you in the woods

R: Why sure. Then I'd...like for him, you know, he'd make his own wood except that he'd wait for me to come and saw it in the fall, you know. I had a saw rig and a tractor here and I used to saw his wood for him, you know...and do his plowing and everything else. And he'd work at our place.

I: Did you ever charge each other?

R: Well, we had initial costs...dollar an hour, but on end of year used to run even, you know. Well, that's the way we used to figure it out, you know.

I: Is that what you did with...?

R: Seppanen's too

I: Did lot of these farmers who had these kind of a..

R: Most of the farmers had their arrangements, you know, with the neighbors always, you know.

I: Did a lot of them do it this way?

R: Yeah...lot of them...most of them did it that way.

I: Was the price usually a dollar an hour?

R: Oh, dollar an hour...mostly...likesawing wood I used to charge them a dollar an hour and then they used to figure out their wages, you know...and I didn't kicked on their wages either, you know.

I: Did most of the farmers work out something like that with each other?

R: Oh sure, they had to...they had to do it, otherwise they never would have been able to keep up they way they did at that time, you know.

I: Was the price usually a dollar an hour for everything?

R: Oh, they used to charge more...dollar and a half and two dollars an hour for plowing and stuff.

I: Oh, for plowing.

R: And cutting wood, you know. But I made that thing with the farmers that I charge them a dollar an hour, you know. But then they, in return, they they would come back and say well we're only gonna charge so much an hour because you had your tractor and your stuff working at our place see. They'd work maybe two or three hours like that, you know, for an hour of mine, see. So you could see that actually the whole thing was even, you know.

I: I see. Would you charge two dollars for plowing and discing?

R: Oh if I was going somewhere else, yeah.

you mean someone else other than your neighbors?

R: Oh sure, I'd have to...I could make it go, you know; otherwise, unless I'd charge them dollar and a half or two dollars or two and a half dollars an hour. You couldn't make it go with dollar an hour, never.

- I: But that's what you used to...
- R: Well, that was our base, at that time, when we used to figure it out with the farmers here, you know.
- I: Did most of the farmers have that kind of arrangement, like a low-base price?
- R: Why sure. They had a low-base price because after all when they figured it out for a year, you know, there'd never be any payment at all, you know, when one farmer did the other because they didn't have the money to do it, you know.
- I: But they still kept track of the hours.
- R: Why sure. Well, maybe I'd work ten hours for a farmer here, for instance. Okay, he'd figure, well he worked ten hours for me, maybe I have to work twenty hours or twenty-five hours for him, you see. That's the difference there, you know.
- I: What if one guy owed the other guy a couple hours at the end of the year.
- R: Well, I never seen money as far as I was concerned. Just every time we had something to do, well we'd run to the neighbors and well we need help now. They'd come and give us a hand, you know. And there was actually, as far as that is concerned never any money as far as I could see and I had a fresh start on a hill here in 1935.
- I: How come you think there was never any money if they kept track of the hours. Surely it wouldn't come out exactly even.
- R: Well, it usually come out even. I tell you, you couldn't get away from it because maybe a half an hour or an hour would be left, but, well forget it, that's all. You know, well maybe let's take three years now. Maybe I'd owe, maybe this year some more...owe him money. Next year maybe he's owed me money, you see, maybe the next year it broke even again, see. You just can't go by the year, you know.
- I: I see. Would one farmer ever go ask another farmer for some money to...
- R: I never seen it yet...not around here.
- I: No one ever came to ask you for money?
- R: Unt-un...and I never went and asked anyone else either.
- I: Were there/^{ever}any hard feelings about this?

- R: No...we never had any hard feelings as far as the farmers around here, you know.
- I: Sometimes you'd think someone might get some hard feelings over something like that, let's say if it didn't work out too even.
- R: I used to work for Ruuti and Seppanen...I never had hard feelings with them and as many years as we were together with them, you know.
- I: How many years were you doing this, about? You said it started in...?
- R: Well, we ^{were} started already in 1918 when we come on the farm but I got the tractor in 1935.
- I: Was your dad doing it with Seppanen's?
- R: Yeah, dad was already with Seppanen's and Ruuti's
- I: Did they work it out the same way?
- R: Why sure.
- I: And you just kept it up then.
- R: Why sure. Ruuti had one horse and we had one horse. Seppanen had one horse. Well lot of times you couldn't do it with one horse. You had to have two, you know.
- I: For what? For clearing the land?
- R: Why sure, for clearing the land and hauling logs and stuff like that, you know. Well, we'd get a horse from Seppanen's and maybe a horse from here or maybe a horse from Ruuti's you know.
- I: You'd get enough horse power then.
- R: Why sure, we'd get enough horse power that way to work around, you know. That way nobody'd have to use any money, you know.
- I: Did you like it better in those days when you did...?
- R: I did, I think right today now, most of it is gone, you know. I think most of it...the ^{fun of} farming is gone, really because nowadays when you do anything for your neighbor it has to be money; if he does anything for you it has to be money right away, you know.
- I: Is that right?
- R: Why sure that's the way it happens nowadays.
- I: Oh, you mean between one farmer and another?

R: Why sure, that's the way with all the farmers around here.

When did this start to happen like this? Could you say you've been here.

R: Yeah, well I don't know, since the big change come...those people died from right there and the neighbors there and these people died and so it just went down under the rocks then.

I: What was the big change? When they died or...

R: Yeah, well when they died new people come in, you know.

I: I see. And now have you had any occasions when you've helped them or they've helped you and there's been a charge

R: Well, I don't know. I've never charged the neighbors here if I've had to go work or anything else like that...I've never charged them yet.

I: Have you ever been charged?

R: Yes, I have.

I: What was this for?

R: Well, Just like I had to work for the neighbors here. Well, the boy and I was working and we was taking care of his cows. Kripe we worked...one we worked two weeks and another time we worked a week and a half. All I got was ten bales of hay out of it. Well, you don't feel like working for a person like that, you know.

I: You don't have to tell me who that is. I'm not interested in...

R: No, no, I mean that it doesn't...it just doesn't pay out that way, you know. I help like different people around here, I've gone with the tractor and helped them out.

T: Did this man ask you to help him?

Oh sure. He asked me to come and take care of his cows, you know. I went and...

Was he sick?

R: Yeah, he was in the hospital at the time. And Don and I we went up there morning and evening to take care of his cows and then he was sick another time and I went to take care of his cows and never took up anything. I wouldn't have cared at all if he would have said well, you come and work and do something around the farm, you know, when.

you're not able to do it, you know, it would have been alright.

I: Did he ask you what he owed you?

R: Unt-un, never.

I: He didn't even ask you.

R: Unt-un.

I: If he would have asked that, what would you have said?

R: I would have said, "Forget it".

I: Do you think he should have asked you that though?

R: I think so. I think that he should have at least asked, you know or either said that he's hard up or if you need help on the farm, I'd be more than glad to come and give you a hand, you know. That would have been alright. But nothing doing.

I: Do you ever visit each other?

R: Well, we're on friendly terms, I mean.

I: Un Huh

R: We're never that way, you know, that we can't understand each other.

I: No, I mean often times when people visit they find out a way they can help another person, you know what I mean.

R: As far as they're concerned, you know, they're right close by and he's been to see me once since I had the stroke and that's all; but the other neighbors have come to see me, quite often, you know.

I: When you had the stroke did they come help you out?

R: Oh the other ones did. They come right away to see what can they do, you know.

I: You didn't have to ask them, did you.

R: Unt-un, not a bit

I: That's the way they were, hey?

R: Yeah, that's the way they were before. Nowadays it's getting down to a point, you know, a farmer should have everything of his own, you know. All his machinery and everything else, he should have his own nowadays. Before, well, maybe you had a grain driller or you had maybe a plow or something like

- I: You'd kind of keep an eye out for each other when the other needed help.
- R: Why sure. They knew...we lived so close to each other right here that it was easy to be with them, you know. They'd know what you were doing and you'd know what they were doing for the day, you know.
- I: Would you visit a lot with each other too?
- R: Why sure. They were...at least two - three times a week, you know.
- I: Are you hesitant now to ask, you know the new people around here for help?
- R: Well, you just don't get it that way, you know. Now you have to talk dollars and cents to get anybody to work for you. You can't go and ask them now if you'll come and work for me, you'd have to talk dollars and cents right away you know, for working.
- I: If you asked someone, the first thing they'd say is how much do I get for it.
- R: Why sure...what do I get an hour for it or that's what I charge an hour for it.
- I: Oh, they'd tell you.
- R: Why sure, they'd tell you right straight off, you know. It's entirely a different story than it used to be before, you know. Like I know, not very far from here there's friends right away...well they don't live up here anymore, they live up here on the other road, they come and see right away what's going on, you know.
- I: If someone's sick?
- R: Why sure, even their own friends, you know; of course I was brought up with those kids, but I still say that there's that old-time friendship there that makes a lot of difference, you know.
- I: Do you have a lot of friends around here from the old times?
- R: Oh sure, a lot of them...quite a few, especially my age men, you know.
- I: Who are your friends around here? The reason I ask that is I want to try to see.....well that's good. You really gave me some of the best information I've had yet. This is very common this thing that I'm talking about...all I'm studying is cooperation and how it's changed.

that, everyone had a different kind of implement and that way you could do a lot of people's work, you know. But nowadays it's not like that anymore.

I: Why don't you think it is?

R: No, because people just don't do it anymore. They get their own machinery and to heck with the neighbor. I'll do my own work and that's what we expect out of you too.

Why do you think it is this way now?

R: Well, soon as we got the new...younger generation coming on, you know, young people working on the farms, that's when it started to be like that, you know.

What about the old farmers? Do the old farmers, those are left still do this sort of thing?

R: Well, most of the older farmers are gone, you know. There's only but very few, but they're mostly dead.

I: Well, someone took care of your cows while you were sick. Would you ask them what you owed them?

R: Why sure I would. I naturally would.

I: But yet you wouldn't expect them to say anything, would you because you don't usually charge for helping and stuff.

R: That's for sure. I expect the same treatment that I give the other person, you know. I've had different people working here and some have been really nice as far as that is concerned, but some aren't. They take every god darn thing you could possibly have, you know.

I: Oh, can you tell me about one instance where that happened? You don't have to mention any names because this is the kind of stuff I'm studying.

R: Why sure, I can. I went to work for a neighbor here and I worked with him and we got his manure out that spring and then he was supposed to give me a hand then with the manure and he didn't at all. Then it was long long after that, He come and said well I owe you for so many hours. I said, "Well yeah, but let's forget it", I said, "I'll need help here in the summer time." And he never showed up.

I: Did he know you needed help then?

R: Why sure because I told him, I said that I'll need help during the summer time, you know, for haymaking and he never showed up. But that was alright. I had my other neighbor then, he's dead now too, he come and give me a hand and we got out hay done and got his done, everything

- R: Yeah, well it's changed quite a bit.
- I: Why do you think it's changed?
- R: I couldn't tell you that...I wouldn't know really
- I: Do you think that It's changed because the people are used to getting high wages?
- R: That's for sure. Like in the cities nowadays
- I: Oh, you're talking about the people that have been to the cities and have come back here?
- R: Why sure. And a lot of these that have been working out you know, elsewhere. Say like a lot of people would be working for Celotex and some have been working for a lot of these other places, you know. They always got two dollars or so an hour, you know.
- I: But yet you used to keep track of the hours years
- R: I know; but it used to be an entirely different proposition then, you know.
- I: What I'm trying to get at, what was the difference then if they...it's more now.
- R: I know, but before, you know, like I was trying to tell you before already, that the people, say like here, you know, we should maybe have a minimum charge of a dollar or a maximum of a dollar an hour, you know, for plowing and discing, you know; well, maybe this year we wouldn't run up so high with the neighbors as the other year...but they maybe owed us thirty - forty dollars on...but maybe next year it would be different around entirely, you know. That's the thing I was trying to tell you just awhile ago because I never seen a dollar yet as far as the neighbors were concerned, you know.
- I: Is that the way it worked out with most of the people? You said most of the farmers had that arrangement.
- R: Yeah, well most of the farmers had it that way, you know, because they didn't have the equipment then.
- I: And for most of the farmers, they never saw a dollar or cent either.
- R: Why sure...most of them because of the fact that well maybe one had a plow and maybe the other one had a disc...maybe the one had a horse and the other person had a horse. They hadda join horses anyway to make a team to pull a plow, you know, or the disc, they hadda join forcer anyway, you know,

okay, no trouble at all.

- I: Would you usually do it that way? YOU'd help each other make hay?
- R: Oh yeah, we'd help. Like neighbors here, right across the road and Seppanen's, we used to make hay always like that, you know.
- I: Every year?
- R: Every year.
- I: Everyone would work on one guys farm? Would both neighbors come in?
- R: Well yeah, if they didn't have anything to take in that day you know, when we had hay to take in, they'd come and give us a hand here. If we didn't have any hay to take in, why we'd go over there and help them out, see.
- I: You mean like if your hay was drying...
- R: Well yeah.
- I: ...or it wasn't ready to...
- R: Take in.
- I: How did you take it in in those days?
- R: With a horse.
- I: Oh, you mowed it with a mower and a horse.
- R: Yeah, that's right, and raked it up with a regular rake then
- I: And then raked it into windrows, right?
- R: Yeah
- I: How would you get it up then?
- R: Well, by fork...manpower
- I: You pitchforked it all in.
- R: That's right, yeah
- I: That was quite a job then hey?
- R: You're not kidding boy, you hadda have a lot of men if you were taking a lot of hay in.

in order to utilize what they had, you know.

I: It's different now though.

R: Why sure, it's entirely different because nowadays when a guy goes and buys a tractor, if he buys a John Deere tractor or he buys a Allis Chalmers or buys a Massey Ferguson tractor, well you have to buy most of the stuff that belongs to that one tractor by itself, you know. They won't fit for another tractor, you know. And another thing is that maybe I got a big farm here, you know, and maybe the other one's got a small acreage down there, see, and he'd buy a small tractor and I'd buy a big one...I'd have to buy big machinery for a big farm, see. That's the big thing, you know, they won't fit together, you know, so good.

I: Because there were so many different sizes of tractors and so many different makes of tractors.

R: Different sizes and different makes. Another thing is that like the machines...draw-behind machines, you know...most of the farmers have to get their own because they can't depend on the neighbors coming to help, you know. They have to get their own. Say maybe you needed a grainrill (???), maybe today...well maybe you could leave it go two or three days but maybe I wouldn't be able to get the grainrill at that time, maybe not for another two three days, then I had to get one for myself in order to do it. But before, used to be that there would be two or three farmers get together and they used to buy maybe a machinery, maybe one or two different kinds of machinery.

I: Oh, you'd have joint purchases?

R: Why no not joint, they'd own their own and we'd own our own or what we had, you know; but we could get it done between the three of us because they had some machinery and we had some machinery and the neighbors had some machinery, see.

I: I see, and you had a tractor years ago.

R: Yeah, in 1935 we bought the tractor.

I: What did you need then that one of the other neighbors had.

R: Well, I had used horse-drawn machinery for quite a few years because I just didn't have the money to buy anything else, you know.

I: Did any of your neighbors have..

R: They all had horse-drawn machinery and I used to use those machinery then.

I: When did you get your baler?

R: Oh, I got this baler here, oh I got that about six years ago, seven years ago.

I: In those days, what would happen to the hay if it would rain on it? Was it dangerous for hay to be laying around there?

R: No, not anymore dangerous than it is now. Only thing, it would go black and cows don't like it as well as the other stuff, you know.

I: During harvest though, those days, you used to cut your own and rake your own, right?

R: Oh yeah.

I: But you'd just help each other putting it in

R: Well, if they weren't cutting or raking or anything like that, they'd come out here and give us a hand, you know.

Oh, with their horse and with their equipment?

R: Why sure, with their equipment. And I'd say the same way, I 'd go help and dad too, you know, and my brother that was home at that time, we go all out there and give 'em a hand, you know. Sometimes there'd be three of us working out there at the neighbors' fields and maybe we'd have one from the neighbor's field up here on the next day, working on our field. It didn't make any difference at that time if you had one or two or three working, you know, more exchange of labor. If we needed help, well we'd get it from there, you know; maybe one.

I: Did you ever feel...were you ever hesitant to ask them?

R: No, I wasn't. I felt that, well we'd go out there and help them, well you'd go ask them if they'd come and give you a hand, you know. They'd come too. There was not trouble there.

I: Would you always have to go ask them?

R: No, you wouldn't

I: Would they ever offer?

R: Why sure, they'd come with a pitch fork in their hands and say well, "You got any hay ready to take in?", you know.

I: And they'd just jump right in and help.

R: Why sure. That's the way it used to be with all of us here before.

- I: You couldn't use that too well on a tractor?
- R: Well, I hadda use it because I didn't have anything else to use...horse-drawn equipment.
- I: And it's not too efficient on a tractor
- R: No it isn't...it isn't as efficient for a tractor as if we would have had the things of our own, you know, that would fit the tractor right.
- I: So, once people bought the tractors, people started buying their own.
- R: Why they had to. And not only that, it was a maybe a Coop Store here and maybe another harvester company.. it used to be John Deere and Harvester Company.
- I: You mean International Harvester?
- R; Yeah, sure...there used to be different companies here, you know.
- I: What other ones? They were all in the Coop there?
- R: There was Coop...they used to handle John Deere equipment before. And the brother-in-law used to own this other store that used to be at Pelkie here...International Harvester Company...used to deal with their machinery and Hancock used to have Ferguson...no they used to handle John Deere equipment there too...at Exley's. Then there's Borges Equipment Company.
- I: Would all the John Deere equipment fit with each other... I mean could you...
- R: Well no, there used to be the size too, you know, as far as the tractor is concerned.
- I: With what?
- R: If you had a one-power tractor, it had one plow on it and if you had a two-power tractor, it had two plows on it.
- I: Did some tractors go up to three plows?
- R: Why sure. The ones that big farmers...big farmers had big openings that used to use three plows.
- I: Did most of the tractors...did they come in here around 1935?
- R: Well, '35's was the first tractors that come out.

- I: And you got it right then.
- R: I got one of the first...we used to have the (???) the year before...(???)
- I: Did a lot of the other farmers start buying their tractors around that same time?
- R: Well, there's quite a few of them that started buying their tractors after that then.
- I: Were the ones that were still using horses still helping each other out?
- R: Yeah, even when they used to have horses and stuff, they used to help out. Like here, the neighbor had a horse and the other neighbor had a horse and I hadda tractor...I was the only one in the area with a tractor...well I hadda horse too; but I used to do most of the field work for them too, you know, and they used to come out here and skid logs or go out and clear land or something like that, you know with the single horses, you know.
- I: But if two men had a tractor, would they help out that much... each other then?
- R: Well, they would help, yeah but, those were different days then than it is now. Nowadays usually have two farmers, you know...they could help each other quite a bit with two tractors, you know. Say like haying time, that'd be such a ball you know if you had two tractors working at the same time.
- I: That's how Mantila's do it right now. They have a jeep that pulls one wagon.
- R: Yeah, well Mantila's have got many utensils as far as that is concerned, youknow. Well they got a jeep and they got a John Deere and they got a Ferguson. But one thing about Waino as far as I've been around and the folks used to live over there, you know, before Waino was there, they were one people that...well they were a little too far for us to always be with them, you know, but I'll tell you as far as that is concerned, they used to give us good service.
- I: Is that right?
- R: You doggone right. They used to always think about somebody else too...not their own selves always. That's one word I can give for Waino and Mantila's and his folks.
- I: But it's now different with Ronnie. He's a modern farmer like, you know, he doesn't...

R: Well, I don't know about Ronnie too much. I've never been so much associated with Ronnie...only what he used to cut grain for me and he used to be alright...I ain't got no kick on Ronnie as far as that is concerned, you know.

I: Would he charge you for cutting?

R: Oh, he'd charge me, but he never charged me the highest amount either.

I: For columbining, you mean?

R: Yeah, for columbining.

I: Was that quite a few years ago when he helped you?

R: Yeah, that's about three - four years ago...four years ago.

I: What would they charge you an hour in those days?

R: Well, it used to be six dollars an hour for his columbine and I don't say that's too much either.

I: What is the rate now...what do you think?

R: I don't know right now...I ain't got no idea at all because I haven't done any columbining for many years now. Four years ago was the last grain cut.

Stop in tape.

R: I think as far as the life was concerned on the small farm, I think they were more close together than they are today. I think so that way myself because, I think that by doing it by machinery, they didn't need to buy all this high-falooting machinery, you know. Pay five-six thousand dollars for it because the neighbor would buy one machine and we could utilize that machine on all farms...three - four farms, you know. Nowadays you don't have that. Say like Waino Mantila or say like myself now; I gotta tractor here. I use that tractor maybe...on an average on the farm...I use that tractor maybe a hundred-fifty - two hundred hours a year where I could utilize that tractor for five-hundred hours a year, you know, say if the neighbors or somebody else would use it, you know. I could make a lot more money that way, but not only money, these other people could be making, say they be buying some other machinery...say like a disc. They'd pay maybe four hundred dollars - five hundred dollars for a disc, you know. Say I could use the five hundred dollars that I would have to buy the disc for that tractor, I could use that five hundred dollars for something else then instead of using it for the machinery, see. There's a lot of this machinery that's it's used so little on the farm that it's just rusting away actually. And I think the other way around, you could

make money on the farm. If it wasn't for this high cost of living now today and buying all this high-cost machinery I think that the farmers if they got together and pooled their buying, maybe they could buy a lot cheaper and they could take care of three - four farms at one time easily instead of buying a tractor and all the implements for one farm always, you know. You could work three - four farms with the same implements.

I: But they don't do it that way now

R: They don't do it...no...no. But they could do it easy enough.

I: Why don't you think...has anyone tried to get them to do it like this again?

R: Well, the same thing as they worked on these cooperative barns, you know, where they tried to raise cattle for these different farms and I'll tell you there's very few that's working out that way either.

I: Have any been tried around here?

R: Not around here, no; but elsewhere they have. I know Lower Michigan has tried it.

I: Doesn't work out?

R: Unt-un...it doesn't work out because they figure the initial cost of raising that calf to a heifer is so big that the farmers themselves couldn't raise that, you know, to that point of lactation, you know; but they don't look at it that way, you know. These big farmers, these cooperative farmers, after they get down there they figure that everything is right down to the point, you know. You figure out, say like raising a calf...well it's...you figure two dollars an hour for those that's raising those, you know and the farmer can't go and say that he's gonna get two dollars an hour for working on the farm, you know. You just can't do it. It's impossible to make two dollars an hour on a farm today unless you have a real good...I don't even think then if you have to buy all your machinery...too big of a hold back on there. If you figure five percent or six percent investment on your money, you won't be able to come out with it because you'd have about fifty-two hundred thousand dollars invested on your farm before it pays to farm.

Stop in tape.

R: And you figure out.

- I: Five hundred for a new manure wagon?
- R: Yeah, that's right. And you figure out what a use you're gonna get for a year end, and I'll tell you it's two days at the most, and you figure out five percent interest or six percent interest on your money and you don't come out that good, I figure, you just don't. Say like the farm machinery...you buy a tractor...that's four thousand dollars even how small a tractor nowadays, and if you go and sell it after the first year you've lost about fifteen hundred dollars off of it the first year.
- I: Depreciation.
- R: Depreciation, yeah.
- I: Yeah, almost a third. Well, it would seem that the best thing to do if you were going to farm would be to buy a used tractor.
- R: Why yeah, you're better off buying a used tractor today than you are to buy a new one.