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

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
Family History	1	
Confirmed in 1919	1	
Education and Teachers	1	
Nurses Training	1-2	
Benefits better Today	2	
Home Remedies	2-3,9	
Different Hospitals in Ishpeming	3	
TB	3	
Silicosis	3	
Hospital Benefits given by Mining Companies	3	
Christmas Programs	4	
Confirmation	4,6-7	
Finnish Services	4	
Fourth of July	4	
Luther League	5	
Funerals different from Past	5	
First Voted	7-8	
Taft and Roosevelt in Ishpeming	7	
Passanger Train	7	
Finnish People who ran for Elections	8	Politics and city elections
Depressions - 1930	8	
Becomes Paralyzed from a Shot	8-9	
Hobbies	9	
Finnish Papers	9	not a elaborate account
Attended Suomi College	10	
Teachers and Courses at Suomi	10	
Suomi Rules - 1918	10	
Parents attitudes toward Education	10	
Sister's Education	11	Nurse also
Improvements in Ishpeming	11	Housing for Elderly
Mining Location	11	
Finnish Sections of Ishpeming	11	
First Car ride	12	
Snow Removal	12	
The Good Old Days	12	Old furniture, pot belly stoves, created own fun

R I have the great pleasure of speaking about my parents. \_\_\_\_\_ was my mother's name and my father's name was Andrew ERkkila. They were born in Finland. My mother was born New Years Day, January 1, 1873 and my father was born in 1875, July 6. They were childhood playmates and friends. My father came to this country in 1898 and my mother arrived here in 1899. Father first settled in Ishpeming and mother went and settled in Ohio. In 1900 they were married in Ishpeming by Reverend Tolonen. They have lived there ever since.

My mother and father told me that when they came to America there were severe storms and the trip took many weeks to arrive in America. On April 17, 1903 I was born and then I have a sister who is younger than I am. She lives in Dearborn Michigan and she is also a nurse. She has one son and he is living in lower Michigan. I have attended schools here in Ishpeming, the Finnish Sunday School, summer school, private schools on Saturdays taught by Linda Malberg, confirmation. I was confirmed in 1919 and then I worked as an apprentice for August ~~Sutton~~<sup>Sutinen</sup>, he owned three drugstores. One in Waukegan, one in Negaunee and one in Ishpeming. Then I entered training in 1922 and I graduated in 1925 Oak Park Hospital which will make it my fiftieth anniversary in 1975. On July 9, 1975.

I Now would you give us your full name?

R My full name is Linne Maria Erkkila. I reside at 622 Wabash Street, Ishpeming, Michigan. I have been a resident in this home since I was 3 years old which makes it 72 years this year.

I Could you tell us something about your school here in Ishpeming?

R I attended schools here in Ishpeming.

I Do you remember any of the teachers?

R Oh yes, I remember my kindergarten teacher, my first grade teacher, Miss Fisher, Miss Kolen my second grade teacher, Miss Burke my third grade teacher, Miss Connors in fourth grade and in fifth grade I had Miss Corden and in sixth grade, Miss Thomas and in seventh grade and eighth grade I had the Konklins, Margaret and her sister were teachers there at the grammar school. Then I went to Suomi College and then into training and I finished my highschool in Chicago and I nursed a number of years in Chicago and in the Chicago suburbs. I'm licensed in the state of Illinois and in the State of Michigan

I Okay could you tell me a little bit about the nurses training in those days, is it different than it is now.

R Nurses training was very difficult. We had very long hours. I worked from twelve hours to twenty-four. Private duty in them days was twenty hours. I spent most of my training in night hours. It wasn't until the later years that I spent on day shifts.

R The hours are shorter for the nurses in the present day time. The wages are much better for the nurses. In the days when I used to nurse, we used to go out and nurse for just seven dollars. We would nurse for twenty hours and many times we were supposed to have four hours off and many times we didn't even get that. We were under strict discipline and I trained in the Oak Park Hospital under the Cordia of Sisters.

I Okay, what about training?

R Training was very strict, we had to work every day except for two or three hours which we had for classes in the evenings. We were under strict discipline, our hair had to be up, we weren't allowed to have short hair, we had to have hair nets, we had to have dresses below our knees. We were watched like hawks or like in military training. But I thank god for the good strict training that the sisters gave us.

I Did they give you off hours during the evenings?

R Sometimes if we didn't have classes. But the students that lived around the Chicago area and the suburbs had a holiday off like Christmas or New Years, but the rest of us had to work those days.

I What time did you have to be in at night?

R We had to stay in after supper. I remember it was my last year of training and I went on a date and sure enough the superintendent caught me when I came back.

I So it was much different then

R Today, they have shorter hours, big pay and more conveniences. We had to do the work that the striped nurses, the nurses aids and the practical nurses and the graduate nurses do.

I Were hospital facilities different in that time and also surgical facilities?

R In some respects they were and some they weren't but I don't find surgery much different. I know it's more convenient now. New medicines were coming out all the time.

This was before penicillin?

R Yes. They started to have penicillin when I was nursing in Illinois.

I Now in Ishpeming do you remember any of the home remedies that the Finnish people had. They didn't call the doctor right away.

R No, for example for fever, they would apply compresses with water and vinegar over the forehead and around the wrists. They had pultuses and so on.

- R They used to even make their cough medicines.
- I Do you remember what they put into those cough medicines?
- R Linseed, lemon, brown sugar.
- I Okay, what about the early doctors in Ishpeming.
- R Oh, the early doctors were really good, I have to give them credit. They would even come to the homes. There was Doctor Lelander, Doctor Fitch, Doctor Felch, Doctor Holm, Doctor Talso, Doctor Crane, Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ and his father, and Doctor Braden and they would go to the homes.
- I What about the different hospitals, that they had in Ishpeming.
- R Doctor Lindgren had a place here, in Ishpeming and his Assistant was Doctor Lanhala,
- I They had a hospital of their own?
- R Yes. Then the Cleveland Cliffs had a hospital and it was called the Bell Memorial Hospital named after an attorney named Bell.
- I There are no more private hospitals?
- R Not in Ishpeming.
- I What were some of the health problems that they used to have, like TB among the Finnish people?
- R The Finnish people were really hurt if you mentioned TB in their families. There was quite a bit of TB but one doesn't hardly hear of that anymore.
- I Did they get it from cows because the milk wasn't pasteurized?
- R They often blamed the cows for it. Everything's more sterile now.
- I What about silicosis?
- R When I was a little girl, we didn't hear as much about silicosis as we do now. Many of the diseases that people speak about nowadays we didn't hear of and they are so common now.
- I What kind of hospital facilities did the mining companies give to their employees?
- R They had a little insurance, it didn't pay much though. Nowadays we have insurances and sick benefits, compensations, and unemployment benefits.

- I Do you remember anything about the mining companies welfare programs of years past?
- R That was just a little amount that they gave for people and often time they had to sue for that.
- I Now going back to social activities, Christmas time, the 4th of July when you were a young girl.
- R They were great, we had Sunday School programs,
- I When was that program held?
- R That was usually held on Christmas Day. Usually in the afternoon, around 4 o'clock and the church was full. We were usually given some candy and an apple and an orange. Usually the mother's made their daughters clothes and the mother's made the little boys new suits. We recited poems and sang Christmas carols.
- I And this was at the Luthern Church?
- R
- I And you were confirmed at the Bethel Luthern Church?
- R I was confirmed at the Bethel Luthern Church.
- I Do you remember the Pastor?
- R Reverend \_\_\_\_\_
- I Was it in Finnish?
- R Yes, in those days, we had Sunday School in Finnish and Confirmation which is now mostly held in English. All our services were held in Finnish before.
- I Do you have Finnish services on Sunday now?
- R We have Finnish services on certain Sundays of the month. Then there are usually two English services sometimes in the morning and then in the evening.
- I What about the 4th of July?
- R Oh that was great, we used to have firecrackers and some kind of bombs that would go off and people would really come out for the parades.
- I What kind of a program did they have in Ishpeming?
- R They were mostly parades on the street and they'd have the fireworks in the evening.

- R We used to also have our Finnish picnics up here near the Jackson Park.
- I Now, what was that like?
- R Oh coffee was served, and icecream and people brought their own lunches and made it a regular picnic day.
- I Was there a program?
- R Usually a summer school program.
- I Was the summerschool connected with the church?
- R Oh yes, I had Reverend Sauvola's wife for my teacher.
- I What type of program did you have for the day at summerschool?
- R They were religious programs, religious songs and poems
- I Were they in Finnish?
- R They were in the Finnish language
- I What other activities did you have?
- R We used to have a group of boys and girls that would get together and now a days they call it the Luther League but we called it the \_\_\_\_\_ Reverend and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ were the head of this. We'd gather in different homes and the parents would serve lunch.
- I Now, what were some other special occasions for the family during the year. Do you remember any others?
- R Oh we used to have a quiet day around New Years because that was her birthday and when there were birthdays we would have coffee or cake or lunch. Sometimes the children would come over or some neighborhood folks and their parents.
- I What about the funerals of Finnish people were they so different?
- R Yes, the funerals were so different than they are nowadays.
- I How were they different?
- R I think I observed every funeral in the neighborhood because I lived near the cemetery but our parents didn't know it. We never hardly missed a funeral that was going on. We were living in the days of the horse and carriage and we would be waiting at the cemetery to see who had the most flowers, who cried the most, and how they were dressed. We didn't even dare to tell our parents what we were doing.

R We would sneak up there to watch. In fact I always wanted to be a minister or an undertaker. People were so serious in those days. They would usually have their loved ones buried from the homes or they would come to the church to have the funeral. The service was first held at the home and then the church was decorated with black crepe on the benches and the men wore a black band over their arm and the ladies wore a long black veil from their head to their chest. They wore them for even weeks and months after. The church service was so serious. The preacher would preach and the people would sing hymns. Then we would all walk around the casket of the deceased and then the preacher would read off the names of the people who sent flowers. Then at the cemetery we would stay until the earth was put over the deceased. In those days the people were mostly dressed in black, the mourners, now a days they come in anything, even sport clothes.

I Did the family fix the dead person?

R We had a mortician by the name of Gust Saari and then Bill Jackson.

Note: there is a gap in this tape of about fifteen minutes

R When I was a little girl I had to attend Sunday School which was in the afternoon and was changed to the morning. Then after I was confirmed, we would have church in the morning and in the afternoon we'd have coffee and the benefit from that would be to help the poor people. On the evening of Sunday they would have church services and they would have Bible study on Thursday nights.

I Do you remember some of the early leaders?

R Some of the leaders we had among our ministers were Reverend Sauvola who had been in Africa as a missionary. We had Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ who baptized me and Reverend Lomne who baptized my sister. We had Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ who confirmed me. We had several ministers after that and things were pretty strict in church there also. people would come and put their head on the pew, now you don't see that, they just come and sit in church. My mother's father where he attended church in Finland, they had to genuflect in church.

I Do you like the Finnish services?

R Oh yes, I like the Finnish services and I try to attend all the Finnish services that I can. Sometimes I go to the English services at the Bethel Church where I belong. God is everywhere where God is spoken and I attend some other churches whenever I'm able. We all have the same God and Holy God and Ghost and God who loved us and gave his only son on the Cross to die. I believe in Resurrection and Holy Ghost and Life hereafter.

I What was your Confirmation like?

I Was it all in Finnish?

R Our Confirmation was all in Finnish conducted by Reverend \_\_\_\_\_  
I remember the last day we were in Confirmation he made us all kneel'  
down and pray. Of course some of the children weren't used to kneeling'  
down like the Catholic people and the Episcopal people and they started  
to laugh and giggle. They thought it was funny.

I What did the Pastor say?

R The Pastor saw nothing funny in it. I think there should be more kneeling  
nowadays.

you have a question period before the congregation?

R Oh yes, before we were confirmed we had a question period. We had to  
attend confirmation for two weeks, morning and afternoon, which now  
they usually only attend on Saturday mornings.

I Now, do you remember when you first voted?

R Yes. It was on Second Street in Ishpeming in the old clubhouse  
Now I vote at the school in the gymnasium in Ishpeming.

I Do you remember the first President that you voted for?

R Let's see who was it. I remember when Taft was in Ishpeming.

I As a child do you remember when Roosevelt came to the Upper Peninsula?

R Yes

I Did you see him?

R Yes, I was at the depot

I At that time were there quite a few passenger trains?

R Yes, there were quite a few passenger trains and I wish there still were.

I About how many a day would you say?

R Oh several went through Ishpeming that you could take to Marquette  
and then to lower Michigan. Then some went to the Copper Country and  
to Duluth.

I Okay getting back to the presidential election, do you remember who  
the first president was that you voted for?

R Let's see, I must have been about 18 then. There was Roosevelt  
Harding and Wilson.

I How about Coolidge?

R Yes, Coolidge.

I Were there very many Finnish people in politics in Ishpeming?

R They used to speak about it and they used to talk about the Democratic party and the Republican and they always used to mention that there were poor times and they would always say there's always war when there are Democratic parties.

I What about Finnish people, were there any that went in for politics and city offices and so on?

R We've had Finnish people in offices, church boards, school boards, and city councils.

I Do you remember any of the Finnish people on the city council?

R Let's see, Mr. Aho.

I What was his first name?

R Mr. Emil Aho. He's been on there for several years and been very good he's also been our mayor. We also had this David Halley, and he was also very good.

I What about the Depression time during the 1930's?

R Oh, during the 1930's, I recall, when the mines were closed two and three days a week. At the hospital in Ishpeming we were layed off two days a week.

I What was your work like at the hospital here, did you get into any complications?

R In Ishpeming I was asked to be the head nurse and I would have been the Supervisor but I left before then. But in Illinois I did general hospital, private and supervisor.

I But you can't remember any special cases that you had at the time in Ishpeming while you were nursing at the hospital?

R What kind of special do you mean?

I Any special things that happened?

R Oh, we used to have alot of complicated cases, you get them in any hospital. In fact I was a victem myself, I became paralyzed while I was there.

I Do you want to speak of it?

R I could, in 1933 they brought in a typhoid case and someone put him in with some other men in the ward which they shouldn't have.

- R They came and gave everybody a shot in the arm and everybody's worked good, but mine affected me on my left side so I became paralyzed and had a heart attack. They took me to the hospital in the middle of the night and they thought I was dying, but it wasn't my turn to die so with the help of the good Lord I pulled through. I had to have many doctors, and specialists, treatments, hospitals, and go away and now at the present time I'm suffering with a weak and lazy heart and how the left side of my heart doesn't function. I should be operated on for galstones and a rupture and they can't on account of my heart. Then I was in a severe car accident and I am suffering with severe arthritis and rheumatism which is very painful. I have to wear a brace from my foot to my hip.
- I This has all come about from those three shots that they gave you.
- R Yes.
- I In 1932?
- R 1933.
- I The Finnish people did a lot with home remedies and taking care of themselves at home.
- R They were very good and efficient and I still believe in a lot of those home remedies. I even used them myself. And pretner all the people had their babies at home before. The doctors would come twice a day and sometimes when the patient was sick, they would come even during the night. They weren't afraid to ring the door bells as some of them are nowadays.
- I So there was plenty of help. Of doctors and so on around the Ishpeming area.
- R Yes.
- I How do you spend your spare time?
- R I like to spend a lot of my time in prayer, reading the word of God speaking of the word of God to others, and I like to play the piano and sing. Read, write, recite, entertain company, cook, bake, and go to religious meetings.
- I Do you read any of the Finnish papers?
- R I read a lot of Finnish papers, the \_\_\_\_\_ . I go to visit many nice homes among the Finnish people and other nationality people, I like to garden. I like to read and write and I like to go and visit the sick and poor. I also like to visit the elders homes and the orphanages that used to be in Marquette before.
- I Now you mentioned that you had attended Suomi College?

R Yes, and I liked it there

I Now, what years were you at Suomi?

R 1917 and 1918

I What courses did you take?

R Academic and I liked it there. The teachers were good and there was good discipline there. We had to obey and we were made to obey and we had respect for our teachers and for one another.

I Do you remember any of the names of the teachers?

R Doctor John Nikander and \_\_\_\_\_

I What subjects did you have?

R \_\_\_\_\_ Kangas. I took Biology, Finnish, History, Religion, Music and French. Oh, and Latin also.

I Who was your Latin and French teacher?

R Oh, what was her name. she was just in Akron Ohio, and I stayed at their home. It's on the east side of Hancock and Reverend Wargelin lived in that home too. It's a very pretty home.

I Whom did you have for music?

R Professor

I Was it in Finnish?

R Yes, then he directed the choir and music. He was very good

I Where did you live?

R Right at the college. Things were very strict. We were never allowed out after seven. We had to dress properly and act properly.

I This was in 1917 and 18?

R 1918.

I How did your parents feel toward education?

R Our parents were for education. I was a lazy student. When I was in Ishpeming, the teacher said I would have been bright but I was too lazy. Then I regretted it and I found out when I had to go to training that I had to be either a winner or a loser so I made up for it and came out on top of the class.

I Now, what school did your sister attend?

R My sister attended the school in Ishpeming and graduated from high school and attended nurses training and graduated from Oak Park Illinois.

I The same school that you went to?

R Yes.

I Where has she worked?

R She has worked in several big hospitals in Chicago and Detroit.

I What is her name and where does she live?

R Her name is \_\_\_\_\_ and she resides in Dearborn, Michigan.

I Is she still nursing?

R She will retire this year.

I Where is she working at the present time?

R She's working at the Outer Drive Hospital at Lincoln Park. It's about a 45 minutes ride from her home in Dearborn.

I Now what do you think will be happening in the future in Ishpeming?

R I think they are always trying to make improvements for the better

I What about housing for the elderly?

R They're trying to get the elders homes and that's all right.

I What about the different mining locations, what were some of the names of some of them.

R Oh they had the Gold Mine and \_\_\_\_\_ and many other mines, of course that's years ago. Now some of the mines are closed around here so they just these open mine pits. Like the Tilden and Republic Open Pit in Humboldt. They're making these pellets nowadays.

I Do the Finnish people just live in one section of Ishpeming?

R We first started in Cleveland Ishpeming and now we have many sections now, we have the Cleveland location still, the \_\_\_\_\_ we have Strawberry Hill, we have \_\_\_\_\_ here, we have Nebraska, New York location, Deer Lake, Palms addition, Eighth Addition \_\_\_\_\_, Clarksburg and \_\_\_\_\_

- I Now years ago, did the Finnish people live in one particular area?
- R The Finnish people mostly lived up Cleveland way but now they're spread all over town. They're in different locations and areas. And the population was many times what it is now but it happened that many families lived in the same house sometimes. Whereas now everybody wants a home of their own. The roads are better now and they're are sidewalks and sewers and electric lights and son.
- I Do you remember the first cars?
- R Yes, I remember my first car ride.
- I When was that, do you remember about when?
- R When I was a little girl coming from the parade, John Hadel and                      had a Packard. He picked up my father, mother and sister and I and gave us our first ride in a car. My second ride was with an old bachelor and he picked up a bunch of us kids and said he'd give us a ride and got as far as the cemetery and his car broke down.
- I Do you remember what kinds of cars they were?
- R Oh, they were cars you had to crank and they had black tires.
- I How were the streets plowed in those days?
- R When I was a little girl, they would come along with the horse and buggy or horse and little sled and plow the sidewalks. They would plow the main streets and the sidewalks but on the sidestreets, they would just plow the road.
- I Do you think it's easier living today than in years past?
- R I think they were the good old days, I still think of the old furniture we had and the potbelly coal stove and the wood stove. I still enjoyed the old days. The new ways are all right too but everything is more expensive now and people crave for more fun. We made our own fun before.
- I Now what were some of the things you made, you said you made fun?
- R When I see nowadays for instance the children, all the toys they have. We had our dolls and buggys, skates, skis but nowadays there are so many new toys that the children have. They don't even seem to take care of them the way they should. They're left on the streets and so on.
- I So there were the good old days?

R There were the good old days.

I I want to thank you Linne Erkkila for being on my interview here.

R Thank you for coming, it was a pleasure having you here

I This is Elma Rantta interviewing Linne Erkkila of Wabash in Ishpeming