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

(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

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The Rev. Martin Halinen

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- I This is an interview with Pastor Martin Halinen at his home at 715 Water Street, August 14, 1973. It's a special joy for me to interview Pastor Halinen in as much as he was my confirmation pastor many years ago in Amasa, Michigan. I count this as a privilege to be able to interview you. I'd like to begin by asking you if I should refer to you as Pastor Halinen or Martin?
- R Martin.
- I You prepared a very fine resume of some of the key events and experiences in your life so what I will attempt to do is mention some of these and then ask you in more detail questions concerning them. Now I read here that you were born April 30, 1904 in Mikkeli Vanharnaki, Finland. Now I wonder if you could just say briefly where this is in relation to the geography of Finland.
- R The area is 27 kilometers from Mikkeli.
- I Would you describe this as being a farming area or lumber region? What kind of activities and employment was your father involved in?
- R My fathers and brothers were in farming and in the wintertime logging of pulpwood.
- I Was this a heavy populated area or a small rural community?
- R It was a quiet farming area. The farmhouses were scattered here and there.
- I How many brothers and sisters were in your family?
- R Five brothers and one sister.
- I Do you recall your mother or father saying anything about the circumstances of your birth, were you born in a hospital or thereon the homestead?
- R Right there at home.
- I Was there a midwife present?
- R I suppose.
- I As a child growing up you were involved in farm chores and other things like taking care of the cattle and animals, was this part of your experience?
- R
- I About how large was your folks farm?
- R Oh, I'd say about 100 acres.
- I How many cows?

R At the most about 8. Couple dozen sheep, three or four pigs and a couple dozen chickens.

I Were your folks very active in the life of the local parish?

R Not anymore than the others. They were busy 7 days a week with the farm work.

I Would you say this led to the people being very rugged, in other words the word Sisu is often referred to the Finns. Was this the type of spirit that your folks had too?

R That's for sure. It really took Sisu to carry on.

I As a youngster you went to school, was the school right in the local village?

R The school was about one kilometer away.

I How did you become interested in the church work? I know in the early years you worked as a lay preacher but in the early years were you interested in the ministry?

R It was during ^{the Civil War in Finland} 1917 and 1918 that many people began to think about the religious matters also. Not only grown-up people but children also. They were concerned about religion and came to a personal decision

I It was a very difficult time during the war, were there incidents in your community where there was fighting?

R Not in my community but I vaguely heard the artillery booms. Those who were living in Southern Finland and working there got trapped behind the lines. It really divided the families. So no information was received if they were dead or alive.

I So no one in your family was killed?

R No. But people were suffering for lack for food and that humbled many people.

I Would you say then that the observation that was going on there not only awakened you to the needs but wanting to serve your fellow man?

R Well that developed the decision for being in service of my fellow man.

I I see here that you had 4 years in the public schools. Was your public school education interrupted at all by the Civil War?

R

I Now you said that the students were made to think, did you have discussions in the school itself about what was going on? Or was this more of a private sort of thing that you did at home?

R Well it was more of a private thing but an open discussion also with other people.

I What is the one year of post graduate course, what did this consist of?

R Well it was a continuation in mathematics.

I

R Handicap work and a continuation of other subjects

I Let's see you note here one year of post graduate courses and one year of ~~other~~ school, what was that?
the higher artisan

R That was when I was in Finland and was a cabinet maker and how would you say it?

I Journeyman would you say?

R Yes. To learn the trade and it was demanded. *Missing Content*

I Now you finished that work in 1922 and I see here in 1923 you began a term in the Bible School. Where was the Bible School?

R The area where I went is still in that area but in a different form. My wife and I had a chance to see the area in 1973 from June 31 to July 31. It's near the city of Hanko and was a three month course at the time.

I Do you remember who the chief instructor was and perhaps some of the courses that you took?

R Well the course basically was Biblical. The teachers who were there were very well educated. Professor _____ was one of them and then all the teachers came from different cities.

I Would you say that any particular revival movement was strong in your life?

R Well time and again we had not what you would exactly call revival movements but studies that were especially regarded by Pastor Onerma. This was during that year when I was in that cabinet making shop. His preaching made the turning point in my life. I started to think more if I should go to study to be a minister. They had short courses like I mentioned for 3 months and I think I went there for about 2 years.

I Did you begin your lay preaching ministry before you were inducted into the service? I noticed that you were a corporal in the batallion in Finland from 1925 to 1926. *Missing Content*

- R Well me and another young man like myself, we went together for about a year and a half.
- I Were you sponsored by a missionary society, or was this on your own?
- R It was sponsored by a missionary society
- I What was the name of the society?
- R That was the Free Church.
- I How large was the free church movement at the time in comparison to the National Church Body? About 2% of the population?
- R I don't think anymore than 2% of the population because even now it's no more than 20,000.
- I Then _____ was out of that too then
- R No, he was a pastor and a great evangelist in Evangelical Luthern Church.
- I Was there any particular reason why you were affiliated or were sponsored by the free church at that time?
- R Well I think it was because of my friends, my friends were there and it's the same way now the young people go where their friends are.
- I How far a range was your evangelism in the area. Was it just in the _____ Mikkeli area or did you go throughout Finland?
- R We didn't go further than a hundred miles then.
- I Did you hold home meetings or _____ were they hold in the church?
- R They were mostly home meetings.
- I Would your program consist of a message, singing and bible study?
- R Our program consisted of that and we had our own little band. In almost every community we got together almost all the young people.
- I It sounds as if it was a very rewarding type of experience for you.
- R Well it surely was and for others. In many areas where people especially young people weren't interested in church at all they came to our services and really got interested and went back to their own homes and were alive with song. Not that they didn't receive this before but now they received more spiritual interest.

- R Okay, let's move on to your time in the service. The custom was and is still that every male should serve a time in the service is that correct?
- R Yes it is and whoever wants to go to a foreign country he has to serve first.
- I Could you explain what the bicycle battalion was, did you ride bicycles?
- R The bicycle battalion was very stern. Like any army when they are first in it, they are in their basic training for about 3 months then when they are through they are soldiers. Then they are assigned an area according to what they want to be. If they want to be a baker they work in the kitchen or go to work in the hospital and I served there for nine months.
- I Were you serving as a chaplain or an orderly or both?
- R As an orderly.
- I Why did you come to America?
- R Well it's a long story but basically I wanted to study more and couldn't do that in Finland. I didn't know much about Suomi College but knew more about the college in Chicago. So I planned to come to America right after I got out of the service so right after I got out I left for America.
- I Was it a difficult decision to leave your family and a lot of friends behind?
- R No, I was like any other young man who had his plans focused ahead on other things.
- I I see here you spent almost 4 or over four years at the Theological School. From January 27 until June 33. Not six full years but off and on for these years.
- R That was the plan but then I got tired after 3 years and I received a call to serve in the United Church. *Missing Content*
- I The time of your study here is very interesting history it was the years during the depression. You arrived prior to the Depression and in the midst of the depression you went off to Canada. This was a time also of great turmoil in the Finnish immigrant community. Wasn't this the time when there was some interest from the immigrants at least from the socialists like the ones we call the Red Finns to go back to Karelia or was this a little bit later?
- R That was later. *Missing Content*
- I When you went to Canada did you work directly with the Finnish immigrants who were coming into Canada?

R No, I was working purely with the United Church in Canada.

I Had you learned English already in Finland or did you learn it later as you moved on?

R I picked it up later.

I How large a school was ~~the~~ ^{theological College in Chicago} Union at the time you were there?

R It was sponsored by the Congregational and Christian Churches. It was nondenominational. And the students numbered about 40 to 50.

I Do you remember any particularly hard times that you had or your friends had during the Depression years?

R In school?

I In school or out of school.

R Well of course at that time I didn't understand much about the Depression or anything like that. Many times I was penniless and didn't have money for food, but a young man who was carefree and young, it didn't bother me.

I Well following Union you went onto a college in Waukesha, what was the purpose of this additional work there?

R Well when I left the Union Theological College in Chicago, I was acquainted with Finnish people in Milwaukee. They had a little congregation and they called me to be their pastor. *Missing Content*

I It sounds very much as if you were a serious student interested in a variety of subjects.

R Yes, I was.

I During the time you were a pastor in Wisconsin, this was the time when you got acquainted with your wife as well right?

R That's right.

I I see here that your marriage was February 24, 1934 in Milwaukee. Perhaps at another time I should ask your wife Alma a little bit about her parents and her background. I gather that they were Finnish also?

R They were Finnish and very active in the congregation. My wife's membership was in the Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

R They went to Sunday School there and were confirmed there and took an active part in our young people's league. They were in many ways associated with us and that's where I got acquainted with her.

I Well then after you got married you made quite a decision you decided to go back to Canada, was this the first time for Alma to be in Canada?

R It was her first time.

Kirkland Lake (Ontario, Canada)

I What were the circumstances around ~~that~~, did you seek the position or did they call seeking you?

R Well you see our Luthern congregations that time were affiliated with the United Luthern Church. So the congregation was organized and they called me to be their pastor. A student who has come from another country is required after he finishes in his studies to go to another country. Now I wanted either to go to Mexico or Finland or Canada. So to help our people in Canada I selected Canada.

I The years of service were from 34 to 36.

R Yes. Missing Content

I What did you find to be the most challenging thing during this period of service?

R That would be a long story, but to make it short, the depression was hurting people in Canada also. Their foolishness caused many men to be out of work. Finnish people have always been honest in their thinking so they speak what they think. So the Finnish people were classified in two groups, red and whites.

That's right.

R And many men were classified as reds who really were not. That caused many hardships.

I In otherwords the companies made a policy of not hiring anyone who was red and that tended to cut off some of the Finns?

R Well that was the policy of some of the companies in my feelings went a little bit to far, in their classification also. Perhaps we could call what they use nowadays work discrimination.

I How was the feeling between the two groups of Finns? I would expect this would make your work very difficult. There was a very strong feeling between the red and white group wasn't there?

R It was and it caused difficulties in the church work. But they had a congregation too and they built their own church which is still there.

2nd release to Synod office
by the request of Miss Marian Nelson
Secret. to Dr. Mattson, Pres.
- December 11, 1967

Lutheran Church in America

Jan. 11, 1965

PASTORAL INFORMATION

Name: Martin Halinen

Birthdate: April 30, 1904 Birthplace: Mikkeli, Vanhanaki, Finland

Baptized: Yes Place: Mikkeli, Vanhanaki

Confirmed: Yes Place: Mikkeli, Ev. luth. Rural Parish

Arrived in America: Jan. 6, 1927 Place: Chicago, Illinois

Ordained: June 10, 1934 Place: Morrisburg, Ontario, Canada.
(Canada Synod, U L C)

Father's Name: David Halinen No. of Sisters: none

Mother's Maiden Name: Vilhelmina Viljakainen No. of Brothers: 2

Education - in Finland - School: Year Graduated

Four years of the Higher Public school	1917 1921
One years of the Post Graduate course <i>and</i>	1918
One term of the Higher Artisan school	1922
One term of the Bible school	1923

in America

In Union Theological College, Chicago, Illinois
January 1927 - June 1933 1933
(One year Mission work in Canada, U C of Canada)

In Carrol College, Waukesha, Wisconsin
One Semester from Sept. 1933 to Feb. 1934

In Suomi Seminary, Hancock, Michigan
Private studies and examinations in 1939
As a regular Suomi Seminary student 1939 to 1940

Military Service:

<u>Branch of Service</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Date of Discharge</u>
A Bicycle Battalion, Finland	Corporal	Sept. 1925 - Oct. 1926	Oct. 1926

Marriage:

Wife's Maiden Name: Alma Emily Schroederus

Birthdate: November 20, 1907 Birthplace: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Date of Marriage: Feb. 24, 1934 Place: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Children and Birthdates:
Ruth Elizabeth (Ball) July 15, 1938
Alma Lydia June 18, 1945

Pastorates Held:

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
Ev.Luth., Kirkland Lake, Ont., Canada, U L C	1934 - 1936
St. Mary's Ev.Lutheran, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. U L C (Nine months leave of absence for Seminary studies)	1937 - 1940
Ev.Luth., Newberry, Michigan, Suomi Synod	Jan. 1941 -Nov.1943
Ev.Luth., Quincy Parish, Mass. " "	Nov. 1943 -May 1948
Ev.Luth., Crystal Falls Parish, Mich. " " (Suomi Synod and)	May 1948 -Aug.1958
Ev.Luth., South Range Parish, Mich. L C A	Aug. 1958 -Feb.1965

Social Ministry

To provide a Finnish language ministry in Congre-
gations and pastoral care in Institutions, ~~of Upper Michigan, L C A~~
of Upper Michigan, L C A Feb. 15, 1965 -

Church Boards and committees which I have served on:

Secy. of Finnish Conf. Board, U L C in Canada

Secy. of Michigan-Conference Board, Suomi Synod in Michigan and in
Eastern Conference Board, Massachusetts

Business manager and Lecturer of Finnish Bible Camp, Pembroke, Mass.,
and at Finnish Bible Camp, Fortune Lake, Michigan for eight summers.

Treasurer of Suomi Synod Pastors' Death Benefit Fund and Copper Country
Pastors' Families Fund.

President of Copper Country Lutheran Pastors group - L C A

At present, am Treasurer and a speaker on the Finnish Lutheran Radio
Ministry - W M P L Hancock, Mich., sponsored by the Lake Superior Dist.
of the Wis.-Upper Michigan Synod, L C A.

Received special 9 months training course as a medical soldier
(orderly) in the Bicycle Battalion Hospital, Mikkeli, Finland 1925-26.

Served as a Chaplain on the payroll and under the authorization of
the Michigan Conference of Suomi Synod, for two years in Newberry State
Hospital, in the Finnish language for patients of Finnish nationality,
to provide religious services and counseling for them.

"Our patients have appreciated this and we have found Mr. Halinen
very tactful and helpful in other ways

I also may add he has been an estimable citizen in this
community." says Dr. E. H. Campbell, Medical Supt. in his
letter to me of Nov. 22, 1943.

I completed the American National Red Cross standard course of
instruction in First Aid to the injured at Crystal Falls Municipal
Hospital, Crystal Falls, Mich.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

482-4643⁴⁹⁹⁶³

I have visited - counseled - patients in hospitals (people in jail) convalescent homes and private homes in every parish I have served.

These are the highlights of my life in the Christian ministry.

Martin Halinen

MARTIN HALINEN

The Rev. Thomas L.H. Collins:

P.S. The other day I found the copy of my pastoral information sent to L C A, office of the secretary, 231 Madison Ave., New York 16, N. Y. That is the reason why it was not in the Synod's office. I am now sending a copy to Dr. Theo. Matson for the synod file also.