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

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Armas Holmio  
July , 1972

Art Puotinen

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It's a real pleasure to interview you, Dr. Holmio, you being a teacher of mine, also a teacher of many at Suomi College and Suomi Seminary and you recall many interesting stories and reminiscences that you used to share with us in your classes. And now we'd like to ask you some questions about your own life, and work and ministry, both in the country of Finland, your homeland here in the United States.

It's very interesting to see old students around and I know they are able to ask more questions than old professors put together in a rainstorm! (laughter)

Art: Could we first of all ask you, what year you were born and where was your birthplace in Finland?

1897 in September, that means next month I will celebrate my 75th anniversary. My birthplace is Rauma in Satakunta in western Finland; Rauma is an old, old medieval town, founded 1452 and its city was built around Franciscan monastery. And still has old Franciscan traditions so in Lutheran congregations.

Art: What kinds of traditions would those Franciscan traditions be? For example

Dr.: Franciscan monks in Finland were known for coming from the country of rank and file; they were farmer's sons usually and they were good preachers; they used to go around and preach in villages and farm houses and street corners; they were actually much more Evangelical than Monastic orders usually were in the Catholic Church.

then

Was your own religious upbringing/influenced by these preachers to a large degree or did it come more from your own home?

Dr.: I was born 400 years after last Franciscan preacher had died (laughter) but the spiritual inheritance was still alive there and it went also very friendly relations between people at large and the church. The old Franciscan Church is still used there as parish church for city parish and surrounding rural-area parish.

Your parents then attended that particular church?

They were members but my parents were both born in Varsinais, Suomi, that means around Turku area and had moved to Satakunta and settled in Rauma just before I was born. My father worked in--was custom officer and over 10 years he sailed in Gulf of Botnia to meet foreign and Finnish ships before they came to Finland. And custom inspection was performed there far away at sea.

So in your early childhood, you already had contact with what, seaman? And thru your father's work?

In Rauma everyone had contacts with sea because everybody was first or second mate on ship or then were sailors but very few became immigrants. Because they sailed the "ocean blues" during their \_\_\_\_\_ years, lifetime, and they came back home and settled there. Very few stayed in big harbors in San Francisco, in New York, in Pensacola, and so on, even today you can find old people who came from Rauma and who were sailors.

Art: Your mother was a full-time housewife then, was she?

Yes.

Art: And were there any other brothers and sisters in your family?

No, I had the unusual luck of being alone!

Did you attend the schools then in Rauma as you were growing up?

Yes, I had my early schooling there; first there was some prep school for lyceum; took four years; and from that you got then entrance exams into lyceum which was eight years.

What were some of your favorite subjects?

My favorite subject was math, geometry, algebra, and so on; so far pre-theology wasn't possible (laughter)

When you finished your schooling there, you went on to the university?

Yes, Helsinki University.

What course of study did you pursue there? Theology immediately?

I was started in math by mathic faculty in order to take pre-med exams

So your interest in theology really crystalized as you were in the university, is that correct?

Dr.: I had interest in theology already before but then I found out it was too long a way to study medicine, usually at that time it took 10-11-12 years because requirements were very high and was very expensive also, so I changed to theological faculty.

Art: Who were some of the men who instructed you there at the university?

Dr.: I was lucky having very good faculty that really made history in those times; my professor in Dogmatics was Antti Jacob Pietila who studied in this country also; my professor in Church History was Jacob Kumerus, very famous historian, who died as Bishop of Tampere; Professor of Nordic Church History was Martti Ruut, who has written big volumes on Finnish Pietist movements; my professor in Greek was Edvard Steni, small but extremely learned man; and professor in Hebrew and Old Testament was Arthur Yelt, who has published many big volumes in English on Palestian excavations.

Was there any particular man or any particular school of thought that really shaped your theological stance at that time? Theological perspective?

Dr.: You mean as a faculty?

Art: Yes, as you look back on yourself as a theological student, where were you at in your thinking? What were you most interested in?

Dr.: You see the area of Western Finland where I was born was occupied by 2 revival movements; one was Evangelical movement and one was so-called "Prayer" movement. Founder of Evangelical movement was Hedbare, found of Prayer movement was Renquist and that area was occupied by both movements. But pietism and Laestadianism were practically unknown there.

So those two revival movements influenced you a great deal then?

They influenced everybody who was born there; for instance, lay preachers of both movements came into our house even and had meetings sometimes and neighbors and people were invited to attend.

Art: Did the instruction you received from the theological faculty, was it contradictory to those revival movements or--in other words, some of these men were really top-notch

scholars, they had gotten into scientific theological method in various disciplines,

There is a fifth movement in Church of Finland and I would say that the theological faculty in those times and even later was favoring that fifth movement, so called "Biblical" movement but university faculty it became, of course, scientific theology.

Art: Were you influenced in any degree by Johannson?

Dr.: Gustaf Johannson was the Arch-Bishop who ordained me and after ordination when I served in Finnish mutual society, I met him very often. I made almost endless visits in his home and we had long discussions and so on because Finnish mutual society where I served was printing Archbishops' books and I was working in the publishing house. So I had to take proof material and so on between Helsinki and Turku time after time.

He was a man, was he not, who served in very critical period in Finnish history and Finnish church history, what are some of the things that stand out in your memory, what made him a churchman for his time?

He was very patriotic in a religious way. And very courageous. When Russian oppression was very heavy in Finland, when he became first Bishop of Kuopio and Bishop of Turku so he was one of the national leaders who made time after time trips to St. Petersburg to imperial quarters, for instance, to present as a case of Finland and people of Finland. He never agreed to any Russian or Russian Orthodox demands, he was always fighting for his country.

Did he identify, especially with, say, the Finnish-speaking group as opposed to the Swedish-speaking--was there a difference in Finnish society then between the Finnish common people and Swedish-speaking nobles or aristocrats?

Not in that particular time, especially higher clergy were bilingual but for example Archbishop Johannson wrote all his books in Finnish language, but most of the clergy were bilingual and church did not experience any difficulties between the two language groups.

Art: Moving to another figure--I'd like to ask you about Syrenius what is his first name?

Dr.: Sigfried.

Art: You indicated at one time that you were one of his pupils, one of the first, I believe, in a settlement house, could you explain a little bit about that?

Sigfried Syrenius was my good friend; he started the Finnish settlement movement in Finnish \_\_\_\_\_ men, the attempt of people from educated classes to move to live in suburbs among factory people. And in that particular case, in Helsinki certain suburb he opened there a big house called (skips my mind now what the name was) and started there a dormitory for university students. There were students studied medicine, others law, some theology, some were trying to get to some mission field and then in that settlement he had a big lecture hall and invited there the University professors to lecture to factory workers who lived all around. And he had Sunday worship services and so on and students worked for their bread and butter very cheaply and their room in--it was Kalliola the name--in Kalliola with the understanding that we attend also the meetings and to take part in discussions and so on so that meant very practical and very friendly relations between our student-group; about 50 students lived there and hundreds and hundreds of factory workers who used to come to the meetings.

Roughly, what time was this, was this after 1905?

This was from 1918 to 1921.

In the factory workers that you encountered, what was their attitude toward the church? Were they sympathetic or were some already into socialism?

Dr.: There was milder type of socialism but I never remember experiencing any bitterness towards the church, perhaps they were open minds full of questions and they liked frank answers also. They knew the weaknesses of the church as well as students knew them and we were frank enough to discuss them. I never remember any difficult situation, many arguments but always friendly relations.

Was there any other emphasis to this approach of Syrenius' besides education? You mentioned that there were medical students, was there any attempt to provide medical services or like today, we have centers for food and clothing and this type of thing for those who are needy, or was it primarily an educational enterprise?

Dr.: During those years it was not necessary, the country was fairly prosperous, everybody had work and it was not expected from an institution like that to start any free-meal service or anything like that; during those years it wasn't needed. But later on when later wars between Finland and Russia and so on, I understand that even Pastor Syrenius' settlement became a kind of center for every kind of humanitarian work.

I'm very interested in the kinds of ideas that prompted Syrenius; I've heard that he's been called the "Walter Roshenbusch" of Finland, what got him started in his thinking, was it Roshenbusch?

Dr.: He translated into Finnish Roschenbusch prayer books and so on, but Syrenius got his ideas in England, he was Finnish pastor in London and became friend of the English Christian Socialist party leaders, invited them to Finland and was their interpreter and he took them around from churches and so on.

Would you say that the Finnish Seamen's Society was a very bringer of new ideas in the whole mainstream of Finnish church life, has it been a very creative influence?

Dr.: It has had. Finnish Seamen's Mission Society was born actually inside Finnish Foreign Mission Society because Finnish Foreign Mission Society by-laws was so wide that they included work also among Finnish immigrants and Finnish seamen abroad but then they found out that they needed another society specializing in that matter and then Seamen's Society was founded but it was sister society of missionary society.

You spent your time in the settlement as you described during a good time in Finland but it was during those years too that the war broke out, sometimes it's been called the War of Independence, others have called it the Civil War. What happened to you personally when the war broke out, were you already in the army or did you join then or how did that work out?

Dr.: No, when war broke out so people in the area where I live were simply drafted to the army.

Art: And what was your position in the army? Were you a Lieutenant?

No, I was studying theology already so I was made actually what we would call in American army, chaplain's assistant. But we were so short of clergymen that that meant in practice Assistant Chaplain, not chaplain's assistant, but acting chaplain because of shortage of ministers.

After the war, what then became your position in the church?

Well, I was ordained 1921 and my first position was amongst the clergy of the great cathedral congregation of Turku. When we say congregation we have here in mind some lilliput ~~American~~ congregation of couple hundred people, Turku Cathedral congregation had 30,000 people and 12 clergymen. And I was one of those 12.

Could you outline as briefly as possible some of the duties that you had in this very large parish?

In that parish, one man, for instance, was working in hospitals because parish area had many big hospitals and one clergyman's duty was taken up by hospitals. One was working only suburbs and we nicknamed him "Hooligan pastor". That was nothing against him, he was nice man but he had to do all this work in suburban groups. I was appointed to serve foreign mission interests in that congregation, they had so many sewing circles and mission study groups and so on that one pastor's time was consumed entirely in those duties.

So you gave talks on foreign mission work and help lead drives to secure funds and send men out, was this the type of activity you had?

Dr.: Actually everyone of--roughly speaking 600 congregations in Church of Finland is a subsidiary to Finnish Foreign Mission Society. And Turku Cathedral Congregation was one of the strongest congregations so far as foreign mission help was consider red.

Art: Let me go back just a bit regarding this position: were you by interest drawn to foreign mission work or were you sort of given that position when you joined the parish?

I was interested in foreign mission work because I drew from many missionaries and so on and because of my work in Turku I was called by Missionary Society to come to the headquarters to Helsinki and start my work there.

Art: So you moved from Turku then to Helsinki.

I moved to Helsinki and after a few years I was given opportunity to make a trip to the United States and visit several hundred Finnish parishes here and I did that in the summer and fall, 1926

Art: And you preserved those recollections in a book, haven't you?

Dr.: It was customary in those times when somebody from Finland came to New York and stayed a couple of weeks and came back to Finland, he published a book about United States and was considered somekind of expert because he had seen New York! (laughter)

Art: I've had a chance to read briefly through your book, I'd like to ask you, looking back at what you wrote at that time, do you feel that the impressions you had in '26 were pretty valid and still would hold true?

Dr.: I would say that in that kind of travelogue what I happened to describe there still holds true but my book did not compete against that kind of volumes and Professor Pietilä's book from Helsinki to Astoria, or Bishop Koskimies' book "Amerikan Matkalta" who elaborated and studied very critically his situation and so on, mine was simply a series of articles that were first published in Finnish newspapers.

Art: The fact that you came to America and have served here, I'm wondering, was it this trip that made a favorable impression on you enough so that you yourself wanted to come then to serve in this country?

Dr.: Apparently the impression was very favorable because I married here and then after 3 years in Finland we came, the whole family back to this country.

Let me see if I get this straight: you married while you were here on missionary journey?

Dr.: Yes. It was--I even remember the day yet. It was in West Yarmouth church, American congregational church in West Yarmouth, December 1, 1926.

And your wife's full name, maiden name was

Lydia Maki.

And her parents had evidently come over from Finland before?

Dr.: Her parents have come, her mother from Pyhäjoki, Oulunlaani, and father from Kauhava, Vaasanlaani.

And did she have any brothers and sisters also?

Dr.: Yes, she had a brother and a sister; her sister later became student in Suomi College. And is living still in Lynsford, New York.

So evidently the two of you met as you were making your circuit in America and were married and this makes a very interesting story because evidently this was her first visit to Finland, was it?

No. She was born in this country but family took her grandmother back to Pyhäjoki and she lived a short time in Finland and she went even to school in Finland, before they came back again.

Art: Well, the two of you went back to Finland you were there a few years you say, what type of work did you have then? Did you continue your missionary work?

Dr.: Yes, I was in Finnish Missionary Society. I was lecturing, making trips in Finnish lyceums and schools andso lecturing for the missions.

Art: What year did you come back to America then?

1929.

You came at a very bad time in American life, the depression was just breaking.

Yes. I came when the depression was just starting, we experienced the great depression full blast.

Art: And where did you make your first home in America?

Dr.: We made our first home in America in Menlo Park, California, about mile or two from President Hoover's home. (laughter)

You said you experienced the depression "full blast". What specific instances can you remember of that first year or two that you were here that really let you know that it was a depression? Can you think of any?

Dr.: I served first as Seamen's pastor in San Francisco and we really experienced depression there because there were hundreds and hundreds of jobless Finnish seamen around.

And what type of ministry did you give to these men, were you able to give to these men who were unemployed and probably sort of down and disconsolate by the whole situation?

It was regular mission station work, regular worship services Sunday mornings, Thursday evenings, Bible classes and so on, but from many seamen's point of view, more important were the endless supplies. The kitchen was going from morning to evening and Finnish people in California kept us supplied with foodstuff.

So your base of support was both the Church of Finland then the local Finnish people in that California area?

Church of Finland Seamen's Mission Society was in no condition at that time to give any financial support. Support was just moral support.

So where did your salary come from then? How did you live?

Dr.: Well, sometimes I was wondering where salary should come because it came from nowhere sometimes but it was Finnish population in United States which was accustomed from the very start of Seamen's Mission work to support it, so there were people from New York and Boston, too, to California who considered themselves supporting members of Seamen's Mission.

Now, was this work at all connected directly with the Suomi Synod or was this independent of the Synod?

When I was there it was -- before I came there it had nominally been connected with Suomi Synod but during the depression years, Suomi Synod was in no position to send more than just nominal financial support.

So in all respects, with little support from the Synod and none from the Church of Finland, you were really on your own.

Dr.: Yes, it became independent work and later on it continued as

(end of tape)

I meant to ask you also, Dr. Holmio,--your family as it was developing here in America--when you were in San Francisco did you and Mrs. Holmio have any children at that time?

Yes, we had 3 children as we have now: oldest, Ruth Margareta was born in Turku, and her sister, Judith Miriam was born in Turku, and son, Aarne Armas was born in Cape Cod

So they as infants weathered the depression years in San Francisco with you and Mrs Holmio.

Yes, but they were too small to remember anything about it.

Art: They weren't of school age then, yet?

No, they were not.

Art: OK. Moving from San Francisco, where was your next charge?

I accepted the Finnish congregation, so-called Quincy parish of Boston, first in Quincy, Massachusetts and I had one congregation in greater Boston--Alston, and one in Cape Cod, West Barnstable, so I had 3 congregations, rural congregation, sub-urban congregation and big city congregation.

That certainly kept you busy trying to provide the preaching ministry and the calling and all the other aspects of that work.

Usual driving every Sunday was about between 150 and 200 miles.

You mentioned something also about chaplaincy work, that didn't come right in during this 3-point parish work?

During second last war, I felt that I should offer my services to the army and I joined the American Army as Army chaplain. Which was traditional because in last wars, for instance between Finland and Russia about 900 pastors of Church of Finland out of 1400 were in uniform.

That chaplaincy work did take you away from Boston, didn't it? Let me ask you about that later. (I want to get the full range of activities in the Quincy-Boston area). Was it during this time, too, that you pursued your studies or was that later?

Dr.: No, when I was pastor of Quincy parish living in greater Boston, I studied in Harvard University in Boston University.

Art: And what course of study did you pursue?

I continued my old studies, mostly in political history and church history.

And you also wrote your thesis there.

Dr.: Yes, I wrote my dissertation in Boston University.

Art: And the subject was on Luther and the Jews, right?

Dr.: Luther/<sup>an</sup>Reformation and the Jews.

Art: How did you get interested in that topic?

Dr.: Because I was interested in the reformation period of history and the world is full of books and dissertations and studies on reformation history and Luther and Calvin and

Swinley and so on, so I tried to find some area that nobody has touched and nobody had written about the Jewish reformation and the Jewish problem. Because the idea was that you cannot write dissertation about anything that somebody else has studied already in some language.

Art: Did you find it personally a gratifying study to be involved in?

It was very gratifying because it took me to areas that were unknown to me and to most theologians too because the question had not been handled.

If I recall correctly from an incident you mentioned a year ago, the experience in Quincy and Boston brought you into contact too with Finns who had little different political views. You mentioned an experience one time with Oscar Tokoia that you were at a similar meeting with him of one kind or another, would you care to elaborate on that or should we move on?

As I mentioned my parish was most interesting in one respect: I lived in suburban congregation and I visited every Sunday a big city congregation and I visited every week a rural congregation so I had 3 different types of Finnish church life always around me.

Art: And where did Tokoia and the socialists encounter you or you encounter them? Was that in urban parish or the city parish?

Eastern conference was very small conference and we had only few: 4, 5, 6 clergymen there including Finnish pastors in New York City and Brooklyn so we had to travel time after time from congregation to congregation. Oscar Tokoia is the former prime minister of Finland, during Finnish war of independence was newspaper editing the socialist paper "Raivaja" which has become democratic paper later on and I met him several times there. Always when going to Fitchburg visiting "Raivaja" newspaper of course also.

There was an occasion once when, if I remember correctly, you performed a rather unusual wedding; was it held in one of the halls?

It was a tradition there in the Eastern conference that and generally speaking Suomi Synod in most places at least that we served the whole Finnish population regardless of politics and we refused to be identified with any political party and when we were doing our church work. So that meant in practice that I performed weddings in Finnish Labor temples and performed funeral services to Finnish socialists as well as to church people and so on, no questions asked about that and nobody wondered that it was considered pastor's duty and I shall be glad to do it.

Art: OK, I'd like to move on then--was there anything about the experience in greater Boston area, any other experiences that stand out in your mind that we should mention?

One thing that comes to my mind is the great Finnish relief, when Russia attacked Finland, so-called winter war started so churches and temperance halls and labor halls became the centers for clothing and so on, were collected and bundled and shipped to Finnish Consulate General in New York and from there to Finland. And/<sup>Finnish</sup> clergy was always involved in that work.

Did this relief effort bring together the Finns in a cooperative effort?

Yes, it did, as in Finland the Russia attack brought the whole Finnish people together. They forgot that there were leftist or rightist or belonged to center party, everybody joined to fight the old enemy of Finland. And so among Finnish-Americans, they all came

together, from socialist homes, from temperance homes, from 2-3 different Finnish churches and we had our joint meetings and joint festivals and our committees were joint committees and we sent our gathered material jointly to Finland.

So that was a very significant development in life of the Finnish-American community this response to the needs of the homeland.

That has been the greatest joint Finnish-American activity

After your ministry in Boston did you embark upon your chaplaincy work, I would assume so because right after the winter war came World War II; is that when you went into the chaplaincy?

Dr.: Yes. It was tradition among the Finnish clergy that when one's country goes to war one's church is involved. So clergy is involved also and following that principle I offered my services and was promptly accepted and I found myself first in rather unusual situation.

Art: Which was

there was personal history blank we had to fill, endless questions of course and one question was languages that you can read or speak. Without thinking anything about it I marked there also German because in Helsinki University Lutheran theology is written from German textbooks. So they are rather familiar and I had traveled in Germany and so on and perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned it at all but I found myself as chaplain of an American police battalion which was guarding 4,000 German prisoners of war.

Art: Did any unusual incidents develop during that time or stand out in your mind?

That was not a typical cross-section of German army because those 4,000 German prisoners of war that I had to serve with my American military police battalion all came from the famous Rommell's African Corps. And they were picked men. It was amazing how many college graduates and so on there were among those 4,000 men. They were actually picked men who were trained to take over German administration in North Africa after Germany had won the war!

And where was the camp located?

Dr.: Camp Swift near Austin, Texas. And the main camp was in Swift and we had 9 side camps where German companies were--place they worked in rice fields and so on.

Did your family accompany you down there?

Dr.: Well, I had been there preaching to American military police and Rommell's African Corps, I had been there 2 years so I was convinced that I spend the rest of my American war years there in Texas and my family moved there also.

Art: And you lived there on the base or outside?

Dr.: My family was first, of course, on the base and then in small village called Smithville and when my family was well settled there, had been about 1 month, so then I received orders to move next week Fort Mason, California, where orders for overseas duty were waiting for me.

And where were you assigned for overseas?

Now that meant impracticable of course that I sent my family back to the East and they

moved back to Massachusetts, after that experience in boiling-hot Texas, they were happy to get to colder climate and they were bus traveling toward Boston, I was in train traveling toward California. And when I came to Fort Mason, so there was my ship waiting already, I became chaplain in a huge army transport. It was interesting to know, too, perhaps that during the last war American army had perhaps more ships than American Navy because Army transported itself across the oceans.

Art: How long were you at sea, then, were you continually at sea?

Continually. I was then sailing a little over a year, year and a half, roughly speaking.

I remember you telling me that one of your hobbies has been the playing of chess and did you have opportunity to pursue your hobby on this rather extended tour of duty on the seas?

Yes, because chaplain in an Army transport has plenty of free time. You cannot run after the men all the time and ask them questions and so on; my working hours were in the morning I would say from after breakfast to lunch. Then I visited the ship's hospital and met my men and received them in my cabin and so on but my duties were finished by that time. And all afternoons and evenings were free except those couple evenings a week when we had evening service and some bible class. So it was question what to do in afternoon. Ship's library was practically non-existent and I had supplied for myself too few books, I had something with me but I went around looking what I should do during those many, many monotonous hours. So it was very interesting, we had several naval officers. It was army transport but our armed guard was Navy-- no armed guard was army man but our communication crew and our artillery were Navy so we had small amount of naval men around also so my congregation actually was mixed Navy and Army. And among our passengers that we took across Pacific Ocean to Manila was a Navy Admiral who had an Adjutant. Adjutant was young Lieutenant Commander and nothing to do on the ship, so we found out that we both knew something about chess. And we decided to play one game a day. And we did! Sometimes when one defeated the other man too fast, we played even second game. And to make it more interesting, somebody suggested that it was dollar a game and when we came finally it took about 42 days, 43 days from San Francisco to Manila, we visited many of the small Marshall Islands and so on, we went to Ulysses Island, that was where they had atomic blast, and Eniwetok Island and so on, so when we finally came to Manila we had played I don't remember how many games, but in 42 days we had played dollar a game and the Navy owed me \$5. Army was victorious. (laughter) But he was good player. It was tough sometimes.

Art: Was there anything else about your chaplaincy ministry that we should talk about, anything interesting that stands out?

Dr.: In the transport business, it was interesting that practically everybody that was free came to Sunday morning service. According to Navy rule it's only occasion where something else is above American flag. Sunday morning service. Chaplain's flag. Blue cross on white shield is above American flag, and when people saw that, they were so that practically everybody who could do it, came to the deck for service. Then sometimes when we came to South China sea those services were held in ship's hold because it was too foggy and you never knew what would happen there in Japanese submarines were still around and so on, so we had service in ship's hold. I remember one occasion when I had communion sermon, confessional sermon, Saturday evening and then I communion service Sunday morning. Men were sitting on ammunition boxes, we had arranged those and I had piled some 6 ammunition boxes in one corner and had some kind of old tarpaulin over those and that was our altar. I found out that the men were from several denominations. There were some--many Episcopalians, high church

Episcopalian, a few Catholics, a few Lutherans and then there were Congregationalists Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and so on. Some of them were worried a little Saturday evening, their church said communion is served bread and grape juice, and they had heard that high church is served communion in bread and wine. So I solved the problem that was apparently a problem to somebody so that I had two chalices, on top of the ammunition boxes. And I told them that one chalice has communion wine and the other chalice has grape juice. And they see what chalice I happen to have in my hand so they see, is that for high church people the service, or for low church people? So then about 50% of the audience came to the high church communion served with wine, that means all Episcopalians, a few Catholics and all Lutherans and few Methodists, and so on and 50% came to the so-call low church service, liturgy was the same, our good Lutheran liturgy of course. Nobody questioned that, it was just question of communion wine.

Well, that was a very creative way of solving the problem.

Well, moving on, following your chaplaincy work, what was the next period of your ministry? Where did you go? You went back to your family?

Dr.: When I was in South China sea sailing towards the Phillipines and Japan, so somebody told me joke later about it, Japan surrendered and we celebrated our end of war there in South China Sea.

How did you celebrate? What did the people do?

Dr.: It was a (I don't remember what day of the week it was) but it was a week day we celebrated it so that everybody was where he happened to be working on the ship and I was in Captain's quarters where there was loudspeaker system and I preached my sermon and my prayers from that loudspeaking system, seeing nobody around, even Captain had gone somewhere else to listen to me below the deck. It was a typical Navy service, it happens time after time.

You were saying that you were on your way from Phillipines

Yes, then somebody told him later that they had heard in Japan that our ship was coming and that Holmio was on the ship and they surrendered! (laughter)

Do you recall when you next set foot upon American soil? When was that?

We came back then, I don't remember, sometime--I spent my last Christmas in service there on sea, we were sailing between Islands, we went to Guam and Ulysses and so on, then we came the following Spring finally, we were ferrying troops from Island to Island between Manila and we were in Laite for instance and so on.

Art: When you got back to the states did you return to the Boston area and Quincy parish or did you go to another field of ministry?

Dr.: When war ended so in my case, so I had call to Suomi College so I finally after many travelings back and forth from coast to coast and so on, I was released from the Army and I came to Hancock to Suomi College.

And to teach and what did you, what subjects did you first teach?

I came here to teach first my old fields: European Political History in College and Church History in Seminary and my side issue was Philosophy.

And do you recall what year that was when you came here?

It was Fall '46.

Art: What were your first impressions on coming to the college? Who were some of the people who were your colleagues at the time? What was the student body like and this type of thing?

You see the change was not so tremendous from an Army transport mixed Navy, Army congregation there, and so on, to Suomi College because Suomi College had been during the war a girl's college because men were in uniform and then fall '46 men started to come from Army and Navy and Air Force so it was suddenly classrooms were full and it was majority of student body were men students.

I'd like to pick up a strand of thread that we left back in Finland when you were going to theological school: Over these many years you served under varying circumstances, meeting different kinds of people and your own theology was being developed in the school of life itself, and then you began to teach theological students as you came here, where were you in your mind theologically? What kinds of things were guiding you in your teaching?

See my theological education was received in so-called Biblical Beckian atmosphere. That means, simple word of God, without any coloring from any sex or any special revival movements so I guess that I continued the work here and it was easy to do so, because the founder of Suomi Synod and Suomi College and Theological Seminary, Juho Kustaa Nikander, was student of Archbishop Johannson, who was leader of Beckian movement in Finland and Suomi Synod and Suomi Seminary were founded in the same theological atmosphere and some other other clergymen in this country were also students of Johannson thru University and so on so that has been the traditional trend in Suomi Synod. So I felt entirely at home.

So it was very natural for you to step in and continue a tradition that had been established here in the Seminary and kept in main.

Yes there was no difficulties whatsoever. The question never even came up because young Nikander was president of Suomi Synod, had followed the footsteps of his father also.

Perhaps I should ask you this question, even though the Seminary was very much in the Beckian revival stream, nonetheless here in the Copper Country and the Mid-west and throughout America there were other streams of Finnish Lutheranism that were in evidence, the National Church, and the Laestadian movement, when you came did you have at the outset any significant contacts with these traditions?

You see, Beckian theological movement cannot be called revival movement at all. It's just theological movement which actually is a background for Finnish revival movements also. Because those clergy in university have studied theology along Beckian lines and brings in certain biblical ideas from the university faculty to their own particular revival movements. That makes it rather easy for clergy who belong to different revival movements in Finland to come together and joint meetings, whereas your background is the same.

The theological method which was established in Finland was used here in America. Did you find your students by their responses and their studies, do you feel that the Beckian approach which was conceived in Finland was adaptable and fit well into the American situation and context?

Dr.: You see that had already become part of Suomi Synod tradition

(end of tape)

Art: We were discussing the Beckian point of view and how it fit into Suomi tradition and American situation.

Dr.: Here in America Finns have all the same revival movements that they have in Finland. A few belong to the Evangelical movement, a few especially in Fairport Harbor area in Ohio and some belong to the Pietist movement, and then we have Laestadian movement, Laestadian church by the way is the oldest Finnish organized church in this country, it was organized a little before Suomi Synod even and then we have Evangelicals also in the Finnish National Church and we have Finnish Free Church movement here in this country among the Finnish Congregationalists which call themselves Mission Church here. But the background for all this is so-called Beckian movement but the word doesn't mean very much so we could just say "general neutral Lutheranism".

Well what you say causes me to think that perhaps one of the reasons why different branches and even Finns in general in this country never united in one particular church body was not due to any major difference in theology but for other reasons, would that be a fair assessment?

The picture has so many special details that it's very difficult to give a single rule to that, what holds true in Hancock might be already wrong in Calumet. And so on because people came from certain areas in Finland, settled in one area and they brought traditions from that particular area in Finland, and so on.

Much has already been written about merger attempts between Suomi Synod and National Church and the record is there in the various church histories; I won't ask you to elaborate in great detail on that, but were you yourself ever involved in any kinds of merger discussions?

Dr.: Yes. Once, in the last one. That perhaps will stay the last one, too; the question in those discussions--I have read some minutes of all the discussions also--it was not about the theological background, it was about some very practical church political problems among the clergy themselves.

Could you elaborate what those were?

Dr.: They did not succeed in those discussions in older times because clergy taking part in discussions, clergy of Suomi Synod and Finnish National Church, became a little shaky and jealous about each other, how is it, will some bigger congregations now elect their pastors from that group or this group or what group and so on and everybody wanted to safeguard his own position. I got the impression that that was most important. Clergy could not see eye to eye and they were a little suspicious about each other and so on. I guess that if the question went without benefit of church or clergy guiding their congregations, went to church members to lay people to take a vote, they would have united.

Art: In the committee that was organized, or the meetings that included representatives from the Synod and the national church, were there laymen involved or were they all clergy meetings?

Dr.: So far as I know it was clergy; one of the weaknesses that was already known in Finland among Finnish church leaders even before I came to this country was that there is one weakness in Finnish-American church set-up, it is major determination at least. They are clerical-controlled churches in which laymen have next to nothing to say. That was weakness of Suomi Synod when the Consistory did not have a single lay member at all and the same has been in Finnish National Church also. Clergy has had the leadership. Sounds nice in the beginning when church board is organized but in the long run, clergy has a tendency of keeping that important position then and not releasing chances to laymen to take part also.

Did you ever hear comments from laymen perhaps or Finnish people who were outside of the church that this may have been a factor in keeping them from joining one of the Finnish Lutheran churches, either staying away from the church completely or going into some other American denomination?

In earlier years when Suomi Synod was founded that was the very burning issue. Now we don't hear anything about it anymore but when you read the old documents from 1890's and up to 1925 for instance, that is always popping up that issue of clergy controlled church where laymen are pushed aside.

As a Suomi Synod clergyman who was trained in Finland and representative of a number of men who came from Finland to serve, how would you assess the role of the Finnish Finland-trained clergy in the life of the Synod?

Of course, Suomi Synod was founded by clergy trained in Finland and for a long time until 1906, that means for 10 years, there was no other clergy at all. And even then it took time before clergy trained in this country had some majority but it came so nicely that so far as I know there has never been any difficulties. Time and they gradually moved to majority of American-trained clergy and became so slowly and so smoothly that nobody can draw the line and say "here it changes".

Art: Let me move to a little different area of questioning: one of the large interest you've had in more recent years has been Finnish-American history, you have been director of the Archives for many years, you've published a book on the History of Finns in Michigan, let me try to get at this area of your experience by asking you, when you came to this area besides just the experience of teaching at the seminary and college, what were some of your impressions of this Copper Country in general? Do you have any early impressions as a Seamen's pastor somewhat on high seas, here he comes into an area of northern region where the mines were going, what are some early impressions?

Coming to Michigan's Copper Country was like traveling from southern Finland and southwestern Finland where I come from, to northeastern Finland to Kainu. Turasa Salmikuusamo, and Huronsalmi and those areas, big lakes, big hills and spruce and pine forests, bears and even wolves and so on, plenty of good duck hunting in the fall, it's just like northeastern Finnish areas. Very much alike.

So the geography was somewhat similar but there were no mines in those parts of Finland, were there?

Dr.: No, the Finnish mines are in southern Finland mostly.

Art: While you were serving as a teacher, did you also serve any local parishes or did you do supply preaching in various local congregations?

Around the beginning because Suomi Synod was short of pastors and we are still in our present church short of Finnish-preaching pastors also. So all the time I have served somewhere temporarily or permanently.

And you ministered then to Finnish miners and farmers and their families?

Dr.: Yes.

Art: Did you see any special needs or among these people or

Dr.: Will you elaborate a little more your question?

What I'm trying to get at is, what was distinctive about the Finnish-American experience, say in the Copper Country? What was happening among the immigrants? Besides Suomi College and besides the local churches, what were the Finns involved in?

Dr.: Especially here in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Copper Country, many areas are inhabited by so many Finns that it is simply like going to some part in Finland where there happened to be living also a few people who speak Swedish so here you meet also a few people who happen to speak English. But majority speak Finnish. So that did not change the picture very much. And Finns coming here, found very it easy, easy to get acquainted to the life because they moved to, I would say, 75, 80, 90% Finnish population, Finnish area.

Art: When did you first get involved in the archival work? At the college? As soon as you arrived?

1955--when Miss Ellen Ryyananen, who had organized the archives, left and Board of Directors of Suomi College asked if I could take over, so it was 17 years ago.

Art: Archives have certainly grown considerably in those 17 years. Could you describe some of the activities of the archivist here, which has been you, what kind of activities have you done?

Archivist is some kind of receiving office, he receives the material that people donate, tries to find space on some shelf to put them in and index and catalog them. Material is pouring in every week. Some organizations have been very helpful, some temperance societies, a few congregations and some Finnish-American historical societies but the bulk of our documents here are coming individual persons who have interested anything.

Art: Have you yourself ever gone out on what might be called collecting missions where you sought materials?

I have made a couple of longer tours to East coast from I would say from New York up to Maine and all the territories and that coastal line and then west from here so far as to Minnesota collecting things. The largest Finnish-American historical material is in Finnish Estate Archives better known as Helsinki University Library. They are thousands of miles away but they have government funds and every year they send somebody here to go from farmhouse to farmhouse, from attic to attic collecting Finnish material and so on and Finnish Consuls ship them to Finland. We don't have any government funds, no funds actually, but we are here. So we get usually more material than what they do get there, so ours is the largest collection. We have now about a little over 19,000 documents, cross indexed, everything is a document in archives, whether it's a chair that a carpenter built, it's a document that proves what kind of carpenter he was or whether it's a small letter that somebody wrote, everything is a document, we call them that way but we have over 19,000 books and smaller documents now here.

One of your major works has been then the preparation of the History of Michigan Finns, when did that work begin?

Dr.: I don't remember. When I first came to America I started mental notes of course

Art: yes, but when did you receive the commission to do the book?

Dr.: The book was published in '67, that means 5 years ago and I don't remember, I would say that it was few years earlier than we made agreement and I started to really collect material and that was great benefit for archives because all that I collected of course is here in the archives now.

Art: And you're also working on a translation of, or the translation has been made of the

That history has been translated into English, we just see if we find a publishing house or money to publish, it should be published and donated to all our American libraries. It's a great job to some Finnish-American Historical Society to do that, would be a great service for our Finnish cause here in this country, a book of that size could be sent to every library.

Is there anything about your archival work that you would like to mention, any significant discoveries, any rare volumes that you've run across?

very

Dr.: We have plenty of/rare volumes here, the greatest collection in the archives that is full of very unusual material is temperance section. And I thank the late REv. Tuukkanen for that, he once brought here the whole archives of the Finnish Raitius Veljeys Seura, Suomalainen Raitius Veljeys Seura, a whole pick-up truck load. There have been in this country, I don't know how many, some I don't remember now, I have a list of them, but some 160-170 Finnish Temperance Societies and we have the minutes and other books of over 90 Finnish Temperance Societies and, of course, minute books are written in one copy so there are no duplicate copies of those. So they are of course, very, very valuable. But also from other fields we have for instance the old Suomi Synod Archives in 40 big archive boxes, 40 of them. Suomi Synod Archives and Finnish Temperance Societies archives are the 2 largest ones. But then we have also the Finnish-American Society of New York Archives and Finnish-Society of Washington, D.C. Archives. We have them here also.

So it's been a very productive time to be archivist, the archives have grown, you worked on books. you've published significantly but

It's interesting to know that no major Finnish-American problem can be discussed in a proper way or a book written about it without doing research work here in the Archives. I don't know any major field where sources would be available somewhere so much as we have them.

All the time that you have been archivist you've been also, or for a good portion of that time, you've continued your teaching career at the college and the seminary, you became Dean of the Seminary in what year?

I don't remember the year, but it was a few years before '62 when Suomi Synod ceased to exist when it joined the LCA.

Were you yourself directly involved in the merger or the negotiations which transferred the seminary from here then to Maywood?

I was in the joint commission of Lutheran Unity of United Lutheran Church, Suomi Synod, Augustana Synod, and a small Danish church. I was one member of that commission.

Art: How have you assessed the move? Was it a necessary move or a wise move for the course of Suomi Synod?

Dr.: It's very, very difficult to say. I guess that some future historian who has the documents written during perhaps 25, 35, 50 years when this new church has been existing, how he looks at it when he looks back. We have now very interesting possibilities to compare. How do the Finnish congregations who did not merge, how do they do now? We know that Finnish National church has joined Missouri Synod so they sail in the same boat as we in that respect that they have lost their independence already. They are in the big Missouri Synod. Finnish--they call them-

selves Finnish Mission Church— Lähetyksen Kirkko—they are only part of or have been a long time in American Congregational Church. And they have lost their independence. Even if they have individual congregations which still use Finnish language but they are actually part of American Congregational Church. We have only our 2 larger Apostolic Lutheran Laestadian denominations who are entirely independent without any tie to some bigger American church. And small Laestadian groups. So one should start comparing then, do they do better when they are independent or who is doing is better. But a church organization is so different from our church organization that it's extremely difficult to even compare. You can't compare two things which have so very little in common.

After the seminary moved to Maywood, you taught then in the college proper for several years

Yes

until you retired and you've continued to be the archivist up to the present--right now, we've traversed many miles and many years in the course of our discussion and I'd like to ask you a personal evaluation type of question: looking back over your varied ministry over the many places and many times, what would you assess, what do you feel has been your most worthwhile accomplishment?

Dr.: It's very difficult to say from a Lutheran clergyman's point of view, the souls who have found edification from our sermons. And who have closer to Christ through our ministry, they are of course the best what we have done but we can't produce any statistics from that at all, who tries to give us statistics so we can say using the old words, that statistics are also official lies. We can't make any statistics of those but speaking of outward things, I would say that helping to preserve this Finnish-American historical material to future generations and future research workers is--looks something worthwhile.

I meant to ask you a little different type of question: I'd like you to put yourself in the place of the Prophet now, you've been Solomon and you've been assessing the wisdom of the past, now I'll ask you to be the Prophet. What do you see in the future of the Finnish tradition to be in this country, say, in the next 10 to 20 years? What is going to happen?

Dr.: Well, dear Puotinen keep in mind that the world is already full of false prophets (laughter) that I don't like to add any to the great number. (laughter) But I would

What would you wish for?

Dr.: That would be safer!!! I say that so long as Finnish-Americans keep and cultivate the ties to Finland there is full possibility of their preserving their full identity in this country but so long as they cut those ties or forget them, so then those days as identified special national group is gone because we have so much examples in history that language is all important in those cases and when you lose the language, then you lose so much else also together with that.

Art: What specific suggestions could you give to the younger generation of which I am a part to preserve that tradition? What would you suggest to us to keep the torch burning?

Dr.: Some of the younger generations blame us who belong to the older generation that why did you not teach us Finnish? So it's a part of the fault of the older generation

if younger generation feel that they stay a little farther apart because many of them are not able to speak Finnish or read Finnish.

So you would see language instruction of being prime importance?

Dr.: It is quite important, not all important of course but then we must start translating our Finnish national cultural heritage into English language here. That means important Finnish books written in Finnish language here for instance should be translated, money found, let's say, published and donated to American libraries and so on so that Finnish national heritage will be available there, on library shelves. It's the only practical way. To put up a monument somewhere in the wilderness of northern Minnesota or somewhere on some river bank in Pennsylvania, that doesn't mean very much, for so very few people see it and very few people start finding out why that monument stays there. There must be something that can be read and available in every American library.

So you really would stress a literary contribution above all, language and literature.

Yes, and that must be translated into English language.

In terms of the church life, I wonder if you could say something about the specific contribution of Finnish preaching, I was very struck by the fact when I asked you what was the most worthwhile accomplishment you referred back to the sermon. What is there in Lutheran preaching in general in this country now, what has the Finnish-American experience, the Finnish-American understanding of Christianity had to offer to Lutheranism as a whole in terms of the preached word? Are there some special emphasis?

That's very wide question but first I go back to that previous question in this respect: I read a few days ago a small article written by a non-Finnish speaking pastor who serves bi-lingual congregation in America, Finnish-English congregation, and he had written an article about speaking in foreign tongues and he quoted plenty of St. Paul and other biblical authors and gave quite a good account of what speaking in tongues means in New Testament but I had one thing in mind when I read it that my dear brother, why don't you learn to speak in one foreign tongue and we are bilingual congregation, start preaching in Finnish also. That's speaking in tongues in New Testament. When you use other language besides your native tongue. That's speaking in tongues. St. Paul was lucky in that respect because he had learned in the college of Tarsus and at home already 4 languages, he spoke his native, Aramaic, his Hebrew, he spoke Latin and he preached in Greek. And wrote his epistles in Greek. He was man of 4 languages from childhood on so that was speaking in tongues and there was Paul, he says he speaks in tongues more than anybody else amongst the apostles. Because he had 4 tongues already, 4 languages right there. That's one that we should remind our American friends time after time that so long as old Finns live here, they have the right to ask for gospel and other services in their own native language, number 1. And goes for other nationalities also. You can't imagine that a pastor tries to serve bilingual congregation

(end of tape)

Art: You said that the Beckian theology has been a guiding principle work, was there when you studied in Finland, you felt at home with it when you began your instruction here at the Seminary, are there certain emphasis in Beckian--the Beckian school that you would see as especially vital yet today?

You see, Beckian theology is so important in Finland because of one simple reason: first of all, it's never called Beckian. You don't hear that name "Beckian" in years and years. Yet all the church is Beckian, in the respect that Beckian theology simply means that the Bible is your norm, in everything, in your practical church life, in your preaching and sermons, your theological writing and so on, you try to follow the Biblical lines. Bible is your guiding post, guiding light. That's simply what Beck said, but he said it so powerfully that people call it now "Beckian"; we just call it being Lutheran in the true sense. Bible is above everything else.

But how did Beck himself understand the Bible? It's one thing to say the Bible is a norm but there is different interpretations of the Bible. How did he view the Bible as authoritative?

I simply say that Beck was a typical Lutheran theologian, that's all. He was fighting against enlightening period what was still lifting up its head in those times but he always fought that and told other extra Christian movements with the word of God.

And in our own particular cultural situation then it's a reminder to us who are churchmen that our preaching, our mission work in everything, has to be measured up by the Bible as the norm.

Yes, that means then that we don't accept any modernistic ideas, like for instance, the social christianity what declares that Christ came to this country--not as saviour of human soul--but trying to make this mankind and this world better. We don't care so much about how good laws and traffic policemen we have, we feel that's more important to have the gospel preached for salvation of souls. But the so-called social-christianity idea sees Christianity as a way to make this human life better in this world.

That's one idea and there are many other possibilities; some people see that Christ is only a teacher and Christianity helps us to understand things better than otherwise we would understand them and so on.

OK, that gives me a little clearer idea of what you meant by Beckian Biblicism or Beckian view of Christianity and study of the Bible. Is there anything that we have't covered that you would like to mention?

Dr.: This has something to do with your dissertation, also? No?

In part-----

One of the subjects that you delved into in some detail, Dr. Holmio, and this a subject I'm currently working on too, is the labor movement among the Finns--perhaps you might have some observations to make regarding that topic.

The relationship between the church and the labor movement has changed in Finland greatly and greatest factor for change, it was the Russian attack to Finland late Fall 1939. That attack found Finnish people as united people. University students and professors and factory workers and farm hands stood side by side in the trenches to defend their country. And when war finally ended, very successful war in that respect because Finland was saved, kept independent, so that close relationship between different classes has continued. And sharp distinctions between social classes belongs more or less to the history now in Finland. Here in this country amongst the Finns I have noticed that in some areas, some people are still fighting

the Finnish War of Independence of 1918 when they come together, they are still arguing about that and so--that's unknown in Finland, already. That's past history and mistakes were made, many mistakes, they are forgotten, they are forgiven, and people live life as they have to face it today. And here in this country, the Finns are living too much in the past, still. That means that they need something that interests them very much in this moment and concentrate in that modern task.

Do you see any way in which churchmen, pastors or laymen, could help to move us from "fighting that war" that's been over for many years?  
What is the special challenge that we face? What can we do?

It has been many struggles and fights among Finnish-Americans about clergyman's duty to belong to other non-church societies or a duty not to belong to them, bitter fights should clergymen belong to temperance society or they should stay away from them, can a clergyman go to laborman's (working man's) homes to lecture and so on, or is it his duty to stay away, can a clergyman go and preach and lecture to Kaleva Knights or Kaleva ladies' meetings and so on. Those questions should be handled in a very practical and calm way. I personally have been preaching and lecturing in many temperance societies, halls, I have lectured in Ladies of Kaleva, Knights of Kaleva meetings; I have actually preaching sermons or lectures in working men's homes also and I have found and everywhere I go, without any suspicions whatsoever, I have found very honest and very friendly Finns with whom I can have discussions about things. And I think that it's every clergyman's duty to do the same--not to pushing himself there but go when he's invited and let people know that his services are available.

One thing that stands out in my mind, you were assessing the Finnish situation, in Finland that is, that what brought the leftists and rightists and all groups together was perhaps not so much a question of ideology or belief but their nationalism, their sense of patriotism, their feeling for the country as a whole and that this was one of the major factors, what can we have as a rallying point among the different Finnish groups here? Is it a sense of patriotism towards America or common ethnic ties?

Dr.: Difficult to say. In Finland it was simply common danger which brought people together. I can't pray God to send us a common danger, though. Here it's a sad experience but it must be something that brings people together but here for instance, the Finnish relief during the last war. It was common danger of relatives and friends in Finland that brought us together. Now Finland is one of the prosperous countries of the world, and United States, western Germany, Sweden and Finland, they are usually listed in that order--living standards of people are very high. So there is no danger in that respect now. Perhaps we should start working for spreading the knowledge of Finnish culture and so on to American people and make that a great issue.

Art: So in order words, it would not be catastrophe but simply enlightenment, that would bring us together.  
Enlightenment, yes.

Perhaps I should conclude 2 different tapes here by saying, to whomever might be listening to this in future years that on their behalf and my behalf we'd like to thank Dr. Holmio for sharing much of his experience and wisdom with us and I feel it's been a very enjoyable, exciting interview. Thank you very much.

Well, before you turn it off, I would like to thank you for your efforts in this ideas and I would like to tell those who listen to tapes someday that we'd like to have help here in archives. Plenty of material; we collect old newspapers, for instance, old stray copies, perhaps we lack that particular issue, so send them to us but DON'T send Kirkollinen Kalenderis and old hymnals and old family Bibles. We have all them and we don't like more copies, but everything else, what you find printed in this country, it's very welcome and you can give that material also to Pastor Puotinen and I am sure that he will be glad to bring them here to me.  
Thank you.

(end of tape)