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

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01: We started a school here in that log cabin. It's not a cabin; it's a big room. And then there was a lean-to where we kept our lunch pails and coats, and the big room was for school.

This is Mrs. John Hyypiö, and we're recording her memories of her life at Otter Lake.

Ya, and so, it was the fall of 1900 that we came. I remember that because father used to say, because he had got his citizenship papers, 'He wanted to wrote.' Day after election, then we started off. We came along the river road there ... just an old road that the loggers had made there. And Uncle Jeremiah wanted father to come here and live up the hill with him; he had a homestead there. Well, father didn't have any land here, but Uncle gave him a forty out of his homestead there; and then he went and built his log house there on that hill. And, it was a very cute little log cabin that they lived in while father was building on his. So, when we moved away from that log house, they decided to teach school. People began to urge now that there were children to go to school. In 1902, if I remember right, the school was established there. We had three years of school here, and the children from across the lake came across with boats in the summer season, spring, and fall and with skis mostly in the winter. But, there were so many treacherous times during those seasons that the folks in Askel decided that they can't let the children take that trip anymore on account of those stormy days and the children don't boat. And, also, when the ice was not too good or trusty .... Well, we had three years of that school here; then, it was turned around and Askel got the school

because of Andrew Heikkinen, who had built a big house; and there was the top story. It was quite a large one-room. So, we went there ... at least, we, not the other kids around here. I went there. My mother was so ... well, she was just being that we had to learn about English and education. Well, she sent me there. I stayed there with a family during the week and then came home for the weekend for that one winter.

Vi: Do you remember how old you were then?

O1: I was about eleven years old. The rest of us here were without school, and I, too, had to give up on that ... schooling there. But, one year there was a teacher there who decided that he could teach us during the weekend. And, he established a school there where the Kangases live now. It's on the corner from coming up from Manninens'; that had been vacated by an old couple. So, what he fixed up for us ... there was an old kitchen table. I suppose it had been a baking table because it was so pock-marked with a fork, and there was no cloth or anything ... no cover. Then he sawed logs, just the right type for seats. They were rather large logs. And those were our seats. Then the first room ... there were two rooms there ... he had a stove, one of these cast iron stoves. But, often when we got onto there, the cabin was so frosted and no heat. He was kind of slow in coming to heat that building. And there we would shiver and shake, and finally he would come and set the fire going. We'd huddle around that stove for awhile; then we went into the other room and started our lessons. I suppose it was a sort of refresher course ... it was. And my youngest brother, Waino, ... he's dead now ... he was such a small tot that mother thought that every chance he'd have to learn English. And, we had to take him along, and couple o' times we had to carry the poor fellow back home. The snow was so deep; it was about, at least, 1½ miles from our house to get to the school house. The winter was so cold. Well, then we had been three years without our school. Then, Uncle had, in the meantime, hauled up that log building into his yard. When the school board found out about it, they started the school again. So, I went three more years, and from then on school was getting continually there until the Doelle school was built.

Vi: What was the school called then?

O1: It didn't have any kind of a name at all.

Vi: Do you remember the names of early teachers?

O1: Ya, the first teacher was William P. Niemi; he was a Finnish boy, and he knew enough Finnish so that he was very companionable with these families here. He was like a part of a family there with us, too. He boarded at my uncle's, Olaf Sävelä's, there ... they live on that same hill yet. He taught two years and then came Helmi Warren; she was recently graduated from high school there in Calumet. Nicest person you could ever find ... she was just rare. Was she a nice teacher! We were so willing to learn for her.

Vi: How many children ... do you have any idea how many children were in the one-room school house?

O1: At that time, there could have been thirteen or fourteen after the Askel kids parted. Up 'til then, there was twenty or more, maybe. Well, there was a gap there before they started again on the hill in Uncle's log house there. From then on it just went on to the Doelle school. That's how we started. But, of course, that education was rather simple ... just reading, writing, and arithmetic. What they taught was really thorough because we had to spell our words right, and I notice now that I am and all those other kids are better spellers than those who have ... than those who come from college.

Vi: Yes, you're right.

O1: And, reading was not hard. I don't know how it came so easy for all of us. That old way of teaching, I think, beats these new methods.

Vi: When did your family come from Finland ... or Archangle or wherever?

O1: Father had come, let's see, in maybe 1890 or before that; and mother came in 1893. And soon father found her, and they got married that very year, once she came from Finland ... in 1893. Then, the following year I was born.

Vi: Was Jeremiah already here when your father came from Finland?

O1: He was in the Copper Country; I guess he was in Calumet. He moved here, oh, maybe in 1890 or so. Ya, the Hyypiö's had come here about 1890 or before, because my husband was born here; he was born in 1890. And, they were really industrious people. That Peter Hyypiö was such a hard worker; he had cleared ...

Vi: Peter was your husband's father?

O1: Ya, John Peter. He had built all the buildings here; there are a lot of buildings. Of course, they are all crumbled out and raised down. Oh, that big hay barn he build before his death there in 1890; he was a great hunter, and some young fellow from town had come here, and he had wanted to hunting with him. And, the first morning they took off ... well, soone he came down ... he was up there on the hill somewhere in the woods. It wasn't long before that the young man ran down here to tell Christina, that was Grandmother Hyypiö's name, what had happened. He shot ... he shot that man by accident. So, Christina took a big sleigh and some quilts; she went up the hill there. He was dead. The bullet had gone right through his heart. And that was a loss to the whole community here. He had been a very lovable man and good to everybody. Just in the prime of life, this had to happen. That young man explained that he ... Hyypiö ... had wanted to change guns. And he walked ahead, and he saw a deer, and he reached backwards and said to 'Give his gun back to him' and that he sees a deer there. This man had the trigger on when he handed the gun. And whichever one of them pulled the trigger, and it went right through

the back and into his heart. It was the story that he told; it may have been so. Well, that was 1898 when that happened. That fall, then, Heideman used to come and officiate on those burials. So, when he came here and the ceremony was over, the lake had rose so recently that they weren't goint to take that body across. You see, there was that Askel cemetery that had been agreed on that whoever ... that whichever member of this colonization dies, well, he grants the acre of that cemetery. Joseph Karkki had died, and they gave that acre from his homestead. So, they had to start ... Christina wouldn't allow that body to put out. There was a hay barn here in the field that they kept him in because they couldn't keep a body here in a house. So, it was that time of year you had to keep a good fire. So, they wanted to put that body back again into that barn, but she said that she cannot think of that ... he is lying in that barn. 'Got to take him across.' And, one of those old fellows told me that they take four ropes on the coffin, and four men pulled that sleigh across the lake. And that ice was so thin yet that it just ... well, there were four men, and they thought that, well, they could probably save each other. They got into that cemetery. But, that family had hard times going through, you know, in those days. You can't imagine that at all ... how little they would have from the family bread winner was gone.

Vi: Do you remember anything about ways of preserving good in those days or what foods you grew? And you did very much, I'm sure, what was done in the old country from the early days.

Ol: We usually made a dugout into the hillside; we still have a couple of them. On the north side, facing the north, and it was pretty cold where they kept the milk, filia, and butter, except the meat ... that would not last very long; but they salted the meat and fish. ~~The suckers were so plentiful in those days that when you have a~~ hoop net in that river there at a certain time in the spring, why, you'd get as much fish as you'd be able to lug home. So, they used to salt it in barrels, and they knowhow to salt that fish so it never spoiled. And they'd have the weights on them. They kept them in those dugouts.

Vi: Did they ever smoke the fish ... or smoke meat?

Ol: No, I can't remember of anybody here smoking that fish. That was something they didn't do; but what they did with the meat in the fall ... they'd cut it into hunks. First, they'd salt it, so that it was fairly salted through; and then they'd cut it inot certain kind of strips that and put them out for weathering on the ~~barn walls or~~ house walls. They had pegs, and they were there for the cold, wintery days when the frost would freeze them through. And you would never believe what a good flavor that meat has.

Vi: And you could just eat it.

Ol: Yes, just by slicing thin.

- Vi: I'm sure that we had meat like that in Finland ... that was just salted and had a very delicious flavor, but salt had really cooked it ... however you prepared it.  
Ya, and there was such a funny flavor in that meat that it was really a delicacy. If you could get it now ... of course, you could do it even now ... our winters are cold enough, but nobody even thinks of it with these here freezers.  
What about berries and other things that you could get out in the woods?
- Ol: Oh, yes, the wild berries .. wherever there had been slashings or logging, why, you'd find raspberries. Then there was the swamp there where, my, there were blueberries. And we put up as many quarts as we could. And it was before the date that the mason jars were yet known about. I remember because mother used to take these jugs that things came in .... What do they call them ... with the cork on? Everything came in jugs ... molasses, vinegar. All those liquids, they came in those jugs. Half a gallon, a whole gallon, and even two and three gallons. So, she scalded them and put in the hot berries. Of course, she had to have a funnel to put them in. They kept pretty well. Well, sometimes they started working -- perhaps, something the air didn't hold very well because they were just these corks that we had. Well, it didn't spoil the berries because when you notice that it's bubbling, you'd make a porridge ... pie.
- Vi: I was wondering if you used mushrooms at all.
- Ol: Oh, no one dared to. My father, coming from that northern Karelia, why, there it was a part of their diet, too.
- Vi: That's why I asked because I knew the Karelians used mushrooms a lot, and now Southern Finland uses a lot of mushrooms.
- Ol: Ya, my father knew exactly what were the edible ones. This I can't remember; there was a certain distinction. And those that were non-edible, it seems to me, were with the solid stem; and those that were edible had the hollow stem. Maybe it's vice versa because it was so long ago. And there were people from town who would come here, and father would go there ... take them around ... pick for them. Mother would not touch them ... they're not worth trying.  
That was my mother's feelings, too. She said only the gypsies ate the mushrooms.  
But in Karelia, that father came from ... they had to find every means they could to find food. There they had ... there they could not make farms because they could only chop down those trees that they needed for firewood in their houses. All the wood ... and the land, too, ... belonged to the government ... to the czar. So, they couldn't do much farming there, as a livelihood. So, they had to go as soon as they were strong enough to carry packs, why, ... they'd go to St. Petersburg. They had to save money enough to buy certain things that Finland didn't produce, like finer cloth and silken kerchieves. Well, I could name them, but they said they had so many things that Finland didn't produce in those days that came from

Petersburg. So, they started off with their packs on, and they made enough profit so that they could go back to St. Petersburg and buy stuff for their home folks. Food, also, ... there was no way of getting flour from their land or any grain; so, they brought flour, and they bought clothes -- ready-made, as well as yard goods. That I wouldn't know because father wasn't one for telling very much about it ... that life. All he would say, 'That beautiful Karelia, but how poor they are.' But they had to start out on the road, when they were youngsters, with their packs.

Vi: Some of Finland's most talented people are Karelians in music, art, and so on.

Ol: Yes

Vi: Poetry ... and all from the Karelian area.

Ol: Yes, and that's something that I just realized when I learned about Kalevala ... read about those scholars who went there. They said that evenings when there was nothing else for the men to do, why, they recited those old poems and sang those old songs. And, they came the scholars there, and they had them sing for them or recite. That's how that Kalevala was composed. Ya, and ~~then~~, there were these ... some women who were gifted in this, that when there was any sorrow, they made everything well. They sang; they made ... composed those songs, and they cried ... 'itkuvirsiä.' Did you ever hear of that?

Vi: Oh, yes.

Ol: And I think there are some yet. Recently I read in some paper that there is somebody yet, very old, who can cry. What would you call that meaning?

And it brought the bride good luck if she was made to cry before her wedding day. That was the idea.

Ol: Well, that was one of their way.

Vi: I was thinking that Erik would probably like to hear, well, what fun you had when you were children ... what kind of games you played or what you did, you know.

It used to be fun. There wasn't very many of us there on the hill. My uncle's children were about the same ages as we were; and we'd just go to their house or they'd come to our house; and we'd play just hide-and-go-seek or some game there and really sing. Those folks ... it's so funny now ... those two families will get together in the evenings now and drink coffee and some rolls. Mother would be one for singing, and she'd take her song book and start singing; and the others joined .... Ya, it was real nice.

Vi: The entertainment of the evening ... they didn't need television.

Ol: No, and they wouldn't have had much time to watch them anyway. I remember my own life was like that. Even when we got the radio, why, there was not time, except at night ... to go and sit by that or listen ... the same with television. No, already my day is eased up so I could watch television .. when we got ours. But, this thing I often think of often; they'd have the prayer meetings ... that was a circuit or something, and every Sunday ... any weather ...

- they'd gather together. Even if the other Askel side couldn't come, why, ours might get those; and then again ... Askel.
- Vi: Was there any special person, ~~you know~~, who was the leader, ~~parsonage~~, in lieu of the minister? You didn't have a minister here.
- Ol: Yes, my father was a preacher from Finland, and he held those meetings and ...
- Vi: Now, what was his name?
- Ol: He was Steven Savelä. And, I don't think that he got any pay. They just got together on Sundays. They came in the morning and .... Well, there was coffee. I guess I just wondered: How did they have so much food to offer?
- Vi: Ya, and it was all free.
- Ol: The table was ladened with good bakery ... homemade ... and coffee; they'd all get their coffee, and then they would settle down and have a meeting ... with prayers, singing, and sermon. And after it was over, there was a table of ladened again; and there was food ... there was food from every description. They always had some fish, and that Mrs. Olaf Savelä, she was a marvelous cook; she had been working for some elite of Finland. I believe that she had worked for the governor of Oulun Lääni when she was young. And she was a very proud person and very accomplished in that cooking and entertaining people. She always had something to offer for every passer-by that went through, and mostly everybody did drop into her house. It was like ... like an inn. No money was ever asked ... well, same with the prayer meetings. They always offered food ... something, anyway. There were some small houses where they couldn't very well afford to put very much of a spread. But, they got together; and there would be fish and bread and something for them to eat, any-way.
- Vi: How often did a minister come to the area?
- Ol: Oh, Heidemen used to when people called ... when there was these burials. Well, Grandfather Savelä, he baptized mostly all of the babies in those days. And, also ... I can't remember if he buried anybody. But, he baptized the babies.
- Vi: What about the weddings?
- Ol: They went to town; everybody went to town to the parsonage and were married there. There were no big weddings in those days ... no, it was just lucky if they got a new suit and dress for the occassion and the ring ... just like I did and ... my husband. We went to the parsonage. And the big weddings and the burials ... they came. And after the first world war, I think that Mrs. Nelson from here, she was the first one that the undertaker took care of. Ya, ... and had a bought coffin ... coffins were made out of ... everybody kept some pine boards for the occassion. I remember my father, too; he always kept a pile of pine lumber, and he said that those are the 'arkun lautoja' (coffin boards). But, then already at that time when he died, why, the undertaker came and took care of it.

- Vi: Did you come to this house, then, as a bride?
- Ol: Ya, ya, my husband had been to the war ... the first world war, and soon after we got married that fall. And those were the two rooms there we lived in, and this room was added on when the family began to grow and .... Then, ~~he~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~, well, all the work he could do here ... was logging, was a woodsman. And, until 1938 he got a stroke of polio, and he was lame ever after that. Ya, his right leg ... his right leg was just no muscle at all; it was just dead. But, he hauled it around, and he was a strong man. He kept up with almost anyone else ... even then. He was pretty badly crippled before the end. There was a government pension that he got so that we had enough to eat. We didn't have to go for welfare of any kind.
- Vi: I don't think that we got on the tape you memories of the log booms on Otter Lake. I wonder if you could go back to that.
- Ol: ~~Oh~~, yes, that's the time we went to school in that Uncle's log cabin. And, every spring the lake was just packed full of logs ... all tied in with those great big booms, and they were ... ya, they were so close together ... the boys used to go and run over them. I can't remember if anybody stopped them, either. They seemed to make it. And, for weeks they were covering, well, half of the lake. It seems to me that they were always on this side. Oh, there's that east wind, I guess, then, too, was the reason that they took the logs. They went down the Sturgeon finally. Lots of them have sunk into the river, and they say that there is a fortune in the lake here, even.
- Vi: Maybe you could tell us a little bit about home remedies and what you did do when you couldn't get to a doctor. Do you remember anything about the people you'd call upon to take care of somebody who was ill?
- Ol: Yes, it was always ... you'd have to be prepared for those emergencies because ... this balsam pitch, if you have ever seen those blisters on the balsam ... they have a sticky pitch -- white. And, we'd all have to keep them at the house for any emergency. That was the only medicine that I ever remember was applied on any cut. And there was never any festering or infection ... never that I've heard ... for cuts. And, then, there was Wards linament and for whatever linament it was; it was for animals and human. Then, a teaspoon of that in hot water ... that stuff! That 'riikabalsamia,' ya, that Södergren's drugstore ... so, that's what they send a cabinet; and they had just all kinds of medicines for anything. There was that rheumatic essence that was good for aches and pains. And, then, there was some ... can't remember the names ... but something for the heart and digestion; and they were about 35¢ a bottle. We'd always keep a stock of those medicines ....
- Vi: Did you know of anybody who was sort of gifted for taking care of ... like setting bones? Mrs. Niemi, out in the Elo area, I remember, took care of my mother when she had inflammatory rheumatism.
- Ol: Oh, that's my aunt Kate.
- Vi: I wonder. Bill Niemi's mother?

Ol: Step-mother.

Vi: Step-mother, yes, she was a wonderful old woman.

Ol: She was; she was gifted in that way. She used to take care of women when they had their babies. If she heard of somebody suffering with something, why, she would have her rubbing alcohol and her bandages. And, what else did she have? She had her medications, and she would go and tend to people even if they hadn't asked her. I remember that. She was really a do-gooder.

Vi: How was she related to you?

Ol: She was my mother's sister.

Vi: Oh, really.

Ol: Ya, older sister.

Vi: I didn't know that.

Ol: She had always been like that. And she would massage, and then she would make these here hot baths with leaves ... a certain kind of leaves ... in barrel or tub or something and put people who were all bent and twisted and aching into that hot bath. And I can't remember just what was the different things that she put in there, but that would ease pain and ease those crippling. Helped a lot of people. I was about eight years old when my mother had inflammatory rheumatism, and she went and lived with Mrs. Niemi for awhile .. she stayed right there; so, Mrs. Niemi could take care of her. And, I remember they tried hot compresses, and that didn't work; so, she tried cold compresses, and that's how she cured her, I guess.

Yes, that's what she had ... all those fixed. She must have had some kind of a medical book that she found out about.

Vi: She must have had some training in Finland.

Ol: Ya, I remember when my sister Selma ... oh, you should get her story. When she was thirteen years old, when she graduated from the eighth grade, and she was very smart, I think. That Mr. Doelle always tried to urge the kids from here to go on to high school and make something of themselves. Selma went there, and she was thirteen years old. And she had to walk all the way from home to Chassell to catch the train at 8:10. I remember long winter evenings when she'd walk that way. And, nobody was worried what would happen on that eleven-mile hike. Winter evenings they were dark. And she stayed with a family as a baby sitter, and it was pretty rough for her there because she wasn't ... she wasn't very well provided for there. She said that evenings when she got home from school, the lady took off on her rounds and visiting, and she was left there to prepare food and supper for the children -- four of them and put them to bed and then study her lessons. And, there was a couch that was all worn out so that the springs were all open, and she had an old quilt that she folded and laid down on that couch ... that one year that she was there. And then she told the folks it was too hard for her to stay with that family; so, they paid for a room for her there ... at Hurley's ... Hurley's in Houghton. So, she batched there and took food there. She went through high school in three years; she was seventeen when she graduated. She could have taught, at that time, with the high school diploma; but the superintendent said she's too young; she got to be eighteen. So, she went to normal school for one year. Then she taught in Elo .. went to summer school ... summertimes. But, then she decided she got tired of that teaching; it wasn't easy to walk those distances to the school there, although she got a job at this Doelle school, finally. But, she took off and tried to get into Walter Reed Hospital; she took the exam, and she passed. So, she went there for those years of training; then she had been a nurse for the rest of her life.

01: I had always wish ... that this thing was on my mind ... that old-kind history should be recorded or told in story form or something so that it should not fade into the past ... like .... And, I suppose, I don't know, that I was too lazy; I often thought that I'd write them down. I have a few little things that I've written down. There are so many different individuals whose lives were something that they could have made a book. Ya. I often think of them ... that there were so many tragedies, too. I don't know if it could be recorded ... what I think of a lot of times. There was a couple who lived here, and she had been the daughter of an engineer in Finland. And during those way-back years when Finland was building the railroad through to the north ... well, he had been working there, and he met this young girl who had been brought up in a nice home and good surroundings ... with, anyway, in plenty. And, they fell in love, and he bought ... he bought her a gold watch and .... What were the three rings? There were four -- two rings, a gold bracelet, and the watch ... and for an engagement gift. And, then, when he got through with that work there, why, it was the time of the Klondikes -- gold strike. And he took off and went to Alaska. And there he had two partners, and they went way, way out into the mountains. They had found such a good gold strike there that they had had suitcases full of that gold nugget. And what did those two sharks do with him because he couldn't talk much English? They went to the authorities there when they got to town and had him jailed ... that is gone koo-koo because he can't talk ... whatever he talks, you can't understand. And he could not defend himself, and he was jailed there, and those sharks went on and carried everything away. Well, she did not hear from him for so long; she took off from Finland and came and followed the trail and took him off from that jail. I guess she had some friends with her. And, they could not get married because they wanted to have a Finnish preacher. There were no preachers even that day, don't know why. And, they just got together and lived like husband and wife. And they had had two children before they came to a place out West where a Finnish minister officiated. Well, they went on ... she said that she supported him and herself with sewing clothes. Somehow or other, they had travelled around so that they were even in New Orleans; and then they came back. They had two girls; they were our schoolmates. Then they settled into a shack by the Sturgeon River, and then she had another baby. And then she got a nervous breakdown; she was just off her rocker completely. And she was at Newbarr, and the baby died; the Grandma took the two girls and kept them for a while. Then she cleared out; it was just one of those things that happen ... post-natal. Then he made a house on his folks' land here in this section here on this side of the lake, and it was sort of isolated in the woods. But, he was afraid to hire out for anybody because he had ... he, too, ... his mind had broken down from that experience. And they were in such poverty that they were even hungry at times. They did have a cow, and he had made a clearing ... and some chickens. She would sew for people, almost for nothing if they had anything to sew. And twice afterwards her mind just broke down, and my mother went to see her one time, and, when she heard that she is breaking down. And, she had been just walking around her clearing there just

lost. She hadn't been tending to anything. Then mother went there and took her in. And I can't remember then what happened there ... she took some bread there, but they had to send her away to Newberry, and she'd always clear out. The girls ... one girl went to town to work, and she got married. And, well, something happened to her; I guess, they had had one of those illegal abortions on her, and she died. Such a tragic death. Although she was married, why ... why they wanted that abortion ... who knows. And, the other girl went to Detroit, and they also had a boy. He was a nice, good man. But, that family really was tragic with her, who had been a child of good ... good days. She died of some ... I guess it was cancer. They didn't even have enough money to have a doctor come and see her when she was sick in her last illness.

Vi: Did she live right here ... right on until the very last?

Ol: Yes, there along the road when you go towards the main road, why, there was ... if you should ever look on this left-hand side, going from here, there is the old buildings with the orchard around. They're all run-down buildings ... windows broken and so forth. There's where she lived, and she was so refined to have to go through such a life.

Vi: What was the name of the family?

Ol: He was Felix Maliniemi, and she was Fiina Yrjänä from Finland. Ya, there was a older couple; there were more of those people, but this was the sad story of her. There were boys that were brothers of that Felix. But, they had just dissolved into nothing; at least, I have never heard that name. Maybe they have shortened it to 'Niemi' or something. That 'Maliniemi' is kind of a long word ... a long name. So, that was one sad story, and there were many others, too. Sometimes he would work if somebody would just ... he had said that he has got to stay his day's wage before the sun set so that he won't be swindled. ... always afraid of being swindled, ya.

Vi: Well, I suppose that stayed with him all his life ... that terrible experience that he had.

Ol: Ya, he didn't realize how much they suffered from that.

Vi: I'm sure that you could tell us a lot more.

Ol: Ya, there'd be many stories like that. Lots of stories ... that's all it is ... beyond recovery.