



Finnish
American
Historical
Archive
and Museum

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

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

F.F.S.C.G.L.M.R. DIGITIZATION PROJECT 2010-2011

*(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory
Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)*

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:

Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:

"Maki, John", Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557

Heimo "Paddy" Jaaskelainen
August 3, 1972

Wallace Anderson

<u>TOPICS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
Professional fighter	1	interesting
Sports in Copper Country	2-3	Hockey and Baseball
Jack Demsey	4	very good story
Origin of Professional Hockey	5	
Track - John Petaja	6	

Interview with HEIMO "PADDY" JAASKELAINEN
at Bete Gries, August 3, 1972 by Wallace Anderson

Wally: Before we get into all the details, how did you get the nickname "Paddy"? Sounds like an Irishman, instead of a Finn.

Paddy: It is, well, when I started to take lessons in boxing I went up to see Pina Shibreau up in Calumet at the Calumet Athletic Club where Pina Shibreau and Nate Hoffenberg had a professional fight license and they were holding professional bouts there, boxing was just starting to take place here in Calumet, and Cliff took me and started giving me lessons and when I told him my name was Heimo, Heimo Jaaskelainen, he said that's more like a song than a name, he told me, he said, "we gotta change that", I said, "well, I hope you do, because I don't want my dad to know I'm fighting" and so it didn't take Cliff long to find a name for me, he said "we'll cut that name 'Jaaskelainen' in half and just use 'Jaasky'" and he said, "we gotta have something that will rhyme with 'Jaasky'", so he thought of "Paddy Jaasky". So I got the name and it's stuck with me ever since, and I fought under the name "Paddy Jaasky" and it took my dad quite a while to learn that, who I was.

Wally: Well, let's get a little bit of your background, Paddy, when is, or when was your birthday?

Paddy: I was born in Mohawk Streetcar Station where my dad operated the streetcar station which he built when the streetcar line was extended down to Mohawk from Wolverine where he also built, owned and operated the Streetcar Station in Wolverine. And I was born in Mohawk Station in April 24, 1912, a year or so just before the Copper Country strike. And we lived in that station, I had a brother born there, Ahti and his sister, Alma, also born there; my dad sold the station to Frisk and the family left for Finland during the war, it just had started in 1914, started in Europe, but my dad said it wasn't going to last long and didn't have to worry, he wanted to get to Finland which we went to but eventually things got tough after we got to Finland after spending 3½ years there, because of the internal troubles in Finland between the reds and the whites for control of the Finnish government after the Bolshevik Revolution so being American citizens we were able to get back and we got back here just before, it was one of the last boats that was able to leave, we left from Sweden there, left Norway from Christiania and we were stopped by the British warships, searched and they escorted the boat into Halifax and the boat that was left, or the day after we had left, was turned back and couldn't get back for sometime after. And so my dad had come back a little before that and he had started business back in Ahmeek. He bought his old bottling plant back that had started, and he started his ice cream plant that he started and bought that back and opened up a plant in Ahmeek. And also a store which my mother didn't approve of, she wanted the family to go to Detroit instead of coming back here but my dad wanted to come back to the Copper Country which he did, and he ran the plant until he died, then my brother ran it for sometime, then I ran it from 1936 on until 1967 when I sold the plant that I had, I built a new plant there, sold it to Jilbert Dairy and in the time from 1928 to 1934 so those were the years that I was fighting, fighting professionally.

Wally: Well, did you start fighting professionally right up here in the Copper Country?

Paddy: Right up here in the Copper Country, the second fight I had I fought professionally. I fought 32 professional fights and I had a lot of exhibition bouts and I belonged to this table with Ray Elvis and Jack Hurley, they had good fighters; Ray Elvis had a fighter named young Jack Thompson who is welter-weight champion of the world and Kelly Petroli was one of the top fighters that Jack Hurley had, and I joined his table of fighters that fought out of Chicago and then fought out of tri-cities, that's Rock Island, Davenport and Moline, which was Cliff Shibreau's hometown, until the depression set in and then the fight/business just got so hard that he wasn't able to make things go and I come back here, my dad was sick at the time I come back and I

stayed, got on WPA and then later started to run a business

Wally: What weight did you fight under?

Paddy: I fought under 126-128 to 132, was the heaviest I fought. That was feather weight or junior light weight.

Wally: Well, even since you've been back here and since you stopped fighting, you've always been connected with the various sports activities in the Copper Country, haven't you?

Paddy: Oh, yes. Then we had a hockey team which won the Upper Peninsula Intermediate Championship for a little town of Ahmeek; we beat every team in the U.P. and besides the all-star team that they had against us from the Sault Ste. Marie, Canadian Sault, and American Sault,

Wally: What year was that, Paddy?

Paddy: That was in 1939, we had some good players on there, still local fellows, most of them were from Ahmeek, we had some from Mohawk; then when we played at the Sault, we had 2 from Calumet that played with us,

Wally: Did any of those 2 people ever go pro?

Paddy: No, I don't think they went pro because most of these players that we had were players that were married and had obligations to take care of, that had to hold on to their jobs, played hockey just in their spare time,

Wally: How important were the various sports like hockey, baseball, boxing and all that? In an area like the Copper Country, particularly, when you think of the fact that you had a lot of Finnish people and a lot of other people who came from Hungary, all these various European countries, first generation people over here, were they interested in sports?

Paddy: Oh, very much so because most of the people that was on my team, their fathers and mothers were people that were born probably in Finland or England or Austria, to where you could say their parents were naturalized citizens.

Wally: Did the parents back these teams?

Paddy: To the best they could but the youngsters wanted to play hockey and they made a special effort, I remember the team that we had, they run around and collected money from everybody we could to get sweaters, shirts, get some kind of a uniform, and we made our own ice rink, we played outdoor hockey for awhile and then we started play at the Coliseum and before that when we had the Glacier Dome in Mohawk which was the center of hockey in this area, we had a hockey team from Allouez, we had a hockey team from Ahmeek, we had a hockey from Fulton and Mohawk, we have a Keweenaw League and we had all kinds of hockey players and good hockey players and the Glacier Dome which was a wonderful indoor ice rink and they helped promote a lot of good hockey players; we had Ted Kahn playing with team in Detroit, was from the Fulton team was Matt Wiljanen, we had players that went to play for shop teams that got fairly good jobs out of it; lot of the players that played hockey at that time were good hockey players, and that's just hockey, and the same thing was with baseball, we had when Keweenaw had its' baseball team we had some of the best ballplayers that played ball at that time, we had--that was a little earlier in

baseball, we had a big Keweenaw team that could stand up and play with any professional team; we had players like Mike Buddo, Michealson, Jimmy Jackson, Alec Young, and those players were exceptionally good ballplayers. And the places used to be packed, we had ballfield diamond in Ahmeek, there was--you just--on a Sunday when they played Calumet, or when they played any team, it was--there was over 3-4,000 people there to watch the baseball team, baseball game.

Wally: Sports must have been one of the main amusements of people back in those days.

Paddy: It was, sports was. And you take, every little place had their own ball diamond, they had just like in Ahmeek village park, there's where B. O. Burnet learned to play ball; he was there from--I watched him start playing ball there in a small little diamond and there's no question about it, there's where B. O. got his start as a ballplayer, playing in--and he used to be out there all day long, he was one of the first ones out there in the morning and the last one to leave.

Wally: How did the various nationalities or ethnic groups get along on these teams? Did they have any trouble that way?

Paddy: Oh, never, never. There was never any--like on a team I had there was just about every nationality on it and when you got out there in the play it didn't matter who got into the fight, the whole team was out there to support him, and they became friends after playing, and better friends after they played together and/or played against each other.

Wally: How about among the spectators, was there anything in this regard?

Paddy: No, as far as nationalities are concerned which was a good, healthy rivalry, was between the towns, the Allouez, like in hockey we called them the "Woodchoppers" but they had some good hockey players, Windy Gaabo from up there was one of the exceptionally good hockey players, and then we had teams like from Fulton, one of the exceptional hockey players was Matt Wiljanen and there's many others from there, and from Ahmeek we had extremely lot of good ball players, and hockey players; one exceptionally good hockey player and all-around player, was Jack Mugford, he could play basketball, he was outstanding basketball player, he held the Calumet High School broad jump, he was extremely good hockey player and baseball player, he was outstanding ball player and so were the Rapson's, and Mohawk we had real rough players and good players like Billy Cameto, ball players like Jimmy Jackson and the greatest, I thought, ball player of our area was Mike Petto. And those are all different nationalities but they became, what you say, "local heroes".

Wally: Did the various mining companies support any of these teams? In any way?

Paddy: Mohawk Mining Company was an exceptionally good mining company promoting sports. It built the Glacier Dome, it was--in the early days they supported running teams, and supported sports all the way around. In the early days we had extremely good connection with the Ahmeek Mining Company with Dr. King who promoted--he was extremely interested in sports and especially baseball. And in later years the C&H became lax in supporting any of the activities, although I must say it did help in giving us a shack and giving us an ice rink, water to---roller skate--they gave us the boards and that was Ocha Potter's who I must say was extremely sports minded.

Wally: In running these oral interviews I've had 2 different stories I've heard now that's been new to me, but I think they're kind of interesting, I think you'd know quite a bit about it, one in boxing--I talked with a fellow the other night and said that in the 1920's, and I think he meant from the year 1928, how boxing was very popular up here in the Copper Country and that he had actually gone to boxing matches and

he had witnessed Jack Dempsey up here refereeing a match, in '28

Paddy: That was in July--Dempsey came up here, it was December 2nd, 1929, Cliff Shibreau being a friend and knew Jack Dempsey well, got Dempsey to come up here and referee about--and he offered--Dempsey said he would come up here for \$2500 which at that time was a lot of money so Nate Hoffenberg who was the--the license was in Nate Hoffenberg's--Cliff was the matchmaker, so Cliff arranged to have the card up, he had Mike Dundee come up who was a top-notch fighter and he had Mike fight Johnnie Mack and I fought--he brought up a fighter at the same time that was managed by Mike Dundee's manager, named Lee Donnally, I fought him that night; Dempsey refereed, Ike Forsberg was on the same card, he fought and he was a fighter from Calumet, a heavy-weight and there was a fighter from Ahmeek, Tom Beaudoin was on it and I think Harold Hoffenberg --Harold Hoff, he fought on the same card, well, the funny thing about that was I think Dempsey coming up at that time kind of hurt Nate Hoffenberg, see they got--arrangements were made and they had tickets sold and they picked a bad date, December 2nd, as I recall that day we had a bad snowstorm and all the reserved seats were just about cancelled for that night. They were the \$5 seats. And Cliff had at the cubs there, they had a gymnasium and they had seats in there and they advertised they had Dempsey there that afternoon. Dempsey came there that morning but the crew from the Miscowabik Club come over and got Dempsey and brought him over to the Miscowabik Club and Cliff said it was alright for Dempsey to go and to go, but when they got him over there they forgot to bring him back and they kept him there all afternoon. The cubs was just packed with fans waiting to see Dempsey. I was there myself. We boxed in exhibition--we worked out lightly because we were fighting that night, and lot of them left there disappointed, they didn't believe that Dempsey was going to be at the bout even and Cliff was quite a bit concerned and it meant quite a bit of money for Nate too because these people, the most of them that were there, went away disappointed and they didn't even come to the bout, for the fight that night which was held at the Coliseum, today called the Armory, and they borrowed money to bring Dempsey up here and I didn't get paid for that fight myself because Shibreau was my manager, and I had a contract with him, that he took one-third of my what I was--we took out the training expenses, then he took out one-third of whatever was left and there was nothing to take because Cliff lost and Nate Hoffenberg lost, Ike Forsberg had to wait, I think, until Christmas before he got paid and they had to guarantee Dempsey that money before he went into the ring. He refereed the fight between Mike Dundee and Johnnie Mack which was the main go, their main go had to go on before 10 o'clock, that was the state law, so I had to go on after the main go because I was on the semi-final and so Dempsey didn't even show up for that bout, he left as soon as he got through refereeing. And from that time on it took, well, it wasn't a few bouts after that Cliff could see it was deteriorating, Nate lost money on almost every other bout and conditions started to get bad here locally, and so Cliff left for Chicago at that time and I came down there later then about 3 months later.

Wally: I 'spose the depression years up here then just about finished boxing.

Paddy: That's right. The depression finished boxing but it helped hockey., because every little town had, they made ice rinks and they produced a lot of good hockey players

Wally: Well, how much boxing did they have? Prior to 1928-29?

Paddy: They had quite a bit. They had a bout, they'd have about 4 bouts a year, and the Elks had a license in Hancock and then there were licenses that were in Iron Mountain and most of the fighters, then there was fights over in Iron River, also we had lot of fighters come in that would help fill the card from Duluth, Jack Hurley's stable.

Wally: I think mining communities have always been good areas for boxing.

Paddy: It has. That's right!

Wally: So it's not surprising that boxing was fairly popular up here at that early period when the mines were going full blast. A lot of your championship matches during the mining company areas like Montana, and those areas.

Paddy: Ya, Dempsey fought Gibbons in Butte, Montana, and the heavyweight match, that I have an article home--paper, that was 1899--pictures and illustrations by New York Times of the bout between Paul Fitzsimmons and Jim Corbett for the world's heavyweight championship. And that was in Nevada.

Wally: The other story I was going to ask you about was the fact that cricket was played here. AND was pretty popular for a while. Again I 'spose it's not strange seeing many of the miners were English or Cornish and would have brought it over with them, but you don't hear much of cricket being played in the United States. But this gentlemen I interviewed, said, ya, Mohawk had had a cricket court or whatever they call it.

Paddy: Well, cricket in my time was already a thing of the past.

Wally: Ya, but there have been some pretty long and important games played in cricket

Paddy: But we had some big hockey games; outside professional teams would come in to Glacier Dome and some real good hockey players at that time right out of Mohawk.

Wally: Did hockey come down from Canada with the French, did they bring it down?

Paddy: no, I think hockey from here went to Canada, because the only hockey they say started here in this area in Portage Lake area, they had the first professional hockey championship team right out of Houghton. They did. We had--lot of our hockey players went play--we had players from Calumet who played in Canada later on. The Koski's, --

Wally: So it spread the other way instead!

Paddy: That's right.

Wally: That's an interesting one. Do you think the sports will ever come back up?

Paddy: Oh, definitely, because I think right now it's starting, with this artificial ice at the Coliseum in Calumet is the greatest thing that we have had in our area for hockey and if we could promote grade school hockey, and now it's developing high school hockey, and if we could get even some kind of indoor ice rink in Keweenaw, I know we'd produce a lot of hockey players that'll win their tuition to college, they'll be able to get themselves an education and probably end up in a professional hockey team.

Wally: How did the various churches look on sports back in those days?

Paddy: The churches, I'd say, never opposed anything like that, sports was entirely separated from church or from religion or any connection with it; we had a little help from the--at that time we had a league in Mohawk that was sponsored by the American Legion Post from Mohawk and they have always been helpful and active; we have people like Dr. King who was very active in baseball, we had Siboley from Mohawk, he was very

active in sports and we had certain individuals like Jack Josey, he made a big contribution towards sports, he always went out and collected money and he always put on a sale of selling tickets which was a big thing in getting anything going.

Wally: Was track ever popular up in this country? Seeing Paavo Nurmi being the great hero of track of the Finns?

Paddy: We had some very good running teams from here before, that was a little earlier; we had such good runners from Calumet like Paul Hogan, we had one good runner from Mohawk, Mohawk had a good running team, and in high school we had, which promoted running, we had quite a few good runners; we had one real good runner, a college runner, a cousin of mine, John Petaja from Ahmeek, he ran with the University of Madison, when he was training he'd run from Ahmeek to Eagle River and think nothing of it; one day he ran from Ahmeek to Baraga, he used to run on a Sunday from Ahmeek to Lac laBelle; running was a real good sport there for while, he ran against 3 good runners in Ahmeek there in Ahmeek village; he ran once around the Ahmeek--it's about a 40, Ahmeek is, and first he'd run around 5th Street and back and then one runner would make one round with him, then a new runner would step in, a relay team, they run against 3 runners, 3 good runners, and he'd show his speed by beating the 3 of them,

Wally: Well, in sports in general do you think the depression years and the closing of the mines and all of this, affected sports very badly?

Paddy: I think it helped hockey because, specially the depression time, WPA gave some assistance in putting up ice rinks and keeping them clean and the fellows had a lot of time to play hockey. And everybody could play and make use of it, every little town had an ice rink and we had a lot of hockey players.

And it just continued to go right on through

(end of tape)

Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

Suomi College
Folklore Album

Father

- a. John
- b. Deceased
- c. Merchant

Mother

- a. Maria Petaja
- b. Deceased
- c. housewife

Father

- a. George Perrault
- b. Deceased
- c. Plumber

Mother

- a.
- b.
- c.

Father

- a. Heimo Jaskalainen
- b. Mohawk
- c. Retired

Mother

- a. Margare (Perrault)
- b. Mohawk
- c. Housewife

Child

- a. Gordon
- b. Mohawk
- c. Lawyer

Child

- a. Jacqueline
- b. Mohawk
- c. Social Worker
Teacher

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.