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

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

Walter Johnson
August 11, 1972

Art Puotinen

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Interview with WALTER JOHNSON
by Art Puotinen 8/11/72

Art: Well, we'll get started by asking you some questions regarding your parents: your parents came to this country from Finland, is that right?

Walt: No, my mother was born in Finland and my father was born in the United States, he's a native American.

Art: Do you recall the area from Finland when you mother came from?

Walt: My mother, I think as I recall her talking about it, came from a place called Ristijärvi, and I think that's in Kaijanilämpi so that is her birthplace.

Did she have relatives here or what accounts for her coming to America?

Walt: I believe that my mother, as I recall, came, she was the first in her family to come and then her two sisters and brother followed her.

Do you recall roughly the time in which she came to this country?

Walt: I believe that mother came here in about 1905

And came directly to the Copper Country?

Walt: Directly to the Copper Country.

Did she find employment immediately when she came?

Walt: Yes, she worked as a domestic, when she first arrived and that was her first employment.

during

Art: Was it/~~in~~ the course of her work in her early time here that she met your father then?

I recall her speaking of meeting dad when she was employed as a domestic for some family that apparently father and grandfather visited.

Art: What was your mother's full maiden name?

Walt: Elizabeth Kemppainen.

Art: Kemppainen. There are quite a few Kemppainen's in this area, too. Your father's parents evidently came to this country earlier, then, are they of Finnish background, too.

Walt: My father's father was Finnish and he came from Oulun Laani, Finland. His mother was Swedish and she came from Haaparanta, Sweden. And they came in the latter 1800's, 19th century.

And what was your father's first employment in this region?

Walt: My father went to, actually worked for the streetcar company on the streetcars, originally, in Hancock, in Houghton County. And then, of course, after that why, after grandfather died, he, of course, was in the logging business and the fuel business and had a farm, then my father took over where grandfather left off and he went into the logging, farming and fuel business.

Where was the center of the business, the Johnson properties?

Walt: Actually we maintained, or grandfather and father and then, of course, my brother and I did for a while, maintained our office in our old family home on Quincy Hill just north of Hancock.

Art: And where were your logging operations taking place?

Walt: Well, grandfather originally started out cutting cordwood for the mines, they used cordwood more than they did coal in the early days for firing the boilers to create steam for the engines and that, of course, led to his logging in the immediate area of the Quincy location both west, north and east. And then when he died, father continued in the Oneco and the Mason areas for the Quincy Mining company, from there then he went along the Copper Range and worked for the Dollar Bay Lumber Company for many years and from there, of course, he went with the Ford Motor Company back of L'Anse and the Herman area and then in the Skanee area. And then he retired and my brother and I became involved in the business and joined with him in a partnership and then we purchased his share and we became a corporation a partnership and then a corporation. And continued in logging.

I wonder if we could go back into the very early period: you said that your father was involved in cutting cordwood for the mines, your grandfather, could you describe briefly the kinds of machinery and tools, just a thumbnail sketch of the nature of the operation, how it took place.

Walt: Well, I have no recollection, actually I never did see it, grandfather's operation because I was just less than a year old when he died; however, just from hearing of the operations, why of course they were rather crude in comparison to our modern methods; he used horses and crosscut saws to cut the timber down first and axes to limb the trees and then they used chains and tongs to hitch to the horses whipple tree to pull the logs into the skidways and then they loaded them, rolled the logs probably on wagons and then pulled these wagons to the mines with the timber and cordwood.

And your grandfather had a standing contract then evidently with some of--

Walt: mining companies, that's right

Art: Getting to you yourself, as a small boy there were, you mentioned, brothers; how many in total were there in your immediate family circle?

I have one brother, Leonard, and three sisters.

And you probably attended grade school--

Walt: I attended Pewabic School which is also on Quincy Hill, I went through my 8 grades there and I went on to high school in Hancock. And after high school I spent one year at Michigan TEch in Houghton and then I went to the University of Michigan and graduated there with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering.

Art: Well, that's a good educational background. Going back to your grade school days, as I understand it, this school was in a mining location.

Walt: That's right.

Was there quite a cross-section of national groups represented in that?

Walt: Yes there were. There were various nationalities, the Finns probably predominated although not too much, there were many of English extraction, mostly Cornish and Cornwall who worked in the mine--their children; Italians, a great number of them; and the Irish and a few French. Those were the main nationalities.

When you went to school, did you already speak English well? Or were you familiar with both Finnish and English?

Walt: Yes, I think that we spoke English mostly at home although we did have--my mother usually spoke Finnish to us so we did learn the language and we had an aunt of my father's living with us for many years who spoke only Finnish so we were forced to speak Finnish, otherwise I think that we probably would never have learned the Finnish language although we did go to Finnish Sunday School and Finnish summer schools so we were exposed to it both in reading and writing but the fact that we did speak it at home or have somebody speak it and speak to us and we were forced to speak to another person, why, of course, we acquired a knowledge of the language.

Did you experience in grade school or even later in high school, any kind of rivalry between the various ethnic groups?

Walt: Yes, I think there was some rivalry although in general, I can't say that there was an extreme amount of it, in some instances, yes, but I think that, oh, there was some degrading remarks often made of the immigrant Finn or what have you by people of other nationalities who probably thought they were a bit smarter or better but Finns with their "sisu" didn't give in. I think they held up pretty well and held their end up quite well. So that actually I think that that has been pretty well dispelled.

So it's interesting you mention "sisu", what does "sisu" mean to you in your associations with other Finns? What does it seem to represent?

Walt: I think it means persistence and a lot of guts

Still on the topic of rivalry: do you think that there was more rivalry, say, between Hancock and Houghton as communities rather than, say, ethnic groups within Hancock itself?

Walt: I would say that community-wise there was more rivalry because I remember it wasn't particularly you mentioned Houghton and Hancock but I remember Ripley and top of Quincy Hill. Back in the days when I was a kid there used to be just regular rock fights; it's a wonder that more kids didn't get hurt and killed actually but we used to get over on the side hills with the East Hancock group as we called them and then the Ripley group and we used to just use these sling-shots and fire rocks at one another and really have a real drag-out battle. It was something that I think finally the police had to put an end to but it went on for many, many years so it wasn't actually, I don't think, might have been some ethnic rivalry there because the people in East Hancock were not Finns and yet again the group that did the fighting on top of Quincy Hill as we would call it Quincy, those weren't all Finns either. But there was a great mixture of nationalities whereas in Ripley again you got into more of the Irish, not that there were Finns down there, too, but as I say "down" because it's down the hill, but not as many probably as we've found in our area.

Art: When anybody in your family became ill, did your mother have a favorite Finnish home remedy, or was there a local doctor that you visited frequently or what happened in those kinds of situations?

Well, it happened that the Quincy Mining Company, the company that operated the mines where I was born and raised, had a dispensary as we called it and they had a staff of doctors there and that was quite close to home so most people in that area, whenever they became ill, they just naturally went to the mining company doctors for their health problems.

Did your parents belong to any of the local Finnish organizations at the time? Like for example, church groups or temperance groups or Kaleva group?

Walt: My mother and father were very excellent church members and they belonged mainly to the church groups; they did not belong to the Kaleva although many of their friends did, they never did join that, and I think for a while my mother did belong to the temperance group in its early days but it was mainly in the church affiliations that they were interested in.

Art.: What year were you born in?

Walt: I was born in 1910

Art: In your childhood you probably were not aware of the copper strike or World War I?

Walt: I have very faint recollections; I remember the copper strike when the state militia was stationed right close near our home where they had their tent set up, I just faintly remember that, but earlier than that I have very little that I remember.

After high school, you went directly to Tech?

Walt: Went directly to Tech, right.

That would put us in the 19--

Walt: That was 1928.

Art: The year after Tech you went straight to--

Walt: University of Michigan, right

Art: And was graduated and came out right during the heart of the depression?

Walt: Yes, I did. I came out in the heart of the depression. My first job was with the survey crew of the Houghton County Road Commission, worked for a dollar a day there. And a couple of months we didn't get paid!

Art: Was that a kind of a disappointment for a college grad after putting in all that time and effort?

Walt: Well, in some ways it probably was because certainly all this time that I was working there I tried to find another job which I felt was more in line with my education. But it was interesting work, it was civil engineering, it was survey crew, it was work that I had prepared myself for and I felt that I was getting some experience in furthering my knowledge of the practical side of engineering so actually I wasn't completely disappointed, I was fortunate that my father was able to support me. I lived at home.

Art: As you went about the community, what general impressions do you have of the depression days of the community as a whole? Were there quite a few people out of work?

Walt: Yes, there were many people out of work, and of course until the WPA came along, why it was quite a struggle for everybody. My father in the depths of the depression was a

supervisor in Franklin Township and I remember what a time he had with people who felt that he should obtain government aid, well, he was not as township supervisor able to do anything but ask and suggest from the government, it took more than just he as a spokesman to obtain that aid; he had a lot of criticism directed his way which I felt was unjustified. But people suffered and were hungry and the WPA was a "life-saver" I'd say for the people of the Copper Country because the copper industry is very cyclical and when business is off, naturally copper demand falls off rapidly so our mines were closed, so I'd say that most everybody and the same way with the lumber industry, my father didn't even log at that time. He didn't have anything to do for about 3-4 years, he didn't log. Yes, and he had, I think there were 4 of us in college at the time so all he could do was dip into his savings and his investments, and sell out his investment, and he was determined that we were going to finish college.

It sounded as if your father placed a high premium on education

Walt: Oh, yes, both he and mother.

Art: Can you account for this, is it some innate trait among the Finns to appreciate knowledge or did they feel that this was--if you went on for a higher education you could better yourself, get different employment or--

Walt: Well, I can't you really why they had that great desire to see that we had education except to think that probably they felt that if we had an education we had the "tools" to work with and if they furnished that, we should be able to take care of ourselves in the future on our own, if need be, so they were both very desirous of all of us having a college education and we all did receive a college education. So the 5 of us are all college graduates.

That's an excellent record for a family!

Did--after your survey work, did you--what was your next

Walt: Well, then I, course I was in constant communication with our employment placement service at the Engineering School at the University of Michigan and they finally came up with a job with the Marinette & Menominee Paper Company, in Marinette, Wisconsin. This was a subsidiary of the International Paper Company and they had a job for a young engineer in their engineering department which I immediately accepted and that was back in 1934. I worked there for about a year-and-a-half and then Dad became affiliated with the Ford Motor Company in the logging business and he asked that I come back and become affiliated with him and so I did. And then I left the Paper Company and came back and have been in the Copper Country ever since.

Art: Prior to your father's involvement with the Ford Motor Company, up to that time had he been mainly involved in producing lumber the mines in one form or another?

Walt: No, no, Dad did of course do quite a lot of logging up until about the middle '20's for the mining companies, that is, logs for their mines, mine timber, and other uses, lumber as well, but Dad never had a sawmill, he was just a logging contractor. Then he went with the Dollar Bay Lumber Company which, of course, then he logged and these logs then, of course, were shipped to the sawmill to be made into lumber. Of course then with the Ford Motor Company that was a logging operation with the logs going into lumber at the Ford sawmills.

A lot has been said about the old time lumberjacks and loggers that they were

colorful characters, what was your father's experience and your experience with these men who were in your employ, were they colorful, what kinds of men were in your employ, were they all Finns or were they various ethnic groups, and were they single or were they married?

Well, in the early days I would say there were predominantly Finnish, predominantly single, predominantly hard drinkers, predominantly hard workers; they would go in the woods in the fall of the year and then maybe go into town about Christmastime and spend all their money on drink, most of them, although not all, there were some men who were family men who did save their money and supported families. Then they'd come back at Christmastime and work until the spring break-up in March, back to town again and same activity of drinking and hanging around the streets, but they in spite of their hard drinking, they were hard workers. In later years, of course, other nationalities began to come in; I think that you found that with Dad being a Finn even though he was have Swedish he always called himself a Finn, he--most of the workers were Finns that worked for him, whereas other logging contractors who were French, why, they had predominantly French but in time, why, we'd get Frenchmen, even Indians and many other nationalities that would work for us.

Art: It would sound as if your Dad had a pretty good rapport with the men

Oh, yes, he did. The only time he didn't was when they were in town drunk and calling for money. Then he was not a friend of theirs!

Roughly, how extensive was the project? How many men were in your father's employ say before the moving to the Ford Era?

Walt: Well, in the latter part of the '20's, I would say that father had a crew of 50-60 men usually and that of course was back in the days before trucks and tractors and it was all horses and he had about 14-15 teams of horses and that was the reason for the farm--we had a farm that Dad owned, several hundred acres where he raised grain and hay and that was principally to feed the horses on the logging operation.
for all the 50 men or

Art: Did you have any lumber camps, were there several located in--

Walt: Well, up until the time we went with the Ford Motor Company, it was usually just one single camp but all the men were quartered. But after that we had 2 different camps and our crew of men increased to about 125-130 and then we had 2 different camps that we operated from.

Could you describe briefly what was the day like in the life of the lumber camp many years ago? From early sun up to sun down?

Walt: Usually you started your day about 5 o'clock in the morning and the men would wash up using the common towel to drink their hands and face and then your sanitary facilities; toilets, were all outdoors; the camps were heated by barrel stoves and the choreboy probably got up at 4 and stoked the fires and added more wood so that things would be warm by the time the men got up, about 5:30 the dinner bell or triangle would ring and men would go into the cookcamp for their breakfast and silence, of course, probably you've heard as the order always in the logging camp, the only time that a man spoke at a meal was to ask for something or somebody to pass some food to him.

Why was that tradition?

Walt: Well, I think basically they felt that, why, you would be there for more than the allotted time and you'd be late for work; they made sure that you didn't talk too

much and in that way you'd finish your meal and be on your way

Art: What was a typical lumberjack breakfast?

Walt: Well, a good typical lumberjack breakfast, as I remember, would be ham and eggs, or bacon and eggs, oatmeal or something like that on one day, and pancakes and sausage and more eggs and cereal and bread and coffee, of course, and they fed well I assure you. Then, of course, back in those early days, why they were off to work by about 6 o'clock and often times they had to walk several miles, they didn't have transportation like we do today. They had to walk half-an-hour to an hour sometimes to get on the job. And in those days they worked 10 hours a day. So they'd carry their lunch which was put up in lunch buckets; no thermos bottles in those days, they were just a cylindrical lunch bucket with the coffee poured in the bottom and then the sandwiches and whatever you might want, cake, on top and they carried these out in the woods with them. Then about 9 o'clock in the morning they'd all have a little lunch break and maybe eat a sandwich and build a fire and hold their lunch bucket over the fire with a long stick and warm that coffee up and then drink some of that with the sandwich. Then about 12 o'clock they'd have their noon break which usually lasted about an hour in those days. And so they would have their lunch, and some either sit around and smoke and chat or take a nap. Then they would put in their balance of the day, anywhere from 5 to 6 o'clock depending on if they worked 10 hours a day and then hike back to camp again. And supper would of course be a great big bowl of soup with your potatoes and gravy, vegetables, beef, pork and pie. Salads were seldom known in those days, but they ate very adequately.

When the men were in the woods doing their work, how did they cope with the mosquitoes and flies in those days?

Walt: In those days we had a material called "citronella" which, I think, the odor was almost as bad as the problem they were coping with. (laughter) It was most unpleasant. And then some of them even resorted to some kind of a tar solution, and things of that sort. It was quite a battle!

With the use of fairly primitive tools, were accidents a problem; did many men miss a log and --

Yes, there were accidents all the time; logging, you might know, is one of the most hazardous industries. The compensation rates for logging is exceedingly high. And even in those days, there were a lot of cuts and bruises and sometimes even fatal accidents, not too many, fortunately, but there were; it's an industry that seems to be somehow or another has a great number of accidents.

Art: The miners later were unionized, did the lumberjacks ever become unionized? Probably not in that early period, but later?

Walt: No. Lumberjacks weren't unionized until--actually World War II is when the lumberjacks were unionized in our area.

And what was the name of the union that organized them?

Walt: International Woodworkers of America.

Let's go back to when you joined your father. Perhaps I should also ask you, were you married at that time?

Walt: Yes, I was married in 1935 when I was working in Marinette, Wisconsin, so my wife and I then moved about 4 months after we were married back to Hancock.

And your wife's full maiden name?

Walt: Jane Mitchell. She's from Charlotte, Michigan. We met at Ann Arbor

Did you have any children when you came back to join your father?

Walt: No, my first child was born in 1938

What type of responsibilities did you have in joining your father in your work?

Walt: Well, my first duties were to take care of the time, that is, record the time, the hours that the men worked to take care of the purchases, to record the log scale, both cut and the shift, and details of that sort to build up a fundamental knowledge of that operation.

I guess you already did describe briefly what that, the operations during the Ford period, didn't you?

Walt: I've mentioned the fact that we did have 2 camps and we had a crew of about 130 men and we were located near Herman which is south of L'Anse and about 4 miles east of Herman; we were actually on the Ford Motor Company railroad so we hauled everything to the Ford Motor Company railroad. At that time when we first started we used horses and some tractors and gradually it all became a tractor operation and the horses were phased out but the sawing was all done by crosscut still in that era, we didn't get into the power saws--actually it was in the '40's before the power saws became popular.

Do you remember the first type of power saw that you tried?

Walt: Yes, the first power saw that we tried was a Mercury and it took 2 strong men to lift it, and manipulate it, so it was not anything that became very popular at that time.

And since then you've got on to more streamlined models.

Walt: Oh, yes, now they're one-man operation completely and very light weight and much more efficient.

Did you spend quite a bit of time in the Herman area or did you make your home here in Hancock?

We made our home here in Hancock, that is, my wife did. Except the first winter she joined me in the woods and we both lived right at the camp. We came back in fall of the year, 1935, and we lived at the logging camp all that year until March. And the following year we made our home in Hancock and I used to go out on Sunday, come back on Wednesday to pick up supplies and back again on Thursday morning and then back again on Saturday night. So she didn't see much of me!

I would suspect that it would be a kind of an adjustment for a woman to lumbercamp life.

It was but my wife adapted to it very well as she was most interested in it; my uncle, Toivo Kuutila, made her a pair of Finnish skis (cross country) which she used out there quite a bit and got into the woods and visited the operations and it really intrigued her and she was very happy with her life there.

Art: Did any of the lumberjacks have trap lines?

We did have some lumberjacks that maintained trap lines but not actually at the logging camp.

Some of the family men?

Walt: Family men, yes

What did these lumberjacks do in their free time beside--you mentioned maybe this pertained only to the early period when the men would come into town and lose some of their savings, what did they do in their spare time at the lumber camp?

Walt: Well, most of them either sat around and read or played cards. Or in conversation with their other friends.

You mentioned earlier that your father or was it your grandfather had been supervisor

Walt: father had

Art: father had been supervisor and did he continue his political involvements after he got involved with the Ford operations? Was he involved in local politics?

Walt: No, he didn't. He served on the Pewabic School Board for many, many years as treasurer which, of course, he didn't consider as a political office although it actually was because it was an elective office but I think grandfather may have started in that as treasurer and then he continued or became treasurer and he only served as supervisor, I think, for a year or two and I believe he discovered it was too much of a headache and he decided to leave it.

Art: How about yourself? To what extent did you become active in politics? Did you run for office at all?

Walt: I served on the Pewabic School Board after dad built a home in Hancock, I moved to the old family home on Quincy Hill, my wife and I did, and then I became treasurer of the school board there until we purchased a home in Hancock in 1941. And then after my years of service in the Navy, when I came back, I became a member of the Hancock Board of Education. And I was on the Hancock Board of Education for about 10 years and I was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Houghton County Board of Supervisors in the later '40's and I served on the Board of Supervisors for Houghton County for 7 or 8 years. So that has been my political background.

Art: Well, it's quite an amount of public service that you rendered.

Walt: Well, I feel that I tried to do my share of it.

Art: How active--let's take the Finns for example, over the years as you've seen them and lived with them, have they been politically active, running for office or have they tended to be more observer types or --

Walt: I think that Finns have been quite active politically here; many of our sheriffs have been Finns, many of other county officers have been Finns although the judgeship has not so far been handled by a Finn but many of the other offices have, I think that the Finns as the years go by are becoming progressively more politically minded.

Was there any particular political affiliation that dominated over another, were most Finns Republicans or Democrats or how would you assess them?

Walt: Back in my youth, most Finns were Republicans. But I'm sorry to say that today they are not.

Was there a change during the time of the depression.

Walt: Yes, I believe that is what brought the change in political affiliations with them was the depression.

Art: So we have a fairly good cross-section represented in the two major parties, there was some indication of more radical types of Finns around who were interested in communism --

Walt: Communism, yes, during the depression we had many indications of that; we used to have parades, in Hancock, and I would probably not be wrong in saying that the paraders were mostly Finns and they were led by communists and were to us very distressing.

Art: Did any of these people go back to, I believe, it was Karelia, there was an organized attempt to try to get --

Walt: Yes, I recall there were some that did go back there but I think some soon found the error of their ways and soon came back.

Art: Were these mainly farmer types or miners or were there even some lumberjacks in this radical movement?

Walt: I'm afraid I couldn't quite answer that, I don't recall just what the types were

Art: Let's talk a little bit about your World War II experiences. You went from here you were busy in your work and along came World War II, where did you serve?

Walt: I served, of course, I joined the U.S. Navy, actually the Naval Reserve, in 1943, July, and I was stationed at Fort Skyler in the Bronx, New York for my indoctrination. I was commissioned Lt. Jr. Grade, immediately upon enlistment and after 2 months there I was transferred to Washington, D.C. with the Bureau of Ordnance in the section there called Planning and Logistics where I was actually assigned throughout my naval career but while I was in this section, I traveled extensively through many of the ordnance stations in the United States and then went to the Pacific aboard 2 ammunition ships. We went into the Southwest Pacific. Primarily the first one was to test the feasibility of pelletized ammunition, that is, loading ammunition on pellets so as to speed the discharge from ammunition ships to naval ships that came alongside. And the second one was a further study of that. So when World War II ended I was in the Pacific aboard the second ammunition ship to which I was assigned and then came back to the states and was discharged in Washington.

Art: And in what year was the discharge

Walt: My discharge, my separation came in 1945 and my actual discharge, didn't; I was a member of the Naval Reserve---correction---my discharge came in January 1946 but my actual discharge didn't come until about 1950 or '52; I was still a member of the Reserves until that time but then they told me I could get my discharge which I was happy to take.

Right! Well, the war ends and "Johnnie comes marching home" (laughter), how does the Copper Country look to the returning serviceman, economically and otherwise.

Economically, of course, I think the Copper Country had one of its' best periods during World War II. The logging was at its' peak, mining was at its' peak, so that when I came home everything was really booming. And so I was real happy to get back in the logging business. But of course it was just shortly after that that the demand for copper fell off and our Quincy Mine was closed, so then that was a tremendous economic blow to our community.

Did it affect your own logging operations in any direct way?

Walt: No, it didn't affect our logging operations at all.

What were some noticeable effects after the Quincy declined? Did lot of people move out of the area?

Yes. Many people did move; the younger people moved into Detroit mainly, that is where most of the migration was toward and they into the automobile business--the younger people--the older people moved to other mining areas, Calumet, Painesdale, and such, and some even to the Iron Country, Marquette, Crystal Falls, and _____.

THis is a thought that I've wondered about a lot and I think you're a good person to ask this question: was the mining interest and mining of so great importance in the local area that its' decrease affected all phases of life or was it as I seem to hear you suggesting, only part of the economy and, you know, logging and other businesses could still maintain their production and level of growth? Was the latter true?

I think so. I'm sure of that

Art: So it's really a falsity to say that mining was in total determinative of the local economy.

No, it certainly wasn't, and even today we can look at the closing of the Calumet & Hecla and yet our, seemingly, our economy is in fairly good shape in the Copper Country, of course, we're fortunate to have a school like Suomi College and Michigan Tech who contribute millions of dollars to our economy and that, of course, they're both like an industry so that has taken up a lot of our slack that closing these mines created so we're very fortunate to have these institutions here.

Art: Could you give sort of a "thumbnail sketch" of the trends in your own logging operations during the '50's and '60's, was it, what were you most involved in?

Walt: Well, we, of course, naturally were involved in logs and then in latter years, we went more into pulpwood because hardwood timber began to disappear, in other words it was cut-over, it was a lack of it; but in the '50's, of course, we used mainly hardwood and hemlock logs, and our operations at that time were almost totally mechanized insofar as cutting was all power saws, by power saws, the skidding was done by tractors, the hauling was done by trucks, and as time went on, we would, we did use what we call "jammers" to load our trucks and then we got into power cranes, that was all motorized; then in the later part of the '60's, with the lack of hardwood timber we began to get into pulpwood and that, of course, required a little change in equipment and fortunately, why, the rubber-tired skidder came into play. The crawler-type tractor was a very expensive tractor to maintain, parts are very expensive, so the advent tire skidder, why you could bring in great

number of stringer length pieces of pulpwood and buck them or cut them on the landing or skidways and the rubber-tired skidder would travel much faster than a tractor and was less costly to operate as well as to maintain so in our last few years of logging, it was almost entirely pulpwood.

Where did you ship your pulp?

Walt: Our pulp was delivered to the Copper Range railroad at Toivola and this was mainly to the Consolidated Papers, Inc., of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, and they would load it themselves on cars at Toivola. Our hardwood went to Vulcan Corporation mill at Donken where it was processed into lumber.

Bringing it right up to the present, how do you assess the current lumber industry here in the Copper Country?

Walt: Well, I think right now that there isn't the volume of timber cut today nearly what it used to be because there just isn't timber available. Much of our timber is controlled by large landowners such as Calumet & Hecla or Goodman as they are now known; Copper Range and other large landowners, there are a few smaller landowners but it's mainly large landowners so that the logging industry is influenced by the needs of those companies and so number of men employed in logging and sawmill business is much less today than it was 10, 20, and 30 years ago.

Art: And any kind of significant increase would depend upon these large landowners.

Walt: That's right. Of course as time goes on, why the availability of timber to them is becoming less, too, so I don't personally look for a great deal of increase in the logging business except possibly pulpwood because we do, there is a great deal of reforestation in pine so that that in time will develop into a potential pulpwood product but today, there's very little timber left.

Art: Would you describe your present position, you mentioned the Upper Peninsula Power Company, Board of --

Yes, I'm on the Board of Directors of the Upper Peninsula Power Company which is our local utility here and also operates in various other counties in the Upper Peninsula from Escanaba north and we go as far east as Manistique, Munising, and then we're in the Iron River area and go into Ontonagon County and I'm also on the Board of Directors as Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Detroit & Northern Savings & Loan Association. That is principally my business affiliations today because we have now dissolved our corporation of the Johnson Brothers in Hancock, Inc., we dissolved 2 years ago so we no longer have any affiliation there.

Art: And throughout these many years, the '50's and '60's, you were involved in the school board yet?

Walt: Yes, in the '50's mainly I was on the school board.

As the times have changed, economy has changed, did you face changes and transitions in local school life, what sort of patterns emerged during the '50's?

Walt: Well, I think that to me the most striking thing as far as schools, I'm speaking of public schools now, was the increasing in militancy of the teachers, they became more organization or union-minded; back when I was on the board of education fortunately we didn't have too many problems, we had--I mean inasfar as teachers and their labor problems, shall I say, our biggest problem was to get school teachers, today there is an excess supply of school teachers. But in those days we had to search for them and so with that I suppose there wasn't too much of a demand for a

big increase in wages every year, we had a step that we gave an increase every year so that seemed to satisfy them but today I'm afraid it's a little different situation from what I've been told so that is been to me the biggest trend, of course, another thing I think another trend is the increasing involvement of the government in programs in the schools and I think that's not only in public schools but it's in schools such as Suomi College and Michigan Tech and so it's a general trend.

Art: I'd like you to speculate a bit now. You've had a rich background in economics and education and politics and what have you, what do you see for the Copper Country maybe 10 years from now? Or what would you wish would happen? Either question.

I'm rather hopeful, it seems as though we are having a study made now by the Homestake Mining Company in the Calumet area whereby they may attempt to develop a mining method that could very well mean a great increase in the economic activity in Houghton County; the big problem has always been as far as our mines in our area is concerned, has been the fact that they're too deep and move too much material to bring up a pound of copper. And I think under the new methods they're going to develop something whereby they'll leave that poor rock in the mine and bring up just the copper so I think that is in itself going to be a very important factor in our economy, so I personally feel very optimistic about it, I think we're going to see a great deal of economic growth in the next 10 years.

And another reflective type of question: there are many years of life yet for you but looking back on the paths that you've traveled, what would you count as your most worthwhile accomplishment?

Walt: I suppose I feel that I have been successful in my business and my opportunity to serve with Detroit & Northern, Upper Peninsula Power Company, and on the board of education, as well as the board of supervisors, those things to me mean more than most anything else I think.

So it's been a very productive time. I wonder if I could ask you some questions now about your family: how many children are there?

Walt: I have 2 children, 2 girls

Art: Do they live in the Copper Country?

Walt: No, they're both married, one lives in Dorvel, Quebec, she is married to Lincoln North, she has a daughter and a son; the son is 11 and the daughter is 6; and I have a daughter lives in Denver, Colorado, she is married to Norman Cromer and they have a son that is 5 years old. (faint tape) I would like to say that the Johnson's not only were in the logging business which of course has always been the number 1 part of their business but we've also been in the fuel business; we not only retailed fuel but we were affiliated with another party in the Peoples Fuel Company whereby we used to get coal in by lake carriers and so we not only retailed coal then but we also wholesaled it to other dealers and we also were for a number of years in the gasoline business, we owned the Diamond Oil Company and we were in the wholesale as well as retail gasoline business for some time and right here where we have our home now, this used to be called the "Brickyard". My grandfather became affiliated with a group that built a brick factory here and manufactured brick and they got the clay from back here, this back area here is full of ^{old} clay pits and they had a brick factory here, you can still see some old broken brick around here, a lot of it along the shore, and then after grandfather died, apparently that wasn't a very productive business, it shut down and the factory was torn down but the mines began to use a lot of clay especially the Calumet

& Hecla for plugging holes down in the mines when they blasted so they used to bring barges here, we had a dock here and we used to keep a few horses here and single, two-wheel wagons, we used to haul clay from back in the pits and put it on the barge and men used to stay, we used to have barns and a house here where the men would stay during the summer months and we used, oh, I don't recall just how many hundred tons of clay we used to deliver to the barges for the C&H for them to take it away with their tugs so we've had a variety of businesses that we have been in in our days.

Art: A very diversified operation!

Walt: Diversified is right!

(end of tape)
