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

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SUOMI COLLEGE, HANCOCK
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Folklore in Upper Michigan

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Isaac Karjala

INTERVIEWER: Arbutus Bleise

SUBJECT: Experiences in Dover and Hubbell Locations

DATED: November 19, 1973

B: I'm Arbutus Bleise. I live in Hubbell and I'd like to interview Mrs. Karjala. She also lives in Hubbell. How long have you lived in Hubbell, Mrs. Karjala?

K: Fifty years.

B: Mrs. Karjala I know that over the years many changes have taken place. I'd like to start with your early childhood and go on from there. Where were you born?

K: I was born on the farm up there.

B: Where's up there?

K: Golf C road

B: Can't I see that at your family?

K: Well, there were two girls and three boys on the farm. One of my sisters was married and was gone.

B: What did your dad do for a living?

K: Just farm. He used to work in the mines for years before; 17 years.

B: My goodness that was a long time. How did he travel to get to work to the mine.

K: Well he was living closer at that time.

B: I see, that was before he lived on the farm. Where did you go to school?

K: Dover.

B: And that is located in Dover-Oneco Location. What kind of school was it?

K: one room school

B: How many students were there in the school?

K: Oh! there was altogether with the grades about sixty.

B: How many teachers

K: Only one.

B: One teacher for all those students. From what kind of families did the children come from? Were they Finnish or?

K: Mostly Finnish, but there were other nationalities too.

B: Were the school children mostly from farm families?

K: Mostly farm families.

B: Will you tell me how students dressed those days when they went to school?

K: They were pretty well dressed just about what the style was

B: I see. How did they get to school those days?

K: Some walked, others came on skis. There was no busses then or anything like that.

B: Did students have to travel very far to get to school?

K: Over a mile, some of them.

B: How was the school house heated?

K: With a pot belly stove

B: What did they burn in that pot belly stove?

K: They had wood and coal

B: How was that provided? Did the school go out and buy it?

K: They must have bought it. They'd bring it in the coal bin every fall.

B: Did any of the students have to keep the pot belly going during the day or did they have a regular janitor?

K: No, the janitor never came. Whoever got there first put a few blocks or chunks of coal in.

B: What kind of subjects did you take? Do you remember taking during those early years of schooling?

K: It was the general, from first to eighth.

B: How long was the school day generally? What time did school start?

K: At nine, and we got out at four , I guess

B: So it was pretty much like we have now. Were there very many in a class?

K: I don't remember about that because there were all them children in one school, you knew, well

B: So it's hard to remember. How many grades did they take care of in the one school?

K: Up to seventh grade

B: There were seven grades. Was there a kindergarten then?

K: No.

B: They didn't have a kindergarten. In general what was the highest grade that students generally went? Did they go on to finish that seventh grade or eighth grade or what was generally the policy?

K: Well, the way I get left from that. The teacher roomed at the Harju's and she taught the girls and it was too far for me to go there. She taught the eighth grade at the house. I wasn't included in that.

B: You were telling me in some cases where you skipped a grade or two even.

B: Was that the reason, or were your grades so high or what was the reason?

K: Convenience, I guess. I suppose maybe I could make the jump.

B: Well , looking at those report cards, I could see why you could make the jump with such excellent report cards even after having skipped two grades.

I've wondered about the children those days. What did they do for entertainment, those young school children?

K: You mean around the school?

B: Yes, around the school and even at home, what did they do to take up the time?

K: There was work to do, but they used to play ball and have different kind of running games

B: They did have chores.

K: Oh! yes.

B: These days children don't know what chores are. Did teachers and parents have any discipline problems those days?

K: I guess it ran pretty much like it runs now but not in such a big

B: Were there any high schools in this area?

K: There was only in Lake Linden, Hancock, Houghton and Calumet.

B: Were there any colleges?

Not very close.

B: What did teenagers and young people do for entertainment? How did they get together or just what did they do when they did get together?

K: Well we used to walk around a lot

B: You'd walk from one home to another. I know I heard of students skiing together.

K: Yes, we'd ski and skate a lot.

B: Oh! you had your ice rinks. Did you have to go very far to get to ice rink?

K: Some of them two miles even.

B: Then there was a chance of hot chocolate or something at someones house after a nice long ski, I understand. What would you say was the average age for getting married in those days? Did they get married as young as they do now?

K: Well, I suppose some did. But I think it's over twenty anyway.

B: Were there very many divorces?

K: I never heard of them.

B: Oh! they just weren't thought of. Did parents ever pick out mates.

K: Not that I know of.

B: They didn't do it like in the olden days. Can you tell me what the majority of the people did for a living?

K: Well in the country it was mostly farming, but if they went in the town, of course, than they worked in the mine.

B: When you say farming, now what kind of farming did they do?

K: Well general farming.

B: Did some people have large dairy herds or was it just

- K: Well they didn't have too big farms here. They had in other places probably, but they had milk cows and used to sell cream and it used to go on the train.
- B: I suppose they made butter.
- K: Yes, they made butter.
- B: Did they plant huge gardens these days, or grain fields or wheat fields or?
- K: I don't know if I should tell you. My dad was the first one that planted grain over there.
- B: Really! What kind of grain did he plant, oats?
- K: No, it was barley.
- B: Was it a success then?
- K: Yes, then after that they started wheat and everybody started planting.
- B: That was interesting. Of course, there were no tractors so what did they
- K: Horses of course, a team of horses.
- B: Did they try any other grain?
- K: Yes, they planted rye and others too.
- B: Later on, I know, potatoes get to be well known around here because so many farmers started planting potatoes. Did they plant a lot way back then?
- K: Well, they had pretty fair amount but they didn't plant them in such big amounts as now, but I think they took better care of their potatoes and you didn't get green potatoes like you do now?
- B: I see. And of course they didn't use the commercial fertilizer like they do now. I know that street cars traveled here those years. Can you tell me where some of the street car lines were located?
- K: Yes, One started from eighth street and came all through the town of Calumet and then down to Lake Linden and came up to Hubbell. That's where they had the end of the line. The other one went from Mohawk to Houghton, I guess, it was.
- B: What did it cost for you to ride the street car, say from Calumet to Hubbell? Do you have any idea?
- K: I don't remember but it must have been about fifteen or twenty cents.

- B: Would it take very long for the street car to travel that distance?
- K: No, maybe about a half an hour.
- B: Did people depend a lot on the street car to get back and forth to work?
- K: Some did.
- B: Others used it as a way of getting some shopping done I suppose.
- K: See, there was no cars them days
- B: I wanted to ask you whether you can remember the first cars that appeared and when they came about in this area.
- K: Well it was in 1916, around there I know, that was when we got our first car.
- B: Was that your fathers?
- K: Yes
- B: Did he drive it himself
- K: No, the boy drove it.
- B: Were the roads, those that were driven over with horse carriages o.k. for the cars to travel on?
- K: Oh! yes, the roads came after the cars.
- B: So they built the new roads then.
- K: But you see the cars were built higher then
- B: So they could go over rougher roads and travel them. You were telling me that some of the roads weren't in the best of shape. You were telling me about some fellow having so much trouble.
- K: Well you see, the roads weren't as good but the tires weren't either. The tires were very poor. One fellow had seven punctures when he went to Lac La Belle.
- B: Oh! my! seven! Would he have to stop and fix it each time?
- Yes. They fixed them themselves.
- B: I see, so they'd just get out and fix it. Do you remember anything else particular about those first cars?
- K: Well, what I didn't like about them was, you had to drive so fast in order to get decent light and then it was always that cranking.

B: I see, you had to crank it to get it started. Would you say they were pretty comfortable to ride?

K: Well we thought so, but they had curtains on. They weren't nothing like the sedans which came later with the glass.

B: The original ones just had curtains

K: Yes, they only had the curtains on, you know.

B: With no glass windows

Yes.

B: Well then they were just a summer car

K: Well they were but later on when they started driving more and still the roads weren't made for the cars, but by and by one fellow told me he thought his car was broke. It was in the snow bank. The kids came along from high school and said no do that, and do this and go that way and you'll get out and he said he got out and he had ordered a wrecker because he thought it was broken.

B: OH! so it wasn't broken after all; it was just that he didn't understand how to drive it.

K: No, he didn't know.

B: I was going to ask you about establishments in Hubbell. Can you remember what kind of stores there were or what was in Hubbell at that time?

K: Well there was a hardware store, called McDonalds, and a livery stable, I can't remember the name now, oh! Slattery's

B: I've been given the impression that there were quiet a few business houses in Hubbell and of course there is nothing much there now so it is hard for me to imagine that there would be all these.

K: Of course, there was stores, you know grocery stores. Of course, there was an Opal store.

B: What did Opal sell?

K: Clothes.

B: So there was a clothing store

K: Yes, there was no way of going always to the next town.

B: What about Calumet? Is there anything in particular that you remember about some of the establishments that were there than that we don't have now?

- K: Well, they had a theater in Laurium that isn't there now and hasn't been there for years. And they had one on Fifth Street in Calumet.
- B: I suppose they had livery stables up in
- K: Yes, they had them all over; they had them in quiet a few places, and we used to go to the cemetery in hacks.
- B: What were hacks?
- K: Well it was those hacks that the horses pulled.
- B: I see, so that was the way you got out there, that was to the Lakeview Cemetery?
- K: Yes, they used to bury all winter, you know, right in the ground. It isn't too long they changed it.
- B: I wondered too about doctors those days. Were there very many
- K: Well there was a few. I don't quite remember, when your young you don't always need the doctor. Everybody didn't run to the doctor them days like they do now.
- B: They took care of their own accidents at home, I suppose.
- K: Yes.
- B: Do you remember any of the doctors names that were.
- K: There was Dr. Labba.
- B: In Calumet
- K: Yes, and Koivupala.
- B: What about hospitals; were there any hospitals around
- K: There was one in Lake Linden; there was one in Laurium, and Calumet and Hecla Hospital in Calumet.
- B: So you had three in this area.
- K: And there was in Hancock
- B: Do you remember if a doctor had to go to school as many years as they do now.
- K: Oh! yes, I think it's about the same.
- B: I know teachers didn't spend as much time as they do now
- K: Oh! no.

- B: You had a friend that went to school to be teacher. How much time did she spend?
- K: Before 1925 when you went to school and get through high school and went six weeks to Northern, well you could teach. But after 1925 that was out.
- B: Then you had to go on for.....
- K: Four years
- B: But that was after 1925.
Then I've wondered what kind of sports did they have around here at that time?
- K: Well, they had skating and hockey in the winter and skiing.
- B: I know I heard quiet a bit about cross country skiing so they must have had a real big doing over it.

And the boys would build their own jumps.
- B: Skii jumps?
- K: Yes and in the summer, there was baseball
- B: Did they just play among themselves or with other teams?
- K: They played with other teams but they didn't go too far because it wasn't so easy then.
- B: I wondered about hobbies for women, what did women do?
- K: Well they took care of their house and most of them sewed their own clothes and the childrens clothes.
- B: Did you or your mom have to wash clothes on an old wash board?
- K: Oh! yes, we washed on the board. Then we got a funny kind of washer. You had to go back and ferth en that handle.
- B: I see, it didn't hav a motor on it.
- K: Oh! no
- B: It was hand operated. Can you remember the first motor operated washer?
- K: I can't remember what year, but then it was gasoline.
- B: It was gasoline operated. That must have been quiet an improvement over the hand washing on a board or your first one that you worked the handle back and forth.
In these days I know women were so creative, what other things did women do for hobbies like or maybe in some cases it was a necessity too?

K: Well, they did a lot of knitting, some crocheting, besides sewing.

B: They knitted for their families.

K:

B: I wanted to ask about all of the churches there very many churches?

Yes, there were for a time there about 4,000 churches in the town.

B: Different congregations

K: Yes, and different nationalities, Italians had a church, French had a church, and the Finns had churches.

B: So each nationality had a church?

K: Yes, there was enough of them then at that time.

B: Did most of the families go to church?

K: Yes, they went with horse to church.

B: Did they have such a thing as Sunday School for children those days?

K: Oh! yes.

B: Did children attend pretty regularly?

K: Most of the time I guess.

B: I suppose transportation was a real problem

(we are looking at an old obituary card)

K: See this is Malisku- she died in March.

B: You were telling me about this epidemic that occurred, what year was that?

K: It's 1906.

B: What was the epidemic you said that hit the school so badly?

K: Well it was all over. It was Diphtheria and scarlet fever. They generally go hand and hand and almost every house lost a child. Some lost two.

B: My, that was a great loss.

K: It sure was.

B: That was I suppose before vaccinations, or did they have any vaccinations?

K: I don't think they had for that. I never heard.

B: Were school closed down during that time of the epidemic?

K: Schools were closed where I was for two months and two weeks.

B: What time of the year was that epidemic?

K: In the winter.

B: Winter months.

K: It was toward spring when we went to school again.

B: Did this epidemic seem to hit the whole county or was it just on the North end or....

K: I think it was all over the Upper part anyway.

B: I suppose some had the illness but in a milder case that they didn't die with it like some of the others did that weren't able to fight it.

K: Well I suppose that was the case because they weren't all meant to go.

B: There was a thing I was going to ask you about neighbors. Were neighbors close to one another, in I mean that they did things together and were concerned about the next one. Now days you don't even know your next door neighbors some times. What was the relationship between neighbors those years.?

K: Some never liked to get close, but there were some that were real good, They were always concerned and when they know you needed help they were always there. We had a neighbor, that even if he didn't have it himself he'd come and help with the hay, to get it in if it looked like rain.

B: That was a big help to have someone give a helping hand.

K: He was good.

B: Do you think you liked it better that way than today when no one seems to care what goes on next door?

K: Oh! I liked that way better that people see each other once in awhile anyway.

B: Sure and they could give one another a helping hand and sometimes when they needed it there was someone ready to help them. I wondered if times and things changed very much from the time you went to school to the time when you were married and sent your own youngsters to school.

K: Well they weren't changed too much. Not as much as they are now.

They generally had to listen to the teachers, what the teachers gave them and told them.

B: When your youngsters went to school was it still a one room school house or had it changed at all?

K: No, well some had the one room yet but not in our area. We were in a better populated section but our children used to go on the train to Dollar Bay for awhile.

B: They traveled by train!

K: Yes, Before the busses came in

B: Did you live in Hubbell then?

K: Yes, we lived in Tamarack Mills location

B: You lived in Tamarack Mills and they traveled by train to go to Dollar Bay.

Was the school located anywhere near where the high school is located now or....

K: It's in the same place

B: Oh! I see, and they had the early grades in Dollar Bay at that time.

K: No, they had them here at Tamarack Mills. They had two schools here but they used

B: I see, they had the early grades here and also in Dollar Bay?

K: Well, I think they started in Dollar Bay from the eighth grade on.

B: Was the train fare paid for by the school or did you yourselves

K: Well, it was the same way as the busses now.

B: It was furnished. Did Dollar Bay have twelve grades there?

K: Yes, from eight to twelve.

B: Was the school system at all like it is now where the students move from one class to another or did say one teacher take care of all the ninth graders? Do you remember?

K: I think that each teacher had their grade

B: The entire grade.

K: Yes.

B: With the children that went to school when your youngsters did, were there children from higher class income going to these classes too?

- K: Well, I supposed there were some. I didn't know too much about them.
- B: So even if there were, from their dress you couldn't really tell then whether they were from higher income or not.
- K: No, they were all pretty well dressed.
- B: I wondered if from these higher income if any one would have made any comments as to whether the students were more learned and because they had more books or records or something like that around the home where the people from lower income had to improvise and make up their own games and things like that. Do you have any ideas on that? I'm thinking of Head Start today, especially in some of the city areas where the youngsters have so few luxuries in comparison to those that are from families of higher class, that you can know youngsters that are at a disadvantage. I'm really glad for Head Start, that they do have a chance to learn in some areas where they haven't been able to pick up.
- K: Well, I don't know too much about them, It seems to me that I didn't hear, there was not too much friction about that.
- B: I see, I know those days families were close and parents did things with their youngsters that even if you were from a lower income a lots of times you were at an advantage than the higher income now ad days, because families were close and did things together. I understand that years back they really used these waters (Torch Lake) for navigation. It was nothing to see the boats come in here. What did the boats come in here for?
- K: Well, they used to be the freighters, the coal boats, They'd come in and bring in coal to the dock for the C&H mines and mills.
- B: There were even maybe way back, I understand that my grandmother came on one of the boats from Finland and that it docked right in Lake Linden. They must have even had passenger boats for awhile. Can you tell us anything about those?
- K: Well, I wouldn't know too much about them, but they used to be boats that used to come and get the copper from the smelts.
- B: Would any of these boats come in to bring food-- supplies like that do you know?
- K: Well they wouldn't bring them here,, I don't think unless they stopped in Houghton because the whole houses were down there.
- B: Oh! the wholesale houses were in the Houghton area. How often would you say you'd see boats come in here with coal?
- K: Oh! the later part of the summer there would be quiet a few.
- B: Is that the only way they got coal in here?
- K: That's the only way they got it here at that time, and they used to bring it with the train, the freight cars to Calumet and to the mines.

- B: Oh! you mean from the dock here.
Did people use coal for fuel very much then
- K: Yes, they used coal. It was the soft coal and you could buy it cheaper from the company. But the company didn't like that exactly because they said they're not in the coal dealing business. But they were good about it. They'd give to their employees, or sold it.
- B: So they gave the employees a chance to buy it.
- K: Yes.
- B: They were good to their employees weren't they?
- K: They were.
- B: For the instance the homes.
- K: Well like here we used to have an ice rink. Mr. Burgan, he was good. He had it all fixed up and then he had a man come at 3 o'clock and supervise that everybody was doing what was right and this man would stay on until 11 o'clock because his shift was over. Sometimes the boys would help him to flood the rink and everybody went skating and had a good time. Some hadn't skated for ten years, others fifteen and twenty years.
- B: That was real nice of the company to furnish the labor for that.
- K: He never got the credit for that and I'm so sorry for that.
- B: Well what about th company homes They built the homes too didn't they?
- K: The company built homes, they built schools, they built the hospital and these were all company built here.
- B: Did the people have to pay very much rent, in comparison to rent otherwise, do you know?
- K: Well, most of them on this hill were paying \$5. We paid \$6.
- B: That was \$6.00 a month'
- K: And then the only other expense we had was in the spring. We used to pay the land lease and it was \$17 and in that the water was included.
- B: That aid for all the water for the year
- K: Yes.
- B: Did you get your electricity through the company too or was the..
- K: No, no, tha was through a power company.

B: So you got all your lease plus your water for \$17.00.

K: But the rent was different. It was \$6.00 a month. That was taken off from the pay check.

B: Then to make any improvements did the company make the improvements on the home?

K: Oh! yes they did a lot of things. If you had the heart to ask the more they did.

B: They furnished ~~say~~ the paint for the home

K: They used to do it.

B: Oh! they had their men do it?

K: Oh! yes, but then gradually they changed, of course, the men demanded more. Well of course, they had to take some of that away and they started giving the paint then.

B: So that one would do it himself.

K: Yes.

B: Mrs. Karjala, it's been my pleasure to interview you. I sure enjoyed learning some of these interesting facts that I never knew. I would know that your such an active person and I wonder if you'd like to tell us your age.

K: Well, I was 80 years old last June

B: What do you account for your ripe old age? Hard work, I know, is one of the things you've done.

K: Work and never quit; feel like you always like to go on.

B: I know you've kept yourself so healthy and well, one of those things I know you can count for is your walking all the time, with your good exercise by being on foot so. You tell me even on Sunday you walked. About how far was that?

K: Well, it's a little over a mile to church.

B: You walked there and came back. Then you told me that you spent the other day walking up the hill (into farming country) another mile and a half or so.
I think that's wonderful. It really has been a joy to have this interview with you.
I want to thank you very much.

K: You're welcome