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

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Michael Kelly
August 1, 1972

Paul Jalkanen

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Interview with MICHAEL KELLY
by Paul Jalkanen August 1, 1972

Paul: Why don't we start talking by telling me where your father came from and what work he did in this country.

Mike: Well, he come from Canada, he grew up as a young man down there, up in St. Alphonse Quebec.

As a lumberer?

Farming community, there was about 60 Irish families that come up and settled in there; that was a French--well, the French settled in there first, then the Irish come in there I guess the time when they had the potato famine in Ireland, and some come in there, and they settled and homesteaded up there. As far as I know. I've seen the place where he come from. I was in Canada 3 times on a trip. And it was a large family, he had another brother what come up here, but he's dead, and my dad is dead now and in fact all them ones that come here at that time as far as I know, relatives, they're gone, they come from Canada.

Why did they come here? Did he ever tell you why he came to this area?

Well, there was nothing back there them days,

Paul: 1880's, 1890's?

1896. Well, he was born 1875 and it was way out in the country there you know there was maybe 60-70 miles from Montreal and they went in there and homesteaded where the timber was so far as I can see and mostly all French in that part of the country, the soil is pretty near like around here and then when you get down by the river there, it's flat there. And there was about 60 Irish families I think come in there and my dad could speak French just like French.

Ya, lot of 'em learned.

I seen up there where they come from, everything, you know they just grew up there and when they got old enough, they got out of there, there was no work up there to keep 'em there, they're out to see if they could better themself, the only way I could figure.

Paul: And he came here, and when were you born then?

Mike: I was born September, 1902. 14th of September

Paul: Have a lot of brothers and sisters?

Mike: I got 2 brothers. One in Royal Oak and John is here, he's retired. And 5 sisters.

Paul: Oh, a large family.

Mike: Ya, we all live in these parts

Paul: And your father had to work pretty hard to raise all of you then.

Mike: Oh, ya, well, I got out and worked then, too, well, like every other one in them days, we all worked hard and they used to plan a garden, keep chickens where they could, and lot of these Finnish people used to keep cows and they'd sell the milk for 5¢ a quart, you see the milk didn't have to be pastuerized them days, and some people had a horse, and I can remember different ways, people lived with what they had them days and they

didn't get all this help that they're getting today

When did you move from Hancock, you were born in Hancock

Mike: We moved from Hancock, 1st of February 1912, out Superior Mine, my dad was working there. Them days when you got a job, where you worked, you moved there, because you didn't have cars to take you back and forth.

Paul: And you were still going to school

Mike: Ya, I was still going to school. I was going to school in Superior, there was a grade school out there and there was a grade school here in Dodgeville.

Paul: What was your mother like?

Mike: She was--she put up with everything, she baked her own bread and all, she worked in the garden, we had a garden, washed clothes, she was our homemaker.

Was she tough on you?

No, hell no

Paul: Was your dad tough on you? Not too bad? Not real strict?

Mike: No I never got in no trouble, when I was a kid, out Superior they had a livery stable there and I didn't live very far and I used to do anything where I could make a quarter or a dime or 15¢, drive somebody to town with that horse and back.

Paul: What did you do with the money then after you made a little?

Well, didn't make that much, if you got a quarter them days you were lucky.

Go to the store?

Ya, go to the store and buy something, but then in the summer months, Bruno had a farm out there--they used to have a truck farm out there, and we used to go down there when school was out and we'd get a job there, 50¢ a day for 9 hours and we'd be on our hands and knees weeding in between carrot rows and beet rows and cultivating cabbage and then when haying time come, we'd get a dollar a day.

Paul: For haying you'd get more. How old were you, 13-14 years old?

Mike: 14, or 15. We used to make money for school, get new suit of clothes and start school again. I went up to the 8th grade, though.

Paul: That's what a lot of 'em did, about 8 grades.

Mike: Ya, well, you'd do anything them days, you had something to do all the time, you had chop wood, or empty out ashes, it ain't like the kids today, they ain't got nothing to do much, everybody got a electric stove or gas stove, you know them days it was different, you pick up wood if you could.

What were the schools like, you went to, the school you went to 8 grades? Remember any teachers?

Mike: Oh, yes, there was Miss Vogan was one, Miss Fern was another, and then one of the principals I remember, Langdon Ford, and another principal, Rueben Ryding, in my day there.

Tough going to school?

Then there was Miss Coughlin, Miss Robert from Hancock, oh, the kids were tough, I was rascal, too, in school, you got tanned, they didn't baby, they give it to you! They weren't afraid to hit you. Dam right! That Ford there, he'd take 'em in the office. And give 'em a good one.

What'd they do, use a paddle on 'em or something?

Strap. One time there, I remember, I knew I was going to have a--get it in school, and I put 4 pair of pants on, I had it coming to me, and there was another lad there by the name of James Cindy, and he didn't put 'em on, and this teacher, Miss Martis was her name, she knew where to get you, too, she'd get you between the legs here, she didn't hurt me, I was prepared for that, that whipping I was going to get, but she didn't hurt me, but then the next day, he was black and blue between the legs, well, his mother went up to school and made a complaint about it, but them days they weren't afraid to paddle you if you didn't do right in school. Oh no, not like today, you can't hit 'em, in school, but I think sometimes a paddling was all right.

Ya, depends on how much. Not beat em up.

Mike: I don't mean to mark 'em up or cut 'em up or that but you had a little fear or sometimes when we went Superior school and some kids weren't behaving just right when John Doelle was Superintendent, and when the teacher complained, he take 'em out of the room and then he'd paddle 'em with a book. But now I guess they can't touch 'em.

How did the students get along, the Finnish students that you went with and the other ones?

Mike: They seemed to get along pretty good. As far as I know

It was the parents that did the fighting?

Mike: Well, I don't know if there was too much fighting, you know some of them--when I went Superior School there was some of them Finnish girls that went there, my age, they were good students in school and their parents didn't speak no English and that, they were good students.

Paul: Did you learn English in school then or did you learn it

I did learn one time to talk Finn but I forgot it, I was the least amongst them

You must have known French when you were younger.

Mike: Oh a few words, little, not too much

Paul: So when your dad came here you didn't use French

Mike: My dad could speak French, though

Ya, but he didn't use it very much when he came here then

Mike: No, although there was quite a few French around them days, Quincy up there

Lake Linden had 'em

Mike: Ya, there was a few French around them days but I mean to say, them days when they used to transport the kids, I think up to the 8th grade out here in Superior, then they'd have

a school bus and it'd be drawn with horses not like these modern buses today. And they'd go to high school down there, see, but they just pick them up on the way, not way out like they do now. No they used to transport them, well, some would quit maybe in the 9th grade or 10th grade or something like that and some would go on to graduate.

Paul: Most people had to get out and work.

Mike: Most of 'em would go out and look for a job.

Paul: You were working out when you were still in grammar school?

Mike: I know a man over here who when I was at Isle Royale, they were drill boys when they were 12 years underground.

Paul: Started pretty young!

Mike: I used to hear 'em talk. When they were drill boys, then they learned mining

Paul: um hmm, and they'd go down and do it themselves

Mike: Then they'd go on a machine afterwards. Miner always got paid a little more in wages than the trammer or timberman.

Paul: What, I think you said you had your first job in 1917, 1918 or the one before that-- You said you were farming, you did some farm work.

Mike: That's when we used to work in the summer months

Paul: And then you got the job at Isle Royale

Mike: In 1918

Paul: And you worked there until it closed up then?

Mike: Well, I was at Isle Royale and I worked up till 1921

Paul: What did you do at this time? 1918-1921?

Mike: Well, I working over here at the mine

Paul: What kind of work did you do at the mine, then?

Mike: Well, I was working at the rockhouse and running the puffer, then I was working on the chute where they dump them skips in.

Paul: How much money did you get paid for that first job?

Mike: Oh, it was little over \$3 a day, I guess.

Paul: That wasn't too bad, a booming time!

Mike: But I was getting a man's wages but I was doing a man's work. But I worked a year and 8 months that way and then finally asked Mr. Voss, I should get a man's wages, I said I'm doing everything a man's doing around here, climb the pulley stand and load them rock cars when they come in with the train, there was no difference in the work and then I asked for a raise, and well, he says, I'm working year and 8 months here now, I said I should have a raise, I'm not 18 years old that I should

have a raise, he said, well, I'll see what I can do. Then I got man's wages after that when I was 18. But the first years I wasn't covered with no compensation or anything, working on my own.

Paul: They didn't care if you got killed or anything.

Well, they cared but the company wasn't obligated to pay any compensation.

Why would they hire you then, I can't understand why they hired people

Well, that was a risk, we wanted to go to work, they needed help and with the changeover of labor all the time, there were big families, oldest ones went out to work.

Support the parents and that while you're still alive.

Them days around here you could go get a job as a young fellow, now the young people grow up around here there's no work for them much.

Your dad was still alive at this time at this time?

Mike: Oh, ya, my dad lived to be 78 years old. My mother lived ^{to} be 74. But then I worked there until 1921, then it was shut down May 1st, 1921 and it started up May 1st, 1922.

Paul: Down for a year, just?

Mike: Ya, it was down for a year then it was in the price of copper

Paul: That's right, there was too much copper around

Mike: Well, the copper market was soft, see the price, so it started up in 1922, May the 1st and then I worked until about September 1925 and then I went to Detroit. Then I was in Detroit until June 1927 I think. I got a job at the Ford Motor Company. And then I got \$5 a day for the first 2 months and then after 2 months, I got \$6 and then after 8 months I think I got 80¢ raise, brought me up to \$6.80 and you had to be on production, see I was working on a screw machine and then when I left there in 1926 Ford said \$40 was enough for a person to work a week because the Model-T wasn't selling any more then, it was slipping then so I come up here in December and when I went back I worked 3 days a week for 6 months until they finished. I worked there until they finished making the Model-T in May 1927 then I took a 90-day leave of absence and I wrote in for 30, I never went back no more and I got a job over at the mine and I stayed here then

At Isle Royale?

Mike: Ya, till the mine shut down the 1st of May 1932.

Paul: What kind of job did you do then when you came back? 1922-23

Mike: from '25 up to when I come back in '27 I was working in the rockhouse over there, crushing rock;

Paul: Did you ever go underground?

Mike: No, I didn't work underground but I went down there though. So when the depression movement, I didn't work for pretty near 3 years. Then I went to Detroit again in 1935 and got a job down there and I was till '37 and then there was a slump, I come back up

here then I didn't do nothing all winter, then this Isle Royale was starting up again

Paul: So you got back in again?

Mike: Well, they were looking for a hoist engineer, well, I never fired no boilers and my brother-in-law says to me, Mike, why don't you ask Jim Richards for the job so I went ask him for the job and I told him I didn't have no firing experience so I says that's the hell of it, and then finally a few days after, he says I'm going to try you out. So I got the job of hoist engineer and I was OK. I had a good record all the way through.

Paul: you worked there then until 1949.

Mike: I worked there on the hoist until from April 12, 1938 until December 9, 1948. Hoisted No. 4 over there from September till December 1, 1948. And then after that I went back to No. 5, they were trying to pull the rails out, well, well, I started firing, and they were taking the rails out of the shaft and different supplies, so then I pulled the last fires out of No. 5 over here. So after that I went down on No. 4 again and I was firing there, while they were taking up the rails over there and the last days of No. 4 I worked over there, was March 1st, 1949. I blew the last whistle in Isle Royale. I don't know if it's anything to brag about but I can say that much!

Paul: So it closed up and that was it?

I blew

Mike: That was the end of it! ~~That was~~ the last whistle in No. 4. March 1st, 1949. And there was an old fireman over here, John Hill, I said, John you fired Isle Royale all your life, but I blew the last whistle. I teased him, so that was the end of it, as far as my department was concerned.

Paul: What can you tell me about working in the mine, let's say back in the '20's, go backwards a little bit. You worked there on and off, because you went to Detroit and worked for Ford and then you came back and

Mike: You mean how the work was here? That was production. It was hard work! In them rockhouses

Paul: What did you do when you weren't working? You were working 12-hour shifts yet?

Mike: No, no. 8 hours. But you know back in 1940 when the mine first started up here they used to go underground, the first man car would go down about 20 minutes to 7 in the morning, and they'd probably have all the men down about 7:30, sometime there used to be 2 cages of men and then they'd take the drills down in a separate cage but when this labor law come into effect, in 1940 or so, that had to be collar to collar, the first man car to go down at 7 o'clock in the mornings and the first car coming up at night would have to be down the bottom level at quarter after 3 coming up, 8 hours collar to collar. Before that they used to sometime go down 20 to 7 but the labor law, 8 hours collar to collar, 7 o'clock and the mancar had to be down there quarter after 3 coming up.

Paul: To get up by 3:30.

Mike: But I'd have 'em up before then. Maybe about 20 after, it all depends how quick they got on, that was electric bell system there, so there was a lot of responsibility, you had to think what you're doing all the time, if you made a little mistake and went past the level that ain't nothing, but long as you didn't go over the mark, so there used to go about 28 men in a mancar when they'd go down, then on Sunday's they used to go over the rolls, change rollers and tighten up fishplates on the track and sometimes they had to put in timbers and grease

rollers

Paul: What other kind of working conditions, working conditions weren't the greatest at that time, in the 1920's.

Mike: You didn't get any coffee breaks them days unless you took your own, ^{it} ~~their~~ was not in the books,

Paul: Sat down in the mine or above and had a little coffee

Mike: You helped yourself but there was not set time that we're going to stop, we never stopped that hoist over there for coffee break, oh, no, course we weren't hoisting all the time, but that ~~was~~'t in the books them days, oh hell, as far as a coffee break, we didn't know what that was years ago, just work.

Paul: When did Isle Royale go on strike? Did they only have that one strike in 1913?

Mike: Well, the whole Copper Country was off, Copper Country strike, that was the Western Federation of Labor that time;

Paul: Did they march up here too in Dodgeville area?

Mike: Oh, hell there was a National Guard camp over here right across from the Dodgeville location, in that field, them days. Ya, they were camped there maybe 9 months, I was a kid about 11 years old then and I used to walk from Superior up to Dodgeville and get the Evening Journal down here, and then the boy from Dodgeville would bring it from Hurontown up to Dodgeville, the Hurontown boy would get it from Houghton, that's the way it used to go them days. And I was living on Superior Street and I used to see lot of that garbage stuff around; one week here that I can remember in 1913, got the paper, and there was cavalry over there, it was like a riot here every god damn night out there and people, those few men working at the mine here and they would be a big scene out there, I was a kid, I'd see that, there'd be cavalry out there and a couple of them national guardsmen would come on mules there like a show there and throw rotten eggs and that. It was rough. Dodgeville front them days there used to be Herlevich's Saloon, Merle's Saloon, Messner's Saloon over where Nozero's Store is, there's 3 saloons that I know of. And then there was a saloon out in Superior,

Paul: The miners did a lot of drinking at night then.

Mike: Well, there was a lot of houses had boarders them days, pretty near every house kept boarders if they could, and boarding house up here and different places,

Paul: Everybody's home had one or two people in it

Mike: Ya, hell this is dead around here right now and they used to import men to work in these mines them days,

Paul: Mm hmm, from New York and other places

Mike: Ya, there used to be--Coty's used to run a boarding house over here for Isle Royale

Paul: What was it like in those boarding houses, what did you do, just pay for room and board to get fed there, too?

Mike: They'd have sleeping quarters for 'em and they had a place for 'em where they used to eat.

Paul: Did the company have a boarding house too? Isle Royale?

Mike: That was Isle Royale, it's over there standing, it's on that side of the road, cross from that red house; that was the company boarding house, that was built in 1917. Some of them houses on location were built in 1917. But there used to have a boarding house down there by No. 2, that's gone, when they built this new one, they shut this one up. During the Copper Country strike they built bunk houses, they imported and brought these men in here and kept these mines going--strike breakers.

Paul: Ya, but there was fighting between them.

Mike: Well, they had Waddel men in here, and Burns men and there was deputy sheriffs and besides this national guard; I know they had a camp over here and they maybe had 'em all over the Copper Country, you see there was no labor laws them days; they fought that strike the companies did.

Paul: And they won!

Mike: Ya, they won.

Paul: Were conditions better after that time?

Mike: It was better. Before that strike there was no compensation.

Paul: Some compensation afterwards?

Mike: Ya, compensation come after that strike. That P. H. O'Brien that used to be Circuit Judge in Detroit, he was pushing for that too, but they got shorter hours than they had; when they went to work in these mines, it was dark to dark, the way I understand.

Paul: Ya, they had 12-hour shifts

Mike: Sure. But they got better afterwards, but still there was no vacation pay or nothing like that or holiday pay.

Paul: How much vacation did you get, a week or something?

Them days when I started out? There was no such thing as vacation. Never heard of it! There was no holiday pay. You worked Saturday, you got straight time. I worked double-headers here on Saturday, you never got no time-and-a-half over 40 hours them days, no, not when I first started out. No. You'd made about \$35 every two weeks, sometimes \$40, we'd have to double, somebody wouldn't come in on a Saturday night, boss asked, want to work a double? You didn't get no time-and-a-half for that. No; that wasn't in the books.

Just regular time, that's it

In fact when I trained in on that Nor^Dberg Hoist over here in 1938, why, I got 3.25 an-hour a day.

Paul: That wasn't that much then.

Mike: Well, it wasn't a matter of making money, it was a matter of you had a job, live, this 3.25 for 8 hours and there was 3 shifts, and you had to work about 7 days a week, I'd make about \$19 a week that time.

Paul: You were making more money than that when you were working at Ford's in 1920's.

Mike: Well, that wasn't too big money down there them days when you figure it out, well, you'd pay \$5 a week for sleeping room, I used to pay 20¢ to have a dress shirt laundered in a laundry and well, you could get board some places if you were alone, \$11 a week. It wasn't too much when you figure it all out. It sounded big but it wasn't too big, course, one thing, what you made, you took home them days. You see, if you worked like when I worked in Ford's there, in 1926, why we were working 5 days a week, until the fall, Model-T was still--well, I was getting 6.80, well you took home 68.00, there was no such a thing as income tax, or union dues, or state income tax, or Blue Cross or Blue Shield or none of that.

Paul: What do you remember about the times when there was not supposed to be any drinking? Prohibition in the '20's?

Mike: I can remember when it went dry, in 1917. I was living out in Superior, I remember that last night, then it was pretty quiet for a couple of years. You didn't see no drunks around much but then after they started making this raisin bumble, they make wine out of raisins, and then afterwards--there was no home brew right away, the home brew started coming around 1924-25 what I can remember, and they used to make dandelion wine, pick the dandelion flowers them days and they'd make wine out of choke cherries, and different Greek wine, the moonshine started come there, why there was moonshine already in 1919 because I drank some white, they didn't have it colored.

Strong.

Mike: Well, strong in a way, sure, because then it used to be what they called a rambletown moonshine, there was lot of it made, certain ones did, but lot of places around here they used to make moonshine.

Paul: What did the law do? What did the sheriff do?

Mike: Them days the law wouldn't bother them unless somebody would file a complaint. Then they'd go and raid them.

Paul: But no one filed too many complaints then?

You know what would happen sometimes, somebody would maybe get pinched or something maybe driving a car, and then they get down to the sheriff's office and they'd put the squeeze on 'em a little bit, find out where they got that liquor, and they'd sign a complaint and then they'd go and raid 'em. Other than that they wouldn't bother them otherwise. As far as I know.

Paul: Did people make good money moonshining?

I don't know, I never known any to have anything easy come-easy go. But different ones sold "hootch", barbershops, shoemaker shops, anything, 25¢ a shot, and then places used to make the home brew, well, that come in in 1925 from then on; they had that home brew pretty good in the end.

It was just as good as the regular stuff, eh?

Oh, that home brew had a wallop.

Paul: Level you out?

The moon you could buy a pint for 50¢

Get pretty drunk?

Mike: Well, some didn't get too drunk altogether; you see them days you go to a dance hall, Otter River or Rainbow Gardens or different places, a guy would have a bottle on him, he'd give the girls a drink, he didn't need a big fat pocketbook. Some guys would peddle around them dance halls. I used to be cop out at Otter River there, me and Ray Hocking, I could tell who was--but they didn't mean nothing to me.

Paul: As long as you didn't get in trouble.

Mike: It was all country dances them days, well, sometimes somebody would get in a fight or something, you had to keep order but what I mean to say is, today the country has changed with these young people a lot today compared to them days; now they go around with their long hair, whiskers and miniskirts and half-naked you might say

(other side of tape)

Mike: -----and not only that when I went to the Isle Royale School, there were some kids who had long hair, we had a janitor who we called John Daley, and he would take the kids down the boiler room and cut their hair up so they'd look respectable. Ya, he cut my hair even there.

Paul: Too long?

Mike: Ya. The kids would go around but now

Paul: Nobody says anything.

Mike: That's the style now.

Paul: That's right. Well, styles do change. Like you were saying earlier, young people don't understand. My age-group doesn't even understand what it was like to work for a dollar a day. It's got to be a dollar an hour anyway.

Mike: Well, I worked for a dollar a day, I drove Bruno's team of horses up on that dollar a day. 1921.

Paul: That was when Isle Royale went out then?

Mike: Course I took a job where I could get it. That was a dollar a day in board and sleep in the road camp and get up 5 o'clock in the morning, feed that team of horses.

Paul: That was working in the wintertime, too?

Mike: No, that was just a temporary job. And then I worked in the woods in the wintertime. I got a job down in--my dad was on the other side of Trout Creek and I got \$18 a month and board in a lumbercamp and sawyers got 40; it wasn't a matter of money that time, you could get a job, now today there's a lot of people won't take a menial job. They all want big money regardless they know anything or not.

Paul: Did a lot of people leave here?

Mike: Well, they left in the '20's

Paul: During that short depression year?

Mike: Lot of them went to Detroit when the auto industry started picking up, that's when a lot of people started going around here; see, Superior Mine shut down out here in 1920 for good. But Detroit was booming and they started going down there, was more money, they figures higher wages and then there's people left here and went to Iron Mountain and down L'anse when Ford Come in down there in 1923, and Ford started building that plant in Iron Mountain in 1921, that's when they started coming in there,

I remember once I went down there,

Paul: Did some like Finns, did they go back to Finland?

Mike: There might be some, I don't know.

Paul: You don't know of any up in this area.

Mike: No, but I remember when they used to come over, in these late years you don't see any come over from Finland. Even with the mine here, but I remember when we lived out Superior, there were ones that would come there. But in 1924 your Calumet & Hecla brought in Germans, imported Germans to work in these mines.

Paul: Up in C&H?

Mike: Over in Isle Royale here. Oh, ya, up in Calu-met, there was a bunch come to Quincy in them days. And Painesdale; they couldn't speak a word of English them fellows, I remember, all young guys. Most of 'em had some kind of a trade, ^{but} They just worked in the mines, some stuck in the mines and some worked until they got their back teeth and then they branched out. They were supposed to pay back the company for bringing 'em over, they were short of labor here. Well, when I started around Isle Royale in 1918 there were 6 shafts working there.

Paul: How many people did they have working then?

Mike: Well, Ralph Kinney was timekeeper at Isle Royale, he told me it was 1300 employees at that time. Day a rock train and a night rock train, then they had a supply train. 1300, that's what he told me. Then Quincy was working them days and Superior was working and Baltic still was going up the range, and sawmill in Chassell was working them days, and Quincy Smelter.

Paul: Did the company make their own lumber? Like Isle Royale make their own timbers?

Mike: No, they used to buy 'em.

Paul: Like from the sawmill.

Mike: No, they didn't have a sawmill

Paul: They'd buy 'em from some other sawmill

Mike: Ya, they used to buy their timber from different ones for what they put down in the mine and lag, maybe from Mike Messner or someone, who used to have logging. No, they didn't have no sawmill. That was Worcester down in Chassell. Oh, yes I seen lot of changes. Well, I've seen change when we lived out Superior, I remember Joe Bruno out in that farm, he had the first truck that I can remember, International It had hard tires, it was a chain-drive, 2 speeds, it was 2 cyclinders. That was the first truck that I can remember. It was always first to get everything. Potter, I think was superintendent of Superior, he had the first Model-T, I think was in 1912 or 13.

Paul: Did these people have money?

Mike: He was pretty big farmer, Bruno was, but not then, he was starting to take off, he had at one time over 100 cows, now there aint a barn standing over there, there's where we used to work with our kids. Superior out there, they had a couple of boarding houses, that was a boom town, it was small but just like one big family

out there.

What did people do when they weren't working? Work an 8-hour shift, go home or go out and drink?

Well, some of 'em would go in the bar and drink and some would play boccia ball when I can remember, out Superior, out Superior, go run around the field, and some played cards, and they had different diversions there, going in the bar was one thing.

Was there that much fighting in the bars, I've always heard stories that there were a lot of fights between Croatians and the Finns.

Mike: No, there was fights in these bars, one time in Dodgeville they used to call it Dodgeville front. And Finns and the Croatians would get into a brawl over there and they'd have to call the sheriff over and sometime out in Superior, there was lot of that in a way, some would start a fight and it'd be a drunken brawl; back in World War I Dodgeville used to have quite a few of these bars here and now and then they'd get together, drinking, they'd say the Dodgeville front is active again. It was rough, try and pick a fight, you had many kinds of element here them days, imported men, you had Armenians, Bulgarians, and God knows what they were, they were all young men, stay in a boarding house and every once in a while that happened. That seemed to be the style in the bars I guess, them days, some would get half swacked up but there ain't too much of that now. Sometime you get someone that gets sore at you or something ain't going right home and then they take it out when they meet somebody outside.

What do you remember about old home remedies? or medicine? Did your mother have some when you were sick? You always had a company doctor.

Mike: They had a company doctor, but we used to gargle our throat with salt water and some say kerosene but then used to have mustard plaster you had a cold in your chest but when the mines worked here, we had a company doctor and we only paid a dollar-and-a-half a month and took care of the family; a single man would pay a dollar, what I can remember from Isle Royale, and a married man would pay a dollar and that would take care of his whole family and you could go to the mine dispensary and you could get cough mixture or dinkle pills or liniment and any one of the family have to have surgery, say appendicitis or hernia operation, they would take care of that but you had pay for your hospital. Because I had an operation in 1932, before the mine shut down, and this side was and well, I belonged to the Eagles that time and Janis, and they had an aid fund here, we used to pay 50¢ a month into the aid fund, if you got sick or something, you'd get so much a week, while you're convalescing, laid up, so I remember I was in St. Luke's Hospital that time, January 28, 1932, I was in there 9 days, and my hospital bill 36.75.

Paul: \$36?

Mike: Ya. 36.75. Nowadays that wouldn't even cover one day.

Paul: No, wouldn't even come close.

Mike: So I didn't have to pay nothing for the doctor, but I gave him a \$10 tip anyway.

Paul: Dr. Janis was the Isle Royale doctor for awhile, wasn't he?

Mike: Dr. Janis was assistant to Dr. Levin. Dr. Janis was working with--Dr. Janis give me the ether the first time I had operation. Dr. Levin was the surgeon, the Jewish doctor. And then afterwards when the mine shut down, in fact Janis hung his shingle up in spring of 1932 up over Joffee's store in Hancock. I remember that well. And then when the Isle Royale started up in 1937 well, Dr. Sloan was the doctor over here. Till she finished up.

Paul: There was always midwives, though, wasn't there?

Mike: Some of these Finnish women were midwives, I know.

Paul: Remember some ladies from up here in Dodgeville?

Mike: Ya, some over there between Baltic, there's midwives, some of them

Paul: Helped the doctor

Mike: Some of 'em brought 'em in without the doctor, they took care of it, sure, there's a lot of children were brought into the world them days without a doctor, in fact, them days they didn't even go in the hospital to have a baby, it was just in the last 40 years or so, since they started that. Hell, every one of us were born home.

Paul: Was there a lady up here, Mrs. Hogback?

Mike: Yes, I remember Mrs. Hogback; and then there used to be a lady, she's dead now, over near between Baltic and Superior, Mrs. Immonen was one of the midwives, I remember that well.

Paul: I 'spose they got a little bit of food or something for helping.

Mike: Well, they'd give so much, I don't know what they give, they had it all planned ahead. And most of the babies them days were born in the house, over 40 years ago. My niece there, I think she was born in a hospital but none of us were born in the hospital. Now it costs about \$500 to bring a baby in the world, but them days if you had a doctor, it was about \$35.

Paul: Dr. Janis said it was about 10-15 bucks sometimes

Mike: Ya, I don't know what they paid the midwives. So now it's different.

Paul: Do you remember the first time you voted for president?

Mike: I don't know, I remember I voted in 1932.

Paul: For Roosevelt that time?

Mike: Ya, but I don't know if I voted or not when I was 21, maybe I did but I just don't recall. I remember Warren Harding, let's see, he was elected president in 1920, 1921 he took office

Paul: ya, that's right and then Coolidge

Mike: Coolidge he took sick in office, and died, and Coolidge took over. Well, then in 1928 when Smith was running against Hoover, 2 chickens in every pot, Smith was presidential timber but he just get elected so I remember Hoover's days alright.

Paul: Wasn't everybody in the mines Republican because of the mine officers?

Mike: Houghton County was pretty much Republican that time of the Copper Country, if you run for office under the Democratic ticket, you never had much of a chance, to elected to office and these companies used to push for the Republican party.

Paul: That's what I thought. I've heard that story

Mike: Sure, they used to push for the Republican party.

Paul: Did they bring the men up from the mines, say, go vote Republican?

Mike: Well, I don't know if they'd bring 'em up for that, they'd take them up, I guess they voted, but that's what they used to drum on, this was Republican part of the country. They always said there's better times than Republicans and I heard a guy one time say these mines wouldn't open up if there was a Democratic administration but they opened up over here in 1937. Of course Isle Royale was shut down for 5 years and they have a lot of ground there yet, course they were only a marginal producer, it wasn't a high grade mine. But Copper County, you know yourself, I remember anyone run on the Democratic ticket, they didn't have a chance in the world. It's the same thing now, I don't know if you got anyone running on the Republican ticket here in Houghton County for sheriff, I don't see anybody's name listed, only Democrats. One time the Irish were the Democrats as far as I know. Charlie McManiman he's a Democrat from way back. He was state senator and then he was president of the village of Houghton. He's pretty broad-minded that fellow. He's more or less a self-made man.

Paul: Ya, I think he only went 8 grades of school.

Mike Ya, he didn't graduate from high school, I know that!

Paul: Did a lot of people change and become Democrats during the 30's when the depression hit?

Mike: Well, in the '30's, there was some who voted for presidential, Roosevelt, but then these county offices, most of them usually get elected Republicans. Burritt was County Clerk, he was Republican, and Francisco was sheriff, he was Republican but he was running on a Republican ticket and most likely he might have been Republican and most

Paul Did the companies run the towns?

Mike Well, I don't know if they run the town

Paul or run the community? Do you really think C&H ran Calumet, and Quincy ran Hancock

Mike: Oh, I guess they used to have a little influence over 'em

Paul Not little bit. At least lots!
I mean when people went to vote, didn't they always have a company official in

Mike Well, I couldn't say that, I don't remember, different ones used to say that, you had to be Republican; them days, people were more easy to convince, I think. They always used to say Republican times were the best times.

Paul: Ya, so they voted that way

Mike: But you know when Hoover went in there, the whole world was under depression and Copper was less than 5¢ a pound, in 1932, and anyone who got a job, you couldn't get a job for even a dollar-a-day for God's sake, for about 2-3 years there.

Paul: That's when you went to Detroit, then.

Mike: Ya, nothing around here then, people would go out and make wood and plant gardens and some kept chickens and pigs, now nobody keeps anything round here now, nobody makes wood;

Paul Not too many gardens even

Mike No! But them days everybody had a garden, a wood pile, and figure up for the winter. Carry 'em over, maybe next year might be better.

Paul: They figure now if they start a garden it's going to freeze up anyway.

Mike: Well, them days they'd get a frost too.

Weather hasn't changed that much. Still the same kind of weather.

People put up with more them days than they do now. They had a way to getting along, there wasn't a dollar sign on everything.

Paul: Did your dad live into the '30's? Was he still alive in the '30's?

Mike: My dad only died in 1953. My mother died in '52.

Paul: So he lived all the way through the depression but never worked, I suppose, either

Mike: No, the last mine he worked in was the Seneca Mine up there in 1930. And then when the Isle Royale started up, he was in his '60's, already retired. He didn't get no pension or any kind, there was no pension them days.

Paul: Well, the union didn't come in here until 1940-42

Mike: Something like that, the union as far as Isle Royale, they didn't have no pension when they finished up.

Paul: Didn't they? In 1949? You didn't get any pension?

Mike: No. Only thing I drew was unemployment. They didn't have no pension plan then.

Paul: Were you part of the union then, when they came in?

Mike: I belonged to the union but they didn't stress the pension so much in the start then it was later years, the pension started coming. They were taking it gradual, same as the auto workers, they didn't have a pension right away when they went in.

Paul: Did Isle Royale fight the union coming in in 1941?

Mike: No, they had the labor laws.

Paul: It was pretty well decided that it would come

Mike: They had a check-off system. Probably signed them up

Paul: Who owned the mine up here?

Mike: Well, it's C&H, when Isle Royale used to work up until 1932, C&H had controlling interest of it; then when it started up in 1937, Copper Range had the controlling interest but when they started up in 1937 they run out of money and they had to call assessment to carry on their operations, repair that shaft over in No. 5 and then they had a year to pump out the water, there was 17 levels of water, they had centrifugal pumps, they'd put in these shafts and then they'd get down, they had a pipe and then go down that way, they de-watered Isle Royale Mine/No. 4 shaft here from the whole mine.

Paul: A lot of time just to pump out.

Mike: Took a year. And then they had to re-condition that No. 5 shaft, that shaft was laced with timber and they called 2-3 assessments. The thing was 50¢ a share assessment. But everyone was glad when the mine started up.

That's right, it was work again, booming a little bit

Mike: Well, I think while she worked in 10 years, the most employees it had was little over 500 there but in the end it was about 250 or so.

Paul: There was only one open then

Well, there was 2 going, well, I guess if it wasn't for the war subsidy they wouldn't have worked that long, they were paid a subsidy.

Paul: Yet the government put a ceiling on the price of copper during the war

Mike: Ya, they put a ceiling and they were getting so much a pound, they had a quota and they tried to stay under that quota so they could get subsidy. Because I seen it over on No. 5 here when I was on the hoist, sometimes they wouldn't only hoist so many skips of rock to hold that quota. Same as in the '50's,
(interruption)

Mike: Like the Copper Country here, there's no industry here, to speak of.

Paul: Think the mines will open up again, never?

Mike: Geez, I don't know, you can never tell; like up in Calumet that's too bad what happened up there.

Ya, it's kind of a mistake or something.

Somebody goofed there! You know, that was a new company that took over there and I think they should have took that offer, first offer like they give 'em, what they do anyway. Because I worked in these mines around here when there was no union or nothing. Maybe hundreds of others. But I don't know, labor had a chip on its' shoulders here the last--'65 on, they got the union, lot of guys take advantage, they want everything, well, you gotta give and take, you can't be a one-way street,

Paul: the unions have become very strong

Mike: Ya, well, sometimes it was strong and sometimes it did a lot of harm too. They did a lot of good but they can do harm too. I worked in Ford's in Highland Park, there was no union there them days. Detroit was no union town, back in 1925-26. I was down there when the union started coming in there in 1937, well, I worked down there for a while, I worked at Woodhall's, the union come in there, UAW, after they passed that labor law. '37 but when I first went down there, there was no union. But's that's when they started organizing when the labor law was passed. You had unions in the west before you had 'em around here.

Paul: That's where the Western Federation came in, in 1913 because they had 'em out there

Mike: Ya. I know a guy that told me he was working out in Bisby, Arizona, and he said he paid \$5-a-month assessment when this strike was going on here in the Copper Country.

To help pay for it?

Ya, he was working in Bisby, Arizona; he's dead now. He paid \$5-a-month assessment, to help the strike along here that time.

Paul: That left a lot of bitter feelings, tho.

Oh, ya, it was for a while, but they didn't--well, some men here like in Superior here I know some that couldn't get a job after the strike, they were blackballed, they were kind of hard strikers, though.

Paul: So the company wouldn't let 'em go back to work.

Mike: Well, they wouldn't give 'em their job back anymore.

Paul: They were agitators, radicals

Mike: Well, some were more radical, then they'd come to Isle Royale here to get a job or go some other place but I can remember

Paul: Did they get blackballed all over the Copper Country then, or could they find

Mike: Ah, some did, but I can remember out Superior, they used to import men over there, and sometime they'd be working there a little while and then they would call them up to Calumet and then they found out they were labor agitator or belonged to IWW or something like that and then they let 'em go. Go up to Calumet, they'd say. I know different ones--when I was a kid, I remember so-and-so.

Paul: What do you remember about the churches in Copper Country, were people pretty strong churchgoers?

Mike: Well, some went to church and some didn't but them days, years ago, you never seen no envelopes them days, you just threw what you had in the basket, but they went to church

Paul: Didn't a lot of social life go on around the churches, that's where people gathered, at least some did.

Oh, there was some but they used to walk to church them days lot of times, I walked over there to Atlantic a good many times, that's 3 miles to walk, you don't see no kids walking today that far

Paul: to go to the Catholic Church in Atlantic

Mike: Ya, walk to South Range

Paul: why not walk down to Houghton, isn't it closer?

Mike: well, we belonged over there, belonged to St. Mary's, and the same way with Superior, we'd go to South Range, walk there. There was no cars, get there and walk. You don't see kids walking today.

Paul: Not 3 miles.

Mike: No. That's 3 miles, and walk back and forth; in the wintertime you walked on a trail, just a path, sure

Paul: Do you remember the Temperance Groups up here? Temperance Societies?

Oh, ya, there's a temperance hall down here in Dodgeville, ya

Didn't a lot of the old Finns start going there?

They weren't all temperance though, no, no; there's some that used to drink, too. Same as the Irish, some kids could drink too, in fact, all nationalities, let's put it that way

Paul: It didn't make any difference. Did the temperance people, did they go to the bars and try to close them up or weren't they very vocal or did they just have meetings?

Mike: I don't think they did that, I never heard of it, no.

Paul: I just thought they might, sometimes you hear a temperance group will go and march or parade in front of the bar and want it closed down.

Mike: I don't remember any of that. Maybe they did but I don't remember

Paul: I know someone was telling me they used to have meetings up here every week.

Mike: Well, down there at the hall, certain groups, you still got that temperance party I guess, in some places all over the country,

Paul: They never meet here anymore do they?

Mike: No, I don't think so, most of 'em are died off.

Paul: They must have been strong because they must have helped push that so you got prohibition

Mike: You know the way it used to be, what I could see years ago, when they had the old time saloons, lot of the saloonkeepers, the guys would spend all their money in the saloon and then there wouldn't be nothing to feed the family. That was a part

Paul: spend a couple dollars and that was it

Mike: ya, that was a part of it, they used to close up at 11 o'clock at night but sometime on Sundays they would be open so, you always had some who would drink more than others and some couldn't handle their drinks, just like today; everybody can't handle a drink, some will go alcoholic; if they got any troubles then they resort to drinking. There's no one yet licked John Barleycorn that I know of. I'm not temperance but I can handle my drinks but I don't go overboard, everybody don't have the same kind of a nervous system; some when they get drinking want to fight, others happy, and some come home they raise hell with the family; it used to be years ago, some of 'em work. You got lot of that today, a lot of cases, I don't know what's going on, but you have 'em all over.

Paul: How did the Finns work for you, were they pretty good workers in the mine when you were hoisting?

Mike: Oh, ya, they were good workers

Paul: Just like everybody else basically

Mike: Oh, ya, they were good workers, they were good miners, good trammers, oh ya, farmers

Paul: Did different nationalities stick together a lot? Finns stick together and Croatians?

Mike: It was something like that, there was Finn towns, like in Houghton one time, you used to have a shantytown in Atlantic over there, a shantytown where there was Irish, but I guess the Finns and the Irish got along pretty well as far as I know of course, way back you hear different things but same as the lumberjacks, them days it used to be who's the best man, who's the strongest man.

Paul: Ya, that was important.

Mike: Ya, that was important!

Paul: Do you remember any good characters or stories that your dad told you or that you can remember?

Mike: He never told me no stories much

Paul: I thought you had, is there any special characters that you remember from up here?

Mike: Oh, there was some

Paul: funny characters, there was that one big guy, 7' tall

Mike: I can remember big Louie when I was kid, I remember seeing him but I just seen him in a blacksmith shop in Hancock where they were shoeing horses, oh, we had different characters over here but they're gone now. They were hard workers and they used to drink and I can remember on Sundays over here in Dodgeville, years ago when these taverns would be open there'd always be some drunks around. They didn't have no recreation. They'd go in the bar, then they'd get lit up, course Dodgeville used to have ballteams here years ago, in the '30's, even out in Superior, they had ballteams, C&H had a band that time, they used to come in the summer over there and play several concerts in the evenings over there, up on the Isle Royale Hill there was a stand where the C&H band would come in and play concerts there in the evening in the summer months and people them days they had a different way of living than they got today

Paul: A lot of changes taking place

Mike: Ya, they tried to help themselves more and the pay was small, but somehow or other, they didn't get no food stamps that I know of when they were raising a big family them days, and when my dad went to work in these mines them days, they didn't get no compensation. If they got hurt or got killed, I used to hear some of them old guys talk, if a man got killed in the morning 10 o'clock they only paid for the hours he worked, they didn't pay no full shift. And then I heard an ol' Cousin Jack say one time a man got killed underground in the iron mine down there, well, men is cheaper than timber, lots more in the old country, that was the attitude, that's what he told me. It was true, hell, hell, they didn't pay nothing, there was lot of men looking for a job, sometime I seen men out Superior come to that mine office when I was a kid, for months, hang around the office there, wait until the captain comes up, so they could see him if there was an opening or something. Sure, them days there was no unemployment or sub-pay and what you got today.

Paul: Some of the changes are for better, though.

Mike: Oh ya it's better

(end of tape

Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

Suomi College
Folklore Album

Quebec
1895
Lumber

Father

- a. John Kelly
- b. Hancock
- c. Oursay mine

Mother

- a. Kathy Murphy
- b. Ireland
- c. Housewife

Father

- a.
- b.
- c.

Mother

- a.
- b.
- c.

Father

- a. Mike Kelly
 - b. Hancock
 - c. Dale Royal
- 1918

Mother

- a.
- b.
- c.

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.