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

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Louis Koepel
July 31, 1972

Art Puotinen

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Interview by Art Puotinen
with Louis Koepel July 31, 1972

I'd like to begin, Mr. Koepel, by asking you regarding your parents, when they arrived in the Copper Country--roughly what time, and also, what type of employment did your father secure here.

Louis: My father's parents and my father came from Manitowac, Wisconsin; as I remember, my grandfather was in the brewery business, perhaps he worked for the Bosch Brewery in Lake Linden because that's where they started a home; my dad worked for Calumet & Hecla, became a machinist and his next job after that was master mechanic at the Copper Falls Mine out in Keweenaw County; from there he went to master mechanic at the Arcadian Copper Mine around Point Mills, and then from there he went to the Trimountain Mill as master mechanic; around 1900-05, about that time, finally he became superintendent of the Trimountain Mill in Beacon Hill, the Baltic Mill in Redridge and the Champion Mill at Freda. We lived there until--or rather I lived there until about 1936 but he passed away in April of 1932.

You were born here then

Louis: I was born March 18, 1909 in Beacon Hill and baby of the family, there are 3 older brothers and 2 sisters.

And in your childhood, growing up in this setting, do you recall any discussion with your father about his work, did he point out to you any special problems or give you any impressions of what operating the mine was like?

Louis: He did not operate the mine, he was in mill work and what is known as mineral dressing or ore dressing; it is the crushing of the ore and separating the copper from the ore. Fact is I worked at the mill at Freda during the summers,

Art: As a young lad?

Louis: As a young lad, started at 16, we weren't allowed to work until we were 16 and that rather peeved me because up to 16, 14-15, my older brothers were working, I had to go out and pick raspberries, so forth; I got so I hated to pick raspberries but when we were 16 we went to work, not so much directly in the mill but on surface in which one job was cutting brush on the high-tension pole line from Freda up to Painesdale; another summer, we worked on painting those same poles with black paint and another summer, in fact several summers I think I worked in the machine shop. The idea of my dad was to teach us everything he could teach us. The fact is he pushed us pretty hard. And, of course, I realized later on that it was darn good that he did that, of course I didn't like it at the time.

Was there a state law prohibiting you from going into or working before 16?

Louis: As I understand, you could not work until you were 16 and finally the labor act for children was changed to 18. So now you have to be 18 before you can go to work in a mill or something like that. Other work, you can get a permit to start working at 14.

Did this allow then for the waterboys who worked with the miners, some of them were younger than 16?

Louis: That's right. But that was previous to the time I worked. That's going back further. Now, when the law when through for the 16-year-old deal, I don't know, but it was in effect when I was a kid.

Where did you go to school as a youngster?

Louis: There was a school between Beacon Hill and Freda and we walked to school, it was only about a mile, or mile-and-a-half, from Beacon Hill to Freda and it served both towns and grades Kindergarten thru the 8th grade. After we were thru the 8th grade we went to Jeffers High School which was the Painesdale High School then at Painesdale or the Adams Township School System and the unique thing about is that we rode the railroad to high school and well, (may as well tell you a few things about that) it was the Copper Range Railroad, it left early in the morning from Houghton, went up thru Atlantic, then to Mill-Mine, then it went down from Mill-mine toward the Lake shore and the first place it hit was Redridge, then Beacon Hill and then Freda and then on the way back they started picking up the children. The Freda children got on at Freda, the Beacon Hill at Beacon Hill, but the Redridge children went up to Stanwood and got on, then there was Redridge junction where the section-man's children got on, then we stopped at Obenhoff to pick up children and by the way, Andy Wisti's family lived at Obenhoff at the time and I can remember his aunt, Fanny, was getting on at Obenhoff, then we went up to Mill-Mine, we picked up some more children there because there's a stationmaster there, then the train went back to Atlantic to pick up the children there. Then back up to Mill-Mine junction, stopped at South Range to pick up the children from Baltic and South Range, went directly th^{ru} Trimountain, those children were close enough to Painesdale to walk, and then we got off at the depot in Painesdale and then walked up the hill to Jeffers High School, and, of course, we did that same deal on the way back at night.

Was this a service provided by the railroad or did each family have to pay a fare?

Louis: Beacon Hill, Freda, and so forth, are in Stanton Township and the Stanton Township School System paid the Copper Range Railroad the fare for each child.

Art: In your elementary school experience, were the students of varying nationalities, or were they pretty much of one ethnic background?

Louis: No, there were quite a number of different ones. Of course from out in Stanton Township there was the Finnish people, the French people and certain number of German people and then when it got up to Painesdale, you get quite a number of nationalities: Italian, Austrian and so forth from the Baltic Mine and Trimountain; all these people that came in from foreign countries to work there plus the Finnish people and a lot of English people, or Cousin Jacks as we call them.

For those of non-English speaking parentage, did language present any kind of problem for them as they were beginning school, or did they pretty much amalgamate fairly quickly?

Louis: I would say that they amalgamated very quickly, there were some with brogues but it didn't seem to bother them or didn't bother us any, we got along fine.

Were there any special kinds of activities in the school besides just the instruction, were there any kind of social events that families gathered together for or was it basically the "3-R's" and that type of experience.

Louis: Just about the "3-R's", I cannot remember in our school at Beacon Hill-Freda when the families came in except if it was a Christmas play or something like that. Otherwise it was regular school work.

Art: What types of things did your family do together for good times or what can you look back on as some significant family-type of experiences? Were they outdoor events?

Louis: Well, of course, everything was outdoors anyhow out there and of course, we made our own recreation, we had fishing, swimming, and getting in trouble down at the plant and so forth, and of course we gardened, and my dad believed in keeping us busy. We had cows, we had horses, chickens; we even at one time delivered milk to other people out in that area, he had us selling Saturday Evening Posts and Country Gentlemen, Ladies Home Journal and he believed in keeping us working. Although when it come to recreation, we had a cottage down at Bootjack to which we'd go down for the summer and of course, I can always remember the Copper Country Fairs that we went to and I was leading up to that

Art: Were those held in August?

Louis: Thereabout, in either July or August, I can't quite remember----no, no, they came later on in the fall when the farm produce had already ripened because they were picking out the farmer that had the best pumpkins, and so forth and so on. So that was in September, I'd say.

Art; Was there anything unusual about those Copper Country Fairs many years ago in contrast to the Fairs we have today? Or was it basically the same thing?

Louis: I would say it was basically the same thing; they brought in entertainment from outside, I don't know if that do as much of that now, but it was again judging cattle, and vegetables and so forth.

Art: When you family experienced illness or sickness, what did your parents do, did they take you in town to a doctor or did you have some kind of home remedy?

Louis: Well, with the mining companies, they had their own doctors. And those who were working for the mining company, paid so much a month--50¢ or \$1.00 or \$1.50 to belong to the club or whatever it was. Now in the case of, for instance, a birth and I imagine even myself, the doctor took care of it, if he wasn't around, then there was a midwife. Or if he was around there was somebody in town that helped my mother out and so forth because I was born at home. None of the children were born in the hospital and of course we had telephones out there so in case of sickness we called the doctor. The doctor, Dr. Johnson lived in Redridge and during the winter he had the sleigh to come over and of course I can remember during the summer he had a Dodge, open job, and he had an office in Redridge and one at Freda. So if we had to see the doctor and were well enough, we went over to Freda to see him at the Dispensary.

Art: We talked a little bit about your childhood experience and schooling, what happened when you sort of "struck out" on your own?

Louis: Well, I graduated and I graduated too young, I graduated from Jeffers High School when I was 16 and I think my parents figures I was too young so they sent me down to Lansing and I lived with my sister there and went to Michigan State University (that's what they call it now) but it was the Michigan Agriculture College back in 1925 and I was there for about--in '27 I quit and went to work for the Pontiac-Oakland Car Factory over in Pontiac, was in the trim shop--timekeeper on the regular time and also kept track of the piece work that they had to cut all the material for the open-jobs, the roofs and the leather seats and so forth. And then in 1928 I left there and came up here to MCM--Michigan College of Mining and of course, that's been changed to Michigan Technological University. And I graduated from Michigan Tech in 1931 and that was a very bad year to get through, there just wasn't any jobs; in fact, I can remember my brother came up from South America, he was working for Anaconda, went out to Anaconda and everything was closed down out there. However I got a chance to

go on iron ore research for the first part of '32 at Michigan Tech and I remained there until 1937. I worked on my master's degree and worked on iron ore research at the same time and also, I was teaching flotation laboratory. In 1937 I went to work for Quincy Mining Company to open the Quincy mill at Mason and I operated the mill up until 1945 when it closed down when Germany capitulated in second World War; in the meantime the Quincy Reclamation was started in 1943 and I operated until May 1967. And then I've been retained by the company ever since and I have charge of the surface at the mine and other things that have to be done around here.

Well, that's been a very productive career!

Louis Yes, in the meantime I raised 5 children

When were you and Helen married?

Louis We were married in 1933

In the heart of the depression

Louis: Ya, and I always remember, I started out iron ore research at \$50 per month and I wanted to get married and I went to Andy Sweet who was the head of the millers department and told him I was going to get married and he gave me a \$50-a-month raise so we got married at \$100 a month, of course at the same time, she was teaching but she was also helping at home because her mother was a widow, having lost her husband back about 1925-26, see. And we remained there in Houghton until 1937 when I went down to Quincy.

Do you recall in a general sort of way what life was like in the Copper Country, this is when you graduated, got married and set up housekeeping. Were the times hard say, here as they were in maybe some of the urban areas in the country?

Louis: Well, there wasn't too much money but you'd be surprised how many new cars there were around, but perhaps I didn't notice it so much as some of the other people because I had a job and she had a job and we enjoyed ourselves and so forth, naturally, we have more things now than we had then, but I would say we enjoyed ourselves then as we do now. Only in a different way.

How extensive were WPA projects at that time?

Louis: I think CWA came first. And then the WPA. While I was at school, they were using CWA men for painting the interiors of the buildings, and so forth; I can remember when they were building the South Range Community Building, the Hubbell Community Building, also when they had the men working on the roads, you go back up toward Kearsarge, I think you'll still see a rock boat that they built at that time, there were quite a number of people on CWA and then WPA.

Art This was the time, of course, sort of like a hinge-point in American history with the Hoover Administration and FDR and the New Deal came in, could you detect any kind of change in the political feelings in this area at that time?

Louis: At one time it was predominantly Republican but I would say about that time when Roosevelt got into office and then he started his program: CWA, WPA, and so forth and so on, that they gradually started to change toward the Democratic side. It didn't fully change until oh, I would say, in the '40's. And I would say that since

then there have been more Democrats in county office than there have been Republicans. But at one time it was all Republican.

Art: Some of the history of the Copper Country, notably Murdock and others have mentioned that during the early periods, Republicans were pretty well entrenched here, and mining company management were heavily ~~Republican~~-oriented in their beliefs, did the the New Deal and Roosevelt and Democratic policies, did this take hold among the management?

Louis: I would say that it didn't, that the company officials remained predominantly Republican but I know of one instance, Mr. Benedict down in Lake Linden who was a Democrat practically all his life and he and Tom Kaufman down in the Torch Lake district and a few others, they kept the Democratic party together for years until Roosevelt came in and started changing things.

Art: How soon was it before some of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation regarding labor, National Recovery Act and others, which brought on the CIO and collective bargaining, did that have any noticeable impact up here immediately or did it take a while?

Louis: It took a while but it--well, by 1938-39 is when we first were organized with the union. So it wasn't too long, '32 to '38

Labor-management relations have been a touchy issue in this area for some time, how would you evaluate what has taken place? That's too broad a question--let me narrow it down. How, what was the feeling like first of all, say, when the union came in around '38 or '39?

Louis: Well, it was rather hard for the management to take that because, let's say, the pendulum was over on the other side, and '38-'39 it was starting to swing the other way and really that was rather hard to take.

Art: I was going to ask you if the 1914 strike if that still had any bearing upon the attitudes between labor and management or was that pretty much

Louis: I cannot remember the 1913 strike very well; having been born in 1909 so I didn't know too much about it. The only thing I know about the 1913 strike is when somebody brings up this fire business and so forth in Calumet and you will notice that when Calumet & Hecla closed down, they referred back to that too. To the 1913 strike and brought all that up. But during negotiations with the union, regular negotiations, that very seldom came up. They were looking at the present-day issues, and they were discussing that.

What were some of the key issues in '38 that were coming up?

Louis: Wages. That's what they were after, is wages.

Has that been basically the over-riding issue since--throughout the years--wages?

Louis: That's right. Because during the 1913 strike they reduced the hours to 8 hours per day, see. Well, to give you an idea, I went to Quincy, got a \$150 a month and the men were getting \$2-\$2.50 a day so that was 1937, so you can see in 1938-39, they were right hot to get increase in wages. Now, those increase in wages did not come until we actually got into the war. Just before we got into the war when copper was in demand and I can remember the first time that we got a \$1-a-day increase, was

they called the "Dutch deal". In other words what must have happened, the government was selling the Dutch people copper and that copper then was being produced here, at least at Quincy was supplying that copper so the deal was with the government that we get more money and we got a dollar-a-day raise. Now, Quincy was being subsidized by the federal government for the war effort and when we first started in 1937, the price of copper was 17¢ and I can remember, December of 1937 when President Roosevelt issued the statement: "copper is too high" and it dropped from 17¢ down to 12¢ and it was pegged at 12¢ for a long time so the only way that the company could get more money for the copper was to be subsidized and the Dutch deal was subsidizing the company so finally when 1945--when the war ended, we were getting 29¢ a pound, the price of copper had gone up but we were still being subsidized and when they took the subsidy off, there just wasn't enough money to operate the Quincy mine, it was so deep, a high-cost operation that we ceased operation in August 1945, and haven't operated since.

How significant a factor has been the other copper-mining industries out west?

Louis: Well, there's no doubt about it that they were able to mine at a much lower cost than we were because the mines were richer and easier to operate such as the underground mines at Anaconda at Butte, Montana, and so forth, sulfide ore and easy to drill and blast were here, we're working in the lava formation which you really call hard rock. And even in the iron country it's called soft rock compared to this lava flows we have here in the Copper Country. Plus the fact that we are working on an angle. When you get into the sulfide mines--let's compare with White Pine. White Pine is a sulfide mine. Their ore body is in a lens so that they put down their shaft at a very slight angle so that they can use motorized equipment, gasoline equipment and run down into the mine and so forth and to get the rock out of the mine, they're using a conveyor belt but with the native copper mines, such as Quincy and C&H and Isle Royale and so forth, it's all hoisting. You have to start out about 57 degrees and then we get down to about 5 or 6 thousand feet and it starts to level off and finally at Quincy No. 2 shaft, we get down to about 30 or 35 degrees so it's a regular curve, starting 57 degrees and ending up in about 35 degrees so that gives you 9300 feet of shaft but a little over a mile vertical.

Does this type of mining present any special problems as regards to safety, for anybody involved in the operation?

Louis: I would say if they follow the rules, there won't be very many accidents, if both company and labor follow the rules, and are careful, there shouldn't be any accidents.

I'd like to follow up a little bit on this question regarding Anaconda: when Quincy shut down and other slack periods, did the men stay around to "weather out" the hard times or was there a significant migration out of the area to say, for example, Montana?

Louis: I wouldn't say directly to Montana, but I would say there was a migration out of the area to Detroit and other places and of course a certain number of them went to the iron country and a certain number of them went out west. But not in great groups but they were migrating because you'll have to take into consideration that there were a hundred-thousand people in Houghton County at one time and now we have 35,000 people

Art: Right there is a very significant indication of a changing time.

Louis: That's right and with the 35,000 people, we still got the same number of miles of roads, and services and everything else to take care of. But it has an impact on Houghton County.

Art: You mentioned roads: One of the questions I've asked sometimes of people is what riled up the people most and two gentlemen said that the fact that the roads weren't

plowed in the wintertime.

Louis; I don't agree with that, I would say that Houghton County does a very good job on keeping the roads open oin Houghton County, compared to other places, they do a marvelous job and it costs money now, it really costs money.

I think I was interested in the response they gave because it points out to one of the distinctive features of the Copper Country, namely, the winter
end of tape)

I was mentioning the snow and looking back over your many years of experience in the Copper Country and the winter that you had to weather, are there any memories about transportation problems or whatever that sticks out in your mind regarding Copper Country winters?

Louis: Well, now, for instance living out in Beacon Hill during the winter. The only way that we got into town was on the Copper Range Railroad! Which was a passenger train. Of course, my dad was--come into the main office here in Houghton, purchasing office, and if we had to have any dental work or anything like that, Dad--he'd take us in, put us in the waiting room with the dentist and when he was done with his work, came back and picked us up. (And I wanted to say something else, too, on the basis of the weather) That's the way we got in and out during the wintertime; in the summertime, of course, with the start of the cars I can remember an old Rambler, one of the original Ramblers that we had, the shift was on the right-hand side and it had carbide lamps on it, wooden fenders, another thing I always remember about it too, is the braking system--to help out the braking system, if you get stuck on the hill, right in the front seat there was a hook with a brass ring that had a rope on it which went down to something like a crowbar and that was hinged on to the frame of the car. So you can imagine what would have happened if they started going down too fast and they let that thing tdown, migosh, it would come right up thru the frame but they did have it on it as a safety precaution if you got stuck on the hill. Then we went into Studebaker cars, and had the Model-T Fords and so forth, I went thru all that even up to the point of having one of my own and then a Model-A when I came back from Michigan State, I drove from Beacon Hill to Tech as long as the rode wasn't blocked so one year maybe I'd get up to sometime in November and then again maybe I'd drive up until December and in 1931, I'd stay in town in the winters and I think it was about maybe '34 or '35 that they were able to keep the roads open all the winter long but there was many a times I'd call up the County Road Commission and ask when them; when Plow was going out and they'd say, well, it would be going out at such-and-such a time and stormy and I'd get behind the plow and go home.

Well, that was a good way to adapt to the bad weather.

Louis: The fact is this Model-A Ford I had, had no top on it and I'd get home with it and run it in the garage and there was raised space in there and get the front wheels against that, jack up the rear wheel, one of the rear wheels, drain the water out of the car, I had a short fan belt on it so I didn't run the fan, just run the pump, this before we had Prestone and all that, and then I'd take the pail that was with me back to the house and then in the morning I'd come out with my books, lunch, pail of warm water, fill up the radiator, then start cranking it so we'd get that back wheel going, loosen everything up, then we'd get in, step on the starter and away she go. Thought nothing of it! (My back would kill me now if I tried to do it) (laughter).

Art: I'd like to turn to a little different area of questioning now, and looking back at your childhood home, could you say something about the churchlife that prevailed in the community there?

Louis: We had, between Beacon Hill and Freda, there was a Catholic Church, the Holy Trinity Church, and then maybe 5 or 600 feet further, was the Congregational Church and right across from the Congregation Church was the school I went to. There were enough people around when I was a little kid that we had a priest living at the church. I can't exactly tell you when that was stopped, when it come under the chaplain of the St. Joseph Hospital, he would go out there. And it became a mission church and Father Chris from St. Joseph would travel out there. Then it came under the Atlantic Church. In fact it must have been under the Atlantic Church originally because my baptismal certificate, when I got married, I picked it up from the Atlantic Church, and then it was under St. Ignatius Church for a while and I think maybe it's under St. Ignatius church now. Congregational Church--I can't tell you where the minister came from. Now over in Redridge they also had another Protestant Church and then there was a Finnish Church in Redridge. I can't exactly remember where the Finns went to church in Beacon Hill-Freda unless it was at a private home and that could have been.

How would you characterize the relationships between the various religious groups-- was a spirit of good will or was there a healthy competition going on or tolerance or difference or how?

Louis: I would say, in difference, we didn't bother each other at all, and of course, I could look thru the eyes of my dad who was a superintendent out there and the company supplied the area or the ground, maybe they built the church, for all I know, both the Catholic and the Congregational Church, but we never had religious troubles out there. We all got along all right.

Did the church support any other activities beside the normal Sunday morning worship and what--sewing circle for the women?

Louis That's about all I can remember them doing, they had their bazaars and so forth, of course, to raise money for the church but I can't remember any other particular thing that they were doing.

Now your present home is not in the Beacon Hill area--you must have told me but it slipped my mind

Louis: I live in Hubbell

And the church work there has been rather extensive, largely the Roman Catholic church dominates now?

Louis: I don't know if it dominates now, there are quite a number of Catholic people in Tamarack City, what they call now Tamarack Mills, Hubbell and Lake Linden. Course, I did not go to a Catholic school but my children all graduated from Catholic School in Hubbell. Course I would say there is quite a number of Finnish people in that area now. Course, they're intermarried now, too, so I don't know whether one is dominant or the other.

That's very interesting. In your experience thinking about the people that you knew in your childhood neighborhood and your present neighborhood, has there been a pretty good intermingling between the various nationalities, in terms of, say, getting married?

Louis: I would say so. You see a lot of Finnish names in the Catholic Church which I didn't see when I was a kid but you see them now and you find non-Finnish names, well, I think if you go up to the Gloria Dei Church here, you run into that, don't you? A lot of non-Finnish names. It's good!

Art Ya, this then really becomes a melting pot

Louis: It is a melting pot, or was a melting pot in this area. Think of all the nationalities that came in here and I would say, the Finnish people are predominant, there must be over 50% Finnish descent in here now. Of course, down in Lake Linden and Hubbell at one time it was greatly French; however, down there they had the French church in Lake Linden, the St. Joseph Church and then the German Church, Holy Rosary, and then out in Hubbell, the St. Cecelia and right next to it is the Lutheran Church, and there is the Congregational Church which has been torn down; in Lake Linden there is also the Methodist and the Congregational Church which both of them are still operating but the Congregational, I don't think, has too many families.

Along with church affiliations, people get involved in other kinds of social organizations, what organizations have you had memberships in?

Louis: I had no affiliations while I was out in Beacon Hill, because you realize that I left there at 16 but to the one big organization out there was the Foresters of America. And I think perhaps it might have started out there. Not too sure, but my memory is that it started out there. But of course since I came into town, I lived in Houghton I didn't belong to any particular organization there other than what was connected to the school, or the college, but when I got into Hubbell, I joined the Lions Club, the Knights of Columbus, was with the Eagles for a while but not too long, and of course, I've been in Boy Scout work and community work and so forth.

How would you characterize the community spirit in this area? Is it a group that likes to join and do things together?

Louis: Well, before TV, you had no trouble getting people to come to meetings and so forth. And when I went to--of course, I lived on what you call, Bunker Hill, down just beyond Mason toward Hubbell, and by the way, the reason why they call it Bunker Hill is when they constructed the houses for the officials, I guess there was a little battling about who was going to get which house, so they call it Bunker Hill (laughter) that goes back a long time and then 1942, I moved into Hubbell. We had no trouble getting people out to meetings and so forth but with TV I think it slowed it up, and then there are so many other meetings going on, that I don't think the people have time to take in all of them. Because you're getting into planning committees and other things that are coming down from the federal government and so forth, it really keeps you busy.

Since we're getting into the topic of this area and what is happening, changing patterns, what do you see for the Copper Country area in the future? You mention that population has changed, in your own experience you've seen the Quincy Mine closed down, what can you look for, say, 10 years from now?

Louis: I may as well say right now, it's not a very pleasant feeling to be with a company and then have to close up the different plants. I never liked it. And I do hope some day the price of copper will be right so that some of these mines can be re-opened but the year for Quincy, even though some people say that Quincy hasn't been trying to open their mines, we've had 2 or 3 companies that have been interested in the Quincy Mine and they've studied it thoroughly and turned it down because too-high cost of operation, they're really deep. However, there is copper here and I'm just hopeful that somehow or other that they'd be able to start the mines again, maybe this deal up at Painesdale, selective picking of rock with copper in it, maybe they can use it underground to cut the costs, can be a big help. Because we go back to 1925, things were not too good in the Copper Country either but that was the advent of flotation and that gave the mines a "shot in the arm". Of course, when you come to '32, that was something different

altogether but they were losing 8 to 10 pounds, 6-10 pounds of copper because it was too fine to save by gravity concentration. But the advent of flotation in which they floated that fine copper and saved it rather than try to sink it by gravity and that gave them a "shot in the arm" and companies were able to operate on perhaps, lower grade ore. Now they need something like that to get another "shot in the arm"

Some improvement in technology along with rising

Louis: Ya, that's right. Another thing, the cost of operation when they do start up again because they can't dump the tailings into the lake like they did years ago. They're either going to have to dispose of the tailings underground somehow or other or they're going to have to build dams on the surface and do it like White Pine is doing it. But that takes a lot of area and when you get right back in here where the towns are close to where the mines are and it's, you have to pick up enough ground from the farmers and so forth to get enough area for a tailing pond. It'll all have its effect on the opening of the mines here.

Art: In the meantime, what possibility do you see for development of the Copper Country? Is there any future in tourism?

Louis: Well, there'll always be a future in tourism because people have so much more leisure time nowadays, it's just a case of advertising our Copper Country to get them up here and we'll always have a good tourist business but I will say, inasmuch as I am in on the Arcadian Mine that it has kinda' leveled off, now how we're going to push that up and get more people up here, I just don't know but I would say that the Arcadian Mine is a good barometer of the tourist business here. Now we're running just about the same as we were last year which would be about the same as a couple previous years.

Do I hear you right in saying that really indicates that the number of people coming into the area has not grown significantly?

Louis: I would say, no, based on what we get at the mine. Now, another thing is, how many of these people coming in are relatives, and so forth, coming back to the Copper Country and have seen the mine and are not coming back again to the mine, see, I just don't know. It's a hard thing to figure out. Now another thing, we do not have enough attractions in the Copper Country to keep the people here long enough to have them drop more money in the Copper Country. But all those things, attractions, it costs money to make an attraction.

I'd like to ask you a question of sort of a personal nature: looking back at the many things that you have been involved in and certainly you've got a lot of things that are on-going and many things as yet to come, what would you say has been the most worthwhile accomplishment in your life so far?

Louis: I can't help say that raising my family, I'm very proud of them; otherwise, I feel that I've done an awful lot for the Copper Country thru the Tourist business with the Arcadian Mine and of course I'm manager of the Quincy Mine Hoist which, of course, is NOT the tourist attraction that the Arcadian Mine is because all people do not like big machinery so we have a problem, the women don't go for it as well as the men and so we're not doing as well up there as we'd like to. I don't know otherwise what to say.

That's a good response. (noise in tape)

I'd like to ask you about your involvement in politics. When did that begin and how has it progressed?

Louis: When I moved down to Bunker Hill in Mason, that was in Osceola Township, and a few years after that I was asked to run for the School Board which I did, and I was on the

School Board from about '39 to 1942 when I moved into Hubbell and put me into Torch Lake Township. A few years after that I ran for the School Board in Lake Linden-Hubbell School District and I was on the School Board from 10 years, up to 1955, and then I ran for Supervisor of Torch Lake Township and I was just retired from that this past May, I was there about 16 years. And now I'm running for Commissioner. I was on the Board of Supervisors for about 14 years of which the 5 years, I was Chairman of the Board. So as far as service politically or with municipalities, I've had my share.

Right! I'm curious as to why you, this part of your life developed, were you encouraged to do so by, maybe the example of your father or what, in the research that I've done, I've noticed that a number of mining company officials have been very much involved in local civic life. How did they get started?

Louis: Well, they came to me and asked me to run for the school board in Osceola Township and, of course, in raising the family, I felt that I should be on the board, and of course, the children were older when I left Osceola Township, the last baby had been born then, and I stayed away for a while and then they asked me to run again down in TorchLake and Schoolcraft Township make up the school district there. And why I left the school board, I don't know, somehow or other I got into township politics.

Before we talk about the township politics, I'd like to ask a question regarding school board activity: a big concern on your mind, I suppose, was quality education not only for your children but for all residents of the community, what were some of the concerns that emerged during your time, what were some of the great challenges or problems?

Louis Well, one of the big problems was that the population was going down and we were getting consolidation with other school districts with Lake Linden, for instance, in Torch Lake and Schoolcraft Townships, there were 7 school districts. So we had that problem and also it was just a case of raising money and keeping up a good school and then those problems were always in front of us just like it is today.

Art: When the mines were in operation and going strong, were they providing the majority of the tax base then for running the schools or was it pretty evenly shared?

Louis: Much, previously to me, the mines I would say provided three-quarters (maybe I'm a little high, I'm not sure about that figure) but gradually as each mine was phased out the property owners then had to absorb more of the cost. So until really now, even though they are raising a big hallaboo about what the evaluation should be on the mines, that was put on by the state geologist, the mines are NOT providing a great deal of taxes compared to the rest of them now.

Art: And with that change, has there been a noticeable decrease, shall we say in the kinds of educational services that the schools can provide?

Louis: To a certain extent but then the fact that the state aid has come in in the mean time to pick up the load as they have done all throughout the state so actually we would get less state aid to help schools if we had a lot of mines operating which were producing a lot of taxes because as the amount of tax evaluation behind each student get high, you get less state aid. When you come down to--fact is, you take Adams Township Schools, after Copper Range was phased out up there, they were getting more state aid than any other of the schools that had high schools.

That's a very interesting point you've brought out because it seems to suggest that there has been no--even though the mines have been closed, there's been no deterioration in the quality of education.

Louis: I would say "NO" or because the state law, the legislature is gradually forcing all the schools to consolidate. That's been coming on all the time even tho' we don't locally do it, then somehow or the other, the act is put thru the legislature, for instance, they say, they started out, you had to have so many grades in the school. You had to have 8 grades or you couldn't operate. Those with only 4 grades, well, then they consolidated on with somebody else, then pretty soon, like you take Torch Lake Township, we had School District #3 in Point Mills area, the children were going to the high school in Dollar Bay. Soon out comes an act that says: a school district must educate from Kindergarten thru 12. There's nothing else that Point Mills could do but consolidate with Dollar Bay. That's just gradually coming. If the people don't do it, you can be sure the legislature is going to figure out some way to make them do it. Because they're putting up, let's say, close 50% of the tax money for the schools. I can always remember Romney making a statement over at Tech. He was governor at the time and he says "when state aid gets up to a certain point, we are going to tell you what to do with the money". It is state money.

Art: With this shift, how has the local population reacted to that? ARE they--

Louis: Well, they fight any consolidation, always fight consolidation. They do not want to lose their school, it's a meeting place and so forth and so on. And even sometime-- I'm not going to say that consolidation gives you better education. I think sometimes these smaller schools if they're run right, they'd give a good education, too. But sometimes it can, if there's not enough children, it gets kind of bad. And they should be consolidated. There's more opportunities for the children.

Let's move on to your township experience.

Louis: Oh, one thing during my--in school doings, was the-- you had mentioned before the Torch Lake area being predominately Catholic and they were at one time and during the depression, because the Catholic schools could not get along, they were put under the public school system and the teachers were the sisters. And they operated that way for about 16 years. Oh, yes. And the way it stopped was the fact that we were closing the Lincoln school in Hubbell and you asked here before how do people take to these changes and so forth and they got rather hot under the collar and what happened was the township board put an ad in the paper to come out to the second next meeting that we're having with the people to keep the last public school open. Well, at the next meeting there were people from down state, listening in on everything and the next day, they refused to give any more state aid to the Catholic schools so when we went down there to Lansing to the administrative board, to talk to them about it, try to get those schools back in again, they showed us this ad. He said, well, it's not a public school. So here's your township board says "come out to keep the last public school open and there's St. Cecelia School, that must be a nun. (laughter) So then, of course, the Catholic schools operated up until here a couple years ago and it's the same all over the United States with these, not only the Catholic schools but I imagine the Lutheran schools, too, they're just having a tough time. It's a problem. Personally I don't know which is best: keep them open and have them subsidized by the government or what. But according to the constitution as you know they can't give a Catholic school any tax money. So there it sits!

Art: In your township work, were the towns included in the township or did they have a separate government of their own or did you--what's behind the question, I'm wondering how you as a township supervisor, what kinds of problems did you run into with, say, the city officials or was there good cooperation or were there certain areas of tension?

Louis: Well, we did not have a city in Torch Lake township. Hubbell was a village at one time, and, of course, I inherited this when I became supervisor; Hubbell had their sewer system, water system, roads and everything else and back in the '20's they voted back into the township

(end of tape)