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

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Edith A. Koivisto
August 3, 1973

Douglas Ollila

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Comment</u>
First settled in Spokane, Washington	1	
Schooling in Finland	2	
Class Consciousness	3	
Instructors - Laukki	3-5	Brilliant Speaker
IWW	5	
The Chicago 166	6	
Arvid Kiovisto	8	*Important
Tyovanen Opisto	8-9	*Progressive school
Koivisto Diary	9-11	
Opisto Falls	11-12	
Art Work	12	
Arvid as Auditor	13	
Co-operative Crises: 1929-30	13	
Theater Activities & Playwriting	14-15	
Work Peoples Organizations	15-16	Effect on Finns Life

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Edith Armida Koivisto

INTERVIEWER: Douglas Ollila

DATED: August 3, 1973

- O: Your name is Edith Armida Koivisto, and you came here from Finland, is that right? Your (oma suku) maiden name was Laine, and you came here in 1910. What is your occupation now?
- K: A housewife, I suppose.
- O: We'll talk about your other jobs later. Your husband was active in the cooperative movement, was he not? He was an auditor with the Central Cooperative Wholesale and so he traveled here in the midwestern states. What is the name of your parents?
- K: My mother was Wilhelmiina Nevala, and my father was Robert Laine.
- O: What city or village did you live in Finland?
- K: We lived in Kuusankoski.
- O: Did your parents come to this country or did you come alone? Why did you come to America?
- K: I had no home in Finland, my mother was a widow and when she died, my sister called me here.
- O: You came to Spokane, Washington, and from there to Työväen Opisto, in Smithfield, Minnesota. We'll talk about Työväen Opisto a bit later. Where did you work in Spokane?
- K: I didn't work anywhere, I was there and my sister sent me to Työväen Opisto.
- O: Was life difficult when you first came to America? Let's say in Spokane and the first years at Työväen Opisto?
- K: I was so young that I didn't really think about that.
- O: You had a lot of "sisu" and you got along. What do you think was the biggest accomplishment in your life?

K: It was my daughter.

O: She did very well in college, what did she do then, was she an artist?

K: She was a musician.

O: Mrs. Koivisto's daughter was born in Duluth and grew up in Hibbing, attended schools in Hibbing, she majored in music. She received a Bachelor's degree in Public School Music Education at the University of Colorado, and earned a Master's degree in Applied Music at the University of Michigan. She also earned a Master's degree in Music History and Theory from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. She had a long record of teaching experience at the University of Ohio in Athens, and at the University of Illinois, Champaign, Southwestern State College, Springfield, Missouri, University of Indiana in Bloomington. She was married to Robert Swain Caird, who was a physicist, he received his PHD and later on they moved to Los Alamos. Mrs. Caird was involved in giving concerts with the Ohio Symphony at the University, and other symphonies along with several professional societies. She died in December of last year. She certainly accomplished a great deal with her life and you have every reason to be proud of her. Now I am very interested in the kind of education you had. You mentioned before that you attended school in Finland, they were Public and Secondary schools, were they not? What was the name of the first school you attended in Finland?

K: It was the Kotkan Yhteys Koulu and when they founded the same kind of school in Kouvola, I went there until I came to America.

O: I notice also by your vita here, that you attended Hibbing State College in 1933-1935 as well as 1953-1955, and studied Art at the University of Minnesota in 1959, so you have certainly moved yourself ahead educationally. One of the areas in education that we talked about when I visited you before, was your education at the Työväen Opisto, what subjects did you study at the Opisto?

K: That's what I meant when I said that there is a gap, that begins from the time that this Worker's Hall was sold, and there was no more social life. That's what I was most interested in, I've never paid much attention to politics or Työväen League or anything like that. Now lately I've joined the League of Women Voters, and I'm more politically conscious and active. You want to know about Työväen Opisto?

O: Yes, the kind of things you learned, the impressions you received in school.

- K: Well I must have had a class consciousness, you know. I should have known that from the very beginning, my father was a workingman and my whole family worked for the Kuu-sankoski Paper Factory in the community. I attended some of the classes in the beginning but I don't know if I gained anything. I've always been curious, never a master, that's me. I'm curious about everything, I have to know everything, always a student.
- O: What kind of teachers were there at Työväen Opisto? Did they know their stuff?
- O: There was Laukki, Sirola.
- O: Did you have Yrjö Sirola as a teacher? My goodness sake Sirola was in the inner circle of the Common Turn (?) in Russia, in later years he was a very, very famous person
- K: Yes, indeed, they even had the Sirola Opisto in Helsinki. It was a work people's college. He was my instructor, he taught Yhteys Kunta Oppia, or that sort of thing.
- O: Was he a good teacher?
- O: No, not as sharp as Laukki.
- O: I've heard this a lot, that he knew his stuff and was a good teacher.
- K: Laukki was a good teacher and knew his stuff, but I did not like him personally. I suppose he thought he knew it all.
- O: I've been reading some of the records of the Työväen Opisto, and also many of the newspapers that he wrote into, and read about his activity in organizations, and I found out that Laukki tended to be very "itse päinen", very, very independent and a little bull-headed.
- K: Yes, being among the Finns who knew nothing, according to him and many others, I suppose he thought he knew it all. Well let's see, there was an Ida Kauppi who taught Commercial subjects.
- O: Was Haataja there at the time?
- K: Haataja was a Correspondence school teacher.
- O: He was also a koulun johtaja, Director of Schools, they had several school directors. I don't know if he was there in your time, he was one of the early ones.
- K: He was a Kansan Johtaja, when it was run by the church people.

O: Was Laukki the johtaja (director) when you were there then?

K: Sirola was first, then Laukki, Sirola left

O: Was Aku Risanen there at the time?

K: Yes

O: What was Risanen like, was he a good teacher, did he know his material?

K: I wonder if I took any of his subjects, I don't think I did, he was supposed to be good. Well anyone could teach there, even I taught there in Correspondence School, although I suppose I knew what I was doing. I corrected English lessons, and I dictated some of the lessons into the machines they had there.

O: They had modern equipment there in the Correspondence School at Tyovaen Opisto. Were most of the people learning English? On those machines you could play the rolls and learn the language.

K: Yes, they taught Yhteyskunta Oppia, Tyovaen Liikkeen Historiaa and they even taught Biology there.

O: Is that right? That was something very advanced at that time. I remember looking at the curriculum and they had Kehitys Oppia there and they had Evolution which they taught there. It's kind of Biological Evolution, it was very intense for that day. In some schools they didn't start teaching that until the 1950's or so. I'd be interested in any other impressions of Laukki that you had. He was such an important leader among Finnish Americans, and of course later he became the leader of the IWW faction within the Industrial (I have new glasses and they press on my nose) Liitto group.

K: He was a brilliant speaker, he could move audiences, I remember one time he spoke for six hours and people didn't want to leave, but his voice got so hoarse he had to stop, and he promised to continue. I don't remember, I was so young, what he spoke about.

Would you describe him as tuli henkinen? (fiery speaker)
I have heard him described as such especially when he gave his Orations at the picnics, or was he kind of like a saarnamies? (preacher)

K: Well there were times when you had to speak loud because they didn't have these loud-speakers, he must have had a voice that carried because he could keep you interested.

- K: He spoke very plainly so that you could understand him, he spoke a people's language, not a high language.
- O: He was most often regarded as the real leader of the Industrialisti faction of the Finns, the IWW faction. Do you regard him as the leader of that group?
- K: He was a leader, but I tell you, at the last he was of the opinion that there should be political activity as well as economic, but the rank and file, the majority of the Finnish people didn't want anything to do with politics. He switched at the last meeting of the organizing of the paper, and that's the way he became a leader among the IWW's.
- Q: He switched and became what you would call "teollisuus radikaallinen". Why do think the Finns didn't believe in politics, especially in the Iron Range, because they couldn't vote?
- K: They could have voted if they were citizens, but they didn't want to be a citizen. I think it must have been because of their experiences in Finland.
- O: That politics always deceives, and you can't get any political action?
- K: In Finland you could vote if you owned so much acreage but I'm not very familiar with that.
- O: Do you feel then and I never thought of that, that they remembered their own bitter experience in Finland where they were politically powerless and they came here having no political expectations, but mostly economic?
- K: Yes, that's what forced them to come here
- O: Why do you think so many of the Finns became affiliated with the IWW here in the Iron Range and especially in Minnesota and Duluth? I understand you are familiar with the IWW here in Duluth even though you didn't belong to the organization, why do you think so many Finns joined the IWW?
- K: Because the other side supported politics. They did not want to have anything to do with politics.
- O: They felt that they could have their economic aims taken care of best by political action.
- K: I think that's a fallacy because even now, all the improvements you get, come through politics.

- O: That's right, through changes in the Federal Government, largely, things like Social Security and so forth. They come through political action. Another phase, and I think it might be good to stay with Laukki and his group, I'd be interested in hearing your recollections and memories of the very serious period in 1918 and 1919, when Laukki and Jaakkola, Tanner, Jacobson, and Frank Westerlund, when they were imprisoned and became a part of the famous Chicago 166, do you have any recollections of that period?
- K: I was in Chicago for a time, and I was interpreter for the Finns. I worked as bookkeeper in a tailoring shop there. In the Northwestern Tailoring Shop. I don't have any recollections of Chicago, it was such a big place and I didn't take any part in the social life there. My husband was attending Valparaiso at the time. He came to Chicago and worked for Montgomery Ward for a while. I was just the interpreter, that's all. Judge Landis was the judge.
- O: Do you think that he was an unfair judge, like everyone says he was?
- K: Oh, was he ever
- O: Did you have a lot of sympathy for the Chicago 166? For Laukki, he was your teacher, did you feel sorry for him?
- K: I don't know, I suppose I was sorry for him and I was sorry for all the people who lost all their money when he skipped.
- O: Laukki skipped his bail and went to Russia, didn't he?
- K: Yes, and also Haywood, he was the one who organized the IWW
- O: Did you see Haywood there then, what kind of a man was Big Bill Haywood? Was he a fire-spirited, bombastic, harsh man?
- K: I don't think I ever heard him speak, I just saw them there at the court trial.
- O: Do you remember Jaakkola at all? What kind of a man was Fred Jaakkola? I've read quite a lot about Jaakkola, he came from Butte, Montana, was a worker, and became involved in a local group and he also got involved in fighting the editors of the Sosialisti and saying that the editors are all pikku porvallisest, and finally he ended up being the editor of the Sosialisti and then it became the Teollisuus and then the Industrialistien. So then Jaakkola was almost a self-taught editor, it appears.
- K: Who told you that he fought against it?

- O: I read about t, he fought against the political radicals.
- K: That's why the first editorial staff was fired, Saari, and Eddie Sulo, Eddie Suokkanen, and of course, Rostello who was Editor-in-chief, they were political radicals as well economic radicals. Now I have a little story about Työväen Opisto, there's nothing that would hurt anyone, I don't have any secret life.
- O: I'd like to include some materials that Mrs. Koivisto has written about her experiences at Työväen Opisto. When she came to the Opisto, which was in October of 1912, the school was at the peak of its growth and she notes that it remained as such for the next five years until World War I. At that time there were one hundred graduate students, most of whom lived in the dormitory, the rest of them lived in the village of Smithville, which is south of Duluth. Her observation is that they were the best that we had. Yrjo Sirola, a political refugee, former head of the Helsinki Workers College, and Editor-in-chief of the Daily Labor Työmies of Helsinki, was the Principal. Leo Laukki who was also a political refugee, at the time, a graduate of His Imperial Majesty's Military Academy of Petersburg, was an experienced newspaper man and then there was Leo Rissanen who had a Master's degree from from Helsinki University, also Ida Kauppi, a Clumbia University graduate who taught Commercial subjects. Fred Thomson who was a graduate of Northwestern University, was not Finnish, was he?
- K: No, he was an American
- O: All of these teachers were in residence, there was a Mrs. Schlict (?) who was a former school teacher, who taught English and there were visiting professors also who came to lecture on special subjects. Her description of the student body is very interesting. There were no entrance examinations to the school, each student attended the class he thought he was able to follow, so there was a kind of freedom in picking your subjects. These are very modern ideas in education, they are doing precisely that today.
- K: They are trying to get a school in Duluth, like that.
- O: Yes, and I think they are going to get it, a free school. Most of the people who attended Työväen Opisto, she notes, had any previous formal education, most of them had no schooling whatsoever but they could read because they learned before confirmation, or during confirmation. Most of them had poor writing ability but there were some who could hardly scrawl their names, nevertheless, all had a burning desire to learn, and learn they did.

- O: The progress they made in a few short months was amazing, for many it was the start of the beginning of further education. She notes also, many of them continued in colleges in America, some studied at Valparaiso, one went through the Duluth Business University. They also attended others like La Salle University.
- K: That's where my husband went, and became an accountant
- O: In connection to this note to the Työväen Opisto, it would be important to add a note on Arvid Koivisto. He was a well known person here in Hibbing and the whole Iron Range in the Cooperative Movement, he was an accountant and did auditing in the Coop. stores in various parts of the Midwest. I'm very interested in Arvid's education, would you tell me a little about that?
- K: (Kierto koulua sai vähän Suomessa, ja rippi koulun visiin sai halon hakkaamisella.) He had no education whatsoever, he could read and scrawl his name and that's about all the education he had, in Finland. Well I can't call him my achievement, but I like to think that I did help him along by taking care of myself economically. He didn't have to worry about my livelihood.
- O: I see, where did he go to school in this country?
- K: He started at Työväen Opisto at first, I think he went there for two years, and then to Duluth University, and then to Valparaiso.
- O: What did he study there?
- K: I really don't know, a lot of young Finnish men went to Valparaiso, I think language was their main subject. Then he went to La Salle University and received his accountancy.
- O: So he really started from scratch. Now, going back to Työväen Opisto, the age level of the students was varied, most of them were middle-aged or over and most of them were male, and in 1912 Aino Paananen and Mrs. Koivisto were the only females.
- K: No, there were others but we were the youngest.
- O: She notes also that the students planned the curriculum, which sounds very much like a free school. Besides commercial courses, it was weighty with some subjects such as Economics, Political Science, Civil Government, Philosophy, Biology, Evolution and Socialistic programs in tactics.

O: There were, of course, the basic and elementary courses. She notes that the works of Marx, Engels, Nietzsche, Ingersoll, Tolstoy, and Darwin were used as source materials. Very important in the Tyovaen Opisto, were the monthly debating societies where the professors and their lectures were critically discussed. Again we might add that this is precisely what they are doing in colleges and universities today. If their work did not meet the student's approval, they were fired. The first to go was Fred Thomson, "he was too conservative, not radical enough" to suit the work-weathered miners, lumberjacks and housemaids. They were not satisfied with the working methods he was lecturing about. They wanted revolutionary action now, the system of government must change. Now sixty years later, the cry is heard on many American campuses. It makes one wonder, were we that much further in our thinking, or has no progress taken place in American social and political life. (Close quote.) She notes that life at the Opisto was not all study and work, it had its lighter side. For example, on Friday night they had a dance at the gymnasium and this provided physical exercise and relaxation as well as mental relaxation. All of the students participated except some of the students who were perhaps a bit too serious. Music was provided by accordion violin, Jewish harp and mouth organ. Saturday was the day devoted to housekeeping, the rooms had to be cleaned, and bedding had to be changed. They had to send out their personal laundry or else they went to Duluth which was four miles from Smithville. Sometimes they would take in a movie, they'd see Charlie Chaplin, Marie Dressler, Mary Pickford, who were becoming popular, or else they stayed for the dance at the Socialist Hall, which meant that they had to walk four miles back to the school because the last train had already gone. Some nights it was 40* below, and they had to walk back. There were no Music or Art courses at the Opisto, however Mrs. Koivisto organized a mixed chorus, they sang a cappella, they arranged for and produced programs in Duluth and the surrounding area, once a month. Faculty members would give speeches and the students would give lighter numbers. Helen Viitikainen who is well known, and one of the part-time student teachers, used to sing duets with Mrs. Koivisto. I would like to include a note about Leo Laukki; he was considered by most to be the most prominent leader of the IWW in America and these are Mrs. Koivisto's remembrances of Leo Laukki. Both Laukki and Olga Fast taught at the Worker's College, she was part time. Mrs. Fast came from Brooklyn with her son, met Laukki and they fell in love. Neither of them was divorced so she moved in with him. It is noted here that Laukki was born in Helsinki, where he studied for one year at the Helsinki University working his way through college, he joined the Russian army, was sent to put down a peasant uprising, he became a lieutenant, he then joined the revolutionaries during the general strike, and he

worked for a while as editor of Kansan Lehti, which was a Socialist newspaper, but he had to leave the country in 1907 for his revolutionary activities. In the United States Laukki was very prominent, he served for a while as editor for Raivaaja and Tyomies, but then he joined the IWW faction of the Socialists and became the Principal of the Worker's College and the editor of the Sosialisti. He was one of the principals of the Chicago 166. Robley's Case with Haywood and Jaakkola etc. He, as is well known, left for Russia and nobody really knows what happened to him there. Mrs. Koivisto notes that he fell in disfavor with the regime, and after serving one term in prison, he disappeared from view. Laukki's wife was said to have been an American educated lady (Esther). She served at one time on the Women's Weekly Toveritar, as editor, in Astoria, after her separation from Laukki she lived in Chicago where she died of a lingering illness. Some notes about Olga Fast, she was a pretty-looking housewife, sexy, but she was somewhat coarse and common although she could read and write. It's noted that her editorial work was just a pretense, Laukki had to supervise every word she wrote, even then slips appeared in her work. She made a perfect companion for Laukki, they both drank heavily and quarreled constantly, their pleasure in each other was obvious. One incident is noted here, Mrs. Koivisto had been invited to visit them so she decided to do so, they lived in a rooming house on Second Street and when Mrs. Koivisto got outside their door, they heard loud screaming and talking and heavy things being thrown about, they may have been pushing each other about so she didn't dare knock and left without seeing them. The following morning she didn't mention the incident at work. Olga followed Laukki to the Soviet Union, her son stayed with this father in Brooklyn, her son's name was Oscar Fast. Laukki was a brilliant speaker, on one occasion he spoke on Industrial Unionism for six hours way into the small hours of the night, but his audience would not let him go. At last he had to go, his voice was gone. He was not a funny comic, he didn't use funny stories or anything, but he was so interesting that he kept his audience with him all the way. Now here are some very interesting notes about Mrs. Koivisto's observations about Laukki. Her own personal feelings about him, "personally I was afraid of the man, especially after he tried to force his way into her room one night." That was at the Opisto, Arvid at that time was working at a sawmill in Winton near Ely, earning money for the coming school year. This frightened her quite a bit, she said after that I avoided being left alone with him anywhere. Much later when they were living in Quincy, Massachusetts, he came there for a speaking tour, he came to visit. They reminisced about old times and commented on Mrs. Koivisto's acting. Mrs. Koivisto then continues her biography. She was registered at the

Tyovaen Opisto as a student late in October of 1912, and in the summer of 1913 she taught Summer school in Eveleth and among other things, she coached drama to a group in the neighboring city of Gilbert. That Fall she returned to the Opisto and worked as office worker, and Librarian in charge of the bookstore. Additionally, she taught part-time in the Correspondence Department which was headed by Mr. K. Haataja. Her job was to mimeograph lessons, and to help Mr. Haataja in preparing and correcting lessons. Then Mr. Haataja cut phonograph cylinders even though he had a terrible accent, nevertheless he cut cylinders for the English lessons. She notes that she wishes she had been foresighted enough to save samples of the lessons. The Correspondence School was not a success and was discontinued. There is a note here on Mr. Haataja, he had a degree in Chemical Engineering, he went to work for the Oliver Mining Company as a chemist in Hibbing. When the Koivistos moved to Hibbing in 1924, he invited them to visit him. He had married a rich widow who lived in one of the nicest houses of the village, and there in his basement he had a sauna, which in those days was quite a novelty. Mrs. Haataja was an imposing woman in size and manner. During Mrs. Koivisto's stay at Tyovaen Opisto, they built a new addition to the building. It was a two-story wing, a student's room and it was at the back of the building, and in front was a large auditorium on the second floor, and the kitchen and dining hall on the ground floor. She notes that the location of the Opisto was most ideal, the building stood on a little hill, below was the Spirit Lake which was named after an Indian legend. It tells of two Indian lovers who drowned themselves because of being of different tribes and their Chiefs would not allow them to marry. Now their spirits still haunt the lake as well as the island in the middle of the lake. She notes also that the Great Northern Railroad track ran along the shore of Duluth to New Duluth or Gary, which was named after Gary, Indiana. Where the track passed the Opisto, there was a little depot, actually a little shack, and incoming passengers to the city of Smithville and Tyovaen Opisto used that depot. After the new building went up, the student registration almost doubled. However the teaching quality did not improve at the same rate. It actually got poor. Political atmosphere had eased in Finland so that fewer qualified teachers were willing to leave the security of their jobs to come here. Reports of conditions at the Opisto were not encouraging, considering the radically and critically inclined student body. Gradually and eventually the Opisto had to depend entirely on the home-grown product, former students who were a notch or two above the students they were to teach, in knowledge. That seemed to solve the teacher shortage for the time being but another kind of difficulty came up. That was a student shortage. The United States entered the European War and began drafting young men into the army. That didn't sit well with the Finns of whom the majority had fled

Finland to avoid military service in the Russian army. Rather than register for the draft, they went hiding. They did not dare come to the Opisto for that was an obvious place the police would raid first of all for Slackers, as these draft dodgers got to be known. Consequently the student count at Opisto neared almost zero. For a while these buildings were almost deserted until someone suggested that they be used for youth courses. The church people in the Cooperative movement had already initiated such courses successfully for their young people, why not the Industrial Workers of the World, too. It worked. For a few years the Opisto served as the Youth Corps Center of the IWW. However, by the 30's it became clear that the Tyovaen Opisto as such, had come to an end. It had served its purpose at the time there was a need for it, the war had put an end to the flow of the immigrants in need of knowledge in the Finnish language and the opisto was not equipped to teach Americans. (Close quote) This concludes the discussions and quotations on the Work Peoples College, the Tyovaen Opisto.

O: Where did you learn to speak English, Mrs. Koivisto?

K: I took some lessons in Finland, Yhteiskoulu, and then when I came here, I attended night school and I taught myself. I have always been a student, I took Freshman and Sophomore classes in High School for one year. That was just to learn English and then I went to college. I went through college here in Hibbing, I took various courses in Spanish, and Art, et. You notice I went for several years well that's where I learned my English.

Now I've noted in your vita again, you were very interested in Art, you showed in quite a few National and regional and local exhibitions. Then you also represented in permanent collections of Dr. and Mrs. W. Dodge of Rochester, and Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Daniels of New York city. You had 17 one-man shows in addition to the other shows.

K: Yes, I participated in 32 group shows and earned 65 prizes in Art.

O: The Kennedys and President Harry Truman also have some of your paintings.

K: I still have some, people do come and want to buy them.

O: You paint with a number of different media oils, you have 3 portraits of winter fun in acrylics, 8 or 9 of them, and pastels, quite a number of them.

K: That's my favorite media.

O: You have pen and ink, water color, and collages also.

O: In this listing of Hibbing Public Library one-woman show, May 14-19, 1973, there is a total of 42 paintings that were exhibited.

You were married to Arvid in 1913 and were married to him for fifty years, is that right? Arvid's chief work was with the cooperative movement, what did he do as an auditor? Did he organize Coops. or anything like that?

K: No, but he was manager for a few years, his first managerial job was at Iron. (Cherry?) I remember I went there once, I was in Virginia at the time, then he took my place in Bewabic as bookkeeper and then he went to Cherry. From there he went to Quincy, Massachusetts, I was asked to go by a friend of mine, Otto Akola, he was manager there at Quincy Co-op. and Boardinghouse. He wrote and asked me to be the manager there but naturally I wanted to push my husband ahead and I had a pretty good job that I liked in Virginia, so he went there and afterward I followed him there, he was too far away. From there we went to Finland for six weeks, both passage and everything included. I think we stayed in Finland two weeks, we went there with the idea of staying there because both of us were still homesick. We couldn't stand it there because our relatives belonged to both factions, Whites and Reds. There were a lot of quarrels and friction so we didn't stay there. The whole trip took six months and after that my husband went to Keskus Osuuskunnan kurseille.

O: Were they in Minneapolis at the time?

K: No they were in Superior, he attended the courses and from there he was sent to New York Mills to be a manager. From New York Mills he went to Hibbing and he was the manager of the Co-op. store there. At the time they were in the process of transition, at one time they had two stores, one in North Hibbing and one in South Hibbing. During Koivisto's time they discontinued the one in North Hibbing and moved entirely to South Hibbing, we bought a house there in 1926. He was manager for the Hibbing Co-op. for about three years, and then he went to Keskus Osuuskunta (wholesale) and he was with them for over thirty years.

O: Tell me now, do you recall any incidents of the crisis in the Co-operative movement in 1929 and 1930 when there was the big quarrel with the Tyomies faction and I suppose the Bourgeois faction, with the Wholesale faction within the Co-op. when the Communists attempted to take over, was there a quarrel in Hibbing?

K: Yes indeed, in the beginning the vanholliset tyomiehen kannatajat (supporters of the working man) did buy from the

Cooperative but of course the American people didn't buy from them, there was no inducement to buy from them, it was entirely a Finnish store. There was one incident when my husband was still manager. A driver had an accident, I think he ran over someone and they sued for either \$10,000 or \$25,000. It was settled out of court, we had A.A. Toivonen for the lawyer, he was from Duluth. It was settled for either \$5,000 or \$10,000, I'm not sure which. The membership started to blame Koivisto for it, they said he wanted to settle it in order to get something for himself, I suppose they thought he got some of the money with Toivonen. You could not find a more honest man than my husband was.

O: Yes, so I have heard.

K: That was the reason he wanted to get out of here. That's when he went with the Wholesale. I was here alone with the child, sometimes he was gone for three or four months at a time, so I had to fill my life with something. My daughter went to school, and I was very active in social life, and toward this home naturally. I can show you how active I was, when I was in these plays, you know.

O: Here is an announcement of a Kesa Juhla (summer festival) in 1937, for example the Socialist Opera had a big naytelma (Program), then of course there was a Saturday night program and others also.

K: Salini was in Bewabic then, with his wife, she died not long ago. His daughter played the Harmonica at concerts

O: You were active then in a lot of plays? I notice one picture where you played Carmen and your husband played Don Jose.

K: Here are only a part of the posters I was in, in the beginning I wasn't historically minded, I started to collect this material when I worked for the Minnesotan Suomalais Osa.

O: This is the Messabi Vermillion alueen Teollisuuslaisten Kesa Juhlat which were held June 14 and 15, 1941, and again it was a very impressive program. What were you in, I see you sang a solo in Lauantai Ilta and you were in the play also. Were you in a lot of plays then?

K: It was my whole life. In that mini-biography there is a gap. It doesn't give any information as to what I did when I went to college.

O: Now here is Tyolaisten Juhlat on May 1, 1928, in the local area. A play noted as the IWW and Partiolaistien toimesta

at Nashwauk, Keewatin, Chisholm and Hibbing, and it was held at the Hibbing Worker's Hall and for example, they had an operetta of four acts, "Kulta Metalienkin". You were one of the singers in that operetta?

K: Yes, I was one of the leaders.

O: This is a play that you wrote and it is called "Kolme Tyhmaa Neitsytta"; it was a short play, was it not? I hope you saved a copy of that.

K: Yes, this is "Syn Sovitus" and Arvid played in that.

O: I might note that the Program notices and the articles you have collected are invaluable. Some of these of course, nobody has, and I would think that it would be important for the University of Minnesota Archives, and Suomi College also, to send someone to microfilm some of these materials. Tell me something about the organizations that you belonged to.

K: I belonged to eleven organizations, two Finnish, the Ladies of Kaleva and the Historical Society, the Women's Club, the (?) Music Hall, League of Women Voters, First Settlers, Range Artist's Association, American Association of Retired Persons.

O: What you are saying is that you were interested and active in the Finnish life of the community, but you were also active in the life in Hibbing in general.

K: There is no Finnish activity in Hibbing except the church. It is pretty well gone now, the Ladies of Kaleva meet once a month if there are enough members to come to the meeting.

O: I would like you to give me whatever personal observations that you might have made at this stage of your life, I suppose you have some judgements to make say, of the activities of the Work People's organizations. Do you really regard them in a positive light, do you feel that they contributed to the life of the Finns of America as a whole?

Yes, I think so, culturally and economically

O: Economically in the sense that it helped the worker develop a sense of class consciousness, so that he would go out and look out for himself, and organize labor unions?

K: Yes, and also culturally they have added much. If it was not for the Temperance Society and the Labor Movement in America, what cultural life would there be? The church people were very narrow, even now. They were interested only in religion, only in spiritual life.

- O: You felt very strongly that a person's life involves more than that, a person should be rounded then.
- K: Yes, I hope it doesn't detract anything from the impression you got from me but I never belonged to an organized church in Hibbing or in America for that matter. I have been baptised and I have been confirmed but we never stayed long enough in one place and as I told you, I thought the church people were too narrow minded. I feel this way, and this is my own philosophy, matter and energy is forever, Kun tietö loppuu, usko alkaa.
- O: I would say then that you really have a rounded philosophy, from all I can gather. That would be the kind of impression I have of you.

Do you think so?

- O: Yes, you have thought through some of the basic issues of life in communities here in America, basic issues of life, and how communities develop and you've seen communities in their very beginning, and you have seen them develop into very complex organizations. Would you say that the Finns have progressed in a very splendid way, through all of their organizations?
- K: The second generation, yes, but the first generation you know, most of them came here and they were very homesick, and many of them came here to earn money, especially those from Northern Finland, Vaasan Laanista, talon pojat, and talon tyttaret, and then they went back to Finland. That was my idea too, when I left school in Finland, I was going to earn some money and go back. But then when most of them stayed here, they really did something. Yes, they got married, I also got married, all this social activity, all these halls that they had, they had built and lost, was just because they were so homesick. They wanted activity, none of them wanted to join the church, and most of them didn't.



Who's Who of American Women

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KOIVISTO, EDITH ARMIDA, artist-journalist, b. Kuusankoski, Finland; came to U.S. 1910, naturalized; d. Robert and Wilhelmina (Nevala) Laine; public and secondary schools in Finland, Hibbing State College 1933-1935, 1953-1955; art at U. of Minnesota and in Europe 1959; m. Arvid Evald Koivisto Nov. 14, 1913 (dec. July 23, 1964); d. Armida (Mrs. Robert Swain Caird); columnist to Hibbing, Virginia, Minn., Superior, Wis., Fitchburg, Mass. newspapers and periodicals. Numerous national, regional, local art exhibits, group and one-man: 1964 Vendome House, Los Angeles, 1952 Kaleva Hall, Ishpeming, Mich., 1951 Hart Gallery, Duluth, Minn., 1953 69th Regimental Armory New York City, 1949 Dayton's Minnesota Centennial, Minneapolis, Lake Worth Art League, Lake Worth, Florida; annually at Hibbing Public Library and St. Louis County Fair.

Represented in permanent collections of Dr. and Mrs. W. Dodge, Rochester, Minn., 1949, Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Daniels, New York City 1953, Mrs. and President John F. Kennedy, Washington, D.C. 1963, Mrs. and President Harry S. Truman, Independence, Mo. 1964. Founder and Past President Hibbing High School PTA 1936-1938; founder 1934, Past President Hibbing Garden Club 1944-1946; founder St. Louis County Fair Art Department 1951, Past President Hibbing Art Center 1949-1951, Past President Hibbing Tuesday Musicale 1950-1952; founder and director of numerous music and art and drama societies.

Recipient of numerous art awards, Champion Grand Prize St. Louis County Fair 1967; prize winner in play contest by N.S. Co-op. Guilds and Clubs 1934.

Member of International Artists Guild, Federated Women's Clubs, Grand Lodge of Kaleva, Federated Music Clubs, Finlandia Foundation to mention few. Author "Pledge-History of the Finnish Temperance Movement" 1955, "History of the Finns in Hibbing" 1958. Numerous plays in English and Finnish. Radio program on WMFG 1939-1947. Contributor of articles and stories to English and Finnish Publications. Past Director and Member of Editorial Board of the Minnesota State Finnish American Historical Society 1954-1959.

Listed in "Who's Who of American Finns" 1949 by Raivaaja Publishing Co. Fitchburg, Mass.

Biographical sketch by the Editors of

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