



Finnish  
American  
Historical  
Archive  
and Museum

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

*(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)*

**F.F.S.C.G.L.M.R. DIGITIZATION PROJECT 2010-2011**

*(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory  
Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)*

***CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:***

Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: [archives@finlandia.edu](mailto:archives@finlandia.edu).

***PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:***

"Maki, John", Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

**Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:**

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

The following is a interview with K. WILBERT KUOPUS by Wallace Anderson made at the subject's home at 116 Stanton Street, Mohawk, Michigan, during the evening of 17 July 1972.

Wally: that's all there is to it. But before I forget, tell me about that game of the sticks, that pointed sticks that you mentioned before, that really interests me

Wilbert: You take a stick that's about 6 inches long and pointed at each end and another stick that you carry around, the idea is to bat the bat on the angle-side of the peg and when it jumps up in the air, you give it a swipe with your other stick, the club that you have. And you try to get it towards the center of the circle.

Wally How big a circle did you have to get into?

Wilbert: All depends on how, whatever size you want; it can be 10 feet but you can only hit it once or twice and you're in the center but the best thing is to have a circle maybe about 200 feet across, then you start anywhere on the edge and you work inward from that.

Wally: Did the kids play this? All the time?

Wilbert: They used to play it a lot

Wally I never heard of that game at all

Wilbert: I even taught some of ~~those kids~~ down the lakeshore school how to do it.

Wally Well, to get ~~it~~ we were talking about schools before, when did you start school and in what school in Calumet?

Wilbert I started in Swedetown School, went kindergarten there

Wally: That school is no longer in existence

Wilbert: No, that's been ripped down

Wally: That was kindergarten, that would have been about, what, 19--

Wilbert: And I was only about half through kindergarten when we moved over to Pine Street and then I went to the Lincoln School.

Wally: That would have been about what? 19--05 06, something like that?

Wilbert Somewhere around there.

Wally That's when the population up here was tremendous. They must have had an awful lot of schools.

Wilbert: There were about 60 kids in the kindergarten

Wally: In the kindergarten alone? Did the kids from the different nationalities get along together or did they kind of

Wilbert Well, they kind of decided, you know, according to nationalities, the Finns were on my side

Wally (laughter) you ought to have the rest of 'em outnumbered up here then

Wilbert There were a couple of Italians that I hated they were always looking

*Dates*

for arguments and fights

Wally: You didn't know any English when you started school

Wilbert: No, no. When the teacher asked me something, I looked at her and said, "nah?"

Wally: Then ran home at recess?

Wilbert: Then I ran home at recess time and my mother said, well, why did you come home? I said, I'm not going to go, I'm not going to stay with those, those "tois kielises", you know, other languages.

Wally: Well, did they have a regular program in the schools/<sup>then</sup>to teach you English?

Wilbert: No. You just stood there like a bump on a log and you gradually soaked in the English language.

Wally: You had to pick it up on your own?

Wilbert: Oh, yes. There were no formal process of educating the foreigners.

Wally: That must have been pretty rough!

Wilbert: It was. Tough on the teachers and tough on the kids

Wally: Ya. How many years were you in school then before you got to where you could get by in English pretty well?

Wilbert: Oh, it didn't take long when you're outside playing with the kids, why, I speak combination of Swede, Norwegian, Cousin Jack and what have you.

Wally: Well, then you went to the grade schools and what, Calumet High School?

Wilbert: I went through the Lincoln School through the 7th grade there and that's where I had my best teacher, Miss Hall. Well, I had to go to the Washington School to finish my 8th grade and from the Washington School, I went to the high school.

Wally: And did you go right straight through college after you graduated from high school?

Wilbert: High school, I applied for a 3rd-year teaching certificate. First year after leaving high school I didn't do anything, I looked for a job. I went to Detroit Worked in a factory.

Wally: When was that?

Wilbert: 1920-21

Wally: '21. When did you decide to teach then?

Wilbert: Oh, after I had suffered from the depression of 1921, why, my mother said, why don't you go to school? I said, I don't have any money. She said, well, I understand that John Spat from Bete Gries needs a helper in there and Olson will pay you pretty good wages if you go up there and work, so I went out there and I act as a "flunky" driving a tractor and milking cows and this and that so

Wally: What were "pretty good" wages?

Wilbert: Wages: I believe he paid me \$10 a week

And I roomed and boarded at Spats'.

Wally: Well, that wasn't too bad

Wilbert: no, I enjoyed it, especially in the wintertime, I was batching at the schoolhouse in Bete Gries but (I'm going beyond my story) I had my first job at, with Cap Wilson and then of course, in order to teach I had to go to Marquette, so I went to Marquette and took their summer school course with the result that I wrote a written examination and passed it and I received my 3rd grade certificate.

Wally: At that time then you could teach with a

Wilbert: I was allowed to teach

Wally: with a high school education and this short course

Wilbert: ya. So the next summer I went to school again

Wally: well, did you come back and teach that year then?

Wilbert: Oh, yes.

Wally Where did you teach your

Wilbert: White Siding.

Wally: Where?

Wilbert: White Siding.

Wally: Where in the devil is White Siding?

Wilbert: White Siding is in, you know that road that runs from Baraga to Mass City?

Wally: Ya, ya

Wilbert: What's the number of it? 26?

Wally: 35!

Wilbert: Well, anyway I was, White Siding that's about 3 or 4 miles west of Nisula.

Wally: How big a school was that out there?

Wilbert: 50 pupils. All grades.

Wally: Did you have to teach more than one grade or did you have

Wilbert: I taught 8 grades.

Wally: 8 grades

Wilbert: plus the kindergarten. Ya, I really had a joyful time there.

Wally: Well, Nisula, that's basically all Finnish country down there, wasn't it?

Wilbert: Ya. And I weighed only 120 pounds when I started teaching.

Wally: Some of those farm kids must have

Wilbert: Those farm kids, about half of the class was bigger than I was!  
And the girls, all of them were bigger than I was.

Wally: Did you have any troubles?

Wilbert: No.

Wally And you went back to school and

Wilbert: So I went back to school the following summer and for a second 3rd-grade certificate. I was afraid to take a 2nd-grade certificate because I didn't have too much time for study.

Wally: What is this 3rd-grade certificate? What does that mean?

Wilbert Well, there was a 3rd-grade which was the lowest.

Wally: Ya, what could you teach with that 3rd-grade?

Wilbert: Rural school.

Wally: Rural school. Right up through 8th grade?

Wilbert: Ya. Then 2nd-grade certificate would allow you to teach for 3 years, you didn't have to do any studying or take any examination, well, I never did apply for a 1st-grade because by that time I had so many summer schools in that I decided that I didn't need it and I was going to go to school and get a little more schooling.

Wally: Where did you teach your second year then?

Wilbert: The second year, taught in Bete Gries.

Wally: How big a school was that out there then?

Wilbert: 3 pupils.

Wally: 3? A lot like Copper Harbor now

Wilbert: Ya. I graduated from 50 pupils to 3 pupils

Wally: laughter that must have been a pretty good deal though

Wilbert: It was and I got more money for it!. I was getting \$85 a month teaching in White Siding and I got \$95 a month teaching in Bete Gries, not only that, but I bought some traps and I started trapping on the side at Bete Gries and I made more money trapping than I did teaching school.

Wally: What were you trapping for? Beaver?

Wilbert: No, no beaver but weasels and marten and mink, I got 3 or 4 mink and those were worth money those days.

Wally: That's nice going, well, marten must have been worth pretty much

Wilbert: Ya, ya

Wally: they were pretty scarce

Wilbert: I think I got \$60 for one hide.

Wally: Holy smokes!

Wilbert: I sent it down to Sears Roebuck

Wally: they were buying furs?

Wilbert: They were buying furs. And they said that my furs were first class because they were so clean. I had scraped them and made sure there was no grease in them

Wally: Were you batching out there then?

Wilbert: I was living in the school house.

Wally: in the school house. How about groceries and stuff?

Wilbert: In Bete Gries? Well, do you know August Raisanen?

Wally: Ya, from the Legion? He's over in the American Legion here.

Wilbert: Yeh, well he was working for the store in Eagle River and he'd go out once every 3 weeks to pick up the mail and deliver it to all these different places and take in groceries to these people and we'd lkinda' look forward to August because that was our only connection with the world. There were no radios then or anything like that.

Wally: How many families were living out there then about that time?

Wilbert: 4, one family had children

Wally: What were they doing out there?

Wilbert: Caretakers.

Wally: Just caretakers, and the county had to keep a school for them out there?

Wilbert: Oh, definitely. But that was the last year when I taught there, that was the last year that they had school there because the C&H refused to give Berg a, what would you call that, a lease so Berg didn't have a lease and it meant that he had to get out of there so he moved to Copper Harbor, got kicked out of Bete Gries.

Wally: Was the school part of the county system?

Wilbert: Oh, yes. Ya, who was the school commissioner, Bettens,--no, Henry Winter Henry Winter was the school commissioner and I spent one year at Bete Gries.

Wally: Well, did they have a bunch of those little schools then located up through Keweenaw County or

Wilbert: Oh, yes, like there was a school in Gay, there was another one at Heberd, and there was a school in Fulton

Wally: There still was population scattered around at that time

Wilbert: Oh, yes, population was scattered and thick, very heavy.

Wally: well, where did you teach then the following year, after you left there?

Wilbert: Well, when I left Bete Gries I had applied in this district, in Allouez Township so I was hired to teach down Gratiot River school

Wally: Gratiot River School? Where was that located?

Wilbert: Gratiot River School is on the road going to the lake behind Ahmeek.

Wally: Oh, off the 5-mile point road, and then turning in toward

Wilbert: Ya, the schoolhouse was on the 5-mile point road

Wally: Oh, there must have been a bunch of farms back there

Wilbert: Ohhhh, there was a slew of them; there was really a slew of them!

Wally: Did you have to teach 1 thru 8 there or

Wilbert: Oh, yes

Wally: Same way

Wilbert: same thing

Wally: How many kids did you have there?

Wilbert: I had 35 kids

Wally: Must have been quite a few farms and stuff then out in that area  
Did you live out there in the same way?

Wilbert: Well, I batched one winter in the schoolhouse but I roomed and boarded with Antti Kuopus, he was no relation to me, see, the way he got that name "Kuopus" was living with the Kuopus family in Finland and they called him Anti Kuopus instead of whatever his last name was. They got a habit of doing that in the old country. Did you know that?

Wally: Ya, ya, you find the same thing in Germany, a lot of times

Wilbert: so I put 7 years

Wally: well, were you teaching there by yourself, too

Wilbert: Ya, 7 years I spent there and then I decided I better go somewhere else so I saw Dave and I said I'd like to get a change of schools, Well, he said, I'll tell you what, he said, I have an opening down Tamarack Waterworks, lakeshore school. I went out there and I was out there 8 years.

Wally: Was that another one of these

Wilbert: country schools. Wooden building

Wally: Well, there was only about 2 or 3 families out there now, aren't there?

Wilbert: I don't know. I don't know if there's any families out there

Wally: There's a couple houses. I drove out there last Sunday

Wilbert: The houses are there but no families!

Wally: No families living there.

Wilbert: Ah, ah, so you see I've done a good job of closing up schools (laughter)

Wally: Doing yourself out of business, huh?

Wilbert: Ya. From there, of course, came the time when I wanted to get away from it all. That's when I quit. I went to Ypsilanti for a year to school and I got my life certificate and I went summer schools several summers afterward and I got my bachelor of science degree from Ypsilanti and I continued going to school and in 1945 I got my masters degree.

Wally: From the same place?

Wilbert: same place. There weren't too many masters degrees around here, I'll tell you that.

Wally: I'll bet not. I bet there weren't

Wilbert: And I didn't get any help. I applied but I didn't get any federal help or state help

Wally: Not like today, eh?

Wilbert: No! Kids today got it nice, they just go and ask for money and it's given out to them

Wally: After you left Tamarack Waterworks, course, that was Houghton county wasn't it,

Wilbert: No, that Keweenaw

Wally: Is Tamarack Waterworks, Keweenaw?

Wilbert: Yeh

Wally: Is it still?

Wilbert: Sure

Wally: Well, where did you teach after that then?

Wilbert: (Let me think now) I had this all written down somewhere. Oh, in Mohawk. I told Daly I'm tired of country schools and he says, I don't blame you. He said I got a school for you. You can teach in Henry Winters place. Winters was the school commissioner and principal of the Mohawk school but he retired so I got the 8th grade job there.

Wally: And how many years did you teach there in Mohawk?

Wilbert: Well, after the winter died, I applied for that school commissioner's job. And I got that. Of course, that was extra, that was back in 1940 so Daly was "kind" enough to die and I was picked for his place. So I started in this township as a superintendent, then I was still a school commissioner so I was holding a double job.

Wally: And were you teaching too?

Walibert:

Wally: administration then, eh?

Wilbert: Soon as I got that job I was out of the teaching.

Wally: You taught "off and on" since then, though

Wilbert: I substituted a lot of times when a teacher was ill or missing but not until 1960 or something like that (I forget now when I retired) but it was in '60 and I wouldn't lie now, I would want to tell you the truth, I think it was 1962 when I quit and I figure that I still got a couple of good years in me so I am going to go teach somewhere. I went down to Copper City for a couple of years, they needed a teacher so I went over there.

Wally: And you ended up with teaching somebody retarded, children

Wilbert: Well, from there then I went to Copper Harbor.

Wally: Copper Harbor? You mean up in that little --

Wilbert: ya, the one room school

Wally: Holy cats!

Wilbert: I spent one year there but that was a miserable winter. We were snowed in most of the time.

Wally: Was Elsie up there with you?

Wilbert: Sure. We were snug "as a bug in a rug" (laughter) very happy, just the two of us

Wally: How many kids did you have up there then?

Wilbert: Well, I started off with 2 and 1 disappeared a little later in the year so I had only 1 pupil and then February month, the pupil I had moved to Marquette so I didn't have any pupils and I was drawing my pay without teaching because there was nobody there!

Wally: Well, I tell you, you've really seen the changes though that occurred in schools over a period of time, huh?

Wilbert: Ya

Wally: Different systems that they've tried to use

Wilbert: One school I would have liked to taught in but I was administrator then, was Betsy.

Wally; Betsy? In stead of teaching you'd have been fishing all the time

Wilbert: I suppose (laughter)

Wally: You'd have been having classes out on your boat out there, that's the thing that could have happened

Wilbert: Betsy was a nice area.

Wally: You know, when you were out in these little schools, Bill, how often did you get into town and that? Did you come in on week-ends?

Wilbert: Well, I lived practically in Calumet most of the time

Wally: You mean when you were down in the Waterworks and that area. How'd you get back and forth to school then?

Wilbert: Skis and snowshoes. I busted 3 pairs of skis, wore them out

Wally: That must have taken you quite a time to go back and forth

Wilbert: Well, it didn't take too long as far as travel was concerned but it took an awful lot of weight off me

Wally: I guess. That hill from Waterworks, that

Wilbert: I weighed 220 pounds in the fall when I started skiing and I wound up 150 in the spring.

Wally: That a pretty high hill to come up

Wilbert: it's a darn high climb

Wally: it's nice going toward the school but, well, how about when you were out there at the other areas, like

Wilbert: Copper Harbor?

Wally: Well, you got a little town there but Bete Gries and that in the early days, did you get in to, were you able to

Wilbert: no, I didn't get into town at all from Bete Gries

Wally: you had to stay out there all the time

Wilbert: only Christmas time, Bushel Tempe was out there and bullcook was going out, I used to visit him week-ends. When he told me he was taking a horse and going to town, would I care to go along, I said, sure, I'd be glad to go with you so I rode behind that horse all the way to Mohawk, then I got on the street car.

Wally: That must have taken some time

Wilbert: Oh, it took a lil' time alright

Wally: Did you ever, can you remember any real sharp students?

Wilbert: At the Lake shore school, my 5th grade, consisted of 5 girls and they were pretty good, they were sharp, you know, the 2 that were lil' slower, why, were helped by the others so that they were up to par. I took a course in testing and measuring down at Marquette and I had a chance to practice on these 5 kids. See when there wasn't any competition it was pretty tough to form an opinion but these 5 girls really did a good job of, you know, taking the tests and I would say that that was a superior group.

Wally: Did you ever follow them up to find out how they

Wilbert: They all got married

Wally: They all married. Pity the poor husbands!!

Wilbert: They were nice kids, though.

Wally: How did the different ethnic groups get along together in these

Wilbert: in those schools?

Wally: Ya.

Wilbert: Good. No trouble at all.

Wally: This is something everybody always wonders about

Wilbert: They never call each other names or anything like that. Nobody said that you're a Cousin Jack or what-have-you. There was one girl that claimed that she had negro blood in her but I never, she looked white so I didn't question it.

Wally: Did you ever have many of the Indians?

Wilbert: No Indians

Wally: Not at all. Of course they were all down along in the L'Anse area.

Wilbert: Only Indians were Finns! Finglish. (Findians

Wally: No, that's something, isn't it? Schools are so much different today, they tend to forget what it must have been like to try and teach in those places and going back and forth and you don't have the equipment, the supplies or anything else

Wilbert: Supplies were very scarce.

Wally: I would imagine.

Wilbert: We just buried Mrs. Berg, did you know her?

Wally: I had her on my list to interview

Wilbert: Should have had her

Wally: I know, she was a sheriff up here for 10 years, wasn't she?

Wilbert: Ya. And then she was a secretary of the school board in Grant Township.

Wally: Ya. I had her on my list, I was

Wilbert: She, she had doings with all the teachers that came in  
Ya, she was a wonderful woman, Mrs. Berg was.

Wally: Who were some of the other better teachers around the area? The old-timers?

Wilbert: Of the teachers you mean? Well, there's one not too long ago, Erkkila,

Wally: Well, he's teaching now

Wilbert: Ya, he's teaching in Calumet

Wally: Ya, I had him as a student

Wilbert: Well, he had finished his work in Marquette and came looking for a job

so I told him, sure, I got a opening for you, you can have it for experience and he said I'll be glad to work for you so when first morning came, I went up to the room and he was there kindda' doddling along and getting things ready, I said, Harry, one thing you want to remember, is that you went to school in Marquette and you've got a hellvua lot of information, didn't you, lotsa techniques about teaching and this and that, he said, yes, I'm pretty well primed. I said, well, between you and me, forget the whole goddamn rigamarol, he said, whatta you mean? I said, forget it because what you know yourself is the best thing. Don't try to be a book educator.

Wally: I think you're right.

Wilbert: He was kinnda' abashed, he said, well, how can I do that? I said, well, I'll come up in the morning and I'll give you a hand but you got an easy grade, I said, 4th grade, he said, well, aren't the other grades easy? I said, don't you know that the second grade, fourth grade, sixth grade and eighth grades are the easy-- you know, easy subjects to teach -- but you take the odd ones and that's where you have your trouble because in every one of those odd classes, they have some new material coming up. You take Arithmetic, the 7th grade arithmetic is tough but 8th grade is easy. You take 6th grade Arithmetic, it's tough but then, you know, that's the way it goes. Every other class, why,

Wally Bob was a good student! I had him the first year I taught I had him as one of my students. Good lad.

Wilbert: So, came a case of discipline. He asked me, he said, there's a boy over there misbehaving pretty badly, I said, can't you take care of him, well, I don't want the parents coming up here and raising cane about it, I said, I'll tell you what; you're the boss in this room and I said I'll show you how to take care of him. I took the kid out in the hall and I gave him a helluva rap in the gut. I said, Now do you understand Mr. Erkkila? He's the boss, the lad said, yes, yeh, yeh, yeh, I said, OK. The minute you get out of line he's got my permission to bop you twice as hard as what I bopped you. Now do you understand what we want you to do? He said, yesss, you want me to be a good boy, I said, you betcha you're going to be a good boy. He didn't get hurt at all, he just got scared.

Wally: Was that pretty common back in the one-room school, did they use

Wilbert: Oh, I never had any trouble with the kids, I got along fine with 'em.

Wally: We should have a little more of it today in the schools. Well, back in those early days then, how many schools were there really? Scattered around in Keweenaw County about?

Wilbert Well, there was a school in Bete Gries, certain northern most in Bete Gries; Copper Harbor; Eagle Harbor; Eagle River; Heberd; Mohawk and Ahmeek and Allouez; so far that's 9 and then there was one up the hill from Phoenix, there was a school there. I know I used to go out there in the wintertime, lot of times skiing and I'd see the teacher, she stayed right up at the school house.

Wally: Even after you got to working around, you still had to go around on skiis, huh?

Wilbert: Oh, sure. But the biggest hike was from Gay, you know, from the pump station to Betsy.

Wally, Oh, up the shoreline

Wilbert: Ya. 4 or 5 miles. It seemed that every time that I went in there, it was raining. I'd go slogging in there and wading through that muck and all that stuff. You couldn't follow the shore all the way, you had to go in the woods. There was a school at Phoenix, that was a pretty good-sized school, Phoenix school was, it must have had about a hundred kids in there.

Wally: Boy, there's hardly any of those schools left up

Wilbert: no

Wally, they're all gone

Wilbert: I closed 'em

Wally: When did they start busting them in?

Wilbert: Well, we started from Tamarack Waterworks, see, when I left that school, there was nobody to teach there so, ya, this Rev. Karvonen was in there for one year after I left and he didn't get along too well with the kids but there's another school, Cliff School, but, of course, Tamarack Waterworks-- Did you know that there was a settlement over at the quarry?

Wally: I didn't even know that there was a quarry

Wilbert: oh, yes, on the Gay Road, off the Gay Road,

Wally: North of it?

Wilbert: No, you know where Hebard is, well, just a little beyond Hebard, there's old quarry pits

Wally: What were the quarries? sandstone?

Wilbert: Sandstone.

Wally: Was it like sandstone at Jacobsville?

Wilbert: Better. Better rock.

Wally: Well, how/did they quarry that?  
late

Wilbert: Well, I think one of the last workers was Bill O'Brien. It must have been about 1920 when they left, cut the last stone out of there.

Wally: NOthing much left around there now, I guess

Wilbert: No. Water. It's a wonder you can still drown in there.  
really

Wally: I wonder how many kids/know about it and hang around in the area.

Wilbert: Well, the people who own it, own the land, used to chase the kids out of there and they were pretty rough about doing that, it was for their own good, keep them away from the water, couple kids wanted to build rafts in there, you know what kind of rafts they'd make. Have it together just far enough so that they could get away from the shore and fall apart.

Wally: How many students do you think there were about roughly, in the Keweenaw area back in those days?

Wilbert: Well, Gratiot River had quite a few; Eagle River had quite a few students; and, of course, Ahmeek and Mohawk and Allouez, they were going strong

Wally: Ya, you know like we were talking before about Eagle River, what it is today with those few people out there and what it must have been, it's really hard to picture.

Wilbert: I'll tell you one guy I used to see was Dick Luoma.

Wally: Luoma?

Wilbert: Ya, from Allouez. Do you know him?

Wally: No, I don't think so

Wilbert: He was janitor in Ahmeek school for a long time but he could give you quite a story on his experiences.

Wally: Well, that must have been pretty difficult, you know, you're teaching like 8 grades at one time,

Wilbert: You can't allow much time for each grade and each subject

Wally: Well, I wouldn't imagine and yet, I think, in one respect it probably was pretty good because kids from 3rd, 4th, and 5th would all be listening to the same thing

Wilbert: oh, yah, they absorbed, they were absorbing the instruction from the older pupils and many times I deliberately let them, these flash cards, when you learn your multiplication, adding and subtracting and that, well, the flash cards, some older boy or girl could hand the flash cards, and you know, learning is really nothing but rote. You repeat a thing over and over again until it's a part of you. That's the only way that I could get the tables into those kids' heads, was to have them memorize them and it was important that they knew their tables.

Wally: And they don't do that anymore.

Wilbert: No,

Wally: As a result, you ask them to figure out a problem and they have a heck of a time. They can't do it in their heads.

Wilbert: Like my daughter was having a rough time with her work in English in school. I told her, I'll tell you what, Sis, I'll help you. will you, pa? I said, sure. So I started saying to her, I said there's certain rules in grammar that you have to maintain, you gotta learn, I told her what these rules were and I said, now, you memorize them and don't forget, they sound silly like "i before e except after c or when sounded as a in a neighboring way" I said, you learn that and remember when you come to a situation like that it's gotta be that way, no other way. Well, she learned that, it was kinda' hard for her to absorb but she got it. Then in Arithmetic, I taught her tables, I taught her, you know, various other things in Arithmetic. She came home one day, she says, we had long division, how does that work out, pa? I said, well, I'll show you. And so it went, from one to another, she -- you know that I had 5 boys in my kitchen many nights of the week? Learning arithmetic. Loren was one of the boys from over here on the back street and one from 5th street. Well, there were 5 of them anyway and I had quite a time of it getting it into Loren's head. It seems like there was all bone and couldn't (laughter)

Wally: I've had a few list that, too.

Wilbert: So the only thing I could do, was drill 'em. Drill and drill and drill.

Lucky if I maint got it. He comes up here every once in a while with his family, he stops in to visit me, he says, you were a tough teacher when it came to learning, he says, but I got it. Goll darnit, nobody can say I didn't study

Wally: Did you have many students at that time coming like when you had started school without being able to speak English?

Wilbert: Ya, there were some sluggish, you know, mentally slow

Wally: but did you have any of them coming in with being only able to speak Finnish?

Wilbert: No, no, not later on; at first there were a few in the rural area and they'd be more apt to lapse into the vernacular than anything else and when they got stuck on a word, they'd just come out in Finn

Wally: How about the parents? Were the parents back in those days basically back the education?

Wilbert: Oh, the parents were 100% behind me. "Jos sulla on rubblia, niin opettajan kans, niin sinulla kähypi huonosti, poika", in other words, if you have trouble with the teacher, you're going to get it.

Wally: "You're going to have trouble with me when you get home,"?

Wilbert: Ya. There was one fellow, a farmer back here, he had a boy from the Goodwill Farm. Well, that boy was more or less like a slave, you know, he had to work on the farm, do this and do that and he lost a few days of school and I told him that you better stay in at noontime so what happened he stayed in and I helped him in classes I worked half-an-hour noontime and lo and behold, the second day that he stayed, here comes the farmer and did he raise particular cane! I told him, I said, Listen that is not your child, it's not my child, but I'm going to see to it that that child gets a schooling regardless of you or not, so then I had to tell it to him in Finn because he didn't understand English so lo and behold, the first thing you know my boss was out there, Daly, he went over Tiery's farm and he says, your boy not in school? boy gotta work, teacher said, boy gotta be in school, boy gotta' work; if that boy isn't in school tomorrow morning with his books, police are going to come down pick you up. That's all it needed. They're deathly afraid of police, these foreigners are.

Wally: oh, yes; when you see the way the police operate over in some of those foreign countries you know why. They've got an awful lot of authority. Not like now,

Wilbert: Another thing that I found out was that there is a tendency to have diseases like tuberculosis and you know, other contagious diseases. In those areas, because when they block up their windows for the winter they don't open them, there's no fresh air; not only that, they don't see doctors. Doctors cost money,

Wally: all the old home remedies, huh?  
Can you remember any particular ones?

Wilbert: T.B.

Wally: no, I mean, some of the particular remedies that they used to

Wilbert: Oh, ya; you've heard of Goose grease being rubbed on the chest; one family did that; and course, rheumatism, they had these liniments and you rubbed them on but the company was generous, you know, the fellows working in the mines and they could get all the liniment they wanted for their aches and pains.

Wally: Well, there used to be a good deal of bleeding around, too, didn't there?

Wilbert: Oh, yes; you know what that was in Finn, don't you--kupos--cupping.

Wally: Cupping, ya, that's what I meant to say. Because I can remember Irene's mother as late as World War II having that done.

Wilbert: Ya, cupping was quite the thing. And my father had himself cupped 2-3 times but it seemed to relieve his rheumatism, too.

Wally: Well, I think they're coming back, they found in certain instances that it's used today.

Wilbert: And massage.

Wally, Ya

Wilbert: They all believed in massage. I had a friend that when to high school the same time I did, he was Eddie Kangas, lived on--his mother had a grocery store on Pine Street right when you enter town--and Eddie went to a school down in Chicago where they taught all these spinal adjustments

Wally: something like a chiropractor

Wilbert: something like a chiropractor, well, the result was that Eddie came back from school, he had been down there about 6 months, and I was complaining about a headache he says, let me try taking care of it, so I sat in the chair and he started manipulating the bones in my neck, he says, how's your headache, I said, I don't have it anymore. I heard \_\_\_\_\_ something he could in Finnish. The boy had learned a lot of stuff in that time and then he was unfortunate enough to get typhoid fever and die.

Wally: Well, didn't they have a big typhoid, was it typhoid, ya it was typhoid right after World War I, didn't they when an awful lot of people died in this country?

Wilbert: I had typhoid but I weathered it.

Wally: In fact I think that swept all over the country.  
How about home medicines, did they make a lot of home concotions?

Wilbert: Well, my father believed in making his own home-made wine, they -----

Wally: If you want to call that medicine

Wilbert: that was medicine

Wally: Ya, I made a good choke cherry wine last fall, came out good, that's the first I ever made

Wilbert: Well, I made some choke cherry wine and it tasted like church wine

Wally: church wine?

Wilbert: Ya, it had that heavy body to it and smooth taste, oh, that was delicious, that's the trouble with it, it's too good

Wally; ya, it doesn't last long enough ; well, talking about churches, you're member of the National church

Wilbert: Sure I was

Wally: that was a big congregation at one time, I guess

Wilbert: that's right

Wally: way back when--did they have the same getting together on what is it? St. John's Day? Did people come from all over on St. John's Day?

Wilbert: Oh, yes

Wally: Is it Pine Street that still has that

Wilbert: Pine Street still has a big gathering

Wally: in June

Wilbert: School is out and that's when they congregate

Wally: Ya, the churches must have been really going strong up here then.

Wilbert: nothing but

Wally: seems like these was a church on every corner

Wilbert: And I was connected with the church quite a bit because I used to drive the minister around when I was a younger boy, I was able to drive a car, I didn't have any license but Heideman wanted me to drive him around. He wanted to go to a christening or to a meeting somewhere, I drove him and he car was called a Haroon

Wally: what the heck was that?

Wilbert: Oh, it was a good car, very economical thing, didn't use much gas, H A A R R O U N

Wally: I've never heard of that one--  
He was quite a character, wasn't he?

Wilbert: Oh, he was a dandy.

Wally: Ya, I've heard some of the stories my wife used to tell about him

Wilbert: Well, he used to go in some widow's house and he'd be in there half-an-hour, come busting out rubbing his hands together, now the widow will last quite a while, he'd say, he told; I used to hear all kinds of crap about, you know, about him and ~~was~~ half the time I had a hard time swallowing but knowing him personally I could see that he was like that, in fact we got to be such good buddy-buddies that he wanted to go hunting with me, deer hunting, I was leary of him, he had shot one fellow

Wally: shot a guy?

Wilbert: Ya, he shot a guy deer hunting but he was forgiven because he was a minister nothing happened.

Wally: did he kill him?

Wilbert: Sure, deader than a doornail. So when I took him over to Anderson's over in

Lac la Belle, I left him there and I got in my car and I went all the way to Bete Gries because I wanted at least 3 miles between me and the reverend. (laughter) So I left him close to Anderson's and he could go back to the farm place from there.

Wally: Well, I'll tell you, this must have been some country to live in up in that time it's so doggone hard to picture it, that many people in this area.

Wilbert: well, I'll tell you, the people were poor; they were really poor.

Wally: I don't see how these farms made a go of it.

Wilbert: Well, that's where they flocked--on the farms and in the mines

Wally: Did a lot of the guys who did farming, mine too?

Wilbert: Oh, yes

Wally: They had to, I guess to make a living at it

Wilbert: They had to. Well, like Elsie's father, he bought a farm and he was farming and working in the mine in town, besides.

Wally: Did he ski in, or walk in back and forth to work, huh?

Wilbert: From Lake Linden, all the way up the hill, you know, to work in the mine, go home again in the night.

Wally: Gee whiz they must have spent half the day going back and forth to work

Wilbert: She was really tough going those days. But the worst was when the strike was on in 1913; you heard about it, didn't ya?

Wally: Oh, ya, I've heard about it.

Wilbert: They had the soldiers here and that summer that they were here, I was staying with my aunt or uncle and wife up in Opeechee; you know where Opeechee is?

Wally: No.

Wilbert: It was the last mine before you get to Boston, or <sup>Demmon</sup> ~~dem~~ or whatever you want to call it, well, that's where the Opeechee mine was, you could ride the street cars as far as Tecumseh, then you go through the woods to the farm house.

Wally: Ya, they must have led a pretty rough life!

Wilbert: It was very rough!

Wally: Working all hours and getting back and forth to work

Wilbert: still the people were very religious, they attended church regularly and no one thought about staying home.

Wally: Well, when they went to the church, what did they have to do? Mostly walk?

Wilbert:

Wally: To get to church, the whole family?

Wilbert: Sure. You'd see families walking down the road, all dressed up in their Sunday best. And I know I had to dress up although I lived right next door to the minister.

Wally: You know, it's too bad that we didn't get all this history back then, huh? And get it down.

Wilbert: Most of what they have now is handed down from father to son

Wally: It should be available for everybody. Look at the old stories, folk tales and all those things that we should have, say, all that.

Wilbert: During the strike I remember one incident; there was a scab, do you know what a scab is?

Wally: Ya

Wilbert: Well, this scab thought he could get away with it. He was working in the power house there up in Location but the strikers had an idea that he was in there, they went in there, they rummaged around until they found him. They chased him outside. And half-dozen of them with big clubs were hitting him, they chased him as far as the snow fence on the side of the railroad track, then they beat the living hell out of him. I saw blood flying all around there, they left him there and they went back to town.

Wally: Ya, things were pretty rough during that time

Wilbert: To be a striker was the only thing; otherwise, if you were a scab, your life wasn't worth the powder to blow you to hell.

Wally: Once that strike was over though, this country started going down hill, didn't it?

Wilbert, Oh, definitely! And they didn't get much, you know, what they were after. In fact they got worse. Because the company had been giving them land that they could raise potatoes and have a garden, you know and all that, they discontinued that. They wouldn't let them have any land. You've seen that fine drilling that they had for a swimming pool, didn't you?

Wally: ya, right on the main drag up there

Wilbert: The company discontinued that. Those were all fringe benefits that we benefited from.

Wally: Think it'll ever come back?

Wilbert: No. Because I doubt if this new method of mining would pan out; I can't see using chemicals underground.

Wally: No

Wilbert: I can see using chemicals on the rock that's up on top of the ground that's been hauled up but --ya, during that strike--one night there was a thunderstorm and it was in July month, oh, it was a rough storm, well, I was upstairs in the bedroom-- didn't really go to bed, and a bullet whizzed from through the window and across the room to the other wall. Then I heard the crashing of the gun, oh, my god, they were \_\_\_\_\_ they shot somebody out there but I don't why they had to shoot at the window because the lamp was burning in the room.

Wally: Well, maybe it was just a wild shot

Wilbert: It could've been-- well, I had sense enough to know that my sister and I had better get out of that house if they're going to start shooting indiscriminately like that and I told Florence, I said, I think we'd better get out of here.

Wally Was you dad involved in that

Wilbert No. When the strike started, my father took off with his brother and they went to Creighton Mine near Sudbury

Wally up in Canada?

Wally:

Wilbert: Ya. /Did many of the other miners do the same thing?

Wilbert: Well, there was Mickelson and (noise) they all went there in Canada and started working the copper mines there

Wally That's a desolate-looking country too.

Wilbert there's no green stuff there

Wally No. I know I drove through there and it's, well, I wouldn't want to live in that area.

Wilbert: There's a boy came up from Sudbury, came here to Michigan Tech and the first time they came, they were just on a visit; more or less sizing up what the area looked like, and the boy was telling his mother: ma, let's go home, he says, there's too many trees out here, I'm afraid of 'em.

Wally: can understand it being from Sudbury

Wilbert never saw trees

Wally that's just bare rock up there.  
Did many of the Finns go back to Finland, Bill?

Wilbert: When the Communists invaded this area, quite a few of the Finns went back to Finland.

Wally When was that? Was that about the time of the strike or

Wilbert It was after the strike, I'd say between 1915 and 1920

Wally: Why did they go back--were they

Wilbert They went back because they were promised these wonderful things over in Russia. They were wonderful things, alright! There's one poor woman went out there, she was an agitator if there ever was one, and she said, telling the rest of the women, I'm going to go over where it's free and I can do as I please. She took it. They had 3 or 4 kids and she and her husband and their kids took off for Finland and they went over to the Russian side. Well, the kids disappeared out there and finally she had help from--she wrote to people in the United States and they sent money for her to come--her husband died out there but she had enough money to buy a ticket to come back and boy did she curse the Soviet Republic. She had no use for the Communists.

Wally Was there a good deal of communist agitation up around through this country

Wilbert: Oh, of course. There's still going on. All you have to do is go behind Ahmeek and listen to those farmers out there.

Wally: Well, I didn't think there was too much of it left up here anymore

Wilbert: No, it's been dying--it's a dying institution, but if the United States

end

*Gazette*  
*6/21/73*

## Area educator K. W. Kuopus passes away

MOHAWK — K.W. (Bill) Kuopus, 71, widely known educator and former superintendent of the Schools of Allouez Township, Keweenaw County, died in the Houghton County Medical Care Facility at noon Wednesday. He had been a patient there for two weeks.

He was born July 9, 1901 in Osceola, a son of Ida and Adolph Kuopus, resided in Calumet during his youth and attended the Calumet Public Schools, graduating from the Calumet High School in 1920. He then attended Northern Michigan Teachers College, and Ypsilanti State College and received his master's degree in education from the University of Michigan.



K.W. (Bill) Kuopus

Bill first taught at Pete Grise for one year, then at Nisula at Copper Harbor and Centennial school, but most of his 43 years in education he was with the Allouez Township School system and was superintendent there for over 20 years. He retired from teaching in 1972. He was very interested in special education instruction.

Mr. Kuopus was a member of the NRTA, AARP, Secretary of the Calumet Order of Moose Lodge and a member of the Calumet Aerie of Eagles. He served on the Keweenaw County Draft Board for over 20 years.

He was united in marriage to the former Elsie M. Heliste in Calumet Oct. 6, 1928 and the couple first resided in Calumet and Centennial Heights and the past 33 years lived in Mohawk.

For several summers he was employed as a skipper by the National Park Commission at Isle Royale National Park.

Surviving are his wife; a son, Lt. Commander Karl J. Kuopus, U.S. Navy, Dayton, Ohio; a daughter, Mrs. Bruce (Karen) Black of Sterling; two sisters, Mrs. Gordon (Florence) Culverwell of Carsonville, and Mrs. Eda Hansen of Los Angeles, Calif.; six grandchildren and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral services will be Saturday at 1 p.m. in the National Lutheran Church, Calumet, the Rev. R. Efraimson to officiate. Burial will be in the Lake View Cemetery.

The body will be taken to the church one hour prior to services from the Peterson Funeral Home, where friends may call after 1 p.m. Friday.

Memoirs of

CHILDHOOD DAYS

My parents were originally from *Finland*.  
After they married they moved to *Married in Calumet*  
My father worked as a *miner*  
Mother and Father raised *1 Boy 2 girls*  
Whenever anyone became ill  
The toughest problem we faced *Language*  
As a family we took part in *Church doing*  
The teacher who influenced me *Miss Ala - Calumet School*  
The good times we had *Browsing, stabs. like 7<sup>th</sup> grade.*  
*little work*

MAKING MY MARK

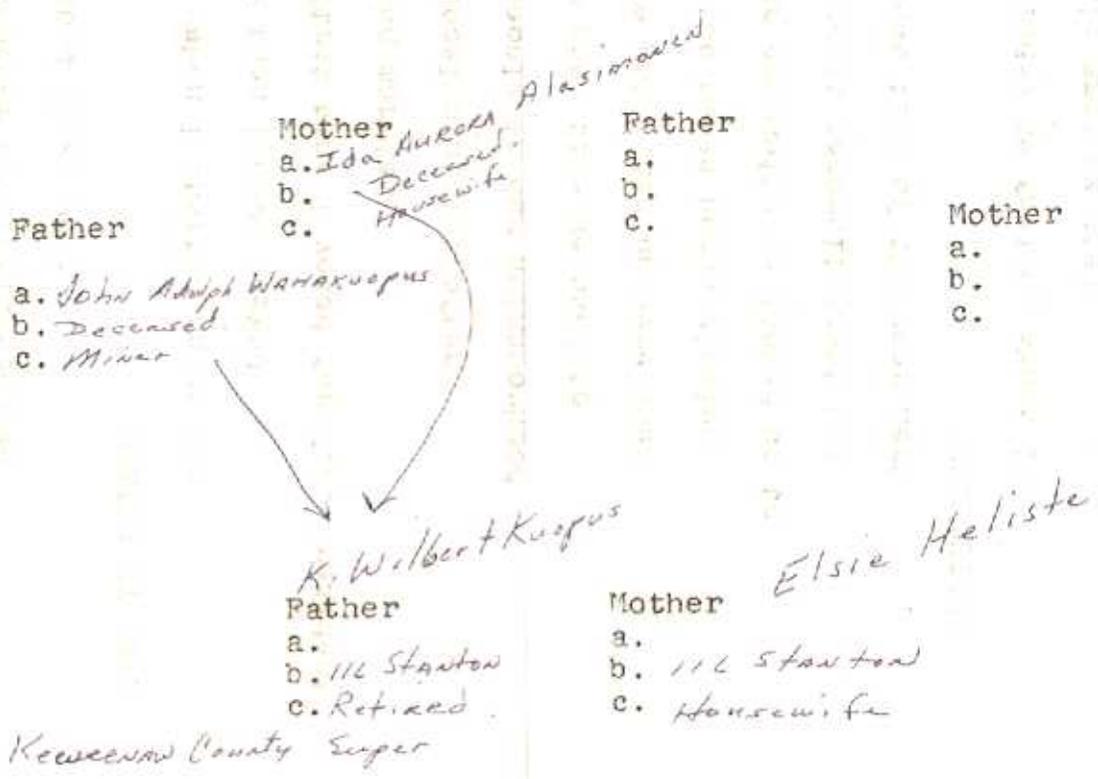
When I started on my own *15 or 16 in Star Theater - 5<sup>th</sup> St.*  
Since then I have worked *Keweenaw City Schools*  
The first time I voted for U.S. President *1921*  
Getting married *1928 in Calumet - Natsona 1 Church*  
The local minister often  
The people in our neighborhood *a mixture connected w/ mines*  
For a good time we used to *Dance*  
People got riled up here when *labor problems - picking up girls from*  
When the mines began closing *this area*  
In our community we looked up to *Church people - Maggie Walby (Rad Estate)*  
My biggest accomplishment was *getting degree.*  
The best time of the year here *Fall -*

REFLECTIONS

Today my feeling about life *Satisfied from teaching & Boy Scout.*  
In this area we need *Recreation of physical nature.*  
Visitors who come here should  
My prediction for the future of this area *Very bad - dying out -*  
Collecting these memories about bygone days is

Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

Suomi College  
Folklore Album



K. Wilbert Kuopus  
Name of person  
1901

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.

Child  
a. Karl John  
b. U.S. Navy  
c. Administration

Child  
a. Karen Kathleen Black  
b. Bay City  
c. Housewife

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.

Child  
a.  
b.  
c.