

Interview with Helen Kaurala

Ontonagon, MI

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Interviewers: Gabe Logan, Kathryn Johnson, Bruce Johanson

GL: And we're recording. This is May 13, 2015 in Ontonagon, Michigan. Professor Gabe Logan, Department of History, Northern Michigan University; Kathryn Johnson, Department of History, Northern Michigan University; and we're interviewing Helen Kaurala and she's going to give us a brief background in growing up in Mass, Michigan, Upper Peninsula, with an emphasis on the Mass Co-op that her family operated. So, with that out of the way, Mrs. Kaurala if you could please spell your name and date of birth to get the context into the interview please.

HK: Okay, first name Helen, H-E-L-E-N, last name Kaurala, K-A-U-R-A-L-A. My date of birth is January 3rd, 1950.

GL: Okay, so what was the Mass community growing up in your childhood? Could you begin reflecting on that please?

HK: Well, my mother had worked as a bookkeeper, and when I was born then my dad took over the bookkeeping for the stores that existed at the time. And we lived in an apartment upstairs of the store. So...

GL: And as a point of clarification, this is the co-op?

BJ: [Inaudible]

HK: Yes, the Mass Co-op. It was Chance's Hardware. That is no longer in existence. It's the one on the corner, it's not Settler's Co-op.

BJ: Okay, so it's the one on the corner? Right.

HK: I do have another clipping which has something about the co-ops and it has a picture of Settler's Co-op, but that's not the correct documentation for that article.

GL: Okay. So, you were saying you grew up in the store, your mother was a bookkeeper, and your father inherited that?

HK: Yes, he worked as a parts man... machinery person... and sometimes my mother would work on an as needed basis, when, like in the summertime when he was really busy with the machinery, or when they had changes in managers and they needed some extra help.

GL: When you say machinery, farm implementations or farm?

HK: Yes, they had the John Deere dealership and they sold Homelite chainsaws and Motorola televisions when televisions first came into being.

KJ: Do you remember when your parents or do you know, I guess you wouldn't have been alive, do you know when your parents first started working at the co-op?

HK: My mother started in, she graduated from high school in 1934 and she started in January of 1936 as a full-time bookkeeper there. And she had attended a several weeks course in Superior on bookkeeping methods for co-ops. My dad was a delivery man, that was his first job with the co-op, and that was in the early 1930s I believe.

GL: So they met through the co-op?

HK: Well, they knew each other from before, because their parents knew each other. My mom's parent's farm was on the East Branch Road in Mass City, and my dad's parent's farm was on what's now called the Post Office Road. So, their parents were friends.

GL: What brought your grandparents and your parents to the Mass community? Are you familiar with that part of your family history?

HK: I think mainly work in the mines.

GL: And then from there ended up getting a little farm?

HK: Mhmm.

GL: Okay, would that be the White Pine Mine?

HK: No, it was the local copper mines that are in...

BJ: Mass Consolidated Mining Company.

GL: Ah, okay.

GL: So we have this question; what are some of the instances of community solidarity or cooperation? And where I'm looking for you to elaborate or what I'd like you to elaborate on that: what were the reasons for the cooperative stores in the community? How did they come about and what were examples of this collaboration through the co-op?

HK: I think, to quote from some of my dad's writings,

BJ: Martin was a prolific writer.

HK: "During the copper strike, the 1913 copper strike, the business community, the merchants sided with the mining companies, adding to the miseries of the workers. And they found new strength in union by organizing consumer cooperative general merchandise stores. That is how some 150 small consumer cooperatives were formed like mushrooms after a rain in the Upper Michigan, Northern Wisconsin, and Minnesota areas. These cooperative associations were founded mostly by farmer Finnish immigrants who had settled here in the Northern United States where climate and environment are much like Finland." And then he goes on to talk about how the Mass Co-op was formed. And I have, this was one of the two things that I typed yesterday, so I have this on Word Document and I can email this whole thing to you. And it's in English too, so it's not like looking at all those Finnish newspapers.

GL: How did the other, how did the non-co-op members regard the co-op? Was it open to the public then as well? Did it seem to enjoy a sponsorship from the community, or was it limited to an exclusive group of people in the community?

HK: Well, I'm not really sure at first because he does write about they struggled, and they didn't have enough inventory, so I don't know if that. Well, I do think it was open to anyone. There were the stockholders, but anyone could shop there. And you know, in the early days there was the one co-op and then there was the ideological split between the two. Then there were two co-ops. Then there was another family owned grocery store, which was owned by the Martin family. It's still, that's the only grocery store in town anymore. Then there were... not during the times that I remember, but there were some other stores like the Nera Store. I don't know if you've studied that part of the history of Mass City... Sedino's...

BJ: Archie Hendrickson had a hardware store in the old Mass Cooperative building.

HK: Andy Hendrickson.

BJ: Andy, yeah. We called him Archie for whatever reason.

HK & BJ: [Laughs]

KJ: Do you know what decade those other stores would have appeared?

HK: Yeah, it is in these writings. It's basically in the 1930s-1940s.

KJ: Can we rewind real quick and capture the names of your parents?

HK: Oh yes, my mother's name is A-U-N-E, Aune. Her maiden name was Aho, A-H-O, and then her married name was Kaurala. My dad's first name was Martin Kaurala.

KJ: Okay, thank you very much.

HK: Yeah, you're welcome.

GL: What caused that ideological split? What were some of the parts that you mentioned earlier?

HK: Well, he says here in this writing that, "The Unity Alliance and its affiliates held to the basic principle that the cooperative should be part and parcel of the class struggle movement, not a purely business enterprise as the cooperative central exchange thought. This internal struggle and split was unfortunate and weakened the movement."

KJ: So which side of that split do you think your father being...

HK: They were on the red side.

KJ: Was there anything that he said as you were growing up, was class-consciousness or class struggle part of your household, your dinner conversations, the literature you read as a child?

HK: Well, I think that was kind of past that time already by the time I was a child. I think that was kind of like my grandparents reasoned, and then kind of passed on to their children. This book, if you can ever find a copy of it, that would be really, maybe you have heard of, *Isaac Polvi: The Biography of a Finnish Immigrant* by Joseph Damrell. It kind of gives a really good idea of what life was like in Finland for some

of these people because of church officials being in charge. And kind of their, I think what motivated some of them to really think that this was not a good thing, but you know, like workers being in charge was a good idea.

KJ: Thank you for that recommendation of that source. That was great.

HK: There is a book or there was a book in the Ontonagon library, I have been looking for it at used book stores because I would like to have it. I have a feeling that at some point, you know when libraries discard books, it may not be there anymore. Another way you may be able to get ahold of it is calling that North Star Press in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and they may have copies of books that are out of print. Because I think it's a 1990s copyright.

KJ: Thank you.

HK: Mhmm.

GL: How did the... if I can use the term "red co-op" ... how did the red co-op differ from the white co-op in terms of merchandise or perhaps in terms of the clientele, you spoke to that? But was the merchandise different from the white?

HK: Well, yes. Because the white co-ops had more, like there brand was co-op. They had, maybe they might have had some name brand food too, but basically the red co-ops had, you know, like Stokely's, and Del Monte, and so on, products.

KJ: Interesting.

HK: During the time that I remember anyways.

KJ: Right. What was the name of the white co-op? Was that Settler's?

HK: Settler's, mm-hmm.

GL: The co-op also probably lent itself to the Finn halls in the community. Did you grow up in a Finn hall as well? Was that part of the...?

HK: No, they were not... the VFW hall that's on the East Branch Road was a farmer's hall, but that was not being used as such anymore. But it was originally a farmer's hall and there were some in Mud Crick and Simar. I was reading one of my dad's writings about the farmers union and in it he says that they met at farmer's halls in East Branch, Mud Creek, and Simar.

GL: And what were they doing in the halls? Was this just to discuss business then or?

KJ: [Inaudible]

HK: Well, a variety of things. They had dances, fundraisers, and plays.

BJ: Yes.

KJ: Did he ever mention any of the musicians that came through? Some of the dances that he went to?

HK: No, he just mentioned that he went to dances, but my dad did not dance.

KJ: Oh?

Whole Group: [Laughs]

HK: Well, and they did have dances at other places too, like the pavilion at Courtney Lake. I think that maybe was more inclusive of other people. I mean anybody could go to the farmer's halls, but some people did not go.

GL: Um-hmm. We also have, Bruce showed us this book on Karelia and we're kind of interested in that, naturally it's before your time, but did your parents ever speak of friends that might have gone to Karelia, or know how that influenced the community as well during the Karelia Exodus of the 1920s and 30s?

BJ: And if you were in business?

HK: I've read a couple of those books by...

KJ: Mayme Sevander.

BJ: Maybe this one?

HK: Yeah, I've read those, and I have that one at home too. Mayme Sevander wrote at least one book if not two.

GL: Okay.

KJ: Your parents never talked about it?

HK: A little bit, yeah. Kind of, kind of knew what happened that, I think people who thought that a workers' place would be a good idea went there and then, or thought that it would be a good thing and they didn't really have a whole lot going on at the time maybe, they may have. Well, some of them owned farms. In fact, my uncle and aunt in Woodsburgh bought a farm from a family that went to Karelia.

BJ: Do you remember which family that was?

HK: I think their last name might have been Maki, and it was Matt and Roja Aho, Bertha Peterson's parents who bought their farm.

BJ: Okay, yeah I know Bertha Peterson quite well.

HK: Yep. And then those people were really not heard from for a long time, until after the Soviet Union split up.

GL: Oh, so they survived?

HK: Well, some of them did. Mayme Sevander's father did not.

GL: This legacy of the red co-op and Karelia and that political, left political leaning, this becomes quite challenged in the 1950's, especially from the Wisconsin senator at the time, McCarthy. Did that have...How did that influence the community or your family if you can recall any of those?

HK: Not really, because I was too young to really know what was going on politically. But going back to the, I was going to say something about the Karelia thing, and I forgot. It will come back to me.

BJ: Helen, this place was built supposedly in about 1948 by the Mass Cooperative. And at that time it was an expanding enterprise; there were six stores. Suddenly it, almost collapsed, it disappeared suddenly. The last one was the one out in Wausau, wasn't it? What happened?

HK: Well, this article really goes into that about it. That when the farmers were buying consumer goods and then profits in 1942 and 1943, over \$20,000 in net profits were set aside in patron's equity reserve funds. There were plans of a new modern store building in Ontonagon, and other capital improvements. And then they had acquired the John Deere dealership. Then after the war there was a big demand for consumer products so, then they were making a lot of money and selling a lot of things. And then as he says in this article that, there were a lot of reasons why things collapsed. Like the small farm no longer became profitable. A lot of the original immigrants who were farmers retired. And I think part of it too was that there were stores that were more modern that people were going to rather than the co-op.

BJ: But now the, the Midland co-ops were like Settler's. They survived until about 1975. Why did they last longer than the other one? Do you have any idea?

HK: No, not really. Well, there's the co-op in Bruce Crossing and they do quite well. I mean they have the grocery store, and the gas station, and they sell propane. Then across the road they have...

BJ: The feed mill.

HK: Yup, and then...

BJ: The credit union, down the street.

HK: M,-hmm, and they also have produce in the summertime.

GL: What would be some of the crops that the farmers were cultivating around here?

HK: Oats for their, well, and they needed feed for their cattle. They were buying feed from the co-op.

GL: So were the farms around here mostly self-contained, or were they producing crops that would go into the market as well? And would these come back to the co-op?

HK: I think mostly the farmers were selling their milk to the creamery.

GL: Okay.

KJ: What did your father do when the co-op closed here? Did he take on a whole new profession, or did he retire and say, "I'm going to enjoy life"?

HK: Well he was too young to retire. He had a job as a bookkeeper at J&H Welding Company in Baraga, and they made parts for Solitechs [unsure of spelling].

KJ: Okay, and so did he drive all the way?

HK: Yeah, it was a 30 mile drive. They also had some dealerships too for chainsaws and some other machinery. I think they were an Allis-Chalmers dealer.

GL: Okay, we could come back to that. I'd kind of would like to hear a little bit about your childhood and your education in the Mass Community. That's where you went to school then, Mass Community? Did you graduate from Mass High School?

HK: No, I was in the first graduating class from Ontonagon High School. So I went to Mass School through grade 11. My parents and I lived upstairs of the co-op until I was seven. That was kindergarten and first grade, so I walked to school. Then my grandfather died and my grandmother was left alone on the farm and she didn't drive and so on, so we moved out there to live with her. So then I rode the bus after that.

GL: To Ontonagon?

HK: Well, to Mass for, through grade 11, and then the last year to Ontonagon.

BJ: Now you would have graduated in 1968?

HK: Yup.

BJ: With the last year at the Mass School in 1966-67?

HK: Right.

BJ: I was on the faculty there myself.

HK: Yep, you taught music at that time.

KJ: So why did that school close?

HK: Too small. I know that whole consolidation at that time, well, it was Rockland, Mass, and Ontonagon consolidated.

BJ: Mass and Greenland had consolidated years ago. There were actually six operating school districts in this county, but the old Mass High School was actually a wooden framed building, a large wooden framed building. It was in pretty good condition, but the Department of Education in their all-knowing infinite wisdom said, "Wooden buildings are hereby condemned," and there wasn't enough of a tax base in Greenland Township to build a separate school facility. So they were annexed by the Ontonagon Township Schools as was Rockland, which was also a wooden frame building, creating the Ontonagon Area School District.

KJ: Okay.

BJ: But it was an annexation, it wasn't a consolidation. There's a difference.

HK: Well thank you for explaining that, because I... that's something that has gone over my head.

BJ: They probably never told ya. It was kind of a friendly annexation, but then again not. The Mass City School had a strong athletic tradition, and they had their own school colors and they really, the community really bonded around this little school in Mass City. The Mass City was the Class-D state basketball champions in 1948 and again in 1955, I got that.

HK: Correct.

BJ: So I've done my homework too.

All: [Laughs]

HK: Well you've done a lot of homework.

BJ: Yeah. That was a little before my time, but there was a close identity with this school, and it was a large blow to that community to actually lose its school identity as it did. There's still some bitterness in some quarters about that.

GL: So when you graduated in 1968, of course the United States was still in the midst of civil rights and Vietnam. Did that have an effect in Ontonagon? Or how did the national politics influence, Vietnam, influence Ontonagon that you were aware of as a graduating senior?

HK: Well, during the 1960s there were meetings in Ontonagon County by people who were opposed to the Vietnam War. And I remember being at some of those meetings with my parents. Mrs. Archibald was a leader in that movement.

KJ: Do you remember Mrs. Archibald's first name?

HK: I think it might be Bernice, I'm really, not positive.

GL: And what were their...Why were they protesting the United States involvement if you can recall?

HK: As I remember they didn't really think that it was the business of the United States to be interfering in that conflict.

GL: Okay. The civil rights movements that was going on, do you recall, did that have much of an impact up here at all?

HK: I don't remember that it did. I think people sympathized with it, or you know, my parents and their close associates.

GL: And then did you remain in the community here after graduation?

HK: No, I went to Northern, graduated from there in '72 as a teacher. I was a Home Ec. teacher in L'Anse for three years. Your stomping grounds.

KJ: Absolutely, yeah.

HK: And then I went to Wisconsin and worked nine more years as a Home Ec. teacher and spent a year at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menominee and became a school counselor and worked in that capacity for 21 years before I retired.

GL: Okay.

KJ: What a wonderful career in education.

HK: Yes.

KJ: Thank you for devoting your life to that.

All: [Laughs]

HK: Oh thank you!

BJ: Coffee?

GL: Yeah, please, I'd like a cup if I may.

BJ: Do you dilute it or do you take it straight up?

GL: I do dilute it a little bit.

BJ: Alright, I'll leave you a little dilution room. Helen, coffee?

HK: Yes, I would like some, thank you.

BJ: We grind our own coffee beans here and we don't fool around with the canned stuff.

HK: Okay, I see your email address on that card before I put my purse down.

GL: Thank you, Bruce.

KJ: Did you ever hear about your father or any of his generation being involved in any athletic clubs in Mass City?

HK: No, I don't remember that one.

GL: Were there other ethnic groups that tended to associate outside of the Finnish communities in the area? Or was it entirely Finnish?

HK: Well, it wasn't entirely Finnish. I remember that the country school teacher that my mom and my uncle had was Margaret Sedino, and she was Italian. I recall my dad saying that her father had a store somewhere up on the horseshoe in Mass City, a grocery store. So there were people who were non-Finnish and there were more non-Finnish people in Greenland. I think...

BJ: A lot of Cornish people in Greenland like the Blakes and the, well, yeah, like the Blakes.
 _____[inaudible]

HK: I think part of the reason why the high school moved from Greenland to Mass City was because the people who spoke English were more likely to send their children to school, but then when more of the Finnish people in Mass City were sending their kids to high school, Mass City became the larger population center. And there the two, there was a fairly similar school in Greenland so it just made sense to have the two of 'em combined.

BJ: Adventure Consolidated was the dominant mining company. Adventure Consolidated was kind of on again, off again. There were two separate mining companies. Oddly enough Adventure was owned by the same people who owned the Quincy in Hancock. Mass Consolidated was pretty much a stand-alone and a consolidation of seven older mining companies that had come together. So there was a larger population base and also the farming community in Greenland Township was mainly west and south of Mass City, out in that way, you see? Greenland is kind of at the edge of the township.

HK: And mostly the people in Greenland were not farmers.

BJ: Right.

GL: When did... so did your parents run the co-op until it closed?

HK: Well, they were longtime employees. They had a general manager. And I remember the managers changing. There were two apartments upstairs of the store, and one was where my parents and I lived and then the other one was the manager's apartment, which had one more room. Ours had three rooms

and the manager's apartment had four rooms. Then there was a bathroom down the hall that we shared with them, and the people from the store who needed to use the bathroom during the day came up. And there was a bathtub in there, but my parents like the sauna so we would go to the sauna to either grandparents' house. I do remember sometimes when the weather was cold my dad would go anyway and my mom and I would stay at home.

All: [Laughs]

HK: Used the bathtub.

BJ: Your dad had quite an Eastern War record too, didn't he?

HK: Yes.

BJ: Can you tell him a little about that?

GL: Please, yes.

HK: He was in ordnance. He had a high IQ, so when they do testing for service they place people according to what they can do. So, he spent most of his time in England and worked with parts for equipment that the United States brought over. And then he did spend some time over on the continent after the war was over. And a lot of people had some interesting experiences. He wrote about his experiences and those reminiscences were published in the Ontonagon Herald.

KJ: Which years did he serve?

HK: 1942 through 1945.

GL: The army drew upon his experiences in the store and applied them to Uncle Sam?

HK: Well, I guess he did have that kind of talent about being able to organize things, and that was what they really needed with keeping an inventory of all of the stuff, all of the equipment that the United States brought over to the continent for that war.

BJ: I don't know if they used Stanford in those days, but didn't you're dad tell me one time his IQ measured in somewhere between 160 and 170?

HK: No, 141.

BJ: Okay. Well Stanford starts at 100 I think so.

HK: Yeah, well he was in his company the guy with the second highest IQ. The highest was 144.

KJ: That's impressive

BJ: He was a tall, slender man. How tall is your dad?

HK: 6-1.

BJ: Yeah.

GL: Would he ever go to... did the co-ops ever have regional gatherings or information business meetings, yeah business trips?

HK: Yeah, picnics.

GL: And where would those take place, Superior? Are you familiar with any of those?

HK: I think they had more regional picnics too.

GL: And what would take place at these picnics? Was it just a year's celebration of, or an inventory or...?

HK: They would have speakers ____ ____, yes. The editor or somebody like that. So it was like social, but also political.

GL: I have this other question that doing my research with the co-ops I can't get away from and it seems the co-ops offered these communities, I don't mean to put words in your mouth here, but it seems they offered the communities a way of surviving, both with commodities and cooperative finances. And that's so displaced in contemporary United States. So, the question: How, what lessons do you think the co-ops of your parent's generation can offer this generation? Especially as a schoolteacher you kind of have your pulse on these generations. If you could speak to that...

HK: Well, that's a difficult question.

GL: That's why I keep thinking about it.

All: [Laughs]

HK: Well, I do think that people in that generation of that time where more concerned than many people today are about how other people are doing. One of the articles that my dad wrote about was that there was a mortgage foreclosure and people were upset about that because they felt this family wasn't getting a fair deal because they weren't getting fair prices for their commodities and that's why they couldn't pay their mortgage. Well, when we had that decline in 2008, some people were really willing to take over, when there were mortgage foreclosures some people were really willing to buy some of those properties at a low price. I guess that's not really answering the question the way that you're asking it, but there are people in our society today who work hard at helping other people, like Habitat for Humanity and so on. And you know there's food pantries and things like that in every town.

BJ: And those are in a sense, scaled down cooperatives if you really think about it.

HK: Based on need. The co-ops I don't know where so much... well, I guess probably everybody was fairly needy at that time.

GL: You mentioned that the John Deere dealership was also out of the co-op, is that correct?

HK: Mm-hmm.

GL: That almost seems a bit incongruent to me you have this bastille of a capitalist farming machinery working out of a red co-op [laughs]. Were there any issues with that that you can recall?

HK: Well I don't know. I think they wanted the co-op to fulfill their needs in what, that it was, general merchandise, things they needed for both the house and the farm. So if they could buy it from the co-op, they would buy it from the co-op.

GL: Win-win situation.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KJ: Do you know if the John Deere dealership existed separately from the co-op and then was acquired by the co-op, or was it brought into the co-op to begin with? Does that make sense?

HK: Yeah it does, I don't know though. My dad says, "In 1938 the Coop had wisely acquired the John Deere dealership franchise and sales of farm tractors and implements boosted the sales volume substantially as the numerous family-sized farmers purchased new labor-saving machinery. After the war went, building materials became available again. A metal Quonset type building for the farm machinery business was built at Mass City, as was a spacious brick building store on Main Street in Ontonagon." My dad used to work out of that metal Quonset building and one of the things that he did was when he saw that the end was coming, was, you know, like working with people who needed some of these parts so that they...

BJ: Stocked up?

HK: So that he was able to sell as much of their inventory as he could. Yeah, and to help people stock up.

BJ: I might be able to help you a little bit. Nisula, there was a co-op over there.

HK: Yes.

BJ: They had a Ford franchise. Here in Ontonagon there was Krohn Implement, which was not involved with the cooperative, they had an international harvester. The Cangas brothers out in Green sold G.I. Case, so there weren't many John Deere tractors around here. There was Minneapolis Molina out in Ewen, but I think the cooperative acquired, they went after it and got that franchise so that they could provide that service. A lady I knew years ago who is now deceased, told me that after the war they had a need for a tractor and they bought a John Deere A from the Mass Cooperative. The gal was a little bitter about it because she was not a socialist. She said, "But I hate to go to those people, so we bought that tractor from them because we couldn't get it anywhere else." And the Ford dealership here also sold Ford tractors, I have to mention.

GL: The Fordsons.

BJ: Yeah.

GL: Do you have another question?

KJ: Yeah. Do you know if your father had any friends or that people he considered friends who worked over at the *Työmies* newspaper?

HK: I don't know if they were really friends, but he knew people who worked there. One of those people who's pictured here, Olga Maatta, worked there... her husband was the manager at that Mass Co-op. They lived in that four room apartment when we lived in the three room apartment. I think they moved around and managed some of the other red co-ops and ended up in Superior and worked for *Työmies* before.

KJ: Can you spell her last name?

HK: Yeah, I think it's M-A-A-T-T-A.

KJ: Thank you.

GL: I believe you also brought some photographs?

HK: Well, articles. This article that I was quoting from has some photographs there.

GL: And those are photographs of the Mass Co-op?

HK: And these are the board of directors. My grandfather, Herman Aho, was on the board quite often. That's him there. You can't really see him very well because his face is so shaded.

KJ: So that was your mother's father?

HK: Mm-hmm. He was frequently the chairmen of the board or secretary.

KJ: So did he happen to get his daughter that bookkeeping job? Was that how that happened?

HK: I don't think so, I think she got it because she was very capable.

KJ: I was just teasing.

All: [Laughs]

BJ: She was a sharp lady, she also brewed a wonderful kettle of soup.

HK: Okay, this is what I was referring to. Here is a picture of the Settler's co-op, but it's really not the right picture to go along with this. That's my dad in his Army uniform.

GL: Oh look at that, a handsome man.

HK: And you may have this because I have two of these.

GL: Okay. Why don't we take the photocopy if you have two, yeah?

HK: Somehow or other I have,

BJ: Let me shoot that before you're off.

HK: Yeah, did you want to make a copy? Oh you did already?

BJ: I've got that one, yep.

KJ: Did your father ever write any articles for any other publications besides the *Ontonagon Herald*.

HK: He wrote articles for Finnish newspapers. In that article that I was reading yesterday about the Farmer's Union, he was their secretary and their correspondent. At that time there were numerous Finnish language newspapers, so he wrote about their doing or their minutes to those newspapers. He wrote an article for a book, *Growing Up in Mass City, Michigan* for the book *In Two Cultures: The Stories of Second Generation Finnish Americans* edited by Aili Jarvenpa and published by North Star Press of St. Cloud, Minnesota in 1992. So you could have these if you want because I can run off more copies because I have that all. That's just quoted from the book, but, you know that would be, if you wanted that book there's a lot of stories about second generation Finns, mostly from Minnesota. And if you did call that North, they're both out of print, but they might have a few extra copies floating around.

KJ: Do you remember the newspapers, the Finnish newspapers that your father wrote for?

HK: Not off hand.

KJ: I was thinking, because we were at the Finlandia Archives yesterday and we came across several newspaper names, did he ever write for *Työmies*?

HK: Oh yes, very often.

KJ: Okay, in English or Finnish or both?

HK: Originally in Finnish, but later in English. There was like *Osusto* [*Finnish newspaper name*].

KJ: No, we had *Eteenpäin*?

HK: Oh, well *Työmies-Eteenpäin* was the same thing. They were both red news, Finnish newspapers, and they joined. *Työmies* was more like a Midwest paper, and *Eteenpäin* was an East Coast paper. So, if you saw *Eteenpäin* that's from a long time ago.

KJ: Mm-hmm, we did. They were more like a magazine format rather than the actual newspaper format, which we though was interesting.

HK: Yeah? Was it the newspaper? They would put out publications for Christmas or Vappu, which is May 1st, that was a big labor holiday.

KJ: I got the impression they were just regular publications, nothing special. No holidays or anything related. I think another publication we came across was *Uutiset*, does that sound familiar at all?

HK: Oh yeah, there was a *Minnesotan Uutiset*. And *Suometar* was the local Finnish newspaper for like the, it was Suomi S_____ at that time but *Suometar* was their newspaper.

KJ: Did your father, did anybody who wrote these articles, but your father specifically; did they receive compensation for writing these articles or were they a volunteer effort?

HK: Yeah, it was a volunteer effort. Although, in his article about the Farmer's Union, he says for practically no pay, so they probably paid for postage and so on.

KJ: Interesting.

GL: In his later career with the Farmer's Union, was that based out of Mass City?

HK: Well, it wasn't a career, it was just a organization of Farmers. You know, just a, I don't know what you would call it.

GL: A co-op?

HK: No, just like a, oh that they, I don't want to say club, but that would probably be the closest that I could say, yeah.

KJ: Think like the Grangers?

HK: He writes in there about how they were in favor of unemployment compensation, union rights, and so on. And so at first that, it kind of influenced their membership on what people thought about that, because some people thought it was a good idea and some people thought it wasn't.

KJ: Do you remember the date of the article that your father wrote about the Farmer's Union for the *Työmies*?

HK: I don't. Well, I'm thinking pre-World War II.

KJ: Okay, and it was in Finnish, right?

HK: I think so.

KJ: It's nice to be bilingual, you can just go and read it all whenever.

ALL: [Laughs]

BJ: Do you still use Finnish yourself?

HK: Mm-hmm.

GL: Was your father self-taught or self-educated? Did he receive formal education?

HK: Well, he had a high school education, but as far as being fluent in Finnish, I think his parents taught him at home, as well as my mother; she was fluent in Finnish too.

GL: Okay.

BJ: It's one of the strange things about the Finnish immigrants. Nearly all of them, thanks to the requirements of the National _____ of Finland, they're all literate, very literate in their Finnish language. Nearly all of them can read, unlike a lot of the English people who came here, who were not literate.

HK: Well, the language is so different that it was the immigrants to catch onto English, because it's so different than like French or Spanish and English are.

GL: Okay, do you have anything else?

KJ: What else would you like to talk about?

GL: Yeah?

HK: Well, I think that these people who worked really hard all day long on the farm, then in the evening with light from kerosene lamps would teach their children to read and write Finnish. I think that was really remarkable. I think it would be easy to say, "Well, I'm really tired."

All: [Laughs]

KJ: Definitely.

BJ: Here, shut up and watch TV for a while?

All: [Laughs]

GL: It sounds, the way you described the co-op, it sounds like a significant part of the community were coming through your doors. You lived there with the communal rooms, the communal restrooms. Were you fairly well known in the community then? Did you know everybody?

HK: Well, I think my parents did. I mean there were people who came who were not really concerned about the ideology. I think that was not really anything important to them. Unlike the lady who didn't like going there to buy the John Deere tractor. There were other people who came there to buy John Deere tractors, or chainsaws, or televisions, or groceries, or for other reasons, that it wasn't that they cared that it was a red co-op.

KJ: They were just being practical and getting what they needed from a place close by?

HK: Mm-hmm.

BJ: Your dad was very emphatic when I talked to him one time. He said, "Please never refer to us as Communists, we're Socialists." He emphasized that, because the word "Communist" had bad connotations here, especially after World War II and the McCarthy persecution years.

GL: Yeah.

HK: Well, this is off the subject, but where I live now, my other home in Shawano, Wisconsin. Joseph McCarthy practiced law in that town before he was in the senate.

BJ: [Laughs]

HK: And that building where he practiced law is still there. It's a large building that looks like a house, and it houses a real estate business now.

BJ: They haven't memorialized it and put up a plaques or anything?

HK: No.

All: [Laughs]

HK: I think people kind of want to forget about it.

All: [Laughs]

GL: Looking over this it says your father also travelled to Finland after the war with Dr. Michael Loukinen?

HK: No, in there he's saying that a relative of his, who was a recent immigrant from Finland, wanted him to go to Finland after the war was over to find a wife who would come and work the family farm. Because that was kind of the Finnish tradition that the oldest son would take over the family farm. So he nixed the idea because he already had in mind that he was going to marry my mom.

All: [Laughs]

KJ: That's funny.

HK: And besides that Finland was on the other side of that war, so he didn't really think that that would be a great idea to go there, you know because conquering.

BJ: That's right, Finland was branded was an ally of the Third Reich, mainly as a result of their involvement of the Winter War of 1939 of course. The Russians invaded them and then of course in 1941 the war of the continuation, the Finnish Army invaded the Soviet Union [laughs].

GL: Did your father ever speak of the Finnish war with the Soviets?

HK: Not a whole lot, no. One of the things that my relatives talked about was that after the war, Finland was in such, they were so poor that they sent packages of clothing and food to their relatives. And I have a letter that was written in 1947 by a relative who had ten children, nine of which were under the age of 14 when the war broke out, and of the things that my grandmother sent, the spools of thread were the most valuable because she said they had to remake clothes, and that they were unravelling crochet because they could only get one spool of thread a year.

KJ: Wow.

GL: Challenging.

KJ: Did your parents ever go to Finland? Did they visit?

HK: Yeah, I went with them in 1973. I was 23 years old at the time. One of my cousins, who received my clothes after I outgrew them said, she and her siblings had nicer clothes because her aunt primarily sent them clothes from here. And I said, "Well weren't there clothes available for purchase for people who had the means to purchase?" and she said, "No." At that time the clothes for children were all very drab that were made in Finland. So they had nicer, more colorful clothes.

GL: How has the Upper Peninsula changed since you graduated from high school to the contemporary period in this?

HK: I think a lot less younger people, and a lot less, well, a lot less reasons for younger people to be here, because there are fewer jobs for people. In a lot of ways not a change that's favorable. I think it would be much better if there were a lot of younger families here, but there aren't very many good jobs to be had.

BJ: There's nothing to keep the young people here. We basically educate the kids in the public schools to ship them out. One young lady who graduated from Ontonagon back in the 70s, who did make it out, did attend a name brand university, and actually married a French national and lived in France for a while, now lives in Lower Michigan where he's employed by General Motors. She said, "My education in the Upper Peninsula in the Ontonagon School District prepared me to live in Ontonagon, but nowhere else," which was a stinging rebuke of what we were trying to do here. But it was an eye-opener.

GL: Last but not least, I want to shift over to Bruce, because this is going to be recorded and the transcribers will go, "Who is this guy talking?"

All: [Laughs]

GL: Bruce, could you please introduce yourself and a spelling of your name as well, sir?

BJ: Bruce Johanson, J-O-H-A-N-S-O-N.

KJ: And your position, sir?

BJ: Right now I'm serving my fourth or fifth sentence as the President of the Ontonagon County Historical Society.

All: [Laughs]

BJ: I'm a retired faculty member of the Ontonagon Area School District, and currently a staff writer for the Ontonagon Herald Newspaper.

GL: Okay. Okay, well if there's nothing else you'd like to add.

HK: No, I just, Bruce made copies of these two things that I wanted you to have and, yeah. Would you like to borrow this?

GL: I wrote the name down of that tape, and I think I've seen it.

BJ: There's a book by the same name.

GL: Yeah, I'm going to check that out.

KJ: We have access to interlibrary loan via NMU, so thank you for your offer to let us borrow that, but...

BJ: Get all the information off of this if you need.

KJ: Thank you.

[Shuffling of papers]

HK: Because I do want to keep it, but I would be willing to loan it to you.

KJ: That's okay, we'll write down everything and find it somewhere via interlibrary loan.

BJ: I have a great film of the Winter War, but it's all in Finnish, it's in the backroom here. It is subtitled.

GL: Okay then, I do thank you for your time, and this concludes our interview.

HK: Okay, well thank you. Yeah, thank you for your interest in all of this.

BJ: Well that didn't hurt too much, did it?

[RECORDING ENDS]