

Interview with Ruth MacFarlane

Mass City Michigan

05/13/2015

Interviewers: Gabe Logan, Kathryn Johnson, Bruce Johanson

Gabe Logan (GL): Okay. It is May 13th, 2015, Dr. Gabe Logan from Northern Michigan University Department of History, Kathryn Johnson, Northern Michigan University Department of History. We're conducting an oral interview with Mrs. Ruth MacFarlane in Greenland, Michigan.

Bruce Johanson: Mass City!

GL: My apologies, Mass City. Thank you for the corrections.

BJ: Greenland is a suburb.

All: [Laughs]

GL: We're out in Gwinn, so...

All: [Laughs]

Kathryn Johnson (KJ): That's right, we live in Gwinn [laughs].

GL: Mrs. McFarland, if we could begin. If you could state your name, your birthdate, and a spelling of your name.

Ruth MacFarlane (RM): Alright, Ruth MacFarlane, R-U-T-H capital M-A-C-F-A-R-L-A-N-E.

GL: And your birthdate?

RM: May 26, 1920.

GL: You have a birthday coming up, happy birthday!

RM: Thank you.

All: [Laughs]

GL: What we're looking for... what we're looking to explore are the old political divisions of this area, and as you indicated I read the chapter in your book about the Red and the White Finns in the area, we were hoping maybe you could speak about that to your knowledge.

RM: Well, I'm so sorry, but I'm an outsider. I moved here from somewhere else and when I wrote that article I had been interviewing people, I wrote what they said, but that's all I know.

GL: What do you remember of some of the things that they said? How was some of the community Red and was some of the community white, or church-Finn and Hall-Finn? Do you remember any of the stories that were given to you at that time?

RM: Not right off the top of my head, no.

GL: Okay, well we can come back to that. Where are you originally from?

RM: I'm from Lower Michigan, around Ann Arbor.

GL: Around Ann Arbor. What brought you up to the Upper Peninsula?

RM: I fell in love with the area on a trip up here and when I had the opportunity I bought a farm.

GL: When was that?

RM: Oh my... when you ask me a direct question the answer flies out, away from me.

BJ: The late 70s or early 80s. You were here in 1984 and you were well before that.

RM: Was I here in '84?

BJ: Yes you were. We did Old Victoria in 1984 together.

RM: Oh my goodness.

GL: What was it about the area that you liked so much geographically?

RM: I don't know. My husband and I took a quick vacation from downstate and we just kept going and we ended up, up here. I just liked the look of it. And he and I were divorced later, and he never had an interest in buying a place up here, but I did. And my daughter-in-law was from up here; she's from Ishpeming, a Finn. They had the farm out here and they wanted to sell it, her parents did, and so I said, "Sell it to me." Then a few years later after that, that's another whole story about how I'd left my job at Eastern.

BJ: Eastern Michigan University?

RM: Uh-huh.

BJ: What did you do there?

RM: I just plain refused to join the union and was fired.

GL: At Eastern Michigan University?

BJ: What did you do there?

RM: I was curator of the Herbarium, which is a collection of pressed, dried plants.

BJ: So botany is your original area?

RM: Yes.

GL: Had you always had a fascination then with plants and botany?

RM: Oh yeah.

GL: So when you took over the farm up here did you cultivate...?

RM: Oh yes, I continued, I probably have contributed more plants from Ontonagon County than many people else. They are now at the University of Michigan or at Eastern Michigan, the plants.

GL: So I came from an agricultural background from Oklahoma, but that's another story, but I've noticed the soil up here and the land, it's not conducive to growing the type of crops that I was familiar with growing up as a child. What types of crops did you work with, or specialized with up here?

RM: Well, these were not cultivated plants, these were wild plants that I was interested in.

GL: Okay, what types? Do you recall?

RM: Everything. I was not top, how should I say... we're off the subject here you know?

KJ: That's okay [laughs].

GL: That's fine. We can come back to the subject any time.

BJ: They drift a lot.

RM: I'm not a top botanist, but I did as well as I could with what I learned. And I did go over to the University of Michigan once a week with the permission of my department head to just do whatever was to be done over there. And I did learn quite a bit that way.

KJ: Were there any plants that were unique to Ontonagon County that you thought needed to be showcased and preserved downstate.

RM: Well, I just... everything, everything up here was sort of new to me. It's a different climate up here from downstate. And when I moved up here I collected up here. There is no plant that I can name for you that is unusual.

GL: What was your farm like up here?

RM: Well, it was 36 acres, but I never farmed it. Somebody wanted to farm it for me, but they wanted to use a lot of stuff on it and I refused, so they...

GL: By stuff are you talking about a monocrop, or a specialized crop?

BJ: Chemical fertilizers?

RM: One that...I forget what it was that they wanted to grow, some kind of a hay I think with the yellow flowers.

GL: Alfalfa?

BJ: Tree foil?

RM: Yeah, and it has to have special, at that time anyways...

BJ: Inoculate?

KJ: Herbicide?

RM: Herbicides, yes.

BJ: Yeah, that kill everything first.

RM: Yeah.

BJ: And then they have to inoculate these seeds before they put them in the ground.

RM: They had to spray my land and I didn't want that.

BJ: That's the old Karinen farm isn't it?

RM: Karinen, yes.

GL: Is that in Green or Mass?

BJ: Mass City.

GL: Mass City. Where the farm was in Mass City?

RM: About two miles out in the country.

GL: Okay.

RM: A painting of the house is right over there. A niece of mine did that.

KJ: That's beautiful.

BJ: That's not the East Branch Road, what road were you on?

RM: Karinen Road.

BJ: But that's off of what, Rousseau Road?

RM: It is off... well Rousseau Road turns into, or it's not East Branch Road, that branches off it. We followed Rousseau Road out. I guess that's what it's mostly called.

BJ: Karinen Road goes off of the Rousseau road, yeah.

RM: Van Nuys was off that.

GL: Is that property still in your possession?

RM: No.

GL: You say that with a tinge of sadness [chuckles].

RM: I do, because I had put it up for sale, and before I could tell the realtor I had changed my mind, he came one day and he had an offer for the full amount. And there was nothing I could do, because if I refused I had to pay his fee. I didn't have the money, so...

GL: Bad/good luck [laughs]. I have read a couple of chapters, one chapter out your book. What inspired you to write the book about the community?

RM: We took a course in community history. The teacher was Pam Koivesto, who was the wife of the senator, he was the senator wasn't he senator?

BJ: Yeah, State Senator Koivesto's wife.

RM: From up here, the State Senator. But anyways, she found out that most members of the class knew more than she did, so she turned it over and she had each one write on the subject they knew most about. Well, I didn't know, I wasn't informed like the rest, so I picked the Communist movement and...

BJ: A red hot subject!

RM: Yeah. And the person that helped me most, I wish, I wish he were alive, was Olaf Rankinen, from Suomi College. Well, he was at Suomi College later.

BJ: He was a Lutheran pastor who also was something of a sky pilot. He flew a plane into some of the remote areas. He was in Alaska for a time, wasn't he?

RM: What did he say about himself? He was the...

BJ: Well he grew up in Vineola, Wainola.

RM: Well anyways, he started out as one of the Communists, and then he was converted to Christianity I guess.

GL: That's quite a pendulum swing from!

RM: Yes! I'm trying to think of how he'd say it. That he was the only...

BJ: He often said that he was so private because he grew up in a Red community out there.

RM: Well, not completely Red, you know.

BJ: Well pretty much so.

RM: Two factors there.

GL: What was your inspiration for interviewing the Red part of the community? That seems to not be overly emphasized today.

RM: I don't know, I don't know what inspired me.

GL: Was it difficult to find people to talk about the...

RM: Oh yes, their cousin... they knew somebody who could probably tell me, but they, not they, the people were still very close-mouthed about it.

GL: Why do you think that was? Why were the people close-mouthed?

RM: Well, the Reds were...I don't really want to say looked down upon, or ostracized, but they were, there was a feeling against them later. You see, a number of people went from here to Russia, and they actually disappeared, they didn't come back.

BJ: That's that Karelia fever, episode. Karelia.

RM: Well, I can't tell you that. Karelia is...

BJ: The...That's a northern province of Russia,

RM: Yes.

BJ: And that's where they settled a lot of people from here.

RM: I don't know that, but that may be so. But they...Somebody, the story that stays in my mind the best is somebody sent back a letter with a note under the postage stamp which said, "It's hell over here!"

All: [Laughs]

KJ: Wow.

GL: I remember reading that in your book, yeah. But the letter itself was fairly upbeat and cheerful?

RM: Well yes, because everything was read. They had to act cheerful, but.

GL: Be careful who you tell over here [laughs]. Yeah. Now I have a thought that went out of my head. Do you have something you can run interference for us on that one?

KJ: When you were conducting your interviews did you interview any of the church-Finns as well, or did you really just stick to the more of the Hall-Finns, the Communist-Finns?

RM: That's a good question.

GL: She's good like that.

All: [Laughs]

RM: I don't know for sure, but I probably did, because I was talking more to the church-Finns. But things were already warming up together, getting together when I came along. But you see, I was writing a small column for the newspaper so they thought of me as a writer and they...

KJ: Which newspaper did you write for?

RM: *The Daily Mining Gazette*.

GL: Oh, in Houghton. Yeah. Oh, I recall now, in your chapter, one of your interviewees mentioned a speaker that came through the Finn Hall to promote the freeing of Tom Mooney, the labor activist in San Francisco. I don't know if you recall part of your chapter.

RM: Well keep on, maybe it'll call it back.

GL: Well, that was a big cause in this area, to try to free this labor activist, Tom Mooney. The speaker that came to the Finn Hall that your recorded, remembered as a child that speech, and he remembered receiving an image, a picture of Tom Mooney. That was the cause du jour of that period. Does that ring a bell with you? No, okay.

RM: Sorry.

GL: That's okay. The reason I... it was kind of an insignificant point in the chapter, but I'm doing research on that currently, and it's a significant point with my research. It kind of helped make an argument for me, you know, so thank you [laughs].

RM: If it was in the article it was as close to true as I could... I didn't make up anything I put in there. The people I interviewed might have, but I did not.

GL: Mm-hmm.

KJ: What did you do with all of your research notes?

RM: I never throw anything away.

All: [Laughs]

KJ: Most writers don't. That's why when you said you were a newspaper article writer I thought, "Well, you know..." [Laughs].

RM: All of my writing papers, and personal papers too, are now down at Eastern Michigan University because I keep expecting to drop dead any day, I should have long ago. But

KJ: You have a birthday to celebrate.

RM: But, anyway, I got rid of everything so.

GL: Are they in the archives there?

RM: Mm-hmm.

GL: Okay, maybe I can follow up on that.

GL: So, when you moved here and you started your farm, what was the community like? What were your initial reactions to the community, and the community to you?

RM: I wrote an article because, the story I put in the article was that it was very snowy, and I had bought a brand new snow scoop, which I had never had before. And I left it out in the yard, it snowed during the night...

KJ: Uh-oh.

BJ: You couldn't find it?

RM: That's right, uh-oh. No, the snowplow came in the morning before I was up and I thought, "Oh, there goes my snow scoop." But I got out, when I got up I found that the driver had gotten out of his truck, put it up against the house, and gone ahead. I was so touched by that that I put it in the article. And I think that was one of the first ones I wrote up here. It gave me an awfully good feeling about the community right there. I've, I have never had any problems up here with other people, until I moved into this house. Well, even after I moved in, the people across the street are impossible.

All: [Laughs]

RM: They raise dogs, but they're, now their very quiet, because the young man of the family was picked up by the SWAT team.

BJ: Oh?!

RM: Oh yes. I don't know what became of him. I have never seen him since. But everything is so quiet. I was surprised the dogs barked as much as they did when you came, because usually they'll start barking, but they'll stop right away as though somebody shushed them up. But here I am, I'm digressing. I digress all the time.

KJ: That's okay.

GL: That's okay, I ask digressing questions.

BJ: I am going to have to split.

GL: Okay Bruce.

BJ: It was nice meeting you.

All: [Okay, see you later, etc.]

KJ: Thank you sir, we'll be in touch. Thank you so much for your time.

BJ: Ruth it was nice seeing you again, behave yourself.

All: [Laughs]

RM: Helen says that to me all the time as she's leaving, behave yourself. I say, "I will, I will."

BJ: Okay, have fun. Keep her awake now [laughs].

KJ: Thank you [laughs].

GL: Tell us about your family; are you Finnish?

RM: No, but my son married a Finn.

GL: Oh, kind of like me, I married a Finn.

KJ: Yeah.

All: [Laughs]

RM: She was from Ishpeming.

KJ: Okay, wonderful.

RM: Her grandfather had at one time owned the farm that I bought.

GL: Okay.

RM: But I bought it from someone else in between.

GL: What about your family and your parents, were they from...?

RM: Oh they're far away. I moved away from my family alas. I moved for the region because I, and I didn't realize how far away I'd be. Now I realize it.

KJ: Are you originally from downstate then, or are you from somewhere else entirely?

RM: I'm from downstate, down around Ann Arbor.

KJ: And you worked at Ypsilanti, at Eastern Michigan?

RM: Yes.

GL: At Eastern Michigan that's, okay. You had mentioned that you left there under hard circumstances between you and the administration, or the union, I can't remember what you said...

KJ: Will you tell us that story?

RM: I just refused to join the union, or to pay for it either. You see, they got... what do they call it? Agency shop. You join the union and you pay to it, or you don't join the union but you pay to it. I refused to do either. And later on, I married a second time, and I married a man who was a strong union man, which modified my opinions a little bit.

GL: I thought it's interesting that you're looking at all, that you did a chapter on these old Socialists and Communists and an anti-union statement, it seems a bit incongruent.

RM: I am conflicted within me.

All: [Laughs]

GL: Okay.

RM: I do have two feelings about the union. I think they went too far, but I think they are really essential.

GL: So your life up here, what you moved here, Bruce indicated you moved here during the 80s?

RM: I'm sorry, I didn't understand you.

GL: Bruce indicated that you had relocated to the Upper Peninsula in the 1980s. So what changes have you seen in the area?

RM: I'm afraid in Mass City it's gone downhill. For one thing, there's been a strong drug influence in the town. And it seems to have brought degradation with it. But also, it's just the economic problem. The young people are moving away to get a job.

GL: What was the main industry when you first moved up here? Did Mass have an industry? Was it, did they?

RM: We had a school for one thing. I wouldn't call it, we had a restaurant. I wouldn't say we had an industry, but we had a thriving general store. And that's still strong.

GL: Were there still co-ops when you, were there still Finnish co-ops in the area when you moved up here? The Red and the White co-ops.

KJ: The cooperative stores?

GL: The cooperative stores?

RM: Well I think those were gone.

GL: Already shut down, mm-hmm.

RM: The local people remembered who had been Red and who had been White, but they didn't talk to me about it until I wrote the article. And a few people spoke to me. The best person I did speak to was Olaf Rankinen. It's too bad you couldn't talk to him.

GL: And that's the one at Suomi College?

RM: Yes. He's the one who had been, airplane.

GL: What did you say the name of his community was that he was from? Viola or...?

RM: Oh, did he say Wainola?

KJ: Wainola. That was it.

GL: Waino?

KJ: No, not Waino, Wainola. Do you know where that is? I don't know where that is.

RM: Oh yes, you drive out, the only place, almost the only way you can drive out... you'll follow this way.

KJ: It's very close to here? It's not in another part of the UP somewhere?

RM: No, it is close to here.

KJ: It's very close.

RM: If you're coming from the north... did you?

GL & KJ: Yes.

RM: You turn left at the stoplight. It will take you out... in Wainola there is a church yet, and people still call it Wainola, but there's no town there.

GL: Okay, yeah. There's a lot of little towns like that in the Upper Peninsula that are no longer, no longer. Are you happy that you moved up here? Did it meet your expectations?

RM: Yes, oh yes.

GL: You were able to get through the winters okay [laughs]?

RM: Oh, the winters. The last winter, before this one, I had never in my life wanted to go to Florida at all, but that had me dreaming of going to Florida in the winter.

GL: We were dreaming of that too last winter [laughs].

KJ: I have a quick question. With your daughter-in-law being of the Finnish heritage, was that the first time you learned about Finns in the United States was your introduction to her?

RM: Yes, I never thought of a Finn as a... Listen, I have to tell you a small, I'll keep it short, but I have a little anecdote. I was in a class of ornithology and one of the members was, his name escapes me, but we were on a field trip and he piped up, "Will we see a bald eagle today?" And everybody just laughed at him. But he was from up here, where a bald eagle was a great possibility.

KJ: Mm-hmm.

GL: That, yeah.

KJ: So, when you were conducting your interviews for the article that turned into the book, did having your daughter-in-law's Finnish heritage help you navigate those interviews?

RM: I'm sorry, you're going to have to ask it again.

KJ: Okay, having your daughter-in-law as a Finn, did that help you navigate the interviews that you did?

RM: I think it did.

KJ: Did you use her name and use her Finnish heritage and help the interviewees know that you...

RM: No, I didn't especially use it, but everybody knows who you're related to pretty soon.

KJ: Gotcha [laughs].

GL: Have you seen the political climate of this area change since your time here? My understanding of this area was that it used to be fairly staunchly Democratic and labor oriented. And now it doesn't seem to be that way. I'm wondering if you could speak to that, if it reflects what you've seen or differs from what you've seen, the political climate of this area.

RM: I've never thought of that question before. I am a Democrat, so I fit right in [laughs].

GL: "Everybody's like me."

RM: I don't know if I've seen any change. I did know Martin Kaurala.

GL: That was...?

KJ: Helen's father.

RM: The father, yes.

KJ: How did you know Martin?

RM: I just got acquainted with him. I wrote some article about him.

GL: Okay, okay.

KJ: If I remember correctly from what Helen told us this morning, her father was a correspondent to the *Työmies* newspaper. He would send in little Finnish, in Finnish language, little articles to the Finnish language newspaper.

RM: Oh, I believe that. He was writer really also. He wanted to express himself in writing.

KJ: Did he talk to you about his writing?

RM: Sometimes, yes. Um-hmm. I liked Martin a lot. But, I don't think I observed any, I don't think I observed the political climate up here much. I've never joined any Democratic organization.

GL: Have had, have you done any additional work in education, perhaps on a volunteer basis with the school districts?

RM: Well I ran, yes I think ran is the term for it, a 4-H group for about 11 years. What did we call ourselves? Imaginations Unlimited. I think we were the only 4-H group in Michigan for writing, creative writing.

GL: Oh?!

KJ: Oh, how wonderful, wow!

RM: Yes, there were some talented kids in that group.

GL: Would they use their agricultural backgrounds and so forth to inspire creative writing or?

RM: No, they were just writers. They were writers that were misfits, because, all of them were sort of misfits, but they found their way in a writing group.

GL: Oh, very nice.

KJ: Did any other volunteers assist you with that, or were you the only?

RM: Yes, the school librarian at the time, Susan Thoreau, she always said, "Oh no Ruthie, you're the leader," and all of that, but she was just, she was half of it anyway.

GL: So tomorrow, or no, later today we're going to go into the Porcupine Mountains. Did you ever hike around there, or go into those areas?

RM: I didn't, I'm not much of a hiker, but I have been to the Porcupines.

GL: They look very pretty. Where we were staying yesterday I was taking pictures of the lake and the mountain coming out of that. What you were speaking to earlier about the beauty of the area, it kind of made me think of that. Climb around there and see what, hopefully I'll be a little bit more of a hiker [laughs].

RM: This calendar is by David Braithwaite, all the photographs are mostly of the Porcupine Mountains.

KJ: Wow, that's beautiful.

RM: They are.

GL: Yeah, I noticed that when I came down.

RM: You're having a terrible time keeping me on the subject of the Communist Party [laughs].

GL: Oh, well we can go back to that any time. Are there any other points about the Communist Party you remember?

RM: No, I said I told you everything I know in the article, and then I went on to other articles and I sort of forgot.

GL: When the McCarthy, when McCarthy was in power, did any of your interviewees speak about that? Did that have an influence on the area?

RM: No, not on me.

GL: Um-hmm. You of course would have been downstate?

RM: Yeah.

GL: That would have been interesting to see how it would have affected this area.

RM: Yes it would.

GL: Up here. I've often wondered if that was one of the non-economical reasons why the co-op stores began to close down a little bit.

RM: I have no idea if that was connected.

GL: Honey, do you have another one?

KJ: Did you interview Martin at all for your article? Or did he help you or give you tidbits?

RM: I'm sure I did. I'm quite sure I did, but possibly not as much as I should have. I think I didn't know at that time how deeply he was involved, he and his wife. And she's dead too, so, but.

GL: We found, yesterday we were at Suomi College in the archives, and there's a recording. There's an oral interview of him, of Martin. Now I kind of want to listen to it and review that. Because he sounds like such a fascinating individual.

RM: Oh yes, if they got him to talk you really...

GL: Everybody keeps explaining how intelligent he was.

RM: Oh, he was.

KJ: I wonder if I could sidetrack you back to the 4-H group that you were talking about. Because I think that's really unique that you were the only 4-H group doing a creative writing component. And I think everybody would love to know more about that. Can you tell us about some of the projects that the students did?

RM: Well, I usually let the students take the lead, although I might throw out, at the beginning of the meeting I might throw out a sentence and they would just take it and run with it. And they would be all different. But, oh there was some nice writing. All you had to do was sort of take the cap off the bottle [laughs]. They, some of them were published in *Above the Bridge*, which you may know.

KJ: I don't. No, I've never heard of that. What is *Above the Bridge*?

RM: It was a magazine about the UP.

GL: It was a literary, yeah. I think Northern Michigan has something to do with that.

RM: Probably.

GL: Yeah, it's the English department.

KJ: Okay.

GL: And some of those were published in that?

RM: Uh-huh.

GL: Oh, how about that.

KJ: How old were the kids?

RM: Well, they were all in high school. Someplace in the four years.

KJ: Were the meetings held at the high school, or were they held somewhere else?

RM: Where they what?

KJ: Where did you hold the meetings?

RM: In the school library. The other leader was the librarian, so it worked out fine.

KJ: That's great, that's great.

RM: They were a good bunch of kids.

GL: What do you think the Upper Peninsula offers today's generation? What do you think is one of the strengths of the Upper Peninsula today?

RM: I think space and forests and. Don't cut them all down because you will have Siberia up here [laughs]. You will, if you get rid of all the trees. I think we're going through a low point, at least in the Western UP, right now. But I think something will come along that will raise it up again.

GL: A low point economically?

RM: Yes. Cause in this area we lost, we finally lost the paper mill. They just razed it. I mean R-A-Z-E-D it. There's nothing there. They took the buildings away and. But, there will be some new resource or something. Or paper, or maybe just the space will be a resource. But you have to be able to tough it out the winters.

GL: When you first moved up here was it economically a little better climate?

RM: Oh yes.

GL: Even in Mass City the people could get a job and?

RM: If you drove up around in Mass City I think every house, most every house was inhabited, but there are many derelict houses now.

GL: Have you driven by your old farm, lately?

RM: Yes.

GL: Does it still look good?

RM: Well, the person who owns it now does not live there, which is not good for it. But I have someone who comes to visit me once a year, and he always wants to drive out to the farm. So we drive out there, and he hops out of the car, goes, he actually, I'm sorry to say, he peers through the window [laughs]. But I don't feel called upon to correct him, but.

GL & KJ: [Laughs]

RM: We go out once every year we go out.

GL: From your research, going, I'll go back to the Communists now, it seems to me that they had such a unique way of looking at the Upper Peninsula and this political theory. Do you think there's any lessons there that could be offered to today's generation, or is that all passé? Is it all water under the bridge at this point?

RM: Well keep on. Keep on telling me what you're thinking there.

GL: It seems from my research, it seems like it was almost like a romantic and an idealistic movement. And this idea of taking that idealism and implementing it into a physical structure such as the cooperative stores, to where it's not for profit, and it's helping out the community. And I wonder if that type of cooperation, of that type of sharing responsibility, is so far gone, if there's any way to reclaim that to where we have so much destitute in the Upper Peninsula and no jobs, if that might be some sort of an answer to bring back an economic prosperity, or a different vision, a different way of getting through life.

RM: This may be true in other parts of the world also, but I see a strong help-your-neighbor up here with so many things, fixing cars and mowing lawns. And there's so much cooperation, and I don't know that that's a communist trait or just a human trait.

GL: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I guess it can certainly go both ways.

KJ: When you were conducting your research and you were interviewing people do you remember anybody saying anything about athletics?

RM: About what?

KJ: Athletics, sports, competitions, like a track meet, wrestling, basketball at the Halls, at the Finn Halls?

RM: You'd be more likely to have me thinking.

KJ: Okay [laughs]

RM: I approve of athletics, but not quite to the extent that they dominate the schools.

GL: Mm-hmm.

RM: Yeah, they just. I guess where I came from the children, the children in the schools went to the athletic meets of the schools. Nowadays the whole family goes.

GL: Yeah, that's true.

RM: Up here anyway. We had debate teams, we had, [mumbles inaudibly] what's the word for not a debating speech, but another kind of a speech?

GL: Persuasive?

RM: Well, keep on.

KJ: Informative?

RM: Just a general, what's the general term for?

KJ: I haven't taken a speech class in years, I don't know [laughs].

RM: Well I can't think of it.

GL: Okay, well is there anything else you'd like to add about your observations of the Upper Peninsula and your life here and?

RM: Well I have been so well treated. Just so well treated. I'm not just sure why it happened, but ever since he rescued my snow scoop, that has been sort of my picture of the people in general. There are a few bad actors, but...

GL: When you first came up here, what would be some sort of the entertainments and recreations that you would do? Would the community come together for dances for example?

RM: Well I personally was writing. Writing, writing, writing. And I was at home out there in the country, so I didn't go to many things. So I don't know what, but someone who lives up here says, "Why we do something. There's something going on every day and you could be going every day to something." But I think, I don't know just why that is. If it's an ethnic thing or a, but, I don't know, I'm sort of forgetting what I was going to say.

GL: About the recreations and the ethnics. And you were writing and I was asking if there were any dances. And you started to say it might have been an ethnic dance, or an ethnic community.

RM: Oh, dances! Were there dances? There had been dances, but there were not dances by the time I got here. So I don't know who put them on, but they were in the community and apparently well attended.

GL: Mm-hmm.

GL: When you were out at your farm was it a peaceful setting that allowed you to write? Would you dedicate a couple hours a day to writing? Or was this, did you have a set schedule?

RM: Oh yes. I wouldn't say I dedicated any particular time, but I often spent far more than two hours a day. I spewed out a lot of articles and that are published here and there.

GL: I enjoyed your chapter. It's easily, it's well written and it's a nice flow. Like I said, it gave me a little nugget or two to add to my current chapter that I'm doing, that I'm writing about.

RM: Well, I hope there's something in it that's of some use to you. Maybe just to lead you to somebody else.

GL: Yeah. Do you remember the name Carl Ross, who wrote *The Finn Factor*? He grew up in the *Työmies* newspaper.

RM: I only know the name. I don't even know what he did.

GL: Okay, he's been quite influential in my work, his memoirs. He's passed away now. But I noticed that you had quoted, you had used a couple of references out of his book. So, good source [laughs].

RM: As I say, I was careful in my...

KJ: Besides writing for the *Houghton Mining Gazette* where else did you write for?

RM: I can't remember the names, but there were some agricultural magazines. See, I write all over the place, not just... my mind is blank,

KJ: That's alright, that's okay.

RM: But I know I have, I can't remember.

GL: Was the agricultural magazine *The Wallace Reader*?

RM: No, what was it. It was something like *Successful Farming* or...

GL: Okay.

KJ: Did you have a contract with the newspaper in Houghton?

RM: Not a contract, no.

KJ: Freelance then?

RM: I just would send it in and they would, they almost always printed it. I don't know if they ever actually refused any.

GL: Did you get a PhD in you academic work?

RM: No, I have a little bit beyond a masters.

GL: Was that unique for a woman to get that? When did you?

RM: No, not at that time,

GL: That was a fairly common field? When did you get your degree?

RM: Oh, that's why. I did it late, I forgot. You see, I had been married and I had five children before I ever took a college course.

GL: Wow

RM: Then I went part time and I gradually went a little more and a little more. I graduated in what, I think it was '79. It must have been '79.

GL: Well congratulations.

KJ: Yeah, that's quite an accomplishment with five children.

RM: But I loved going to school. I just loved it.

GL: Did you go to school at Eastern as well?

RM: I did, I graduated from Eastern.

GL: You said a good school and you liked it. What were some of your favorite courses?

RM: Oh, I think my very favorite course was botany. When I hit Botany, that's what I had been looking for all my life and hadn't known it. Besides, the professor was very good. Very, very good. That makes such a difference.

GL: Yes. Okay. Do you have anything else?

KJ: I do, you mentioned that so many people went to Russia from this area, did you, do you know who any of those people were?

RM: No, and I don't know who's relatives they were because nobody was telling me. They were still very sensitive on the subject by the time I was writing the article. "Oh, no. It must have been the fellow across the street."

GL: A lot of those archives have now opened up. Russia's allowing more access to those archives, and it's a grim story.

RM: Yes it is.

GL: Yeah. Not a lot of people survived that period.

RM: Boy, the people who did survive were tough. They lived through the bitter winters and...

GL: I agree. Okay then.

KJ: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

RM: I wish I could, but I'd have to make it up and I [laughs].

KJ: Oh, but I mean on any subject.

RM: Oh no, you don't want to get me started [laughs].

KJ: Oh? We'd be happy to if there's anything else you'd like to talk about.

RM: Over 96, 95 years a lot happens to you.

GL: And you moved up here for your twilight years. You're living in the Upper Peninsula, and like you say, most people want to go to Florida [laughs]. What's next for you, the Arctic Circle [laughs]?

RM: Oh no. Just the whole UP, I liked it and I like the people, I like all the plants and forests. Right now I'm having trouble because I'm so old and I'm. The thing is I'm not sick enough to go into a retirement home, because I'm on my feet more or less, but I'm so far from my family. I have a son visiting me, he's here for three days. He's out researching to see if there's anything he can do to get me into a retirement home.

GL: Are there services for, are there community services that help you out?

RM: Oh, all kinds of services. I have a woman who shops for me, I have one who cleans my house, another one who writes my checks because I cannot write legibly enough for a check. I can sign my name, but... But I'm not sick enough to go into a retirement home.

GL: Are there any aspects that could, that your generation that the Upper Peninsula could help with? What areas could be streamlined to make your life a little easier?

RM: Well, I think probably the whole United States, you would have to change their rules for retirement people. But, my whole problem is I'm too well. I'm not really well, but I'm too well. They've tightened up

a lot since the time my mother, we had to put my mother in one. We just took her there, but not anymore.

GL: How old was your mother when you took her in?

RM: 90-something.

GL: Okay, that's, huh.

KJ: You've got great genes. It's kind of a good problem to have.

RM: Well, yes and no. There comes a time when you should end it. People say, "Oh no, you're going to live to be 110." I don't want to live to be 110 [chuckles]. I've had my life. I've done it. Your attitude changes as you get older. Mine did anyways [laughs]. Well I certainly have lead you around the bush this afternoon, and not told you a thing I don't think that can help you with your article.

GL: That's okay. That's okay, it's nice to get your memories down and what you care to share with the future.

KJ: Mhmm, and I think it's an honor to meet you, so thank you.

GL: Yeah.

KJ: Thank you for all the writing that you've done and how you've contributed to the Upper Peninsula and what you've taught the kids that you worked with, that's really important.

GL: These lessons continue on to another generation.

KJ: That's right, absolutely.

RM: I don't know.

GL: Okay, well we're going to stop the interview there. And we certainly appreciate your time and contributions to it.

[AUDIO ENDS]