

KATHERINE LIIMATAINEN
AURA, MICHIGAN
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SUBJECT: Life in a family of Finnish immigrants and Finnish cupping.

START OF INTERVIEW

GAIL JUNTUNEN (GJ): Today is March 4, 1987. This is Gail Juntunen and I am speaking with Katherine Liimatainen, from Aura?

KATHERINE LIIMATAINEN (KL): From Aura, yes.

GJ: Would you tell a little of your background?

KL: Well, I was born in Atlantic Mine, Michigan, in Houghton County in 1907. I'll be eighty years old now this fall. And my folks came from Finland. In 1900 my dad came and my mother came a year later. And they were married in Finland. And my mother met my father in Finland. They lived in the same slumisoleme [phonetically spelled] in Finland. But my mother was a maid at my father's home. They call them call them piika in Finnish. And that's where,

GJ: That's where they met?

KL: That's where they met and that's where they were married. And then they came to America. My mother's was a poorer family. My father's was a better off, not rich, but you know, but they were better off, they had maids and jengays [phonetically spelled] what they called working then. And so that's where they met.

GJ: And you're father then came over on his own to find work?

KL: Yes.

GJ: Or did he know of,

KL: He knew of an uncle that was here. But he had worked, see, I guess, his father, they had quite a few you know cows and big farming, not a big farm, but anyway, that he could, they paid him when he worked at home. So he had enough money to come here. He didn't have to ask money from anybody to come to America. But he got a job in the mine in Calumet. When he came.

GJ: In the copper mine?

KL: Yes, copper mine.

KL: And then he was here a year and then my mother came. And then my sister Mayme was born a year later after they were here a year. She died at twenty seven. But there's still living my sister Anna and me, and Linda's in Detroit, and then I have my brother Fred and Carl, maybe you know them. Carl Waisanen, he's at Suomi College.

GJ: Yeah, I've heard of him.

KL: Dr. Carl Waisanen. And Fred Waisanen, Dr. Fred Waisanen, he's in Lansing. He's my brother. Yeah.

GL: So there were five, six in your family?

KL: No. There was altogether, there was eleven. But my sister Mayme died and I had twin brothers Henry and Lori, they died when they were sixty-three and sixty-four. And then brother Waino died and my brother Matt died. Waino was five years old, and Matt was six weeks old.

GJ: Did the family stay in the area?

KL: No. Well, we stayed in the Copper Country till that, you heard of that 1914 strike at the mine in the copper country. Well, then when the mine went on strike, or you know, you heard of that big fire there too, okay well that time they moved, left those, left those, Ellen's folks and my folks and Toyras, the three families came to Aura.

GJ: Now, the one name is 'T',

KL: T-O-Y

GJ: R-A-S?

KL: Toyras. And Habilethal [phonetically spelled] was their name then they changed it to Lethelgist [phonetically spelled] and that's Ellen's folks.

GJ: How did they spell their name before?

KL: Habilethal [phonetically spelled]. But they call it Letho, all the time now since, you know,

GJ: Was that H-A,

KL: H-E-H-T-O, Lethelgist [phonetically spelled]. L-E-T, and so,

GJ: And then your family's last name,

KL: Waisanen.

GJ: Waisanen?

KL: Yeah, Waisanen.

GJ: And your father's first name.

KL: Louis.

GJ: Louis. And your mother's name?

KL: Kate. Katherine. Same as mine.

GJ: Oh, okay. So the three families came together?

KL: We moved together from the Cooper Country to Aura on a boat and a box car, then from Pequaming, you know, to Aura.

GJ: That's nice.

KL: And we all stayed, of us three families in a lumber camp, camp five, until they all built little housing. You know, that, just a tarp paper roof and boards and we bought the stuff from Hebard's from Pequaming. They brought it with a train. You know, those box cars. The train used to come. And so, then they built, we moved in to them. And then by fall they all moved into their own houses. Us three families, we all lived in that camp five lumber camp.

GJ: That must have been interesting.

KL: It was.

GJ: And then all the children,

KL: All the children. And do you know, I told Ellen, you know because Ellen was a year, she was born in Aura, but she wasn't yet. But she had, there was Elsie and Ava and Bruno, and Hugo and Walter. They were all born in Cooper Country. But Ellen was the only one born in Aura. And it's Ellen that comes here. So we were in this lumber -, they had stove outside. And I remember because the summertime, Ellen's mother was cooking pancakes, and all of us kids around that stove, you know, everybody had five, six kids, you know. [Laughing] Really, you know, we never thought it was a hardship.

GJ: For kids it would have been fun.

KL: Yeah. I mean the bears used to come every night behind the doors, you know we were scared. You know, when I think of it the Lord protected us, right, you know?

GJ: Mmhm. All the adults that may have moved to Aura, what were they going to do?

KL: Well, just farm. And they went to work for Hebard. You know Hebard was in Pequaming. You remember Hebard in Pequaming, yeah. And there was a saw mill there. And so when they got their places they got the jobs there. And then Hebard, a little, gave them a little-. The store, there was a Hebard store. And they gave them stuff so when they got to work then they paid it from their pay check and that's the way they started.

GJ: Wow. You spent how many years in Aura then?

KL: Well then I, we were two years in Aura before they started a school at our old camp building there. Then they started a school. And then I was eight, almost nine. See school started in the fall. I was eight, and then I was nine in November. So that's when I started. But then that fall I started working at the Heltunen when I was nine. I went to school from there for my room and board and I got three dollars a month. But they were real good to me. I just stayed for school. The weekends I come home. But the weekdays I was a companion for that lady and her daughter because her husband went to the camps and stayed a whole month. So she didn't want to be alone with her little daughter.

GJ: Was this a common thing for the girls to do? To be companions?

KL: Well, nobody else did it in Aura. But I guess I was that kind that, see, I had older sisters, too, at home that didn't go. But I was always that kind that I wanted to go, you know and do... And see, I don't know my parents were always, and I was my dad's favorite pet, and they were always good to me. And my mother had so many children, I have to stress this, she never felt that the kids were a burden. She always said they were a gift from God, you know. And when there wasn't school she was glad that we were home helping her. And she never, I never heard her say like nowadays it just hurts me when I hear say mothers that, when school starts that the kids will get out of my hair, that they're glad that school starts, because my mother never said that we were getting in her hair. You know we got spanked and we got schooled because we did do things, but that's natural, we need it, all kids do. But she never felt that or made us feel that we weren't wanted. And that we were a burden. And that's so important for children to know that they're wanted and they're loved, so that they're not a burden or they weren't wanted. Because then they get an inferior, you know to think that, 'what's this? That I'm not' you know, see?

GJ: Well, you must have felt that you were doing something very special when you were being the companion.

KL: Yeah, because she came and asked. I wouldn't have thought, my mother wouldn't have suggested it I don't think. But she came to the house, and I guess she thought, because I was one to talk a lot. [laughing] And maybe she thought that I would be a good companion for her when her husband was gone. And I didn't know,

[BREAK IN TAPE]

KL: She didn't, I didn't see any home steads, you know. I went there always, I went home Friday night from school. And then Monday morning I went to school from homeschool, then I went there Monday night and stayed all week. You know, and I did dishes in the mornings and swept, and fed the chickens, I remember, and carried wood. And I was nine years old. And they bought me clothes and good food. And three dollars a month which I thought was such a great thing. You know, we never got money at home. You know, there was enough to feed that big family. And my father got a dollar a day. So my mother said 'do you want to go?' when she asked, and I said 'yeah, I want to go.'

GJ: How long did you work like that?

KL: Well, then I went that fall there, and I went until April. Because you know what happened? Then in the April, you know a great [inaudible] pines comes in the woods? One Wednesday, it was a Wednesday, I still remember, see I had been, already been, I was nine, or when I was ten already then? When they came in April, the men from the woods. I had never seen the men before, because they were all gone, you know, in the woods if I came home,

GJ: They went to the logging camps?

KL: Yeah. But see I came home on weekends when they came home.

[BREAK IN TAPE]

KL: I got through that April, I stayed until June and school was all at home. And then that summer I went to Jack Harju's. There, you heard a little of [inaudible]

GJ: Yeah, yeah.

KL: To [inaudible] his home. So I went to school from there then, it was that summer, and went that fall with Paul and Irya and Leonard and went to school, and that was we walked to the Aura school then, and sometimes they had a dog, a big dog, that would take us with a sleigh. And they paid me eight dollars a month.

GJ: Oh, my.

KL: And then I used to wash dishes and be a companion for her. And they all wanted me to, and then from there I went to that Alex Harju that lived over in Caspersville. Do you know where they live in Aura? Next to us, a little ways? They were sisters, Mrs. Jack Harju was sister to Alex Harju. Although the men weren't related, same name, but they were,

GJ: No relation.

KL: No relations. And I was that winter at Jack Harju's. And they paid me eight dollars a month.

GJ: Well you must have been able to see then the different, these were all Finnish families, right?

KL: All Finnish families.

GJ: What types of things did they have in common as far as maybe food, or,

KL: Well, they most Finnish people had the same, we had a lot of milk, potatoes, which they raised their self. Always potatoes was every day. And they all had chickens. They had eggs. And they make pancakes. And they all had almost about the same, kind of, because they all had the same things. They had cows, they had chickens. They mostly had a pig too, so that then in the fall they'd butcher and they'd have pork.

GJ: Did they have, were there like special Finnish delicacies, or, bakeries.

KL: Oh, yes, there was this homemade nissua, you know that. You know, yeah. They always made that for the weekend, for Sundays, company came to go with coffee, because that's the Finnish people you always have to have something to go with coffee. So they made that with cardamom. You know.

GJ: It's very good.

KL: And then they made that fresh milk, that cheese, Finnish cheese. And that was a special, like if children were baptized, then, and every special occasion they always made the cheese. That homemade cheese.

GJ: What did they call that?

KL: Homemade cheese. That's all my mother said.

GJ: I know, some people,

KL: Squeezy cheese.

GJ: Squeaky cheese.

KL: Yeah, squeaky cheese.

GJ: And some people call it juustoa, but I don't,

KL: Yeah, that's what, juustoa is cheese.

GJ: Oh, okay. That's the word for cheese?

KL: Yeah. Well, your husband's Finnish, isn't he?

GJ: Well, his father is.

KL: Oh, but his mother was,

GJ: But his mother is English. They were raised over in England, but then they came back when the kids were grown.

KL: Oh.

GJ: So, I'm learning, I'm picking up little bits of culture. Although I had grown up in Herman so there were many Finnish families there too.

KL: Oh, yeah.

GJ: Where there special holidays, or how would you,

KL: Yeah, like, Christmas always was a big thing, like at my home too, although we were poor. But Christmas was very special. My mother used to start saving money in the fall for fruit soup, you know, to make out of prunes and raisins and, if they had apples, they'd make that fruit soup. And then prune tarts. I don't ever remember a Christmas that we didn't have that fruit soup or prune tarts. Because she always say that, 'well you have to save now because Christmas is coming,' and of course she'd make nissua. Biscuit. And the same with Jack Harju's. And every, well they were Finnish people that I worked with, I mean I worked in almost every house in Aura. Went to school, and when they delivered babies, I went there for two weeks to take care of that, you know, wash clothes and, you know that Mr. Newland? His wife's grandparents, I worked there when that Mrs. Newland's aunt was born, Helen.

GJ: Oh, my. And that was in Aura?

KL: In Aura, yeah.

GJ: You had mentioned earlier that you're, I can't remember if it was the woman that you stayed with first, spoke Finnish. Did most of the adults speak Finnish all the time?

KL: Oh, all the time.

GJ: Yeah?

KL: Although my dad was such a reader that he could understand English and he could get along. But my mother was more slow in, she understood but she wouldn't talk it. She was afraid that she would say it wrong or you would laugh at her over something.

GJ: Aw.

KL: Yeah. So,

GJ: But they encouraged the children to learn English?

KL: Oh, very much. And they encouraged that you should go to school. Very much. My father and mother both, you know. They were very much that for education.

GJ: Was Finnish spoken in school?

KL: Oh, no. No. We were punished if we talked Finnish in school. You know what my brother Ted, he's still living, you know what he had to do in school, when he talked Finnish one day and he, well he didn't know any other language, what could he speak? [laughing] So the teacher, Miss Mattson was her name and she was a Mrs. Heikkinen, and she died now, not long ago, in Houghton. In fact, you heard of Dr. Jacob Heikkinen in Herman, right?

GJ: I think so.

KL: It was his brother's wife that was our teacher.

GJ: Oh.

KL: Yeah. So, and her maiden was Mattson. But she married this doctor Heikkinen's brother. And, so, when my brother talked Finnish, we had those big round wooden stoves in the school?

GJ: Yes?

KL: And he had to go stand on one leg and hold a log, a chunk of wood. [laughing] For a punishment for when he talked Finnish.

GJ: How long did he have to do that?

KL: And then he had to stay after school. And you know that, we went home and told mother, he said, mother said 'where's Ted?' you know, where's Ted. We said he had to stay after school. Mother said 'what for?' We said because he talked Finnish. Oh, you didn't need any more than that. She took a [inaudible] for school [inaudible]. Well it was maybe half a mile from our place. She went there and took him by the arm and told the teacher 'what else will he talk when he don't know anything else?' And she grabbed him, and she said, 'don't you ever keep him after school or he's not coming to school.' And so she didn't say anything. She took a hold of his arm and brought him home.

GJ: Oh, my.

KL: And then another thing is, we didn't know what excuse me and thank you, this has happened to me. When I went to school. Well, all in Finnish we would say 'Aaho' [phonetically spelled] you know, if you stepped on somebody's toe, or something. Well the teacher tried to tell me when to say excuse me and when to say thank you. Well, we only knew Finnish. All of us. I had never been to school, how could I

know English? But my folks just taught Finnish. So she taught everybody else, you know, well folks that knew English was fine. But I didn't, so I couldn't catch up so fast. But I tried to learn. I always had good marks in school. And so I tried to, and then one time I met her in the doorway and I stepped on her, you know, foot. And I said 'thank you.' [laughing] I got them mixed up, you know. I knew I, I did know,

GJ: Well, she must have understood.

KL: No! No, she didn't. She kept me after school for an hour, I'm telling you. And she hit that ruler so hard on the neck and told me 'Now say excuse me. Now say thank you.' I've never forgotten. [laughing]

GJ: You don't get them mixed up anymore.

KL: No, no more.

GJ: Now, at home, did your folks read Finnish newspapers?

KL: Yes, they always got the Volvoja and the Suometar and the Finnish papers.

GJ: Where were they from?

KL: Well, one was from Minnesota, the other came from Calumet, or Laurium that Volvoja came from. And we went to confirmation school and confirmed in Finnish. I went to confirmation school in Finnish, too.

GJ: Was church in Finnish or was that it in English?

KL: Oh, yes. In Finnish those days, yeah.

GJ: And everybody, was everybody Lutheran in that area?

KL: Well, yeah, most of them were like United Lutheran or [inaudible]. My mother was apostolic. My father was raised in Finland as Lutheran. You know like this [inaudible] you know they were called [inaudible] I don't know what, to me, my mother and father were, they got along although one was apostolic and one was, they never argued about that. And my mother and father both always told us that, they never impressed that we had to be that or we should do that. But they said 'just believe in God and Jesus.' And just, church doesn't get you to heaven. In a way, that's true. You know, if you're not going to be good otherwise, what is the church going to do or the church?

GJ: Was your family bible a Finnish bible?

KL: Yes. But they believed in, you know, they weren't real strict. But they were strict like I worked in L'Anse at a boarding house from thirteen to fifteen. I came around to [inaudible] first, and then to Jon Saari's. I worked for Tiberanka [phonetically spelled] and a year for Jon Saari's.

GJ: And that was downtown here?

KL: You know where the credit union is?

GJ: Yeah.

KL: You know right across the street that building, that was the old L'Anse house. That's where I worked.

GJ: Oh, yes. Well, they remodeled it.

KL: Yeah.

GJ: And that was a boarding house?

KL: That was a boarding house. That's where I worked two years. From thirteen to fifteen. And then I was fifteen I went in April to Detroit. And then I was sixteen in November. I was like fifteen and a half.

GJ: Did you go to school in L'Anse while you were living in the boarding house?

KL: No, I quit school when I was thirteen in the eighth grade. I didn't wait for the diploma they offered, you know, because money was so important those days. And so they offered me twenty dollars a month, and I was getting only eight in Aura and going to school, for my room and board when I was going to school. And they said that they would give me twenty dollars a month.

GJ: Couldn't pass it up.

KL: No. But we worked from five o'clock in the morning till eight or nine at night. But, and we never had a day off. And you know, we didn't think nothing of it. Not a thing. And, but, this Mrs. Kim Rehto [phonetically spelled] was such a lovely person. You know, she worked so hard when I think of it. But she was so nice to work for. You know, she never scolded us. There was another lady Lydia Jestila that worked with me. She came a little bit after I did. You know, people are nice. They are evil to work with. They're not crabby and they don't scold you, and if we didn't know something she was so willing to show us. You know, I remember all these things how people have been so nice and patient with me. That, I, when I hear people saying that people are so rude, it seems, it doesn't register. Because they often are so nice to me.

GJ: Do you feel that people were different then or that, we've just changed our attitudes?

KL: No, because these past two years I have been in contact with, like when worked with the [inaudible] now it's just, well years ago, people were all nice. And none of them seemed sarcastic or, they were real nice. And when I hear, you go and their so, they want to boss you around. No one has ever tried to boss me around. I can't understand. And I worked five years in Detroit for Stantons. You know if I told you what experiences, their just... When my husband worked in White Pine three years, when they built that White Pine mine, he worked on construction. Do you know, I worked for Friedman's he was the head of

the White Pine company, you know, his father owned the Edison Company in Chicago. And they were wealthy. They had a chauffeur. His folks came with a Cadillac from Chicago to visit him. But those people, they were so nice to me. That do you know what I did once? See, they used to entertain a lot. They had to, its business. They had to entertain. And there was nine couples, eighteen people. Now see, I had taken,

GJ: This was at the White Pine?

KL: White Pine. And I had taken, the Mrs. Stanton that I had worked for five years in Detroit, she put me through cooking school, the Edison cooking school in Detroit. And of course I knew how to cook fancy meals, and I knew what. So then I worked for the Friedman's while my husband was working there three days a week. And she found out that I could cook. So when she entertained she wanted me to come in as the cook. So of course I did. And this one time she invited these nine couple, eighteen people, and she wanted, I remember to this day, leg of lamb and we had, and then she wanted me to make cream puffs and chocolate, hot chocolate sauce over the cream puffs. So listen, that's what I did. And then the leg of lamb with brown gravy, you know. And then we had a small white potatoes, creamed, you know. So anyway, but something went, the cream sauce, someone had thrown gravy on the potatoes. So I made the brown gravy out of, and then... And they were two same kind pots. You know, with the hot chocolate sauce and the brown lamb gravy. So then when I went to bring the deserts, I took the cream puffs. And so you know what I did accidently? I poured the,

GJ: The brown gravy?

KL: The brown gravy.

[laughing]

KL: And Mrs. Friedman came and said, 'Katherine,' she said, 'Katherine, what did you do?' I said, 'what?' She said, 'you put the gravy on the cream puffs.' You know, I felt so bad I started crying.

GJ: Aw.

KL: Oh, but I worked so hard getting that dinner, you know. And they liked it. But naturally, those parties they [inaudible] But anyway, then she said 'well, they all ate it, they thought it was a different kind of desert.' [laughing]

GJ: They all ate it,

KL: So then Mr. Friedman comes in and you know I was crying. He said 'why are you crying?' And I said, 'the terrible thing I did, I put the brown gravy over the, instead of the cholate,' he said, 'Mrs. Friedman shouldn't have told you anything.' And you know he gave me a ten dollar tip.

GJ: Aw, bless him.

KL: Think of it! What are, you know what they were,

GJ: And nobody even noticed?

KL: It was [inaudible] [laughing]

GJ: A Finnish delicacy, maybe.

KL: [inaudible] [laughing]

GJ: Never forget that.

KL: No, never in my life. Oh.

GJ: Oh. Now had you parents married just prior to, wait a minute, not married. I'm trying to figure out when you went to White Pine, had you and your husband just been married or,

KL: Oh no, oh, we had been in Aura already for, my husband,

GJ: What is his first name?

KL: Carl.

GJ: Carl.

KL: Carl Liimatainen. He died, it'll be twenty-nine years now on May the third. He was an operating engineer, he operated those heavy equipment. And he was a master mechanic at White Pine, too.

GJ: So you stayed at White Pine?

KL: We stayed at, we lived in Silver City and in Ontonagon we rented a place.

GJ: Is Silver City an old name?

KL: Yes. It's a little resort town next to Ontonagon. Just a little. So, all my working places like that they were so understanding. And even if I made such blunders, you know, they never got mad. You know, it's just remarkable, don't you think?

GJ: Well, I think that in part it must be you.

KL: Well, I don't know. And do you know that,

GJ: You know that you were sincere about your work.

KL: Well, I didn't do it purposefully. And I did good work, although I say it myself, you know, I'd been taught that when you do work for somebody you have to do it, and you don't expect to work and not get paid for it. You know, if you get paid for it you have to deserve the pay. That's the, well, this Mrs. Friedman. I worked for her. And do you know she was from a wealthy family. You know, she was so nice to me. She used to go around with those kind of faded overalls and just canvas gloves. And she, would, when I couldn't get a ride to work she'd come and get me and she'd bring me home. And then at Christmas, you know what she did? I can't tell you how people have been good to me. You know, she piled my car from turkey, to lettuce, to tomatoes,

[BREAK IN TAPE]

KL: - to show off. See, I've gotten this attitude a lot of places. If you've been poor or you've felt that you were, then you all of a sudden-, then you want to show off. And that's a bad point. You know, that you have to show off, you know if you had a lot of knowledge, a lot of wisdom, you don't have to show off about it.

GJ: Do you feel that how you feel is kind of a general, kind of a Finnish,

KL: No, I haven't found that in Finnish, maybe some I have.

GJ: Because I know that an awful lot of the Finnish people didn't have an awful lot when they came here.

KL: But I don't think any of my brothers, although they're pretty well off now, they have their PHDs and they earn good money. They have nice homes and summer homes and anything. But they're not stuck up. And that's what I want to impress to kids from next generation. Is that, you know, education is a miss if it goes in your head. See, you have to get an education to improve the world. And you have to be some benefit to somebody, not just to yourself. What good are you to yourself alone? Right? You're nobody alone. You can't get along by yourself alone. You need your neighbors, you need people, you need, a... See, if you just think that you're somebody, you're nobody then. Right?

GJ: So you feel that those that felt that the money made them a little bit better were really isolated?

KL: That's right. Because money doesn't. Money doesn't mean a thing if you don't have anything else. But what is money if you don't have friends? And if you don't have inner peace, you know, with yourself, and with the world. And with your neighbors. What good is the money? If you're not happy. Happiness is the most important thing. And if you think well of yourself and have done the right thing, you will be happy right? And if you're happy and you do the right thing to others, and you have to trust people, it's better to trust people than not to trust people. It's better to be poor than to [inaudible], right?

GJ: With the community, the Aura community. You spent quite a number of years in Aura.

KL: Yes. We came from Detroit when our oldest son was three years old. Now he's fifty-seven. Of course, we didn't stay there, you know. My husband worked on construction. But we had our home there. And

we travelled, you know, into Wisconsin and he worked there. But I found out that, although I've never had a lot of money, but I hadn't been hungry either. Which the Lord has provided. But I wouldn't want that now. Because I'm afraid that money, I don't think money would change me, because I would give it to a good cause. Like to Head Start program like where children are underprivileged and they don't have a chance. And I think everybody should have a chance, that's my viewpoint in life, that everybody should have a break so that they could better themselves. And enjoy life. Because God made us to be happy.

GJ: Do you think that's why you're mother consented to having you go to these different places and kind of learn from them?

KL: I think so, maybe. Because she came from a poor family. Of course we were always poor. We went hungry, because there was cows and chickens, I mean, but we didn't have a lot of clothes or a lot of money. But we went, all of us were in the same boat, we didn't know we were poor. You know, really.

GJ: As a community, now I guess I'm speaking back to when you were a child up there, were there a lot of community activities that would go on?

KL: Well, they had, like birthdays, people would come to their house. And we'd play post office, whatever, you've heard of all of these, well have you?

GJ: Post office I've heard of.

KL: Spin the bottles, and all kinds of things that we played at homes they had parties. But then when we were a few years in Aura. Of course I hadn't been in Aura, see I went to school, I really left when I was fifteen and I was two years in L'Anse. But there was a community hall, the Aura Hall, and they had dances there. And Viola Turpeinen used to come and play, you've heard of her, haven't you?

GJ: I know the name.

KL: Viola Turpeinen and she used to play accordion. And, so I remember when I was the last year in L'Anse, I was fifteen, and I came home to visit and there was Viola Turpeinen playing at the Aura Hall. And I wanted to go so bad, of course my mother is Apostolic and they don't believe in dancing or cards. Oh, this is what I was going to say about the boarding hall, because the men played cards there every night. And they played pinochle. And of course, when we'd get through with our work we'd stand in our, just Lydia Jestila and me, and I first was there alone. Well, I'd watch behind there and watch how they played it because it was interesting to me, I had never seen it. And we never had cards at home. So I learned to play it because I watched them and I was eager to learn. So, then I came home to visit and one of those boarders gave me a deck of cards. I couldn't even tell my brothers you know that, boy, I know a good game. [laughing] My mother said you don't bring cards in this house, no way, so out they went. Well, that's the way they felt that it belonged in gambling. You know. Because they had saloons were those days, men would go there and drink play cards and stuff like that, of course it wasn't, my father didn't. That was what they took cards for, that it was just an evil thing. And you couldn't blame them, you know, because that was the way they had seen it and heard it. So, of course I didn't do it because my folks didn't. But then there's the Viola, she didn't believe in dancing either, but she knew I

loved music. Another thing is too, I loved music. And I think everybody should take music, because I think music gives something to people. It can reach you where something can't. Like a nice song can tell a person a lot of things that you can't express. To me anyway. I think music is very good. And so I wanted to hear this Viola Turpeinen, see ever since I was small that I love music. And so, I told my mother 'I'd love to go on Saturday night.' And my father said, 'you don't have to go there.' You know. And there nobody came Saturday nights. And I thought, 'oh, if somebody just came and walk with me.' Because there was no cars those days. But my mother was so kind and nice and understanding, and she knew how bad I felt that I had come home to visit that I had been working in L'Anse. So she said, 'I'll walk with you and we'll listen outside.' So you know she walked with me to the Aura Hall. And we stood outside for about a half an hour and listened. Well, you know I was satisfied. But to this day I've never forgotten how wonderful that was of my mother. And she didn't believe in dancing. And she didn't care for dance music. But just to please me she would do that.

GJ: That was special.

KL: It was. I still think of it.

GJ: Did she teach you the cupping?

KL: Yes. I went with her to [inaudible] she cupped at our house when we moved to Aura. When people used to come.

GJ: Is this something that she would have learned from her mother?

KL: She took it in Finland, see she was out in the [inaudible] too, you know. And she took that course in Finland. And then she showed me.

GJ: Is it something that, do you classify it as herb medicine?

KL: Yes. Well, now see, nowadays people take, you know like, the [inaudible] in Aura, he has too much blood. He goes every month to the doctors, they draw a pint of blood. Well, my mother used to put the take the blood out of [inaudible] but there was no doctors, you know, they couldn't afford any doctors. When everybody felt that they had a headache or they felt that they weren't feeling good they were cut.

GJ: Well, I don't think that's that much different from the leeches that were used, you know, many years back. You know, where they would put leeches on people to draw the blood out. But this was very unusual. Now is this a real Scandinavian thing, with the horn?

KL: Yeah.

GJ: Is it something that, now you said this was a plow horn, and that's what they usually used?

KL: Yep, all the time. There's little ones and big ones, as you can see. You know, if you wanted to just make a little cut someplace you put a smaller one and then a bigger one, then there's little ones and big

ones. You know how horns are sometimes big and small. Well, my mother would make these. Trim them herself and everything. She did these.

GJ: I can see that there's a little lip on the syringe

KL: You put like a sausage in right here, so then when you soak these in hot water right here, see, you have to get them stuck on the skin. You can see.

GJ: Is that just with suction?

KL: Yeah, I soak them in hot water, that what, my mother showed me exactly. And then you take a razor knife and you make little cuts. And then you put alcohol first to make sure it's clean. And then you wash that knife with alcohol and then you make the cut and then you put this and draw the blood and then you push the blood and then rub some alcohol so that you, after all the blood is drawn then you close the cut.

GJ: In this photograph I see the cups are just stuck on,

KL: Yeah, that's drawing the blood. And then when that cup is filled with blood I take the blood out.

GJ: I see just the suction itself is drawing the blood out. How do you know when that's full?

KL: Well, you got to check. You can put it back then if it isn't.

GJ: And people would feel relief?

KL: Yeah.

GJ: Is there a Finnish name for cupping?

KL: Yeah, kuppkaus.

GJ: And you say your mother did it, she did it in Aura.

KL: And in Finland already and she taught me how.

GJ: Did a lot of people,

KL: Yes. Almost, yeah, a lot of them.

GJ: Have you ever had cupping done on you?

KL: Oh yeah, my mother did it.

GJ: What kinds of ailments would it be used for?

KL: If you got a headache or you felt that you had like your shoulder blades were aching or something and she cupped. And my mother did it for my husband too.

GJ: And it was reliving?

KL: Yes. At least we thought so. You know, a lot of,

GJ: Sometimes psychologically that would,

KL: It's in our mind too, you know. That was what she was taught in Finland. And that's what it helps to know. And I a lot of times think it's in our mind. A lot of times we think that it will help, but it well help, if, I can't put the words, our mind does wonders.

GJ: I agree. Do you personally feel that withdrawing blood that it physically,

KL: Oh yes, because [inaudible] is in Aura, and he has to come, Doctor [inaudible] takes his blood.

GJ: So it's just a more modern way of,

KL: It's a more modern way, they draw it with a,

GJ: With a hypodermic needle,

KL: Yeah, that's right. So there's no difference.

GJ: And I see the little string around the, that's what held the,

KL: That held the sausage thing that would. You have to soak that to come softer, it'll become soft, and you have to put it to get it stuck.

GJ: When was the last time you did cupping?

KL: Well, that's the last time I did [inaudible].

GJ: And this was,

KL: That was Skanee centennial when they had that big parade there. That we were in Skanee doing this pageant that I had to be in the pageant. That's why that was taken, the picture it's Skanee.

GJ: Do you know what year this was?

KL: Elsie Collins will know because her husband took these pictures. It must be about sixteen, seventeen years ago.

GJ: Very interesting. I suppose that it's one of those things that will kind of die out now, I imagine the young people don't take an interest.

KL: No, no. Like Jane, she wanted to. Jim told me to have something written, well Jane said, she's an English teacher,

GJ: Jane is your daughter?

KL: My daughter in law. She's Robbie's wife. She teaches in Houghton, English. Well, she said she'd write. She took the pictures. She told her pupils about it and they said 'oh, ugh' so she wanted to show how it was done.

GJ: Well, it's something that their children will never see.

KL: No, no. that's why it's good to, and then of course my mother had at that time, too, like if you had a boil or a [inaudible] like you got an infection. Well, we never, you couldn't go to the doctors there was no cars and they didn't have the money. So you know she made from Fels-Naptha soap softened it with real soft and put sugar in it and made a poultice out of that. And put it in [inaudible]. You know, my brother Fred even got those boils, you know boils, and she drew it out here just like that.

GJ: What other types, did she have any sort of medicines that you might drink or anything like that?

KL: Oh, yeah. We all drank milk and onions. Faithfully. Ugh.

GJ: Milk and onions? What was that for?

KL: For a cold. Or anything. I tell ya, even after I was married my father used to come over, if anybody had a cold, he'd say right away in Finnish, 'boil some milk and onions.' [laughing]

GJ: How would he, how would you say that in Finnish?

KL: Maitoa ja sipulia.

GJ: You dreaded hearing that, right?

KL: And then another thing, [inaudible] that's pine tar. You put it on the stove, everybody had a wood stoves, I have a wood and electric combination now. But you put that and burned that smelled that. Well, it also brought the [inaudible]

[laughing]

GJ: It was pungent, huh?

KL: Yeah. Well, that's what, you know,

GJ: It cleared your sinuses.

KL: And you know how we got rid of our tooth aches? My father smoked a pipe. So he took that pipe away with a tooth pick or some kind of made a stick, and put it in the decay in the tooth, it went away.

GJ: The stuff that's in the bottom of the pipe?

KL: Yeah, the nicotine or whatever's in that poultice. It was so strong, it killed the tooth ache. More than once he put that, [laughing]

GJ: Now how would have known that that would work?

KL: Well, he must have learned it in Finland. And my father used to make those baskets weave as shoes, those Finnish shoes. I have some at home. Any baskets that he made. And those golpos [phonetically spelled] that you carry on your back, pack sack. In Finnish.

GJ: He made them?

KL: Yeah, he made them.

GJ: Oh, I'd really like a photograph.

KL: Oh. Okay, I can bring them sometime. And then he made shoes. I wore many pair out but I saved one because he died, you know. And so I have one pair, those cedar slippers that they wore in Finland.

GJ: Really?

KL: Yeah.

GJ: Would he make those for the whole family?

KL: Well, he would have made if they liked them. But someone them were so [inaudible] But, see, I was always more than kind of, I don't know if I was different or what, but whatever my father made I wanted to wear it so it would please him.

GJ: Did they think maybe that was a little too old fashioned?

KL: Yeah, and then he made shoopacks [phonetically spelled], too. You know, those real sharp, peak, you know, you've seen those [inaudible], you know?

GJ: Is that with the point on the end?

KL: Yeah. The point on the end. So, my father used to make [inaudible], he used to make,

GJ: Was that out of leather?

KL: Yeah. And he tanned the hides and made them himself. And then so I remember we walked to Pequaming when the store was in Pequaming and when we walked to Pequaming I had these shoopacks [phonetically spelled] I had these shoopacks [phonetically spelled] and you know all the other kids in town they think

SIDE B

KL: all the kids in town, in Pequaming, they were pointing at my shoes, so I told my father, 'I'm not going to wear these to town.' Because they were all pointing.

GJ: Aw.

KL: And you know what my father said? He said they were jealous because they didn't have them, so he was that nice to make me, so do you know I was so proud the next time I went. I thought, well, they wanted my shoes. See so I was not being ashamed of,

GJ: That's cute.

KL: You know when I think of it, you know, he was real smart. Because see, he made me feel that they're so important. And anything my father, now I know that everything he's been, and he'd made me, I liked them even when he was living even. He used to baby sit for me. And he, see I was my father's, and everybody knows I was my father's favorite. He'd make anything for me.

GJ: Were you the youngest girl?

KL: No, I was the third. But I guess I was more than kind of outgoing. Because I was out, and I never was afraid to face people or, you know, I don't know. I left home they were always good to me, but you know I never was lonesome. And I still am that way. You know, we moved a lot when my husband was on construction, we had a house trailer. And I'm that kind I can adjust to anything. Because, I always think wherever you move you are what you need. Isn't that right? So then you enjoy anyplace where you are.

GJ: And you make the most of it.

KL: You make the most of it. And you, think the best of everything and not the worst. Because a life will, life is what you make it, nothing else. If you make it good it will be good, if you make it bad it will be bad.

GJ: You feel that you got a lot of your attitude from your dad?

KL: I think so. Everybody says I look like my dad. And my son Rod, he looks just like my father. And he's gotten a lot of saying that he looks like my father.

GJ: The only reason I say that is because when I think of these people who, you know, would travel, a bunch of different, come to different countries, they'd have to have an attitude like that.

KL: Yeah. They never got lonesome. You know, think of like my mother, they had to leave their folks.

GJ: And wait. That's right. And when the men would be in lumber camps.

KL: All of them. And then they took care of the cows and the children. And I think that they rubbed clothes on their, you know, and they carried the wood, they carried the water. And do you know even in all that stress and their hard work, they never complained that they had so much work or they had so many children. Never, never, did they..., I never heard my mother say that. And whenever there came a baby, she says that was a gift from God. You know it's so wonderful when you think of it, that they didn't think it as a burden. I mean, no. See, they wouldn't have got along otherwise. If they thought that they were mistreated or, they wouldn't have gotten along. They wouldn't have been able to go ahead.

GJ: No. It took some very special people to take that chance. And to make a new start.

KL: And my mother went and she delivered babies and she massaged and while my father was at the lumber camps and then worked in Pequaming. They were always good to us kids, although we didn't have much. But we always felt that we were welcome. And that's what I think parents should always do, and whatever kids that are troublesome make sure that they can come to you. So that they don't have to go to somebody else or hide, or even how bad it is! Because you can work it out. And you have to work it out, right? Because you can't run away from trouble, you have to, you know, straighten it out. The more you run the worse it is. How does this,

GJ: This is good, I hate to, you know, take you away from your thoughts.

KL: No, that's fine.

GJ: You were talking about all the things your father made,

KL: Oh yeah, well, I have one, two, three, four of those baskets that you put clothes in or little baskets where you put, you know, just any kind of like Christmas cards or whatever. And then I have a big bowl, a big wooden bowl that he made all by hand, out of a, you've seen on a tree, those things that grow,

GJ: Like a fungus?

KL: Yeah. No, it's like a root, a real hard. But he carved it just by hand,

GJ: Oh those big knots,

KL: Yeah, knots. And I've got a big wooden bowl that he made,

GJ: Oh, my.

KL: Just carved it by hand. And then he used to make wooden spoons. And I have some them, because I gave all my children some, too. And he made all my potato mashers. You know, from wood.

GJ: He made from wood?

KL: Yeah, from wood.

GJ: Did your mom do any weaving or anything?

KL: Oh, yeah, she, everybody had a carpet loom in the house. Yes, they made carpets and they crocheted and they knit all the socks and mittens. And then they crocheted, you know those days, although I suppose I don't know where they got the yarn from to crochet, even when my twins were six months old and I got pictures at home, when they had pictures taken they had slippers with lace on them. You had to have lace on slippers that show a little bit, you know that they,

GJ: Well I see many... Now the rugs, the carpet looms, were those the rag rugs?

KL: Yeah, the rag rugs,

GJ: And you just take the strips and just keep using all the spare,

KL: Just keep putting them on. Yeah, I did many of them.

GJ: They are very hardy rugs.

KL: Oh, yes, I still have some that my mother made.

GJ: I have some from many years ago.

KL: I got some that we got from my husband's folks. They lived in Baraga, and she made when we got married about sixty years ago, we got married in '27 and this is '87, and they're all good.

GJ: Oh, my.

KL: They're sixty years old.

GJ: How do you care for them?

KL: Well, I don't put them in the washing machine. I wash them on a board. Because then they would get all, you know, soft. Yeah.

GJ: Isn't that amazing when you think of it?

KL: Yeah, and then I got a bar soap, they made their own soap. You know when they butcher cows. They got the fat and then they bought the lard. I still got a bar of soap that [inaudible] and that's over fifty years old. It's so hard you wouldn't believe. I mean, you want a picture of it?

GJ: Oh, certainly.

KL: Yeah, it's a Finnish bar of soap.

GJ: So really, the families were pretty self-sufficient weren't they? They had to be.

KL: Well, you had to be. And then they canned berries, you know, we picked berries all summer long. And they canned them. And they grew a garden. Right away they pitched a... My mother used to go and make a few potatoes here when there was no, they had to clear the land and everything. So they all had a cow, so we all had milk and they all had chickens. And so none of us went hungry. And then they traded charge account that Hebard gave at the Aura store where they could charge flour and sugar and then they would exchange like eggs for flour and stuff like that.

GJ: So it all evened out.

KL: Yeah. And we used to walk. Our mail came to Pequaming. And that was five miles from Aura. We'd walk there once a week. And there was a postmistress, her name was Mrs. Crofton, I still remember that. And she was a crabby old lady. That's one lady who was crabby, I remember. And my father was always that kind of, you know, jolly. And good natured and he always said too, that life is what you make it, you know. So, he didn't like crabby people. So, he knew this postmistress was crabby. So, we didn't know a thing what my father had in mind. But when we'd go to the post office, he told us to ask that lady just to get her goat. Because he didn't like crabby people. So he told us, 'ask if there's any mail. And if she says no, ask when will there be some?' How would she do, but we'd asked us kids, oh would she get mad.

GJ: But he was just teasing her?

KL: Yeah. Because she was crabby as it was. He thought, I might as well make her worse.

[laughing]

GJ: Oh, that's funny. Well, did everybody have a sauna?

KL: Everybody. Oh, that's something they built right away before they finished it they put a roof on the house and that sauna, and that's where we went, winter or summer, we had to run there barefoot in the sauna.

GJ: And in the winter time?

KL: Winter time, too. Absolutely. We'd get a hot and we'd run. You know, none of us ever got a cold or froze our feet or nothing we'd run so fast from the sauna in the house that, yeah.

GJ: Toughen you up.

KL: That's right.

GJ: So it was a very important part. Was it like a once a week type of a thing?

KL: Yeah, once a week. Until the summer time of course when it wasn't cold, then it wasn't as often.

GJ: Was it like a Saturday night?

KL: Yeah, Saturday night.

GJ: They still do that don't they? Saturday night sauna.

KL: Yeah.

GJ: I've heard of people smoking their sausage and stuff like that,

KL: Yeah, yeah,

GJ: What all would they use the sauna for?

KL: And smoke venison too, and meat, in the summer. The smoke would come in and they'd smoke it. They'd hang it in the sauna. Well, I'll have to tell you, do you know what happened in Aura? Herman Heltunen, do you know Herman Heltunen?

GJ: No, I don't think so.

KL: Oh, maybe he was on the Bay Shore over here, anyways. Well, I went to school from there too, and then everybody had venison those days. You know, we couldn't have survived if we didn't have venison and fish, because everybody lived on that, you know. So, but nobody, until one family had moved, they came from, I'm not going to tell the name, they moved. They had more than any of us, you know. They didn't realize that that a big family that anybody ate. I don't think it's a sin when you take, in those days, when everybody tried to make a living and when they got a deer they cooked all the bones, made stew, they cooked everything of it, not one thing went to waste. And I think God provided that, so that people

would, if you don't waste anything. And then somebody tattled so the game warden had to come. And it was Crevis [phonetically spelled] and Wilson that was their name from L'Anse. And I was going to school from Miss Heltunen at that time in Aura. And we all knew, we were so great at game wardens because I had been at this Mrs. Newland's grandparents working that time and the game wardens came there and found the venison roasting in the oven and they paid a sixty dollar fine those days. It's like a thousand dollars today! It is!

GJ: Isn't that awful?

KL: Yeah. And so we were all, so, I was at Miss Heltunen's and Mrs. Heltunen was smoking venison in the sauna. And I was in the house and this game warden's came, this Crevis and Wilson. [Inaudible] Crevis [inaudible] I think. And Wilson. And I still do remember they had a straw hat on. It was in the fall. And one had a straw hat on, I can't remember what the other had. And they said, 'Little girl,' because then I was about ten or eleven, I think I was eleven. And they said, 'what kind of meat do you have?' I pretend, I knew how to pretend [laughing] So they ask, 'what kind of meat do you have?' and I said, 'what kind of meat are you looking for?' they said, 'any kind.' See, they thought I didn't know. Because I was so small. And so we had an outside basement entrance at Heltunen's, so I said, 'Well, I'll show you one type.' And I seen them shoved each other, like now we got it, now she's going to show us the meat. So I showed them a hunk of salt pork. [laughing] And they said, 'is that the only kind of meat you have?' and I said, 'yeah, what kind are you looking for?' 'Oh, this is fine, thank you.' And they went. And Mrs. Heltunen comes, and she says, 'what did you tell them?' because she seen them go. I said 'I showed them that salt pork.' I never had such a hug in all my life that she gave me. [laughing]

GJ: Couldn't they have smelled it from the sauna?

KL: Well, they didn't. But see everybody warmed their sauna, you know. No, they didn't smell it, no.

GJ: All the [inaudible]

KL: Yeah. Oh...

GJ: So there were many uses for the sauna other than [inaudible]

KL: Yeah, that's right. And my mother used to cook in the sauna all the time.

END OF INTERVIEW



2/87

Catherine Liimitainen