

Interview with Lempi Aho

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Jackie Kari

Me: I am in the home of Mrs. Lempi Aho the date is December 28, 1983 Mrs. Aho when and where were you born?
L.A.: I was born in North Lake on May 19 1914

Me: How old were you during the depression?

L.A.: Oh I think I was 19, yes because we had just met.

Me: What was school like when you were growing up?

L.A.: We had to walk miles to school I lived in Kroon Plat right in the middle of Kroon Plat there was an old farm there we walked and I never missed a day I don't think of old stormy days we walked. You know where West Ishpeming is I went to West Ishpeming school till eighth grade then I had to quit West Ishpeming

Me: OK. What effect did the Stock Market crash have on your family?

L.A.: gee I don't know

Me: Mr. Aho - what was that

L.A.: ~~the stock market crash~~ the Crash Market

I don't think it affected us much.

because we didn't farm that much

Me: What did you think of president Hoover?

~~L.A. (laughed) I thought he was a~~

M.A. He wasn't a good president

L.A. I doubt he was but, gee, what good did he do? I thought Roosevelt was great though

M.A. He was the depression President

Me: What did you think of Roosevelt's plan for the new deal?

L.A. I thought they were great.

Me: What did the C.C.C. do?

L.A. Did you work with the C.C.C.?

M.A. It was something like the WPA

L.A. And what does the CCC do

~~M.A. they worked on the roads and~~

M.A. I wasn't in the C.C.C. at all. I was in the WPA. ~~But~~

L.A. Oh you weren't just the WPA

Me: Where were the C.C.C. camps located?

M.A. Where were the camps located?

Me: uh-hu

L.A. Wasn't there one around here

NO

MA - ~~Oh~~ I think they were in the Western U.P. Pg. 2.

L.A. See, I wish I had just read I have a book about the U.P. and I think there is stuff concerning

the CCC camps in it.

me: OK. What means of transportation did you use?

L.A. we walked all over

me: Did many people have cars at all?

L.A. yes there were quite a few cars. we just couldn't afford one ^{those days} but now we have two in the garage (laughed)

yes, but we mostly walked. we didn't have a horse did we were not quite that old for horse and buggy days but (laughed)

when I was a little girl we used to have a horse

me: How much did gasoline cost during those days do you remember?

MA: Five gallons for a dollar ^{L.A. he knows what ASK father}

me: What did you do for entertainment?

L.A. Well ^{MA. there was no entertainment between us what was there for}

M.A. A Show may be once in a while

L.A. But of course we had ~~to~~ ^{the} church and the

Show and then we had friends over and we played cards

me Did you ever listen to FDR's Fireside chats? on the radio

L.A. Oh I must have cause we listened to the radio all of the time

me: What did you think of them

L.A. I have no idea of what it was all about but every time a president spoke we listened to it on the radio

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LA Have you studied about any of them?

Me: I've studied about a few of them

MA: Yeah I like these kids who study do you remember any of his chats

LA: Not really

Me: How much money did your father bring home a day or in this case your husband?

LA: you didn't bring much home did you when you started working during the depression days

MA: Not much but we made ends meet

LA: Yeah I know but she wants to know about how much I can't remember I can't remember about my father I know ~~you~~^{he} worked in the mine but then he was a farmer too do you remember what you brought home?

MA: What my father brought home

LA: NO Your what you brought home it wasn't much I know

MA: Depression ~~time~~ time

ME+LA: Yeah

MA: Well, it must have been around \$40 a month that's about it

LA: Well, lived on that you bought your food and paid your rent of course everything was so much cheaper

MA: our rent was only about \$8 a month

LA: yeah because the rent was so low too

ME: What did you do for a living?

LA: I was just a house ~~keeper~~^{keeper} a housewife I was just your live in hey first WPA then the mines I think the ~~tilden~~^{first} of course the tilden was open then

MA: Yeah I started at the ~~Tilden~~ Tilden and that closed for the winter and I went to the Blueberry and I stayed there

LA: yes you were in the mines I was just a housewife I didn't have a job.

ME: What did your mother and father do for a living?

LA: My father was a farmer and my mother was a housewife there was so much she had to do you know she brought up eight children so she was getting sick

ME: Did the people that didn't have a job get welfare?

MA: There wasn't no welfare

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LA. Well what was that line there used to be

MA. Ah I don't know

LA. I never got into that line ^{because} we managed on what we ^{got} had ~~well there was that line there used to be~~ they gave out clothes and food

MA. It was a special kind of help

LA. Yes it was really hard to get that ^{help it was} ~~got~~ out clothes and food and

ME. When you were growing up were you or your friends trying to help ^{each} ~~other~~ ^{others}

LA. Oh I guess we did we helped someone who was in need

ME. How did you help

LA (Laughed)

ME. Like did you give out clothes or

LA. Oh yes I was always giving ~~out~~ ^{old} clothes you know used clothing and, and um, it seems too me these later years ^{now} we have been giving more help by being good to ~~to~~ different old people and I bake bread for some different old folks and distributing pie and different things like that I think I do more of that now when I am older than I did in those days

ME. What was it like to be poor?

LA. Well it wasn't much fun I ^{don't know if I} ~~didn't~~ considered myself ^{really that} ~~really~~ poor I always figured I had my husband with me and well we went to church and I think that well we didn't have as many material things now today I think I have ^{more than} before as long as we had each other

ME. When you were a child did you have any toys?

LA. That I can say no I remember my first dolly we made it out of rags and we put it in a match box and colored pins for the eyes and nose but I never had a doll even and I just love dolls to this day when I see my granddaughter over here ^{and she's} ~~with~~ ^{them} all these dolls and she don't take care of them leaves them in the snow bank and oh dear and I just love dolls

ME. What was your childhood like?

LA. Well I had a ^{very} ~~pretty~~ good child hood with a place to sleep and plenty to eat and a warm house and ah but not no kind of fun like the kids ~~have~~ today we went to school and ~~went~~ to Sunday school things like that but ^{otherwise} as for toys we did have skis I remember we used to do a lot of skiing and I think maybe ~~to~~ those skis were made by my dad

MA. Home made skis

LA: Yeah but I don't think they were boughten skis

ME: what sort of a reward did you recieve for doing your chores

LA: Well I don't know if I recieved any we were taken care of that's all but we don't get allowance like the kids do nowadays. Father would go to town ~~with~~ and come back with that extra bag of candy for us when we were done and we all got a bag of candy and that's what we always waited for you know it wasn't like it is today now kids aren't happy with anything we were so much happier in those days with the less that we had

ME: Did you ever come home from school hungry because you didn't have anything to eat?

LA: Oh no because we always had plenty to eat and we weren't that poor you know there was always plenty cause we had our own cattle our own milk and a hog and a chickens and we had everything

ME: OK. The clothes that you wore were they store boughten or were they homemade?

LA: Some ^{of them} were homemade some were boughten but a we wore the same clothes for months I think at a time I remember I ^{had} a dark dress I wore to school and oh I wore that ~~thing~~ and it was always put away when I came home from school I would put it upon a hanger and ^{I will always} it had green embroidery I think a neighbor lady made it so mostly I wore it ^{remembered that} to school.

ME: what was the biggest hardship your family suffered from during the depression?

LA: did we really have a hardship?

MA: not really, we were helped along

LA: ^{I don't know who it was} but it wasn't welfare I know that I don't know who it was that gave all that meat and all the different things we got to help us out but a, we were never hungry look at us now (ha, ha, ha)

MA: the city paid a lot of bills

LA: we did things like that you know ~~that~~ something they won't do today I don't think. Father didn't like bills they had to be paid so we didn't make any big bills

ME: How many people were in your family?

LA: Now or when

ME: well during the depression.

LA. Oh, well there was just the two of us, we were just married and we didn't have children until 5 years after that you see do you know Mary my daughter

ME Um hum

LA. We had her and we lost one

ME. Did you or your father work for the WPA

MA. Yes

ME. What was it like

MA. Hard work

LA. He was telling me you traveled in an open truck just about froze yourself hey

MA. Yes in below zero weather we went out with a wheel barrow and shovel.

LA. Well what did you do in the winter time

MA. dig ditches we shoveled snow off the road and dug ditches

LA. Oh Heavens

MA. you eat your lunch by burning brush brush made your lunch warmer

LA. and it was nearly froze your lunch those were the days

ME. How important was education

LA. How important I think it was really important my ma & pa wanted us to finish school but my mother died and I had to quit I graduated in the eighth grade but then I couldn't go on to High school my mother passed away and I had to take care of the house and family but now I have finished my education and have graduated

ME. Do you remember who was the principal of National Mine?

LA. National mine

ME. Yeah

MA. I think it was Mr. Swanson

LA. See he went school there I went school west Ishpeming

ME. What grade did west Ishpeming go up to

LA. eighth Kindergarten through eighth

ME. What High school would you have gone to then

LA. Ishpeming

ME. Do you recall any of the board members of National Mine

LA. O. H. O. H. H.

MA. Charley Kroon. Thomas Traiten

LA. That's really old then hey

MA. And ah Harry? John & Kouistie

ME. Did you go on any picnics

LA. Oh yes

ME. What were the movies like

LA. Silent Cowboy pictures mostly (ha, ha)

ME. How long did they last

LA. about an hour

ME. How much did it cost to get into the movies

LA. Wasn't it 10¢ what is it now

ME. 3.00 or 3.⁵⁰

LA. is that right

ME. What was the men's chorus like?

LA. Did National Mine have a chorus

MA. There was a quartet

LA. There was a church chorus

ME. Were there weddings during the depression

LA. Weddings yes but they were nothing big like today

ME. What kind of wedding ring did you get

LA. Wedding ring don't tell them the price of it (ha, ha) it was just plain silver this is new since but it was just plain silver but we managed

ME. What were the weddings like?

LA. Well they had a party right after the marriage but no drinking and stuff.

ME. Did you go on honeymoons?

LA. No I still didn't go Now we just had our 50th anniversary and I said lets go to Finland that would be our honeymoon but he doesn't like to go that far.

ME. What were the funerals like

LA. during the depression did they still have them during the depression

MA. Horse and buggy no I don't think so

LA. They were with the funeral coach then I know my mother was with the horses

ME. What were the sermons like during the depression were they long

LA. yes they were more sad unlike nowadays the pastor gives out little jokes to start you off but not in them days they were more sad and long

LA: They were in the Finnish Language course always interesting

ME: How long did a sermon last,

MA: The whole church service was about an hour long

LA: Then why did it seem like we were in there so long cause we don't have all these choirs and every thing

MA: It was just a preaching

LA: Your father had to go from house to house for collection too

ME: Was there any moon skinners

LA: There was many in National Mine

MA: There were a few around

LA: ~~There~~ a lot of them in North Lake but there was some in National

mine they weren't supposed to though was Italians in National Mine

MA: NO they were mostly Finnish

LA: The parents were really terrible about a Finn marrying an Italian

ME: Why were they so against it

LA: Yeah I don't know why that was they figured a Finn should

marry a Finn just like ah some of these churches

ME: What railroad lines came into this area

LA: Railroad

MA: North west and ~~and~~ many others

ME: What were their purposes?

MA: ~~was~~ There was a passenger and a freight

ME: What effect did the railroads have on this area and depression

MA: None really some were still working and others weren't

ME: were there any major layoffs

MA: yes there was a couple strikes too

ME: What mines were ^{closed} during the depression

MA: ~~Blueberry~~ National mine

ME: What mines were running

MA: 106 or 16 in an old mine and shaft

ME: Were there any mining company houses

MA: mining company houses yes

LA: That's about all that there was at one time in National Mine even

were they them little shacks like all the same kind

ME: were you ever layed off

MA: NO, NO I wasn't layed off only if you were in the pit then you were and that was for only about a week I worked at the Tilden and that closed for the winter and then I went to the blueberry

ME: During the depression where did you live?

LA. We lived in a

MA Salisbury West Ishpeming

LA. So we haven't moved much this has been our home for 40 years

ME: did you live in houses or did you live in apartments

LA. we lived in houses

ME: Did you live alone

LA. NO. Because we lived in a two family home

~~LA. When you were young you said you lived on a farm~~
ME: What did you do with the crop

LA. We kept all of it ~~but~~ but sold the potatoes because there was 10 of us to feed

ME: Were there any major epidemics?

LA. oh yes there was a real bad flu what was it that they had besides that

MA. Wasn't it Scarlet Fever

ME Did you get any of these epidemics

LA. I can't remember scarlet Fever Measels I had you had flu yes because you lost ⁱⁿ your hearing

MA 1918 when I was 6 years old we all ^{some of} got it except for my father and helped m.ilk the cows and stuff He sure was strong though he didn't get it at all

ME: When did you meet

LA. It was 1932 on a blind date believe it or not

MA. and we got married in 1933

LA. did we only go that one year?

LA. We managed ok though through the depression

ME did you help your friends during the depression

LA. yes we helped them as much as they helped us

ME: How much money did you make at the mines?

MA: 3.25 an hour then it went up to 4.00 a day but we managed

LA. That was enough but now they are not satisfied with 10.00 an hour

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ME which mine did you work in

MA. 3 good ones the Blueberry, J+L, + The Flooring Mill

ME Did you ever work for the goz zard store

LA ~~LA~~ NO, my sister did

ME: The major layoffs did they affect you

MA: They didn't affect me no

ME: why didn't you like Hoover

LA: well I guess I listened to your mother that's where I got

the idea + when he was president the whole country went

haywire well it's a lot better now than it was

Roosevelt made the WPA and all the organizations for

people to go to work for

ME: When you went to school did you still write on slates

LA: yes

ME were all the different grades in one class

MA in National Mine it was Kindergarten to 6th

Seventh - eight.

LA in West Ishpeming the classes were separate

ME did you walk miles to see your friends

LA yes we did

ME Did you ever go down to Annala's Store

LA. yes many times + there used to be many little stores in National Mine

ME Did the people have large families

LA. oh yes

ME Do you remember when Roosevelt shut down all of the banks

LA yes but we don't have to worry cause we didn't have anything in the banks

ME Did the stock market crash hurt anyone

MA yeah a lot of people lost their money

ME: Did many people vote

LA: oh yes I'm sure all of us ~~was~~ used to vote

ME where'd you go to vote

LA. Ishpeming we went to the township hall

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what were the picnics like

LA Oh they were lots of fun ask father over there he had church picnics

MA We played different games and all of that stuff we played baseball and horseshoes and running races and sack races

ME Did many people have radios

LA Oh yes just about everyone

ME Did any of your family finish school

LA Only my sister did my brothers didn't care about school

ME If you went on to high school did you have to walk

LA Oh yes

ME When did buses start picking you up

MA In about 1924 I think

ME What kind of booze was made

MA Moonshine regular moonshine or homemade wine

(Laughed)

ME What caused the layoffs

MA People demanded higher wages and then they layed off

ME OK Thank you for all of the information you have given me it is going to be a big help