

Trisha Perala interview
with Ruth Fredin

Me: My name is Trisha Perala, the date is December 10th, I'm interviewing my grandma, Ruth Fredin, this is a topical interview. It is at my house.

Me: When and where were you born?

Gram: I was born in Sault Ste. Marie on July 16, 1928.

Me: Okay. Mhm. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Gram: Yes I have 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

Me: What are their names.

Gram: Eleanor, Darlene, Nancy, Ronald, & ~~Donald~~ Donald.

Me: What are your parents names?

Gram: Matt and Tymo Hamari.

Me: And where and when were they born?

Gram: My dad was born in Finland in 1902, and my mother was born in Republic in 1910.

Me: What did they do for a living

Gram: My dad was a painter and my mother was a homemaker.

Me: When did your dad come to the United States?

Gram: My dad came to the United States I believe it was the age of 14

Me: What year?

~~Gram: Do~~

Me: Do you remember? You don't remember but, why did he come here?

Gram: Cause his dad came here ahead of him.

Me: Okay. Are you married?

Gram: Yes I am.

Me: And how many children do you have?

Gram: 4 children.

Me: Okay and what are their names

Gram: Bruce, Richard, Carla, and David

Me: What were schools like when you were young?

Gram: Oh I can't remember too much about them, but all I can remember is going to a school that had like, 4 rooms in it. That was Eagle Mills school. Then I went to the Ridge Street school and I went to High Street school.

Me: What were teachers like?

Gram: They always seemed real old at that time.
(laughs)

Me: Ya that's true. Um, what subject ~~are~~ were your favorite?

Gram: I always liked spelling and arithmetic.

Me: Do you have any stories?

Gram: Oh a few of them. We used to get into some arguments with the kids on the way home. In the winter we'd throw snowballs. In the summer I don't know, the boys, the boys were the mean ones, they'd always chase ya and they'd throw rocks at ya or something like that on the way home. We were just nasty kids at that time.
(Jokingly) I don't think that happens now though

Me: Sure. How far is it. From your house to school?

Gram: Oh we used to walk like about a mile and a half.

Me: Everyday?

Gram: Everyday?

Me: Was your class very big?

Gram: If I remember right there was probably about sixteen in our class. In one of the classes, but in that little place in when I went to Eagle Mills school there was probably about, I think there must have been about fourteen in the class altogether.

Me: Was that all?

Gram: That's all.

ME: How were you, how were you expected to act?

Gram: Ah, The teachers were always real stern they always made us behave in class.

Me: Ahuh. What kinds of punishment did you get?

Gram: Oh sometimes go up and write some words on the board, or take the board, or go sit out in the, the hallway.

Me: How were you expected to dress? Did you have like a special uniform or anything?

Gram: No. at that time you never thought of wearing slacks. It was always dresses. In the winter time you'd freeze your legs going to school

(cont.)

Gram: with your long stockings half of the time that the girls would take off their stockings before they got to school, just go bare legged.

Me: Do you remember any humorous events about school?

Gram: No, I can't remember too many of them.

Me: What kinds of chores did you have as a child?

Gram: I used to have to help my mother do the cleaning. Cause I was the oldest in the family so. I always remember that cause there was always cleaning or always something to do.

Me: Did you live in a farm.

Gram: We lived in different places, but there were, the places that we lived were never close to anybody else. It seems like we always had to. Um we always had to play with, there was the girls always kept each other company and we always played games outside. I remember different things that we did that I don't think the children do now a days.

Me: Like what?

Gram: Oh, I remember when a when the ground used to get bare, a little bit a clear spot after the snow would melt, we'd go have a picnic in that bare spot.

(everyone laughs)

Gram: We used to have fun.

Me: ~~Um~~ Um. What other things did you do for fun?

Gram: Played paper dolls when we were younger, cut out paper dolls outta just take catalogs and cut 'em out.

Me: What kinds of church activities did you participate in.

Gram: I used to go church with my grand-mother mostly. And then go to Sunday School and go church with her mostly.

Me: What kinds of special ~~holiday~~ ^{community} events attend for like holidays or things like that?

Gram: Holidays I think it was mostly family get-togethers at that time. I can't remember any other things that we did ~~except~~ to go to church and family get-togethers where our whole family would get together.

Me: Like when?

Gram: Like on any holiday like Thanksgiving and Christmas, and even Birthdays, were we used to always have parties. There used to be aunts and uncles and some of the cousins used to come over too.

Me: Did you have a big family?

Gram: Yes, we had a real big relationship.

Me: Um, Did you have a job before you were an adult?

Gram: Well, when I was thirteen years old I started working at a waitress.

Me: Where?

Gram: In mequame I used to work, there used to be a 'mequame cafe' and I used to work as a waitress there.

Me: For how long?

Gram: I can't remember how long it was, but I remember working there and then I worked as a waitress till 19.... of and one until 1964 and then I took nurses aid training and went in for that, and since then I've been a nurses aid.

Me: Did you go to college?

Gram: No I didn't.

Me: Can I ask you why not?

Gram: At that time I don't think we had the money to go to college.

Me: How did your family make and meet during the depression if you remember?

Gnam: Well I can't remember myself, but um my mother always talks about it. That it was hard, but they made it. They said that my dad would go and work in the woods or field, he'd always get enough money to feed the family.

Me: Um. Did you, um, what extra things were done?

Gnam: Um. What do you mean ~~there~~

Me: That you family had to do to make ends meet ~~?~~

Gnam: Well I think as far as a, I remember mother used to do all her own baking ~~the~~ it's not like ~~the~~ now-a-days where you go and buy everything you already made. I think they save, they saved a lot of money that way too. And then, of course at that time, well, ah, the venison and the, all the wild game would a, would help. I remember grandpa used to, used to go deer hunting and we'd always have some kind of deer meat. I remember my mother used to even can deer meat at that time.

Me: Oh really!

~~Can it~~? Can it, how would you can it?

Gnam: She used to bottle it.

Me: That's interesting. Did you like deer meat?

Gram: No.

Me: But you ate it anyway.

Gram: Well I used to eat it but I don't like it anymore.

Me: Did your parents used to tell you stories about it?

Gram: Oh, ~~my~~ My dad used to talk about ~~the~~ different things that he used to do.

Me: Okay um, so you have any memories of the depression?

Gram: No I don't.

Me: Okay. Where did you live during WWII?

Gram: Oh, In Negawnee.

Me: Did you live in Negawnee most of your life?

Cram: No, we were just like ~~the~~ gypsies
(laughing), we were all over the
place. Between Ishpeming and
Vegaunee.

Me: What were you doing when you heard
the news that the Japanese had bombed
Pearl Harbor? Do you remember?

Cram: No, I can't remember at that time
what I was doing.

Me: What one thing like, a picture or some-
thing, most often comes to mind when
you think of those years?

Cram: Well I can't remember too much
about the years during that time,
but I always remember when it was
all over with. I always. I rem-
ember when it was over with and
the boys, a lot of the boys came
home, I remember that. But other
than that I can't remember
too much about what, what those
years were like.

Me: Did you have like any of your brothers in the war?

Gramm: No.

Me: No, any cousins or anything?

Gramm: No. I can't remember any. Maybe ~~I~~ ~~if~~ I would have had any relatives in there I would have remembered more about it. But at that time I didn't.

Me: How did food and gas rationing work?

Gramm: Oh. I, you used to have to, especially for I remember gas rationing you'd get so many gallons for um, you'd give them a coupon, and you'd get so many gallons a week. But everybody seemed to have enough gas. I don't know if they were just, if everybody was um was giving their coupons to somebody else or what was going on but it seems like we always had enough gas to go where we wanted to.

Me: Did you have a victory garden?

Gramm: No

Me: In what ways did ordinary people support the war effort?

Gram: Well I suppose they just tried to help, help the men that were in the service. A lot of them used to write to the men that were in the service and I remember during, during the holidays when they'd send packages out to them and they'd um seem to put more of an emphasis on sending, sending things to the service men to keep their morale up by writing to them.

Me: Did it take long for letters to get through?

Gram: I can't remember how long. I can remember I used to have a pen pal and ~~I remember~~ I remember that, I remember getting letters probably two, two letters a week so it doesn't seem like, like it was so long.

~~Gram:~~
Me: How much time did you spend in school talking about the war?

Gram: At that time I wasn't going to school and, and I just, um, I can't remember how much they

talked about it at that time, even when I, because I, I think at that time I was out of school already. when the war was on.

Me: Did being the oldest one in your family put a burden on you?

Gram: Ah, No, I got a lot of hand-me-down clothes from other people, you know, and, it seems like it was hard. But um, but we just, we always made it. Everybody in the family seemed to help.

Me: Do you like a close knit, tight family?

Gram: Yeah, we were, I, I lived with my grandmother for a while and.....

Me: Oh, Really?

Gram: ~~Y~~ Yeah, I lived with her and went to school from her place for a while & I used to go and spend time with ~~the~~ my grandmother at that time. It seemed like um, my mother and dad used to spend a lot of time at the camp, and a, I used to go spend a lot of time with her.

Me: For how long did you live with her?

Gram: Oh, I can't remember how long I lived with her, but I remember staying with them. There was my grandmother and an aunt that lived in town when I used to stay with them.

Me: So you were real close to your grandma?

Gram: Yes.

Me: How did you learn about President's Roosevelt's death?

Gram: (Pause) I really can't remember, probably on the radio. That's the only thing that I can remember is hearing it on the radio.

Me: How would you compare the reaction to her death compared to John Kennedy's death?

Gram: Oh, I don't know. I can remember JFK's death. Because I was in Illinois at the time working as a housekeeping for a lady and I remember I put the radio on and that was the first thing I heard on and that really shook me up. And um, that happened to be on my sister's birthday so um I always remember when President Kennedy died.

Me: How strong are the memories of this period compared with other times of your life? Did it have like, a real affect on you? —

Gram: Well, I think ah, I remember President Kennedy's death more than any, death of any, ah, of any President. Because I think he was, he was one of the best,

Me: Yeah. Um, when did you move to Illinois?

Gram: We were, we lived in Illinois from in 1958 to 1964.

Me: You and your husband?

Gram: Yes.

Me: What did you do down there,

Gram: Well, I worked in the cafeteria of the hospital. I worked as a, ah, I just, I worked in the cafeteria and I just did ~~the~~ dishes out of the meals there.

Me: Okay um, what did you do for fun in Illinois?

Gram: Oh. fun. We just visited with other people and we got to know a lot of people that, and, just through the church, and a, and then I had a sister that lived there. We got together with her a lot, and we'd go and see different things, and we'd go to Chicago and we'd go to, um, Wisconsin. We'd really take in, take in a lot of different sights.

Me: What sister was that?

Gram: My sister Nancy.

Me: Okay.

Gram: (Pause) I want to take a break.

Me: Okay.

~~Me~~ Me: When did you get married?

Gram: Oh I got married in 1952.

Me: To who?

Gram: To Alfred Fredin

Me: When was your first child born?

Gram: Oh my first child was born in 1946.
That was from my first marriage,
and a. he's 43 years old right now,
and I don't feel that old. (Laughs)

Me: What about your other kids?

Gram: My other children are. I think I gave
them, you there ages already. But um,
There's Richard, he's 36, Carla, she's
34, and David's 22.

Me: What did your husband do for a living?

Gram: My husband used to work in
the Mine. He worked as an under-
ground miner, and he worked for,
on the Matha A mine first and that
was 1950, he started in 1950, and
he worked there until he retired in 1974.
He worked for CCI, except for 5 years
inbetween when he was laid off.
and we went to Illinois for those
five years.

Me: Was it hard when he was laid off?

Gram: No it wasn't because he got a job
there. He worked for the Waukegan
School District

Gramm: Worked as a maintenance man for the w, ball field and then also during the winter he'd take and a work as a custodian.

Me: Did you like it down there.

Gramm: I liked it while we were living there, then when we had a chance to come back here we decided to come back.

Me: So did you move around alot when your ~~l~~ kids were growing up?

Gramm: Ah, a little bit. Not too much.

Me: Okay Ah, Do you have any interesting stories about your kids when they were growing up?

Gramm: Oh Not too many. I just remember, I just remember that they used to, the two middle ones, they were the scrappers. They would always be fighting with each other. They'd always be blackmailing each other.

Me: The how?

Gramm: Oh, I don't know. Carla would blackmail Rick and Rick would blackmail Carla and pretty soon, pretty soon they'd come and say I'm gonna tell
ma

Gram (on't): I don't know, they'd get each other
to do everything, everything for each
other. Because they'd know different
stories, I think, and Carla she'd
I think Carla, she was the instigator
though. Cause even the boys I'll tell
ya, even the boys in the neighborhood
were afraid of her. Cause I remember one
time she'd was, she got mad at this
one boy for some reason and there his
dad was looking all over for him and
there was Carla she was sitting on
him she says he wasn't gonna, he
wasn't going to get away from her that
~~the~~ easy that, ~~that~~. I guess he had
due punishment coming, cause he always
gave her such a hard time.

Me: You mean his father came by?

Gram: Yes (laughs)

Me: Oh Gosh!

Me: Do you have any other stories?

Gram: Oh, not many too many, Oh, except
the time that we were coming back
from Illinois, there was Rich and
Carla in the back seat of the car.
And Carla, she was lying down, and
Rich gave her a life saver and a I

Gram: always remember my husband had
to pull into somebody's yard cause
there she was choking on that life
saver, I bet you she doesn't eat life
savers lying down anymore.

Me: Did you panic?

Gram: Oh, it was a big scare, once that life
saver came up, well it was fine, but
at that time we didn't know how
to do the hydraulic maneuver. You
know and that was really a scary
oudeal. Do you know, I know I think
a person knows what to do I
something like that happens

Me: I see. ~~So~~ where do you ^{work} ~~live~~ ~~now~~
Gram: And does your husband ~~work~~ ~~now~~?
No my husband is retired, he retired
in 1974 due to health disabilities.

Me: And what was that?

Gram: He had trouble with his high blood
pressure and his nerves are bad. He
just he had all kinds of different
problems.

Me: So do most of your children still
live around with you by you?

Gram: Well, I have one that doesn't live
to close, he lives in San Francisco,
and I have one that lives in ~~town~~
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But, the other two are quite close.

Me: Well thank you for your time.

Gram: (She nods her head and says
nothing)