

Aili Lake, Lillian Mattson & Lydia Hogan

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Cassette tape label: Aili Lake, Lillian Mattson, Lydia Hogan reminiscing of folks' life

Side A

Aili: Eighty-seven! My goodness! I think we're all gettin' older, I guess as I was born in December 1914. Anyway, Lydia called to come over here for coffee and we sat and had coffee and then she'd play some tapes and she asked us to talk about what I remember.

What I remember I (unintelligible) when I (?) in Michigan was a BIG Maxwell car – touring car – but the roof was put down, and we were living in a little log house over there where I was born and we got out in front there, Lillian and I and Vieno, and we were sitting there and lookin' at her beautiful button shoes! They were above the ankle tight and she had a ribbon in her hair, and she had a beautiful dress on, and those shiny button shoes. And oh! How we looked at 'em. We couldn't understand how come *we* didn't have button shoes like her. We just couldn't believe it. But then when we got up after we played in the sand for awhile, then go over the road with the mothers, because I guess we got our hind end warmed up a little bit, 'cause we didn't appear to be very, ah, nice. We kinda, we got a little dirty.

Well, anyway, and then when we were younger and the Hyytinen's moved over here – down yonder, as we used to say – and there was Leppanen. Well, Mr. Leppanen used to hitch up the team of horses and then said, “well, now we're gonna go to Hyytinen's to visit!” a lot of times on Thanksgiving, or so forth, or even on any Sunday. We took the horses and the sleigh (?), and then they'd start from home and there was (sounds like Mr. Leppanen, Mrs. Leppanen (tetti) and Vieno) and then he'd come over and pick Mother and Lillian and I up, and then we were all sitting around the sleigh over there, then we'd cut across the meadow over there to Karjala's up there in those fir trees. And never in my life before had I seen a beard on trees. Or so called, oh we called 'em whiskers. And I remember we used to reach out in the boughs, used to follow in the sled, and we used to pull on those things and Mr. Leppanen finally said, “Don't pull so hard! You're gonna go right along with 'em! Because the branches aren't going to give way.”

We got a lapful of that moss and then we got down to Hyytinen's and we all got out of the sled then Mr. Hyytinen came to meet us, and Leppanen took the horses out and put 'em so they had hay from the sled, from the sled box, and they had a little oats and stuff on 'em, and we went into the house.

Then after a little bit, me and Mrs. Hyytinen brewed a whole big pot of coffee over there, and we all had something to eat, and we stayed in there. And after awhile we were stuffed

and we went skiing down on the hill. And we were sliding down on their hills. And of course Rex Smith who lived across the road over there was 15. And Rex had a pony over there and he had a sled and he used to hitch up that thing over there. And then give the girls a ride on there. And we used to ride on a sled - I believe it was a sled most of the time, because it was in the wintertime – and up and down the road we'd go! And we just had a lot of fun. And then Mrs. Smith used to feed us some hot plum sauce – wild plum sauce? – and it was GOOD. Then she had some kinda cake to go along with it, and I'll never forget that. Then, of course, after we stayed a long time...

Lillian: We had frosting on the cake, too!

Aili: ...Well, I guess she had a little frosting – it was white on top. And then we went after awhile we went back to Hyytinen's over there, and then of course we went and slid a little bit more down the hills and went down along what's now the island and then we went down the pike over there towards Karjala's way, and slid down a hill. And then after awhile we got cold and we came and then it was time to start going home. And back home again we went through the... over the hills and through the valleys and through the woods and I don't know if I can find my way if I had to now anymore.

But we used to do that quite often. Mrs. Hyytinen used to come there on a Sunday and she'd visit. She had a few of the children along, would come and stop at our place and then stop at Leppanen's and...but she was quite a runner! She used to come from home and she would run and when you'd see her come, she'd run and then she'd come and ski...

Lillian: She was quite a good skier. And light-footed.

Aili: Oh! She was light-footed! Ya. And she used to ski so much and come over and go over to Leppanen's and then she'd ski back. There was a ski trail that went straight across about the same place where that, ah, sleigh ride used to be. And I remember it very, very well.

Lydia: Remember them wads of newspapers even that Mother used to bring from Leppanen's and so she had something to read.

Aili: Oh, yes! They saved...if somebody got a letter from Finland you'd better believe it. They read that over and over again, then they saved the newspapers, and then they'd pass it on from one house to the next house. How do you remember Dad? I remember your dad used to come home after he was out working and most of all when they first moved over there, and they had that little two-room house that was covered with tar paper. And then they raised some geese on there, and in the fall the geese always used to love to come and tear the tar paper up, and Mr. Hyytinen used to say "Those darn geese, they can't leave the house alone!" They're gonna move in with us. And then they had a little way out in the yard, an old log barn. It was very low, and it was, I believe that thing housed about six, seven head of cattle, besides the horses included in there. It was made out of round clump of logs and it had a little bit a little upstairs in there that was packed with hay and I always remember all the leftovers from the house were brought upstairs in

that barn, hayloft over there. And after awhile they built a building over there by the house – they called it their granary where they butchered in the fall, they had their meat in there, and they had their grain in there and they had left over fruit that didn't fit in the house they were hanging over there in there, too. And so that's about my memories out of there. We used to walk up and down the road over there. We used to do a great deal of running.

Lydia: Did Dad used to bounce you on the knee too knee?

Aili: Oh, ya! _____ Hyytinen used to take – because I don't remember our dad at all – it's only that I remember the dictionary and books, and he used to take me and he'd bounce me on his knee and sing “kertaan, kertaan kirkkolen, pappin muotin penkkilan; ruskiällä ruunalla, ja valko sille varsalla”.....and more. And those were the three songs that he used to... then he'd sing quite a little bit, and I always remembered him smoking his pipe, usually always, and I used to stomp behind him and he used to get hay for the cows while I used to tromp behind him. And go in the barn over there. And he told me to stand in the corner over there while he was getting hay for the cows, then we'd come back together again. So I guess that's about it. Now Lillian can talk!

Lillian: I will say, too that this is January 2, 1987 we'd have coffee at Lydia's and Floyd's. I'd just go back to recalling a little bit of the days when Grandma Olli had died in Finland, and like Aili said, we took that day, too, it was a Sunday, and Mrs. Leppanen had gotten word that Grandma Olli had died in Finland, and I believe she was only 59 years old. And so Mr. Leppanen harnessed the horses that Sunday, and there was that black horse that Mother had – Dad had raised – Kossi was one of them, I don't recall the other horse. And through that same woods and swamp to Arthur Swanson's we came up there, and we were on, Mother and Aili and I, and Mr. and Mrs. Leppanen and I suppose Vieno, and they went to tell the word to “Grandma and Grandpa Hyytinen”(actually aunt and uncle) that Grandma Olli had died in Finland. And they were very much saddened by the news.

And then, of course, then there came evening again it was in short days of the year. Would it have been in December, I don't recall, but I couldn't have been too old. Maybe I was only 14. So that dates back a long time ago. And I recall many instances of hardship. I can see Grandma Hyytinen sitting on a pump early July of 1935, before Roger was born, and she said that if we lose our farm, now, it ain't going to be my fault, she said. I have tried for all I am worth. And that year, they had the first turkeys, 500 of them. And they made enough money to pay the payment on the farm, which I don't know if it was one of the last ones.

Lydia: It might have been close to the last of that...

Lillian: Close to the last, or something. Because she was so sad that they'd lose their farm after they had paid for it for so many years. And that time then also, she got her set of teeth, front teeth. She hadn't had teeth for at least 2 years. So that was a bright spot in

their life, that they got through after that, they thought they got to be fine then but times were hard and it was Depression and drought. And then, then we were at Rossburg Meadow making hay there, and Grandma came and she was expecting Roger, and I had Marilyn as a baby born April 16, 1935, so she was exactly 4 months older than Roger. And I left her home with Aili and Mother, and always had to hay the Rossburg Meadow. But as I recall, I can only recall many of the days of hardship because I was one of the older ones. And when I went visiting Grandma (Selma Hyytinen) in town, and she said “Stay a little longer, stay a little longer! Let’s talk some more.” And she would even come to the front step and say “Come back in little while longer! Let’s talk.” And she would talk about lots of things that went down in hardships. And then, of course, when they used to come over to Rabbit Lake when Leppanen’s were living, and then Aunt Julia then of course Aunt Selma and Mother, all three of them, they were at the coffee table and tried to make their minds and talk was all of Finland, so we knew pretty much all the relations here, because - the elder generation – because they were always the talk of Finland. The country they loved so well, but where they had left.

And it is hard to recall the things all of a sudden, but only things I recall as an older person being born in Nauganee, Michigan December 28, 1909, only things I can recall is the hardships of life! Which of them was many and I think the younger generation how hard they have it – they’ll never have it like we do. We had to carry wood in and we had to sit there with oil in the lamps and the lanterns, and there was no electricity and no bathrooms. And there was so much work to do. And I recall yet Grandma Hyytinen telling of the tales of hardship which were many, but of course I guess there was many brighter days in her life, too.

But as she was left alone when Gust died, even my husband Arvo seemed to have lost interest in life. He said “Gust is gone!” and I heard him cry. He said, “Gust is gone.” He lost all interest in life because they used to chat together so many times. He came over at least once a week. And they would have nice visits together. Talking mostly of the past and some into the future...the kids at Selma Hyytinen’s were smaller, because I am the oldest one. I am 10 years older than Aunt Lydia ...your mother Lydia (Cherie’s mother) and I recall we made rolls for them on a Sunday when Gus tried to rake hay to sell. I don’t remember the price per ton he tried to raise to sell and get money, and keep it in existence.

Aili: Then they had to haul it all the way to Aitkin.

Lillian: Yes, and haul it all the way to Aitkin with the horse! And I remember being at Rossburg Meadow the summer of 1935 east of Hassman Junction out there in the meadows, and there Gus had a lot of watermelon and he brought in the biggest muskmelons there, and he had been selling them in town for 25 cents apiece. Great big muskmelons, and they were sweet!

Lydia: Isn’t that something that they could raise watermelon and muskmelons then?

Aili: I could remember when...

Lillian: We had watermelons up to 25 pounds!

Aili: ...when your folks picked up a load of stuff – rutabagies, raspberries, potatoes, and other garden stuff, I think there was some tomatoes – and they went to town with that load of vegetables and then traded it in for shoes. Mostly shoes and stockings and mittens. And not so much coats or that stuff there.

Lydia: Mother used to make our coats from somebody's old coats.

Lillian: Yeah. So it's just a story about, talking about hardship of the olden days but of course many of us tend to forget the past but it is so easy to... hard to forget it completely. But there have been many brighter days in our life, and of course we'll lucky to be alive and enjoying many luxuries of this modern life also.

Lydia: You'll have to tell about Dad cooking coffee when he went to get the hay off.

Lillian "Ya! One of the times I was expecting Marilyn, and I rode with my husband Arvo he had a sore back, and I rode behind him. I remember they had to load 31 days and most of the weather that week it was 30 below and 25 below in the early morning hours. It was very cold. And I went 12 trips to with Arvo to help pitch a load of hay, because his back had been sore previous to that. And behind there was your brother Paul (Hyytinen) too, but I don't recall if Paul wasn't on that Rossburg there north of the "T" that crosses then to either to Kimberly or across the road to yours (talking about the road toward Floyd Hogan's and later Andrew and Aili Lake's)

We got north of there and there came the popple woods and it was very cold and Gust, and he had the team of horses and he was then running to have a cup of coffee (laughs) and there's snow. That means we had quite a bit of snow but it was very cold. And Gust got stopped in the popple woods until it was warmer there and he had some kind of a can, and he made a little fire out of popple branches and then he took some snow from the ground there, a couple feet deep there. And he took some snow into the can and started melting it, and that coffee – he was going to cook coffee – and there was some rabbit turds in there and every gulp there was at least three. And (laughs) Gust just picked them out – the rabbit turds – from the heated water that had melted from the snow, and he said well, it would be more nutritious now! And that's good coffee. And we had coffee there.

And we always had sandwiches along and of course then over the fire we kind of tried to melt them because the sandwiches were kind of frozen.

Aili: You got a long stick and you toasted them! A long stick...

Lillian: I suppose...

Aili: ...and make them warm a little bit so they, otherwise they are solidly cold.

Lillian: Yes, and they were wrapped with cloth pretty thick with newspapers) but most often...

Lydia: Were you there, Lillian, that time, getting hay when Dad's horse got caught on the railroad tracks? Pulled its hoof off? Pulled its hoof off on there?

Lillian: No, I don't think I was that day.

Lydia: Oh.

Lillian: I wasn't that day. But see there was a mixup which one of them was it, was it, somebody started making hay there when uh, there was several of the WPA gang was graveling the road to Rossburg, and it was 30 below in the morning and there was seven teams of horses went to get hay. And there was Mariins and there was Leppanens and there was Henry Haveri. And then, of course, Paul – your brother, Paul – and Gust (Hyytinen) there was and Arvo (Mattson). And there was a total of seven sleds.

Aili: And Andrew.

Lillian: Andrew wasn't there. Andrew wasn't there yet that time.

Aili: Oh. And that was the drought years.

Lillian: That was the drought years and the WPA gang was graveling the road north of Rossburg. And it was quite a ways that they had graveled the road. They had to hitch two teams together to pull one load of hay when they came back. They had to put two teams together to pull that one load. Then go back again and get the other sled. That's what they did!

Your dad even had to loosen up the horses and put them on Arvo's. And Mariins and Leppanen's, I think, went to get - oh, there was Cartie (?) and (unintelligible) hauling hay. There was seven in that...

Aili: People had absolutely no idea...

Lillian: They come below the hills, they had to, up to the railroad tracks, two teams of horses had to pull one load of hay. And then they had to go back and get the other hay load. One winter we had the WPA camp was graveling the road.

Lydia: That's what you call... life was hard!

Lillian: And they were going in the mornings, Arvo said, that there was teams of horses were coming afterwards, after...they pretty much went together from that neighborhood Leppanen, Marin's and Havari and then your dad and Paul and Arvo. There was Skarbakka and Wiita...no Karjala. There were seven. And I remember Arvo said on the first sled, they put a blanket, standing up against the sticks were sticking up in the sled, they would blanket and they...and shovels. Snow shovels. Some kind of shovel, they'd make a fire. And a fire there, and the first sled and all the men went to work they had, see, that fire, because it was so cold that they were just freezing.

Aili: They were snow shovels. They put...

Lillian: Yeah, they put blankets around the top of the sled, like a windshield. Because those sleds were that kind that they had two heavy beams on each side and then they had arbors and there were sticks sticking out, coming out each side.

Lydia: So it made it a little warmer to ride.

Lillian: And then there was... yeah, they'd hold the hay then, when they built a big hay load and those sticks would hold it, so... there was a stick there was a stick, I think, there was a cross piece in front, I think there was a stick. And they had a team of horses, the first one, they put the blankets around the front, and then they put a shovel, or some kind of big metal thing, and they made fire in that sled and that's where all the men came on that first day and the teams of horses were following afterwards. They came by themselves!

Aili: They didn't need a driver – they came by themselves.

Lillian: They came...

Lydia: They were really trained, weren't they.

Aili: And one time, your dad came across the railroad tracks there and the horse happened to step so its foot went between the railroad track and that, in there, in that hole, and he lost his whole hoof on there, and I believe they had to shoot that horse, I think.

Lydia: I guess the railroad company compensated Dad a little, but not a lot.

Aili: Yeah. And it was cold. It was, I think, for six weeks they had 30 below.

Lillian: What year was it when that tornado came through there. I think it must have been, well, Andrew, I don't think Andrew Lake wasn't here yet, maybe. When Mariins and Leppanens, they lost all their haystacks on the south side of that popple woods. They all were blown away from the ground level.

Aili: Scattered all over!

Lillian: Scattered all over! And I seen a picture at Mariins where all... they quickly put the horses on one wagon and Onni Mariin and Vaino Mariin and they all hung onto that wagon, without... they hung on it. And the teams of horses they had been tied on that wagon, and the other wagon - Mariin's wagon rack – was blown, so there was just the cross T in front. There was a pole sticking out, and a T to hold it.

Lydia: I'm surprised the horses didn't get it.

Aili: Yeah. Well, they were all hanging on to that hay rack.

Lillian: On that other hay rack. And Mariin's hay rack was blown away, and smashed to smithereens, but the T was left, just like a cross.

Lydia: Well, that was quite an experience.

Lillian: Yeah. Then, of course, we went back – Paul and your dad and Arvo and I – we went back and we were then, of course, on the north side of the woods, and we had this great big haystack. And just the tops were taken off of our haystacks and we worked all day long, Paul and your dad, and I and Arvo, we worked all day long. I was on top of haystack, too, and I think your dad Gust and Arvo and Paul were pitching back the hay because it took the tops off all those haystacks. And we had some big ones!

Lydia: You know that Dad went through that, during that storm. It hailed so terrible that they had to go under the hay rack, didn't they?

Aili: There was great big hail.

Lillian: That day...

Lydia: Or was that a different storm?

Lillian: That's a different storm. But that time then they didn't get enough hay and they went north of Aitkin to make hay, at Hassman where they rented some hay stumpage, they went north of Aitkin and they came back, it was already September. And I had come back from the meadow and that day it rained nearly 18 times. But your dad and I suppose Paul was there, they put the hay... finished the hay making. And came home. And your dad, if you recall, he got, Arvo just got, he had the wagon, and behind the wagon was the hay rake. Do you remember that, Aili, when...

Aili: Yes, I do.

Lillian: Arvo got in front of mother's and he had time to put the horses in the barn, and the storm came, that tornado came, that was the one that did damage, that tore up everything and the haystacks they had been north of Aitkin and the wagon was pushed below the hill with the hayrack in back on the hay mower. And they weren't even broken. It just pushed it...

Aili: Pushed the thing down...

Lillian: And that's the time your dad got as far as Bergstrom's.

Lydia: Is that the storm that took Paul's windmill?

Lillian: I suppose.

Lydia: That was Paul's pride and joy. I remember Paul cried when the windmill went down.

Lillian: I suppose. And that's the time your dad, Dad only got as far as Bergstrom's and he loosened up the horses and then they were at Bergstrom's farm, the horses, when the storm went through. And Mother's barn was pushed off the foundation. One foot backwards.

Aili: Was that when Laine's farm went down?

Lillian: Yes!

Lydia: Going back to when Grandma Olli died. Mother had a dream ahead of that time.

Lillian: Yes, she had...

Aili: About that birch tree going back to Lappajarvi and she said, well, who had made that big hole there at her grandma's...

Lydia: ...Grandma's tree down.

Lillian: Yes. That's right.

Lydia: Then she had a dream that there was coming a team of black horses to tell the news that Grandma is dead, and she said when she saw you guys coming with that team of horses – it was a black team of horses – she said her heart just...

Lillian: Yeah. She knew.

Aili: She knew right away that it was bad news.

(Everyone talking at the same time, can't make this out)

Lillian: ...and I suppose they had one horse and Grandma had one horse.

Lydia: I had, in my diary, when Mother had dreamed a few years back, that she said that, she had planted a garden with the best of seeds, and she said something went in there, like tearing everything apart, and she said, "Are you the devil?" That I have planted good seed, and now you are tearing it apart. Just like she was worrying about her own family, you know.

Aili: Oh, yeah.

Lillian: Yeah.

Aili: But I was going to say, once more, about the haying business. There's Karjala and Leppanen, and we made hay several years because it was so dry many years in a row. And they were, on that field, there over the hill from Rossburg, on – as you go on the left-hand side, where now lives, used to be that Dan Morris used to live there...

Lillian: Dan Morris.

Aili: Yeah. And they rented the hay stumpage and they had their food; they had some underneath the ground dug in a kind of a well, they had some up in a tree, and a bear came over there and ate the whole bit, do you remember that?

Lillian: I guess I wasn't... but I recall their talking about our ditch hay, and so we had old stove that Arvo had brought there, and there's dryers and deer. We were not too awful far from the Rice River. And then we had canned two-quart jars of meat, two-quart jars of meat, and we cooked some kind, tried to cook some kind of stew.

Aili: Yaaaaah.

Lillian: Then of course milk, I guess Lydia's mother tried to send milk, too, and went there every few days to get groceries. And she sent canned meat and I don't remember what all, but there was crushed rutabagas.

Lydia: Did you make a hole in the ground and put the...

Lillian: And we went down the bend to Rice River and there was then the Rice River water was very low, but we made a hole in the sand, and in the bottom of the sand came a little water. That was our refrigerator!

Lydia: Yeah. You must have had the stuff in tight jars.

Lillian: Yeah, we had canned meat in two-quart jars in the spring Arvo would butcher at Mother's a pig or something, and we canned and we made meatballs and all kinds of meat. And I think your mother had the same thing.

Aili: And we had canned fish, sucker fish, with a little vinegar in there, and put some salt in there.

Lillian: And that time we were making hay late in the season. I was expecting Marilyn already, and I had morning sickness. I remember stirring up a cake and going to the Rossburg Meadow, then. And then Gust was always cooking that stew with that meat, and he was putting rutabagy in there, and that rutabagy because he liked rutabagy and potatoes and carrots – they were home-raised food, our vegetables – and Gus was always putting rutabagies in with the canned meat and we were cooking stew there. And I learned to hate rutabagy stew then! It still smells bad to me! (lots of laughing).

Lydia: Oh, no!

Lillian: And you should, then of course, there was an old house. Somebody had lived there when we were in Rice River. There was an old house there where we had hay on the floor and we sat there. I was on the side and Arvo then and then was Gus and then was Paul on the other side. Well, then, we went north of Aitkin, in 1936 to make hay because there wasn't enough hay there out of Rossburg, and there wasn't as much hay. We went north of Aitkin about 10 miles to Hassman Meadow, there was a artesian well there where they would go and water the horses. But I wish I had a picture of that crude little house of ours we called our bed. The men put sticks, Gus and Arvo put sticks, and those sticks were like a wicket. They were sticking outwards, and on top of that, they dumped Grandma's box wagon, wagon box. They dumped it upside down. It had sides on it.

Aili: That was the roof!

Lillian: That was the roof, the box. And then they put old blankets and things on the side, to cover the walls, and the hay on the ground, lots of hay, and that's where we slept. And there again it wasn't too wide headquarters.

Aili: I didn't see anything

Lillian: I was first, and then was Arvo, and then was Gus and then was Paul. The four of us slept. And I wish I'd had, then of course our cooking was out on the stove. We had to put a lot of water around so the fire wouldn't get going.

Aili: We had three trees. We nailed some boards on those three trees and made a table out of that thing and it might be they still have those nails out there in the trees.

Lydia: I suppose it was warm weather yet then, so you didn't...

Aili: Oh, the mosquitoes were so thick, you had to...

Lillian: ...because in order to make it, it was already some frosty nights. We had pretty early frost that time. It was some frosty nights. Then of course when they came back from there...

Lydia: I think there were two different years, weren't they?

Aili: I remember at 9:00 in the morning, it was 90 above. And the June grass was probably six inches tall, so when they cut it, you clipped about three inches of the top, and the hayracks were lined with burlap feed sacks to keep that little tiny bit of hay in there, what there was. That is why we had to go north and get some of the June grass and that sannaheinaa.

Aili: I remember Dad, after he saw these flat swamps now like where we're living, and he thought that was the most wonderful country that...

Lillian: Yes. That is heaven. And he was always going to buy from Judge's farm but was turned out that he didn't buy it.

Vieno: Did your folks, did your folks ever have a time when the pasture ran out, cut popple trees?

Aili and Lillian together: Oh, yes!

Vieno: To eat the leaves off of them.

Aili: Yeah. And there were so many grasshoppers that time then, too, that if there were any hay or garden, it was just full of grasshoppers. And the only thing that they didn't eat was those popple leaves, so we used to holler to the cows and chop the popple trees down and the cows would come and...

Lillian: In the morning you'd have to get the cows because they were all over looking for something to eat. You'd bang with your ax, you'd bang on the popple tree, and the cows went back, and they would home with milk. And then you'd go back and cut some popple trees with the ax for them.

Vieno: The cows would come.

Aili: Oh, yeah!

Lillian: Oh, yeah!

Aili: The poor things they wouldn't have any water for them. The wells went dry. There wasn't any water for the animals.

Lillian: Your dad was hauling water from Rabbit Lake to the tent when they had those 500 turkeys.

Lydia: I remember that.

Aili: And then the potatoes, I remember when the potatoes grew the size of 25-cents.

Lydia: Lillian, what was the date that Dad and Mother raised their first turkeys?

Lillian : 1935. The year Roger was born.

Lydia: ...I was 15 years old then.

Lillian: I can see your mother when she said, "If we lose our farm it ain't gonna be my fault. I tried for all I'm worth." They made \$500. They paid that land payment and she got false teeth in her mouth.

Lydia: See, I went to Karjala's in the summer up by, to earn money, by haying there, and I remember I had to haul way from the Karjala's house water with a barrow, and I got the stone boat to I didn't like horses anyway. I had to drive the horses, and to water the garden.

Lillian: Because everything was...

Lydia: See the garden was not very far from folks.

Aili: Oh, yeah.

Lillian: See, we were carrying water at Sockala's over the hill there, we were carrying water for vegetables to keep it from burning and drying up.

Lydia: Mrs. Karjala and they had a pretty big potato patch, and she put me into that potato patch. It was hotter than a pistol that day, too. And I had to weed the potato patch and she took off all her clothes and she was sunning herself! (lots of laughs)

Vieno: Now if a neighbor woman would do that, they would say "She's mentally ill!"

Aili: Yeah.

Lillian: Aili was in the meadow making hay, and they had that year of 1935 some of the house, remember that whole inside was cross-cross with potatoes. And I was walking barefooted. There were so many potato bugs. And they were just full. And I was shaking the potato bugs barefooted on the farm. And they would burn on the hot rocks.

(everyone speaking at one, can't make this out)

Aili: Yeah, it was so (unintelligible) your teeth when you'd walk on (unintelligible)

Lillian: And they were so hot, we had to put something on because you couldn't stand it.

Vieno: It was a depressing time.

(everyone speaking at the same time again)

Lydia: ...coming, just like they talked, Floyd talked about living in Montana during those drought years. That's what put them back here but it was terrible. It was so dry and there was no water and the clouds, nothing came out of them.

Lillian: Nothing came out of the clouds.

Lydia: ...never have to see that wet, uh, or that dry years again.

Aili: The wind used to blow so hard...

Lillian: 1936 I and Aili went to Menagha. At that time we had one house of earlier turkeys and one house there was Fourth of July and I was on the side hill to watch the meadow that spring, and then the turkeys could go underneath the house even. At that time, then last week of August it started raining after that terrible drought and it rained one week, but it didn't rain hard. It just was a light rain.

Aili: It was probably good it was a light rain, so it was soaking in.

Lillian: And I remember, I remember on Decoration Day, in 1936, a man came from Breckenridge, Minnesota, how he had found out that at Mother's there was a loose stack of white hay that we had had raked, and piled into a little stack. And that man was wiping his brow. He was, I suppose, close to 60. And he said, "I don't have anything to eat for my cows in Cambridge. Will you sell me that haystack?" And I and Aili, we walked to the hay meadow then, and sold that hay, stack of hay for \$25.

Aili: Oh, yeah.

Lillian: He had some kind of small old truck and he hauled it away. There were so many...

Lydia: Do you remember the year Dad finally got his first crop?

Lillian: Not too much. I don't remember that, though, not the first time.

Aili: See, we were even further away. I was, it couldn't have...

Lydia: It must have been after the turkeys started, bringing in a little money.

Lillian: Yeah, I would say so. Yeah. I don't remember them having any car at that time yet, when Roger was born.

Lydia: I remember Dad trying to learn to drive.

Lillian: And he was going to town with the horses. Your dad was going... like Aili said, he was trying to sell produce from the garden, potatoes and rutabagies and he sold a lot of rutabagies. I can't remember the price per pound, but they shipping them out of Aitkin by the carload.

Lydia: Now before they built 47 wasn't Glen Route the main road?

Lillian: Yes, it was.

Lydia: That's what I thought.

Lillian: And your mother...

Lydia: We were sure kind of in the sticks then.

Lillian: Oh, my. You were in the sticks.

Aili: I remember somebody said when Dad and Mother built their (Finnish for god forsaken country).

Lillian: Yeah, and she always talks about a (unintelligible) that swamp below the farm there, and below Unto's house. A long ways was swampy and so wet, it was all covered up in some kind of corduroy, and she...

Lydia: I remember walking over that to go to school.

Lillian: And then, then they, Laukkanen was running for commissioner, and he wanted that that highway built Glen Route for the first election, but he lost out in the second one, because he wanted that highway to go through.

Lydia: You know Cherie and I went through the Republican, the papers, at the Independent Age and it had been eight years, about a year ago, and I got the copy of the ad that Mr. Laukkanen had in the paper when he was running for commissioner.

Lillian: Oh, have you?

Lydia: Yeah.

Lillian: See that's the time Mother had to get a new chimney in the house in and I was giving them mortar....carried the mortar way upstairs when we were building...

Aili: What year did your mother make the house bigger?

Lillian: I was 17, I guess. I must have been 17. It would have been 1927, I suppose.

Aili: Yeah. I would have been 11 years old then.

Lydia: That was a pretty nice house, though, in those days, wasn't it?

Lillian: Yeah, well it was comfortable.

Lydia: It was comfortable.

Lillian: That's the time Laukkanen was running for commissioner, and Gust Mariin said I voted for him the first time, but I'm not gonna the second time, because he wanted that road to go along old Glen Route.

Lydia: Oh, sure.

Lillian: (unintelligible)

Aili: I remember when it was corduroy from down below the hill from your place going towards the south, there used to be corduroy road. I can remember that real well. And they'd cover it with stuff there comes now they used some of that stuff .

Lydia: What neighbors that you remember around your place.

Lillian: You could see the lights of Mother's in Rossburg. You could see the lights of eleven farms in the winter time.

Aili: And the train going to Rossburg. Oh, yes. That fire of 1918, I remember that...

Lillian: Everything there on the east was fire.

Aili: ...it was just fiery sky. And I tell you, oh, yes. I was on the trunk over there and I saw the train and wondered where they'd been.

(both talking at once, can't make this part out)

Lillian: ...because you were only five.

Lydia: That's when Dad and Mother had, first your dad and mother had been here was the fire of 1918.

Aili: The whole world was on fire. There was great big hay things would fly all over.

Lillian: (unintelligible)

Aili: Well, there used to be our neighbors, I'll start now – there's Haveri's, Mariin's and Leppanen's (unintelligible).

Lillian: And Palomaki?

Aili: And Palomaki.

Lydia: Where would Palomaki have been?

Aili and Lillian in unison: (unintelligible)

Aili: Then there was Maitland's, Mattala's, Arvo Pento (?), Don Larson's, Nels Lidberg's, Sorenson's, Christianson's, Leiviska's, Nikko's, Green's - Russ Green's...

Lillian: Yeah, and Christianson's.

Aili: Christianson's.

Lillian: And Sorenson's.

Aili: Sorenson's. And Morris (?) Sorenson.

Lillian: I don't know if we saw Morris's from there. We could see the cars in the evening coming over this way from the east (unintelligible).

Lydia: Did the Finnish people neighbor with the Swedish people?

Aili: Well, Mrs. Lindberg used to come over to our place and...

(both talking at the same time, can't make this out)

Aili: Oh, yeah. They didn't talk too much English and they couldn't...

Lydia: It was a disadvantage.

Aili: Well, you know, it's surprising, you know, when you bring a cake and you set that on the table and then after awhile you go to the stove over there and you pour some water and drink coffee, and I tell you! Yeah. Well, they probably didn't understand each other but by the time they got through with the (unintelligible) they understood each other very well. Down there taking care of (unintelligible) and they'd come saying "Chick chick chick chick chick!" Chickens, you know. And "Moo moo!"

Lillian: And the (unintelligible) thing, Mrs. Sorenson, she had, they had a team of horses, and of course the horse manure pile was heating in the wintertime, so they had made some kind of a cloth tent over that manure pile and that's where she had a few chickens. Yeah, she had about 20 chickens on top of that.

Lydia: To keep them warm.

Aili: Keep them warm.

(everyone speaking at once, can't make it out)

Aili: Yeah, because that thing would heat, and I can remember (first name, can't make it out) Sorensen.

Lillian: It's a wonder they didn't die of...

Aili: Heavens no. They didn't die.

Lillian: They put hay on top of it, but underneath that hay (unintelligible)

Aili: Sure.

Lillian: We (unintelligible) into it ourselves.

Aili: Oh, yeah. And I remember when Sorenson's had an oxen team and then they used to go to Rossburg with little runners about six feet long. And the seats where both of them sat. Then there was hay on the bottom and then there was a 5-gallon cream can and then they had some more hay, and they got me to go on to Rossburg. Went over there and they, I don't know, they sent their cream I think someplace where they tested it out there, I don't know, but anyway...

Lillian: I think Diogiovani¹ buying was cream.

Aili: Well, that probably was it. Got some groceries and their mail and they were sittin' in the bottom of the box (?) and they were...

Lydia: I don't think Rossburg (unintelligible).

Aili: Wait a minute, I was gonna say. And then those oxen started for home, and they got halfway home, and they got tired and lay down, and they read their newspaper and the oxen took their rest, and then we came home. (laughs)

Lydia: Oh, yeah.

¹ Luigi DIGIOVANNI

Lillian: There was Diogiovanni's Store there and for a while there was was Hughe's store right in the corner into the swamp, a double-story store. And Oscar Paulson would tell you the story, his dad was the first one to be buried in Spencer Cemetery, April of 1912.

Lydia: Oh, really?

Lillian: And that would have been the year that we arrived here, April 5, 1912 (unintelligible) and Oscar's dad had died, and Oscar said they cleared out brush and that his dad was the first one buried there, and he said that Mr. Hill, who had a ranch north of Rossburg on the right-hand side there in the hills...

Aili: Where Hoffman (?) used to be.

Lillian: Yeah, and further to the right, yeah, further east there, that big hill there were small buildings. And Oscar Paulson said that Mr. Hill slept in a coffin, that the coffins were selling... wooden coffins, kind of oval-shaped, they were selling them \$3 apiece. And Oscar Paulson would be the one that would - he's kind of hard of hearing, though - to get some history of early days in Rossburg.

Aili: Why did Mr. Hill sleep in a coffin?

Lillian: Well, that was his bed!

Lydia: That was his bed!

Lillian: (hard to make out, someone is coughing) ... and Oscar said I'm not sure \$3 apiece.

Aili: They had Diogiovanni's Store, they had Hill's Store, John Swanson's Store, Anderson's Store, Co-op Store, and then they had a Catholic Church.

Lillian: Co-op Store was later, Aili, that was Diogiovanni's Store.

Aili: Was it? I thought it was in that corner there, the foundation is still there.

Lydia: Didn't they have a creamery there?

Aili: No.

(everyone talking at once, can't make this out)

Lillian: ...John Swanson and Diogiovanni were buying cream.

Lydia: Well, that... I don't remember that much, because I was awfully small, but that Dad bringing the cream there.

Lillian: Um hm.

Lydia: What did they do, then, hoist it on the train and take it to Duluth?

Lillian: They tested it, and they hoisted it and shipped it out, but you got paid for your...

Lydia: But where did they take it to, Duluth?

Lillian: I think they shipped it there...

Aili: ...Brothers creamery and then they used to ship it to...

(they are talking at one, can't make it out)

Lydia: Imagine the quality of that cream, by the time it got there.

Lillian: (unintelligible)

Lydia: It was usually thick- sour, wasn't it?

Lillian: It was quite sour, but I tell you, I think those were still the healthier days.

Lydia: Well, I still say that's the best butter, and best buttermilk you could ever taste.

Aili: That's right. You take and get some buttermilk now, even milk when it sours you cannot drink it, you cannot use it, you can... I don't know, I'd say that they probably put some of the embalming fluid in it...

Lydia: Do you know how to make vellia?

Aili: Well, what's the matter with it? (starts speaking Finnish).

Lillian: Well, you can buy the mix...

Vieno: We used to put buttermilk in it.

Aili: Oh, that's a different story.

(everyone speaking at once, can't make it out)

Lillian: ...mixed fruit, you put fruit and raisins and...

Lydia (?): You can't use this buttermilk, because it (unintelligible) curdle. I tried it.

(everyone speaking at once, can't make it out)

End of tape

Lydia speaks at the end: Yeah! I was copying it and I thought, I'll give it to Marilyn if it turned out, you know. Well, it's too bad they're not here to talk to us yet.

Vieno Fairchild



Vieno M. Fairchild, 91, Aitkin, died June 7, 2004, in Aicota Health Care Center in Aitkin.

She was born Aug. 11, 1912, in Nagaunee, Mich., to Will-

iam and Julia (Olli) Leppanen. She graduated from Aitkin High School. On June 9, 1935, she married Harry Fairchild in Aitkin. She was a member of the Bethel Lutheran Church. She enjoyed knitting and crocheting afghans and quilts for her family and gardening.

Funeral services were held June

10 in Bethel Lutheran Church in Aitkin with the Rev. Gunnar Salmonson officiating. Burial was in Rabbit Lake Cemetery, Glen Township, Aitkin County.

She is survived by sons and daughters-in-law, William and Janice and Harvey and Wendy all of Aitkin; daughters and son-in-law, Elaine and Bill Somero, Orleans, Ind., and Loretta Graves, Poplar Buff, Mo.; 13 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Harry; one grandson; one brother; and her parents.

Arrangements were with Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home in Aitkin.

Julia Leppanen died in an Aitkin nursing home In October 1978 at the age of 88.

Selma HYYTINEN

Birth Date: 22 Oct 1893, Death Date: Feb 1986

Death Residence Localities

ZIP Code: 56431

Localities: Aitkin, Aitkin, Minnesota

Aili Lake

Birth Date: 5 Dec 1914, Death Date: 7 Oct 1993

Death Residence Localities

ZIP Code: 56431

Localities: Aitkin, Aitkin, Minnesota

Lillian Mattson

Birth Date: 28 Dec 1909, Death Date: 25 Jun 1996

Social Security Number: 468-20-1433

State or Territory Where Number Was Issued: Minnesota

Death Residence Localities

ZIP Code: 56431

Localities: Aitkin, Aitkin, Minnesota

Lydia Hyytinen Hogan is still alive in 2010 and is living in Aicota Health Care Center in Aitkin at the age of 90. – Cherie Holm, Lydia and Floyd Hogan's daughter in Aitkin