

Interview with Carlo Heikkenen
With Kathryn Johnson
Pequaming, Michigan
May 1, 2010

START OF INTERVIEW

Kathryn Johnson (KJ): Alright, so you were in the U.P. Sports hall of fame? When did you get inducted?

Carlo Heikkenen (CH): That was twelve years ago.

KJ: About twelve years ago and that was for baseball?

CH: Baseball, yeah.

KJ: Alright.

CH: I was the first one in the U.P. eh in baseball, there have been others afterwards but I was the first Baseball player to be inducted. So I been here for about 90 years now.

KJ: Okay, we are in Pequaming, Michigan, and today is May 1, 2010 and we will begin the interview. What is your full name and when were you born and where were you born?

CH: My full name is Carlo Ludwig Andres Heikkenen.

KJ: Woah, could you spell your last name please?

CH: H-E-I-K-K-E-N-E-N.

KJ: Okay, and where were you born and how did you end up in Aura?

CH: June 13, 1918, My folks were in the Copper Country, I was born in Painsdale, then we made a trip to the west coast we went to Saint Mary's Idaho, so I had my oldest sister Hester was born there, then they come back to the Copper Country and the mine work was slow so they bought property in Aura and moved to the farm and they didn't move no more after that they lived there ever after.

KJ: What type of farming did they do?

CH: It was dairy farming and potatoes.

KJ: Did they only speak Finnish at home? Did they know English?

CH: Just Finnish. In fact when I started at school the teacher asked me to count to ten and I counted in

Finnish. She told me quite suddenly that I had to learn to count in English so I did.

KJ: Where was your first school?

CH: The first school was Immaculate School in Aura and then that.

KJ: And then?

CH: Long time, then they built another school in Aurbon Township site cause we lived in Aurbon Township so then I went there. I went the first three grades at Immaculate School.

KJ: And then where did you do high school?

CH: High school I went to at Skanee High School, I graduated out of Skanee High School in 1936.

KJ: Okay, was that where you learned to play baseball?

CH: No, we didn't play baseball, I learned to play baseball at Aura. We played ball but there was no theme.

KJ: Just for fun just with the kids in the neighborhood?

CH: Mhmm.

KJ: Were there any adults who were teaching you or were you guys teaching yourselves?

CH: Well I learned a lot when Walter Ledle was one of the pitchers in Aura, so, I learned a lot just from watching Walter, and then I learned a more about baseball when I was 18 years old. I went to Hot Springs, Arkansas, went to a professional baseball school and it was some good instructors there. Saw Young was one of the better pitchers of all time was there as instructor.

KJ: He was one of your instructors?

CH: Roger Orsby, yeah and then the New York Giants stopped there for a few days to have some baths at the hot springs you know at the hot baths so Carl Hubble was there, he taught me how to toe the screw ball, that was my best pitch in baseball.

KJ: Wow.

CH: So then I had a little note from Saw Young that Carlo Heikkenen, you are a very good prospect for professional baseball.

KJ: Approximately what year was that?

CH: In about 1938.

KJ: Wow, and did you go on scholarship there or did you have to get accepted?

CH: No, I was in Detroit and I worked for a few months at an automobile factory then I got laid off the first part of December so then we went down town and we registered for you know, unemployment office to see if they would give a job for us and they couldn't find nothing so I was downtown one day and I picked up the sporting news and I see this big ad in there about Ray Doans Baseball School down in Hot Springs, Arkansas. So I thought, "Well geez I want to go there," but I didn't have no money. I had an Uncle lived in Aura and he had \$500-\$600 on him I knew always so I came home and asked him to give me 300 bucks so I could go to the school.

KJ: And he said yes?

CH: Yeah, he gave me the money right away.

KJ: That's nice of him, which uncle was that?

CH: His name was Able.

KJ: Able, was he a Heikkenen as well, or was he on your mother's side?

CH: No, his last name was Tornberg.

KJ: Okay, was that your mother's maiden name?

CH: Yeah that was my mother's maiden name or no, my mother's maiden name was Heidila

KJ: Okay.

CH: He was an uncle to my mother I guess, my mother's mother and him were brothers and sisters.

KJ: Oh sure, wow, so then what did you do after baseball camp down there in Hot Springs?

CH: Well we I had a chance to go to Pine Bluff, Missouri, but we had to go there, pay our own way and be there for two weeks. If we made the team well then they would reimburse us for our expenses that we had. We didn't have enough money but there was two other boys from Copper Country the Trabilski brothers were at the school, they had a chance to go to the same place, well, we put our monies together and we had 32 dollars that's all we had between the three of us so Louie said, I got a car, I said, needs gas and our best bet is to go home so we didn't even have enough money to stop on the way to eat when we come all the way from Hot Springs to _____ to Copper Country without eating but we made it.

KJ: Wow.

CH: Things don't come the easy way.

KJ: No, you got to work for them.

CH: We enjoyed it.

KJ: So when you came back, did you share your baseball talents with the community?

CH: Yeah, I played with L'Anse and then I played with Iron River for a long time, they paid me 25 dollars a game for pitching and then they'd fill my car up with gas and give me a good meal after the ballgame so I made more money on Sunday than I did working at Ford Motor Company all week.

KJ: Wow, I bet you enjoyed it more too.

CH: Yeah oh, I enjoyed it, yeah.

KJ: And you didn't have to drive back hungry, that's always good.

CH: Oh, they always had a good meal, always had a great big steak dinner.

KJ: Wow.

CH: If I got a home run, they paid me five dollars more. Once in a while I'd do that too, not too often. I was a good batter, I was the second highest average batter on the team, so I batted good.

KJ: Very good, so was that the, maybe a minor league team?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Do you remember the team name?

CH: I forget just what, Iron River something.

KJ: Huh, and that would have been in the 40s?

CH: Yeah, yeah.

KJ: How fun. Okay so when did you actually move back to Aura then? Was that...?

CH: Well I lived in Aura all the time. In the 30s I lived in Aura, I didn't move to Pequaming until I, until after I got married, we lived in Aura at first and then we bought Pequaming properties so all of Pequaming points and then I moved here.

KJ: And where was your wife? What is your wife's name and where was she from?

CH; She was of Pequaming, her name was Isabelle Lorri.

KJ: And she grew up in Pequaming?

CH: She was born here and raised here, yeah.

KJ: Was she Finnish as well? Or was...?

CH: No, she was Norwegian and French.

KJ: Norwegian and French huh. Did she go to school in Pequaming?

CH: She went to school in Pequaming and L'Anse she graduated from Pequaming.

KJ: Did you ever hear from her or from anybody else that the students who went to Pequaming High School were very good dancers because Ford wanted them to learn Ballroom dancing?

CH: Yeah, she knew that, she'd even danced with Henry Ford.

KJ: She did?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Oh wow, did he go to the school and visit with the kids?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Alright, anything else you'd like to add about that?

CH: No, that's about it I guess.

KJ: Okay, alright.

CH: She enjoyed dancing and so did I.

KJ: So where did you learn how to dance?

CH: Well I learnt at Aura Hall – had Bill Nigurd that used to play every Wednesday night that was to welfare program that he was a musician so he got paid for playing through the welfare department so we'd have a dance every Wednesday night so all the war kids danced a lot.

KJ: Do you remember anyone specific teaching you how to dance?

CH: No, I don't remember, I guess I just watched others.

KJ: Yeah, what were the most popular dances?

CH: Well I used to like the jitterbug myself a lot so it wasn't with too many girls, Isabelle couldn't jitterbug with me. Martha Milu could and Elanor Johnson and Dorathy Solberg, those three girls I jitterbugged with real good so when it was the jitterbug I really enjoyed that. I used to put on an act

sometimes when I went up to bars I'd go on the table and table dance the Jitterbug number.

KJ: Oh that's funny.

CH: Not no more.

KJ: So Bill Nigurd, would he play jitterbug music or did he play other types of music as well?

CH: He played the waltzes, Polka, salsas, it was a mixture of a little bit of everything. It was a good mix.

KJ: And so would this have been in the 1930s?

CH: Yeah this was the 1930s, early '40s.

KJ: Early '40s.

CH: We danced for a long time.

KJ: Oh, huh do you remember what he played? What instruments?

CH: Accordion.

KJ: And would he just play by himself or was he accompanied?

CH: Well he had two or three other guys that used to play with him but most of the time on Wednesdays he was always by himself.

KJ: Did they charge admission for you all to go in?

CH: No, this was free.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Didn't have to pay anything.

KJ: That's nice.

CH: On weekends, Saturday night or Sunday night, you had a dance that you paid probably a quarter, but Wednesday night it was always free.

KJ: That's very nice, good way to keep everybody together. When you were a kid do you remember any gatherings, maybe in people's houses or anywhere else where there was Finnish folk music being played?

CH: No, I don't really remember where there was folk music being played, we used to get together a lot of times and have birthday parties at the school or at different homes too.

KJ: Mhmm and so people would still socialize and yeah, okay. So can I ask you about the two halls? Because I understand that there was a hall that was built maybe in 1924?

CH: Yeah, well there was an old building, right where the Aura Fire Hall is right next to it now, that was the old hall and that was built in the early '20s and then they I don't know it must have been about 1926, '27 when they started the Aura Co-op store. Built the building there and had the store and then the store wanted to buy the hall because they weren't using it that much, but they would not sell it to the store and there was a lot of friction in the community and there were quite a few families that were communist that minded, they believed that any profit that the store made should be sent to Russia and the other people believed that it should be given to them, to the people that purchase goods there and you'd get slips there every time you purchased about ten dollars or fifteen or whatever and you kept that slip and then at the end of the year you add them up and you take your total purchases and whatever percentage the store made profit then then the next year they'd divide that among the people, they did that and the communists lost out on their belief. So there was a lot of bad feeling and then the Co-op people weren't able to use that hall at all then my dad and Eric Bif that lived in Pequaming at the time decided that they'd build another hall so my folks donated the land for the hall, ten acres and then they built the hall, that was all done by voluntary labor.

KJ: Wow, do you remember who was building that second hall?

CH: Well Eric Robacki was the boss, he was a good carpenter so he was the boss of all the rest of them and then there was Ladle brothers were there, and Nighgourds, Wieseneds, Ted, Henry Lori, all those people it was the Olderlaws, August, Middy, Packalaws, Oberhiltensins, Caranens, many of the Caranen boys they all pitched in and the ladies cooked a meal there every day so you got a good meal and coffee couple times a day and some sweets to go with it, pie and doughnuts and cookies, whatever they baked you know. The hall they was started building between Christmas and New Years and the first part of March it was done so they had an opening dance in the early part of march

KJ: Do you remember who played at the opening dance?

CH: It was a band from Mohawk, Michigan. Wessly Overlaw was instrumental in getting the band there, he knew about these peoples. I was just up there today and he was talking about that band.

KJ: Oh really? I've got to talk to him still.

CH: You told me that had to talk, contact...

KJ: Yep, yeah, did they charge an admittance to come to that first dance?

CH: Oh yeah, they charged, I forget what it was, maybe 25 cents, 50 cents.

KJ: Was there anybody...?

CH: And they had coffee and lunch downstairs during intermission, sandwiches.

KJ: Were there people in the community that did not want to come because they were...because of the split that had happened?

CH: I well there probably was the communist people didn't show up for that either but there wasn't that many, the communist people there was a funny thing there was during the depression years, they weren't bad people but when times were poor here then somebody got them to believe that it was a lot better in Russia so that's why they had to go up there and find out and when they found out that things weren't like they thought they would be. Well then they come back and they weren't communist no more. That was the end of the communism. They spoke strongly against it then, but they just got fooled into it then and it's funny how you can get fooled.

KJ: Yeah, so going back to maybe the 1920s or early 1930s do you know who built that first hall?

CH: Well that was built by the community people.

KJ: Oh, it was, okay.

CH: Yeah, they used that first they had a platform set up in Petropolis Field where they used to have picnics and they'd dance on in the evening and have the picnic during the day then they moved that platform to where the hall is now that's the base of that old dance hall and so it was the community people that built it.

KJ: And so how did it take on the name of being the socialist hall? Was there socialist party activity?

CH: Well it was a...yeah I don't think they really called it a communist hall but it was the leadership. The name of the guy that had the property in his name was John Montelot he was a strong communist.

KJ: Okay.

CH: And he used to go all around the country and speak for communism.

KJ: And he was the one who was recruiting people to go?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Over to Karalia?

CH: He never went himself but he recruited a lot of others.

KJ: How about that and was he from Superior, Wisconsin? Is that what I, do you remember?

CH: No he was right from, I don't know where he came from other than Aura, probably from the Copper Country, from Finland originally, he was Finnish born.

KJ: Oh, okay, and did he work with the co-op at all?

CH: Well, no, I mean he was a member of the co-op and everything else but you know he had shares in, everyone bought shares in the co-op to get it started 10, 15, 20 dollars maybe 50 dollars-worth of shares.

KJ: Do you remember who started the co-op?

CH: No, I don't. My dad, he was instrumental and Frank Salow and the Loughis and Nigars there was a lot of different families involved – Wiesenens, Paylaws.

KJ: Do you remember who the early managers were of the co-op?

CH: Yeah, name was Baltenen that was the last name, I forget his first name, and then Matt Sari managed it for a long time. Then after Matt Sari was Bill Liguard and after Bill Liguard was myself.

KJ: Okay and were the – Mr. Baltenen and Matt Sari, were they from Aura or were they from somewhere else?

CH: No, Matt Sari was from Minnesota and Baltenen was from the Copper Country.

KJ: Okay and so did they come just for the job or do you think they came...?

CH: Yeah, just for the job, yeah.

KJ: Alright, so when you took over working there at the co-op why did you take over? What had you been doing before?

CH: Bill Liguard had left, he had a chance to go work for a co-op in Minnesota that paid more money than Aura could and I was on the board of directors at the time and then he left you know quite suddenly when he got that job, they wanted him up there right away so then we had the board meeting we were wondering well who to get for manager so they asked me that if I would like to be manager for until they find one, I said well yeah, I'll take the job, so I did and it was supposed to be a one or two month job but it ended up being a 14 year job.

KJ: Oh my, must have been a job you enjoyed, was it?

CH; I enjoyed, but the pay was poor. There wasn't, between my wife and I we made 3,300 dollars a year, and we had free lodging. Didn't have to pay for that, that was free but, it was pretty poor wages.

KJ: Did you live right there at the store?

CH: Yeah, well I lived upstairs of the store, yeah.

KJ: Is that building still standing?

CH: Yeah sure, yeah it was by now that live, they don't live upstairs now they moved the, live downstairs now, well they use the upstairs too.

KJ: So is that right across the street from the Fire Hall?

CH: Yeah, Dan Suit lives there now.

KJ: Well, okay, huh. So with the co-op where did, you know, you and your predecessors, where did you get your supplies from?

CH: They come from Superior Wisconsin.

KJ: Okay.

CH: They had a big whole sale, they called it co-op whole sale where they had all the merchandise, they had a truck that would go and deliver it to all the co-op stores so they, the truck used to come in once every week, every Monday the truck would come you would order then by telephone you would place an order with what you wanted to be sent.

KJ: Okay, and then did people at your store and from what you remember when you were growing up before you actually worked there were they speaking Finnish at the co-op? Or were they speaking English?

CH: All together, all the meetings were held in Finnish.

KJ: Do you know if those records are still somewhere?

CH: I don't think so, they used to keep good records, they always had good records of the minutes when I managed, I used to have to talk Finnish at the annual meetings and after I was there a few of years then we changed so then the meeting was held in English but then I'd have to translate that to the Finnish people in Finnish. At first I was translating from Finnish to English then afterwards, that's why it's so irksome, I got to be a pretty good Finlander.

KJ: I bet, you'd have to be, all that business communication not just everyday language.

CH: Yeah I was, I got by okay.

KJ: And then were there a lot of community members going in and out of the co-op, were there kids going in and out or was it just one particular member of the family who would do the shopping?

CH: Well different ones, anybody you know, kids would shop and the parents would shop, sometimes husband and wife would both come sometimes just one would come and I remember one of the neighbors there, Mrs. Lax, she done all the shopping he never would shop but she always done, she'd come to the store and she buys a lot of groceries and some dairy feed and stuff so then I'd give her a ride home with the pickup truck.

KJ: And then, when you would communicate back to Superior and place the orders, were those orders placed in Finnish at first?

CH: Yeah, they used to have the, used in Finnish then they changed that to Finnish too. They'd have an annual meeting of all the co-ops in the whole Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan area, and Superior, Wisconsin used to hold the annual meeting for the co-ops, I attended quite a few of those.

KJ: And do you remember any of those being in Finnish?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Yeah and what kinds of things would they discuss there?

CH: Well they'd discuss you know, how to operate good and stuff like that it was a kind of an instructional type of meeting.

KJ: Okay, huh. Did you ever hear any stories from the managers before you? Where the co-op and Superior was telling them in the all the outlying areas to do something political?

CH: No, they never really got that involved, no.

KJ: Okay, so just strictly business. Can we go back to this idea of athletics for a minute? Did you ever hear of the Aura Athletic Association?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: What was that?

CH: Well they had an athletics association called the Aura Vesa. V-E-S-A I think or V-E-Z-A or something like that, and they used to hold track meets then they'd have run the hundred yard dash and toe the javelin and shot put the discus and high jump and pole vault all the different track events and a fellow by the name of George Imonen from Pequaming used to be at the head of that always he was a pretty good track man himself and he had two boys that were real good in tracks so he was kind of the leader to keep that going.

KJ: Oh.

CH: And they'd have track meets quite often there used to be people from Hurbon coming to the track meet, from L'anse coming from the Laudon area, Pelkie, Keweenaw Bay, all around the area to track meet in the North.

KJ: Would they have prizes do you know?

CH: I don't know if they had prizes or not it was just the idea that whoever won and then they would publicize that in the paper – who was the best runner, fastest, best high jumper, and stuff like that.

KJ: And were they mostly for teenagers or were they actually adult then?

CH: Well no, they were pretty well grown up yeah. Right as a teenager you can't throw the javelin or shotput.

KJ: No.

CH: That's, you know, for people that are 18, 20 years old, early 20s.

KJ: Mhmm and was it just men? Do you know if women were involved too?

CH: No, there was women in it too, yes. I remember a lady from Herman she was a Carriden girl, Sadie Carriden, she was married to a Sadie Falks who just passed away a few weeks ago, she was a real good track woman in all different parts of track.

KJ: Wow and then did they have to pay anything to be involved in that or was it just all free?

CH: No, you didn't pay anything, no.

KJ: And was there any...?

CH: They used to always have a picnic when they had this track meet. They'd always have a picnic and the ladies would cook a big fish, _____ they call it.

KJ: Oh yeah.

CH: They'd cook that in many different boilers and the people would eat that and you paid something for that, I don't know – 50 cents, 75 cents to eat.

KJ: And did they, were they strictly non-political?

CH: Yeah, that was pretty obvious.

KJ: Just athletics?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Okay and then there was something called the Aura Lady's Club, did you ever hear of that?

CH: Yeah they had that, what they called The Guild.

KJ: What did they do?

CH: That would have been, well they just met you know and planned different events that they work on and they'd make quilts and blankets and stuff like that then they'd raffle those off and make money for the guild.

KJ: Okay, and then what was their guild benefiting? Were they like just...?

CH: I don't know just what. They probably used it for some good purpose for the community. I don't know just what though.

KJ: Okay, I've never heard of them before. Do you know, were there any like plays or operas or theaters, theater events.

CH: Well no, but they put on a lot of plays, a lot of Finnish plays and English plays put on too so I remember one time I was on a play they called Here Comes Charlie and Bill Nigurd was, had a comical part in there and he could really do that part well he had the audience just laughing and just roaring when they were laughing and when we'd practice he'd do the same thing we, you couldn't help but laugh the way he acted, he was really good and it was a good play in fact we put it on in many different places in Herman, L'anse, Baraga, Bruce's crossing, Pelkie, South Range, we went all over the area putting that play on.

KJ: Yeah, you guys must have been very popular.

CH: Yeah.

KJ: And did any of the plays have a political tint to them as well or did they...?

CH: No, they don't, there was both English and Finnish plays. Frank Sable used to be in a lot, kind of a leader on Finnish plays and Toila Neiman used to have a lot of comical parts and so _____ Finnish plays.

KJ: So they were just for fun.

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Yeah, did you ever hear of anybody having a subscription to the newspaper that came out of Superior? And I'm going to mispronounce it, but it's the Toumees?

CH: Yeah, they used to have a paper called Touamees that was the communist paper.

KJ: That's it.

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Yeah, did anybody in Aura subscribe to that?

CH: Oh yeah, there was a few like the Outtulau and those that were communist, they did subscribe to it yeah.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Mrs. Leoreroihoia, she was from Superior, she was a strong communist and she always got that paper even after communism kind of faded out she was still pretty strong in that.

KJ: I'm just starting to learn a little bit about her. Did she grow up in Aura?

CH: No, she was from Superior, Wisconsin.

KJ: Oh Superior, okay, how did she end up in Aura?

CH: I don't know really just that she came here and she married Leonard Haryone.

KJ: Oh, okay, and did he grow up in Aura?

CH: Yeah, he grew up in Aura.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Leonard was just a couple years older than I was.

KJ: Did you ever hear of any police activity at the halls in the late 1920s early 30s where they were writing down license plates of people who were suspected of being socialist or communist?

CH: I don't remember no.

KJ: Never heard that?

CH: There probably was but I didn't know.

KJ: Alright, well, let's see here, well can we talk about music for just a minute?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Have you ever been to the Aura Jamboree?

CH: Oh yeah, every year.

KJ: Every year, you've never missed one?

CH: No, I never missed one, no.

KJ: Wow, so...

CH: Last year was the first year I didn't dance.

KJ: And was that because your wife wasn't there?

CH: Well I don't know. It was because I figure my legs couldn't hack it anymore.

KJ: Oh okay, but you still enjoy the music?

CH: Yeah well I enjoyed, yeah, so I was there for quite a while.

KJ: How do you think the Aura Jamboree has changed over the years?

CH: Well, it's gotten bigger, I guess that's the biggest change. It's grown lots and it's a good thing they have it cause it's a money maker for the hall and that way they have enough money always to keep it in good shape so I kind of think that over the years it's going to improve.

KJ: Do you know if the musicians are paid anything?

CH: Well yeah, there's a couple that plays in there all the time and Eddie Coupla, Elmer Teris and Keven Coske's son, Matt always plays in it. Then a lady sings in it from Skanee. Rod Brer, Joseph Majeski play in it from Skanee then oh, what they call The Amazon, The Band Waters or something rings a bell.

KJ: Oh, is that White Water?

CH: Yeah, they play there.

KJ: The Premos, Dean and Betty Premo yeah, I've seen them in Marquette.

CH: And there's quite a few Copper Country guys who come there and play and some from down below, the Detroit area. And there's a Finnish Lady from Ishpeming area she's a native of Finland, she's still got the Finnish baroque she comes up and sings all the time.

KJ: Mhmm, Tanya Stanaway I think her name is.

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Yeah. Do you remember when they started to sell beer at the Aura Jamboree?

CH: No, I don't remember how but it must have been going on for at least 15 years now would be my best guessing, but Betty Wisenen got it going for Freddy.

KJ: Do you think that's changed the Jamboree at all? Or the people who come to the Jamboree?

CH: Well I don't know if it's changed that much, you know. It's more or less the same musicians and every year there's one or two new ones, some old ones pass away and a new one takes their place.

KJ: Do you think that something like the Jamboree, an event like that helps to communicate Finnish traditions to younger generations?

CH: Yeah, I don't, it seems to me that they really don't dwell on the Finnish part of it that much. It's all the more or less to have music but there's always somebody there that does give their stuff in Finnish

language, they sing a song in Finnish or play music, you always have several like that.

KJ: What do you think about the musicians who play outside as opposed to in the hall, do you think people enjoy that?

CH: Well people enjoy that yeah, they get tired of sitting in a hall well they go outside and they sit there and they listen to the different music under different tents so...

KJ: Mhmm, so back before the Jamboree was created and this money started pouring into the hall to rebuild it, what was the hall being used for like in the 1960s?

CH: Well, it wasn't being used that much, that's why it kind of was rundown. It was, you know, there wasn't a dance every weekend or not like it was once in a while there'd be something, but not too often so it was just when Freddy got that thing going well that kind of pepped things up and going good ever since.

KJ: So why do you think people stopped having dances?

CH: I don't know.

KJ: No? I don't know either.

CH: It seems to be, I kind of think, that maybe TV got a lot to do with it.

KJ: Mhmm, do you remember when you got your first TV?

CH: No, I don't remember it. When they first come out I guess, we weren't the last ones to get it I know that.

KJ: Do you remember when you got your first telephone?

CH: Yeah, first telephone was well about the same. Well I guess we got the telephone a little before the REA, we got REA in 36 I think telephone was a little before that, a couple years before.

KJ: And was that a party line?

CH: They were.

KJ: Like a community line? Where other people would be on it

CH: Yeah there was in Pequaming, even Bungalo were the same line as we as us folks were, there were probably four or five people on that same line. And I remember in Aura, I laughed, the ladies, Mrs. O and Mrs. Turess and Charlie Maki's wife, they used to a lot of times get you know on the phone and they'd all be talking at the same time. One time the women were talking, they were talking about something that happened in the community well Matt Turess was listening then too and he corrected the women, they weren't right, he corrected them, he butted in.

KJ: That's funny.

CH: He told them, "It ain't so, it's like this."

KJ: Yeah, I've heard stories where you know maybe some of the youngsters would be on the phone and they would tell their older neighbors you know like someone's mom to hang up and get off the phone because they were trying to talk.

CH: Yeah a lot of kids would get on there and they wouldn't want to get off the phone. Some were on there all the time.

KJ: That's funny. Well what else would you like to talk about? What else do you remember about growing up in Aura?

CH: Well, it was always an active community and I was always active in every, you know different stuff so I was always a good co-op member, good REA board member, I was on the board of directors for years and years.

KJ: What were your responsibilities with the REA?

CH: So I was on the board of directors of REA for 30 years. Then, I always liked politics, so I was township supervisor for 30 years, last township supervisor, I done all the censing and things for all the town laws of Aura, Zeba so not too many people stay in office for 30 years they get voted out but they kept me in.

KJ: Wow.

CH: I finally decided to retire. I didn't get beat by anybody, I retired. I'd had enough.

KJ: Good for you. What made you want to do that to begin with?

CH: Well I just wanted to be involved I guess and I wanted to have something to say about taxes so I did. There wasn't too many people, every year you'd have a hearing when you sent the tax notices about their taxes evaluation will be there's a few people that came to meetings but some after they're there and I explain what was what they're real well satisfied and said we're sorry that we even came and others again they would kind of grumble Pete VanStrat was one of them he never was satisfied, but now that I'm not supervisor, somebody else is there, now he's telling me that Carlo, you sure done a good job. He never told me that when I was working though. Funny, how things change.

KJ: Yeah. What, can you tell me about your days with the REA?

CH: Yeah it's a REA, the first director from our area was Carl Hematiten. Carl was there for many years then when Carl passed away Henry Wiesenen took over. Henry was there a year then Henry moved to Wisconsin, then I came in. So I was in for 30 years.

KJ: And what were, what were some of your, not just you but also Carl and Henry's, what were some of the big accomplishments or how did you get things done and...?

CH: I guess the accomplishments that we had that we were able to get electricity to anybody that wanted it that they would get electricity regardless of where they were. There were still some people on the tip of Point Abbey that didn't but we tried to cover the area pretty well.

KJ: Who paid for that?

CH: Well it was paid by the REA.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Yeah, lot of people.

KJ: And did they provide, did the REA provide salaries for you guys too? Or did you do your work for free?

CH: No, well we didn't have a salary, we got 5 dollars a meeting.

KJ: Oh, okay.

CH: That's how we got paid, and we got coffee, free coffee at the meeting.

KJ: Who would come to the meetings?

CH: There wasn't too many that used to come to the REA meetings. Once in a while somebody would be there but not too often.

KJ: And who were they?

CH: Most of the time it was just the director and managers.

KJ: Okay and where were they held?

CH: They were held right in Daugus, at the main office.

KJ: Oh, okay.

CH: Once a month.

KJ: So with getting electricity out, all the way out to Point Abbey, there's a lot of wilderness in the way.

CH: Oh a lot of wi-...Yeah, it's not cheap you know so it gets to be too expensive a lot of times to go but they're getting awful close, they don't have too far to go before they'll be at the tip.

KJ: And was that at the same time that they were paving the roads? Or at least putting in the gravel roads out to Point Abbey?

CH: About the same time, yeah.

KJ: Okay, and then did the electric lines follow the roads?

CH: Oh yeah.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Pretty well.

KJ: So what about, how did you guys get your energy before electrification, did you have oil lamps or?

CH: There was no energy – gasoline lamps, kerosene lamps, lanterns.

KJ: Was that what you had as a kid?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: And where would you get your gasoline or kerosene?

CH: Well we'd get it from whoever furnished gasoline in the area to people that had it. We'd get it from there.

KJ: And it's not a...

CH: Gas stations and there used to be the co-op had a gas truck that would deliver gas right to the farm.

KJ: Oh okay.

CH: And they'd put it in a big tank and you'd take it and pump it out of there then, out of the big tank

KJ: Did they do the same thing with Kerosene? I don't know how that's stored.

CH: Yeah, kerosene you get the same way. If you wanted kerosene you could have a little barrel for kerosene and they'd fill that up or a half even. I was genic there at first when they built the hall, well I used to fill up, oh, I must have had about eight, ten lanterns I had to fill up with gasoline. Put gas in there, and then there was a little plunger there that pump air in there then you light it up and there was mantles up on top and sometimes the mantle would break, then you would have to put a new one on.

KJ: Yeah, and what about the danger of fires? Did fires start?

CH: Well I don't know, I don't ever recall fires happening.

KJ: Speaking of fires do you remember when the Aura Fire Hall was built?

CH: Yeah that was built in, I don't know, must have been in the late 40s. I was supervisor at the time it was built, and we bought that property and decided to build a fire hall there, the township done that.

KJ: Okay, what did people do if there was a fire before then? Was there a volunteer fire?

CH: Well you'd have to try and put it out yourself and then call. The L'anse fire department would come out from Skanee, because they had a fire department there.

KJ: Okay. What are some of your best memories of working at the co-op? Or what were some of the hardest things that you had to deal with?

CH: Well I guess hard, I didn't find it so hard, but Isabelle found it real hard when I wasn't there all the time. I had cows that I'd have to go and milk, I'd leave before five o'clock, I'd leave she'd close the store at five, well, anybody come to get feed, she had a hard time handling them hundred-pound sacks, a lot of the guys that come there they could have put them in but they would never do, they just watch her do it so she worked pretty hard. In fact she always said afterwards that she sure got used a lot by just mucking around those hundred-pound feed sacks.

KJ: Wow.

CH: And I guess the hardest work that I done there but I enjoyed it was butchering. I learned to cut meat real good and it was quite a trade, and I learned it the hard way but after I learned to cut meat I could mix it pretty good like steaks and roasts.

KJ: And would you get the animals locally or would they come in from s...?

CH: No, bridgeman, no, no, what's this, Walwards used to bring us meat.

KJ: Okay.

CH: And sausages and stuff we'd get those from Superior, but most of the sausage even we'd get from Walwards, we'd always get our hind quarters or whatever we bought, sometimes the front quarters or whatever beef we bought, we got it from Walwards.

KJ: So then when did the co-op close and why did it close?

CH: Well it closed in a certain period when people quit farming, quit having dairy cattle and then when they quit having dairy cattle there just wasn't that much business so it wasn't profitable no more. So they closed it. There was a couple years there when I was manager that they didn't make profit no more and went backwards a little bit so when they decided to close then there was enough cash in there and with the inventory and stuff that all the people that had shares there, whatever hundred dollars-worth of shares they had they were able to when they sold the place to pay everybody all their

shares off.

KJ: Did people make money off of it or did they just get back say their hundred dollars that they put in?

CH: Yeah, they made no money with it, no.

KJ: Okay.

CH: When they made profit, for the years when they made profit, they'd share that profit, they'd give that profit then according to the amount of purchases they usually had in groceries.

KJ: Oh, okay.

CH: They never saw money, if they had ten dollars, they didn't get ten dollars, they got ten dollars-worth of groceries.

KJ: And then what did they do with all the inventory? How did they sell it?

CH: Well...

KJ: Did it go back to superior?

CH: Well the people that bought the store, well they bought everything. Then they started and kept a private store there.

KJ: Oh okay, who was that? Do you remember?

CH: Yeah, I don't remember. Was it the Shelet's that bought that or what, I don't really recall, probably was.

KJ: So at that point were people, maybe, doing their grocery shopping in L'anse?

CH: Yeah, in L'anse, yeah.

KJ: What do you remember about the old Aura Post Office?

CH: Well I remember the first Post Office was at Middy's place where Earnest or Mrs. Hilda Middy operated that post office.

KJ: Was that out of her house?

CH: Out of her house and on Saturdays the boys and girls that went to school they'd all go get the mail for the elderly people that was mostly done by kids, there'd be 25, 30 kids sitting in the house waiting for the mail to come but it was quite a rumpus there. Yeah, then when they moved it from there to Edna Ladel's house, Edna Ladel then had the post office for many years then they was in the house, they had a separate building there. There wasn't a big, visitation no more – that ended.

KJ: She couldn't fit all those kids.

CH: But Mrs. Middy she put up, she had a big family herself and she didn't seem to mind that at all. She was just willing to work with the kids.

KJ: Were you one of those kids who would go there?

CH: Yeah, I was there on many different Saturdays a lot of times what we'd do, some of the boys then in winter when we had snow, we wouldn't sit in the house, they had a good ski hill in back of the sauna so that we would go up there and have a little ski jump there, we'd jump that ski jump then when the mail came in we'd go pick up the mail and go home

KJ: Do you remember in her mail house there, do you remember ever seeing posters for dances or posters for musicians?

CH: No, I don't remember that, no.

KJ: When you worked at the co-op do you remember people asking you if they could hang posters in your co-op? Like on the door?

CH: I don't really remember that, no.

KJ: Do you remember any musicians like Ed Molberg?

CH: Yeah, Molberg used to play, Telesen used to play there a lot, Mrs. Saint George used to play there a lot.

KJ: Do you know where they were from?

CH: Yeah, Molberg was from back at Baraga, Telesen lived in L'anse, Mrs. Saint George lived in L'anse, Viola Turpenen was from Iron River, she used to come and play there a lot.

KJ: Did you ever see her?

CH: Oh yeah, I saw her many times yeah, I even danced to her music.

KJ: Wow, who did you dance with?

CH: I don't remember, some other girls from our high school, it wasn't Isabelle because I...

KJ: Didn't know her yet?

CH: No, I didn't know her yet.

KJ: Yeah. So what do you remember about Viola Turpenen playing in Aura?

CH: Yeah, I remember she played accordion, and she was good, very good musician. She enjoyed coming cause there was always a lot of people at the dance.

KJ: And was she just playing in Finnish? I mean singing? Would she sing too or would she just play accordion?

CH: Yeah but she played all kinds of music, English dances you know.

KJ: Okay, not just Finnish, she played English songs too.

CH: Not just Finnish, no, but a lot of Finnish songs she played.

KJ: And which hall would she play at? Was that the new hall or the old hall?

CH: At the old hall yeah, I don't remember if she was ever at the new hall or not, but she may have been there too I don't recall.

KJ: Did you have any friends who you grew up with whose parents wouldn't let them go see her?

CH: Uh well at one time when there was all that friction there, my folks didn't want us to go if there was any kind of thing going at the communist hall, they didn't want us to go there but we'd sneak there anyways but we weren't supposed to go and there were a lot of other kids that were the same things that we, we all cheated we would, not too many times but a few times.

KJ: Well didn't your parents find out?

CH: Well...

KJ: It's a small community.

CH: Well I guess they found out, but it was too late then, we had gone.

KJ: That's funny.

CH: Yeah.

KJ: Alright, what else would you like to talk about?

CH: Well I guess there isn't all that much, getting to be a pretty old man now so...

KJ: You're a very sharp old man.

CH: But my memory is pretty good yet.

KJ: Yes, it is.

CH: Because I'm a pretty active at the golf course where we have our scramble on Tuesday, I always keep track of all the guys that show up and put them in pairs so there's four guys to a foursome, I remember their handicaps and their names and if they have a golf cart or not so I make sure that every foursome has two golf carts. A lot of guys, if I'm not there, they do it, they get it all mixed up.

KJ: Who taught you how to play golf?

CH: Oh I guess I just learned the hard way. I was 55 years old before I started golf so I was never a good golfer, but I enjoyed the game and I always enjoy doing it, so last year I helped them, they were in pretty tough shape financially so I figured well I'll be able to do a donation so I wrote a check out for ten grand.

KJ: That's no small donation.

CH: So that was lifetime membership for me.

KJ: Yeah, you should get.

CH: And I won't use it all, there'll be a few dollars left over.

KJ: Yeah.

CH: By the time I pass away.

KJ: Was that to the Lans Golf Course there outside of town?

CH: Yeah, yeah, I done that then I thought what Christmas time I thought oh boy I helped the Lans Golf Course so then I thought, "Well I better help somebody else," so I gave the Lutheran Church five grand, they got five more coming to even the score.

KJ: That's nice. So speaking of that La- oh that's the Lans Lutheran Church, I was thinking of the Aura Church. Do you remember when the churches were built in Aura?

CH: Yeah that was the early '20s, some carpenters from I want to say Nishila, but it wasn't from Nishila, they were from Toivola.

KJ: Okay.

CH: Built the, wholesaws were _____, were immaculate in getting that built. I was confirmed from there of the Aura church.

KJ: That's a very nice small church.

CH: Yeah. I and Leonard Bidy and Ruth Makula, _____ Sari, Vera Heikkenen, Lila Sari, I suppose we were all confirmed there. Ruby Johnson was Pequaming. It was a nice class. A guy by the name of Elm,

Reverend Elm Chastle was our Minister at the time.

KJ: What, did he come over once a week?

CH: Well once a month he'd come but then we had one year that we had summer school, we had about eight or ten, we were there every day.

KJ: Where would he live when he would come for such a long time?

CH: I don't know where he lived. He didn't live in Aura so I don't know if he rented a place in Lans or what. I know he didn't stay in Aura, I don't recall at least.

KJ: Do you remember when the first automobiles came out?

CH: Yeah I remember the first automobiles. First one we had was a Maxwell we got that from Pete Opolus, he had a used Maxwell so we used that. That's the first one we had then after that we had Ford cars. In 1936 when I graduated I worked at the Pequaming mill here so I bought a new car, Ford and cost 700 dollars.

KJ: How much of a year's salary was that? Was that more than a year's pay?

CH: That was a new car.

KJ: Yeah, how long did it take you to save for that?

CH: I don't know, I had payments, I think I had about 50 dollars a month or something like that I used to go to work and there was four guys I used to ride, my dad and I, John Hilton and John Ot used to ride with me all the time so and they paid me a little, enough money so that I could buy gas, wasn't much, I charged them maybe a quarter a day to go to work.

KJ: And that was at the Pequaming Mill?

CH: Yeah.

KJ: How long did you work there?

CH: I worked there about a year, a year and three months, something like that.

KJ: And that wood that was coming out of the Pequaming Mill was that going to Ford plants down state?

CH: Yeah I guess a lot of it was. Seems to be a lot of it went from here to Cleveland area and some to Ford Motor Company too, but not all that much.

KJ: Do you know why it would have been going to Cleveland?

CH: A lot of it was used just locally too. That lumber was used locally Pequaming sawed all hemlock and pine and spruce, L'anse had all the hard wood, there was no hard wood saw in Pequaming.

KJ: And so your wife Isabelle, she grew up here in Pequaming?

CH: Yeah

KJ: And she had some interactions with Henry Ford?

CH: Yeah, she used to work at the Bungalow so when he come there then they'd have these square dances. So then the other dances too, a guy by the name of Olson used to furnish music for that and, what was the name of that, Olson's wife's name was Gertrude she'd always play too. They'd have music and then they would square dance so that he asked, it must have been some other dance that he asked her to dance.

KJ: What kind of work was she doing at the Bungalow?

CH: Well they used to, well he'd eat there then they'd wait on tables and clean up the place.

KJ: Was she working there the same time as Catherine Wiesenen? Was she working there?

CH: No, that was before.

KJ: So if you could look into your crystal ball and predict the future of Aura what do you think is the future?

CH: Well I think Aura's going to grow, there's a lot of nice places, there's still a lot of lake shore property that hasn't been developed and used yet, lot of room for buildings yet, a lot of room at Point Abbey, so I think you're going to see growth, the population is going to bet bigger, they've got to move somewhere, they might as well move up here where they're by the lake.

KJ: Yeah, that's funny, is there anything else you'd like to add?

CH: No, I guess that pretty well covers it.

KJ: Well thank you for your time today, I'm going to shut this off.

CH: Well I hope I done alright.

END OF INTERVIEW