

Laura Carlson's Interview
with
Emil Kaurala

Introduction:

This is Laura Carlson. I'm interviewing my grandfather, Emil Kaurala. It's Tuesday February 23rd, 1993, and we're at my house in Ishpeming.

Me: O.K.

Grandpa: All Right.

Me: When and where were you born.

Grandpa: I was born August 21, 1924, in Rubicon, MI. It's Russau, now.

Me: What were your parents names?

Grandpa: My mother's name was Ida and my dad's name was Anton.

Me: What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

Grandpa: My oldest brother was Wayne, my sister's name was Marie, then the ~~brother~~ brother that was born after me was Berrault Matt, and a.. Arnold.

Me: Um, Where you married? If so, when and where.

Grandpa: ^{on} Many years ago, in 1947, in the Copper Country.

Me: What was your spouse's name?

Grandpa: Her name was Mary Alice Stratton.

Me: O.K. What did your parents do for a living?

Grandpa: They farmed.

Me: Where did you go to school?

Grandpa: In Russau, MI.

Me: Do you have any special areas, memories ^{of growing up} (laugh) in that area?

Grandpa: Sure, ah, the winters, especially ^{them days} they didn't plow the roads like they do now, ah. I can still remember the ah, they'd call them holts, plowing snow and we had a snowstorm that lasted maybe, a week or two, you couldn't even see those equipment opening the roads. Ah, and then they would even sometimes have a bulldozer pushing it because the snow was so, so high.

Grandpa: you couldn't see the equipment
me: Well ok, um, what kinds of things did you and your friends do
for entertainment back then?

Grandpa: Skate, ski, ah, and oh, that would be wintertime, course soft ball,
just regular softball, and uh, Auntie, Auntie Fover, and things like that,
ride bike, ah swim, oh and oh, take walks, things like that.

me: O.K. um, do you have any humorous stories about your childhood there?

Grandpa: Well, I'd have to think now, if I can remember any. Maybe it was
all humor, that's why I can't (laugh) But, ah, I loved growing up on
the farm and, let's see. I was born on the farm, too. You know
right in the very house that's still standing. In fact, all my brothers
and sisters were born in the same house.

me: What kind of a farm was it?

Grandpa: Well, we had not a lot of cattle, we ^{had} usually had milking cows, and
then we had calves, and things like that, and we usually had one horse,
at least, and, oh, and equipment, we had tractors, and equipment
to help us farm, I would say it was just a general farm. It was ^{always} 4
ah, all cattle or a all grain. We used to plant, ah, oats and barley,
and sometimes wheat and ah and my dad had a flour mill, we could
make our own flour, we had a shingle mill, we could make all our
own shingles, in fact, shingles for just about everybody around us.

me: How old were you when you found your first job, and where
did you work?

Grandpa: I worked at a garage and I would think somewhere around
fourteen or fifteen, I worked part-time in the garage where
my brother was, helping with mechanics.

me: What did you do there? Just mechanics and stuff?

Grandpa: Well, I did mechanical work. Yah, just being a help at first and then,
In fact I worked in that garage for, this was usually in the winter-
time when the farm was slow. (cont)

Grandpa: and that was after I was around 16, I did a little bit, before that but ah, a lot of the work that I learned in mechanics was at home on the farm. We had a, a light plant that we generated our own electricity, before the electricity.

Me: O.K. Were you ever in the military?

Grandpa: Yes, I was.

me: O.K. What part of it were you in?

Grandpa: Well, first of all, when I went in the service, I ended up getting infantry basic and then from infantry basic in Florida, I was in Camp Landing Florida, in the fall of 1944, and then they have inquiries where they gonna suit you best, and then you fill out forms and they found out I'd be best suited in mechanics. So I went to mechanic's school there then to, to a motor mechanics school. And then after I come home for fertile, I went back and went to Georgia. And let's see, what was the name of that place? I forgot. Port, Port Benning, Georgia. And I spent about three months out there, going through more mechanics school. And then from there on, went across from there to Fort Raleigh, Kansas, and then I went from there to Fort Hood, California, then I went from there to, fort Louis, Washington and got shipped overseas from there.

me: And what was that for?

Grandpa: Ah, we were gonna go, we went all the way across, that's when the war was still going on.

me: Uh-huh.

Grandpa: and when we were on the ocean, that's when the first atomic bomb was dropped. And it was hard to believe that one bomb could do so much destruction.

Grandpa: I was just awesome to think, my goodness, and it wasn't too shortly after, another one was dropped. And it got to the point that Japan was ready to surrender. But were on the way to go on an invasion of Japan. And uh, where we ended up anyway, we went on a regular convey. we left alone from, Seattle, Washington, and nobody knew where we were going. and the orders are open that they're way out in the sea somewhere ^{here}. So, we stopped at midway, and unloaded cargo, and from there on we went into a whole slew of ships going into Okinawa and I ended up in Okinawa for a while, and then I went from there to Korea.

me: Oh o.k. What was your most recent place of employment or job?

Grandpa: Before I had this place, or?

me: Well, this place.

Grandpa: yah, well Capital City Express, of course.

me: And, what did you do there?

Grandpa: I was an owner, and a partner to another one. We run the business (airplanes), we did charter work, we did aircraft fuelings, for airlines and individual airplanes, we did maintenance, we did flight instruction, we did aircraft rental, we did aircraft handling, and tie downs, and just about everything you can think of about aircrafts.

me: Um, when did you first start getting interested in airplanes?

Grandpa: When I was on the farm. When I was about maybe 13/14 years old. We used to see these old airplanes go over the farm every once in a while. If you heard an airplane, I don't care if you were eating, in the house or anything, you ran out to see it. To see where it was going or how far. And you'd watch 'till it'd just disappear and you'd wish you were up there.

Grandpa: The old Walkyls, and the Jennys, and them days, it was that long ago that they didn't even have any ~~J-3s~~ J-3s in them days.

Me: O.K. um, How long did you work at that place, or did you own the business?

Grandpa: Well, this coming April would be 32 years.

Me: O.K. what changes have you noticed in the airplane business since you started?

Grandpa: Well, the airplanes are getting more sophisticated, especially the radio gear and the electronics end of it. It's marvelous how they can fly around the country now and the all the different aids there are now. And of course the airplanes have improved a lot, they're more sophisticated, they have more power, they fly faster, and they use a little less fuel for the time they're in the air, because of the efficiency all the way around, and the aircrafts are real reliable.

me: Was there any interesting events that happened during your career?

Grandpa: yes, I suppose, most of all, I took up flying before I come to Marquette, and I was flying in maybe about 1960, and well, the first, one of the first events that happened to me I was flying, one evening I was flying an old T-craft, that's a two-place airplane, and uh, I'd been doing some practicing that I had got to learn, see I'd go practice it everyday, everytime I had a chance. So ~~3~~ this night I took some fuel, it had two tanks it had an aux. tank and a main tank ^{was} in the nose, right in front of your feet there. So need any fuel there, but I put it in the aux. tank. That took 6 gallons of fuel and the I went up and said, "Well I'm gonna do some, first I'm gonna do some left turns and right turns and decent's and climbs

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Grandpa: and then I'm gonna make some emergency, as if I had an emergency and all of a sudden I had to pick a field and go and land. OK? Not landing, but just pretend I'm gonna make an approach there and just keep going around. So, I did a couple of them, then all of a sudden, I could smell fuel coming in through the, the airplane. It was starting to get down in my shoes and I said "Where is that coming from?" and I could see it coming in through the nose tank, coming over the top, from the cap. So I thought "What in the world happened now?" It must be that I've got an air-lock in there, but I can't see how that could've happened. "I said "Well I better do really do an emergency landing." So, I looked around and I said, "Well now where am I gonna really gonna land. I gotta find something that is a good one to land into. So I seen a farmer's field and they had been baling hay there. I said "Well I'm gonna make a go over there and make a landing because, I don't want to see the airplane catch on fire. Cause after it's on fire, then you really have a problem. So I said "Well it's still, or everything is running good and so I'm gonna go and look, and I could see one place where these hay bales were all stacked together but there was a nice straight line, I could land between the bales, so that's what I did. I made an approach and landed and come to a stop, shut the engine off, and I said "I don't know if I got a gas cap on there", and the air was just like a spring, coming out. I said "What in the world?", I said "I wonder, if it's coming out a wing tank". So I went and stuck my thing, took the wing cap off, and, sure enough, I couldn't reach the fuel, so I said "Oh, the fuel valve on the, for the left, that a wing tank is well it's gotta be on ~~sets~~ cause it would feed from there to the ~~the~~ wing tank. So I switched that tank, the valve the other way, because that airplane had been painted and there was no off or on. And I couldn't remember which ^{way} it was. So I turned it the other way, and sure enough, it stopped it. I said "Well, that's all that was the fuel was coming from the wing tank, so, what I did was I propped it, and started it and taxied right up there and took off, from there and I could see where, this was in the farmer's field and through the middle of that field there was power lines going to the house. So when I was going through that way I figured that if I couldn't go over the wires I would have to go under the wires, so I took off and I could see that I was not going fast enough and it wouldn't climb right over the wires, so I flew it right under the wires, then a little farther on then that there was a fence and I had to go over

Grandpa: I was going good enough and I flew it out and flew it back home, I mean to the Mangack Airport and here's my instructor, talking to a guy about flying. How good it was and everything else and safe it was. Then I told him, "Well, it's a good thing I practiced some of those emergency landings you know, and he said "How come?" So I told him what happened. Oh and the student looked at him and he says "My goodness. I'm gonna get out of here before one of your students comes down with a parachute." (Laughs) So, that was, that was one of the exciting times.

me: What are your favorite, do you have any favorite hobbies or leisure activities, or?

Grandpa: Oh, I just, I would say, I used to have, I was always interested in electronics, radio, HAM Radio operator, things like that. And I, oh I like fixing things, I'm curious about everything, well, if things are broke, well it's broke, I like to take it apart, see what it ate, and maybe I can fix it, that's where I've learned a lot,

me: If you had choose a career all over again, would you choose the same one?

Grandpa: Ah, yeh, probably a different portion of it though. It's getting, running a ~~business~~ business now, specially the aviation and of it, it's getting tougher, with all the paperwork to be done. But I enjoyed it, I learned a lot, it's ah, I met a lot of interesting people, and seeing interesting places, and I love flying. The only thing I thought, getting a business and town, you'll have more time for flying, but the opposite was true. It kept me busy working instead of flying.

me: Did you ever feel like changing careers?

Grandpa: Yes, I did change careers. I was in the auto mechanics when I come out of the service. And I worked in the one place for 14 years straight. I used to work on logging trucks, gravel trucks, cars, oh once in a while I'd work on tractors. Oh, but I just got sick and tired of getting, especially in the winter time getting soaking wet from the snow and ice that would melt from these cars, and we had to get underneath there, and although we had hoists and there, but you'd get wet and all kinds of dirt in your eyes and salt in your mouth and Oh, I used to change springs, and work differentials and take rear ends out and transmissions and ditches and engines. Just everything, and it got tire some. So I had a chance to get into aviation and that was right down what I wanted. So, I went and got my, while I worked I got my A and P. That's known as air frame and power plant license. So, aviation was the best career I had.

me: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Grandpa: Oh, Let's see. Well, oh, after you start getting to my age, you'd like to slow down a bit. ~~So~~ Cause I never took a lot of time off, never had long vacations or anything. And it's time to pass the torch to someone else and spend a little more time at home. I got a lot of things to do at home. It'll keep me busy for a couple of years, far as I can see, without any problem, I'd like to make a couple of gadgets here at home, and I'm working right now to make a DC Arc welder. So, I hope I get some time to do that.

me: What is that?

Grandpa: Well, it's a welder, you know where you put a welding rod on it and you can weld things. Well, a lot of places have them. Like in garages and work-shops, and it's an air-cooled engine. It's part of an aircraft engine that'll run on a generator. Oh and I like hunting and fishing and I've never deer-hunted since for the last going on 22 years.

Grandpa: See, the last time I hunted was when I was back at home until we moved up here in '61, I've never taken a deer rifle out, got pretty busy, when we first started we worked 7 days a week, then it got to be maybe 6 1/2 days a week, it took years to do it though, Yup!

me: Who did you retire?

Grandpa: Well, let's put it this way, January 30 approximately of this year, and actually I didn't do any work anymore through November, did a little work in December, and a little bit in January just to help someone out. That's pretty well it. The end of January, our pay checks quit coming, just retired and living on Social Security and some of the income were gonna get from the business being sold.

me: OK, Is that it then? ^{Grandpa:} Yeah, why don't you turn it off I'll see if I can think of something.

Grandpa: Is it now?

me: About your school and stuff. Do you have any memories about school when you were young?

Grandpa: Ah, yes. I was 6 years old when I went to school the first time. Them days, they didn't get children to go to school until they were 6. And Ah, I can remember going to school the first day, and of course our farm was about 300 ft. down the road, and when you seen the other kids going, mother sent me, "Go on and catch up with the other kids, go to school with them" So, that's the way it went, I didn't know any English. It was all Finnish that we ever spoke at home. So, some of my days at the beginning were a little hard to understand what the teacher was saying, of course, it was only kindergarten but mother told me I didn't know a word of English and she said after 2 weeks or so I was jibber-jabbering in English. So, that's the way that got started, I guess it was the first time, like I said, we had indoor bathrooms, they weren't the flush-type, just the other type. And we had lots of windows on the east side, and ~~there~~ a chalkboard on two sides where the teacher could do all her work. And there was about 28, 29, 30 students all from kindergarten through 3rd grade. She taught one teacher, we had a big wood furnace in one of the corners and a care taker would take care of it at night and eat by morning. Then the kids that would be in 7th or 8th grade would feed the wood into it during the day like the winter time. Summertime of course, you didn't need anything. So, the cost of running that school was low cost. No electric lights, no candles or anything, no lamps of any kind. I can still remember the big clock on the wall. School started at 9 o'clock, recess was about 10:10, 10:15 we got a 15 minute recess everybody got chased outside to get some fresh air. Then about 10:30 the bell would ring and ~~we~~ go on to the room, and almost everybody brought their own lunch. Then, 1 o'clock, the bell rang again. We didn't have a big bell, it was just a hand held one. One of the students would get out and ring it. We used to have a lot of fun playing ball outside. We didn't have bats. Just wooden boards and sponge balls and everybody played. When you got out, you started as a third-fielder and then pretty soon somebody else got out and they ended up as a third fielder then second, first and so on and pretty soon you'd be up to bat and you'd get a chance to pitch and everything. It was a lot of fun.

Grandpa: And you'd play first baseman and pitch and then you were out batting ^{catcher}
 And on we played duck in a rock, take old coffee cans and knocked
 out with a stick out back. Yeah, and winter time was something else then.
 Lots of snow lot of times and the roads weren't taken care of like they
 are nowadays. In fact, I can remember once or twice that they had a
 horse-drawn V-plow that they opened the roads with. And they had
 two-three teams out and a lot of times the roads were lower than
 the fields so that's why it'd just drift in. Oh if the storm was real bad
 we didn't go to school period. And I remember once it was either a whole
 week or almost two weeks we had had snow storm in the thirties,
 maybe around '36 or '37 we didn't have school for a long time. Couldn't get
 there anyway. And we used to, there was no snowblowers. Everybody snow-
 eled and we had a model T, a 1925 model T and I can still remember
 them shoveling a path for it to the garage. We never hardly used it in the
 winter time. But shovel a path to the garage and we had one horse. Take
 that log, and put a trail to the road and one on the other side
 where the car tracks would fit. And usually for the Christmas
 program for the school at the town hall. That's the night that the
~~folks~~ folks would come see the plays and everything else. Then come back
 home it would only be about an hour/ hour and a half. There were
 no school buses. Not until you went to high school at Mass, then
 they had one of these old buses, I'm not even sure that they weren't
 made out of wood at the time. So, that was the life. We had a
 lot of fun. Like we created our own, like skating, we created
 our own skating rinks. We knew places that had dams. We'd go over
 there and clean that dam off and sometimes before supper
 then have supper then put our skates on and go skating, then
 punch a hole in the ice at one end and flood it with buckets
 of water. OK? And then go home so it'd be nice and smooth
 ice for the next night. Some of the farms dams that they
 had and then there were some places that had ponds, like
 frog ponds. We'd do that there, clamp-on skates. I didn't
 have no shoe-skates. They had to be clamped onto like oxfords
 and they weren't very good support. When dogs we used shoe packs
 to go to school so your feet would be warm. So, I had home-
 made skis that my dad had made and back home we had some
 nice hills on the farm so, we had great times. Then you'd come
 back from school when you were old enough, you'd have a little snack
 the first thing you'd do, you'd look for wife's mother, you know bud was
 out working the field but you'd look where's mother so then she got
 you a sandwich or something to eat. Then it was time to go get
 the cows or take your dog and my dad. I carried a dog all the
 time. See we had a couple of different woods and fields that you
 could go to and shoot chipmunks for the cat. The cotticed chipmunks,
 we had little dogs and they were good for chasin' the cows.

(10)

Grandpa! Do you mean to tell me a dog can chase cows? Why sure I'll show you and he go + so smart if he wanted the go and then if he wanted to chase him more I'd say 'yes', Get him! Go get him!' And he'd go after him. All the cows and he'd have no problem getting them home. Then pretty soon it was milking time. So we had no shortage of chores and then after we got some more work done, we could do our own projects. Whatever we wanted to. Yah so, that was a great life, the farm is still there. I'd like to take you folks out there this summer when I have time. your dad is interested. I have some land out there. We had our own apple trees, we had our own garden. We hardly ever bought from the store. Staples like sugar, salt, pepper, things like that. Sometimes flour. But we could grind our own flour sometimes we had the equipment, well, do you want to cut it off now?

me: Sure. Thanks!