

Field Trip to Houghton-Hancock, Michigan on March 26, 1979

Marina and I drove from Ashland to the Houghton-Hancock, Michigan area today. We left Ashland at about 10:00 a.m. It was a cloudy day and the roads were slushy and icy a good part of the trip. The ride is aesthetically pleasing as the highway is lined with trees.

We picked up a hitchhiker at the junction of highways 45 and 26. He was from Michigan Tech. He told us that Houghton had a lot of snow this past weekend. Marina had been told that we were driving into a storm. Neither prediction was true. It hadn't snowed that much and it wasn't going to snow on this day.

We dropped off the hitchhiker at Michigan Tech and then drove across the bridge to Hancock. We had an appointment at Suomi College at 2:00 p.m. but we didn't plan for the change from central standard time to eastern standard time. Thus we arrived at Suomi College at 3:00.

Meeting at Suomi:

Matthew Gallmann
Marina Herman

Gail Pizaro
Dan Makki
Kalervo Frieberg

We met with Gail Pizaro who works with the institutional development department of the College. When we entered her office we met with Kalervo Frieberg who is a consultant from Finland working with the college for one year. Gail first offered us coffee and I accepted while Marina passed. We started out by explaining the project. Then Kalervo began to show us some tape transcripts from the archives at Suomi. Gail went and got Dan Makki and then Marina handed them copies of the newspaper article we've been running.

We weren't quite sure what kinds of things we wanted to get done. Dan turned out to be a wealth of information. He spoke with an accent that sounded as if he was from Finland but he was born and raised on the upper peninsula. Marina and him pulled out a map and began going over place names and Dan was telling Marina what kinds of ethnic groups presently live in these communities.

I began to talk with Kalervo and Gail. I told them about Arnie Johnson and his Toivo jokes. Then I asked Kalervo about Savo jokes. He told me that Savo is a province in Finland. The people in Savo have certain characteristics that make them different. He said it was analogous to the difference between people in the deep south and people in the north. Kalervo explained that this is how the Savo jokes developed and that these jokes often involve ethnic mockery which is not harsh but only humorous.

Dan mentioned that he has recently been learning Finnish folk songs but he is not yet an expert. Unfortunately Dan had to leave and go teach a class. The rest of us decided to take a look at the archive at Suomi.

When we entered the archive Kalervo showed us around. They have tapes of the Finnish Heritage Radio show and a collection of oral history tapes. They have many old and new newspapers and many more Finnish and English books pertaining to Finnish culture.

When we left the Archive we went to see a collection of books they have at the student center. The room these books are kept in is hot and humid and both Gail and Kalervo are worried about the books. Many of the books are 100 years old and still in good condition.

We said our goodbyes to Kalervo and he said he would help us any time as much as he could. I felt that this gesture was genuine and sincere.

We went back to Gail's office. Gail offered to let us stay at her house but we decided that we would get more work done if we went to a hotel. Gail mentioned that she might be interested in collecting and she felt that some students may like to collect.

After we left Suomi College we acquired a room at the Best Western Hotel down the street. We dropped our bags and my instruments in our room and then we walked around the town a bit. We saw many Finnish names on signs. Restaurants included "Finlandia" and "Kaleva". We went into an old Finnish Lutheran church and looked around. It was now an Assembly of God church.

After walking around and looking around we went to the newstand to buy a local paper. Dan Makki had told us that there was an article on a 90 year old Chippewa woman in the L'Anse Chrnicle of last week. We bought the paper but found no such article. The name of the newstand was Paines newstand.

While we were in the store we started to talk with the proprietor. He began to tell us about an old clock on the wall. "I used to deliver newspapers to the man that made that clock," he declared. Then he explained how during tourist season people offer him money for the clock. "One guy took that clock off of the wall. I mean, he physically took that clock off the wall! He asked me to name my price but I told him I wasn't going to sell it. The man said that there is a price for everything but I told him I couldn't put no price on that clock."

Another person came into the store and so the proprietor's attention was diverted. I suggested to Marina that we stay around and see if this guy knew anything about ethnic music. I saw some local historical society publications and so I asked the proprietor if he had any other books such as those on history. He said that he has more books such as those during the summer but now he only had those two that I had seen. I then told him that I was looking for ethnic/folk music. He asked me, "You mean like old Finnish music?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You mean to record it and stuff like that?" I said, "Exactly." And then he proceeded to tell me about a woman named Mrs. Charlie Rhinne who is now at a rest home and who sings old Finnish songs. He then told me that Bob Kent's son has been going to the rest home and learning some of these songs. He told us to call Art Suvanto and ask him about Mrs. Rhinne who is his mother. Then the proprietor said that if we had any trouble we should come back to the newstand and he'll "see what he could do".

We went to the Finlandia restaurant but it was closed so we walked up the

street to Eola's

street to Kaleva Cafe. We ate pasties and read the newspapers. After dinner we walked back to the hotel and worked on fieldnotes, read and played music. I also called Art Suvanto. He said that his mother is very sick and she doesn't sing often. She only speaks Finnish or perhaps he meant she only sings for Finnish speaking people or he meant that she only sings in Finnish and thus I wouldn't understand the songs. I realize now that I should have clarified his simple statement, "you'll have to be able to speak Finn."

Anyway, Art said that I should call the Kents because his mother always sings for their son. I thanked him and he offered to help if he could.

I called the Kent house and Mrs. Kent told me her son's name was David but that I should call back about 9:30.

I called back at 9:30 and Mrs. Kent said I should call Claudia Stadius because she knows about the music. She said that David Kent told her to tell me that ~~_____~~

^{Perhaps} ~~_____~~ David felt he lacked musical knowledge and couldn't help me out. I never got to talk with David. I think we might follow this lead with at least a letter.