

July 18, 1979  
Wednesday  
77 Branch Street  
Kearsarge, Michigan

Informant: Eva Koopikka

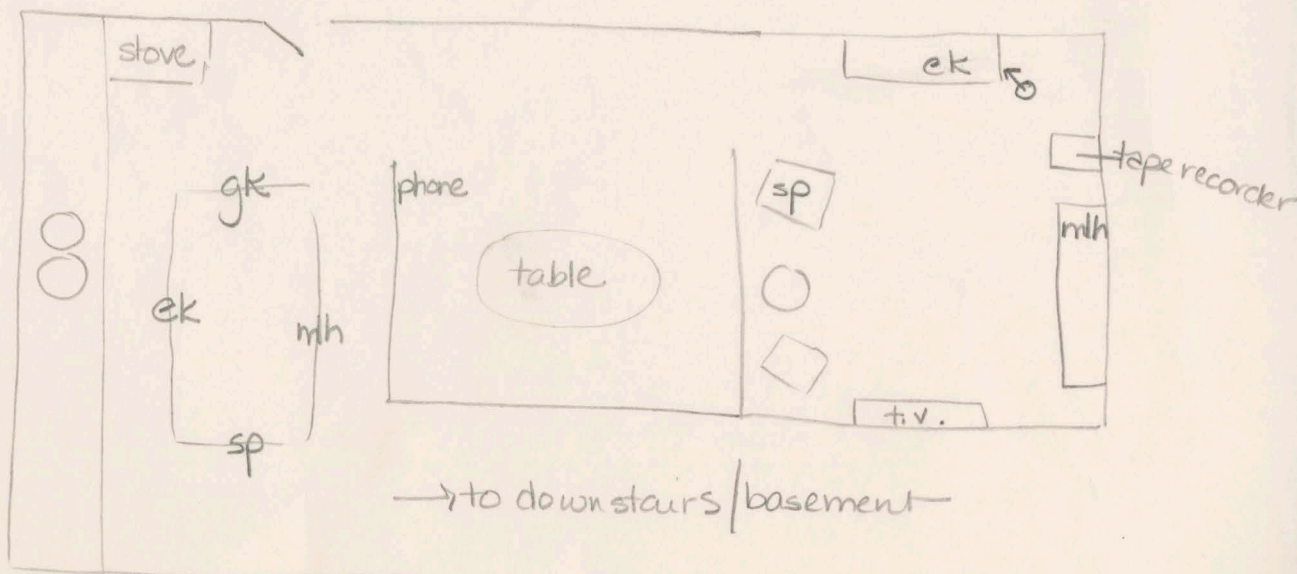
Collectors: Sara Poynter  
Marina L. Herman

After a lesson on the Uher 4000 tape recorder, Sara Poynter (SP) and I (MLH) left for Kearsarge at 12:45 p.m. to see Eva Koopikka (EK). SP drove north on U.S. 41, past Calumet. When we got to Kearsarge (5 miles north of Calumet) we drove past the Post Office and meat market on 41, past the Hut restaurant and Sportsmen's Bar until we saw the stone boat sculpture. We turned right on Smith Avenue until we came to Water Street (½ mile). We took a right on Water Street, went about one block or two until we took a left on Branch Street. EK's house was the 2nd house on the right-hand side of Branch Street, #77.

(EK was wearing a green top, pattern slacks, and a Quinaynine copper medalian. She had a cane and her hair was short and grey)

She and her husband Gus live in a two-story brown shingled house with a 2-car garage. A flower garden lines the basement wall and there are several small gardens in the yard. There was a small greenhouse to the left of the driveway and a bench swing. Gus was outside as we drove up, fogging the yard for bugs. He said, "Hi, Sara" and told us to go right in. EK was on the phone to a friend. She motioned to us to come in. The breadmaker was sitting on the counter. She had just finished making a Finnish white bread with cardomon seeds called "Nisua". There were 6 loaves of it rising in the oven.

Still on the phone, EK motioned to SP and MLH to go into the living room. (We had started to set up in the kitchen, but decided the living room would be a better place to record. We started towards the living room when EK motioned to us). As we began to set up the equipment, EK hung up the phone and came toward us. MLH asked if it would be alright to record her there in the living room. EK said fine. EK then said we had better come look at her bread and told SP she would give SP the recipes for the Nisua and Finnish rye bread.



Tape #1, Side 1  
(Tape On)

We then came back to the living room. EK sat down on the couch, her cane over the arm of the couch. (She never stopped talking from the minute we came in!) (MLH set up recorder). SP lead questions on EK's family background. EK sat on the couch with legs crossed at her ankles but her arms and hands were in constant motion. GK came in to say "hi", putsed in the dining room for a while and then on the kitchen. EK said he was getting her vitamins.

EK wandered from subject to subject regarding her family - mother, father, brothers and sisters. (MLH found it interesting that her mother married 3 times; 2 times in Finland). EK got out a photograph album her son-in-law put together of their (EK, GK, daughter Louise and her husband) trip to Finland in 1974. EK said she would show them to us later.

SP kept trying to ask specific questions about EK's background. EK would answer for 1-2 minutes. Then wander to another subject. (MLH looks to SP with a sigh). EK talked more of her family and her sister "Mimi" whom she looked upon as her mother. Spent a few minutes figuring out the ages when her sister and mother died in the Depression. SP asked about schooling. EK responded with talk of two schools she went to, but then wanders to talking about church, the Wolverine Lodge (where she and her brothers and sisters went to Sunday School). EK then relayed a story of how they buried people back then. The "remains" would lie in a casket in the house. EK remembered her mother laying in the casket where the couch now sits. EK then speaks of her mother (with a sense of deep pride) stating that although her mother didn't go to church as often as some others, "no one came to mother's door without getting something to eat."

Tape #1, Side 2  
(Change tape)

EK begins to talk more about the school, Bethlehem Church and the Kaleva Lodge. MLH/SP then interrupt and try to steer conversation to the music EK may know. EK gets up to get her old school song book. It was printed in 1924 by the Finnish Book Concern, entitled "Pyha koulin Laulukivia." The book contains no music, only words. It measures about 3"x5". EK pages through the book to a Christmas song, "Terve oi Joulu." She sings the song once relying on the book, then reports it and used book as a prop. (EK mentions her voice is scratchy today, holding her throat).

(Tape Off)

The timer dings for the Nisua. EK asks SP and MLH to turn off the machine and see the bread. On the way to the kitchen, MLH notices a set of English demitasse cups on the chest and asks EK about them. EK also points out the Finnish demitasse cups on buffet. EK remarks English cups have better sound. EK shows SP and MLH her new stairs to the basement. While in the kitchen, MLH asks EK about the row of cups on the cupboard with names on them. EK says her son painted names of all their family on them, so each person has their own cup. MLH notices

dried flowers/weeds on a chart. EK says that is another hobby of hers. EK points out two finished wall hangings made of dried weeds/cones and felt to MLH and SP. (EK seems proud of her work). EK then placed bread in the oven and we all went back to the living room.

Tape On

EK begins to explain about Finnish alphabet and also talks of her mother again and her mother's broken English. EK wanders from subject to subject. (MLH and SP getting frustrated. No matter how hard SP tries to keep EK on track, EK takes conversation in many tangents. Believe it's not a function of not answering questions, but EK has too many stories and likes to talk so much, she is easily sidetracked). EK philosophises on America and all the nationalities; discusses the relationships between Swedes/Finns, saying Finn's have a "chip on the shoulder" when it comes to the Swedes; and talks about her church and its politics and the bad feelings after the merger of the Swedish and Finnish churches to Faith Lutheran.

Tape #2, Side 1

EP asks EK about the song EK sang SP last visit, called "Tula loolala". EK smiles and claps her hands as she sings this song. (She sings brightly). GK comes in. EK says he knows songs, too, but he says he doesn't remember. GK talks for a while. He says his parents were from Vassa in Finland and his father played the violin. GK picked it up to play for his father, but gave it up long ago. (SP trying hard to keep EK on track). EK then sings a song about a coo-coo bird singing, "Kakki Se Kukki". Her foot taps throughout the entire song. SP asks about other songs. EK singing "Ma Oksala Ulli Malla." She translated it to "On the Highest Branch". Her arms flow back and forth to the rhythm. She said the church choir sang this song. SP asks if she knows other songs. EK tries to remember. EK says to shut off the tape so she can check her bread. (She smelled it). EK comes back and while she was sitting down, she says she can't remember any songs. EK glances through the school song book. EK picks out another Christmas song, "Hosianna", translated "Hosanna, David's Son". EK reads from the book as she sings. When EK sings the song the second time through, she glances at the book now and then. When EK finishes the Christmas song, she lead right into "Viella Nittiia Hankia". It was sung without a book. She learned it from Ritva Heikkila, a few years ago when RH was a consultant to Suomi College and put on the Lumberjack Play EK was in. EK speaks highly of Ritva saying RH was "a bridge between the U.S. and Finland." (MLH feels sad about RH because it appears EK sings only the songs from the Lumberjack Play and has set aside those she may have learned prior to the play).

2

3

4

5

6

(Tape Recorder Falls)

Tape Off 1-2 Minutes  
Tape On

3:15 (Tape Off)

The timer on the bread went off; EK said we probably want to "wet our whistles" and have some Nisua. We all went into the kitchen. EK set out cups and small plates. GK came in and help EK put out Nisua, applesauce cake, butter,

thimbleberry and strawberry jams and jellies. SP started copying recipes. MLH started looking at the photograph album from the Finnish trip, but EK interrupted and said she would explain them to me. She explained all about their trip and how she discovered where her father came from. (She never stopped talking!) While we were all eating, she spoke to us of her cousin (a Red Finn) (shaking her head in disapproval). She talked about baking as SP copied the recipes. GK took out some Finnish yogurt to sample. MLH showed interest; GK gave her the recipe. Gk motioned to EK, calling her "grandma" and said he'd save the rest for dinner. MLH noticed Finnish sayings on the kitchen wall and asked what they were. EK read them in Finnish - "Tule meilla vaan Meilla leivotaan!"

EK said it was from the breadmaking song sung at the last visit. SP and MLH said thank you and left around 5:15 p.m. (Totally exhausted, a little frustrated. SP and MLH agreed that another taping session would not be appropriate. It appeared Finnish baking and cooking was the stronger tradition than singing).

Additional Comments: One anecdote EK related struck me. Her grandmother used to say, "Marry another nationality - that makes a strong strain of people." That thought was quite ahead of her time.