

Interview with Rudy Kemppanen
Ishpeming, MI
January 19th 2012
Interviewer: Russell Magnaghi

Tape 1 of 2 side A

Russell Magnaghi (RM): Make sure it's working. Interview with Pastor Rudolph Kemppanen
Ishpeming, Michigan, January 19, 2012. The interview is going to deal with Pastor
Kemppanen, his background career and then discussion of the Finnish immigrants in the Upper
Peninsula in his view of them. Good morning.

Pastor Rudolph Kemppanen (RK): Good morning.

RM: My first question as I begin this is, what is your birthday?

RK: December 3, 1931.

RM: Okay, could you tell us a little about your origins, your background, and I would ask you if you
use a, you know, Finnish word or something, if you would just automatically spell it.

RK: Yes.

RM: So the transcriber would be able to print it out without a problem. What was your origin of your
family?

RK: Well my grandparents came from Finland and my -

RM: Wait now, give us their names

RK: On my mother's side, it was Jacob and Ida Puska and Jake Puska came from Lydia, Finland, and
that place is known as the Scotchman of Finland, and they make humor of it because the, even
the money is stretched, the mark is they have an emblem of their Finnish mark and it's stretched
because the people hang on to it so much and my grandmother came from Tervola in Overmany
and they were married here in this country back in, I think, 1890 by Dr. J. K. Nicamber who
was the founding father of the Sumi senate and who is known as the Patriarch of Finnish
Lutheranism in North America and they had nine, no they had thirteen children all totaled and
my mother was the eldest daughter of the Puska family and she married William Kemppanen
who eventually with my mother bought the farm from Jake Puska and my father had never
farmed before so it was a challenge for him to operate the farm, it was a dairy farm and then
eventually it became a potato farm and a dairy farm and finally my eldest brother bought the
farm from my father and it became totally a potato farm without any cattle and -

RM: Wait, now what was your brother's name?

RK: Alphy, my brother was Alphy, and he lived in on the farm and then retired and lived in Calumet on
Foundry street between Larium and Cat(not sure on street names)

RM: Now where was the farm used to be -

RK: The farm was located in Salo and originally the residents of Salo nearly all of them came from the same area of Finland and so the farm was basically in the middle of this Finnish community called Salo about eight miles from the city of Hancock. Between Boston location and Lake Superior and the great state park in that area

RM: Oh okay and were there, and now were there, the people in that area were Finnish farmers?

RK: They were all Finnish farmers they it was a closely knit ethnic community

RM: Okay so that was your, and then they came here, your grandfather, they came to the United States for what reason?

RK: Well they came largely for employment because there was great poverty in Finland and they initially worked in the copper mines and in the copper country and the Saol area was pioneered because the copper country Quincy mine operated by steam heat and they had to find fuel to fire the steam operations of the Quincy mine and so they had to harvest hard wood and so then you had these left over cut over areas of timber that was harvested and they finally sold it to the immigrants and that's how our farm was begun by my grandfather owning one in the forties and then with all the manpower of nine sons working to develop the property and it really was not a choice piece of farm land it was more or less a swamp but though the sheer hard work of his sons, they dug ditches all over and tried to dry up the land so they could farm it and cultivate it.

RM: And the and then so this area then continues as a Finnish community.

RK: Yes, it was a very closely knit community because I remember as a young person how most of the harvesting of grain and fracking of grain was done by the whole community following the threshing machine from one farm to another and my grandfather owned a bailing machine which was a rare machine in the Salo district so they went from farm to farm bailing the hay so they could more easily transport it from their hay barns in the wintertime to the cow barn where the cattle were.

RM: So it was then just kind of naturally became sort of a, what do I want to call it, a communal, a communal effort for everybody, they all worked together.

RK: Yes, and what I remember so keenly is no one kept time of how many hours they worked for this farmer or that farmer, they simply made a commitment corporately to everybody and they just followed the machine from one farm to another until the job was done. So that was a beautiful example of serving the neighbor.

RM: Now how did, now did you grow up on the farm?

RK: I grew up on the farm I was born, we were all of our children, there were eight children in our family and only two of us are living, my brother Roy in Round Lake, Illinois and myself here in Ishpeming.

RM: And what was what was, could you describe life growing up on the farm

RK: Well it was, as you know farming is labor intensive and so it meant starting very young to do

chores and milking cows my father and I divided the milking chores, we had twelve cows in the end and I was milking cows even up to my seminary training at Hancock I was a student at the theological seminary and I would still milk cows in the morning before I went to school with my dad and we divided the chores, he milked six cows and I milked six cows and of course the passing test of knowing how to milk is when you get milk, when you get foam in the milk pail when you're milking the cows by hand and if you are not able to get any foam from the milk in the pail, you're kind of a second rate milker. But I was sensible in being a first rate milker in getting the foam on the pail.

RM: Now how long would, kind of a technical question, how long would it take to milk a cow, you said you had six to do so how long would that take.

RK: Usually in an hour we would, maybe an hour and fifteen minutes something like that

RM: You would get through the six cows

RK: Yes through the six cows, that is my dad would milk six and I would milk six and so the cows were let out to pasture in an hour and a half or something like, like that.

RM: But that, they're just for the listener, that was something that had to be done every day.

RK: Twice a day

RM: Twice a day

RK: Yes, morning and night yes.

RM: So then did your other brothers then...

RK: Well I, my other brothers weren't on the farm when I was growing up, they had gone to the cities to work and mostly in Detroit my brother Carl was in Chicago for a while and then in San Francisco and my brother Alphy was in Detroit, forked in foundries and that kind of thing while I was a young kid on the farm.

RM: So this is a, as you said, labor intensive and with these cows they had to be they had to be milked -

RK: Oh yes.

RM: You couldn't, you couldn't put off -

RK: And then my job also was to bring them to pasture and then get them from pasture and that was, that was not a difficult chore because the cows would go into their own stalls in the barn naturally and I keep saying that the church members who come to church are something like cows, they go to the same place, the same stall in church and sit down and I just two Sundays ago preached that my former church in Negaunee and the first thing I noticed was that people were sitting in the same place.

RM: Yeah, I guess yeah, that, from my experience as a teacher, is the same, everybody goes to the same spot, now how did you, coming from this rural back ground how did you become interested in

the ministry?

RK: Well, we had a one room school house and in the summer time we had bible school at the school house and our pastor, Pastor Edward J. Issac was the pastor and he kind of buttoned the whole thing about considering the ministry but as a young kid I was complemented by that suggestion by the pastor but then I was totally unclear about what I could ever speak before other people and all these insecurities that a young child would feel but the pastor and my mother was also very instrumental in my, in helping me choose my vocation. She for example the Saol school was a one room school house and had eight grades and most kids that went to the Saol school, their education ended with the eighth grade but my mother had the vision to make Certain that I would continue my education by rooming and boarding me at my aunt and uncle's place on Quincy hill not far from the Hancock High School and so when I finished the eighth grade at the Saol school I roomed and boarded at my Aunt Delore's and Simon's uncle Simon's house and continued my education, otherwise it would have ended right there and I'd probably be a rock farmer because Salo had a lot of rocks and our farm had a lot of rocks.

RM: Now the, _____. So you went to school, you went to Hancock High School.

RK: Yes

RM: Which was very close or is very close to now Finlandia University

RK: Yes correct

RM: And the seminary

RK: Yes, correct

RM: Was there, then did you when you were going to high school and boarding there did you make the connection with the seminary? I mean,

RK: Not really, it was after I graduated from High School that I enrolled at Finlandia, Sumi college at that time and I also had a scholarship to enter Michigan State in East Lansing to study agriculture so there was a, there were two different directions I could go and so I started my career at Finlandia University and that was that was how I prepared myself then for the seminary because there was a very acute need for bilingual pastors and I had the gift of knowing the language to some extent even though I had to unlearn a lot of the language because it was not the classical Finnish language but it was mixed up with English and Finglish and what have you and so I studied the Finnish language at Finlandia and became proficient in the language

RM: Now how did you, let's talk a little about learning the language at home the role of your grandparents?

RK: Yes well my grandfather on my father's side, Andrew Kemppanen, lived to be ninety three years old and he spent quite a bit of time living with us on our farm and I used to be with him a lot and he spoke Finnish all the time, he didn't understand English. So I gained some rudimentary vocabulary and language from my Grandfather as far as my parents were concerned they were

both born in this country, so I represent the third generation of the Finnish Americans and very few third generation Americans speak the language

RM: So you were just lucky to be able to interact with your grandfather

RK: I surely was, then my grandfather on my mother's side, Jacob Puska was blind and I would as a young boy, lead him around on the farm as he was blind he couldn't see so there was a certain amount of language interchange there as well.

RM: Now did your, did the rest of your siblings, did they learn Finnish?

RK: Well they learned some Finnish but neither of them could speak very well I mean they had some basic vocabulary but they really didn't practice or use the language and so through disuse it became very rusty and -

RM: So it'd be more that they would understand it and might know some phrases and words and could toss them out, but couldn't carry on a conversation

RK: Yes, correct

RM: But might understand the conversation

RK: Yes, to some extent although in the church, our language is unique to our theology, for example a sermon they wouldn't get much anything out of it because of the ecclesiastical nature of language in the church

RM: So then you, then when did you begin your seminary studies?

RK: I began my seminary studies in 1952

RM: Now was that part, was that, you went to Sumi College it was called

RK: Yes, the seminary of the Finnish Lutheran church the Sumi senate was located from the beginning of the college up until 1958 I believe it was when it merged with the Chicago, Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. And the reason for the merger of the seminary it was felt that it was such a small seminary that it couldn't provide adequate library facilities for post graduate work as well as a limited financial support by the church and too limited a faculty for the demands of theological education and training so it was merged with the Lutheran school of theology and so I am an alumnus of the Lutheran school of theology by virtue of the merger

RM: I see now did they continue having classes at Sumi College or you had to go to Chicago

RK: Oh no, I was one of the last, next to the last classes to graduate from Hancock and I was ordained in 1955 so it was in I believe it was in 1958 that the seminary began to operate in Chicago.

RM: Could you briefly from your perspective talk about the various branches of the Lutheran Church, like you started out one of the earliest ones was the Apostolic Lutheran Church up in Calumet and then could you talk about the different branches of the Lutheran Church?

RK: Well the original Lutheran Church was located on Quincy Hill and it was a, it included, it was called the Scandinavian Lutheran Church and it had Norwegians and Finns and Swedes all in one congregation and Finnish immigrants kept arriving by the boat load and there was a lot of unrest in the Scandinavian Lutheran Church on Quincy Hill. Reverend Rornes, a Norwegian Lutheran who spoke some Finnish was the pastor and he was chided by Apostolic background Laestadians coming from Finland as needing to repent and come to the true living faith and the downside of the whole event was that Rornes excommunicated the Apostolics from the church on Quincy Hill so they had no place to go except to organize their own church and so that was the beginning of Apostolic Lutheranism in the Copper Country and they built their own church in Calumet on Pine street and Reverent Paul Heinemen and his father served that church for many years they are kind of the patriarchs of the Laestadian movement in the copper country. But the, there were also early beginnings of Laestadianism in Cocado Minnesota and the, so the Cocado Minnesota congregation I think predates the copper country if I remember correctly and to follow the Laestadian and Apostolic Lutheran Church history is a very difficult one because their splits, there have been so many splits and disagreements among the Laestadians and one of the causes for that I think is that many of them did not believe in a trained clergy and it was a laymen who were in charge of the leadership of the church and they were very sever critics of one another in many instances and they, finally you had the first born separate from the Heineman group, the big Pine street group and over, the conflict over the pastors or late pastors that were leaving, and a further dimension of Laestadianism in this country is their relationship to the counterpart in Finland and their belief of course is that there is only one church and they claim to be that church and in order for them to be that church they have to be in fellowship with the parent body in Finland otherwise if they operated independently here they would not be a part of the one church that they espoused so it's kind of a triangle you've got the elders of the church in Lapland in Finland you've got the copper country Laestadians and then you have the breakaway groups from the Laestadians in Calumet so it's a hard picture to put together because of the huge amount of division among them the fact is that had the Laestadians stayed together they would be a very significant part of the church but their divisiveness is so tragic in many respects because it's hard to comprehend all the so called divisions of this so called church and then furthermore that one group is demanding that the other group repent to them so that they remain in the true church and they're demanding repentance of this group and that group and it's hard for some of us to try to understand that

RM: What would be kind of a typical issue or issues that would cause this break up or demand for repentance was it theological was it?

RK: they claimed that it was theological and they based it on what some apostolics wrote in their periodicals, they had monthly periodicals and whatever they proof read so to speak they would raise objection that this brother is not going in the right direction he's, so it was in my opinion I think it was a total misunderstanding of terminology and just a fine tuning of well it's hard for me to even describe it because some of it had to do with the third use of the law which Luther of course in out confessions gave witness to, but they accused for example that the, some of

End Tape 1 side A

Start Tape 1 side B

RM: Okay

RK: Some of them were of the mind that certain aspects of Laestadianism had abandoned the third use of the law. For example one of the factions of the Laestadian groups was called the Bolarieliesia or the followers of Johannes Bolarie who believed that once you repented and your sins were forgiven you needed no more repentance you were living in the freedom of the gospel and there was that there was no need for any later repentance after conversion a very in my opinion very heretical understanding because we sin in thought word and deed every day and we need to as Lutherans believe in daily repentance, there's no quick fix or one fix for your entire life. So that's a very checkered history I just received a copy of the history and memoirs of Peter Nebola who wrote a book on the Laestadian church which is a break off from the Heidaman of the Apostolic Lutherans and it's nothing but warfare between this group and that group and it's hard to understand this to be part of the one holy and apostolic church.

RM: So they would be, there would be inter fighting among the Laestadians or the Apostolic Lutherans, how would they view the other Lutheran churches?

RK: Oh that, the other Lutheran churches are totally in the dark and totally lost

RM: So there's no hope for them.

RK: There's no hope for them and the public enemy number one for the Laestadians in its early history was the Sumi Senate, the church that for example, I belong to, until our merger with the LCA and then the ELCA

RM: Okay, could you explain the LCA and what would it stand for?

RK: Well in 1963 the Sumi Senate which was Finnish in background and the United Lutheran Church which was basically German in background and the Augustanians which was Swedish in background and the American Evangelical Lutheran church which was Danish in background all merged in 1963 to form the Lutheran Church in America and our church at that time was over three million some members and then in 1988 we, the former American Lutheran Church and the LCA and the American association of Lutheran Churches which was a break off from the Missouri senate merged and formed what we call today the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and that's where most of the congregations of Finnish background in the Upper Peninsula belong to, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

RM: And then the, and then, so that's more the ethnic church in the Upper Peninsula then how does the Missouri Senate Lutheran Church, how does that fit in, that's more of a German background

RK: Yes it is of German background and very conservative and they have very little to do with the other Lutheran Churches, the Missouri Senate has taken a very conservative theological position on everything they don't ordain women for example and they don't allow women to be in leadership positions in their congregation which we find very difficult to understand in light of holy scripture and especially when spouse is neither slave nor Jew or gentile, all are one in Christ and so it gives legitimacy for female members to be also leaders in the church.

RM: So those would be the major groups of Lutheran churches then that are operating in the Upper Peninsula yes, there's there are a few Wisconsin Senate churches I think like the, is it at Garden Grove or near Marquette up on the hill there, they have a Wisconsin Senate church they are even more conservative than the Missouri Senate so they have broke away from the Missouri senate

because the Missouri senate is too liberal for them. So it's a very tragic story in my opinion of the breakup of the church when there ought to be more tolerance and understanding and affirmation of one another than there is disagreeing with one another.

RM: Now does, could a or if you're a member of one of these churches, what happens if you attend the services for instance what if you were to well they would probably know who you are they wouldn't be too excited to see you what if you attended an apostolic service or you wouldn't even think that, it'd be like going to a Presbyterian church or something would it be that?

RK: Well last summer they had a gathering of Laestadian churches at the superior dome and so we attended, my wife and I and our daughter and it was an interesting experience because they had thousands of people there, they come from all over the country there's a decided loyalty there to the church that they belong to, the Laestadian church and but we stood out like sore thumbs because the women had lipstick on and they had ear rings on and so immediately they were singled out by those belonging to the Laestadian religion that these are outsiders who have come to this gathering but they were polite they came to shake our hands and gave us a list of their events, their program, but then we thought the preacher was so bad that after listening to two of their speakers we left before the offering it was not the best time to leave the service, but we did decide to leave anyway. What we kept hearing was very detrimental statements and not anything that we were expecting to hear. Like the message of the gospel and fury.

RM: Would they be sort of like you know from my point of view evangelical Christians the Christian right that you hear about they would fit into that category?

RK: Well yes but I think they have no relationship to the evangelical group across the country they are totally separatists

RM: But they would be kind of, they would think in those, those terms or are they beyond farther to the right.

RK: I don't know that they even think in those terms, what the emphasis is on is their repentance and their continual desire to walk the way of Adam as they say and not to be entangled with the world and worldliness. Some of the apostolics in their early history understood that even curtains and neck ties were signs of worldliness and so you had to abandon those things if you were a true child of god according to them.

RM: So they're almost a spinoff of the Amish people and that whole heritage

RK: Well they aren't a spinoff because

RM: No, no, I don't mean a spinoff but I mean in that, thinking in those terms, very primitive Christianity

RK: Yes, that's very true, the rigidity with which they come across I don't know what curtains have to do with worldliness except they keep the sun shine, we have curtains here and we attach no religious significance to them.

RM: Ok, were there, let's talk a little about, then your career where did, you were ordained in 1955?

RK: Yes

RM: And you then came back to the Upper Peninsula? Or what happened?

RK: No, I was serving two churches in Lower Michigan, at Calaba, which was a Finnish community so Finnish that even the street signs there are Finnish

RM: Where's that close to?

RK: That's close to well it's close to Manistique you know where Manistique is it's close to Bear Lake and it's not far from Interlochen and Traverse City, it's a totally Finnish Ethnic community

RM: And made up of farmers

RK: and farmers and now a days no one makes a living by farming because the soil in the Calaba area is all sand. And then I served another parish in Lake City which is next to Cadillac 60 miles away and I served Calaba and Lake City for 36,000 dollars a year without any kind of car allowance. But I survived and they were both wonderful parishes

RM: Now were you supposed to find some other employment to amend your -

RK: No, I was supposed to be completely dedicated to the Christian ministry. But that's how wages were in 1955.

RM: Oh, that's true

RK: Yeah

RM: And then how did you progress to get back to

RK: Oh, then I Calaba was a one horse town and we can only stand a one horse town so long, and we get restless and so I received a call from the Wakefield congregation in Gogebic county and I moved there and that's where I got to know Father, Senior Louie Copo he was priest at the Ramsey which is right next to Wakefield and I was there for eight years and had a wonderful ministry there and that's where I really learned a lot from the Finnish immigrants I had my attendants at my worship services there the first year I was there was 125 people per Sunday so that's a significant number of people and they were all immigrants or nearly all immigrants and they were the priest, their pastor doesn't only teach, it's not a one way street it's a two way street the laypeople can have a powerful influence on the Pastor and they all had libraries and libraries that were totally committed to the faith and growth of Christian faith and they gave me their books and I have to say that I was deeply influenced by that literary commitment by the immigrant generation and then from Wakefield I moved to the Bishop Robert Marshal, presiding bishop of the LCA was pestering me to go to Decalb, Illinois and I didn't want to go to Decalb, Illinois and I said, well he called me the third time and I said well if you want me to take a trip to Illinois I suppose I could do that and so even though I was decidedly against moving to Decalb, after I met with their church council and saw their exciting plans of building a new church I told Darly, on the way home from Decalb, start packing, we're moving. So we moved to Decalb, Illinois and I did end up building the church there and then from there I came to Negaunee and they kept pestering me even though I really didn't want to move at the time, I

had only been in Decalb for four years but they lured me to Negaunee and that's where I was for twenty two years.

RM: Now when you were at these, like when you were at Decalb and these other parishes were they Finnish parishes or were they

RK: They were of Finnish background, yes

RM: So did you -

RK: That's why I think they were so desperate to get me because I was the appeal of bilingual ministers was limited and so -

RM: And so there were still enough immigrants where you could preach in Finn

RK: I, it was an expectation in all of my parishes so I ministered bilingually for 36 years

RM: Oh, and you continue

RK: And I continue to minister in the Finnish Language

RM: Now how many Finnish language clergymen are in the Upper Peninsula today?

RK: Bilingual, there really are none, except Les Niemi in, is in Au Train in the summer months but he's in Bay Cabisu, Arizona for the rest of the time so there really aren't, I guess that you'd have to say that I'm the last of the Mohicans, yeah

RM: So you don't get young, young clergy men learning the language

RK: Oh no, no one is learning the language because even at our services here in Ishpeming once a month that we've been having them until recently we get only 16, maybe on a good Sunday, 20 people but no one wants to come to a Finnish service even though they may understand some Finnish, but the immigrant population is almost nil so it had died it's natural course

RM: So now today when, when you present a Finnish service or give a sermon or something it's more, for a kind of retention of the heritage of the past

RK: Well I think it's a sensitivity at least on my part to people born in Finland, whose first language is Finnish and to Minister to them in their own language, I think that's the only reason I keep doing it, not to perpetuate the language, there's no future in that, but there is reason to respect some of the remaining immigrants

RM: Could you tell us a little about the, your views of you know the Finnish culture, the Finnish immigrants and so on I don't know quite where to start but for instance one of the things you mentioned and I would like you to mention it on tape now January 19th, today and what that means in Finland with the bear story and the farmer

RK: Well these are legends that I have learned from the immigrants over my ministry, over these 36 plus years well today is the 19th of January and it's called Heikin Paiva with umlauts over the a's

on this day, legend tells us that the bear who was in hibernation sucks the first half of winter, sucks it's one paw, but on this day, the 19th of January he wrenches over on the other side and sucks the other paw for the last half of winter and the back bone of winter is broken, and of course this is the day I wait for because anything to break the back bone of winter and as legend also says, this is the day that farmers check their hay supply in their hay barns and if they're more than half used up then they're going to end up buying hay in the spring for the cattle before they are let out to pasture. That's the legend, and of course there's another legend in February, February 22 which is Nattin Paiva with umlauts on the a's, Saint Matthew's day, and that's the day that the Natti drops the hot rock onto the well on the farm and the hot rock water sufficiently so that it doesn't form ice on the surface anymore and we are that close to spring. Those are I think important legends to psychologically help us to get through winter. And that's what, well there are other legends too, but those are the ones that I remember most significantly.

RM: Were there any special, or could you talk a little about, there is one at Christmas time, special Finnish celebrations of Christmas, like I think it's Little Christmas, could you talk about that?

RK: Yes there is and people in this country that owe their origins to Finland celebrate, we call Pikku Joulu what did the Finns understand by the Little Christmas is that because Christmas is such a huge celebration that one must prepare for the huge celebration of Christmas by celebrating the small Christmas or the Pikku Joulu and usually it's associated with worship of some kind and then following the worship there's a bountiful table of Christmas foods and especially pudding that is made by rice and it's garnished with prunes and other fruit and Finnish made cheese, squeaky cheese, those are some of the foods that are served and it's just a way of setting your house in order spiritually for the big celebration of Christ's birth.

RM: Is that, is there any special date for that other than if comes before Christmas?

RK: There is no special day I don't think, it's just any day preceding Christmas

RM: And was that done in private homes or was it done in the church?

RK: Usually it is done in the church. I suppose that there are homes that could celebrate it too in their own way but usually it's the church that they celebrate this of course in my area you also had Finnish groups or societies that are not necessarily church based societies that also celebrate, like the group in Marquette area they had a small Christmas celebration at the Masonic hall for example

RM: I think you gave a talk -

RK: No, I have given talks at them but Reverend Lemata from the copper country spoke at their small Christmas.

RM: And so these were held then when the immigrants were in full

RK: Oh yes there was -

RM: This was done throughout the Upper Peninsula

RK: Very definite

RM: And then in recent years now today I remember I attended one and I think you were there the pastor at Palmer had quite an elaborate celebration I remember they had, they had done it for a number of years, they had ham and herring and all these foods and then a big table of desserts and whatnot

RK: Yes

RM: But I think that isn't done out there anymore

RK: Well it isn't done because there are very few immigrants left

RM: And so the younger people don't kind of get into that?

RK: They seem not to adhere to those practices and it surprises me that they wouldn't be interested in their own ethnic roots enough to learn about them to say nothing of cultivating them.

RM: So you do see this even with the large Finnish population in the Upper Peninsula and around us that even with that large population the connection with the ethnicity and with the celebrations and so on is disconnected

RK: Yes, it is

RM: There isn't a connection

RK: The only exception I think would be to that is the Apostolic Lutherans they have built large churches in the Upper Peninsula, they built the church, the first born apostolics had built the huge church in east Hancock, I mean west Hancock and they built another large church in South Range I mean a huge church and the Pine street Laestadians and apostolics in Calumet have built a huge church near the cemetery the lake view cemetery in Calumet and so they have succeeded in holding on to their young people so they are more likely to celebrate the festivals although Laestadians aren't known for celebrating these ethnic festivals as well as some others

RM: So now the at least in the Marquette area one of the few celebrations is the one they have on Presque Isle there for Midsummer's Day

RK: Midsummer's day, yeah, that's celebrated quite religiously, I mean every year they celebrate Midsummer's which is the summer solstice

RM: But that isn't done throughout the Upper Peninsula?

RK: No, I don't think so

RM: Yeah

RK: No, it isn't

RM: Could you talk a little about the socialist Finns that were active at one point

RK: Well,

End of Tape 1 Side B

Start of Tape 1 Side A

RM: Tape two of the Kemppanen interview.

RK: Yeah, the Finnish socialists, unfortunately when the Finnish immigrants came over first into these mining towns here on the Marquette Range the Massabi Range and the Copper country, the majority of the Immigrants that came were not decidedly representative of the church, even though they had received church training in Finland but they looked upon their arrival to America as emancipation from the church, no longer having to pay church taxes and to have to be under the thumb of the clergy of the church of Finland so they were basically in their arrival, working in dangerous mining conditions where in some instances mules were more valuable than men. They worked under severe and dangerous working conditions so they were driven to alcohol and alcoholism and that's why getting the church started was most difficult because young men coming from Finland looked upon the tavern and the temperance society as their places of interest rather than the church so the churches beginnings were exceedingly difficult, for example I've done history research with the first pastor of the Emmanuel church and Bethel Lutheran church here where as few as five people came to communion and they lamented early on the pastors did of the lack of attendants and the worldliness of Finnish immigrants. Well among them of course they were a lot of socialists and someone has said that the church captured a minority of Finnish immigrants the majority were not committed to the church, they were socialists and some of them were communists. You know for example the Rock area had a heavy concentration of communist minded Finns and I think it's safe to say that the thing that made the Finnish immigrants so repulsive to the mining companies was their poor wages and dangerous working conditions not knowing whether they would survive another shift for example. And the socialist Finns had nothing to do with the church Finns and so they ridiculed the church Finns and in many instances they belittled the people who were associated with the church so there was the tremendous divide between the socialist Finns and the church Finns and the communist Finns in the cooperative movement broke away from the socialist Finns, so there was that cleavage in that, in the immigrant community. And so you had co-op stores organized some were socialist co-ops and some were red co-ops and so well the fact is I think that they weren't so much against religion, because well they were publicly but privately I think they still adhered to some religious commitments of some kind, but I think what made them socialists were the capitalist mining companies that paid poor wages and dangerous working conditions and you can hardly blame them for that I have often said that if I had lived in that time and worked in those conditions I probably would have had a good strain to socialism in myself. Trying to understand the plight of the Finnish Immigrants and so the fact is though that the socialist Finns did militate against the church and even doctor John Wogelen was maligned by the socialists when he was pastor in Evelyn Minnesota and I remember how he tried to speak against the socialist Finns and their strikes etc. and so on but having not been raised or been on the inside of the socialist struggle for the Finnish immigrants I hesitate to say too much because I haven't experienced or known that from a firsthand experience but I've read and studied.

RM: Now would in say a community would church Finns for instance do business with the co-op or was that kind of a forbidden fruit store?

RK: Oh they, they did, I think Church Finns did business with, with co-ops I think they had the best business though with the red co-ops

RM: The red co-ops

RK: Yeah, but they, I think they were forced to do business with other co-ops because the price struggle was so significant the cooperative movement could provide cheaper food than say an independent grocer.

RM: Now was there ever a discussion movement by some of these socialist Finns to try to get the church to play more of a maybe activist role in protecting the rights of the workers, was that ever an issue?

RK: I don't recall and I doubt whether there was any such rapprochement by the socialists throughout the church. If anything there was a tremendous disdain for the church, for example I think of Wakefield and the co-op store there and they had a manager who was very co-op minded and one of the customers came in and he spoke loudly because the co-op store manager could hear and he said, "don't give me any of that co-op made coffee that it makes my wife so crabby" and of course it was a slam at the co-op by this customer, in other words there are these examples of people who still did business with the co-op but didn't always approve of their products. Yeah.

RM: Was that they really didn't approve or was just a means to complain?

RK: It, was a means to complain I think, yes.

RM: Now did you ever hear of a book, and I'll get back to you on it, I came across a book written, in, published, the third edition, published in 1923 so it went back earlier and it was a bilingual cook book and it, nowhere did it, in the whole book was bilingual, all the recipes are Finn and English and then there was a little side bar in the beginning and I had a friend of mine translate it, and it was a cook book that prepared young Finnish girls to become domestic servants. Did you ever run across anything like that?

RK: I've heard of that but I've never come across to read such a book. Or see such a book.

RM: Yeah, I was at a history meeting in Newberry and this woman was marry Hunt, she does a lot of tourist books on the UP and she had it, she had this book in the trunk of her car and I she said, do you want to buy this, five dollars, and I looked at it and I'm interested in food and I, absolutely, and then I had Lily Roberts in Marquette, she's fluent in Finnish.

RK: Yes, I know her

RM: And she translated the, this little side bar and then also went though and said, "These are authentic Finnish recipes and so on but it was just a strange cook book to have but it was, and it was published by the Toomies publishing company

RK: The Toomies, yes. There are umlauts over the o's so it's tooameas, yeah, toomies, that used to be the socialist printing company. So they were teaching the young maidens to become domestics and this was one of their valuable instruments

RM: Tool, yeah, yeah. And I thought maybe it was, because there was a lot of that, they were trying to get Finnish housewives to cook American, because that was a whole thing too, that eating ethnic food was, which sound bizarre today when everything on television is ethnic foods, different foods but back in the 20s, 30s, through most of the 20th century to eat ethnic foods was demeaning to a person, you weren't supposed to be eating garlic and wine and all of your foods and so on. I thought maybe it was a vehicle to get Finnish housewives to change their cooking habits but instead it was, it surprised me it was a guide to the young Finnish girl

RK: It was making them marketable

RM: Yeah, I was just wondering, you'd be interested in seeing it?

RK: That would be interesting, yes

RM: Okay, I'll bring it by and you can take a look at it yeah, the now were there any other were there any other special holidays or times when Finnish, back when the immigrants were around any special holidays or celebrations that were common

RK: Well since the independence of Finland in 1919 Finnish independence day was celebrated very religiously in the Finnish community, the ethnic community, even to this day it's being celebrated there's great pride in the fact that where as many countries yielded to communism and the Russian influence Finland tried to remain independent and actually is independent to this day because of its fierce commitment to freedom and liberty.

RM: So this was done right after, I mean it continued with, I mean from 1919 on.

RK: Yes

RM: This isn't a recent -

RK: No this isn't a recent phenomenon, and of course the Finnish ethnic community when Finland was in the winter war with Russia really responded valiantly I think in sending food and any kind of help they could to Finland to alleviate the burden of the war and that's really a very significant work that the Finnish communities all, nearly all of them were involved in sending food and any other kind of help they could to struggling Finland and war against this Russian giant so to speak

RM: Could you comment about the Finns, I think maybe a lot of red Finns and some of them I think were from the Rock area that migrated to the soviet Russia during the depression of the 1930s

RK: Well yes, there were these Bolshevik Finns and communist Finns who so believed in the classless society that was supposed to emerge at the very turn of the corner that they sold, no they didn't sell but they shipped their farm equipment and they themselves moved to the soviet union, to Russia and we visited Korelia in the year 2000 and to some of the areas where these American Finns came in Russia and soviet Korelia, and it was astonishingly poverty looking area it, all you had there was rundown buildings and decrepit buildings and not a very bright reminder of the classless society and we also learned from the soviet Korelian Finns how under the darkness of the night, they would come, that is the Stalinist rumors and their henchmen would come and capture their men from their houses and send them to Siberia and never to hear from them again

because they were annihilated and it was really a disturbing story to hear that the soviet union, took all the machinery that the farmers sent over to the soviet union and the owners had nothing, and then they were sent to Siberia and many of them were assassinated.

RM: Was the idea to get rid of any, or they didn't trust the men to get rid of them so they wouldn't cause, you know they were sort of American Finns and they were invading Russia to cause a problem?

RK: I think there certainly was a lot of suspicion by the Stalinist mindset in Finland, I mean in Russian and so I'm sure that the, their designs were to eliminate them and that's what happened

RM: So these people went there hoping for this new society and all and they were really seen as intruders

RK: They, ultimately that's what they were seen as, intruders and threats to the system, to the Communist system

RM: And yet they hadn't done anything to because -

RK: Yep, they had not done anything, I suppose that the more skilled persons may have been saved for perpetuating the communist system actually as we well know, most of the immigrants never had university education training they were very literate, the Finns have always been literate but their chance of having an education, I'm talking of the immigrant generation they had young people who were just looking for a job and a lively hood and they came here to work in the mines, copper mines to better their life and they didn't have time for education

RM: Do you remember the era again, the golden era of the immigrant and so on, the Finnish language news papers

RK: Oh there were bundles of them I mean that's one thing that the Finns were noted for, the Finnish immigrants, the endless numbers of Finnish published newspapers all the way from Duluth, Minnesota to the east coast to New York, (several names of Finnish newspapers) in the copper county, the Opas and there were just oodles of Finnish newspapers I can't even recall all the names of them, just the fact that Finns were very literate and they supported these newspapers

RM: So you could go to a newsstand in one of these towns and find a whole variety of newspaper, Finnish newspapers on sale

RK: Well, I don't know that they were in newsstands I can't speak for that but people would subscribe to the papers, they were mostly by subscription and of course even the Opas was a mouthpiece for a certain break off group of the Laestadians so they had their own press as well, mixing secular news with their religious news

RM: But that, I mean having that kind of newspaper response, publication meant that there were a lot of readers because you can't, I mean you had to sell the newspapers so even with the Laestadians you have the splinter group but they still have a lot of readers

RK: oh yes, they did and even the Sumi Senate had its own Finnish newspaper called the American Sumitar that used to be published at the book concern in Hancock for many years and it was the

key newspaper for people that adhered to the Sumi Senate and that's how we kept aware of what was happening all over the country with Sumi Senate congregations, because each of the congregations would have correspondents from the paper that published news from their area and it's interesting that when I was pastor at Calaba, the newspaper article indicated that the pastor at Wakefield had resigned and I told my wife that well if I could be lucky enough to get the church call from Wakefield, we're gonna be moving, and I'll be darned if that's what didn't happen you know and so I ended up going to Wakefield, for which I was very grateful because that's the church that the immigrant generation had a very strong influence in my life because as I said earlier it isn't always that the pastor is the teacher, sometimes the congregation is the teacher, especially if you want to be sensitive to the truth of things as they experience it.

RM: Now you obviously found that speaking the language was critical to your work then to your ministry

RK: It was critical in the sense that it gave me the opportunity to serve in larger churches and because of my skill in the language, I'm sure because of that

RM: So this was kind of an added plus for you

RK: It was, although it never showed in my paycheck, even though it added tremendously to my responsibilities. Not only doing the services like I did up until the end preaching two English services on a Sunday, but also a third service in the English language. So I preached three times throughout most of my ministry on a Sunday

RM: Oh so you did the English sermon

RK: Two English services

RM: Oh two English and -

RK: And one Finnish

RM: Now, in with the, when we talk about the, for the listener who will be listening to this in the future when you had the service then it was in the Finnish language, the whole service

RK: It was, the whole service, the liturgy and the speech of course and the hymns, was a separate Finnish service.

RM: Ok, and that was the one where you noticed over the years then as the immigrants declined in attendance.

RK: Yes, absolutely. From a high of 125 on a Sunday to a handful, yeah, normal attrition by death

RM: Now do you, and that's pretty much what has happened to the program Sumi Kutsu that Carl Pelempa has, I noticed that when you watch it at one, I guess at one time it was heavily in the Finnish language and today it's almost bilingual he,

RK: It's almost more English than Finnish

RM: And now even more English and that's in the last what, that's been around for about 50 years now

RK: Yeah, it is in fact the 50th year this year

RM: This year, yeah

RK: Carl has served at the FCM that, and it used to be that when there were more Finnish immigrant pastors and I served on, and I preached on his program for 27 years.

RM: Oh

RK: The last ten minutes, first the last 15 minutes, then eventually the last ten minutes for a sermonette and I began that in 1969 and for 27 years that was an extra responsibility, because there were still enough Finnish immigrants in the listening audience to support by their free gifts to that devotional part of the service, to support and sustain it, but the, we had to end it because there wasn't enough revenue coming in to support the program but the, and all of that was pro bono,

RM: So you were there every Wednesday morning when he did his filming,

RK: Well we, it was on a rotation basis, but eventually there were only two of us remaining so it was every other month that we preached on that program

RM: Oh, so you only did it once a month, not -

RK: Once a month, yes,

RM: Oh, not every week

RK: No, not every week yes, but in ministry you do a lot of things pro bono, yes

RM: I've always, I'm always sort of amazed at clergy, especially catholic clergy they talk about retiring, and I don't know for me I look at a clergy man and it's kind of, maybe unfortunately, but sort of a life's work there isn't -

RK: It's a life commitment

RM: Now you might not want to be the pastor and in charge but I could see still doing the service and preaching and so on

RK: Oh yes like I have said in retirement, I've been retired now for 20 years, I have probably been busier some of these years than when I was pastor of Emanuel Negaunee where I had an assistant who shared my work with me so I always divided my preaching with my associate pastor so that I would not be up for preaching every Sunday, but every other Sunday but in retirement, sometimes I end up preaching three Sundays out of a month so I'm busier in retirement than I was in full time ministry

RM: Now, kind of curious, when you when you're working on a sermon, you work on that from scratch?

RK: Yes, oh yes and that's the hardest part of ministry is preparing and trying to come up with a message for every Sunday that you preach and to me the function of preaching is to both inspire the hearer as well as teach the hearer and someone has said that for every minute you speak you should have at least an hour of preparation so if you preach a 20 minute sermon, you should have 20 hours of preparation so you aren't just flying by the seat of your pants but you're trying to do serious _____ work in the preparation of your sermon so that you're actually conveying the word of god to the people instead of just storytelling and I critique a lot of preaching, some of modern preaching as being a story telling that is neither here nor there, but if you get challenged, by the word of god, if the word of god doesn't challenge the preacher himself, it's not likely to challenge anybody that's listening so it has to kind of pass through your sieve before it gets out to others so it can pass through their sieves. The, so that's a continual challenge, and I don't know any preacher who would brag and say that he is a great preacher because, before the divine word we are all servants and some better than others but none of who can say that we have been we're at the top of the pack or things of that kind

RM: I think one of the things, I just want to add this, one of the things that people I feel don't understand is that a clergy man I mean that's part of his ministry but preaching isn't just off the cuff but it's a, the sermon is a well-developed, I mean it's an activity that you have to go through to develop a well-organized sermon that is, as you say, teaches and inspires and lets the congregate leave with something to carry with them

RK: absolutely so that the and after all in preaching we don't only address the intellect but we also address the conscience and maybe even more importantly the conscience so that the, our word resonates as the word of truth, not of just an opinion or things of that kind, although I suppose if you backed someone in a corner, there's enough opinion in every sermon that

RM: Now, talk about sermons, have you, does a pastor like yourself, do you keep, do you have copies of previous sermons?

RK: Oh, I've got a drawer full of them

RM: So you have preserved them

RK: They are preserved, but for what purpose? Not to be reused, because I never, I always start with the scriptural texts and go through the laborious work of exegesis and interpreting and gathering as much of you can of the context in which the word was originally spoken which means that clergy need to have theological training to do this, that's one of the things about apostolics that don't believe in trained clergy, they have the notion that you open your mouth and god will fill your mouth, but sometimes it's nonsense I mean, if you follow that line of reasoning, but no, we, you have to struggle for the living word of god, and that's a lifetime struggle, you never get over that and it would be nice if you could just push a button and say give me that sermon from 1957 and you look at it and you're ready to puke, because it's so bad

RM: And I guess as a person who talks to people as a teacher that's a whole different, you know, I'm going to go teach tonight the history of the upper peninsula and that is completely different that being a pastor and doing a sermon I mean you have to be very, very focused on your preparation and all. Now, I just asked about the old sermons because I had read something in the past and it was a problem that sermons aren't kept, and I asked some catholic priests do you keep your sermons and they kind of looked at me funny, and said no, and what happened was

there some, a collection of sermons from the colonial period that had been preserved and then scholars went and were surprised to find them and then could look at the way the colonial clergy men was approaching scripture and the congregation and so on, but I guess in most cases the sermons aren't preserved, I mean number one, they're not I don't think they're written out verbatim, maybe an outline, but are they written verbatim and then would you have a copy well you do, but does a clergyman have a copy and then does he keep the copy you know for historical purposes

RK: Yeah, well the what is that story I'm trying to remember was it the German pastor who was going to depend on god filling his mouth and so he got into the pulpit and he says, yes god did speak to me and says in German it was clear that he said doxist foul, you have been lazy, god spoke and he said, you have been lazy you didn't prepare doxist foul

RM: You could have probably used that as a take-off to the congregation about laziness and how to avoid it and so on

RK: Yes, now the Laestadians claim that that's what happens in those who are against trained clergy, but what I find so difficult is that he seems to be filling their mouth with the same message every time I mean no matter what the text, the preaching is the same you know

RM: Oh, so they don't tie the preaching into the text, into the scriptural text -

RK: Well they sometimes do but their emphasis is to get saved and the only way you can get saved is by having your sins forgiven but only by appropriate people who can forgive sins, like people who belong to the true apostolic church, so it isn't enough that just anybody absolve you of your sins but you have to be absolved by one who belongs to the true church. So it's very a kin to Roman Catholicism who it believes that there is no salvation outside of the church that only the church can absolve and forgive sins. Similarly some of these apostolics believe, like for example, I don't know if you remember Paul Heidemen, the copper country, or Weino Carbonen, Weino Carbonen belonged to the Michalson branch of the apostolic church, Heideman belonged to the Heideman branch, well one of their, the person that died, one of them belonged to the Heideman church and the other spouse belonged to the Michalson so they had a funeral in the Michalson branch of the church in Laurium, in reverend Carbonen's church, it was a cold sub-zero temperature they, and Heideman came to the funeral in the apostolic Michalson church and Reverend Carbonen assisted him in taking off his big heavy winter mackinaw, as a courtesy, Reverend Carbonen told me the story, I remember this story, two weeks after the funeral, Heideman called Reverend Carbonen and said, I hope that you didn't misunderstand, that when you removed my winter mackinaw off of me, that we were approving of your religion. And so, he was saying that unless you repent into our church, you were still in darkness and lost and so can you imagine that? By a simple thing like taking off somebody's, you might be giving the wrong message.

RM: And he had thought about it and two weeks later he's bringing it up as an issue.

RK: Oh yes

RM: So this was obviously bothering him

RK: Oh yes, Reverend Carbonen was also a school teacher and taught school in the Saol school house

where I went and he was teaching the first grade, and I remember my first slapping on the knuckles with the ruler from Reverend Carbonen after I had played with the ink well that was in the desk in the old schools and messed the whole desk with ink, then I got the ruler on my fingers, that's one of the rebukes that I especially remember

RM: You know, you've been talking about this Salo location how do you spell that?

RK: S-A-L-O

RM: Just S-a-l-o, ok, now does all, in Finn, do all of the As have umlauts?

RK: No it depends on what the word is

RM: So this wouldn't, Salo would just have straight As

RK: No, it would not have umlauts

RM: But for instance your name? No, yes, no

RK: No

RM: So the A and I wouldn't have an umlaut when the two come together

RK: No, that's true, where there are two vowels A's you would never see one with an umlaut and another one with out

RM: But I know now Karl Pallompaa has

RK: Both have umlauts on the A's on the end of the word.

End of tape 2 Side A

Start of tape 2 Side B

RM: And now, how do you, do it again for the tape and I can remember, how you, you pronounce what we call Pallompaa?

RK: It's Pellum-peh

RM: Pellum-peh

RK: Yeah, accent on the first syllable Pellumpeh

RM: Are there, we've gone for about two hours here, probably come to the end, are there any, anything I didn't mention or something you would like to add to the interview?

RK: Well my experience in the Finnish ethnic community is that by and large, the Finns are a hardworking people, they're hard working people and basically they are, they live by a high sense of integrity, on the negative side, they also tend to be decisive and it seems as though the

Finns can never be all one group they have to keep splintering and dividing and that's a part of their history, very sad part of their history

RM: So they don't, no go ahead -

RK: Yes. But I think they have earned the respect of their fellow citizens as being honest and hardworking, those are some virtues that are lacking in our society but are very important for progress and we certainly need hard working and intelligent people and of course Finland rates rather high in terms of their educational system, being among the leaders of the world in some of the best equipped education in the world.

RM: Okay, well very good, thank you for your time and your wonderful comments.

End of Tape 2 Side B