

Interview with Anna Neva
Conducted by Marian
Juntunen
In April 1985

Interview of Anna (Herrala) Neva

April 22, 1985

by her sister Marian Juntunen

Marian Juntunen: First, let's talk about what you remember about our grandparents, or the older times I wouldn't remember. When did Grandpa and Grandma Koski come to America and what can you tell about that?

Anna Neva: I don't know for sure, I believe they came to Michigan in 1880.

MJ: Did Grandpa and Grandma come together?

AN: No, Grandpa came first in 1880, then Grandma came in 1884, four years later.

MJ: Did they come by boat, most likely since they didn't travel by plane then.

AN: Yes, by boat. I think they came to Redridge. Of course Grandpa worked there, in Michigan, in the mines. And there was a mill there too. Grandma came four years later. She had four children with her: Andrew, Matt, Anna, and Mary.

MJ: They were the oldest ones?

AN: They were the oldest ones, born in Finland.

MJ: I suppose Grandpa had to earn money first in order to send money back to her to come? Do you have any idea what prompted them to come to America in the first place? Was it because times were so hard in Finland?

AN: Seek a better living I guess. That's what a lot of them were doing, coming over to Michigan, some also to the Iron Range, but they settled in Michigan.

MJ: Yes, I remember so many talking about it that the times were hard. Was that during the famine in Finland, even at that time?

AN: Well, I don't know, but it was hard to make a living.

MJ: Yes, so many came at that time. Do you know if Grandpa and Grandma Koski were Christians when they came?

AN: That I'm not sure about. I really don't know. Somewhere along the line, when they were in Michigan I guess, and I think it was about that time when Heideman started coming, soon after that, maybe that's where they learned of Christianity. I don't know how much they knew about it in Finland.

MJ: Then the rest of the family was born in Michigan, which included whom?

AN: Amelia, Lydia, Hilda, Mimmi, and Esther.

MJ: And Lydia was our mother. Do you know at all they lived in Redridge? Did you ever get to see the place where they lived, the house?

AN: No. They had some kind of house, a big house, they ran a boarding house at that time. See that's where our father came first too, most of them had a place to come to, boarding houses. So it must have been a bigger house to have quite a few stay there after working in the mines. I don't know how long they ran it then because I think they moved to Rudyard, Michigan, then too.

MJ: The grandparents?

AN: Yes, the grandparents. I don't know how it came about that Uncle Matt was living in Rudyard, most likely he was on a farm and maybe that's where the grandparents went. That's where they came to.

MJ: Uncle Matt was our grandparents' son?

AN: Yes, Matt Koski.

MJ: And when he grew up he moved to Rudyard?

AN: Yes, he must have when he married, but I don't know if he married there or in Redridge, but that's where they were on the farm cause they had cattle and from there Uncle Matt came to ND to homestead.

MJ: Now we'll switch and talk about our Dad, Otto Herrala, and his years and then we'll get to this point where Dad and Mother got together. Dad came to America when?

AN: At the turn of the century, late 1880's.

MJ: Wasn't he about 21 years old when he came? And he came to this boarding house?

AN: Yes, he must have come, probably knew about it. The area wasn't such a big place.

MJ: That must be where he met Mother.

AN: Yes, must have been.

MJ: Dad worked in the mines, didn't he?

AN: No, he worked in the mill. There was a mill in that town. The Frieda Mill they used to call it. He was a fireman there. I don't know what they really did there, "Kupari mylly." Must have been something to do with the mines.

MJ: Did Dad himself ever work in the mines?

AN: Not that I know of, he worked at the mill. It was awfully hot. He used to get those terrible headaches, remember, in North Dakota? He used to get those terrible headaches and I heard him say that he was working on such a hot day and that's what caused it.

MJ: So then Dad met Mother and they got married over there, and I suppose he kept on working in the mill at that time.

AN: Yah, he was working there. Then they had four of us children: Anna, Henry, Heino, and Melma, all born in Redridge, Michigan. They lived in a company house, the mining company had company houses for them to live in. I don't know if they bought them or not but I think they might have been rented, reasonable rate.

MJ: So they must have been there 5 or 6 years after they were married before they moved to North Dakota.

AN: It was 1908 when they moved to North Dakota. Melma was 4 months old.

MJ: 4 month old. How did they come, do you remember?

AN: They came by train.

MJ: Did they all come together?

AN: Yes, we all came together. And we came to Uncle Matt Koski's. He was on the farm there, settled in, had been there for many years already, and Grandpa and Grandma were living there already with them too.

MJ: Oh at that time already when you came, Grandpa and Grandma were already there with them too?

AN: Yah.

MJ: Do you remember anything about your trip coming?

AN: Faintly, not much but I kind of remember a little of the train ride.

MJ: Must have been a long ride.

AN: Yes, I suppose I don't know how long it took in those days. A couple days or more. But that I remember when we left from Houghton, I don't know how we got there, must have been horse and buggy, but then we had a ways to go to the depot, and I wouldn't go in that buggy, I was afraid of it. So I had to walk with Dad so it couldn't have been too long a ways to go. I wouldn't go in that huggy.

MJ: You were just afraid of the buggy, you remember that much about it anyway. Do you know, did they have furniture that they took along, or ?

AN: I don't know, I don't think they did. I don't think they brought any of that.

MJ: They just went themselves.

AN: Yah, then we stayed at Uncle Matt Koski's. We didn't stay there too long, cause he probably had known of a place already where Dad could go.

MJ: Did you come to Perth?

AN: We came to Perth, North Dakota on the train and we stayed there. It was August. We didn't stay there too awfully long. But it was in the fall anyhow when they moved to the Adams place.

MJ: Do you remember anything about that, when you moved there or about the place?

AN: No, not much.

MJ: Now where was this Adams' place?

AN: That was east of Perth.

MJ: Straight east from Perth?

AN: Straight east, what is that road that goes there, I don't remember. And who lives there. Bensons used to live there.

MJ: Yes, well that would have been a little north and east of Perth then.

AN: Well maybe it was, I think it was about 3 miles or so from Perth.

MJ: Where was Matt Koski living at that time? When you went to his place first, where was his farm located?

AN: It was there, across from our farm, the Taylor place, where we grew up.

MJ: Presently, it's Walfred Halone's place, used to be the Adams' place.

AN: That's where we came. They had their own family there, also Grandpa and Grandma too, lot of people around.

MJ: So probably Matt Koski or somebody had found this place where Dad and Mother and the family could live.

AN: Yes, he must have.

MJ: Did Dad start farming there?

AN: Yes, he started farming then cause I remember around the country, the farmers all around there gave chickens, couple chickens to the folks, and somebody gave a calf. Or must have been a cow.

MJ: Wasn't that something? Just to help them get started.

AN: To help them get started. I don't know of other cattle but I suppose they had something to get their milk.

MJ: What did they use for transportation? Did Dad get horses right away?

AN: Well he must have. Had to have horses to get around, to get to town.

MJ: Yes, to get supplies. Course I guess in those days they didn't need much supplies but they still they had to get there sometime.

AN: Well I suppose he had to have horses cause he started farming there, I don't know what he did in the fall but . . .

MJ: Hard to know if he started fall work right away.

AN: So how he got that, but as long as he was on the farm he must have had to get something to start farming with.

MJ: It would be interesting to know what he got and how he acquired it? Did he have enough money to begin with to buy it?

AN: Yes, he had money when he came from Michigan. He had saved money, wages weren't big there, was it a dollar and a half a day or something, 10 hour days, but I guess that's what prompted him to make a move and I guess he kept in touch with Uncle Matt and them, and I imagine that's why he moved. Must have thought for an casier way of living, I don't know how much easier it was.

MJ: I'm sure it was a lot of hard work and they had lots of hardships there too but I guess we just never really thought to ask Dad at the time, just how did it come about, how did you get your machinery and what did you get and where did you get them.

AN: Yes.

MJ: Now we'll switch here to Uncle Matt Koski, who was Mother's brother. He was the only brother, the only son the grandparents had then, although you mentioned that Andrew [another son] had come with them from Finland, but what happened to him?

AN: He was killed in the woods. He was 14 years old and a tree fell on him. Must have worked in the woods. I think they might have been in Rudyard then at that time.

MJ: I wonder where his grave would be?

AN: I do not know. I wouldn't know.

MJ: It just dawned on me now, thinking of it.

AN: One could inquire in Rudyard if they would know anything.

MJ: We'd have to have a little idea of what year it was.

AN: Or would it be in Redridge but I don't know if they would have been there anymore at that time.

MJ: It just dawned on me now, where is his grave.

AN: He's buried there somewhere in Michigan, either Redridge or Rudyard.

MJ: Anyway, Uncle Matt had married in Michigan too, and did they have the family already there which included who.

AN: Four children: Hilja, Helmi, John, and Fanny.

MJ: Were they all born over there?

AN: They were all born in Rudyard.

MJ: OK, then they had come to the Perth, ND area also several years before our folks did.

AN: Yes, well Uncle Matt homesteaded a farm east of Perth too, the Matt Saari's place, that used to be his first homestead. Yes, I don't know how long he was there, not very long, but he went back to Rudyard. I don't remember how long he stayed, but he came back again and he went to this other place, another farm, the Walfred Halone farm. He must have because I don't know what happened to that other farm if he ever went back there.

MJ: They were living then on that farm, but how did it come about that he was running a community store or grocery store in Perth? Was he doing that at the same time he was farming?

AN: Well, he moved into town, yes, and he rented the farm. My folks moved on the farm. They moved on his farm and he went to live in Perth.

MJ: How long was that then?

AN: That was in 1920s, I guess.

MJ: Had the folks lived on this Adams' place all that time?

AN: Well, they lived on that place and brother Alfred was born on Adams' place. He was the only one. Then he moved on what is the home place now, the Taylor place. Then from there he moved on to the Wilson place.

MJ: And the Wilson place was about one-half mile from the Finnish Apostolic Cemetery.

AN: But they weren't there very long cause from there they moved on to Uncle Matt's farm when he moved into town.

MJ: In the meantime Uncle Matt had been farming but . . .

AN: He farmed, and then he moved to town.

MJ: What were the circumstances, why he quit farming, do you know?

AN: I don't know, but he moved into town and they bought that store in Perth, with the Juntunen brothers.

MJ: He went together with them in the store business?

AN: Yes, and Alfred Peterson was running the place, he was the manager.

MJ: Oh, Alfred Peterson, who is our cousin. He is Anna Koski's son. And Uncle Matt, from what I understand and have heard, he was really a good hearted man and he really helped a lot of the farmers out there and a lot of the people that moved there.

AN: He was well off on the farm.

MJ: He had made some money on the farm and then he got the store so he was a good hearted man and he wanted to help the farmers too and he would give them credit so they could get their groceries and not have to pay it until they got their crops in, in the fall.

AN: That's what they were doing, all of them in those days.

MJ: Yes, everyone was doing that in those days too.

AN: They trusted the people then.

MJ: And I'm sure everybody paid back what they could but I suppose there came hard times, I imagine and some couldn't pay.

AN: There were some that couldn't and he shouldered it.

MJ: That fell on his shoulders and I guess he just couldn't make a go of it anymore. But like you were talking once about our Dad that when the crop came in he went and paid his debt.

AN: It was at the Agneberg Store then, I guess it was there then at that time already.

MJ: Is that the same store that Uncle Matt had that was then Agneberg's Store?

AN: No, no that was another store. There were three general stores in Perth at that time. No, it was another store. It was Haskins' store, Uncle Matt bought it from Haskins.

MJ: What else was there in Perth at that time? It was kind of a booming little town, wasn't it?

AN: Oh yes, it was a lively town. There were two banks, a livery stable, a couple cafes, a post office, shoe shop, Saukkolas used to have that shoe shop, and there quite a few Finnish people moved into town, living in Perth. Pete Juntunen, Jake Juntunen, Uncle Matt, and others too.

MJ: Then you said three general stores but they had clothing and other things too.

AN: Yes, they had everything there.

MJ: Almost like the shopping mall of today.

AN: There was a creamery where farmers brought cream, a little ways from the Haskins store, a service station . . .

MJ: Like Guy Thayer used to run. Of course they had the school there.

AN: They had a high school there. There were lots of people living there.

MJ: I myself don't remember the banks but I remember seeing the bank buildings. I don't remember when the banks were in operation cause I was too young.

AN: Rother and Gergin – they ran both banks.

MJ: What ever happened to those banks? Did they go broke too?

AN: Closed the doors!

MJ: Did people lose money in those banks? Do you remember?

AN: I know Dad lost some in that Rother's bank. He did all his business there. Was it in the fall or when, anyhow he had some saved, I suppose not an awful lot, but those days a few hundred dollars was a lot of money. He lost that. I don't remember the sum but he lost some when they closed the doors. That was it.

MJ: Why did they close the doors, do you remember? Was it that times were so hard?

AN: Times got bad. That must have been somewhere in the 1920s and early 30s when the market crashed. It was about that time, I guess.

MJ: Course there were banks that went broke all over, you know.

AN: Yes, I suppose they had given so much out and nothing coming in. Grain prices fell, and the price . . . So there you were.

MJ: Then the folks anyway were on this Taylor place, then came to Uncle Matt's farm. In the meantime what happened to Uncle Matt?

AN: Well he lived in Perth awhile, but then he moved to Cokato.

MJ: If I remember right, I think he only lived in Cokato about three years, till he passed away.

AN: Yes, it wasn't very long.

MJ: How long was he a speaker, do you remember?

AN: Well, I went to his confirmation so it must have been some time before that. It might have been 1917 or 1918, I would have been how old? I would have been about 14 years old to confirmation. Maybe 1916 or 1917, somewhere in there.

MJ: So he was a speaker before that. Did he make a few trips to Canada also, preaching trips?

AN: I don't remember if he did but he must have gone there, like to New Finland and I suppose he went to Dunblane too cause two of them, Aunt Mimmie and Esther, were living there at that time. I'm sure he made trips there.

MJ: Do you remember anything about his speaking days in the Perth area, when that church was established?

AN: Yes, well, Simonson gave the land, I don't know when it would have been, but then they went on to Canada and it was must been about that time when he must have started speaking, then Kakela started too. About that time anyhow cause I went to his confirmation school, and I don't know if they had confirmation classes before that.

MJ: Do you remember, did they used to have church every Sunday?

AN: Yes, every Sunday, I don't know sometimes in the morning maybe most of the time in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon too.

MJ: Then Matt moved to Cokato. What did he die of?

AN: I really don't know, but he was sick already when he moved there. I really don't know.

MJ: They had the four children as you said, so they were our cousins: John, Helmi, Hilja and Fanny.

MJ: And Hilja married Henry Mickelson and they were neighbors of us, just one mile north of our place, and we were always good friends with them.

AN: Helmi lived on the Halone place, by Mrs. Saima Halone's.

MJ: Then they moved to Hansboro area?

MJ: And that's where her husband died, who was Ed Martin.

AN: Yes. He died of TB. Then she had the two children, Arnold and Effie, then she moved to Cokato where her parents lived.

MJ: Then eventually she remarried, to George Wuotila, and they lived in the Cokato area but since then he has died and she makes her home now more or less in Florida for the winter.

AN: She is 84 now, will be 85 now this fall.

MJ: She's the only one remaining of that family anymore.

MJ: Going back to our Grandpa Koski, they were still living on that farm, now called the Walfred Halone place, would you say something about his (Grandpa's) death. How old was he at the time, do you remember?

AN: I don't remember but he must have been in his 60s. I think this happened in 1915, in the fall, threshing time. What happened was, sister Melma used to stay at Koski's a lot and Grandpa went to get the cows, they had a big pasture, they went to get the cows from the pasture. They walked, Fanny and sister Melma were along. They were way out there in the pasture bringing the cows home. Grandpa told the girls, you take the cows home there, for milking, and I'll get the bull. And he got left behind. When Grandpa didn't come and the girls had looked back, it must have been by a fence somewhere, they saw the bull was after Grandpa. The girls ran up to the house and must have said the bull is getting after Grandpa, and somebody ran up to the threshing machine, a little ways out there, to go tell the men to come there and help him. They came and got Grandpa out of there but his chest was crushed already. They brought him there in the house at Uncle Matt's.

MJ: Do you know if he died right away?

AN: No, I don't think he died right away but he didn't live too long after. Yes, I guess they had the doctor come but he was so badly crushed that he didn't make it.

MJ: My goodness. Must have been a horrifying experience for them all.

AN: Yes, hard for Grandma too, I always remember that she took it hard.

MJ: Wasn't he quite trusting of this bull?

AN: Yes, he wouldn't let them tie him up. They had mentioned many times that he should be tied up cause you never know. But he never would listen to that. That was his pet, he had raised him from a calf, one of those Ayrshire breeds, so that's what happened.

MJ: The bull just got mad and . . . goodness sakes. Do you remember, did they kill the bull?

AN: Well, the men came from the field with pitchforks and got after the bull. I guess they butchered him. I don't know if they could eat that meat, but . . . it was something about it. Whatever happened I don't know.

MJ: That's something we always remember in our family that our Grandpa was killed by a bull. Did Grandma continue to live there with Uncle Matt?

AN: Yah, she lived there. Oh, I don't know, she got paralyzed. But I don't know if she was paralyzed before that or thereabouts. She had a stroke. I don't know which side it was cause she couldn't talk. She lived there awhile and then Aunt Anna took her in and took care of her. She lived there awhile too.

MJ: Where was Aunt Anna living at that time then?

AN: She lived by Perth. They lived on a farm by Perth.

MJ: She was married to a Peterson.

AN: Henry Peterson.

MJ: So she took Grandma in and took care of her.

AN: I guess she had her until she died then, not too awfully long.

MJ: If I remember the dates right, about three years between the time Grandpa died until she died. So both our Grandpa and Grandma are buried then in the Finnish cemetery there.

MJ: What can you tell about your young days, Anna? You mentioned about always going to town with the horse and buggy. Tell me something about those days.

AN: Well, our parents had a horse and buggy, mother used to go to town like that to get the groceries. She'd go once a week to town, take the cream to town. She'd leave early in the morning and she'd be back by noon. She'd go to Perth. That was about 5 or 6 miles.

MJ: 7 miles I think.

AN: Yah, 7, and she used to go around that other road, what did they call that road, she took that road by where the Petersons lived on that Miller place. She used to stop there to rest.

MJ: Where was the Miller place?

AN: Well, do you know where Heartso's was? Not too far from there. On that road past Martin Johnson's.

MJ: Around Krogstads, Martins . . .

AN: Martin Johnson's, it was a little farther up, maybe a mile.

MJ: Around the Gronna elevator.

AN: Yah, but they didn't live there, they lived on that road that went straight to Perth and then along the railroad track.

MJ: Did the kids get to go to town with Mother?

AN: Not very often. I don't remember that. We had to stay home and take care of the family. Men were out in the field and we had to start dinner.

MJ: Did she take any of the kids with her when she went?

AN: Not very often. No. She'd do her errands and come back home.

MJ: Those were the good old days. Can you see the women of today going out with a horse and buggy going shopping?

AN: She had to take the cream to town, buy the groceries, get the mail and I suppose that was it. I don't know if the mail was even delivered yet in those days, I think later on delivery service came on the route.

MJ: Who were some of the other families who came there around the same time, names some of the other families who moved into that area? I imagine they more or less all came from Michigan, and they'd come from Finland in the first place. You talked about Saukkola, he used to have a shoe shop. Didn't he also run a sauna in Perth?

AN: I don't know if he had sauna or not but he did have a shoe shop.

MJ: Well he used to have a sauna at one time, maybe it was just for his own purpose because the sauna that was on that farm was a Saukkola sauna, and they had bought that sauna.

AN: Yes, I guess he must have had one.

MJ: There were Saukkola's and who were some of the other people there then?

AN: Jake Juntunen's, Pete Juntunen's and Koski's.

MJ: And Tapanilla's and there were a lot of these people there, or did they come later?

AN: Tapanilla's didn't live in Perth that I know of, but he might have run the sauna for people.

MJ: Or else maybe it was his own sauna.

AN: Yes, maybe for his own use. That's where Dad bought that sauna then.

MJ: Yes, because it had been this "sisälle lämpeä" (or warming inside) [i.e. savu sauna] because I remember it was always black, so black inside, but eventually then we painted it, fixed a different kind of stove and it was painted white then. Oh, wasn't there those Lchtinen's who moved at the time?

AN: Yah, that was around . . .

MJ: Was that around the same time that the folks came?

AN: From Michigan? Oh no, no, they didn't come until after the war years, around that time, around 1918 or so.

MJ: Who were some of the other people that moved about that time, some of the names you mentioned?

AN: Those from Michigan, there were Hill's, Pietela's, Snelling's Kippola's, and Savaloja's. There were five families that came.

MJ: Whatever happened to them?

AN: Well, they were on farms but that didn't appeal to them so they went back to Michigan. They weren't here too long.

MJ: Is it Kippola's? or Kilpela's?

AN: Kippola's.

MJ: There's an older couple in Phoenix named Kippola. I wonder if they would be any relation to the Kippolas who came.

AN: I don't think these people had any children because Paul Anderson used to work there. He used to stay there for years and years when he was a young fellow.

MJ: The Phoenix Kippolas came from New York.

AN: Must be different ones cause I don't think these Kippolas had any children.

MJ: It must have been later, in about what years, 1920's and 1925, when some of the other people came. Like Valikainen's and Mattson's. When have them come? Sormula's? Tuomala's?

AN: That I really don't know. Must have been early 1920's.

MJ: Tapanilla's?

AN: Oh, Tapanilla's I think they were here longer than we were. I think that was their homestead place. Yes, and Kaapo Hemminki, you know across from Tapanilla's. That was his homestead place. Anyhow they lived there.

MJ: So many of them came and homesteaded there, but our Dad didn't?

AN: No, our Dad didn't.

MJ: But Matt Koski did, you said.

AN: Yes, and the Hemmings. They moved on the farm on the hill, Sormala's used to live there but they moved somewhere else and then I guess later years they bought that farm.

MJ: Then there were Koppinen's and Raisanen's. Who were some of the others, let's try recall. Who else. I'm thinking about the church people, the Christians families who where there at the time.

AN: Have you asked Sylvia, does she know?

MJ: No, I haven't now.

AN: Must have been in the 20s sometime, like Valaiki's, I don't know if they came from Michigan or where they came from.

MJ: Like Pahkama's. I remember Hilda saying that evidently they came from the old country and came to Michigan, but then they lived in Montana and came from Montana to Dakota. So everybody didn't just move from Michigan to Dakota.

AN: No, like Kakela's and Neva's, they lived in Montana. Yes, in Butte Montana. That's where they came to North Dakota from and filed a homestead. Wayne's dad had a homestead there too, across from where Henry Mickelson lives, that windmill is probably up there yet, I don't know if it is, maybe not.

MJ: Probably not any more.

AN: Red Lodge Montana, that's where they came from. Red Lodge. I have the family Bible.

MJ: Do you know, had they come to Michigan first too, or did they come straight?

AN: Yes, they had come to Michigan, Neva's had come to Michigan, and I guess in the meantime they had gone to Montana. From there they came to Dakota. That must have been in the late 1880's cause that's where they were all born there except Wayne and his brother Emil. Emil got sick and died. And who else? There was somebody else that came from there too. They all settled around that same little area.

MJ: Between Rolla and Perth and Rock Lake area.

AN: Well they were all on that one road — Mickelsons, Tapanillas, Hemmings, and Nevas and Kakelas. They were all on that one road, were they within a mile of each other.

MJ: Then it wasn't too far from where the church was either, when they established the church and the cemetery. It's too bad that we don't even really have any decent pictures of that church, do we?

AN: Don't we?

MJ: I think there is only what was taken at confirmation time, when they'd have the confirmation kids standing outside. I know my confirmation picture is that way too, we're standing outside by the church and all you can see is the background of the church.

AN: We don't have pictures, I don't know if people took any then.

MJ: That's just it, they didn't take much pictures in those days. Anyway . . . there wasn't anyone to go to that church anymore so they decided to buy this church in Rolla in 1951 or whenever it was, about that time. But a lot of those people who did come at that time did stick it out in farming and stayed there for

the rest of their lives, like Mattsons and Valikais and Raisanens and Pahkamas. They stuck it out, times weren't very good I'm sure.

AN: They made a go of it somehow.

MJ: You mentioned about this country school that was there by Lockett's or Currie's or where was it?

AN: There used to be one a one-room school out in the country. If I could drive on that Perth road I could point the place out.

MJ: Was it close to the Perth road?

AN: Going to Perth, maybe half or one mile off, by Curries, I don't know who farms that place now. But that's where the school had been, on that road anyhow that went to Curries. Cause Aunt Esther Simonson (then Koski) went to that school. She knew the Locketts.

MJ: Was she the only one who was school age at that time, or why was she the only one that went to that school?

AN: She must have been. Later on they got this two-room Monroe school, a township school, but I suppose the other was just a one-room school then.

MJ: Right, that's the way they used to have them then.

AN: But then they had this Monroe school, one-room school in the township and they were being hauled over there.

MJ: Do you remember what year that might have been built?

AN: That I don't know.

MJ: Did you go to Monroe school?

AN: I did, when I started school, I must have been 6 yr old. 1908 when we came so I don't know if I started school that fall or did I start school the following year. But it was there then already in 1908. Well, it must have been there, yes, before I started, shortly before that because that's where we went. The Koski's went, we went with Henry, and Hilja and Helmi and we were all going there, and the Peterson kids from Annie down, that were school age.

MJ: I didn't realize that that school would have been that old.

AN: It had to be cause that's where I started school. I don't know if they sent you to school at 6 years old.

MJ: Some went at 5 and some at 6.

AN: No, I wasn't 5, I was about . . . what would I have been, would I have turned 5 that summer when we moved, or 6, in 1908 from Michigan. We can figure it out. We had a two-room school there in Monroe school, very nice school.

MJ: I remember that too because that's where I went my 8 years.

AN: My first teacher was Mrs. Serumguard. I didn't know much English when I started school, but the teacher gave me a book and I sat with John Koski. We had double seats. She gave us both a book, and I guess somewhere along the way we did learn to read.

MJ: I'm sure it must not have been easy even for the teacher. I suppose there were a lot of other kids that didn't know any English.

AN: Well first graders. I suppose they couldn't read either unless they were taught.

MJ: Tell about when Mother was expecting sister Senia and when she was born.

AN: It was the twins that were born in 1918 during the flu year [Senia was a twin]. Mother was sick most of the time and everybody in the family was sickly, beds all over the floor and every place. I was the only one that really wasn't sick so I had to stay home all that fall, I didn't go to school before first of the year cause Mother wasn't feeling good. I was in the 7th grade then.

MJ: Then she had those babies on December 27 of what year?

AN: 1918 when Senia was born and a stillborn twin, a boy.

MJ: You went to school the rest of the term then?

AN: I went the rest of the term, but the teacher, Lida B. Turcotte, she helped me to pass two subjects in the 7th grade, spelling and civics it was then. I guess it's called something different now.

MJ: We don't even know the subjects they teach now. You finished your eight grades there at Monroe school?

AN: Well, in the meantime we had moved to Uncle Matt's place and that's where I went to school for the eighth grade.

MJ: That's which is now the Walfred Halone place.

AN: Yes, I had gone to Monroe school all those other years except that one year.

MJ: Where did you go that one year then?

AN: There in that Lakeview township, that little country school by Bergrs.

MJ: Oh, so that's when you lived on the Wilson place.

AN: Yes, so we couldn't have lived there very long, maybe just that one year.

MJ: Oh I see. That was in a different township so you ended up going to a different school. Monroe school was quite a nice school in those years, wasn't it?

AN: It was a consolidated school. They had the kids being hauled to school so they didn't have to walk.

MJ: It was considered one of the nicest schools in the area, if I remember right.

I remember my school years too because for the last years I was the only one from that end of the township that would come to school so then Dad would always get the school hack driving [job] it was called. But I was the only one who would come from there anymore. Sometimes we used to stop and pick up this Heartso girl who stayed with her grandparents on the Currie place. The Curries were here grandparents, right?

AN: Yes. She was Donna Currie, then Heartso. She was the only child they had.

MJ: Then she had a daughter, Ruth, which I don't know why she stayed with the grandparents a lot but she went to school so we'd pick her up then. For all those years then I was the only one on the school route from that corner anymore. Well, when you went to school, did they drive them with the horses then or what? Did you drive yourself?

AN: Yes, we went with horses those first years. No, Martin Johnson drove the school hack and he'd come early in the morning there, about 7:00 o'clock. Henry and I were the only ones going to school then. He had a long route, he went around Gronna, picked up Kreb's I think it was, then they went to another place, named Lamb on the Heartso line, then picked up the Heartso kids, then he'd come back home and pick up his own kids, Pauline and Edna. Then to school. We were in that hack all that time. 9:00 o'clock school started. Then two hours again coming home. We didn't get home before 6:00 o'clock, school let out at 4:00.

MJ: In those days they had school from 9:00 to 4:00. Not 3:15 like they do these days.

AN: Yes, 9:00 to 4:00. It was a long day. But it was warm in the hack, they had a little stove to keep it warm and Henry and I would lay on the benches and sleep before we'd get to each place. Then we'd lay down again when the others left.

MJ: That was a long ride with horses.

AN: It was a long ride.

MJ: Martin Johnson drove the school hack (nowadays called school route), drove it for many many years, didn't he?

AN: Yes, but then he changed it, well . . . how did he do it now. Somebody took the other route and then he had just the horse and buggy come pick us up from the farm. So we went as far as Martin Johnson's and we waited there until he came with the others.

MJ: Tape's running out so time to end. Thank you for the interview.

Added info:

Anna Herrala Neva and Marian Herrala Juntunen are sisters, the oldest and youngest children of Otto and Lydia Koski Herrala. They grew up on a farm near Perth, North Dakota.

** Anna was born July 28, 1903, and died November 27, 1997. She was married to Wayne Neva, and they lived most of their married life in Minneapolis, MN.*

** Marian was born January 27, 1924. She married Reno Juntunen and they lived and farmed near Hansboro, ND before retiring in 1982 in Menahga, MN.*