

LORIANN LYONS

LOCATION

NOVEMBER 30, 2004

SUBJECT: Trenary Home Bakery

START OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER (I): Loriann, would you please say your name and state your birthdate to get started?

LORIANN LYONS (LL): My name is Loriann Marie Lyons and my maiden name is Hallinen and I was born July 27th, 1962.

I: Alright. I understand that you grew up in a small town. Could you tell me the name of that town and a little bit about your childhood?

LL: I grew up in Trenary, which is halfway between Marquette and Escanaba.

I: How big of a town is Trenary?

LL: Well, I graduated with thirteen people, which is a big class.

I: Thirteen people? Wow.

LL: Yep, big class.

I: Okay.

LL: I think the years before that were kind of the baby boomers, so that was probably an average size class. But that was much bigger than that at one point.

I: So, really, we're talking about a town of several hundred people?

LL: Right.

I: Likely.

LL: Probably. I know that school days when they did school counts, whether you were sick or not you had to attend because they had to get the one-hundred and fifty-five number in order to not lose state funding. You could have the flu and you had to be there. You could be in the hospital. [Laughing]

I: Was there a truant officer there or was it a parent?

LL: Well, no but, in perspective of a small town, everybody was a truant officer. You behaved in a certain way in a small town, you behaved in a certain way for the benefit of everybody. If you're screwing up, it's not just your parents that say something, it's anybody on the street. You know, everybody keeps everybody in line. So, and that's a good thing about a small town but then again it's a bad thing because by the time you got to the co-op in the afternoon everybody in town knew what you had done, where'd you'd been, who you'd been with. [Laughing] What you ate for breakfast.

I: My, my. The co-op, what's the co-op?

LL: The co-op is the community grocery store. It's, you know, it's different from, it's probably actually the same, in theory and maybe politically, as the co-op in Marquette, the food co-op. It's not organic. The co-op then was set up for farmers. The farmers would have a place to buy equipment. When I was growing up you could go buy equipment for your tractor. You could buy material to make things. You could buy your groceries. You could buy parts for your house. You could do banking there. That would be your banking, there. We could do some of our banking there, in Trenary.

I: Wow. That's significant. That speaks to a good and tight community. So, pretty much everyone was involved in the co-op or was a member?

LL: Sure. You bought a share which was [inaudible] and then if you, like, Joe and I, we,

I: Joe is your husband?

LL: Yeah. Because we're members of the co-op credit union we are members of the co-op. Because we own a share of the credit union we can buy from the co-op.

I: How far back does the co-op date, do you know?

LL: I don't know about that one. But my father, that's what my father did during the war was he set up co-ops. And he set up co-ops throughout Wisconsin and the U.P.

I: During the Second World War?

LL: Yep. Yes, he wasn't allowed to, he got to Milwaukee and they found out that he had a hernia and they sent him back.

I: Oh, no kidding, wow.

LL: But then that was fine because he was setting up co-ops and that was important.

I: Yeah, fine for a variety of reasons. So, you could buy farm equipment and stuff, the bulk of the residents of Trenary were farmers, would you say, or no?

LL: No. Well, I have to think about that. Well, farmers and probably business owners, and people, quite a bit of the people who tried to do a bunch of their business within the community. We were considered the rich folk because we went to Escanaba to do some of our shopping. Not food shopping, but clothes shopping and, you know, that kind of thing. So people tried to stay within the community. A lot of people just, you know, they were farmers, they didn't need [inaudible] all the time. From their house. [Inaudible]

I: Sounds like a real tight community. What about community events?

BREAK IN TAPE

I: Community events, how often did the town get together? Even in town as kids?

LL: Well, I think that, you know, there are, just like with lots of social communities, there are areas [inaudible]. And my parents were members of the Lions club. So the people that were real active in the community and in the lions club, they got together often. They did a lot of community events, fundraisers and charity things for the organizations that the Lions Club supports. And even the children of Lions Club members got to wait on a lot of tables and we got to sweep a lot of floors and you know, [inaudible] whatever or we were the workers.

I: How many siblings did you have, do you have?

LL: I have four siblings and I'm the youngest. So, my brother, he's the oldest, is seventeen years older than I am so we have essentially two different families.

I: I've heard some tales about the Fourth of July in Trenary. What happens there? What does the town do, turn out for the Fourth?

LL: Well, the Fourth starts out in the morning with everybody either in the parade or watches the parade. And as long as you're not working at a booth on the Fourth of July grounds, then you are either in the parade or..., and when, often we're in the parade. There's children that need, you know, somebody in the parade with them. On those years that I walked, you don't really walk, you walk and then there's a line of floats. Then years that I worked in the booth I walked half the parade, they go around the block twice. You go down to the grounds and get your booth set up and then you work all day. And this is the Lion's Club part and so all that money goes for things that they support. And we work until three o'clock and then, and these days we work until three and then pull down our booth, turn our money in, go to the tilt-a-whirl, eat some dinner and drink some coffee, then go watch the fireworks. But growing up when I was a kid you didn't, we didn't go to town, well maybe sometimes, because my mom would work, because after the booth shut down then they would help close down all the booths and they would start cleaning up all the grounds. And then there would be a dance, there's not a dance any more, but there used to be a dance every year. And for many years it was at Herb's bar there in downtown, I used to think that was cool, and there was a big dance hall on top of the barn.

I: Oh, really, wow. Like upstairs of the barn?

LL: Yeah, see these buildings the upstairs was all one big dance floor. It was always a lot of fun. So at the 1976 was a big, they had two Fourth of Julys.

I: Two Fourths?

LL: Because it was the, '76 was the year when the Constitution was written, and there were two dances and that was my senior year and I thought it was really cool.

I: Yeah I bet. The people who live in Trenary, are they predominantly of Finnish descent, or?

LL: Finnish and French.

I: Finnish and French.

LL: And them some Irish. But there's a Catholic church, which is pretty big, but that handles the Trenary, Traunik, [inaudible] and Chatham areas. It's our mission church. And then there's a Lutheran church which is small, and grows smaller all the time as the elderly people pass on. And then there's a Methodist church. And you know pretty much everybody I grew up with attended church, one of those churches. And then some of the kids went to the Baptist church in Clarkston.

I: What, in your opinion, when do you think the heyday for Trenary was? I mean is it a town that is growing smaller? Or is it been pretty much a steady population?

LL: Well, there's probably, like, for instance right now, I know there are two houses for sale in Trenary. Maybe three. But, well, I think, so I think the population has stayed the same, but I don't think that people, there's not the same commitment in the community that there used to be at all. I think that now it's more of, you know, a bedroom community. People work somewhere else. They don't, like the co-op isn't doing very well because people are working in Marquette or Escanaba and they do all their shopping. So, there used to be two grocery stores in Trenary, one has closed down. The co-op has only managed only because it's, you know, the finances are different. It's a private establishment. So, but when I was growing up people were a lot more active. People shopped in the community, you know, it was for, you know. Herb's bar. Everyone would go to the fish bar on Saturday night. You know, because it was always, you know, lot's people were real interested in doing things within the community. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody knew everybody's kids. But I think that my brother would probably argue that it was probably, even more like when my father was younger that it was probably at a [inaudible] because people were, people were still really excited about being a part of a community. After a lot of these guys got back from the war they were really insistent on having a strong community and there were lots of [inaudible] guys that had been in the war and had had you know, I can think of five guys that, my father's equivalent, that have serious medals of honor. Purple hearts. And so that was real important that they have a really strong community and make sure their families are safe.

I: Well, that certainly must have been your father's ideal as well if you were travelling around setting up co-ops, do you happen to know how many co-ops that he was involved in and how far ranging he got from Trenary?

LL: Well, I don't know how many he set up because some of them, because they, once he would go, like for instance the one in Duluth. They went there and they started that one for a run and then he did a lot of design on the inside, you know, shelving design and what have you, and then they used those design for other co-ops that he didn't go to in Minnesota and Wisconsin. But they lived in Duluth and around when that one first started up and then he set up all the, you know, book keeping and all that so they would know, because he worked at the one in L'Anse that he had set up so they already had an idea. But these were more modern co-ops, as opposed to the one in L'Anse which, well, there were two in L'Anse, there was the communist, the red co-op and then the democratic co-op. He set up the democratic co-op. He would be quick to point that out. So, then I think he lived in, well, actually no he lived in Superior. That would be, I think that was the farthest that they went. He was supposed to go up in Maddage [phonetically spelled] and stay at the one in, was it Thief River? All the way up. So, he was supposed to go there but he'd been up that same time for the chance to come back to Rock, which was where the family was, and he decided to take that one instead.

I: He must have had a pretty strong conviction in himself, then, about community living. This is what he did to earn a living? Is to go around and set up co-ops? And this was something that was embraced by a number of communities, then?

LL: Oh, very important.

I: Was he sought out to do it or did he go to these towns and try to sell them on the idea?

LL: No, well, he worked for, there, I've seen there was some sort of organization that, I don't know, but I know that there was some sort of organization that were pushing to set up co-ops. And I know that actually the government was really pro people setting up the co-op. Because it seems to me that there was some issue with, you know, going into the Korean War that it wasn't, they were letting people, that they were working in co-ops you know that that was something that was considered more important because it was supportive of, farmers were so important. Especially for the rural areas, they didn't have anything.

I: Curious you don't really hear anything about co-ops today. All that kind of community activity. What is your dad's name?

LL: His name? Well, when he was born his name was Henry Emil Hallinen but he changed it, just before he went to Finland he changed it to Hans just because that's what everybody had called him, not in Rock, they still called him Henry, but, you know.

I: Before he went to Finland?

LL: Yeah, well, he went to Finland in 1980. In the summer of 1980.

I: Just to visit?

LL: Just visit family. But because they had the records in Escanaba had been burned down they had to redo a birth certificate for him and he decided well, it would be convenient for him, you know everybody called him that.

I: Wow. Now, I also know, to change the subject a little bit, that your family was the family that started the Trenary home bakery. Is that, that wasn't your father, though?

LL: Well, the bakery existed, I think the gentleman's name was Syrannen, something like that. Had a bakery going at that location and had put himself out of business, essentially, spending more time at bars.

I: Spending more time at Herbs,

LL: Well, they had turned it into apartments. And then he decided to sell it and my parents came in and they were looking for a business that they wanted to buy in Trenary, my mom wanted to live somewhere close by.

I: Where had they been previously?

LL: Well, they were in the, not sure if at that point they were in Superior or Rock.

I: Okay.

LL: Because they went kind of back and forth between the two working at the different the co-ops. They made sure that they were being run right. But so then in the fifties they looked at a number of businesses. Stores. And my dad saw this as an opportunity to bring it back as a bakery and frankly, deluded himself, that it, mostly the business end would be his labor. And he, [inaudible] not a problem. [Laughing] So they turned it back into a bakery. And used some of the recipes that they, he purchased the recipes separate from the business. You can purchase recipes from bakeries, as a commodity in itself. And then they purchased the recipes for the toast and the limpuu.

I: So Trenary toast has been around prior to your family? As it's known today?

LL: Yeah, but I think my father constantly was working with it and kind of changed it to a different product that it is now, well, than what it had been. But very similar. He brought back toast from Finland, Finnish. And he brought, and he sent it to my relatives there. And he brought back toast that people there buy and it was the same thing. You know, so it's a recipe that came from over...

I: Okay, I was curious about that. I know it's not the same thing as like, you know, my dad ate that, call them pulla? Or,

LL: Pulla is just, well,

I: It's not the same thing?

LL: No, pulla is cardamom bread. So that's a, that's a coffee kind of bread. Coffee type. But it is referred to as korpuu.

I: The toast that, the Trenary toast is referred to as korpuu?

LL: Korpuu. And that you know a common thing for people in, not so much the people in Finland now, because they're on the new healthy living Finland. [Inaudible] French and the Italians.

I: Well, back then, was it the Trenary community that was, that were the customers of the bakery or was it shipped further? I know even for me you can go up the street and get Trenary toast here in Marquette today.

LL: Well, I know, in fact, a lot of people who are, like my brother's equivalent and they talked about teething on it, you know. Growing up and out and needing to ship it and I know my brother keeps a map of all the places that he ships to. And he ships all over. I mean Finland, so, you know. At the base, especially when the bases go in, the air force base in,

I: Sawyer,

LL: Sawyer, those that eat it when they were here and as they moved to different locations, so he'd send it to Guam. You know, and there's still places that he still sends to, there are people who are having it ordered. You now, people keep on ordering in Alabama, or,

I: I had no idea. That's far, though. Wow. Did you ever work at the bakery?

LL: Yes. We lived above the bakery so we worked from the time the telephone rang in the morning until, you know, the guy from downstate that would deliver the bodies to the funeral homes up here and then on the way back down he would load up the hearse with cinnamon toast up until about two or three in the morning. And so on the way back down, we'd wake up and fill up his hearse, you know.

I: These are either people who were from the area and were living down state and were coming back to be buried? Wow, three o'clock in the morning, loading a hearse with toast.

LL: Yeah, you always felt kind of bad coming here that day, that would be a little odd. But that would make all the telephones ring in the community.

I: Like having an ambulance parked outside your restaurant, right?

LL: Exactly.

I: When your brother, what's your brother's name, he runs the bakery currently?

LL: His name's Bruce. Bruce runs and his son Joe.

I: Bruce Hallinen. And things are going well there?

LL: No.

I: No?

LL: No, it seems people are less inclined to... people get bored. People want new things. Toast is probably still, they still make as much toast as they used to. But toast is probably not as popular, you know, people even have a change, people like, you know, all the things [inaudible]. So it probably doesn't do as well. Especially [inaudible]

I: And what other types of products does the bakery make there? Or is toast the main thing?

LL: Toast and limppu.

I: What's limppu?

LL: You know, rye bread.

I: Rye bread. Another Finnish recipe?

LL: Yeah. And you could buy brown rice, and any staple, Finnish style. I grew up eating that food.

[Laughing]

LL: But when I was growing up we bought the recipe from the Gwinn bakery for limppu bread that used to be a [inaudible] and we also made summer rye which was, I think the same thing except in a different shaped loaf. [Laughing] Some people were pretty particular. I think that that the consistency was different because based on the shape of the loaf, that was probably what it was. And we did shortbreads, and dinner rolls, and sub buns which was, when I was growing up, the sub buns were probably our, sub buns were probably the thing that brought my parents such financial stability.

I: Standard necessary item. So, in your opinion, with the whole fate of the Trenary Home Bakery? I mean, does Bruce's son Joe, did you say? Does he hold any visions of taking it over?

LL: Yes. He's [inaudible] but that's the idea, he'd like to take it over. If Bruce would let it go. But he works, he still works as hard as my father. I mean, if anybody could make it, so, Bruce works hard but he's you know, I don't know. I think that people that grow up with people that work really hard and are very, you know, he will financially, maybe not always work as hard, but you know, but that... But Joey

works hard. He's, it's like watching my father work so hard. So, if anybody could make it go, and his wife works in the bakery. [Inaudible] wives could do. [Laughing]

I: Well, let's not talk about that...

LL: But Joe and his wife work from home every day. They're at the bakery every day. They're the same way that when I was growing up, you know, seven days a week. The only time that my father wasn't in the bakery was when he'd go up to camp. He'd go up for camp out on Cliffs Basin and that was intentional, so he could separate himself out. Because if he was home, he was working.

I: Wow. Sounds like a pretty amazing guy. Hey, let's take a real quick break for a moment.

BREAK IN TAPE

I: Okay, how isolated were the folks in Trenary? When you were a kid were you so far off the beaten path that nobody came, were you on any kind of route, was it a railroad stop? Like maybe a bus come town.

LL: Well, there was a railroad that came through Trenary, it was a supply train. And actually the people who wanted to take the train and go to Rock they took the train, as far as were passengers. Those people [inaudible] Rock to Chicago. You could take the train to Chicago. But we were part of the train route that would bring iron ore pellets across the U.P. and also lumber. And a lot of that would also bring some pretty interesting people. All the guys that worked on the railroad. So we had the people that would come in for the summer. We had tennis shoe man, who had the biggest tennis shoes I have ever seen in my whole life. He played the harmonica.

I: And this was the kind of a transient shuttle?

LL: Yep. It would come in every year.

I: Come to Trenary?

LL: Come to Trenary. The people were very, people would take care of us, people would be generous about supplies and farm living or work. You know, summertime there's, you know, hay to be made and mustard to be picked from the field, fields people would plant.

I: Is this like before World War II, or after?

LL: After. This was when I was growing up. And you know, there [inaudible] you know, drink heavily but then they would also work as much as they wanted or not. Because, but people were very generous. They would come to, we lived above the bakery and they would come downstairs to the side door and ring the doorbell. And we would peek around and see who it was. And my mom would then decide whether she would send food down or money, or clothing, an old coat. You know, and we would run them down. And there would be, you know, not a lot of exchange. There wouldn't be any words or

anything. They would say thank you and go home. But you would know. People would keep track of who needed what. That kind of thing.

I: Sure, sure. How many of these transients, do you think?

LL: There were five guys I remember and one local woman who hung out with them who was actually one of my mom's classmates. Back then.

I: Led kind of a hard life.

LL: Yeah, it was a very hard life. But they, what I remember, I don't know if I even remember this, I was kid, you know, we would sneak around the corner and watch these guys. There was an old, old guy. And I was always amazed that he could jump on the train. Because then we would wait for them to go. We would wait for them to come, because they would come and they would get off the train, and we had the co-op, and that's where they hung out in that back alley back there, now that I think about it, and,

I: Did they travel together, these five guys?

LL: No, but they would show up about the same time. Sometimes there would be a couple of them that would go together, kind of thing. But they, then they would start getting cold and they would go and I don't know where they would go. Maybe Chicago or, maybe that's because that's where the train hooked up to the tracks in Rock, that maybe they were going to Chicago then and [inaudible]

I: Wow, that's curious. Any of them ever work at the bakery?

LL: No, but they did work for my dad, though.

I: They did work for your dad?

LL: You know, work pulp wood or, every year the [inaudible] were sanded and re-varnished and all the wooden counter tops.

I: Wow, that's...

LL: That was probably the funnest part of being a kid. Little girl. [Inaudible] trains come in. They were pretty slow. And then it eventually closed down and I was probably about twelve when it was closing down. But [inaudible] [laughing]

I: Well, would you move back to Trenary today?

LL: Oh, sometimes I think about it. I would like to be in this community, but I have a teenage girl and I don't think Trenary is the place to go.

I: No?

LL: No.

I: No.

LL: That's just asking for trouble.

I: Times have changed again, huh? Well, thanks Loriann, I appreciate it.

LL: Not a problem.

END OF INTERVIEW.