



*Olkinuora family at lumber camp in Canada. Photo: Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.*

Chapleau. We had a cow & chickens. Father worked in a mine by Lake Athabasca coming home once or twice a year. Although he was very kind he felt like a stranger to me. I was nearly 5 years old when we all moved to South Porcupine, near Timmins. Father worked there underground in the gold mines & within a short time following our arrival there we had our own home built. By this time our surname was shortened from Olkinuora to Olki. Mother was frequently known as Mary as well as Maria. I was called Ella at school & by my friends while the older Finnish people called me Eila.

Since Finland's civil war in 1948 the Finnish people were politically divided. Some were referred to as Red Finn (Communists) & the others as White Finns (non Communists). Our family was White. When meeting new people we were always asked, "Are you Red or White?" In South Porcupine the Red Finns had their own grocery store known as the Workers Co-op & the white Finns also. Our's was called Consumers Co-op & neither faction ever crossed over to the others store. The Red Finns also had their own hall where meetings, funerals & Friday night dances for high school students were held. One afternoon on walking home from high school I saw the door of the hall ajar & no one appeared to be inside. I darted up the steps & peered in the forbidden room. It was empty with only chairs stacked on

the sides. I looked across the room & saw the wall covered by an enormous red flag with a hammer & sickle & 2 immense black & white portraits, one of Joseph Stalin & the other of Molotov. I ran out, took a deep breath as I reached the street & was relieved to find the street empty.

Even though both Whites & Reds vehemently stuck to their own beliefs most Finns who came to Canada from the same communities in Finland, remained friends & visited in each others homes. Politics, however, were not discussed when they were together. I remember receiving a bright red smocked dress for Christmas. When I was little & I refused to wear it because it was a communist colour. A few times Mother insisted I put it on & I was miserable. Robed in red I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The entire Porcupine area was a veritable melting pot of nationalities. Even though the community was such a diverse ethnic mixture, as a child I longed to be a WASP. Only as I became older did I begin to truly appreciate my own heritage – our parents "sisu" – perseverance, hard work, & great accomplishments.

I still have my parents trunk that held all their possessions & travelled with them from Finland's Karelia to Canada in 1928. When I was a child the trunk was always padlocked & I was intrigued by its hidden contents & thoughts of the mysteries that lay within. Now the trunk sits silently in my den, no longer padlocked but still not divulging the family secrets it has absorbed en route. It is an important part of my heritage ever reminding me of that long ago voyage across the Atlantic that brought my family & ME to Canada.

I visited Karelia with Finnish relatives in June 2001. Accompanied by my sister, Hilikka, the hitchhiker, we visited Pier 21 in Halifax, June 2002. A visit that completed the circle of our family's voyage to this great land. Thank you Pier 21 & Thank you, Canada.

*Olkinuora family, arrived from Finland, November 24 1928. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Accession Number S2012.778.1.*

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