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Sound on this one rather light.

Eino Kotilla, interviewed by Myrtle Bergren, March 4, 1979

SIDE A
Begin

Mr. Kotilla, what year were you born?

EK: 1905, March 25.

WHERE?

EK: Right here in Ladysmith. Down on Kitchener Street. In one of the
~~MRx~~ Finnish boarding houses. Family boarding houses.

~~XX~~ ~~KKMB~~ What were the family boarding houses like in those days, do you remember?

EK: I don't remember them just at that time, but I remember them later on, before they tore them down and all that, they were just 2-storey buildings, with -- well they had lots of bedrooms in them, that was one thing, because they had lots of single boarders. In those days. And the miners were working three shifts at that time, and the trains were running from Ladysmith to Extension. Three times a day. Changing shift all the time. And in those days they came home from work black. They didn't have any wash houses. I remember the first time ^{when} they got the wash houses going in Extension, my dad was working ⁱⁿ ~~at~~ the mine at the time. And he brought some clothes home with him, they were all black, and -- they came home in good clothes, you know. In their ordinary every-day clothes, and -- where they used to come home in their pit boots, and their old, dirty pit hats, and everything else, --I remember the first time he came home with this white sack on his back, and we wondered what was in it, and there was all his old miners clothes in it. They used to change at the pithead there, in these lockers that, every man had a locker for himself. And he brought all his dirty clothes home to be washed at that time. Which was something different. for them.

My mother and all the women, all the mens husbands. (sic)

MB: And this was the wash house at Extension then?

EK: At Extension, yes. And I'm not quite sure if they had the one in Granby at the time, ~~but~~ before that or not, but I don't think so. I think this one in Extension was one of the first around here.

Prz

MB: Whenx you say that you were born in the boarding house there, how did it happen? Did you have some brothers and sisters?

EK: Yes, I had two brothers and one sister, after me. My dad came here first from the old country, and he worked in the iron mines in Michigan, until they found out about these coal mining, they were looking for coal miners out on the west coast, in the coal mining, so -- a lot of them migrated here then, and we had a ~~xxxxxx~~ regular Finn town here in Ladysmith. They called it Finn town, in fact. And my father came out first, and I had one brother in Finland, but he died when he was four years old. And after my dad had been here long enough to get money for fare for my mother, he sent for her, and actually, I'm the outcome, the first outcome of that.

MB: Yes, but I mean did they live in the boarding house before they got a home for themselves?

EK: Yes. In fact my mother was one of the -- like a maid, a cook, and fix the beds, and swept the hallways, and all that, and changed the beds, and all that kind of stuff. So, there was a job for them. In those days, women worked too, you know.

MB: And then eventually they got a home?

EK: Yes. And they started getting more and more Finnish people around here, and then they started building houses, and everybody was buying lots. I think they were around \$35 or \$40 a piece, which they're getting \$18,000.00 for right

now! (laugh) In fact when Dunsmuir first decided to move Extension to Ladysmith, a lot of the houses were just torn down piece by piece, and transported down here to be rebuilt again, exactly in the same shape and style as they were torn down in.

MB: That's how they moved them? Not whole --

EK: No, piece by piece. And in those days it was all one-by-twelve. Rough that was, lumber/like, partitions in the houses, and the outside walls, and all they had was plates and stud, joists for the floors, and timbers to hold them up, rigid, and --

MB: Did Beban cut the lumber, or where did the lumber --

EK: I think a lot of it was cut at Beban's mill, but I was too young to remember anything about that in those days.

MB: And do you remember if they used to get together to build the homes, or-- how did they --

EK: Sure! They used to have those building bees. That was a common thing, especially on the top of the hill here. What they called Finn town. Everybody was building at the same time. And there was always shingling bees around, you know. And as we grew older, us kids used to have to go up on the roof and help the men. We laid the shingles and they nailed them on, and even that way when you were seven or eight years old. We used to lay shingles as good as the men anyway. And the regular building bees, like out in the country, the barn raising, and all that. I remember that as plain as day.

MB: What did they used to do then? I mean, they probably have some --

EK: Every -- well there'd be one guy, maybe the owner, or maybe one guy that knew something about carpentry, ~~an~~ he'd be the boss like, and he'd direct the whole building bee. You go and do this, and you go and do that, and they'd put the walls together and lift them up, and first thing theyk know they had a roof on it!

MB: And then they'd have a get together, or celebrate, or --

EK: Well, the women always brought sandwiches and coffee. Coffee was the mainstay in those days. Just the same as it is now. And we used to have these coffee bees then, coffee breaks like they do now, but it was a different style of coffee break in those days, just come down and have a cup of coffee and a sandwich, and ~~you'd~~ ^{they'd} go back ~~and~~ on to the building, and keep working, well, as long as they could stand it/ ^{I guess.} Till dark.

MB: Then you were beginning to grow up a little when the labour trouble was taking place?

EK: Yes, well, I was about seven, I think. When they had this big demonstration down town.

MB: What can you remember about that?

EK: Well, I remember one thing about it, that everything was quiet all of a sudden, and my next brother, he was two years younger than I am, and another brother was ~~xxx~~ two, three years younger than him. And I remember I decided to go down town and see where everybody was going, and I was barefooted. Started going down town, and a Mr. Turner, he caught up with me. He used to live just up the street from us. He seen who I was, he knew me, and wanted to know where I was going, and I told him I'm going down to see where all the fun is. We called it fun in those days. Which was the wrong thing to say, but -- But I don't remember coming home. I don't know how I got home. Because that was the night that they had the bomb thrown into one of the ~~miners'~~ miners' houses and he lost a hand.

MB: When you said at the beginning it was quiet -- it got quiet, what did you mean

EK; Well usually there was visitors everywhere, you know, and that was in daylight almost yet, and I guess this had been planned ahead of time by all the union officials and all those that were in the union, and they were going to have this demonstration down town, and everything quietened down all of a sudden, and everybody disappeared, and I was wondering where they went, so I went down to see where they were going.

MB: So what happened in the following days?

EK: I don't remember very much about it.

MB: Concerning your father, though?

EK: Oh, my dad was -- and I don't know if anybody listening to this tape will know George ~~Ki~~ Copp, he was fined, and Johnnie Morgan, was another one. Sam Guthrie was another one, and oh, there was dozens of them. But I knew later on as I grew older, My dad was another one that spent two months in Nanaimo jail. On the outskirts of Nanaimo at that time. Sam Guthrie was with him, and Sam spent more time there. I don;t know why they picked on Sam so much. Or why they $\frac{1}{2}$ icked on anybody, because they didn't do anything that anybody else didn't do, but -- being officials in the union, like, I guess they more or less picked them and were going to make examples of them, or something.

MB: Can you remember how you ~~fk~~ felt as a child, can you remember what kind of spirit there was in your house over this?

EK: What way do you mean?

MB: Well, the anxiety, or -- loneliness?

EK: Oh, there didn't seem to be any anxiety at all in those days. I don't know what we were living on, but some of the merchants down town, they were standing good for all the groceries they got, and after everything was all over, well, you just paid so much a month on 'em until it was all paid for, and that's all they thought about it, I guess.

MB: But you missed your father when he wasn't home?

EK: Oh yes. When we used to go down town, I don't know where we got the money to hire a team of horses and a buggy. But we used to go down town, every once in a while we'd take this team of horses and somebody would drive the horses for us, and we'd go up to see him for a couple hours, and come back again. Well it was just the common thing, it seemed like.

MB: How many would go in the buggy?

EK: Well they weren't very big. You had to sit on a little box in the back. And there was a driver, my mother, and I guess at that time three kids. More or less a family affair, yes.

MB: Do you remember what the jail looked like?

EK: No. I don't remember that.

MB: I heard it was a stone building, that was used as a jail, and I wondered. So then when he saw you, and you saw him, what would happen?

EK: Well again, I was too young to remember. I was glad to see him, and I guess he was glad to see us.

MB: Was he behind bars, do you remember?

EK: No, I don't think so. I don't remember bars at all. It used to be something like a visiting room, or something. Maybe I'm wrong on that, but I don't remember bars at all.

MB: And did you see Sam Guthrie at the same time, do you remember?

EK: No.

MB: But you knew him?

EK: Yes. I knew Sam before he was married.

MB: What do ~~you~~ you remember about him? What kind of a man was he?

EK: I think he was secretary of the union at the time. If I'm not mistaken. And he used to come over to our place quite often. During the strike there they had these special meetings, and everything, and see what was going on. And he started going around with the wife that just died here three or four years ago. Lempi. And they were married. I remember him sitting on ~~that~~ ^{our} front verandah time and time again, and they'd start these political arguments, you know, and I think that's why I never even the political end of life at all, because I'd had it up to here, you know. Because each time those ~~guys~~ ^{guys} got together they'd start arguing politics, politics, and more politics, and that's all there was, politics!

MB: And the mine was the important thing, and life, I guess. --And then they had two sons, didn't they?

EK: Yes. Andrew and John. John was -- I think he's up at Kitimat or somewhere now. Andrew died here a couple of years ago. (Asks his wife what Andrew Guthrie died of.)

Mrs. K: ~~She died~~ He died in a house fire. He and his wife.

MB: Were you able to go to school here?

EK: Yes, I went through, they called it the entrance class in those days. From Grade One to Grade Eight. And my sister went further. And my brothers went further. But my next brother and me, when we finished school we went to work.

MB: Where at?

EK: I went up into Victoria Lumber Company, up in old Camp 6, way up there.' (to Bergie) Remember ~~that~~ that, Hjalmar? Old Camp 6? And that's where I started. I was 15 years old ~~in the month of June~~ and finished school the end of June and right after the first of July I put on a pair of big cork boots and I went -- 15 years old, I wasn't 16. I went to work in a logging camp.

MB: Did you eventually go to work in the mines?

EK: No, I went to a mining company later on, about 4 or 5 days after that, I

guess. I worked on Mount Bickerton, on the log dump, they called it. On the log dump hoist.

MB: So this would be what, about 1920?

EK: I finished school in 20, I think. This would be 3 or 4 years after that.

MB: Did you say you were on the hoist?

EK: Well they had a steam hoist ~~up there~~ down there, and all the rock that came out of the mines, ~~they~~ and everything else, they used to come down a side-track down in there, and they used to dump them into a car that used to go up to -- they used to call it Mount Bickerton in those days. / And it got so far, and it just tripped, and all this stuff would fall out. And then you let it down hill again, and ---- down into the chute in the bottom, and load it up again, and done the same thing for the whole shift that you was working.

MB: And where did that mountain eventually go to?

EK: It's still there, I think.

MB: What mine did you say, where ~~is~~ was that coming from, that stuff?

EK: Canadian Collieries, at Extension.

MB: Uhuh? It is still there. But I just didn't know that it had that name, before.

EK: Everybody called it Mount Bickerton, because Mr. Bickerton he was the outside foreman for the pithead. And he used to look after all the coal dumping and the rock dumping and all the timbers that had to be loaded back on to these empty cars that we used to empty out, and the motor would come along and pick them up, and all the timber that ~~we~~ ^{they} were using inside we'd have to load 'em up, on to these cars, and instead of going back/they'd be loaded with timber, and lumber and, remember they used to make brattice boards, I don't know why they called them brattice boards, but, every once in a while they'd have to have a kind of a shield to stop the air from ~~going through~~ escaping. --And when there was nothing to do, every once in a while we'd take a ride with the motorman and we'd go all the way outside, and I think there used to be about a mile straight you could see lights. This motor used to run along the track, and they had a electric motor then you know. And I think it was just about a mile,

right straight, you could see from the pithead right straight in. And they used to branch off at different mines. And they used to keep the mules and horses inside, some of them, never seen daylight. And the ones that they used to take outside, they'd bring 'em outside and feed 'em, and then they used to have Chinese fellows there, and they used to look after the horses and the mules and feed them and clean them, and clean their stables and all that.

MB: I heard too that in some mines the Chinese were not allowed to work in the mines. But I don't know if that was true at Extension. Did they have a Chinatown here at Ladysmith.

EK: Yes, they had three or four of them here. The Chinese would more or less have their own Chinatown up at Extension, and most of them would stay there. I don't remember Chinese going back and forth.

MB: What did the Chinese who lived here do?

EK: Well, some of them had small stores. A lot of them were on the railroad. On the section crews. And then they used to look after the dock down there. I think a lot of them used to be handling the coal down there, like switching around and all that kind of stuff. So -- I didn't pay much attention to them at all. There was at least three fair-sized Chinatowns here.

MB: How long did you work for the mining company?

EK: About two years, I guess. Up until about the start of the Depression. About 1928, or something like that.

MB: Were you ever unemployed?

EK: Not after I started. And the ~~mines~~ it got so the mines were working less and less and less, the mines were closing down. So I had an uncle outside of Boston, my dad was in touch with him all the time, and so he finally -- so my dad he finally collected up enough money for me. Another thing, when I started to work, I never had my own money. Whatever I made, I gave to my mother. Whenever I wanted a dollar, a couple of dollars, ten dollars, whatever I wanted, to buy a suit, or pants, all I had to do was go and ask her, and she'd give me what I wanted. No questions asked. But I never had my own money.

Everything went into the pot, like.

MB: Until what age?

Chemainus Lake

EK: Well, until I left for back east, then. Then I would have been 22, or something like that. And in the meantime, there was a little bit of unemployment before that, because things were starting to slack off, and when I went back there well, (clock strikes) a friend of my uncle's had a bottling factory there. He needed some summer help, I got a job there right away. And when winter come, well I was kept on with three other fellows there, and in the winter time when there wasn't anything else to do, we fixed hop crates, and all winter long when we was delivering, bringing cases back, and that kind of stuff, we would pile them up into a big warehouse they had there, and when spring come we would have to start bottling u; the stuff agains for summer trade, and first thing we know, no more empty bottles around, so we'd have to start delivering to roadside stands, you know. And we had a lot of hospital trade -- ginger ale especially. It was a popular drink then. In the hospital, like, you know. Drugstores and hospitals were our main stay. In the winter time. But in the summer time it was everything. Roadside stands, restaurants, hotels, and --So I stayed there for four years, met my wife, and we were married there, and I stayed there for about a year after we were married. And we decided to come back here. And we've been here ever since. Married 52 years now.

~~MRxxxX~~ When we first came back here ~~in September~~ in September, we were going to come here and just stay the winter, and head for the American side. Her being an American, in those days my wife was an American until she voted over this side, and then she'd lose her citizenship, and become a Canadian. So that all went out after a while anyway, it didn't matter as far as that goes.

But in the meantime my dad was hurt in one of the mining accidents here, and I was working down at the Chemainus mill, at the time, and I was going to stay there till spring, and then we were going down to the States. I got this phone call one day down at the mill ~~and~~ that dad had been hurt. And would I come home as soon as I could. And it was almost quitting time,

we quit at 4:30 in those days. I think they still do. And I came home. My dad was in the hospital, and he had a punctured lung, broken jaw, broken shoulder, and breastbone, and everything else, and he lived 14 hours after the accident.

MB: What had happened?

EK: Well it was a freak accident in a way. The two fellows that he worked with, they said he was one of the most careful miners that ever worked in the mines down there. And this one time they had just blasted this facing or whatever they call it, in the mine, and there was a big slab of slate on the side, ^{and this} ~~the~~ car that they were loading this slate into -- the rock, they had to keep the rock separate and the coal separate when they were loading, and he ~~was~~ ^{just} walking past this -- well, it was just big enough for these little mine cars to go into, so he was walking past this when this thing just gave way and hit him in the side of the jaw, and crushed his ribs and everything else. It was just one of those things that shouldn't have happened. (Note: He died May 19, 1943, 66 years old). They all said that he was a careful miner.

(Note above)

(end of Side 1) *Side B begins*

Side 2: He was crushed against the car like, and it had jagged edges on it, so he didn't have a chance, because it just came like that, and that was ~~it~~ it.

MB: You had a large group of friends here in Ladysmith, I guess --

EK: Yes, we had two halls here one time!

MB: Well in those days there were left-wingers and right-wingers. And the right wingers didn't like the left wingers, so they decided to disband and built their own hall. So they built this hall, and I think, I heard, later, that it cost \$1200 for all the material, and one man's wages, ^{one man that was} the/head carpenter on the whole thing. Which is at the present time the Kin Hall in Ladysmith.

MB: What I'm wanting to get is some of the social life the Finns had as a national group.

EK: Oh they had athletic, societies, they had -- in fact they had a Finn band one time, brass band. And they had Finnish choirs, womens' choirs, and mens'. And they were forever rehearsing plays, and every Saturday night there used to be something in the Finn Hall there. If it wasn't a dance, it was a play, or some kind of a social evening. I used to play the fiddle there, and Mrs. Guthrie used to play the piano. After she was married there, and pretty near every Saturday night they had a dance of some kind. For quite a few years.

MB: Did they have Christmas celebrations?

EK: All the time.

MB: How would they be?

EK: I always remember the big Christmas tree they used to have, about 20 feet high, and as big as this living room, maybe bigger, around. With candles on 'em, of all things! And they'd light those candles. I don't know how they ever got away without having fires! In those days, but -- there was never any accidents. And everybody used to bring their presents underneath this tree, and Santa Claus would come along, and pick all this stuff out, and call their name, and when your name was called, you just went up and got your present. You could bring presents to your friends, and your friends would bring presents to you, stuff like that, you know. Oh, the floor used to be just heaped up with presents!

MB: And the children used to go too?

EK: Yes, The kids were there all the time. And all the farmers from out the district would come in. With their horses and buggies, and tie 'em up to trees or fences or something outside. Throw a blanket over them when it got cold. And put some feed under their noses, and when they were finished, away they would come and collect their horses, and wagon, and away they'd go home. Out the Cedar district out there, and Brentons, Brentons Crossing used to be another little Finnish community.

MB: And what would they usually have for their meal?

MB: At the Christmas party?

EK: They used to have these basket socials, remember? There'd be a basket social, and you'd bring a little box with sandwiches in it, the women would make them, and they'd auction them off. And after you bought a basket, you looked inside and seen whose name it was, and you'd go and pick up that partner, and go downstairs where the kitchen was, and eat your meal with, your sandwiches and coffee would be down there. Through the organization, like. And all these women would be down there helping. Washing dishes after. Cleaning up.

MB: So they were quite important in the life of the miners? Because I guess the mining was still the main --

EK: Yes, in those days, it was. Until about 1936 when it gradually turned into a logging town.

MB: Can you remember how they got through the depression, in those years?

EK: That's what they call the hungry thirties.

MB: Did the depression affect you very much?

EK: No, I don't think so. We always had a little bit of money in our pockets, although wages went down to two bits an hour. So you can figure from that, that only amounts to about \$600 a year. They make that in a week now! (laugh)

MB: Were your mother and wife generally good managers?

EK: Well they had to be in those days. There was lots of canning in the summer time. Jammed full of canned goods. Blackberries, raspberries, prunes, peaches, apples, even meat. We used to can the meat in those days. Canned fish. Everybody had to do it.

MB: Did you go hunting?

EK: No, that's something I never did. My brother used to go hunting.

He used to be the unter in the family later on. I never did hunt or fish. Everybody had fruit trees in their yards. And gardens. Chicken run in the back. And most of them had a cow. We had a cow for a couple of years, that's about all. Just go ~~walk~~ down the back, around the alleys there, every other house had a cow barn.

MB: It sounds like a very good life.

MB: I think the Finns used to have a reputation for being industrious, and good managers.

EK: Yes. And they always helped out anyone that was in too tough a position.

MB: How about other national groups, were there other nationalities up here too?

EK: Oh yes, there were Czechoslovakians, Italians, Polish people, pretty near from every country there was something here. At least there seemed to be. Oh the Chinese they were always by themselves. In a way they were looked down upon. But they always kept to themselves in their own little, they had their boarding houses the same as they had them down town there. Before they started building up the hill here.

MB: And the English and the Scotch, did they get along with everybody, or did they think they were better?

EK: No, I think the miners all got together, because they were all working at the same trade. There used to be, they called it Scotchtown, we used to call it Mush Valley.

MB: Did the union have quite an influence on the people?

EK: I think so. They had the union hall down here. On top of the old drug store.

MB: Did the Finnish people in Nanaimo and Ladysmith go back and forth to each other's affairs?

EK: Yes. If there was anything going on in Chase River, or in Nanaimo, that was in Chase River, it wasn't in Nanaimo so much, Chase River was pretty near all Finns. Ladysmith people would go up there, and when Ladysmith had something, Chase River people would come down to Ladysmith. There was a lot of that going on between each place.

MB: Was there any upper class and lower class in Ladysmith? Was there anybody here that had servants, or had a maid?

EK: Yes, the postmaster, and the dentist, that's two that I know of anyway. There must have been some more.

MB: What was the Finnish organization called?

102 offices
 EK: It's still got ~~organization~~ in eastern Canada, I think. The Finnish organization of Canada.

MB: And did they have a newspaper? What was it called?

(Time?)
 EK: Vapaus. And Työ Naiset. Vapaus means freedom, or something. I think it's still being printed, from outside

MB: Did you have many speakers/coming in to speak on union or Finnish --

EK: There was speakers coming all the time. In the Finnish organization. And they used to stay at our place. (laugh). And they'd have at least two speeches every time they came here, and they'd be gone, and a little while after, another one would come. There'd be two or three a year, some times.

MB: Question re father. (answer given above).

I was just thinking when he died, it must have been quite a loss to the community.

EK: Yes, it was, I imagine. He was in the headlights all the time in anything that was going on. In fact he had the keys to the hall, and they had a big Finnish library in that hall. And he had the keys to the library. And it was (that) long, and it was full of books, all Finn books. You could go and get a book same as you do from the library down here.

MB: Where is that library now?

EK: I think most of it went to the Finnish Rest Home in Vancouver. And those that wanted certain books for themselves, I guess they had preference. Whatever was left, they shipped them all over there.

MB: So then your father's home was quite a gathering place in a way.

EK: (laugh) It sure was!

MB: Can you remember the funeral. Were there any Finnish churches?

Most of the Finns
 EK: The Finns are Lutheran. There wasn't any Finnish sermons, I don't think. There might have been the odd one that used to come around, you know. Traveling minister or something like that, and that would always be in the Finn Hall here. Everybody would go and listen to him, and that was it.

MRx (End of effective tape)

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Ending of Eino Ketola interview:

I had the measles. A Big red quarantine sign on the gate. No Visitors. That night neighbours came, one by one, each one bringing a box of oranges, they cost about 35 cents then. We had a big pile of oranges. That was the kind of neighbours we had.

We had a lot of visitors. Speakers used to come through all the time. Sometimes two or three a week. And they always stayed at our place. They used to meet and have talks in the hall.

Brown crumbs lightly in butter and add sugar. Place in alternate layers in casserole with cooled apple sauce. Chill until firm. Serve with whipped cream or strawberry jam.