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SUBJECT: ARTHUR MIKKOLA COLLECTION - BIOGRAPHY & PHOTO INDEX

This was created for Arthur Mikkola Family and the BI Historical Museum's public Biographical file, "Mikkola"; Subject files, "Finnish Community", "Island Schools", "Logging", etc; and Photo files.

Donor: Arthur Mikkola (See contact information above).

Interview, Sept. 9, 2009 at his home by Gerald Elfendahl, with associated Arthur Mikkola Photo Collection of 17 photos and index; with comments added Oct. 16, 2009, from Marilyn (Mikkola) Crawford (Mrs. William Crawford), Manchester, WA, Arthur's daughter, (360)-871-2693 (Grandson is Matt).

ART MIKKOLA: A BIOGRAPHY

(word count: 2,486)

By Gerald Elfendahl

ART MIKKOLA, 95, Bainbridge HS Class of 1932, is the eldest alumni to attend the Sept. 5, 2009, Bainbridge HS "All Class" reunion. It was our privilege to interview him soon afterwards. We had met in the 1980's or early 1990's and he once gave me a tour of his sauna on Sunrise Drive. I also knew his brother and many of his neighbors and friends.

Art is a second generation Finnish American born in 1913 in Florida. Art recalls, "My parents, Johan Gust and Maria Mikkola, immigrated from Finland to NYC in about 1910. They met someone there who knew wealthy people in Florida who needed a housekeeper. Mom got the job and dad, a logger went along. He did some logging there - small stuff."

Art's daughter Marilyn elaborates, " My grandmother came to NYC and met a friend who helped her get a housekeeping job with a NY family. That family would vacation in Florida and take my grandmother with them. While in Florida my grandmother met my grandfather who was already doing logging there. They married and my grandmother then stayed in Florida. Dad was born there. Then the family moved to South Carolina where my grandfather still logged and Dad's sister, Mary was born."

Art continues, "Gust soon heard about better timber in the Pacific NW. He ventured west alone, got a logging job and brought his family to Seattle in 1916.

"Dad worked in a logging camp at Kariston. It's no longer there. We lived up there in the foothills of Mt. Rainier. My brother, John, was born there. Then we moved to Scandia, SW of Poulsbo. We lived up on the hill on the corner by the Keyport Road. At the bottom of the hill was the Scandia steamboat landing - and a large Finn Hall! A lot of people came over from Seattle for the day on the HYAK and had big picnics there.

"We moved around quite a bit before settling on Bainbridge Island in 1919. (See photos #6 & #7) Dad heard about Bainbridge from other loggers he'd met who lived there - Frank and Emil Williams, Sam Tusa, and Elias Lahti.

"Dad bought a house in the Island's central valley where Highway 305 goes today. A lot of Finns lived there. It was nicknamed 'Finn Hollow.' In those days, most of the people on the Island year-round lived inland so they had room for a farm, cow, garden and some chickens. In summer, a lot of City folk lived on the beaches."

The Mikkola's lived below or west of the Frank Williams' family farm in the central valley where Highway 305 and the berry stand is today (at the west foot of Morgan Road).

Art thinks, "The house was probably built by the Bensons who lived at Rolling Bay. Their place on Falk Road is similar. It is just east of the Presbyterian Church.

"There were skid roads all through the valley used by early loggers with oxen to haul logs down to Manitou Beach so they could be towed to Port Madison, most likely, or Port Blakely. I found one of their old oxen bells. There were still huge fir trees when we were there. We fell them and bucked them up with a drag saw for firewood for the stove and sauna.

"Dad built a sauna soon after we moved to the Island. We used it every Saturday night, for sure. We had copper coils (warming water) in the firebox and always had hot water. We had no electricity. Water flowed by gravity from a well up on the hill. It had good pressure. Most of the Finns had saunas. Saunas were a part of my life for 75 years - all the time we were on the Island."

Sam Tusa's sauna was a work of art, made from hand-hewn cedar logs perfectly squared and notched with axes and adzes. Tusa's sauna was at the bottom of the hill at the west end of Valley Road.

"You get a lotta wood outta one cut of fir. We sliced those logs like we were slicing cheese. It was easier cutting than alder - no knots. It split easy and you got more wood per slice.

"I couldn't start school when I was supposed to because I didn't speak much English. We spoke all Finn around the house and other folks in Finn Hollow did, too. The older kids taught us English. We started talking with them every time we seen 'em. We talked with everyone we could. Didn't have a radio yet. And no TV, of course. So the big kids taught us.

"The Finn community had no hall on the Island. As long as they had coffee and something to eat, that was the main thing! You had to have the coffee pot on! They liked to dance and had wind up Victrolas and recordings of Finnish music made in the US by early Finnish immigrants.

"People nowadays don't associate pretty much. In the old days, we visited people. People were friendly on Bainbridge and helped each other in the old days. We'd all help make hay and get it in the barn. We helped each other all the time.

"I ate a lot of clam chowder. Fished a lot. Always had a bucket of herring and salt salmon. There were lots of ways to eat the herring. Mom bought rye hard tack by the barrel in Seattle. We picked a lot of berries. I loved the wild blackberries and picked lots of them. Everybody had a garden, a cow and chickens.

"Takemoto's farm was just north of us. They didn't have a sauna or electricity either. They had a hot tub instead and heated that thing up all the time. We used to pick strawberries on their farm when I was in grade school. Terry Takemoto always says 'Hi!' to me at reunions. Her family recalls how I was too small when I started picking. I had to reach across the rows to pick berries on the other side. I couldn't without squashing them. So, they told me to pick a half row at a time - up one side and down the other.

"Bill Weld was a good friend. We were in the same class for twelve years right through high school. Bill liked airplanes and once we took the ferry to Seattle to see the movie WINGS. It was the best film to that date about airplanes.

"There were two grade schools at Rolling Bay (near the NE corner of Valley Road and N. Madison Road). Originally, everyone was in the old (lower) school by Valley Road. Then around 1920, they built the upper school on the hill north of the old one. Then they put the first and second grades in the older building - no kindergarten in those days. The new upper school had grades 3, 4 and 5 on one side and 6, 7 and 8 on the other.

"We had no electricity - no lights in the school. I still wonder how we could see to read the books in the wintertime. We did see and I still have good eyes today. I don't know why we have to have the lights on all day long."

After Rolling Bay School, Art attended Lincoln School in Winslow for 8th grade.

"Joe Sivertson (Manitou Beach) drove our "school bus". He had an old Reo truck and he put benches in there for us to sit on. He added a roof and curtains for the winter. And that's what we had for a school bus! They were taking out the bridge where the highway is today near Manitou Beach and we got stuck in there that winter in the 'bus'. They had to get a Caterpillar tractor to haul us out. There were lots of bridges on the Island at that time - four large ones: Sunrise Drive, Winslow Ravine, Fletcher Bay, and Creosote Ravine; and many smaller ones."

In the fall of 1928, Art was in the first freshman class that opened the original all-island public high school built that year.

"The opening of that high school was a big deal," Art recalls. "It was three stories and all brick, unlike earlier schools. It had one of the largest gyms for basketball in all of Kitsap County with a nice stage for plays, too. It was right inside the main building. We had an election to choose a school mascot and symbol. Jimmy Munro, Class of 1928, nominated the name 'Spartans.' I voted for that one. I don't remember the others. I was too busy on the farm and with other things to get involved with many organized activities at BHS.

"I worked picking berries and used to skin a lot of cascara bark from trees in the valley, dry it, sack it up and ship it on the VASHON II into Hibert & Stuart, a Seattle buyer on First Ave.

"Sophomore and junior years at BHS, I worked summers in the strawberry cannery at the head-of-Eagle Harbor. I packed tin cans and wooden barrels full of berries and sugar. We started

work at 10 AM and at the peak of the season worked until 2 or 3 AM for a few days straight - a busy time! We'd get a break every few hours. You were pooped doing that all day long: You were ready to hit the sack at the end of a day!"

After BHS, Art worked with his dad in the logging camps. Logger Gust Mikkola operated the steam donkey and skidder that pulled the logs up to the landing where they were loaded to be hauled to the mill.

"The skidder he ran for so many years is the one now on display at Camp 6 Logging Museum in Tacoma's Point Defiance Park. You had to use a high tower in order to pull the logs. It was dangerous work. That is where I got banged up in 1934. We were working up on the Skookumchuck River. It was pretty steep land and one log got away from them and hit me from behind. Tore the heck out of one leg.

"It bent my foot right over - almost severed my foot from my leg. They had to haul me out of the woods on a stretcher. I had several operations over a two-year period. I only have one bone on my lower leg where you should have two. They splice bone from one leg to try and get it to knit together. It didn't knit for a long time. That was back in '34 and '35. Bone grafts were not common then. I've walked on it ever since.

"After I hurt my leg, I went to Business College. Then Ed Wallace and I went to a class with an old timer who taught us arc welding. I worked as a welder most of my working life...

"In 1938, I bought a used 1930 Model A Ford coupe for \$125 in Seattle. Harold Lahti and I went car shopping to find it. I had broken my leg in a logging camp. I had a \$1,500 settlement with which I bought the car.

"I helped Casey Selfors in the repair shop at Rodal Motors at Rolling Bay. In 1941, I took the train to Detroit and bought a 1941 Plymouth and drove it back to the Island to save money. It had a governor on it because the engines weren't broken in. It came right out of the factory. Selfors took the governor off once I got it home.

"I met my wife, Vendla - a Swedish name - Hendrickson in Seattle. She'd graduated from Business College in Duluth, MN, and then worked in Washington, DC, in the Smithsonian for a number of years. Her sister lived in Everett and she transferred to work for Fish & Wildlife in Montlake Terrace. I met her through a friend in Ballard. I was living in Seattle and I was surprised to learn that she was living only two blocks away! We were married in 1944 and lived in Seattle. Our family's old Finn Hollow home was sold in the late 1940's to Eddie Corpuz. We moved to the Island in 1950 again. Vendla and I bought a home at the SW corner of Sunrise Drive and Day Road.

"Used to get fish from Sam Mirkovich of his boat, BAINBRIDGE. Two bits for a chum, they called them "dogs" or "dog salmon" then. Silvers were 50 cents apiece. Any size. Nice, bright, firm - the best! Fish have been a major part of my diet. Mom used to grind up fish and make and can fish balls. I used to love to fish and smoke salmon in my smoke house. Neighbors loved it too and used to like to sample the fish.

"One day, they couldn't get the 6 AM ferry started. They brought in Al Cooper from the shipyard and he couldn't get it started either. So, I took the day off and went fishing in my skiff off Point Monroe. A purse seiner was out there and the cannery didn't want their 2 and 3 pounders so they gave me 18 of 'em! I rowed in to Hank Larson's place on the spit and he thought I had really

good luck. I gave him a bunch to take home.

"I retired in 1970. Been retired 39 years!

"I went to Finland in 1976 or so and my uncle showed me a photo of the Rolling Bay School which had been sent to them by my mother when we first started school there. They'd kept it for 55 years!

"Things that I think helped my longevity? I don't get sick. The doctor can't figure me out. Saunas were a part of my life for 75 years. I never smoked and never drank much in my life. I never got hopped up. To be a welder, you had to have a steady hand and clear eyes. You can't sit in the house too much. You gotta go out and get some fresh air and keep active. I paint my house, mow my lawn. I am very careful about ladders. I don't do high climbing.

"Vendla and I were married 64 years. We moved to Port Orchard in 1994 to be closer to our daughter, Marilyn (Mrs. Bill Crawford) and family."

The original Bainbridge HS burned down in 1976. An "all class" reunion for students of that school is held every five years. In 2009, Art Mikkola, 95, was the eldest attendee. He enjoyed seeing everyone, noting, "Not too many from my old class showed up. There aren't to many of us left."

Art and a buddy have promised each other to strive to become centenarians. Art says, "I don't want to miss the next reunion in 2014!"

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ARTHUR MIKKOLA PHOTO COLLECTION: INDEX

Photo Description:

No.:

1: Home with Mrs. Maria Mikkola (l) and Mrs. Carlson (r) with their children - Art & Mary Mikkola and Lillian and Helen Carlson;. See photos 2 & 13. Size: 3" x 5".

2: Finnish families gathering at Mikkola home. "Mikkola's old home, Rolling Bay, WA with Mrs. Emil Williams, Mr. Emil Williams holding Henry, Sam Tusa, Bill Tusa, Mrs. Sam Tusa, Mrs. Lahti, Harold Lahti, a Lahti relative (Lordi?), Maria Mikkola with Mary, John and Art." (Note: two photos of this image. One without captions on back is the best for copying purposes.) See photo 13. Size: 3" x 5".

3: Emil Williams' house. Elias Lahti at far left. House was located on the west side of and faced No. Madison Ave., two houses north of Morgan Road (to Frank Williams farm). Size: 3" x 5".

4: Mr. & Mrs. Johan Gust Mikkola and children, Mary, Art and John, ca. 1920. Portrait taken in a Seattle studio. Size: 3" x 5".

5: Art Mikkola in 1938 with 1930 Model A Ford he bought that year for \$125. "Art before trip to CA - not (in) this car." Car was bought and

restored by Lyle Flodin, Sequim, and formerly of Island Center. Size: 5" x 7"

6: Pierson - Scandia Group (of Finns gathered at Finnish hall there). Gust Mikkola, back row, fifth from right; Maria Mikkola, just left of Gust Mikkola in row just below. Size: 3" x 5".

7: Pierson - Scandia Group (of Finns gathered at Finnish hall there). Gust Mikkola is about seventh from right in the back row (wearing a hat). Maria Mikkola is to the left of Gust in row just below (partly hidden between a man and a big lady in white). Size: 3" x 5".

8: Fir trees logged on Mikkola land and cut up for firewood with drag saw. Ellen Davey, a Finnish girl, standing on log. Art Mikkola is standing on the ground. See photo 9 taken same day. Size: 2-1/2" x 4-1/2"

9: Mr. & Mrs. Ellen and Harold Davey with fir tree round. "Ellen Davey, a Finnish girl, and her husband, Harold, friends of Mikkola's from Seattle. Harold survived being on the aircraft carrier HORNET when she was sunk in WW II". See Photo 8 taken same day. Size: 2-1/2 "x 4-1/2"

10: Rolling Bay Grade School Class, 1925. Seated: Miss Sorenson, teacher; Jenny Knutsen, Jeanette Winthers, Roberta Hurst and Marjorie Emmons; Standing: Bill Weld, Bill Tusa, Art Mikkola, Van Halvorsen (behind with part of head showing), Paul Anderson and Dick Yeo. Sneaking in at left: Howard Halvorsen. Note: two prints of this image. Size: 2-3/4" x 4-1/4",

11: Rolling Bay School classes, 1925. First row: Sarah McSparran, Jenny Knutsen, Art Mikkola, unknown, Dick Yeo, Merv. Sivertson, Rich Arms, unknown, Bill Weld; second row: Jeanette Winthers, Luke Halvorsen, Harry McCulloch, unknown, Edith Williams, Paul Anderson, Mary Mikkola, unknown, Marjorie Emmons, unknown; back row: Howard Halvorsen, Louis Anderson, Jimmy Grisdale, Lawrence Nelson, Van Halvorsen and Walt Winthers.. Size: 2-3/4" x 4-1/4"

12: Two Rolling Bay Schools. Size: 3" x 5".

13: Mikkola family home in Rolling Bay, WA, remodeled in the 1940s by Mr. Mikkola and Mr. Lahti. Size: 2-1/2" x 4-1/2"

14: Mikkola kids - John, Mary & Art - dressed up in early 1920 on Island. Size: 3" x 5".

15: John Mikkola, Harold Lahti, Art and Mary Mikkola at Bainbridge Gardens, early 1920's. Size: 2-1/2" x 4-1/4".

16: Class of 1932, Bainbridge High School, Ralston Photo, Seattle; 37 student portraits including Sam Nakao, Dick Yeo, Olive Myers among them. See student autographs for names on back. Note: there was no *Spartan Life* year book with class photos that year.

Size: 8" x 10".

- 17: Fishing off of Point Monroe, today's Fay-Bainbridge State Park circa 1940's. Size: 2-1/2" x 4-1/4".