

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Second Christian Church

Personal Experience

O H 992

PEARL E KEIFER

Interviewed

by

Joseph May

on

August 8, 1979

JM This is an interview with Mrs Henry Keifer, formerly Pearl Rowland, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Second Christian Church, by Dr Joseph May and Mrs Jane Keifer Moore on August 8, 1979

K My dad was one of the first founders

JKM (Mrs Keifer's daughter) How old are you now, Ma?

K 89 years old

JM 89 years old? My goodness

JKM How old were you when you marched up from Central?

K I was 17, but when they decided to have a church on the West side, they started to have choir practice around in the homes that had pianos, and I was only 15 then

JKM You played piano, did you not?

K Not for that

JKM Oh, you did not?

K Grace Elliot did Her picture is up there Show him the picture

JKM Yes, I will show Joe the picture

JM The first pastor of the church, I understand, was Reverend Lind

K No, no, he was the last pastor we had at the Central Church The people that went came over to the Second Christian Church I joined church when I was twelve and Lee Bates was the minister

JKM Where?

K At the Central Church, and at the time our church started here it was Reverend Lind and there was about 40 that came, I think, from the Central Church And then the baptized caught a few of the young people and two of them left One was Esba Kinderman, and the other one was Helen Kerr Reedy and one is in Colorado and the other is in Florida And they are a little younger than I am, just a little bit

JKM Where were they baptized?

K They were in that bunch that was baptized at the Central Church. See, we had a two-weeks meeting and all those that joined in that two weeks meeting could count as charter members

JKM But you were already a member of Central, is that correct?

K Yes And, of course, Roy and them, they were baptized down to the Central Church

JKM Your brother Roy?

K Yes

JKM All right I think maybe Joe would like to know, Mom, about why the people on the West side decided that they wanted a church Why did you all not keep on going down to Central?

JM Yes, that is a good question

K I was only 17 [Laughter]

JKM. Was it a long ways to go?

K I could not tell you just exactly Why?

JKM Did it seem like a long ways down there to go to church?

K Yes And, of course, the west side had got quite a few from the country that moved in to the West side, from the country around Braceville, Southington and all

JKM Central was down on the High Street next to the library?

K Yes

JKM Okay, tell about that day you came from Central Christian up to Second to begin the church What did you do? Did you all go down to Central?

K Well, the West-siders went down as far as Quimby Hill That is not there anymore, Quimby Hill The other ones were coming up from the Central, and then we marched from there with the rest of them I was in the choir That was the charter choir there

JKM Quimby Hill, Joe, was where the Remnant Room Carpet place is now. That is Quimby, and it used to be Quimby's home was on that hill That is historical in Warren

JM Yes, I see

JKM Who was on the first committee? I believe this is in here Do you have that in your book? [Referring to book] I do not know if you have all of this, Joe, but September, 1905, Central Christian Church appointed Charles Phillus, Henry Harwood, F F Rowland, Harry Oldecker, and H Q Stiles as a committee on mission church for the West Side On October 21, 1906, the corner stone was laid On December 9, 1906, the pulpit committee from Central was Charles Phillus, Henry Harwood, C G Pritchard and F F Rowland From the West Side F F Rowland, Harry Oldecker, Mrs William Griffith, Miss Mary Louis and F A Kagey On January 2, 1907 the name of the new church was adopted Second Christian Church Then April 8, 1907, C O Rennard began duties as first pastor

JM I see They offered him a salary of \$1,000 a year, plus \$100 dollars moving expenses [Laughter]

K When the treasurer had that book and he passed away, my sister gave that book to Helen Wildman, who was historian We do not know where it went from Wildman And that book had Rennard's \$25 a week and part of it had Brown, \$35

JKM That is Reverend Brown Let us keep on the history here Do you want to know about where the first communion set came from?

JM Yes

JKM All right Tell Joe about the first communion set that is now in our display case at the church

K The Farmington church had disbanded and then my husband -- of course, I did not know my husband then -- brought that communion set down for our church because, I guess, it is in the display case

JKM That was the very first communion set It came from West Farmington, the church which had disbanded Is that correct?

K [I] could not tell you whether it was West Farmington or Farmington

JKM Oh, okay And the first communion bread, who baked that?

K My grandmother

JKM It was unleavened bread, was it not?

K Salt-rising, they called it Flat, round

JKM Oh, you had the first organ Where did you get the money to build your first organ?

K Mary Louise's class We wrote to Carnegie and, at that time, he was donating \$1,000 dollars towards the first church organ

JM From Andrew Carnegie?

K Yes

JM Well, for heaven sakes So Second Christian Church was the beneficiary of a Carnegie Grant?

JKM I guess so

K We had recitals and things to raise money One or two of them

JM Did he follow the matching principle? You say you had recitals The church had to raise how much?

K Oh, well, one or two We had to raise more money, you know It was a pipe organ, of course, and at that time, the organ was at the side of the church and it did not have all the pipes it could have [Laughter] So it started with a smaller organ But in about 1911, I think, pipes were added And a picture, one they have over at the church, says it is the first organ -- well, it probably was the first big organ -- that you could add pipes to

JM Then, the one they have pictures of was not really the first organ?

K No

JKM No, it was not

K I do not think it could be because it was right across the front and our baptistry was right in the floor

JKM It was a hole in the floor, was it not?

K Yes, and the choir was in back of that I could tell by the pictures, I guess

JKM Well, the pictures I think they have are after the large pipe organ was put in The marble baptistry to one side, and that was later, was it not?

K Yes Our first choir was right at the side Do you know where the fire escape door was in the old church? And right next to that was a square where the choir sat And then you had your pulpit and you had your baptistry in the floor You just lifted up a lid (Laughter)

JM Dunk down, huh?

K Well, probably, they took the lid off I do not remember

JKM Well, yes, they would for that because I have visited a church where they had it like that

K You have all those dates in there I might get them mixed up

JKM Yes All the charter members are not listed, but I think you can get that list

K All but the 40

JKM All but the 40 You have the list of the first 40

K And a few years ago when Dorothy Masters and I were historian, they had brought an old dirty bag out of the basement, and here that 40 names was on a paper and Dorothy, of course, did not know anything about it I said, "Oh, that is what they have been looking for for so long!" Those 40 names

JKM That was the original 40 charter members What was the 40 names, Mom, of what?

K Those that joined church in the first two weeks

JKM Oh, I see What was your attendance when you started the church? I mean, was it a small church? How big a congregation came to the West side?

K Well, I think 216 [It] does not tell in that book And then this 40 was added on

JKM Right, 216 and then 40 more

K Well, I think it tells in that book

JM What kind of man was Reverend Rennard, the first one?

K He was a wiry little fellow

JM A what?

K A wiry little fellow [Laughter]

JM Wiry [Laughter]

K His picture is right there in that choir

JM Is that him? [Looking at picture]

JKM I imagine Right in front?

JM Oh, I see

K Short

JKM Now, this is my mother

JM He was a young man then

K Oh, yes They had the first baby Right over here, caddy-corner across here

JM Over on South Avenue?

K Or else they just had one when they moved there I forget

JKM Mr Harry Oldecker was elected as the first superintendent of the Sunday school department

K We had Sunday school first You know Herb Downs, do you not?

JM Yes

K Herb Downs and Chester Downs and Raymond McDonald, they were the Sunday school orchestra Of course, Chester played the flute Is it a flute?

JM Probably It is a long thing

K And the other two was violins And we had the Sunday school first And we had special days with 900 Just think, church has gone down [Laughter]

JM Sunday school had an orchestra?

K Those three, yes

JKM So then, was it just one Sunday school class then that everybody attended?

K Oh, no

JKM Well, then, why did you have an orchestra?

K Oh, well, I think you had exercises first or something like that

JKM We used to do that

JM You had an assembly with everybody together first, I think And then you went to your class

JKM I can remember doing that when I was young We had our assembly first and had our exercises -- I do not know what you call them -- and then you went to your individual class for the lesson

K Do you remember anything about our town or, I mean, did you live in our town?

JM No, no I am afraid not

K You were not related to Harmen Mays then?

JM No

JKM Well, see, Mom is third generation Warren She has got a grandmother in the Pioneer Cemetery over there

JM Is that right?

JKM You know, behind the Red Cross She is definitely a Warren-ite

K When my mother was 18, they went over to find the grave and they could not find the stone

JKM Can you think of anything you want to ask here?



K The Royal Century class, just a curtain divided it in the back room

JKM So that was where they had their Sunday school class?

K Yes Is there a Royal Century? There is not a class by that name anymore, is there?

JKM Royal Century? No, I think they are all gone, Mom While you are thinking, do you want me to read a little of this?

JM Yes, go ahead

JKM This book was given to my grandfather in celebration of the 33rd anniversary of the dedication of the church and that is in appreciation of his service as one of the committee of five who organized the church under the leadership of Reverend J E Lind and the Central Christian Church and who had served as elder continuously since the organization of the church April 14, 1907 Do you want me to read this or not?

K Harry Oldecker Was that the 40th anniversary that they had Harry Oldecker and my dad stand at the Community? Because they did not change like they did then My dad and Harry Oldecker were there just about every Sunday

JKM They were the two elders who served

K I think that picture is in among the church pictures

JM I notice here that the Reverend Frank Brown served from 1911 to 1928, which was a rather long pastorage

K Yes, 17 years

JM 17 Years What do you recall about his pastorage?

K He lived right up here on Stiles Avenue The church did not furnish a home for them

JKM He was well liked, was he not?

K Yes Well, of course, you know that Jessie Brown Pawn was a relative of Frank Brown We had the missionaries circles Brown and my dad went out through the country for the -- what is that liquor business?

JKM OH, WCTU?

K No, when they wanted to take it out of the districts or something

JKM Oh, Prohibition? Is that what you are talking about?

K I guess so My dad, of course, I guess he had a car then No, he would not have a car then He must have taken his surrey But anyway, he took Brown out through the country and Brown talked about that Oh, I had not thought of that for years

JM What did Brown say about it?

JKM Well, of course, the church does not believe in drinking

JM Oh, no So he probably was for the Prohibition

JKM Oh, yes Mom was the tower -- the year of the tower class Was the tower built on the original church? It was on the very first building? The tower?

K As far as I know, yes, sure

JKM But you belonged to Mrs Louis' class Was that the tower class?

K No There was a big picture of the tower class then, and I was in the next class And then when my class, they all got married, and what was left went into the tower class

JKM Well, were you not married at that time then, when the tower class started?

K Oh, no Well, Mrs Benedict was their teacher for years And this was Mary Louis, she was on a committee there and Benedict and Prices and them, they all moved down from Braceville I thought I could tell where that door was, but I cannot [Looking at pictures]

JM What door? Oh, you mean the fire escape door?

K Yes

JKM You cannot see it, Mom, because of the trees

K And that was about the first building and then they added on

JM This was added on and then the educational building was added on later.

JKM Yes, see, there was two buildings on what we had as our original building, was there not, Mom? There was part of it and it was added on, too Then the education building was built fairly recently I mean, like 20 years ago, or something -- 1957 Can you think of anything from the beginning at all that you want to know, Joe?

JM No, I think I would like to go through the pastors of the church The pastors that might evoke some memory here Reverend Jarmen, R C Jarmen, was pastor from 1928 until 1931

K Two years I was Sunday school teacher two years for Vernor and two years for Jarmen

JM Is that right? He had a rather short ministry

JKM He was a good preacher, was he not? As far as preaching a sermon?

K Oh, yes

JKM He could preach a good sermon

K But he went into the insurance business

JM Did he go out of the ministry?

K No Rennard went into the insurance business We did not have him to marry us because he had gone into the insurance business

JKM Then who did marry you?

K Vanhorne Brown's mother passed away I think that was the reason

JKM Was Vanhorne from Central?

K Oh, yes He preached there years ago They built a home on top of the hill Now, I forget what you asked me about

JM Jarmen

K Jarmen

JM Why was he there only two years?

K Well, I guess he got something better or something I do not know See, I am getting things mixed One of Rennard's children was born in Canada I think that was where he went

JKM Where who went, Mom? Jarmen?

K No, Rennard No, Jarmen, he went down to Cincinnati Yes, down to Cincinnati to preach He was not very good for the young folks He would tell stories'

JM Well, after him, the Reverend W L Vernor was minister from 1931 to 1943, which was a rather long pastorage I take it he was rather well liked

K Yes When was Bobbit there?

JKM After Vernor

JM Do you recall anything about Mr Vernor that stands out in your mind?

K No, but I do not want to go back though, but I could tell you a story about Rennard

JM Rennard, okay

K Well, we had evening services at that time so one evening I sat out in the audience with a boyfriend So, when we were going out, Rennard said, "Pearl, why were you not in the choir?" I said, "I had a cold " He said, "Bring him in the choir " [Laughter] [break in tape]

JM There we go It is erased now After Vernor, there was Reverend Edwin Bobbit

K He was liked My sister and her husband, they liked him well I guess they have pictures of him, or they did

JKM Many people in church can tell you about all these ministers That Bobbit was well liked, right Mom?

K Yes I guess you got everything in there

JM Yes, I think so

K I would not want those other things I said [on there]

JKM He erased them Mom

JM I erased them, yes Do no worry about that

JKM Grandpa Rowland lived next door to the church, did he not? But now, did you not say something about an alley and some pigs? What was that?

K You do not want that

JM Why not?

JKM Yes we do That is local color Tell about it Tell about it [Laughter]

K Oh, well, that was long before the church was built

JKM Oh, it was?

K The pigs, that was Grandma and Grandpa Scarlet's time

JKM Oh, excuse me

K Well, my grandparents lived next door The church property was the Hoyt Greenhouse, and that whole block there where our church covers the whole thing now And then there was an alley -- my grandparents and that house would be over 100 years old now They moved it up on Parkman Street and they have aluminum siding on it So, it cannot be in the history anyway because it is moved off its property and now it has got a cover over the original wood

JKM But what about the greenhouse?

K Well, that was what was the other side of the alley At one time, one winter when my dad did not have work, he worked over there for a dollar a day

JKM Now, there is a church picture where some women had their picture taken right by that greenhouse

K Yes

JKM So, did the greenhouse still stand on that part of the property after the church was built?

K Oh, yes And I have a picture in here the day the cornerstone was laid and I was standing on the porch of the Hoyt house And where the church stands, there

was a big high fence all around it and he planted geranium plants in that

JKM Did the church have electricity to start with or did you use gas light?

K I think electricity

JKM Almost seems like I can remember an old gas fixture in there

K Might have been because when I was a young girl, my friends were down here at the corner of Todd and we had carbon lights then, and then another carbon light up at our corner, Parkman Street

JKM And how did you heat the first church?

K I was only 17

JKM Yes, but at 17, can you not remember? Was there a pot-bellied stove someplace?

K Well, did we not always have the furnace room?

JM Probably was coal fire

JKM Probably radiators There were radiators in the church I remember that

JM There were radiators

K Well, was it not boilers?

JKM Yes, but I did not know if they went clear back to the very first church Can you tell anything about the stained-glass windows? How did you get the very first stained-glass windows for in the church?

K I do not know I guess classes helped buy things like that Our class, we was each to make some money, and I made mine and sold it at the store

JKM Oh?

K First, I got a ten cent bag, and then I got a 25 cent bag of corn meal Different ones, some made candy and popcorn, a bouquet for your lapel

JKM Anything to raise your money

K Yes, and of course, the church used to have dinners at the fair, and they had bazaars

JM They did have bazaars?

K They sold aprons mostly Mostly aprons, that one with the band around

JKM Tell about some of those old plays that they used to put on Remember?

K Oh, yes

JKM Those were wonderful Of course, the church had some of the pictures They had the Tom Thumb Wedding Was that the one when Grandpa was the Old Grandma? He had Aunt Ann Paisley's shawl and a cane and a bonnet? Oh, it was all men That was it I guess it was Tom Thumb

JM When was this?

K Oh, years and years and years ago

JKM They had quite a cast Gee, the picture has a whole great amount of people on the platform

K I think Bert Kagey was in the carriage with the baby bonnet on They had a baby carriage

JM Was this play just at one particular time or was this a play that was shown annually?

K Oh no, not annually Just once.

JM Just once

JKM Did you put it on to raise money? Why was it put on?

K I do not remember I suppose it was I think the church has the pictures of those different things

JKM Yes, in the history there is a picture of all of the cast for that one play I know I did not know it was Tom Thumb I did not know what the name of it was We will have to remember that to tell Mildred Countryman

JM From this picture I can see that Mulberry was not paved Was Market Street

paved?

K Not when I walked up with the carbon lights, it was not Market Street has been widened two or three times.

JM Oh, yes

JKM And that is dirt There is no grass there

JM In 1956

JKM Yes This does not have the date up here, though, does it?

K Those big pictures you see of the Sunday school, they were all burned up in the fire They had them down there and they burned.

JKM Now, how many charter members are there left? Three?

K As far as I know I do not know about any of the 40

JKM You and Esmith Kinderman, and Helen Kerr Reedy

K Yes Mabel Ketzal was one, and Rowland Downs But Rowland Downs had not attended our church for quite a while

JKM And your brother Roy

K But then Roy, he lived in Florida We had five that was Evergreen and all that

JKM Is it still going? [Indicating tape recorder]

JM Oh, yes, this is still going

K That is what I am afraid of, I will get something in there that I do not want in it

JKM There will not be anything in there In fact, what Joe can do is play it back to you so that you can hear what you have said, and then you will know just what you have said Yes, there were five as Evergreens We have the charter members back to Evergreen There were five at that time, and we took pictures and the camera did not work So we did not get the pictures But gee, Joe, I do not know what other questions to ask

JM Yes that is basically it



End of Interview