

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ethnic Groups - Youngstown

Personal Experience

O H. 1185

DOROTHY KRUSELY

Interviewed

by

Molly McNamara

on

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M This is an interview with Dorothy Krusely for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Ethnic Groups of Youngstown, by Molly McNamara, on July 27, 1988, at St Stevens Church in Youngstown, at 10 00 a.m

Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your background, about your family, your parents, your brothers, your sisters?

K I was one of three children I was the youngest. I was born ten years after my sister and brother My brother was born in 1917 My sister in 1919 I was born in 1929 I was born on the East Side on Lansdown Avenue We lived there for five years Probably longer, but that is how long I lived there Then we moved from there When I was born, from what I can remember, on our side of the street, we had no electricity We used the kerosine lamps

M Okay, now your parents. Your mother was from Hungary right?

K Yes

M When did she come here? When did she come to America?

K: She came here before the First World War Somewhere, I would say, around 1914, 1915 Somewhere around there

M Do you know why she came here?

K Her mother and her sister immigrated here from Hungary They came out first and then, I guess, when they got enough money, they sent for her

M Where in Hungary were they from?

K It would be northwest Hungary.

M How about your father? What was his background?

K. Well, my father was the first of seven children, and he was born here in Youngstown He always worked in the steel mill

M Do you know what he did in the steel mill?

K My father was a crane man He started out as an electrician, and somewhere along the way he transferred over and became a crane man.

M Which steel mill?

K He was at Republic Steel

M Now, was this within walking distance of where you lived on the East side? Was that how he got to work?

K Yes Well, in those days we did a lot of walking We would walk from our house to come here to church

M So it was quite a distance for you to walk

K: As a matter of fact, where I lived the closest transportation, I think, was up to MacGuffey, and I think they had a street car that you could catch. Because there was, I know, a street car that went out to a place It was called Sharon Line at the time and then that would take you to the end of the line or into Youngstown, or we had to come the other way We were like at a half and half distance when I was born Then when we moved here to South Garland, which is not too far from the church here We ran down to the corner, which was like a hop, skip, and a jump, and we picked up a street car In those days it was

M Now, do you remember the Depression at all? I know you were young

K No, by the time I got old enough to remember anything , they were coming out of the Depression So I do not really remember too much I remember what my brother and sister said That when they were going to school they had people who came in and they gave out, if you needed, shoes I guess they gave out food, but I do not remember any We were not that bad off because my dad always worked

M I see, and he was still in the mills

K He did not work everyday, but he was one of the fortunate ones that had a job, and did work

M. What did your mother do?

K Before she got married, my mother did housework and then later on she went up to work at the Mastalamp Company

M And this was where?

K Up on the south side It became GE later on

M: Oh, I see.

K But at the time my mother worked there, it was called Mastalamp

M So, she was a housekeeper when she first came to this country?

K Yes, and you know, watched children

M This was not in this area, was it?

K Yes, it was here in Youngstown

M Oh, I thought she had originally gone to Cleveland

K No, my mother's family originally settled here and then before my mother got married, her mother and the rest of the family all moved to Cleveland. She stayed here. She had a half brother who lived here

M I see

K She worked here. Most of the times, when they did do the house work, they lived in with the families. And she had lived with them, and then she got married in Cleveland. She went to Cleveland and got married, and then they lived in Cleveland for awhile. But then they did move back, to Youngstown

M Okay, you had mentioned something about your grandfather. Could you tell me a little bit about him?

K My grandfather lived to be eighty-three years old and he and my grandmother, I guess, both immigrated from Hungary and met here and got married. He used to tell us stories. He told me that he had been in the Czechoslovakian Army and he spoke Slovak as well as Hungarian

M Is that because he lived on the border between the two countries?

K Yes, from where he came from he was closer to the Czechoslovakian border; and my grandmother, I do not know her location at all. I would have to look it up on the map, but from memory I do not remember. But she may have been from the same section because her maiden name was Homa and in this district, there were a lot of Slovak Homa's

M I see. So there were a lot of Slovak people along with the Czechoslovakian people there?

K Yes

M Now where you lived on the East side, where there a lot of Hungarian families?

K: Yes, most of them lived in this area on the East side, and it seemed that they all settled close to the church or they erected the church

M: So the church was not built then?

K: This church was built in 1905.

M: Oh really?

K: It was started in 1905, but at the time my grandparents came here it was not here

M: So were these people all from the same region in Hungary or were they from all over?

K: No, they are from all over, but a lot came. There were a lot of people here who were born like where my mother was. A lot from my grandparents at the time

M: Okay, did your mother ever talk about when she came over here? Did she go through Ellis Island, do you know?

K: She had to

M: That was the prime port

K: I do not remember her saying anything about it. All I remember is that she told me that she got very sick on the boat coming over

M: I hear that a lot. A lot of people say that is what happens

K: But she never talked too much about her trip coming over

M: Okay, where did you go to grade school?

K: I went to Sheen High. I started there for four years and then I went over to the South Side to Monroë, from there to St. Patrick's, and then to high school

M: Okay, was this all within walking distance of where you lived too?

K: Just the grade schools. The high school I had to go by bus

M: Oh, I see. What was it like going to grade school? What years?

K: Well, I started school in, I think, 1936, and at the time I went, the public schools had split grades. You always had one B, and one A. One B being the first half of the grade, and

one A being the second half They discontinued that somewhere along the line We had the split grades, and it seemed to me we learned about the same thing that the children today do, only they have a lot more to learn. Now they have computers, which we did not have

M How about high school? Did you find that it was still a lot of Hungarian people that were going through or Hungarian children that you were going to school with? Or was it more?

K No No, I never had a lot of Hungarians anywhere because where we lived, the neighborhood was, you know, all mixed You had all kinds of nationalities So we went with everybody

M Was there a problem with that? With the mixture of people in the neighborhood?

K No

M I mean did they get along?

K Oh, yes Now in my neighborhood, I do not know, but my husband's neighborhood I remember. My husband knew a variety of languages because he had said he learned Italian from this one, and he learned a little bit My husband knew Hungarian You could not speak in front of him because he understood it, because there were Hungarian people in his neighborhood He learned Bulgarian, and he learned I do not know what other ones. He knew a little bit of this a little bit of that. Which I never picked up from anybody

M Where did your husband live?

K My husband always lived on the West side of Youngstown

M And there was this mixture of people there, too

K Yes, but I guess they picked it up Now, where I lived, and we had Italians If they used it they did not use it when I was present, so I never picked it up. A couple of my neighbors were Italian and I never picked anything up.

M. Is your husband or was your husband Hungarian?

K No, he is Croatian

M Okay, now did he speak [Croatian]?

- K. He spoke Croatian because his mother spoke better Croatian than she did English
- M I see Okay, going back to the church, to St Stevens Church Can you describe some of the ethnic customs that you practice in the church, like on holidays?
- K Well, what we practice today mostly is just the Blessing of the Fruit at Easter, and they try to keep some of the dances We have a dance group, and the foods, and we celebrate St. Stevens day. Then we have a March 15 celebration Day, they commemorate for the uprising of 1848 in Hungary, and they celebrate that day Now they also celebrate the 1956 uprising Years ago we used to, some of the older ones, when we would get together at Christmas, the priest and some altar boys and some men, they would go from house to house and they would carry the manger I think it was a church, but I cannot remember now; but they used to carry it I think it was the church. They would carry it from the house to house and they would carol and the priest would bless the house, but they do not do that anymore And then what we used to do to in the New Year, and this tradition stayed for quite awhile, I would say maybe in the last ten years or so they discontinued it, but for Epiphany, they would go out and bless each home, and the blessing that they would place on the house would be a cross in the front and they would put the initials of the three wise men GNBL They do not do that anymore
- M. Why do they not do this?
- K I do not know They got away from it But I remember when my brother was pastor here it was still done and I think that it was still done after the next two pastors Then somewhere along the line it died They tried to revive it one year and they did it one year Then they did not do it anymore
- M Do you think that this might be because of so many of the older people, I do not know, maybe are dying or leaving? Do you think that may be part of it?
- K Probably dying and a lot of moving that you would have too far an area to cover But most of the people moved away from the area.
- M What about for Christmas? Like for Christmas Eve, I know the Italians have a certain tradition that they practice by eating fish and whatever on Christmas Eve Is there any specific customs practiced by the Hungarians, any food that they eat?
- K The only thing I remember mother made that I would never make was she used some kind of a dough that they boiled out and they put poppy seed on and it was called Bobalki It made me sick and I would not carry out the tradition at all
- M So that is where it ended?

K: But that is the only food that I remember that was really different. You always baked Kolachi. You always had more.

M: I did not realize that that was Hungarian Kolachi?

K: Kolachi. Yes we have that too, and they always have the stuffed cabbage and they always have chicken and turkey. We did not have turkey too much, because no one really liked it. We always preferred chicken, and of course, there was always food and you always had ham, you always had keibasi. At Easter they always had your Easter can, your Easter Keilbasi. You made it all year long but at Easter it was Easter. Then we always made a special cheese. Why they only made it at Easter, I do not know. It is made out of eggs and milk. But we only made that at Easter, and then of course you always had your Easter bread.

M: I see, so you do have some traditional foods then that you do eat.

K: Then they usually make the horseradish and the beets together.

M: I see. I remember earlier you were telling me about some of the ethnic meanings in the parish and how they translate into English.

K: Oh, yes. Well, some of them would be the more common ones with the Horvath, which means Croatian. You have Toth, which means Slovak.

M: Now that is kind of interesting that these names are Hungarian and yet they mean something else.

K: My mother's maiden name I do not know. We never found a translation for hers. Mary Shower tells me that it is not even a Hungarian name.

M: So a lot of these names, then, they have a meaning to them as far as what the persons occupation may have been?

K: Yes, my name itself is a form of iron.

M: That is interesting, too. Were there ironmakers in your family?

K: Well, I do not know. Well, that was my grandfather, so I do not know, because I do not know what he did in Europe, other than serving in the Army, and maybe somewhere along the line his father did.

M: When did you move here then? You did not always live on the East side, right?



K: I was born on the East side and I moved to away when I was ten

M: Okay.

K: Then we moved to the South side

M: What was the South side like? Was it much different from the East side?

K: No, not really

M: You were saying that one side of the street had electricity

K: Yes, well they eventually got it in on the East side after we moved away

M: What year was this?

K: That I moved away? 1935 The reason I remember that is when we moved from the East side and we had a Christmas tree the first year, we were still using the candles on the tree because on Lansdown we had no electric, so we were still using the little candles.

M: I would think that that would be dangerous

K: No, I found out in later years that there were a lot of fires, but we never had one I guess we were fortunate.

M: I guess Okay, how do you feel about the ethnic area today? Do you still find that there are a lot of Hungarians people in this area?

K: Yes, I think that they are trying to revive it We still, you know, maintain some Hungarians here at the parish, and they formed a Hungarian club on the West side, and we have five Hungarian churches in the area.

M: They are not all Catholic though right?

K: There are two Roman Catholic, one Greek Catholic, one Presbyterian, and one Reform

M: That is quite a variety. Now do they all get along, or do they all share? I mean culturally?

K: Yes, they have an American-Hungarian federation that they all belong to We celebrate on the second Sunday of August a Hungarian Day, and they try to keep it going We have a Hungarian picnic once a year and invite all the Hungarians in the area to join us

M I guess that would keep everyone together.

K Yes

M What about the ethnic neighborhood? Where do you live today?

K I am out in Austintown

M Okay, well I guess that would not count so much, but in this area right here, right around the church, are there still a lot of Hungarian people?

K No

M It has changed? Do you know what the ethnic groups are in this area now?

K I think that there is a lot of mixture We have blacks, you have Puerto Ricans, you have Italians, there are some Slovaks, some Hungarians, not very many but they are around

M So, there is a big change over from what it used to be?

K They all lived, more or less, in one area when I was a child A lot of areas would be gone You would go on the street and it would be all Italians I know when we moved the one time we were the only Hungarian family, but the lower end of the street was Italian, mostly Italians and the other end was Jewish. But they all seemed to congregate in one area, I think as generations, you know by the time that I grew up, the children were moving away, then the families moved You know because maybe, economically, they could afford something better or bigger, and they all just dissipated. A lot of the homes are gone because the freeway is through A lot of the homes went and people moved when the freeways came in, or they made the streets bigger

M Today, in comparison to, say, the 1930's, what differences do you see in Youngstown? Are there any major changes? I am sure that there are some, but is there anything that really strikes you?

K Yes, they got rid of the nice little street cars that used to be fun

M What were the street cars like? What did they look like?

K They always reminded me of like the train car, only they were more open, they had bigger windows

M. Did these have the cables that ran up?

K: Yes, they had the cables, they had tracks. The tracks are all covered over now. We had brick roads, much more brick roads. They had the tracks. They went all over town. I remember going to one of my aunts who lived in Boardman, and they had a little private train place, it was on Southern Boulevard. It was called Southern something, but it was like a little train system and you had to take that to get out to my aunts' in those days. We did not have a car and we always went either by street car or you walked, and a lot of times we would walk to town just to walk. [The] Town itself changed. It used to have tons of shops. Today there is nothing downtown.

M: Where?

K: On East Federal. You had most of your shopping on East Federal. They had a lot of delicatessens, they had the grocery stores. Well, now that is different. We had no local grocery stores. Where I live today, I have about fourteen stores that I could run to. We did not really have it. We may have had like one neighborhood little store where you could run for bread and milk, but if you wanted to go shopping, we always came downtown to get our meat. One of the stores that I remember used to be an A & P down on East Federal where Habors used to be. They used to deliver, and we would have our groceries delivered.

M: Now that has all changed, huh?

K: Yes, if people can find a store that will deliver, it is a miracle. The only one that I know is the one up around the corner from me, which is a smaller local store. They deliver. In those days these stores would deliver, but you did not have as many as you did today.

M: Okay, now you had mentioned that your husband was Croatian. Did your family have a problem with that? Having him being Croatian and you being Hungarian?

K: No.

M: Was he a Catholic too?

K: Yes.

M: Because I know a lot of Croatians are not Croatians so much.

K: The Serbians are Orthodox, yes. Now they belong to St. Peter and Paul here in town. I think that the Second World War changed a lot of that. Before the war, I know even from here, if you did not go with the Hungarians, something was wrong. But I think that the Second World War changed all that, and the people had to intermingle. They went out more, and oh one of the funny is they say in the Indian churches, women sat on one side. The women sat on the left hand side and the men always sat on the right. One of the

things that I noticed as I got older after the second World War, when the men came home and they got married, they did not sit on the left they sat either with their wives on the right hand side or the wives would start sitting on the left hand side. Today it makes no difference, but in the ethnic churches, the women and the men were separated and I never did find out the reason for it; but that was something that has changed

M What about wearing the shawl on your head now? Do they do that in the church here?

K Yes, the women always came with hats. You never came in without a hat.

M Today they do not practice it?

K No. Some of the older ladies, you will see or a woman wants to be stylish she will wear a hat, but now they do not keep up with that custom. You know, where you come in and everybody has a hat on.

M Do you remember much of how World War II effected this area? Did your husband fight in the war?

K Yes, my husband served over in the South Pacific. I was a teenager and I remember rationing very well. You had to have your ration card. You got your little red disks for meat and if you used them up, you did not get any meat, you did not get any butter. You had to have tickets to get shoes, you could not get shoes, cigarettes.

M What did you do? Just present this at the store or whatever?

K Yes.

M That is how you got food?

K Yes, and your canned goods were at a premium because they were using the metal for war. There was always a shortage of sugar, butter, coffee. Of course, in those days, I did not care whether I had that much coffee, but I remember the meat. You had to watch what you bought and you got a book for each person in your family.

M I did not even realize it was like that around here.

K Yes.

M That is interesting.

K I did not even think about the rationing until you brought it up with the war. I remember when Germany signed the peace treaty, you could not drive down Youngstown. I was

living with another family because my mother had died and my father had moved to California. My sister and I were together and the couple we were living with, we went downtown and you could not move. We went through town you had to go all the way almost to Struthers to get back to where we were living, because everybody came out

M I never heard anybody talk about that or describe that.

K Well, I remember in Youngstown you could not move. But I remember that because we were out and the traffic. It took us about two hours to go from one end of town to the other because of the people. Everybody who had a car came out and the people were just out in the streets yelling and screaming. The couple that I lived with, the man was a real joker. We had a car full already and some girls were walking home from work and he said, "Hey girls, are you tired from walking?" and they said, "Yes." So he said, "Why do you not try running?" I think they could have killed them.

M You were talking about the Central Store in Youngstown?

K Right. Instead of registers, you know cash registers as we have today, they had a tube system that was run by a vacuum tube and they had a network of little wirings going all over the ceiling. They would send it upstairs to the cash office and they would make the change up there. You would watch these little, it looked like sardine tins that I can remember, and they would put the sales slip in there, the money, and they would shoot it upstairs and it would come back. It was fascinating to watch.

M: Where was this?

K This was on East Federal Street in the first block from the square. I do not know if that was Champion Street.

M I think so.

K I do not even know the names of the streets.

M That is okay, neither do I.

K But that was one of the unique things. I do not remember another store having it. They may have had closed tubes. Now when I first started to work after high school, I worked at Stambaugh's downtown and we had a tube system there, but it was all closed in because that was my job. I would get the change from the tubes, but it was a closed system. You did not see the tube that they put it in and the pipes were all hidden. But at Central Store it was open and you would see these little things flying along. It was interesting.

M Yes, it is Okay, have you ever been to Hungary?

K No

M How about your parents? Were they ever back?

K My mother never went back and my father never went over, and my grandparents never went back on either side, on my mother's or my dad's

M Do you have family there still?

K There would be some cousins My brother, while he was alive, corresponded with some cousins that were still in Europe, but after he died we lost touch with them because he read and wrote in Hungarian, and I do not I can read it but I do not write it

M Yes, they say that it is more difficult to write in a language

K Well, my brother was brought up with it more than I was and there was a trouble with him in school that he spoke too much Hungarian

M So you do not keep in touch then with anyone in Hungary?

K No

M Have you ever had any desire to go there?

K Yes, I keep telling myself that I am going to go and one of these days I would like to pick up a tour and go

M You should

K I am sure it has changed from what my mother told me

M I am sure

K Her district was like a little, you know, small community and small towns

M Okay, is there anything else that you can think of that I have not asked and you would like to add?

K I had something in mind, I cannot think what it is

M Take your time

K It was something to do with customs

End of Interview