

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project

Customs & Traditions

O. H. 524

MARY TAYLOR

Interviewed

by

Mary Lou Shirilla

on

October 9, 1986

MARY E. TAYLOR

Mary Taylor was born December 19, 1924 in Youngstown, Ohio, a daughter of Joseph J. and Mary Kirtos Vansuch. She attended Campbell Memorial High School, Campbell, Ohio, and the Paramount Beauty School, Youngstown, Ohio.

She married John Alven Taylor on March 14, 1945. They are the parents of three children: Joseph Alven, John Myron, and Mrs. Marylou G. Coleman.

She was employed by Berndt's Restaurant, Youngstown, Ohio, from 1960-1965, and by the Voyager Motor Inn, 1966-1972. From 1972 to the present, she is employed by the Youngstown Auto Club, and is planning to retire in December, 1986.

Mrs. Taylor was the first president of the Parent-Teacher Guild of Byzantine Catholic Central School. She was also a volunteer school bus driver in the 1950's.

For four years she served as a state officer of the Ohio State Auxiliary, Fraternal Order of Eagles. She was the recipient of the President's Award from the Ohio State Auxiliary F.O.E. and also Four Chaplains Award.

She is also a member of Catholic Daughters Court 1875, the Legion of Mary, and the Altar and Rosary Society of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church.

Her hobby is knitting.

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INTERVIEWEE: MARY TAYLOR

INTERVIEWER: Mary Lou Shirilla

SUBJECT: Wedding Customs, Parent-Teacher Guild, Boy Scout Troop, Christmas and Easter Traditions

DATE: October 9, 1986

S: This is an interview with Mrs. Mary Taylor for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, by Mary Lou Shirilla, at Mrs. Taylor's home, on October 9, 1986, at 6:30 p.m.

As you know, Mary, we are doing the history of our parish, but first, can you give me a little bit of background information about yourself?

T: I was born in 1924, and I was baptized in St. Nicholas because at that time there was no church in Campbell. My mother and dad lived in Campbell. I remember going to St. Nicholas as a little girl and some of the old customs. Until today I can remember them.

S: Would you elaborate?

T: They used to have dances. Everybody dressed up in European clothes. Then they had a mock wedding. I can strictly remember the mock wedding. We used to have the hall across the street from the church and just have a good old time. I really enjoyed that. That sticks in my mind about keeping the old customs that we had. Then as I got older . . .

S: What was the mock wedding like first of all? Do you want to tell me a little bit about that?

T: The mock wedding? Well, it was a couple and of how they would be getting married in Europe and how the orchestra

would come to the home, and the bride and groom would have to get forgiveness. Then they would play the bridal song; then they would dance. It was a fund raising up there for the church.

S: Did they sell tickets for it?

T: Yes, they sold tickets for it. They had a big dance with it and all. All the proceeds went to the church.

S: This was when you were just a little girl?

T: I was just a little girl.

S: How old were you?

T: I was about nine or ten years old, and I can remember that.

S: Is that one of the first impressions you had back from your childhood, or can you go back even more? Were there any other earlier memories that you can think of?

T: No, because it all was on the same basis. I mean I remember that one in particular because my dad and mother participated in that one.

S: Oh, did they?

T: Yes, I can remember my father dressing up as an old--well, we call them a gubazio.

S: What does that mean?

T: Like a bum or something. He dressed up. He had a great, big pipe, and he had this sheep lined outfit on. I can remember very distinctly him getting dressed and mother dressing up in European of what the bride wore in Europe and all that. Then they have what they used to call a parta. It was a specific headpiece that the brides would wear. It was beautiful.

S: Was that in place of the veil?

T: That was in place of the veil, yes.

S: What was it like?

T: It was sequins. It had all sequins on, and then it had ribbons going down the back. It fit you, and the headband had all sequins.

S: So it was real colorful?

- T: It was very, very colorful. There was a wool skirt; they wore a white blouse. The wool skirt was all pleated, heavily pleated. It was more like a jumper because then you tied it. The blouse would show, this elegant blouse.
- S: And that was the bridal costume? That was what they actually wore?
- T: Yes.
- S: That sounds interesting.
- T: Years ago I can remember a cousin of mine, the first wedding--I can't remember what year she got married--it was up here. In fact she was a Shirilla.
- S: Really? Was she?
- T: Yes, and I can remember that she was marrying John Ritz. They had to kneel down in front of their parents, both parents, and ask for forgiveness of anything; if they ever hurt the parents, they were asking their forgiveness that day so that they could start off their married life without having any hard feelings.
- S: And that was one of the traditional customs?
- T: That was a traditional custom.
- S: To ask forgiveness?
- T: To ask forgiveness. Everybody was at the house.
- S: Oh, at the house?
- T: Quite a few people would be at the house, relatives.
- S: Before going to church?
- T: Before going to church. You didn't go to church to get married until you asked for forgiveness from your parents. The orchestra would be playing as I said.
- S: Then did the orchestra follow them to church?
- T: They went to the church. Then when they would come back home, they would play another song wishing them well and all.
- S: So this was an all day affair?
- T: Oh, yes. Three days actually.

S: Three days?

T: On the second day you always went to the bride's house. There would be a man dressed up as a woman in the old European costume and a woman dressed up as a man. They would come to you. The woman would pretend that she was going to shave you, and you had to give money into the cup or box or whatever she had. That would go for the bride and groom to have. The man would take off the heel of your shoe and use it as a hammer until you put in money for that. I can just remember that more distinctly.

S: Oh, that is interesting too. Is there anything else you can remember about the wedding? What about the third day? You said that was the second day.

T: Your first day was like the night before and then the wedding and then the third day.

S: So it was like all weekend long?

T: Yes, it always usually lasts three days.

S: What about the traditional wedding ceremony itself in the church where they use the crowns?

T: They use the crowns, yes.

S: Anything else that you can remember?

T: I don't think they still do it today, but I know after they were married, then he brought her back to the vestibule of the church. Then she just came in with the priest. When she came, she now was a married woman in church.

S: The priest brought her back then?

T: Yes, the priest would walk her back outside.

S: After the ceremony?

T: After the ceremony, and then bring her back into the church.

S: And present her as a married woman now?

T: Yes, in fact they did that for baptism also that I can remember. After the baby was baptized the mother would go back with the priest and come back up to the altar.

S: And that had something to do with the presentation of the mother after the childbirth?

T: Yes.

S: How about your parents or your grandparents? What are some of the earlier things you can remember about them?

T: My grandfather I know worked in a coal mine. They used to walk from Langsville and walk across Center Street Bridge to church and to vespers and to everything. You didn't miss that. At that time they had no cars, and they used to walk that all the time. Rain, snow, or sleet, they walked to church.

S: About what would be the distance then for walking?

T: I would say roughly three miles of hiking.

S: Rain or snow or whatever?

T: Yes, they would walk to church. They would go to vespers the night before and then mass in the morning. Then if there was a meeting or anything in the afternoon they went back to the church in the afternoon.

S: But the liturgies were much longer than they are now.

T: Yes, our liturgies used to be an hour and a half to two hours, and they were all Slavonic. In fact even when you went to confession, it was in Slavonic; you didn't go in American. It was always Slavonic.

S: When did that change? Do you remember when it changed from Slavonic into English?

T: When we started the English masses. I can't remember when that was. Then we used to have catechism. Mr. Horvath would go over to Adams School and have catechism. Then when we lived in Campbell, we started going to St. Michael's, and then I started back with St. Nicholas in 1942; I believe that was when I started back at St. Nicholas.

S: Was that about the time that you got married?

T: No, I got married in 1945.

S: Okay.

T: But then the girls I palled around with used to always go to St. Nicholas and then we would go out from there. The two side altars at the church . . . The one where the bust of the Virgin is at was donated by the young ladies of the church.

S: The young ladies? Was there an organization?

T: No, they just donated that in memory of the war victims. I think the other side was donated by the older people or maybe the men who didn't go back, but I remember this distinctly as far as the young girls of the church.

S: So that was after the war was over?

T: Yes, well, it was about 1942; I think it was because the war was still going on when we had that. In fact I think there is even a writing on it; if I can remember correctly, there was a writing on it. But it was donated by the women from the church, the young ladies from the church.

S: Were you involved with that group at the time?

T: Yes, I was involved with them. Then after I got married and was going to church . . . I can't remember what year because we actually were the ones who started the pirohi sale.

S: Your young women's group?

T: Well, it was everybody then. There was either a golf tournament or a baseball tournament and we decided to make pirohi for it for coming down to the church.

S: After the tournament?

T: After the tournament, yes, so that actually is how the pirohi got started.

S: So from that one time you decided to keep it going?

T: Yes, they thought it was really good; so they decided to keep it going.

S: For the fund raiser?

T: Yes, as one of the fund raisers.

S: So that was before the organization of the school?

T: Oh, yes, before the organization of the school.

S: Let's go back, Mary, to your childhood. Now you mentioned about Mr. Horvath coming to Adams School for a religion class?

T: For religion classes.

S: He was the cantor, right?



- T: He was the cantor. Then at St. Michael's we also used to have Mr. Roman come in and give instructions there. Mr. Horvath used to go over here at Adams School either after school or on Saturdays.
- S: So the cantor's job was to instruct the children as well as to sing?
- T: Yes, and at that time we used to have classes in Russian as far as the writing and the reading.
- S: The Slavonic?
- T: Yes.
- S: Were there any other activities that you had as a child?
- T: Well, what I used to enjoy was the gymnastic classes.
- S: You had actual classes in it?
- T: Well, we used to participate at Idora Park. The day would be Russian Day out at Idora Park. They would have the gymnastic classes from this district and who could do the gymastic program the best, the exercises.
- S: Competition?
- T: Competition. We used to have the competition, and that used to be really something.
- S: Was that the Greek Catholic Lodge?
- T: The Greek Catholic Lodge had the younger ones, the young children also.
- S: Do you mean that the lodges were a little bit older?
- T: Yes.
- S: But the younger ones still had the activities too?
- T: Yes. That used to be the day that you would get all dressed up and go out to Idora Park and participate in your gymnastics.
- S: That was your big day?
- T: That was the big day.
- S: What was it called again?
- T: Well, that was Russian Day. We would have mass in the morning. Then everybody had their picnic lunches. Then in

the afternoon were the exercises in gymnastic field drills.

S: Then the park was open also for you too for the day?

T: Oh, yes, that was the day that we had that whole park for the day.

S: And for the field day you are saying races for the children . . .

T: Races for the children and then like I said the competition. They would have trophies for the competition and all that.

S: When was that usually held, in the summertime?

T: That was always in the summertime.

S: Any particular day or month?

T: It was always on a Sunday. I don't remember what month it was.

S: And you would always get a big crowd?

T: Oh, yes, the whole ball park used to be filled because that was where the mass would be. Then the people would be up in the stands.

S: Did Byzantines from other areas come to this also?

T: Yes, they used to come in.

S: They traveled then?

T: Yes, some of them traveled in because, like I said, the competition would be between the districts.

S: Did you compete?

T: I competed in them. At the time I wasn't with St. Nicholas. I competed with St. Michael's.

S: You belonged there at the time?

T: Yes, and I can remember competing with them.

S: What was your favorite competition that you can recall?

T: Just your exercises mainly with what they had with the different drill teams and all that. Again you didn't go into too much competition; it was just your exercises.

S: Like a drill team more than the actual gymnastics that we

think of today.

T: Yes, just exercises.

S: You had certain movements that you had to count?

T: Certain movements that we had to count, yes.

S: Did you wear a uniform for this?

T: Yes, we called them bloomers, but they would be more like shorts now or petal pushers which were navy. Then you had a white blouse with a red bandana; that was your uniform.

S: What do you remember about the inside of the church? What did it look like in those younger years that you can recall?

T: I can recall that we had steps in the church. Then we had the pulpit--well it has been taken down since--but the father used to always go up on the pulpit where everybody could see him and hear him and his sermons and that. But he would just go up there for the sermons. I can remember our altar seemed to be a little higher up; they took some steps up.

S: Oh, did they?

T: Yes, I can remember more steps being up there.

S: What about the colors and the designs? Is there anything that you can recall about that?

T: Just about what they are now.

S: Is it really?

T: Well, the only other thing that we don't have now are the flag poles . . . I don't know what you call them, like flags . . .

S: Banners?

T: Banners, yes, with the different things on them and all that. Either every other row or every third row would be a different saint on both sides of the aisles.

S: So the banners were placed every third aisle?

T: I think it was every third aisle, yes.

S: On the sides or in the center?

T: Right in the center.

S: Those were up all of the time?

T: Those were up all of the time, yes. In fact I think the first one might have had a cross on it if I can remember. But I strictly remember the banners. There were always the same banners in church.

S: And they were always the same? They didn't change for the different seasons or anything like that?

T: No, they were always like that always.

S: Did you belong to the GCU, Mary?

T: I belonged to the GCU, but I'm not real active in it because being that my mother and father were in the business, I was mostly helping them out in the business and all.

In fact another tradition--and they still laugh at me today because I still say it today--when our people were buried, our caskets were always open in church for the last time with the people. To me that is one tradition that should have been kept, and I say it until today. I have told every one of the priests here that if I ever die, I want my casket open in church. I mean that is my way. I remember that always and they say the reason for that was that the person was having his last day in church. Now with the caskets being closed I just don't feel that it is right.

S: It is not the same for you. I know there are pictures of that in our Golden Jubilee book with the open casket in front of the church even.

T: Yes, well, they used to open the casket up out at the cemetery too.

S: Did they?

T: Oh, yes, they opened the casket at the cemetery.

S: And that was the last?

T: Yes. During the services the casket was always open.

S: Did the family place anything in the casket at that time, or was it just like a final farewell?

T: It was a final farewell. I can remember with the men a man was always buried with his hat. The hat always went

in the casket with the man.

S: Was there any custom or any reason for that that you know of?

T: The men never went to church without a hat.

S: What about a woman? Was there anything in particular for her?

T: Well, before the casket was closed they always put a babushka on her: I think they still carry that through; I don't know.

S: How about your young adult years, Mary? You have already told me about the young women's organization. How did you meet your husband?

T: I met him at work. We worked at United Engineering, and that is where I met him.

S: Was he a member of the parish?

T: No, he wasn't a member of the parish. In fact he wasn't even Catholic. He turned Catholic after we got married.

S: He took instructions afterwards?

T: Yes, Father Rommack gave him instructions afterwards.

S: At that time was there any problem since you were marrying a non-Catholic?

T: No.

S: I know how times have changed.

T: Yes, well, at that time we talked about getting married in church. It would have been during lent. Then you didn't get married during lent.

S: Right.

T: We had a little bit of family difficulty, so my husband and I went away and got married. Then two years later we got married in church. Father saw nothing wrong with it. I mean they were already starting the changes a little bit about going to church, I mean with his family being Protestant and all. He said, "No, if anything ever comes up, you should be there alongside your husband."

S: And that was Father Rommack?

T: Yes, senior.

S: Senior, okay. Then when your children were born in the church, Mary, what was it like being a young mother with children at St. Nicholas Parish as they were growing up?

T: As they were growing up, I got active in different things in the church. Even when our young men were being ordained, I was always there. Mrs. Prebish and I were always doing the cooking and everything, and I was always involved with them.

S: That was that period in the 1950's when there were quite a few ordained from our parish?

T: Yes, and I was just involved in anything they needed. In fact even when the marrying council, the PSE, they were mostly from our parish in the 1950's. Then after our school started we had Bishop Sheen, and I was involved in that. We used to have the pilgrimages out at our school. Then they stopped having them.

S: The pilgrimages were once a year?

T: Yes.

S: And that was an open-air liturgy also?

T: Yes.

S: And that attracted a lot of people?

T: Oh, yes, they would come there all night long just like they do in Uniontown at the school and be there all night long.

S: And was that sponsored by the sisters there or just the school?

T: It was sponsored through the school trying to do the same thing like in Uniontown because some of the people couldn't get to Uniontown. This way they were able to get here. Then when young Father Romath took over, he just sort of disbanded than having the pilgrimage.

S: You mentioned Bishop Sheen coming. When was that?

T: That I think was in 1955 or 1956; I think that was when Bishop Sheen was here. We had him out at the school, and then at St. Michael's Church that day they had everything put up.

S: From what I understand that has significance because

that was the first time there was ever an English mass in the United States. Is that correct?

T: Yes. I wasn't at the mass because I was at the school, but I can remember that particular Sunday. It had rained a little bit, and just as Bishop Sheen lifted the chalice lightning struck. Nobody got hurt. It just seemed to clear right up. He said that meant the skies are opening up and God was welcoming everybody together.

S: He made a special point of that.

T: Yes, that lightning struck right at the particular moment as he lifted the chalice up.

S: How did the people feel about the English masses?

T: Some of them didn't like it. A lot of our younger people were breaking away from our church. They said they couldn't understand our mass. Well, at that time they were going to the Latin-like church. I said, "There is no way you can't tell me you don't understand our mass because if you follow it in the book you have the English version with the Slavonic version."

S: Right, side by side.

T: Side by side. I said, "When you went to the Latin church, it was all in Latin. You don't understand Latin."

S: That is right.

T: This was why a lot of our people were breaking away. Then they all kept hollering, "Oh, it is too long. Our masses are too long." So you stayed at church an hour to an hour and a half. If you went to the high mass, it was two hours.

S: Were the pilgrimages always at the school?

T: They were at the school.

S: The school was built when?

T: The school was built in 1955. It started in 1954, but in 1955 it was built.

S: Do you remember anything about the organization of the school? How did it come about?

T: Well, we parents got together. I was the first president elected of the Parent-Teacher's Guild. We started out

down at St. Nicholas. Then when the school opened up and got together, then we had all five parishes.

S: So the Parent-Teacher was organized before the school?

T: Well, we were like in talking stages. Then I think it was in 1955 when the Parent-Teacher Guild started. We had a spaghetti supper as a fund raiser, and that was when I was installed as president of the Parent-Teacher Guild. At that time when the Parent-Teacher Guild was started, each year a different church would have a president. It wasn't always one church.

S: They rotated?

T: They rotated, yes. But we had different fund raisers. One thing we didn't allow the youngsters to do was to sell. That was one of the rules of the Parent-Teacher Guild.

S: To sell anything?

T: To sell anything. Our youngsters weren't allowed to do that. We felt that we, as parents, could raise the money in having the different functions. We used to all volunteer to go out to the school to help clean the school and different things and painting it. I can remember where the school sits today that there used to be a garage in the back, and they tore the garage down. They blocked the sewer, and our convent got all flooded. They couldn't figure out what was happening. The fire department went out there. They put a dye or something in I guess to see what was causing all of this flooding. Here it was where the bricks were taken down from the old garage that they blocked the sewer line.

S: Was that when the school was just being built?

T: Yes.

S: The grounds where the school sits was originally an estate, right?

T: Yes, it was the Oles estate. We used to have mass in the convent at first until it actually got started. Our first school was at Fairview School in Campbell the first year, which was in 1954. That was where we started.

S: Was it still called the BCC?

T: Well, at that time it was called Our Lady of Perpetual Help.



S: The one in Fairview, what did you call that one?

T: Well, it went under Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

S: There too.

T: Yes, because Fairview School was not being used in Campbell, and that was where we got started.

S: You just rented space there?

T: Yes.

S: Was that it?

T: Yes, and then the buses would all come there. Then the kindergarten was held at the convent.

S: That was until the school was finished.

T: Finished, yes.

S: Which person or persons weremost instrumental in having a school built?

T: Well, I think the one who was most instrumental was Bishop Evancho, I mean talking with the priest. They were trying to get the churches to have a Catholic school, but none of the churches were big enough to support a Catholic school by themselves. Then they decided to get together and maybe go ahead and build the school for all five parishes. Well, I guess when they first were talking about it, none of the banks wanted to go along with it. Bishop Evancho got the banks in Pittsburgh who were going to loan us the money, and all the churches were going to deal with Pittsburgh. Well, when the banks here found out, that was when the banks okayed to have the loans go through.

S: You did get the local lending?

T: We did get the local lending, yes.

S: Do you remember how much that loan was for?

T: No, I don't remember what that loan was for.

S: I'm sure it was a sizable amount.

T: Yes.

S: Did the parents have to pledge anything towards . . .

- T: Yes, we had a pledge drive. Most of the churches worked it through the church, you know, so much for each student. Then there was a pledge drive.
- S: Also?
- T: Yes.
- S: What else during this period stands out in your mind, Mary? Is there anything else that we might have skipped over?
- T: No, but I know being the first bus driver there was a lot. You went all over picking up the students.
- S: You were the first bus driver?
- T: I was the first lady bus driver from St. Nicholas.
- S: You were the first lady bus driver?
- T: Well, actually the first driver even because the other churches had their own buses. We still went together. I mean if there was a parishioner from St. Mary's who lived on our bus route, we picked them up and like for St. Peter and St. Paul's. We used to pick them all up.
- S: So each parish had their own bus but you cooperated more or less in picking up the children.
- T: Yes.
- S: What was a typical day like then for you when you were driving the bus?
- T: A typical day? It would be taking them over to Fairview and then getting the kindergarten students and going out to the convent and then at 12:00 picking up the kindergarten and then coming back home and then going back at 3:00 and picking the other students up.
- S: So the kindergarten originally was for half a day?
- T: Yes, it was only a half of a day.
- S: Not like we have now.
- T: I think you are right.
- S: What was the bus itself like?
- T: The bus itself that we had at the time . . . The churches could get an old bus. After a bus was ten years old the

state insisted that those buses for the public schools get off the roads. For Catholic schools they were allowed to drive them. We had a lot of trouble the first year with the bus and all. Eventually it worked through. I mean I would take them there. The one incident that I had with the bus . . . We had a new motor put in. I can't remember what garage. I was on Wick Avenue. It was supposed to be a Ford garage. They were supposed to put a new motor in the bus. When I drove it, I said, "This is even worse." I took it up then to Donnell's. As soon as they looked at it they lifted the hood of the bus; they said that I had the wrong motor in there. They said that I had a car motor. I said, "What do you mean a car motor?" He said, "I could tell by the different colors." I guess they had motors in different colors. So I went back up to the garage on Wick Avenue, and he said, "Oh, no, they don't know what they are talking about." So I had to talk with Father Rommack, and I said, "You know Father, I'm writing to the Ford Company." Well, I wrote to the Ford Company and asked them to distinguish between a car motor and a bus motor. They sent a representative down to the church because Father Rommack told me, "Oh, they won't even answer your letter." Well, a representative did come.

S: Right from the Ford Company?

T: Yes, and we got a new motor in that bus. I told him, "See it pays to inquire." They figured I didn't know anything because I was a lady and I wouldn't know anything about anything. When I got the letter from the Ford Company, I was really thrilled about it and excited. Finally, we were getting something done with this bus. I knew it just didn't have the power that it had before. People in Youngstown weren't used to seeing buses on the road like they do today. So you would have a lot of them who would start passing you by.

S: The cars were passing buses?

T: Yes, and a lot of times I used to get really furious because until a youngster would cross a street . . . I never left a youngster just off on the corner. I made sure that they got across the street safely.

S: Did your buses have the flashing lights then like they do now?

T: They had the flashing lights, but they didn't have the stop sign come out and this and that.

S: Did they have the law then?

- T: Well, they had a law, but see, in Youngstown, they weren't used to having that. It was just becoming more popular.
- S: It wasn't enforced yet?
- T: Yes, it wasn't enforced.
- S: About how many children did you have on your bus?
- T: I have about thirty. One thing that I did on my bus . . . At that time they had a "Grizzly Pete Show" on WKBN, and the kids just got the biggest thrill out of it.
- S: That was on the radio?
- T: On television.
- S: Oh, television?
- T: Yes, television just started coming out. I made arrangements, and all the ones who rode my bus go onto the television station. They were just all excited about it.
- S: Oh, I bet they were.
- T: Students were good. I mean you had to let them know that you were the boss.
- S: Was this a volunteer position for you?
- T: Yes, it was volunteer.
- S: So you put in a lot of hours?
- T: Yes, because like I said you actually drove four times a day, three times--morning, noon, and night.
- S: You put on a lot of miles I bet.
- T: Yes.
- S: How long did you do that, Mary?
- T: I only did that for the one year.
- S: Who was the principal of the school at that time?
- T: I can't remember who the principal was, but I remember the one sister was Sister Germaine. The sisters were from Canada at the time.
- S: From Canada?

T: Yes, they weren't our sisters from Uniontown.

S: Were they sisters at Mary Immaculate?

T: Yes.

S: Okay, I have heard them mentioned, and they are from Canada.

T: Yes.

S: How did they come here?

T: I guess one of the priests contacted them or something. They had enough at the time to staff our school. I really can't remember who was the principal.

S: Were they good disciplinarians? Did they support you if you needed help with the children on the bus?

T: Oh, yes.

S: What year was that then, about 1955 when you drove the bus?

T: 1954 and part of 1955.

S: What about a few years later then like in the 1960's? Is there anything that stands out in your mind from those years?

T: No, my children already weren't going there.

S: They were out of BCC by then?

T: Well, I took them out of BCC.

S: Where did they go?

T: They went to Adams.

S: It was a lot closer for you?

T: Well, it wasn't the closeness. It was just that there was a conflict between Father Rommack, junior, and myself. It was just being taken out on my children, and I didn't like it.

S: Personality?

T: Personality conflict, yes.

S: Were there other people who felt that way?

- T: Yes, there were some others. I have always kept in touch with the school; I mean anything that is going on especially now since my grandchildren are going there. I still keep in touch.
- S: I know you do. Compared to when you were involved, Mary, how do you think the parental attitudes are now? Have they changed? Do parents . . .
- T: Parents don't have the time for the children today.
- S: That is true.
- T: That is what the biggest problem is. They feel why should I do it. Let somebody else do it.
- S: So then they were a lot more free to volunteer their time?
- T: Oh, yes, when we used to have PTG (Parent-Teacher Guild) meetings, we used to get fifty or sixty members out.
- S: All the time?
- T: Yes.
- S: Was that monthly?
- T: Yes, we had it monthly. We have like volunteers. We had a lot more volunteers.
- S: So there was a lot more involvement at that time?
- T: Yes.
- S: What were some of your projects then that you had back then besides the pirohi?
- T: Well, we had like I said the spaghetti dinner. I can't remember all what we used to do. Then during the pilgrimage we used to have like a little festival to help raise the money to see what we could do.
- S: A festival during the pilgrimage did you say?
- T: Well, we sold food and everything. It was like a little festival.
- S: A bazaar type of thing?
- T: A bazaar type of thing. Then we used to have different raffles and that which we would sell amongst ourselves to not involve the children any.

- S: Okay, so you really wanted to keep them out of the fund raising aspect of things?
- T: Yes.
- S: What type of activities were there for the children at that time then?
- T: They used to go to the seminary. We used to take them to the seminary like in Pittsburgh on seminary day.
- S: That was once a year?
- T: Yes, that was once a year.
- S: Oh, tell me about the Boy Scouts. Weren't you involved with the Boy Scouts?
- T: Ernie Lavatsky was the scout master. My husband was assistant scoutmaster. In 1962 they took six Boy Scouts to Alaska. For two years they sold light bulbs. They had everything figured out, what it would cost and all.
- S: To go?
- T: To go. Each boy had to help raise \$150. They had car washes but mainly the light bulbs that I can remember because like I said it took quite a bit of money. They went up and had a real good time. When they came back, I think they were either \$15 under the amount that they had or \$15 or something like a few dollars over; one or two, I can't remember exactly. They were pretty close on . . .
- S: How much they spent?
- T: How much they spent. They pitched tent every night, and my husband would do the cooking. Then the boys would go fishing, but they each had their own chore that they had to do.
- S: And you took how many boys?
- T: There were six Boy Scouts.
- S: What did you go in?
- T: They went in an international car at that time that Ernie had.
- S: Was that about a nine seater?
- T: Yes.

- S: I think my dad used to have something like that.
- T: Yes, like I said they went up Al-Can highway all the way up. One thing that they were very, very disappointed in--I mean they liked the trip--they made a special trip to go to Anchorage to our church and the priest knew they were coming, and he as much as completely ignored them.
- S: I wonder why?
- T: I don't know. In fact that same priest had to fill in at our church one time.
- S: Had to fill in?
- T: Yes, he had to fill in. We let him know that we were very, very disappointed to think that the Boy Scouts drove so many miles out of their way to go to our church and get that treatment because he knew they were coming and didn't give them the welcome.
- S: He could have acknowledged them somehow.
- T: Yes, but he didn't; he didn't even as much as acknowledge them. That sort of hurt them.
- S: I could understand. But what else about Alaska was there that you did enjoy?
- T: No, I didn't go on that trip.
- S: Okay, they did.
- T: The sights were beautiful. The Al-Can highway was all dirt and gravel road. Like I said they would pitch tent at different camp sites every night. Then they also went to the World's Fair. The World's Fair was in Seattle that year, and they went to the World's Fair. They enjoyed a lot of that. In fact the six boys talked a couple of times about getting together and talking about their trip to Alaska.
- S: A reunion thing?
- T: Yes.
- S: Was this affiliated with the church then?
- T: Yes, it was affiliated. It was the scout troupe. They were the six older scouts.
- S: That was their project that they worked for?



- T: Yes. Every year the scouts would go somewhere, but this project went for the six scouts, the older ones because they couldn't take any more with them because of the car problems and not having any room, but the six of them went.
- S: So that was one fund raising thing that they did do themselves, right?
- T: Yes, they raised every penny themselves. They weren't allowed to just say, "Here's my money." They had to raise it.
- S: So the rule for the school part didn't apply for that one?
- T: No.
- S: Because they were older already?
- T: Yes, they were older.
- S: That was different.
- T: Yes, and that was affiliated with the church. That had nothing to do with the school.
- S: How many other boys were involved besides the older ones? Were there a lot of younger scouts?
- T: There were I think about fifteen or twenty scouts.
- S: Who else was involved in leading them?
- T: Mr. Lavatsky and my husband. Then they had a Cub Scout group of younger scouts. But as far as the Boy Scouts it was just my husband and Ernie who took care of them.
- S: And they met at church?
- T: Yes, they met at the church, yes.
- S: Is there anything else you would like to add about more recent times?
- T: Well, I have always said . . . In fact when I drove the school bus I always said that I would like to start the drill team with the youngsters again because it kept them together and it gave them some pride as far as the exercising and all that. If they kept the competition going, it was just something that you got to see people like once a year that you would only get to see them during the competition. Everybody keeps telling me that I'm old-fashioned. There are some of our traditions that

I feel should be kept.

S: That was like part of the fraternal organization?

T: Yes. I just feel that there is too much of our tradition breaking away. I mean just like even with the blessing of our baskets and during Christmas how we used to . . . The carolers used to go to each home, and we used to walk.

S: With them?

T: I'm talking about when I was younger.

S: Those were the Bethlehem carolers they called them?

T: Yes, they called them carolers, and they would come to the houses. It might be two weeks before even when they would come over to the house and have all this singing and everything.

S: Did they dress in costumes then too?

T: Oh, yes, they dressed in costumes, yes.

S: Tell me more about that. That is interesting.

T: They would come to the house. They had a couple of carol songs they would sing in Slavonic. They had the one about who was the beggar. They would light the church up for you.

S: The wooden church that they carried?

T: Yes, and they always had the bells that they carried. The carolers had bells knocking on your door when they would come, and you would see them coming. People would just wait for them.

S: So they walked everywhere?

T: At that time they had ones in different sections and then they would walk. Living in Campbell it was a closer neighborhood.

S: There was a cluster of parishioners all together.

T: Yes, where today they are all spread out over different places. The same thing goes with the blessing of the Easter baskets. Father Rommack at that time even when I first got married, we used to take baskets down here to Fox's residence. We each had a certain time for them, and we would go in there and take all of our Easter baskets there. My grandmother used to have a bunch at her house.

S: Oh, you blessed the baskets right in the homes of the people rather than taking them to church?

T: Right in the home, yes, because it was easier for the parishioners because at that time too many people didn't have cars.

S: Right, you would have had to carry all that along.

T: Yes, I can remember them being at my grandmother's house and like I said Fox's house would be down here in another section and then maybe he would go over to Campbell to somebody else's home. They had a place which was designated every year to have the baskets.

S: And he would do that on Holy Saturday?

T: Yes.

S: The day before Easter?

T: Yes, the day before Easter?

S: Do you feel that we have kept that up, the tradition of the baskets, well enough, or do you think we should . . .

T: I don't think there is enough participation in it. A lot of them got away. Today to me that is one tradition--I can be as sick as I am going to be--but that is one thing I have to do is make my own paska and my basket has to go to church.

S: That is beautiful.

T: I have to. I feel that is one custom . . . Like I said the other custom was at Christmas time that I always enjoyed. At that time when I lived in Campbell I can remember walking at midnight to St. Michael's Church. I used think I was a proud peacock walking because I was thirteen at that time.

S: For Christmas?

T: No, this is for Easter?

S: For Easter?

T: Yes. Walking and carrying the baskets to mignight mass. Then it was in Campbell at the midnight mass that they would bust the baskets there.

S: He didn't go to the homes?

- T: Because the cluster was all close.
- S: Oh, you were all close. Do you want to tell me more about the tradition of the Easter basket?
- T: Well, everything that you are planning to eat that day should be in that basket.
- S: To be blessed?
- T: To be blessed, yes.
- S: What would you include in your basket?
- T: Well, I would have the Easter paska, the butter, the salt, the horseradish, kielbasy, ham, the Easter eggs. I still carry the tradition. Anything from that basket does not get thrown into the garbage. It is burned or buried in the ground because it is blessed.
- S: Did you include a candle too?
- T: Oh, yes, a candle always. On the butter we always made a cross, a picture of the cross, but there was always a candle for light.
- S: And each one of these things has a special significance, right?
- T: Yes, special significance.
- S: Can you tell me what any of them are?
- T: Well, I know the candle is for the light. Offhand I don't remember exactly what they all are. If I would have thought of it, I would have looked it up because I do have some stuff on it, but I don't remember exactly what they all meant.
- S: So for the Byzantines then the traditional Easter basket was more of a custom than after it came in later with the candy and that type of thing?
- T: Yes, oh, yes. Everything you had in that basket is what you ate that day.
- S: Tell me a little bit about the Easter services.
- T: Well, the Easter services were just about like what we have today. Only then during lent we used to have services. For one whole week we used to have a missionary and another priest come in, and we would have services early in the morning, and then every evening there would be a service.

Then there would be a sermon with it. I'm trying to remember what they called that?

S: During lent?

T: Yes, it was always one week during lent. I can't remember what it is.

S: That was a solid week?

T: Yes.

S: You went each night?

T: You went each night, yes.

S: What about the fasting during lent?

T: I was just going to say that was another thing. You didn't eat any meat on Wednesdays or Fridays. On the first day of lent it was always a black fast: no milk, no butter, no eggs, no cheese.

S: Black fast you called it?

T: We called it the black fast. My dad always said that when he was in Europe the black fast went for forty days.

S: The whole lent?

T: During the whole lent they ate no meat at all.

S: Or dairy products?

T: Or dairy products. Then they started here. On Good Friday you had no milk, no butter, no eggs, and then even on Saturday you kept it that there were no dairy products or no meat until after you came home and after your basket was blessed. Then you could have it.

S: So the blessing of the baskets then was also the breaking of the fast too?

T: Yes, the breaking of the fast.

S: It had even more of a significance.

T: It had even more of a significance.

S: That people hadn't eaten all those foods all that time.

T: That is right.

S: So they enjoyed it.

T: Yes. There are a lot of things that you can make without meat.

S: Right.

T: That you don't have to have meat with.

S: Right. There are a lot of recipes you can make.

T: I know probably keeping it forty days for today would be hard, but yet there are a few people I have known that have kept it.

S: Sure.

T: No milk, no butter, no eggs, no cheese for the whole forty days. Then you gave up something for lent, something that you really enjoyed.

S: Other than food?

T: Other than food, yes. I can remember years back that I lived on coffee. I loved coffee. So I used to give up coffee for six weeks.

S: That was a sacrifice.

T: That was a sacrifice because when it came the day I could have coffee, boy, I really enjoyed it. It is something that you give up that you are really sacrificing.

S: It made it more meaningful that way.

T: Yes.

S: You mentioned bringing back the gymnastic or drill team. Is there anything else you would like to see brought back or changed in any way that you can think of?

T: Well, it would be nice if we could . . . Well, I don't know if there would be enough around here that would have the old costumes and clothes just the idea to show what it used to be like as far as the mock weddings and like that in Europe. There are a lot of ours that don't even remember what it would be like.

S: That is true. Well, the time of our anniversary year is past, present, and future; so maybe we can do something like that.

T: Yes, something like that. There might still be some of

the older ones who would be around who would have some of those clothes yet.

S: That would be interesting.

T: Yes.

S: To go ahead and do one of those mock wedding like you said.

T: Yes.

S: Okay, if there is nothing else that you can think of?

T: No, there is nothing else that I can think of.

S: Okay, then I thank you very much.

T: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW