

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project

Parishioner Experience

O. H. 540

MICHAEL KIKTAVY

Interviewed

by

Mary Lou Shirilla

on

December 2, 1986

MICHAEL KIKTAVY

Michael Kiktavy was born in Youngstown, Ohio, on September 8, 1916, one of four children of Stephen and Anna (Garancovsky) Kiktavy. His father died in the flu epidemic of 1918, when Michael was 26 months old. Mrs. Kiktavy never remarried.

The family lived in an apartment on Wilson Avenue, and Michael attended nearby Haseltine School. He later attended East High School for two years. During his early years, he worked to help support the family, first by selling newspapers, later by working full-time in a grocery store.

In 1937, he began working at Republic Steel. Following an industrial accident in which his neck was broken, his job was terminated (1939). He was employed at the Hathaway Bakery for a year in 1941. From 1942 until his retirement in 1979, he was employed by Youngstown Metal Products in Girard, a division of the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company.

Mr. Kiktavy is divorced and the father of one son, Michael. He had two grandchildren.

He had been a lifelong member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, and has been active in many areas of parish life. For several years he was responsible for typing the weekly church bulletin, adding some "words of wisdom" to it. When Byzantine Catholic Central School was organized, he was instrumental in set-up of classrooms, et cetera. He also served as a school bus driver in the 1950's and 1960's. Other activities included working for parish and school

bingo games, and for the parish festivals.

He is a member of the Greek Catholic Union. His hobby is collecting political items. He has attended several political conventions, and has an extensive collection of political memorabilia, dating back to the McKinley era.

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INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL KIKTAVY

INTERVIEWER: Mary Lou Shirilla

SUBJECT: Parish life, Finances, Bingo, Pastors,
Congregational meetings

DATE: December 2, 1986

S: This is an interview with Mr. Michael Kiktavy for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Parish, by Mary Lou Shirilla, at the parish house, 1898 Wilson Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on December 2, 1986, at 6:00 p.m.

K: When my parents came here, they probably were married across the street in the original St. Nicholas Church. My sister was baptized there, and my brother Joe who was born January 6, 1915 was baptized there too. I was baptized in the new St. Nicholas Church as was my brother Andy. We had our First Communion here. We were married in the church. I hope to be buried from this church. Well, Andy was last month. Andy was buried. That leaves me alone, and my sister, Elizabeth Baran who goes to St. Brendans. My earliest recollection was with Father Papp. He was a pastor here. He has a son named Alexander. One of the things that I remember was that Alexander, myself and David Schwebel--who used to live on Haseltine Avenue . . .

S: The baker?

K: He is the president of the Schwebel Baking Company now. People here had chickens and roosters. A rooster jumped on Alexander's head one day and just pecked a hole right in his head. We had to bring him home. We were scared to death. There was blood running down his face, but it wasn't anything serious. They just patched him up.

You do know that the first house on the left on Haseltine Avenue was originally our parish house?

S: Yes, somebody did tell me that recently.

K: We had our bazaars at the old church which was converted to a hall and the picnics up on Gladstone Street. The family Hanuschak used to live there. It was in a big field. There was no housing up there. It was like farm land, I want to tell you about this gypsy band. His name, as I recall, was Baradak, and he brought three or four. They played the bass fiddle and violins and one of these cymbals I guess they called them. They would play for dimes. This was their wage. There was no such thing as raffles, et cetera, to collect big money. They played at all the weddings and picnics for the ethnic groups--the Hungarians, the Slovaks, the Polish people--they played for all of those. They were quite a famous band in the Youngstown area at the time and in Campbell which was East Youngstown if you lived in Campbell.

S: Baradak's you say?

K: Baradak's yes. I think it would be spelled just the way it was pronounced. They used to live down on Boardman Street which is eliminated now where the old Christ Mission used to be. They had a Gypsy settlement down there.

S: Oh, really?

K: Yes, and all the Gypsies lived down in that neighborhood. We were always told to watch them because they might kidnap us. We were kind of always afraid of them since they said they might kidnap us. Of course, those were some of the tales from the older people, and we listened to what the older people told us.

Has anybody told you about the old coal furnace they had in the church before they put gas in?

S: No.

K: They had an old coal furnace there that heated a boiler which generated steam.

S: Over the church?

K: Steam.

S: Yes.

K: The only time that church was heated was on a Sunday. Even then Sunday night they let the church cool because it cost money for coal to heat that big place. I remember when we had vespers on Sunday night, Father Krusko used to wear an overcoat and then just a little vestment over the

front line they used to use for confession.

S: The little stole, the long stole.

K: Yes, threw it over your head. He used to wear just that over that, and the church was cold. Sometimes we used to have to go to mass on Saturday morning, and then we had catechism across the street. How you were dressed for outside you stayed that way dressed in church because it was cold. Then you would go there, and they would have a coal furnace there. Sometimes the cantor used the fire furnace to get the place warmed up for the . . .

S: Catechism classes.

K: The catechism classes, yes. You better learn to hold your fingers--all the fingertips touching--like that because he had a switch or else he would make you kneel if you didn't. That is why the kids learned fast because they didn't want the switch, so they kneeled.

S: What else do you remember about these catechism classes?

K: At the end of the class--it maybe lasted an hour or an hour and a half; I don't recall . . . Regardless of whether the kids were good or bad or whether you learned or didn't learn in that day, there used to be a confectionery store right across the street. He would get lollipops for everybody. That came out of his own pocket. It was maybe 60¢, and everybody got a sucker. He erased anything we did that day. He forgave us for that. It was fun. That was where we learned our prayers and everything plus with what we learned at home. They also prepared us for our first communion. We had to know everything before we were allowed to go through with confession and make our First Communion. You had to know it, and if you didn't know it, you waited until the next year. They just didn't pass everybody like they do today.

S: They test you first.

K: Oh, yes. Every individual had to get up and recite his prayers and everything, and you better know everything or else you had to wait until the next year. He wouldn't pass you.

S: This was all in the Slavonic language, right?

K: Yes.

S: Who was your cantor then? Do you recall?

K: I don't remember his name. After him though came Mr. Horvath.

S: Was this Ratzin? There was a Ratzin in the picture?

K: Yes, that is him. Then came Professor Horvath. He was a real professor, and we all respected him even when he retired from here. Another thing I remember was when we would meet . . . Father used to go down the street to the hardware store and go shopping or something down here. It was like a little uptown shopping district at one time.

S: Oh, was it?

K: It was. Every time we would see the priest on the street, we would send the alarm out, "Here comes Father." Everybody would walk down, and we would tip our hat or take it off to him. That was a must. You didn't dare . . . Down here they had two hardware stores, three shoe repair shops, two movie theaters, six or seven grocery stores, an Isaly Dairy, a rug shop, a bakery, a couple of restaurants, two doctors and a dentist: Dr. Taylor, Dr. Bolster, Dr. Wick. It was like an uptown district here. Haselton School is still down there. We used to go to that school there.

S: Where was that?

K: One block south of Wilson Avenue on Center Street. At the corner of Lawrence and center, just one block south of Wilson Avenue. That was the school we went to. Then right from there we went to East.

S: So the elementary at Haselton went all the way up to eighth grade was it?

K: No, seventh grade. We started there and they had seventh and eighth grade there. Then you went into high school in ninth and on through.

S: What about the church grounds back then? What did this area look like?

K: Where this porch used to go around the side of the house . . .

S: Right where we are sitting?

K: Yes, this porch here. They cut it off. It used to extend around the side of the house. They had a pump there. We used to go and get water out of that to take home in a bucket, a pail of water. My mother used to like that pump water. We would go and get a pail of water and carry it home. She didn't like the tap water. We would go and get the pump water. At that time at the church I think they had a dog here. It seemed to me that he was the size of an elephant, but, of course, we were just little kids. When

you are small, you could still pet the dog. He was up pretty high. When he would wag his tail, he would almost knock you over. I will never forget his name was Mayo.

S: You said he was Father Papp's dog?

K: Yes. Then, of course, as I told you where Father's garage stands now that was just a hillside there. They dug all of that out when they made the garage. Up on the hill at the end of the wall was a barn, and they had a cow there even before Father Papp came here. I forget the priest who was here before, but he probably was the original.

S: Kossy?

K: Well, see, I don't remember. They had a maid in the house or a housekeeper, I guess, they called her. She used to go out there and milk the cow. That was part of the job. Milk was brought in from the cow for the parish house.

S: Did Father Papp have a big family? You mentioned one son.

K: I can only remember the boy. I can't say for sure. I just don't remember.

S: That is okay. I just wondered if you remembered.

K: I know he had Alexander, and he was around our age, so we played together.

When Father Papp came here for Father Rommack's funeral, I hadn't seen him for a year. I went up to him and introduced myself to him. He looked at me and said, "You had more hair on you when I baptized you."

S: What about the church on the inside itself back in your earliest times that you can recall?

K: They had the side pews at that time. They had like portable benches. Then in the back they had chairs just like the ones you have in the auditorium now. They became regular chairs after things progressed. The kids would always have to sit up front. That was a must. Of course, we were allowed up in the choir loft because Cantor Horvath would keep an eye on us. We had to behave in church because, you know, kids can sometimes be mischievous in church. When you sat up front, everyone saw you. You darn well better behave or one of the older ones would come over, so you wouldn't be fooling around during church. That church used to ring with everybody singing. There was no such thing as one, two, or three people. Everybody sang. I mean you could hear them down to Center Street on a Sunday morning when they had the mass. It was different than it

is today. Even though it is in English a lot of people don't participate, and I don't know why. They go to football games and holler their heads off. They come to church and they seem to quiet down. I don't know why that is. It didn't use to be that way. Everybody used to sing.

Another thing was that the women used to all sit on the left and the men on the right. There were a few who were even women libbers even way back then.

S: Really?

K: Yes, they sat with the men. They sat on the right. There were two or three. The other old ladies used to look at them as flapper fannies. That is what they called them in the 1920's. They weren't abiding by the rules. They weren't supposed to go over there and sit with the men; they were supposed to sit with the women. The women at that time all wore like a straw hat or a babushka. Everyone was in their finest when they came to church. There was no fooling around. Everyone seemed to abide by it except one or two or three women. They are all gone now anyhow. None of their families come to this church here anymore. As far as I'm concerned this was hearsay. I used to hear my Aunt Mary and the other people talk about it. I didn't care what they said because it didn't make any difference to me. They used to call them flapper fannies because in the 1920's they used to wear the short skirts and the long beads and would twirl them, so they called them flapper fannies. This was what they were referred to.

S: Yes, the roaring twenties and that stuff.

K: Yes, and it was unheard of. I remember when Father Rommack died, the Knights of Columbus were present. Some of these old ladies in church--and me for one too--never saw a Knight of Columbus in church. They wore their hats. We never heard of that. The old ladies couldn't understand how a man could walk in church with his hat on because the Knights of Columbus do that.

S: With the big plume and all that.

K: Yes, and with their sabers on and their red jackets. Myself I never saw that before. I thought it was part of the ceremony. I didn't mind, but some of those old ladies did.

S: Okay, you have talked a little bit about Father Papp and said a little bit about Father Krusko. Is there anything else that you can remember about Father Krusko?

K: Well, he was here in 1925 and 1926 I know. Then he must

have left when Father Rommack came.

S: Well, I have 1924 through 1930 for him.

K: Well, who was in between them? There must have been somebody.

S: There was a Sabow.

K: Oh, Father Sabow, yes, that is right. He was here a short while. Then Father Rommack came and stayed until 1955 when he died.

S: Is there anything that you can recall about Father Sabow?

K: He was quiet. I can't recall too much.

S: Father Rommack, I guess, came in 1932. Is there anything in particular that you remember about the time when he first came here?

K: I remember things were tough. Those were hard times.

S: During the Depression times, yes.

K: He came in when I don't think they collected thirty dollars weekly maybe. It was tough. They used to hold annual meetings, and they would set the priest's pay for the month or for the year or whatever.

S: You mean the trustees did that?

K: Yes, there were always arguments. They had to vote on everything. They used to have a big blackboard there. Those in favor would raise their hands, and the man with the tally would mark all the votes down. We were up in the choir loft. We would be listening, but it didn't matter to us. We were likely to hear it but ignore it. There was always a cry at that time. Because of the Depression everybody wanted that job as janitor. I think they paid \$15 or \$20 a month, but it was something. There was always a big scramble for that job. Whoever got it the other ones were envious because he got the job. Things were tough on everybody. It wasn't like today where you always have to advertise for janitor and helpers. In those days everybody wanted it because it was a job.

S: Was that a full-time job or just in addition to some other job?

K: That was in addition to another job. Well, he cleaned the whole church. Of course, we didn't have rugs at the time. He had to fire up that coal furnace. That was a big job

to do that. They had steam heat. The basement was just ground. There was no . . .

S: It wasn't finished yet.

K: There was nothing down there but dirt. That was all it was. It was cold down there. Finally when Father Rommack got here was when all that renovation started on the basement.

S: Sometime in the 1940's I guess.

K: Yes, and in the hall down there. We used to hold the St. Nicholas banquets down there. It was a buffet style thing. Everybody brought something.

S: Like a casserole dinner type of thing.

K: Yes, and we used to hold that down there. They used to fill the hall up. I remember they used to have the wedding receptions down there.

S: Did they?

K: They had wedding receptions across the street when the church still owned the hall. Then if you got married here, you just went across the street for the reception. You didn't have too far to go. You would just give them time to get their pictures taken.

S: Then you came back here for the reception.

K: Back here for the reception. It was close and handy. I think they maybe got \$15 for the hall. It was some figure like that. It wasn't like it is today when you rent a hall. It is up into big bucks today. Those were really the good old days.

We always had a good choir even when Father Rommack was here. Well, Professor Horvath was the one who kept it going. It was really nice. They would sing on Sunday. They didn't sing every Sunday, but once in a while they would sing on Sunday. of course, for Christmas or Easter they always sang. It was always beautiful singing.

S: Were you in the choir ever?

K: No, I was in the Glee Club at East.

S: At East?

K: Yes.

S: You said that the choir sang for holy days and holidays.

K: Yes.

S: What are some of your recollections about those special holy days or holidays? I'm sure that you had some.

K: Well, it was a must. You had to go to church. There was no excuse for missing church. There was no questioning of how long it was going to be, or if the sermon was too long, you dare not say that the sermon was too long or if you get tired in church because you get caught good for it. Your duty was to go to church and no questions asked. There were never any questions asked I will tell you. The old people were so devoted to church. For instance, my mother spent the last eleven years of her life in bed with arthritis. She was terribly afflicted with arthritis. We would come home from church on any given Sunday, and she would almost quote verbatim the gospel for the day.

S: You mean just from reading it in bed?

K: She didn't read it in bed. This was all from her previous . . .

S: From the past.

K: She used to go to church every day. When father had the mass here at 8:00 in the morning, he had somewhere between fifty and sixty ladies there. They would recite and attend mass. Now it is down.

S: Are you talking about weekdays?

K: Yes, sure. They would be there every day, the same group of women with their rosary beads and their prayer books. Some of them walked from the other side of the bridge from Lansingville as we called it. They would walk over. We lived on Garland at the time. My mother walked to church every morning. They never missed. It was just a must for them to start the day off in church and then go from there.

S: Every day?

K: Every day.

S: What about some of the other sacraments? You told me how you were prepared in catechism for First Communion. Do you recall your First Communion?

K: We had to learn all the prayers, the Act of Contrition,

Ten Commandments, and . . .

S: The Creed?

K: Oh, yes. Everything was to prepare you. If you didn't know it, he wouldn't allow you to make your First Communion. He got each individual to stand up and go through the whole thing. He could tell. If you would slip on one word, too, he kind of would coax you through it.

S: You have a picture here of your Communion Day, and this was what year again?

K: 1926.

S: Do you recall anything about this day?

K: It was one of the biggest days of my life. I will never forget it. I know I woke up in the morning. Of course, they prepare you. You weren't allowed to eat anything from midnight the night before. My mother made another rule of 10:00 if we were up that late, but we were never up that late. I mean I was hungry. This was a big day at church. All these kids went to communion. At that time they didn't distribute communion like they do today. Everybody had to kneel along the front.

S: There was a rail?

K: There was no rail there.

S: No rail?

K: No, you just knelt. Father would come to each one, and he would recite a special prayer and then he would mention your name. He would go to each and every individual. After the kids went through first communion then the rest of the people went. It seemed like hours. Then we had to stand and get our picture taken. There was no such thing as orange juice or doughnuts or anything after that. We had to go home right after that. I think I ate a ton and a half that day. I was so hungry when I got home, but it was a great day. It was a nice day and the pictures all came out nice. Whoever wanted a picture had to sign up. It is sixty years old.

I had a picture of when they dedicated the cemetery. It was about 30 inches long and about 12 inches high, and it was a big, broad picture of everybody at the cemetery. When it was rolled, it cracked and pieces dropped out that were lost. You couldn't even begin to use it.

S: Yes, it dried up. How about these medals here?

- K: Those were issued to each member of the women's lodge. This here came off of the other one like this. I don't know what happened to the other one. That would be my father's, and I don't know where it is at. I think they are starting a museum or something in Pittsburgh, and they want old stuff like this. I think the Greek Catholic Union might even be starting one. If I could get it cleaned, I would donate that because I have held it long enough. I am sure it would be given perpetual care there.
- S: Can you tell me what that says on there?
- K: Bless the Virgin Mary, the women's lodge, and this is the lodge number, 741, and this is the year, March 29, 1914 in Struthers, Ohio.
- S: What about on the other side?
- K: I can't even see this.
- S: It is pretty faded out.
- K: It says practically the same thing on this side, yes.
- Of course, you were told about the picnics we had.
- S: Yes, you told me a little bit about them. What else do you recall about the picnics?
- K: They had an old barn there. They used to have homemade brew and homemade hard drinks. Of course, the kids weren't allowed there. That was out of bounds for the kids. We were supposed to sit up and watch the action at the picnic. We weren't allowed to go there. Of course, it wasn't very far maybe twenty-five feet or something like that, but still it was out of bounds for children. If you got caught even going towards there, it didn't have to be your mother who yelled at you. It could be somebody else. You obeyed no matter who it was. You respected them and you went back to where you belonged. Then they had dances there. First at the old picnics they used to dance right on the ground. When they got a little more modern, they built a platform. Everybody would dance. The Gypsies would play, and the people would dance, and the guys would sing. The harmony was beautiful. It was all good singing; it was all good harmony. They sang from old folk songs that they brought over from Europe. It was a fun day. The picnic was a day that we looked forward to because we knew it was going to be a fun day. We maybe would get a bottle of pop that day, one bottle of pop. That was it for the day.
- S: Did you pack a picnic lunch that day, or did everybody bring

a casserole or something like that?

K: As I recall my mother used to pack a basket, and we carried it up there. There wasn't too much in it. Young kids don't care too much about eating. You are running around and having fun. Once in a while you would get hungry or something. We had fruit. You would give a kid a piece of fruit or something like that like an apple. There were apple trees out there too. You would just get one right off the tree.

S: Where did you have those picnics at? I know there were a couple of different places.

K: Up here where Gladstone Street runs into Campbell there are all nice homes up there. At that time there was nothing there. There was just a house here and a house there. It was just like a farm land and all the way out to state route 422. In fact where Lincoln Knolls project and plaza is itself that was all woods there. In those days there was nothing there but woods.

S: Were you ever an altar boy?

K: No, my son was. I was never. I didn't. I just didn't care to be an altar boy. I didn't want to be an altar boy.

S: You told me before that you lived right here in this neighborhood. Where was your house at?

K: Right here on Wilson Avenue between Center Street and Haseltine Avenue. That is right in this block here. The Center is there now that lounge or whatever is right on the corner. There was a theater there, and then there was a post office. The next building was a post office. Haseltine, Haney, and Keesecker were civil engineers. That Haseltine's father was the one who sold this parish house to the church. Our house was two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bath. My sister slept in the bedroom with my mother, and us three boys slept in the other bedroom. There were four children. Then we had a living room, a kitchen, and a bath. Heat came from downstairs. There was a furnace downstairs. But then my mother had a coal stove in the living room too. We had to be very careful.

S: With that right inside like that.

K: We polished the pipes every Saturday with stove polish. The stove would get dirty and sooty. It wasn't all that bad though. You put that stove polish on, and it came out another beautiful black just like it was when it was new. Then the next Saturday you had to do the same thing. My mother set the Christmas tree up in the corner at Christmas time. Of course, we celebrated Christmas on January 7th.

We weren't allowed to light it until after church Christmas Day. We had candles all over the place. My mother had maybe eight or ten candles right out in front of the tree. We had candle holders that would clip onto the tree branches. Then you put the candle in it, and it would hold. I wish I would have saved some of those too. Then you let the candles burn for about two minutes with a bucket of water handy in case of a fire.

S: I wondered about that.

K: There were a lot of people's houses and children who were burned on account of the trees. The trees weren't like they are today. They were dry. There were a lot of fires that started because of candles. When everybody went to electricity, it still wasn't perfected. There were shorts in the lines.

S: It is pretty safe now.

K: They got it down pat. You don't have to worry about it.

S: I wondered about the candles on the trees.

K: We weren't allowed to light the candles until after church. Then it was Christmas and you could light the candles. Another thing about fasting . . . Sometimes all we had to eat was crackers and jelly all day long and tea. You fasted completely; you weren't allowed to touch anything. You didn't dare whistle or sing during Lent. You weren't allowed to whistle.

S: Oh, really?

K: Yes.

S: I never heard that one.

K: Yes, if you whistled in the house or even thought about singing, you got a tug on the ear because this was strictly an observance of Lent. You were supposed to give up everything. My mother said everything.

S: So that was considered a pleasure I guess.

K: If we sang in school, that was a must. She understood that. We were permitted while we were in school. But when you were home, you didn't whistle or sing during Lent.

S: That is a new one. I haven't heard that one yet. Going back to what you said before about the Haseltine family, you said his father was the one who sold this home to our

parish. So this was their family home?

K: If I recall--I'm only talking about what I can remember--this was like an estate. I think they purchased the property from the estate. Then later on they sold it, the house, to them. I guess they acquired the other property in ensuing years.

S: That came later, yes.

K: That was supposed to be a city lot. We played ball there all the time whether it was a playground or not.

S: Did you work at all when you were a teenager or a young youth?

K: When we were kids, we sold newspapers. We had two newspapers in town. It was the Youngstown Telegram and the Youngstown Vindicator. They used to sell a late edition which they called a peach edition. It was a pink colored front page. They called that the peach edition. That carried the latest baseball scores and games. We would go down the steps of Republic Steel and go through the mill and sell papers to the men who worked in the mill. The papers then were 3¢. We carried about ten papers each. Right at the end of Republic Steel on Poland Avenue they had a Youngstown Hide and Tallow. We used to go there and sell newspapers too. We didn't like that because that was where they used to dispose of all the animal fat and dead horses and stuff. They somehow processed that and made commercial soap. Of course, they cut that out. They don't do that anymore. That place used to smell so bad. We didn't like to go there to sell newspapers, but we did it. It was hard for me to get a job as a teenager but things were hard. Older guys couldn't get a job. One of my first jobs was working in a grocery store for Sheeban. I was a clerk. I worked six days a week for \$6 a week.

S: Wow, \$1 a day.

K: I worked from 8:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night. On Saturdays I worked from 8:00 in the morning until 11:00. I gave my mother every cent I made.

S: She needed every penny of it?

K: Oh, she needed it desperately.

S: Before we go onto the next time period, is there anything else you would like to talk about during your early youthful years?

K: No, I can't recall. If somebody in the parish died, whoever

the janitor was at 12:00 at noon and at 6:00 p.m. in the evening he would toll the bells until after the funeral for three days or whatever it was. If we didn't know anything about whoever died you heard the bells, then we knew somebody in the parish had died. That was a method of communication.

S: Yes, it would have been. Mr. Bosak was telling me about the cantor coming right into the home where the person was laid out right there. Do you remember anything about that?

K: No, I really don't remember going into too many homes. But I know they used to keep them at home because that was the custom. I was kind of leery. Of course, my mother and all the old people went to all of them when somebody died. We called them old people. When you are little, they all look old.

S: When you are little, sure.

K: Sure, they all looked old. Well, we didn't have that many people at that time die anyhow because they were all young, and we were just younger than that. It is just now that they are starting to die more frequently.

S: It is catching up to us.

K: We are in that group; at least I am anyhow.

S: No, I mean the parish in general has been declining that way.

K: Yes, it is dwindling down. You can see that because there are a lot less children who are baptized. Our people are kind of spread out and they are going to other churches in outlying districts.

S: How many children do you have?

K: One, just my son Michael.

S: One son, okay. What do you recall about your young adult years with your son when he was little in the church?

K: Michael was an altar boy. Father Pohorlak was here with Father Rommack. Of course, he started out at the school about the same time. Before that school was completed we had to start school in Fairview in Campbell. Andy Kohl and Steven Kohl and myself, we had to go there and clean that building out.

We had the second floor. The first floor was used by the

board of education. I think I had one class downstairs, but the upstairs of that school hadn't been used since the WPA (Works Progress Administration) days. The women used to sew up there for a government project. The floors were oiled with something. I don't know if they did that to preserve them or what, but we had to run a hose from outside with chemicals and we had squeegees. We had to scrub that floor down until we got it white. Then when we got that done, we had to knock all that paint that was peeling off of the walls and clean it all off, and we painted the walls and the ceilings and made it look nice. We just got it finished in time for school to start. We would go there in the morning to clean the desks and the blackboards off, and we took care of the kids until the sister came in.

I will never forget one day that I drew a picture of Sister Germaine on the blackboard and she walked in. She used to have mints in her desk drawer. We used to help ourselves to her mints. Then she would open the drawer and say, "Were the mice here again?" We would say, "Yes, the mice were here again. We chased them." She knew we were getting it. When the janitor would walk in--I think he belonged to the St. Michael's Church in Campbell and was the janitor at the school building for the Campbell Board of Education--and when he would walk into the room, we taught the kids to stand up by the desks and greet him. We did the same thing with the sister when she walked in. They stood up and greeted her. It was fun. It wasn't too long after that when the desks came for the school. They had the school complete, and then the desks were shipped in. We worked there sometimes until 3:00 in the morning putting the desks together. They all had to be assembled and put into the rooms. Finally we got that school completed.

We moved from Fairview into B.C.C. (Byzantine Catholic Central). I don't remember what year Mike started up here. I know the school was up in 1954 or 1955. He went to Roosevelt School his first six months, and he went to Sacred Heart for awhile. Then he went to Fairview and then to B.C.C.

S: You told me that you were a school bus driver too.

K: Yes.

S: What was that like for you?

K: I never drove anything bigger than a pick-up truck in my life. I came down here and they showed me how to do it around the parking lot a couple of times. I even forget who gave me instructions. Then we went up Coitsville Road and down Coitsville Road and went down side streets so that I could just learn how to swing the bus. It wasn't actually

all that hard. Those buses didn't have power steering or automatic shifts. You had to do all the shifting with the clutch, and it was fun. I had to travel from the east side to kids who lived way out on Jacobs Road. I used to have to go pick children up on Maple Drive.

S: Way out past Boardman.

K: I used to have to go to Lansingville too.

S: You had quite a route.

K: But I loved it. Sunday over here was bingo, and we had bingo down in the basement of the church. I worked the day here. Then on Monday night I used to take the school bus down in front of the courthouse to pick up women for the bingo game. The bus would leave at 7:00 sharp. I parked there. The first thing I would have a busload. At 7:00 I would take off and go out Market Street. I would cross over and get on South Avenue. I would take them to the school and unload them. They would go work the bingo. After bingo I would load the women back up and take them downtown. That was when the city buses were running. I could take them downtown maybe 10:30 or 10:45 and they could still catch a bus to get home.

S: I wondered why you met them at the courthouse. That was just like the central pickup?

K: Yes. That was where I picked them up, and that was where I unloaded them. They would run like heck for the bus because they didn't want to miss that bus downtown at night.

S: So Monday night the school had the bingo?

K: Yes, and then we had this church bingo here on Sunday afternoon. I worked both of them. I also typed the bulletin too.

S: You typed the bulletin too?

K: When the garage was being built, we devoted all of our time to that. I would say that ninety-nine percent of the labor on that was all volunteer. Even the cement finisher did the floor. He was married to a girl from our parish, but I forget her name. They lived out in Poland. He was a cement finisher, and he did all that work finishing the floor. He did a good job. We had to dig into that bank that was like sand. Then we had men who knew how to lay brick. It was all done by volunteering parish work.

S: The parish supplied the materials, is that it?

K: Yes.

S: And you did all the labor?

K: Yes. Once in a while we got sandwiches brought up to us. Some of the women would cook something and bring it up to us. Then the kids used to have car washes here. I don't know if they still do it.

S: I think the eighth grade has been doing them through the school.

K: We used to have car washes here especially right before Easter when we used to bless the baskets. People would bring their car here and get it washed and get the basket blessed also.

S: All set for Easter then.

K: Yes, if the weather was nice.

S: That was a good idea. Tell me more about typing the bulletin. How long did you do that?

K: I started with old Father Rommack. I would say it was around 1961 when I retired. I quit bingo and everything. I just retired from it.

S: From all of it?

K: I figured the younger kids could take over. After you work so long it gets boring.

S: Sure.

K: There is nothing to do anymore. You need a change.

S: You need a break.

K: I used to take the altar boys and the boy scouts down to the seminary. On certain days we used to load up the altar boys and the boy scouts and take them to the seminary for the day. They would have lunch there. The seminarians-- which we had a lot more of at that time--would take the kids around the grounds and show them. I think they were trying to get some recruits.

S: Recruits, yes.

K: Yes, they weren't very successful. I think there were three: Ray Backus, John Palen, and John Biro.

S: Back to the school a little bit, were there very many discipline problems then that you can remember?

- K: No, at that time discipline was different than it is today. We had a state trooper who at the start of the season would come in and give us a talk about safety first of all. One thing he said that he would never excuse is if you hit somebody in the rear end. There was no excuse for running into somebody in front of you. You had to be very careful and keep a distance and turning on the lights and everything and making sure that you look both ways and look in the mirror to see that nothing was coming when the kids were crossing the street. They told the principal, the teachers, and the parents that they had nothing to do with the bus. The bus driver was the boss on that bus with the kids. I only had, I would say, two problems. They were only two occasions. The sister would get on the bus when we were taking the kids home at night. She would start them all in the rosary. By the time I hit Youngstown-Poland Road, the rosary was over and WHOT was on the radio. On the last day of school we used to stop at the Dairy Queen and treat them. We made points with the kids. Everything was forgiven for all that happened during the years for the ice cream and the end of the year.
- S: That is sort of like going back to your cantor and his lollipops.
- K: Right, I probably had that in my mind. When you see somebody in the mall and they greet you, I know it was somebody that was on my bus. When they say, "Mr. Kiktavy," they still hold that respect.
- S: That respect for you, yes.
- K: I know if they greet me in that way, it was somebody who was on my school bus.
- S: Is there anything else that was significant during this period that you can recall right now?
- K: Which period?
- S: The time that you were driving to school during the 1950's and 1960's.
- K: The school had a larger enrollment at the time. I understand there are strange kids going up there now.
- S: Nonparishioners, yes.
- K: Yes, kids who don't belong to the parish and even from Campbell or wherever they pick them up at.
- Sister Germaine was a princess. If there ever was a good

nun, she was it. When she left here . . . I think they sent her back to Canada. I'm not sure. She left around 11:00 p.m. or close to midnight from the New York Central Station. They had trains then. I think there were 200 kids down there to see her off. Would you believe that? Then she got on the train.

S: Do you mean downtown?

K: Down at Wilson Avenue towards town. We were still on trains then. That night it was so crowded that you would think it was a ball game or something. All the kids went there to see her off. She was a really, really good nun.

S: Was she the principal or just one of the teachers?

K: No, just one of the teachers.

S: I understand that when Father Rommack Sr. died, then Father Rommack Jr. became administrator of the school and took over his father's job. Was that transition smooth?

K: Yes, there was no problem there, none whatsoever.

S: That is good. Then Father Rommack eventually had to retire due to his ill health, right?

K: Right.

S: Then who became administrator, Father Romza?

K: Father Romza.

S: He had that for about eighteen years I think.

K: Then Father Dennis took over.

S: About three or four years ago he took over. As far as Father Rommack Jr.'s pastorate in the parish is there anything significant that you can recall about that?

K: He carried on just like the other priests. He was a good pastor, but he was so sick. When he used to have mass, towards the end he used to sit on a high stool at the altar because he was so weak. He used to perspire. I think he had three or four handkerchiefs up there, and they were soaking wet. He had a fan there to his side. It was blowing air on him because he was perspiring. I guess it was the medication he was taking that was causing all of this. He was an awfully sick man.

S: What was it? Do you know what he was sick with?

K: He was involved in an automobile accident when he was really young. That may have been the result of that.

S: I believe Father Levkusic took over after him.

K: The gardener.

S: The gardener?

K: He straightened up the cemetery because it was in a general mess. He started planting flowers all around here and made it look really nice. He was the one who actually started all of that.

S: He did all the nice landscaping then.

K: Yes.

S: I believe there was a group called P.A.C.E. (Parents and Associates for Catholic Education) that was really active at the time. Were you involved with that at all?

K: No.

S: Okay. Then we had Father Koval. Was there anything about Father Koval that you can recall?

K: Yes. Father Koval, what I remember most about him was that he married my son. He also gave me the Last Rites for my heart operation. Then when he was sick . . . I told you six months after I had my heart surgery I broke my hip. This was like in February and I was walking around on crutches in March. He was in the hospital, and I went to see him. He raised cane with me because I was on crutches in the snow and ice. I told him that he came to see me when I was sick, so I could go to see him when he was sick. I did go up to visit him when he was sick in the hospital shortly before he died.

S: He had cancer, right?

K: He was still jolly despite the fact he was sick.

S: And Father Duker was next?

K: Yes, Father Duker. The only thing I had with Father Duker was he baptized both of my grandchildren. When my grandson was baptized, we took pictures. My granddaughter was maybe four, five or six years old. I was pointing out the pictures one day. I was asking her who the people were and showing her that this was mommy, this was daddy, this was grandpa. When I pointed to Father Duker and I asked her who he was, she said that he was God. I told Father Duker that he got a promotion over the bishop and over the

the Pope. I told him about Michelle. She promoted him right up there to God.

S: That is funny. That is almost the same thing my daughter said looking at her own baptismal pictures. She called him the Pope I think.

K: They have the right idea.

S: Then we had Father Mihalik next.

K: The only thing I liked about Father Mihalik was his singing. He used to sing along and lead the whole church in singing. He could harmonize beautifully, and I loved that. His Lent services were really beautiful. I loved those.

S: Was he the one who started having the presanctified liturgies again?

K: Yes.

S: Those are beautiful. Is there anything else in particular you can recall about him?

K: Only that my aunt was the last one he buried.

S: Mrs. Haladay.

K: Yes.

S: Now we have Father Dennis.

K: Father Dennis came up to tend to both of my brothers when they were in the hospital. He administered Last Rites to both of them. He even came up to the house to see Andy the last day before he passed away. He knew Andy was a regular churchgoing member. I used to go up to the house and pick him up and take him down. The last time I went to pick him up for church he told me he was so sick that he couldn't make it. He told me to tell Father Dennis that he was going to skip church that day. I saw Father as I came down the drive. I told him that Andy sent a message that he was going to skip church. He told me to tell Andy that it was okay. The time before that was the last time Andy was in church. I like what Father Dennis is doing. He seems to have people coming to church. It actually reflects the contribution on Sunday. That reflects . . . If people are dissatisfied, that would be the first place that it would show up.

S: Speaking of collections I think you mentioned something to me earlier about how . . .

K: The Golden Hearts.

S: The Golden Hearts, okay.

K: That was what we had here. We had that in the bulletin, and that only made more work for me. I used to have to type everybody's name and what they gave up to \$1.

S: How did that start now again?

K: Old Father Rommack . . . I do believe it started under old Father Rommack. You put everybody's name and the amount they gave in the bulletin up to \$1. Everybody who gave \$1 would get their name printed anyhow, but it seemed like when somebody saw a name in print and somebody gave a little bit more than them, it seemed like they would try to top that. The first thing you know they were \$20, \$25, \$10, \$15, and \$5. The ones got reduced and the bigger money started coming in. It was amazing how when people saw their name in print how they . . .

S: They just try to outdo each other.

K: They want to outdo the next guy; they want to climb on top of the next guy, and it showed. It was remarkable how the collection went up. Of course, a lot of times when the collection goes up, the expenses go up too. For instance, the renovation program is going to take money. Today the cost of everything isn't like it was fifty years ago. The renovation costs now are going to be now probably half of that church with labor and everything the way it is.

S: You had told me about--I don't know what time period this would have been--but you said that the ushers would make note of anybody who gave 50¢ even.

K: Yes, that was in the early days when I was seven or eight years old and through that period. There would be two ushers. They would go up the same aisle and take collection. One would have the basket, and the other would have a pad in his hand. Anybody who gave 50¢ or more, he would write his name down or her's. Then they would hand that list of names to the priest. After he got through with the sermon and gave the announcements for meetings or weddings or church services or something, then he would read out everybody's name. That was like Golden Hearts. For example, he would say Joe Smith gave \$2. Well, then the next week John Brown would want to top that, so he gave \$4. That kept multiplying.

S: A snowball, yes.

K: A snowball to where the collections went up a little bit. I remember they used to have the basket right on that table

up in front of the church. Everybody who came to church in those days used the center aisle. You would walk right up the center aisle; you would bow reverently, kiss the crucifix, and whoever had change would drop the change in the basket right there. It was always pennies, nickels. I never saw a bill in there in my life. That was the way it used to be. Everybody went right down the center aisle.

S: They went down there first.

K: Then they walked to the side to their pews. The kids had to sit up the front like I told you. The girls were on the left side, and the boys were on the right side. You better be spic-and-span too. Boy, your hair had to be combed, and your shoes had to be shined.

S: Just so, yes.

K: We always used to shine our shoes with lard.

S: Did you?

K: Yes, that would make your shoes shine. It was just a little speck of lard.

S: It probably preserved them too and made them waterproof.

K: Shoe polish cost 10¢ which we thought was horrible.

S: We have covered quite a bit. Is there anything else that you think is important that we didn't talk about?

K: I can't really think of anything. Some of those things happened years ago. There were so many things. They might sound insignificant, but they are really something.

S: This is all really interesting. How about when you look back through the years? Were there any changes that you particularly didn't like or maybe did like over the years?

K: One of the changes I did like was the changing of the calendar from our Christmas on the 7th to the 25th for the simple reason that we were ridiculed by the Roman rite at St. Elizabeth's. They thought that we didn't even know what day to celebrate Christmas. It also was embarrassing in school. The kids all celebrated it on the 25th. They said that the only reason we celebrated on the 7th was so that we could go pick their Christmas trees and use them over again so that we wouldn't have to buy any.

S: Oh, really?

K: Yes, there was talk like that. I approved that 100 percent.

S: You liked that change.

K: Everybody opposes or rebels a change in one way or another. You get a lot of people who approve and a lot of people who disapprove. You will never satisfy everybody; I don't care what you do. It is just not fair. You can see it in your local politics and in the school systems or any organizations. There is always an opposite side, and you can't get everybody to agree to one thing unless the majority votes. Then that is the only way, but it is hard to please everybody at one time. I saw a lot in our open union at the shop. You could never please everybody no matter what you do. There is always somebody who is dissatisfied, and that goes with the changes in the church. There are a lot of things that people just don't approve, and they will talk about it. Once it is set in motion and they get accustomed to it and they get used to it, then nothing is said.

S: What words of wisdom do you have for the children of this generation or even the next generation?

K: Don't leave this church. Stick to it. There is no rite anywhere like ours. There are no services like ours. I don't care where you go. I have had Roman rite people come here, and they want to join. They are afraid to leave there, but they think our services are beautiful. What they still like is that altar. The Roman Rite is changing, so where the priest faces there is just a table there.

S: Yes, yes.

K: It is not like going to church anymore they say. It just doesn't seem like church, so they come here. Even at my brother's funeral there were two Jews. They commented on how beautiful the services are, and they don't know anything about our services. They didn't say this to butter me up or anything, but they actually believed that the services were beautiful because they never saw that before. Then the Roman rites would come, and they think our services are beautiful. For the prayer services there are certain hymns and tunes and even the tones that are very like harp strings if you are brought up with it.

S: I know what you mean.

K: But if you are not brought up with it, it hardly means anything. But certain ones that when the minute that started, the tears would just start rolling. There are just certain portions of it that you just can't help it.

S: It is that minor key that it is sung in that seems to go with the mood. I know what you are saying.

K: See, people who don't really understand it or who weren't brought up with it, it doesn't hit them as hard like with us because we were brought up with it. It really is a tearjerker as I call it, but it is true. You can't hold them back; they come automatically, and you just have to let it out; that is all.

S: Sure.

K: I thought I held it pretty good at my brother's.

S: I was raised Roman rite, but in the last three years that has become very meaningful to me too.

K: Yes.

S: Okay, is there anything else you would like to add?

K: No. I don't want to go to the future.

S: Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW