

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project

Parishioner Experiences

O. H. 541

MR. JOHN AND MRS. ANN TIRPACK

Interviewed

by

Mary Lou Shirilla

on

November 18, 1986

MR. JOHN Y. TIRPACK

John Yenik Tirpack was born on October 16, 1911, in Czechoslovakia, a son of Michael and Anna Tirpack.

His family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when he was a child and he graduated from South High, Pittsburgh. Returning to Zavadka, he worked on his father's farm. He married Ann Vansach on May 21, 1934. They are the parents of three children: John M., Boris J., and Mrs. Nadine M. Kramer.

From 1938 until 1950, he was employed by the government of Slovakia, in diplomatic service (customs). His job took the family to live in Sophia, Bulgaria, Stockholm, Sweden, and Hamburg, Germany. From Hamburg, they came to America in 1950, living first in Campbell, Ohio and later in Youngstown, Ohio.

Since that time, he has done carpentry work, and was a Deputy Sheriff for Mahoning County (1965-1985). He is now retired.

Mr. Tirpack received the Bulgarian Crown Decoration for Public Service, and has received recognition for his efforts to help fingerprint children for I.D. purposes.

He has been a member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church since 1950. He has been active in the parish in many ways. He is a member of the Byzantine Men's Association and the Golden Circle senior citizens club.

He is also a member of Slovak Catholic Sokols and Volunteer Senior Service. His hobbies include woodcraft, fishing, fingerprinting, reading, and photography.

MRS. ANN TIRPACK

Mrs. Ann Tirpack was born on June 5, 1915, in Farrell, Pennsylvania, a daughter of Michael and Katarina Vansach. Her family moved back to Zavadka, a small village in Czechoslovakia, when she was a small child. She grew up in Zavadka, attending grade school there. She attended junior high school in the village of Zavadka.

She married John Y. Tirpack on May 21, 1934. They are the parents of three children: John M., Boris J., and Mrs. Nadine Kramer.

Mr. Tirpack's job with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, first with the independent government of Slovakia, then Czechoslovakia, took the family to Sophia, Bulgaria; Stockholm, Sweden; and Hamburg, Germany. From Hamburg, they came to America in 1950, living first in Campbell, Ohio and later in Youngstown.

Mrs. Tirpack was employed by the Fanny Farmer Candy Co. in downtown Youngstown from 1960-1963 and uptown 1963-1975. She is now retired.

She has been a member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church since 1950. She was active in the choir for many years, under the direction of Mr. George Hress. She is a member of the Byzantine Ladies Association, the Sacred Heart Society, and the Legion of Mary, Golden Circle.

Her hobbies include reading, crocheting, knitting, and walking, also volunteering in pirohy house for the church.

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St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project

INTERVIEWEES: JOHN & ANN TIRPACK

INTERVIEWER: Mary Lou Shirilla

SUBJECT: Byzantine rite, Modern immigrant, European
life styles, Customs and traditions

DATE: November 18, 1986

MS: This is an interview with Mr. John and Mrs. Ann Tirpack for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project, by Mary Lou Shirilla, at their home, on November 18, 1986, at 11:00 a.m.

Mrs. Tirpack, before we begin talking about yourself, can you give me a little bit of a background about your own family, your parents or your grandparents if you remember them too?

AT: I was born in Farrell, Pennsylvania.

MS: Farrell, yes.

AT: My mother, my father, my two brothers--I was the middle one . . . Well, what can I say. Do you want me to say something about Farrell?

MS: Go ahead, yes.

AT: All I remember is that we lived on Spearman Street and St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church was on the same street. That is all I remember.

MS: That is alright.

AT: The house was on this street and so was the church. I know I went around the corner to the movies with my brother. He was watching me; he was older. That is all I remember from that.

MS: That is okay; that is fine.

AT: In April 1921 we moved to Europe. My parents were from Zavadka, Czechoslovakia. It is Spish county. Then I started school there, first kindergarten and then school.

MS: So you were just about five years old at this time.

AT: Yes. I only remember one grandmother on my father's side. On my mother's side my grandparents were dead and my grandfather on my father's side too. When we moved there, we just rented a house. We built a new home there. The village has only one church and one school. The school had two teachers. The church was Byzantine rite. There was no Roman rite church or any other kind. We had a lot of Roman Catholic people there, but we all went together to this church because they came from other villages by marriage. The priest who was there at that time was married; he had children. His name was Reverend Turchany.

MS: Was the school a part of the parish also?

AT: No, that was a government school. But we had religion twice a week. Also at the same time we had to learn the Cyrillic because the prayer books were all in Cyrillic; so we had that class on Wednesday and on Saturday afternoon.

MS: They taught you that at church?

AT: No, in school.

MS: Oh, in school.

AT: That was extra. Otherwise everything was in Slovak language which is very pretty; it is a very beautiful language. At home we talked with the dialect. It was Slovak mixed with maybe a little Rusin and maybe even a little bit of German because in the next village the majority spoke German.

MS: So that was what it was like for you as a child.

AT: Yes.

MS: Do you remember why your parents moved back to Europe from Farrell?

AT: Yes, I do because my father lost his hearing. He was working here in a factory. The factory had only a roof. There was nothing on the sides. He got a very bad cold, and he lost his hearing. So he was only thirty-two and he couldn't hear. When he started going to the doctors all over, they couldn't help him. Someone said that European doctors are much better than here; so he decided

to take the whole family to Europe. He started going to the doctors there, but nobody could help him.

MS: What about schooling past the grade school level? Did you go on to high school there?

AT: Yes, to junior high school, and if you want to go further, you have to go to the city because that was the Higeet in our village.

MS: I see.

AT: You have to pay your own room and board in the city.

MS: To go to the city?

AT: Yes. That was expensive for people who just work at the farms.

MS: Sure.

AT: My older brother and sister both graduated from Teachers College in Presov. My brother also had a degree in cantoring and choir music. My parents really struggled to put the two of them through college.

MS: They sacrificed for you.

AT: Yes. When we went to Europe, I had two brothers. My sister was born in Europe and another brother.

MS: So five children all together.

AT: Yes. They sacrificed; they wanted us to have an easier and better life. If you had an education, it helped there too. It is just like here.

MS: What did you study in school?

AT: We studied the same subjects as in any other school anywhere.

MS: Is your mother still living?

AT: Yes. My mother is ninety-five.

MS: Is she here with you now?

AT: No.

MS: Is she still in Europe?

AT: Yes.

MS: Then what did you do past the junior high school years?

AT: After junior high I was a nanny for two children for a year and a half. I lived with the family, and cared for the children full-time. I had to quit when my mother wasn't feeling well. So I moved back home. And I was home working with the housework and farm until I got married.

When we got married, I moved in with my in-laws and we worked on their farm. We were there for four years. By then the Slovakian Republic was formed. When we came to Europe in 1921, it was Czechoslovakia which was formed from Czech people, Slesian, Moravian, Slovak, and Rusin like they call Ruthenian now.

There were five regions or whatever you want to call it in one Czechoslovakia. When World War II started everything was changed. They formed the New Slovak Republic. Germany took the Czech part and Slesian and Moravian. Slovakia was formed like an independent state, independent country. Ruthenia was included in Ukrainian S.S.R. at that time. I think they were independent for maybe a month.

MS: Ukrainian S.S.R.?

AT: They didn't want it; they wanted to have it just like the Slovaks, but they only had it maybe for a month or two months. I'm not even sure about that. The Slovak government was independent for six years. That was really nice. It was like a little Switzerland. That was when my husband got a government job in 1938.

MS: What did he do at this job?

AT: He was working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

MS: Foreign affairs, yes.

AT: I think you should correct me because I have such an accent.

MS: No, I think it is beautiful.

AT: So we moved to Bratislava and we lived there for only maybe a year and a half. Then he was transferred to Sofia, Bulgaria to the consulate, because of this English language and because he knew a little bit of Russian and German language. He was office manager of the consulate. So we were in Sofia for three years. Then he was transferred to Stockholm.

MS: In Sweden?

AT: In Sweden. We were there for three years. But in most countries we had a Byzantine rite church. Most of Bulgaria is Orthodox.

MS: Yes.

AT: But they had Roman Catholic churches; they had all kinds of other churches that you can go to, but they had a Byzantine rite church there. In Sofia, we joined that one, but we didn't have it in Stockholm. We had to go to a Roman rite. But we liked it; we liked Stockholm. It is a democratic country and independent. It is really nice. Then when the war was over, they formed another Czechoslovakia. So we had to move back home. We were in Bratislava for maybe three months or so. He had to be cleared because the communist government already took over then. Everybody had to be checked what he was doing before, but my husband was cleared because he wasn't active in communism or any other political activities. He just did his job and that was it. At the consulate in both Bulgaria and in Stockholm he was doing the passport and visa agendas and the payroll. That was his job at both places and typing. You had to have typing. When he was clear, we went to live in Prague. From there he was transferred to Hamburg, Germany. We were there for three years. In 1950 they asked him to return home, but by then our country was really bad.

MS: Communism?

AT: Communism took over everything. So we didn't want to go back. That was when he resigned, in December 1949. In 1950 in June we came over.

MS: Did you come directly from Germany?

AT: Yes.

MS: You never went back to your country?

AT: Well, I went for a visit, but not my husband. I was there three times already. I visited my sister before she died. She was very ill for a long time. Then I went twice: once with my granddaughter and once with my daughter-in-law just to show them the country. The country is beautiful. But it is nothing like it used to be. It was beautiful before because everything was private and everybody took care of his own property. Now everything is government and nobody cares.

MS: They don't have that pride.

AT: No, it is not theirs'. It's government owned and so the people just don't care. Everything is run down and so gloomy

looking.

MS: What about the church?

AT: They still have church. They have priests. The priests really have to sign that they are going to do what the government tells them to do. In public, they must obey the government, but privately, they discuss everything and criticize the government. In private they can probably do anything they want to. But when they serve in church, with even the sermon they have to be very careful of what they say.

MS: Now you said you came to America in 1950 in June. Did you come to Youngstown at that time?

AT: Yes, to Campbell.

MS: To Campbell.

AT: Because my husband had two brothers and one half brother in Campbell.

MS: Did you stay with the brother for awhile?

AT: For one month and then we rented a house and lived in Campbell until 1961.

MS: How old were you children when you came?

AT: Johnny was about twelve; Boris was nine, and Nadine was three years old.

MS: What about you? What were your first impressions coming to America?

AT: My first impression was very bad.

MS: Why?

AT: Because I lived in countries that . . . well, like Stockholm. You can't compare Stockholm with Campbell.

MS: Right.

AT: At that time all the mills were working, and it was so dusty and black. Campbell was especially dirty because all of that smoke went our way. I wasn't used to that. I cried every day. I didn't have any family here. American people don't understand you when you come here and how you really feel. I do not blame the American people, but when you come here, leaving your friends and family, and that you may never see them again, you are scared and you really do not know if you made the right decision. But today I

know it was the right decision.

MS: Did you know the language yet at this time?

AT: No, just a few words. My husband resigned in 1949 at the end of December. From that time, the first of January, he was unemployed. We lived in the British zone in Hamburg. So the British people were very nice to us. They let us live in their apartment where we lived before. We bought groceries from them on credit from where we got them before until we got our papers straight so that we could leave. They even gave my husband a job. In Stockholm and in Hamburg there was no Byzantine rite church. We had to go to Roman rite churches.

MS: Did you join St. Nicholas Church when you came here?

AT: Yes, right away. All of his brothers and their families were members of St. Nicholas, and it wasn't too far for us to walk. We were in Campbell.

MS: And Father Rommack was pastor at the time, right?

AT: Father Rommack Sr. was the pastor, yes. We liked him; he was very nice.

MS: Did the church in any way help you to get settled in America?

AT: No, we never asked.

MS: You didn't?

AT: No, we never asked. His brothers were contractors, building homes. They gave him a job right away. He had to learn carpentry to make a living at that time.

MS: Maybe what I meant to say was did they make you feel welcome? Did they help you get to know anybody in the neighborhood or anything like that?

AT: Well, yes, because the neighbors were mostly Slovaks. We right away joined the church. They were friendly, oh, yes. Mrs. Rommack and Father Rommack were nice; they welcomed us.

MS: Did you find the church here in America very different from the one in Europe, the Byzantine ones that you were used to there with the customs? Were they the same or different?

AT: Yes, see when I was growing up in Europe, every Sunday you went to church three times a day.

MS: Did you?

AT: The morning utrena service, and at 10:00 was the high mass, and 2:00 the vespers. You just went; there were no questions.

MS: So you mean early morning.

AT: Oh, yes. Eight o'clock was the service and ten o'clock high mass and two o'clock vespers. We prayed the rosary every Sunday after vespers. You socialized after that. Sunday was a Sunday. We didn't work. We just got together and maybe sing and maybe talk. We had a good time. Here for me it was hard because when you don't go to school here, you have no friends. You make friends in school. I didn't have that, and I still don't have that. You get to know the people, and you make friends like when I joined the choir here. That was when I really made friends and got to know more people that way, but before it was hard.

MS: Sure, those bonds that you made in early life were just lost to you right?

AT: Yes, I didn't have that; I still don't have that. I will never have it because I wasn't here. I don't think they had an early service on Sunday here, but I think they had Saturday vespers that we used to have on Sunday afternoon. I think Father Rommack Sr. had that and Cantor Horvath. But I don't know when they stopped that. They don't have that anymore.

MS: But they did have that when you first came?

AT: Yes.

MS: Were there any other differences that you saw in the churches from here and in Europe?

AT: Well, the singing in Europe compared to this singing was much better. In our village everybody sang. We either had a choir or we had people singing, but everything was in harmony. The little children knew how to sing already even at the vespers and not just high mass.

MS: Do you want to tell me about this? What were the cantors like?

AT: They were educated like my brother-in-law or my brother. They enrolled in the Teacher's College. They had to know every note and everything about the vespers and all the singing in church. They had to have degrees in church music. For the most part today these cantors here don't have much of an education about it. Of course, right now we have excellent cantors in our church. There was a time, though,

that we didn't.

MS: So in Europe was the cantor's job a full-time job for them?

AT: He was a teacher and a cantor. Every morning at 8:00 they had to go to church first then from church to school.

MS: To the village school?

AT: Yes. He had a paying job. For the cantor's job he had a home, and he had property like farms.

MS: That was part of the parish position then.

AT: Right and for the teaching job he had a government salary.

MS: Were the cantors assigned to be a parish? Were they moved around to different parishes or villages?

AT: Yes, if they wanted to, but if they wanted to stay there like our cantor or teacher, he was there until he died. The second teacher . . . Later on they had even more than two, but when I was growing up, there were only two. The older teacher was the cantor; the younger teacher was only teaching. He was not a cantor.

MS: You said even the little children knew how to sing.

AT: Yes.

MS: Did they teach that in school or as part of the religion classes or what?

AT: Yes. In the afternoon when we had religion class we learned, and then we learned at home. Everybody had a book, Molitvenik, and Sbornik and everybody sang. When they went to church, they sang.

MS: You said you would come home on Sundays and sing them too, right?

AT: Yes, sometime. After 2:00 service at vesper, after that, everybody was kind of free for maybe two hours until they had to go home and cook or take care of the farms. You stayed and talked.

MS: Stayed together.

AT: Yes. The young people got together, and they would maybe sing of maybe even dance. Maybe somebody had an accordion. They had a good time. I can't really tell you what it is like now.

When I go for a visit, I stay for only one day just to visit my father's grave and my brother's grave and talk to some of the relatives and go back where my mother is now in the city of Presov. In the village now they have electricity, and they have a bus service that goes into the city. At that time when I was small, we didn't have that. We had to walk. We walked to the city for two hours to get there if you had to do some shopping. There was a grocery store at home in the village, but if you wanted to buy shoes or clothes, you had to go to the city, and you walked.

MS: There was no electricity either?

AT: At that time no electricity. They used kerosene lamps.

MS: You have seen quite a few changes then.

AT: Yes. My parents came from America. They already had learned to live a little bit better. They wanted their children to live better. I never really remember not having what we needed because they saved their money. They came to Europe. They built their home, and they were farming after that. So we always had what we needed. We didn't have to suffer really.

MS: You weren't really in poverty?

AT: No, no. I wouldn't say that. No, my parents were very hardworking. They were very good parents.

MS: Did it take you very long to learn English when you did come to America?

AT: Well, because I didn't have any friends, I started reading anything. Maybe I just would look in a magazine and try to make a few words and slowly I understood some of it. When Johnny went to college, I went to work. I think most of my English I learned when I was working.

MS: Where was that?

AT: Fanny Farmer Candy Company downtown. I learned by reading.

MS: You taught yourself.

AT: Yes.

MS: Very good. Now you said you got involved in the choir in church.

AT: yes.

MS: When was that?

AT: Father John Rommack Jr. was pastor. That was when we started the choir. We really did have a good teacher at that time. About fifty people joined the choir. Nick Fabian was English mass cantor at that time. He just started singing and Father Rommack helped him. He wanted Nick to teach us. He tried for awhile, than Mr. Hress took over. Of course, Mr. Hress knew everything about a choir. That was when I started. Nadine started and my niece started with me. That was when I really go to know more people.

MS: Was Father Rommack, Jr. still the pastor at this time?

AT: Yes.

MS: Had Mr. Hress received a formal cantor's training?

AT: Oh, yes.

MS: Where did he get his training?

AT: He studied for priesthood.

MS: Oh, I didn't know that.

AT: Oh, yes, he was in a seminary. I think he only needed one year to be ordained a priest. Then he left. So, yes, he knew everything about it. He also had special courses in cantoring and leading the choir. He knows everything about Byzantine rite; he knows about the singing.

MS: Was he in the seminary here in Pittsburgh?

AT: Yes.

MS: How long did that choir continue then?

AT: I really don't remember what year he came. He was here eighteen years. Here is a picture of our choir. That is not all of the members in the photo.

MS: And this is with the bishop?

AT: Bishop Kocisko.

MS: Was this a special occasion?

AT: He was visiting I think; it was a visit.

Until Mr. Hress left we had that choir. Do you remember when he left?

MS: He was still there when we got married and that was in 1972. He was there for several years after that I know.

AT: I don't remember the year he left, but it must be at least six years now or maybe more.

MS: Probably more than that I think.

AT: After that the choir just fell apart because there was no one to take it over and that was bad. We all felt very bad because by then we knew four different masses to sing. We learned a lot, and then we just lost it.

MS: Do you think those people would be interested in getting back together again?

AT: Some of them I think would do it, yes. Maybe not all of them but probably most of them would. Some of them have joined the St. Michael choir now like Mike Gozur, Mike Kushma, Joe Bayus and John Sharshan, because they have a men's choir. So some of the members joined that choir. As for the ladies, we lost.

MS: There is nothing for you.

AT: Nothing.

MS: Aside from the choir were there any other activities that you were involved in in the parish?

AT: Not until I joined the Byzantine Ladies' Association. Then I joined the Sacred Heart Society. I belong to that now. But I like the club, BLA.

MS: When did you join that? Do you remember?

AT: When it was first formed. I don't remember the year, but we already celebrated ten years. It must be about fifteen years now.

MS: So would you say in the early 1970's maybe?

AT: Yes.

MS: So you already had been here for quite some time by then.

AT: Yes. Well, it has been thirty-six years already that we have been here, from 1950. This is 1986. That is thirty-six years. I know a lot of people in church. A lot of them are gone already. I have made good friends with a lot of them.

MS: Going back to the 1950's then--that was when the school was

first formed--did your children go to B.C.C. School (Byzantine Catholic Central School)?

AT: Just Nadine, because the boys were already in high school. Nadine went to B.C.C.S.

MS: Do you remember anything about the early years of the school?

AT: Not much because I started working, and I couldn't join any P.T.A. (Parent-Teacher Association) or anything because my hours were really long. The shop opened at 10:00, and I worked until 6:00 or 9:00. By the time I got home it was 7:00 or 10:00. The only thing I can remember was when we had the pilgrimage in school.

MS: What do you remember about that?

AT: Well, what do I remember?

MS: Was that a yearly event, the pilgrimage?

AT: Yes, we had it every year. I think that lasted for two or three days.

MS: Was that before they started making the pilgrimages to Uniontown?

AT: No, they already had that in Uniontown.

MS: They already had that.

AT: Bishop Ivancho or Bishop Elko started the pilgrimage here. I'm not sure which one of them started it. I remember Bishop Elko so maybe Elko was the one.

MS: What about when we began having the liturgies in English? What do you remember about that?

AT: I remember Father Yarnovitz started singing that.

MS: Were you comfortable with that?

AT: Yes. Somewhere you have to change words to fit the melody. I liked it.

MS: What about the times of some of our other pastors? Do you remember anything in particular about the time of Father Levkulic when he was here?

AT: I remember he was a hardworking priest. He put the cemetery records in order. He cleaned it up; he worked hard. Our daughter Nadine got married when he was here.

MS: Didn't he do a lot of musical writing?

AT: Yes, but not here.

MS: Not when he was here. Not that we know about it.

AT: After he left.

MS: That was afterwards?

AT: Yes. I remember Father Maskornik was our assistant one time. I remember Father Pohorlak was our first assistant to Reverend Rommack, Sr.. He was very nice. I liked him. Father Maskornik, I think, was with Father John, Jr.. I liked them all. A priest is a priest. I respect them.

MS: That is good, and in more recent years with Father Koval and Father Duker?

AT: Father Koval, you do remember him, don't you?

MS: Yes, he was the one who married us.

AT: Yes, he was nice. I liked him. His sermon was very short, and his services were shorter too. Now Father John was a very nice person. As a person he was very nice to talk to. But he was ill; he wasn't well.

MS: That was Father Rommack, Jr., right?

AT: Yes, Junior. He got upset many times. Some people didn't like that. Then there were complaints.

MS: But you think that was mostly due to his illness?

AT: Oh, yes. My husband was a councilman at that time, and he got to know Father John very well. He sympathized with his illness because he had so much medicine. He probably didn't eat anything but medicine. So even if he was doing something that people didn't like, it wasn't really his fault. He suffered; he was in pain.

MS: He eventually retired due to his illness, right?

AT: Yes.

MS: One thing that we didn't talk about and I would like to know is how did you celebrate your holidays in Europe?

AT: In Europe?

MS: Yes.

AT: Which one? Christmas?

MS: Okay, start with Christmas.

AT: It was beautiful. Zavadka, where we lived on a hill, you could see the highest peaks of Tatra Mountains. You get that cold mountain air straight to Zavadka, and it is very cold. There is a lot of snow and it's clean. There are no factories there.

MS: Yes.

AT: I remember Christmas and all the confusion, all the baking. But the church service like midnight mass was at 12:00 exactly. When you walked to church, you heard that squeaking snow. We were in church at least two hours if not more. Nobody skipped anything in books. Everything, the reading and the singing, was done. That was at midnight.

MS: Was that a candlelight service?

AT: Yes.

MS: Could you describe what it looked like? What did the inside of the church look like then?

AT: Just like here with the candles but no electricity. They didn't have electricity. There were just the candles and flowers.

MS: Did you have an icon screen then at your church?

AT: No, not in Zavadka. Before we even came to Zavadka they had a fire and the church burned. I think somewhere in the 1920's they made it bigger. They rebuilt the church. Bells were outside at that time, but then later on, they put them in the tower. Christmas holidays lasted three days.

MS: Three days?

AT: Yes, Christmas Day; the second day is Blessed Mother Day, and the third day is St. Steven's Day. You don't do anything during holidays. You just go to church three times a day and then you socialized; you visited after the vespers.

MS: You ate I bet.

AT: Yes.

MS: Did you exchange gifts then at Christmas?

AT: Not that much. We always had a Christmas tree.

MS: Did you?

AT: With candles on it.

MS: The real candles?

AT: With the candles, yes. My parents came from America so they brought some decorations. But Christmas trees were decorated mostly with nuts, apples, candies wrapped in foil.

MS: Oh, they took some decorations back with them.

AT: Yes, they took a lot of things with them; not furniture, but they had a clock and the decorations, the tablecloths and different things. If they could take it, they took it.

MS: Were the other people a little bit envious of that because they had those kind of things?

AT: Yes, some of them were, but there were more people like us there who also came from America to Europe--they returned home.

MS: Were there any other things in particular about Christmas that you can remember?

AT: Yes, my father didn't like that, but I know my friends had it. You slept on the floor Christmas Eve. They brought in straw; you moved your table somewhere else, and all the kids slept on the floor on that straw. We wanted to do that so bad, but my father didn't allow that.

MS: Oh, he wouldn't let you do that.

AT: No, he didn't want us to do that. He said that it was too much dust and too much work. So we went to a friend's house before midnight mass. Christmas Eve young people would go caroling and sing Christmas songs under the window. Not the boys, just the girls. We started maybe at 6:00 and did it until maybe 10:00. Then we went to a friend's house that had that straw, and we laid down for a while. Twelve o'clock we went to church, and after church we came home. We always had something to eat before we went to bed. It was probably 3:00 by then. Of course, kolachi, tea, et cetera . . . On Christmas Eve we didn't eat anything with milk. All we had was what we called posipanky which you make from dough of bread. Then you put poppy seed, honey, water and that together and you eat cold. That was all we had. We had posipanky, fruit and hot tea maybe, nuts and plum compote.

MS: When was that now?

AT: At Christmas Eve. All day long you didn't eat anything with milk or meat or cheese.

MS: Right, the same as during Lent.

AT: Yes.

MS: What were some of the food you did eat on Christmas Day?

AT: Well, we usually had chicken soup and maybe roast and maybe ham, kolbasy.

MS: Is there anything else about Christmas?

AT: No.

MS: Okay, then what about your Easter traditions?

AT: Easter . . . Lent started on that first Monday. That is a strict fast, and we didn't eat meat all Lent long. We just had like dairy product on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Saturday and Sunday we ate meat. We had strict fast every Friday just like here on Good Friday. We went to church every Wednesday and every Friday. We had services.

MS: Was it pre-sanctified liturgy like we have here now?

AT: No, we didn't have that. I didn't know about pre-sanctified until we started here. I never heard of that before.

MS: What were your services like? Do you remember during Lent?

AT: Parraklis they called it. That was to Blessed Mother on Wednesday. On Friday service it was to the Sacred Heart. So that was what we had at that time. They were nice services, but we don't have it here now. I like the pre-sanctified mass, but I think those other services were nice too.

MS: Then what about Holy Week, the week before Easter?

AT: We always started by going to church Thursday night and then every day after that. Thursday they read the twelve gospels in the evening service. Then Friday wasn't a working day; it was a holy day. At 10:00 a.m. they had a service and four gospels were read. Then in afternoon I think at 3:00 on every Good Friday we went to church. What we have here in the evening we had that in the afternoon at that service. They put the shroud in a small grave on the side of the altar. They didn't

have all night services.

MS: Did you have a procession around the church then too?

AT: Yes, three times and Sunday morning again. Now Saturday you could go to church all day long any time you wanted to. But they also had services Saturday evening. Then the resurrection service was always at 3:00 a.m. Sunday morning. That was nice.

MS: Three o'clock in the morning?

AT: Three o'clock Sunday morning, and you felt that it was really happening.

MS: By the time you got out then was the sun starting to rise?

AT: Sure.

MS: I bet that was beautiful.

AT: Yes.

MS: What about the blessing of the baskets?

AT: That was after the high mass because there was only one priest. At that time they didn't allow him to have more than one mass. He only had one.

MS: So that was actually done on Easter Sunday.

AT: Right.

MS: After the high mass.

AT: Right.

MS: What about what foods did you put in with it? Was it the same that we do now?

AT: Same, yes. Paska, kolbasy, ham, eggs, cheese, bacon and whatever you wanted. We never put kolachi in, just paska.

MS: And the days after did you have that custom with the sprinkling of the water?

AT: Oh, yes. Sunday was a big holy day; everybody was home. Monday was services three times a day just like on Sunday. On the second day of Easter the boys were sprinkling the girls. That is before the service in the morning. Then on Tuesday the girls were supposed to do that to the boys, but we didn't.

MS: Why not?

AT: Maybe you did it to your brother, or maybe you did it to your neighbor, but we didn't go like the boys did.

MS: They came after you?

AT: Yes, and not with a perfume. It was really cold water. Sometimes maybe you were all dressed up with your hair combed, and they would splash you with water.

MS: They really got you.

AT: You got mad.

MS: Was there any kind of reasoning? Why did they do that? What was the meaning for it?

AT: I have just recently found out the probable reason for the spraying of water was this: After the resurrection of Jesus Christ the multitude stood around in groups and the Jews did not like this so they started throwing water at the multitude to disperse them, from discussing the miracle.

Tuesday after the afternoon service everyone went home to change. Then everybody was spraying water on each other. It was a lot of fun, but some people got mad too. Young people had a lot of fun especially if Easter was nice and warm. You got wet; you got it all over, but you didn't care because you were already wet; so if they wanted to spill water on you that was okay. We had a lot of fun with that.

MS: Gee, that is news to me. I have heard that the boys would do the girls and then the girls would do the boys, but I didn't know that everybody got into the act like that.

AT: Some of the young people who had already gone away to school to be teachers or learn a trade of some kind, used a more gentle version of this custom. They would spray with cologne, rather than dousing with water. After the afternoon service everybody got into it. That was when you had a lot of fun.

MS: It sounds like it was. Did you do anything on Wednesday or was it pretty much over by then?

AT: No, that was it.

MS: That was the end?

AT: That was the end of it.

JT: Everybody would get water from wells. If anybody got caught

at the well--sometimes you would have ten or fifteen people there--everybody got water, cold water.

MS: Mrs. Tirpack, now you said you still have your mother who is ninety-five.

AT: Yes.

MS: And she lives there. Do you communicate with her in letters? Does she write?

AT: Yes, well, I call her now. We used to just write letters. When my dad died--that was twenty-six years ago--my mother sold the house in the village and she moved with my sister in Presov. She still is living there. After my sister died my mother stayed to take care of the family and my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law was visiting here this summer. Maybe you saw him in church with us.

MS: How did he find it when he came here?

AT: He was shocked. He just couldn't get over it, how we lived, what we have, and how much we have and maybe we don't appreciate it. Many people don't appreciate it. All they do is complain and complain. I can't stand that because I have been there, and I know what it is like there and what it is like here. I just say, "If you don't like it here, go home."

MS: Has your mother ever been here?

AT: Yes, she was here visiting about eleven years ago. She didn't want to stay here.

MS: She didn't?

AT: No, because my sister was ill for many years. When my mother moved there, my sister's twins--she had twins--were only three years old. She kind of raised them. When my sister died, she just felt that she had to be there to take care of them, to take care of the family. This is a picture of my mother when she was here. That is four generations: my mother, me, my daughter and her two girls.

MS: That is lovely.

AT: That is eleven years ago, and she still looks like that.

MS: Does she?

AT: Yes.

MS: That is good.

AT: At first I had to go through New York, the operator, then Prague and Presov when I wanted to talk to her. But now I just dial eleven numbers, and I talk to my mother.

MS: Isn't that wonderful.

AT: That is just great. It is just like I would call my son in Dayton.

JT: Just like here.

MS: Considering that in your village there was no electricity and no buses like you said . . .

AT: Yes. Now in our village they still don't have a telephone, but they do have a telephone in one of the stores.

MS: Like a general store type of thing?

AT: Yes. If they want to call someone, they can call. But see, if I call there and want to talk to someone, well, by the time they get them to the phone it may be too late and expensive.

MS: It is quite a charge for you.

AT: Yes, so you can do that. My mother lives in a city; they have a telephone at home and I call direct.

MS: What you said about people not appreciating what they have here I can really see what you are saying.

AT: Yes, they don't know what they have. They never stop and think what kind of life they have here.

MS: We just take it for granted.

AT: Nobody else in the world has that, nobody.

MS: Is there anything else that you think it important to talk about that we didn't cover yet?

AT: Maybe there is.

MS: What would you say to the children of our parish in regards to their heritage? Is there anything that you want them to keep in mind as they grow up? Is there anything in particular?

AT: I just hope they keep their own Byzantine rite. I don't care what kind of nationality they are. One thing I wanted to say is that I don't think priests should be involved in

nationality. They should be involved in the Byzantine rite and take care of that only, not like they would say that every Byzantine rite person is Ruthenian. That is not true.

MS: Oh, no, it certainly is not.

AT: There are lots of Byzantine rite people of different nationalities. They wanted to impress that every Byzantine is a Ruthenian. That is not true.

JT: We were all over in Europe and they had Byzantine everywhere.

AT: Not everywhere, not in Stockholm or Germany but everywhere else there was. There are a lot of nationalities that have Byzantine rite. Byzantine rite is not very well-known; that is true because there are not that many, but there is. There are lots of other ones.

JT: There is not one priest that I have yet to hear to explain in church the difference between nationality and religion.

AT: A lot of our people, the older people, and like my mother was when she first came over, they didn't know anything else. They only knew what was going on in the village. They didn't even go to school very much. They went to school during the winter months. As soon as spring came they couldn't go to school. They were lucky if they learned to read and write.

MS: They had to work on the farms, yes.

JT: Farm work.

AT. They had to work.

MS: So to them the church and the nationality are the same.

AT: Right.

MS: But that is not necessarily true.

AT: No.

JT: You have Bulgarian Byzantine rite in Bulgaria. In Yugoslavia they are all Slavs but some of them are Byzantine and some are not. You can say, "He is a Slovak, and he is a Byzantine Catholic," which is true, but you can't have them say, "He is a Moravian," and then say, "He is a Ruthenian," because he is Byzantine Catholic. That is not the same even though it is the same religion.

MS: Well, Ruthenian dealt with the nationality.

AT: Yes.

MS: But the Byzantine is the whole rite the way the people celebrate it as a religion.

AT: The Byzantine rite, yes, like the Roman rite. That is one thing, and nationality is another thing.

MS: And people confuse the two is what you are saying.

AT: Right, they do.

JT: Right now they say Ruthenia but we are not into Ruthenia. It doesn't exist.

AT: Right now it doesn't exist. In the first Czechoslovakian government the Ruthenia was included.

MS: That was one of the states or provinces.

AT: Right.

JT: One of the provinces.

AT: Not now. I think Ruthenia is included in Ukranian Russia. Russia took over everything.

MS: It is part of Russia.

JT: Yes. When Hitler occupied Europe, he occupied Czechoslovakia first. Then on March 14, 1938 Slovakia became an independent. Hitler gave us, the Slovaks, independency. The other three were occupied by Hitler, and Ruthenia also had the independence for about three months. Then they were incorporated into Russia and Hungary. So they were eliminated. That was all during World War II. After World War II Slovakia was incorporated again. It was the new Czechoslovakia. So Ruthenia still does not exist. I know the history of it. I know that is true. I was there. We are not Ruthenians. There are some Ruthenians from Europe. I will say freely that eighty to eighty-five percent of our Byzantine Catholics here in our church are Slovaks.

MS: Really?

JT: They are, definitely.

MS: In our particular church, you mean St. Nicholas?

JT: In our particular church, and that was certified to me by one of the priests who was already there in the older

days because I asked him how many there were. He told me that there were eighty to eighty-five percent who were Slovaks.

MS: Was that because of the villages that their families came from were the Slovak villages rather than the Ruthenian?

JT: Yes. I know where my ancestors came from. They didn't come from Ruthenia.

MS: So we are Slovak Byzantine more than Ruthenian Byzantine?

JT: Sure, eighty to eighty-five percent of our parishioners are Slovaks.

MS: That is interesting.

JT: To prove it have the priest ask them where their parents were born in which villages.

MS: The villages are important material.

JT: Because the old people, the grandparents, will say Austria-Hungary which is the name before World War I. After World War I there was no Austria-Hungary but Czechoslovakia. Those people when they came here said they were from Austria-Hungary. Then when the census came around they were Austrians or Hungarians, and most Slovaks are not Ruthenians. That is where we lost our people.

AT: There is a letter of explanation that you got from Bishop Kocisko.

MS: So you mean when they split them up either into Austrian or Hungarian and if they said Hungarian, then they just became Hungarian.

JT: It was the man who was writing the census. Whatever he decided he put down, Austrian or Hungarian.

MS: Just up to his own whim.

JT: It was up to him. You were either American or Hungarian. I would say the majority of them were written down as Hungarians.

AT: Before the first war everything was Austria-Hungary.

MS: The empire.

AT: Yes, the empire.

JT: They were teaching our people and children in school Hungarian.

AT: Yes, when my mother and father went to school, it was Hungarian.

JT: Besides Slovak. Talking about Slovak here it goes for all of the nations too. Every village has its own dialect.

AT: Right.

JT: But the literary Slovak is all over. They teach that in school and at home.

MS: So really then like what you are saying about the children no matter what nationality they are to still maintain the Byzantine rite.

AT: Yes.

MS: That is what is important.

AT: I think Byzantine rite is beautiful.

MS: It is, yes.

AT: I think that is what they should teach them to keep. That is first children born. In America, they are Americans. What do they care what nationality their ancestors were. They want to know, but they are Americans.

MS: Some of them have so many different ones like my own children have about five or six at least, different ones.

AT: Right.

MS: In the next generation they won't even know.

AT: They want to know the history, but they don't care otherwise, but they are right. They should remember. They should care about their heritage.

MS: That is a good point.

JT: Bishop Sheen conducted our first mass in English in Uniontown. The first one in district here was at the dedication of St. Michael's Church in Campbell, Ohio. He was there also. That was the first English mass in our area.

MS: Bishop Sheen came to St. Michael's?

JT: Yes, he was there and he said that our mass was the most beautiful because of the services. Because of the icons and musical singing, it was one of the most beautiful masses he ever conducted.

Now the children at our church had a youth organization. That was very good because they were getting more and more youths into the organization. That is the only thing that hold our youth together is an organization like that. Without any youth organizations were are going to lose our youth and the youth generation.

MS: Well, if there isn't anything else that you can think of . . .

JT: I am glad for one thing about Fahter Dennis. We have many nationalities in our church. Can they all be called Ruthenians? Father Dennis has beautiful services both in English and Slovanik; had very informative sermons. He never mentions Ruthenia in the mass or anywhere. I give him credit for that. The first thing they say is, "Where is Ruthenia?" Ruthenia doesn't exist.

MS: That must have been hard for the people who came. I did read, though, that it was hard for the people who were coming here through the customs agencies and they would say Ruthenia and where was that, so they did have to put down something else.

AT: They would have to.

MS: Yes, because most people haven't heard of it.

JT: We have to keep up some of the customs, so we don't lose it.

MS: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

AT: Not at this time.

MS: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW