

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church Project

Parishioner Experiences

O. H. 554

ANNE PLANEY

Interviewed

by

Mary Lou Shirilla

on

November 3, 1986

MISS ANNE PLANEY

Anne Planey was born in Youngstown, Ohio on September 2, 1925, a daughter of Joseph and Anna Planey. She graduated from North High (Scienceville High) in 1943. She received an A.B. degree (cum laude) from Youngstown State University in 1967, with a dual major in Russian and Social Science. In 1977, she received a Masters degree in Education, also from Y.S.U.

From 1943-1945, and from 1946-1968, she was employed by the General Fireproofing Company. From 1968 to the present, she has been employed by the Mahoning County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, as an instructor for the home bound (those who are unable to attend the Mahoning County School for the Retarded for reasons of health).

She is a member of several professional organizations: Ohio Education Association; National Education Association; Mahoning County Council for Retarded Citizens and MEADD.

She is a lifelong member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, and has served the church in many capacities. She has been a member of the choir, the festival committee, the financial committee, the Young Adults Club, banquet committees and others. Presently, she is a member of the Educational Heritage Committee for the 75th Anniversary Jubilee year.

Her hobbies include collectibles, flowers, and reading.

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INTERVIEWEE: ANNE PLANEY

INTERVIEWER: Mary Lou Shirilla

SUBJECT: Holy Days, Rusin language, Ruthenian customs,
Sacraments, Married clergy, Social events,
Change in church calendar

DATE: November 3, 1986

S: This is an interview with Miss Anne Planey for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, by Mary Lou Shirilla, at the parish house, 1898 Wilson Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on November 3, 1986, at 6:30 p.m.

Anne, what can you tell me about your parents or your grandparents before we get into your actual story? What do you remember about them?

P: My parents were both born in Blazov, Saris County, Czechoslovakia. It was called Austria-Hungary at that time. They were married in 1908 in the village of Blazov. My dad came to Youngstown, Ohio in 1910. He left my mother in Europe. He came to find work to locate and to find a place to live. It took a couple of years until he was financially able to send for my mother. My mother came to Youngstown in 1912. Their entire life centered around their relatives, family members and those who were members of their Byzantine church. In fact the new arrivals from Europe clustered and located geographically with relatives or friends. The people who helped them adjust to the area perhaps helped the man find work. When the wife did come to America, she came either with the husband or later. Friends or relatives helped them find a place of residence. Generally, when a wife came over, she stayed with relatives maybe for a week or two until they found their furniture and . . .

S: Got settled.

P: Got settled, yes.

S: Where did your dad work at this time?

P: As with all men who came from that particular area in Europe, in the steel mill with various capacities. Of course, at that time their salaries were very minimal, but they somehow managed to survive. My parents had children eventually. Their main objective was to buy a home or rent a home near the church. They were very supportive of other members of their family who had remained in Europe. Perhaps they would help other members of the family come to America too. After being here a year or two, they were able to sponsor other family members, that is brothers, sisters, wives, or whoever requested help to come to America.

S: Sponsored them in a way.

P: Yes, financially and otherwise. Of course, when they did come over, they had living quarters. They lived together with relatives. They didn't have all the facilities; they didn't have all the conveniences, but they managed to live together.

S: Share the expenses?

P: And share and to be supportive.

S: Very good. Do you remember anything about your grandparents? They probably stayed in Europe, right?

P: They stayed in Europe. My mother's dad was here in America when her mother died. My mother was only twelve years old when her mother died. My grandfather returned to Europe to be with his children. When he came to America, he wanted to earn enough money to bring his family over. Some of the men in the early part of the twentieth century or the latter part of the nineteenth century would come here to America, and maybe go back and forth two or three times to take money back to their family and to see how things were going there. Then they would come back to earn more money. Or maybe they would earn money here to buy a piece of property in Europe, and then they would be better able to have a higher standard of living in Europe. My grandfather's name was Steve Kraynak.

S: That was your mother's father?

P: That was my maternal grandfather. When he returned to Europe, his children were being taken care of by the grandmother.

S: Because the wife had died?

P: Because his wife had died. My grandfather remarried. His second wife was a widow, and she had children. So there were his children, her children, and then a few of their children. One brother came to America, but most of my mother's family remained in Europe in Blazov.

Here in America, they still retained some of their customs, their love for each other, and their dialect.

S: These particular village people who you talked about?

P: Right. In fact, the early founders of St. Nicholas Church were from various counties or villages, and they each retained their own particular identity, their own culture, even their distinctive dialect. They all sang the liturgy together. They had the unity of the Byzantine rite.

S: They have shared the same things in the rite, yet they still have their own particular customs.

P: Right. Life was very simple. Their faith was very simple, almost childlike. It was all black and white; there were no shades of grey. They did work together as groups, and yet they retained their own customs brought with them from Europe. The people in Czechoslovakia dressed differently in different villages. When they came to America, the immigrants from different villages had one thing in common, their church, their rite.

S: They shared that common bond.

P: They called themselves either, Catholic Carpathian-Russian, Rusins, Rusnaks, Greek.

S: Your dad was here in 1910. Therefore, he was one of the founding members of the parish?

P: He was one of the early members. There is nothing in the church records, to my knowledge, but he was one of the early members of charter members of St. Nicholas Byzantine Church. He was active from the time he came to Youngstown. In fact, he was active in the church when it was across the street, from our present church.

S: That was before your time, but do you remember anything from his stories about the early church that you can share?

P: The one thing I do recall is that he did say Father Alexander Papp was the one who had the architects design this church based on the cathedral in Uzhorod in Europe, the cathedral there.

S: Is it pretty much a replica of the cathedral there then?

- P: Yes, with the domes and the height. The various villages in Europe had wooden churches which I would love to see some day. My parents spoke of the cemetery adjacent to their church. Their priest was married. Of course, our priests were married here, also. Some of their offspring became priests. There was a reverence for a priest. Going back a little, here in Youngstown as I recall Father Rommack Sr. was never too busy to do anything for parishioners. He served as interpreter, legal counsel; whatever the need was, parishioners called upon him, and he was always there willing to help.
- S: I would like to hear a little more about that later. What about your early memories from our church then as a child? What are some of the early things you can recall?
- P: The earliest thing I can recall--and I don't know whether it is because I have heard it repeated or whether I actually did this--but Father Krusko is the priest who baptized me. I must have been maybe between two years old and four years old at the oldest. I remember going to Mirovanja [anointing with oil] when Father Krusko was pastor.
- S: You do?
- P: Yes, I do. I remember him standing there and my being anointed with the Holy Oil. I have a more vivid recollection of Father Rommack Sr., his voice, his gentle manner. Mrs. Rommack always sat in the front pew facing the altar on the left-hand side of the church. She sat in the front pew. Guess who sat right beside her? I always did.
- S: Did you really?
- P: I always did. She was a very beautiful, charming lady. She wore these beautiful large hats, and she was such an elegant lady. I remember her very vividly from my early times. Some of the things I recall about Father Rommack was the blessing of the homes and various services.
- S: The blessing of the homes was usually done in January, wasn't it?
- P: Yes.
- S: At the beginning of the year?
- P: Yes.
- S: What do you recall about that?
- P: Father and the Cantor John Horvath began at the church after the services. They walked up Hazeltine and blessed all of the homes of our parishioners and down Center Street. They visited everyone within walking distance on foot. Then the

ones at further distances, they drove to make their annual home blessing visit.

During that time, there were a lot of social events as I recall. There was what they called the Harvest Moon Dance. That was in the fall.

S: I did hear about dances held over there, but nobody mentioned the Harvest Moon Dance.

P: What they did . . . They would string grapes and fruit--these large clusters of grapes--on strings or wire, and the young men of the parish tried to knock down this fruit and then they were fined a certain amount of money. I don't recall the amount of money, but it was a fun thing. Of course, we had squashed grapes all over the floor. The children accompanied their parents to all church functions.

S: Was that a yearly event, the Harvest Moon Dance?

P: It was held about three or four time as I recall. Another thing that I remember is the Halloween Dance. Tickets were very reasonable. Tickets were sold for 25¢ to people who wanted to attend these dances or these functions. My dad was a church officer and usher; they called them "Curator" at that time. He was the one who sold tickets perhaps, and he was at the door taking tickets for admission to the dance. My mom brought my brother and I to this Halloween Dance, and people saw her there. Then she slipped out quietly, and she came back with a relative. They were dressed as Siamese twins. No one guessed who they were because my mother was there; no one saw her slip out. Of course, my dad being at the door, the ticket taker, knew their identity.

S: He was in on it.

P: Yes, he was in on it. They won one of the prizes. She was cute. It was my mother and Mrs. Kiktavy; they were the Siamese twins. Mrs. Kiktavy made the outfit.

S: That sounds really cute.

P: These were fun times. To them it was simple; it didn't cost a lot of money, and it was fun.

S: Were those at Mihliken Hall also or were those in the church hall?

P: In the church hall.

S: Across the street?

P: Yes.

- S: What about catechism classes when you were a child? What can you recall about that?
- P: In preparation for First Holy Communion, Father Rommack taught catechism, and Mr. Horvath taught. During the fall and winter months, catechism was held on Saturday in the church basement. At that time, the church basement was not completely floored. It was partially gravel, and the boilers were in the back, coal boilers. Then, during the summer we had catechism classes, and we also learned to read from the Azbuka which is in the Cyrillic alphabet. It is not the Muscovite Russian, but it was the church Slavonic Russian. A few of us mastered the language.
- S: Do you mean with the prayer? Would that be it?
- P: No, it was secular short stories. We attended. We never complained about going. We learned our prayers and liturgical music in the Slavonic.
- S: So you said that was year round in winters and summers?
- P: We had summer sessions. At the conclusion of our summer session, we had a picnic or an outing at Lincoln Park.
- S: Oh, did you?
- P: Yes, we went swimming too, at Lincoln Park pool.
- S: Who accompanied you on those picnics?
- P: Usually, Father Rommack and Mr. Horvath and a few of the adults went too.
- S: You mentioned that Father Rommack prepared you for your First Communion. What can you remember about your First Communion day?
- P: Before my first communion I was sick. I had an ear infection. I looked scrawny. I was really thin. My dress hung on me because I lost a lot of weight. I had some type of ear infection, cold, sore throat, whatever.
- S: It must have been a bad winter for you.
- P: Yes. The doctor made a house call, and told my mother that I should wait another year to make my First Communion because I was too ill to go. I said, "No way, I'm going." My father brought me down to confession. All these little ones were waiting in line, but he talked to Father Rommack beforehand, and Father had me go to confession when my dad brought me in. Then my father took me right home. My mother was so afraid that I would pass out and keel over because I really looked bad, but there were no problems. Communion was really a big

thing. We did not eat from midnight until after we came home from church.

S: That is right.

P: We did not drink water. We brushed our teeth, and we wouldn't swallow a drop. It was very rigid.

S: I remember that myself.

P: So I didn't miss my First Holy Communion. Of course, that didn't stop me from going to catechism. I still continued and went to catechism.

S: How old were you at the time of your First Communion? Do you recall?

P: Possibly seven or eight. I would have to look at the group picture. I was probably about seven.

S: About the same as they do now.

P: Yes.

S: Before, you talked about how all the people clustered together in one neighborhood. Where did your family live at this time when you were a child?

P: When I was a child, we lived on Center Street. Prior to that time my parents lived in Lansingville on Cooper Street. They lived on Homewood which is in Lansingville. Then they rented a house on Montgomery. When I was approximately five or six years old, my mother was planning to go to Europe. She was going to take my younger brother, my brother who was older than I, and me to Europe. Our passport was a group picture. She wanted to visit her dad before her dad died, but we just couldn't make it. We did not go to Europe.

S: I forgot to ask you about your brothers. How many are in your family, brothers?

P: There were three brothers.

S: Any sisters?

P: I had one sister. My sister died. She lived in Erie. She was married here at St. Nicholas in 1935.

S: What was her name?

P: Mary.

S: And her married name?

P: Kaschak. Then I have an older brother, Mike Planey, and my brother Joe died a year ago last Januray. My brother Steve is younger than I.

S: I meant to ask you that before, but I forgot about that. What about the holidays when you were growing up? Did you celebrate St. Nicholas Day at that time?

P: Oh, yes. Some things about the holidays . . . Easter was always a very big holiday for us. It was the blessing of the baskets. But prior to Easter there were the beautiful church services for Lent held on Wednesday and Friday. They were very well attended. It was the preparation before Easter. At that time--we lived on Center Street--we were the neighborhood minority. We were surrounded by the Slovak people who went to St. Elizabeth Church. Our Easters came together only occasionally. We followed the Julian calendar at that time. My brother and I always took off school the Monday and Tuesday after Easter because we went to church on Monday and Tuesday.

Christmas, that was another very big holiday. Of course, there were the services. There was a Christmas Eve supper.

S: What do you remember about that?

P: My parents told me that in Europe it was very solemn; they did nothing other than feed their animals Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It was a religious holiday. They had the Christmas Eve supper. On the table they would have straw under the tablecloth and straw on the floor.

S: Signifying the manger?

P: The manger, the nativity. Of course, it was a very beautiful supper. Then when the bells rang at midnight for the services, they would put pennies in a basin of water.

S: At home?

P: At home. When we washed, we would wash with this water. Those were our pennies. They didn't exchange gifts in Europe. Their's was more like good food, but they didn't exchange gifts.

S: How long did that continue, that custom, that you can remember with washing with the pennies in the water?

P: Perhaps until I was ten or twelve years old.

S: And then eventually they did start exchanging gifts?

- P: Yes, but not exchanging really. They bought a few gifts for the younger children. I know my dad bought a doll for me. I'm so sorry I got rid of it. I had never seen one like it. It had a porcelain face with a leather body stuffed with sawdust. That is what my dad bought for me, and he bought my brother a horse. It was on wheels; it was a small horse. So it wasn't extravagant.
- S: Very simple.
- P: Very simple. Backtracking a little bit, at Easter we always had new shoes.
- S: I bet that was important.
- P: Oh, yes, we had our Easter shoes. They were black patent leather or white, but we had new Easter shoes. That was one thing that we got for Easter, our shoes. Another thing, at Christmas we always had nuts, especially filberts because those were nuts that were grown in Europe. Even when they came here, filbert nuts were something that my parents always had.
- S: So they were familiar and special.
- P: Yes.
- S: I asked you before about the St. Nicholas Day celebration. Was that a big celebration in the parish?
- P: Other than the religious celebration, there was a special sacramental bread that was blessed during utrenja.
- S: That day, you mean St. Nicholas Day?
- P: On St. Nicholas Day. My parents always kept that blessed bread with them (a cube approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ "). It wasn't a superstition, and it wasn't just for good luck, but this was something that my father always had as a special way of wrapping it in a piece of cloth. This was always in his wallet on his person.
- S: In fact, I found out about that in the pouches. I didn't know if it was the same.
- P: That is the same.
- S: Were there any other holy days that had any special significance to you?
- P: My father was born August 2, and this coincided with the Holy Day of St. Elias the Prophet according to the Julian calendar.

S: Was that a solemn Holy Day at the time?

P: Yes. I believe at one time we had twenty-six Holy Days of obligation.

S: And that was by the Julian calendar?

P: Yes. We attended church services on all Holy Days.

S: You didn't ask what degree it was.

P: We had twenty-six, and we went to all of them.

S: Did you belong to any church or lodge organization that would help, or were there any type of organizations for children at the time? I'm not even sure.

P: The only thing was the Greek Catholic Union Lodge. It is a fraternal organization. I was a member from infancy, but during the Depression I was dropped. My parents could not afford membership dues.

S: Were you ever active with the drill team?

P: Yes, yes. There was a very big doing at Idora Park. It was an outdoor liturgy and the drill team; there were hundreds of us. I remember we had the black bloomer type pants with a white middie blouse and a red bow tie.

S: I've seen pictures of that.

P: I was on the drill team then.

S: Was that just one time, one occasion, or was that every year that you did that?

P: I did that only once.

S: Who were some of the other people who especially influenced you as a child? You mentioned Mrs. Rommack and Father Rommack, of course. Were there any others who you can particularly recall?

P: Of course, my parents. I told you I was always running errands, even as a child, because we lived in Haselton and Father Rommack was here at the time. We didn't have a telephone; so I would come to the rectory and Father would have a little project for me. Sister Calista, I went to all the parishioners with her; we made visitations.

S: Sister, who?

P: Calista. That was like at least fifty years ago when she was

here.

S: She was just a young novice at the time then.

P: She was young.

S: And what exactly did you do with her?

P: She apparently was soliciting funds for the mother house. It was more or less a visitation too; it wasn't necessarily asking for money, but it was a visitation to the parishioners.

S: That was the Basilian order?

P: Yes.

S: And there was no community of them here at the time, right?

P: No.

S: She just came on her own?

P: There may have been two, but one may have gone in another direction (the Lansingville area) because nuns always traveled in two's years ago.

S: I remember that.

P: I did make visits with her to various parishioners.

S: Can you tell me a little bit about that, the visits you made? How was she accepted?

P: She was a very sweet person. In fact, she autographed my autograph book for me.

S: Did she really?

P: Yes, but I don't know if I still happen to have it somewhere. She wrote in it her name and her address.

S: I remember the little story you told me. Do you want to repeat that?

P: About Mr. Brinsko?

S: Was that about she couldn't go into the place?

P: Yes. I made sure that we didn't miss one parishioner. Mr. Brinsko owned a bar here on the corner of Wilson Avenue and Center Street. I believe he lived on the south side of Youngstown at the time. He was a parishioner, and I made sure that she was making him a visit too. Since she wouldn't

go into a bar and wasn't allowed to go into a bar--it wouldn't look good for her to go into the bar--I went in and called Mr. Brinsko out to the sidewalk. I told him that someone would like to speak with him. It was Sister Calista. I stepped aside when she was talking to him. Whether he made a donation or not, I don't know, but perhaps he did. He was a businessman, but I made sure that he was visited because that was my duty.

S: How old were you at that time?

P: Eight or nine.

S: You were an active kid.

P: I guess.

S: I know you have a reall good memory, and you were very much involved with the parish even as a child. So what can you tell me? What was the parish house like when the pastor and his wife were raising three children?

P: Father John Jr. was a couple of years younger than I. My first recollection of Monsignor Gregory was when he was a baby. For whatever reason my dad came to the rectory, I tagged along. I was asked to come along. Mrs. Rommack showed me the new baby, the wee baby was Gregory. That was on the first floor. He was such a tiny, little thing--that is my first recollection.

S: Just a newborn then.

P: Just a newborn. As he grew, he became a beautiful curly-headed little boy. Mrs. Rommack and Father stopped at our house when we moved to the country. We had a raspberry patch. The berries were saved for the Rommack's. My father would tell Father Rommack, "The raspberries are ready for picking. Stop out and get some one day." Father did. This is how I remembered the beautiful, beautiful, curly-haired Gregory. He spoke the Slavonic language so beautifully.

S: Did he?

P: In the Slavonic.

S: The baby.

P: And such a little gentleman. They were so proud of him.

S: He was their second child?

P: Yes, their second child. That was my recollection of Gregory.

S: Do you remember when the third child was born too?

P: Yes, Tommy. I remember Tommy. He was a joy too.

Even years ago when Father Rommack and Mrs. Rommack came to our house, they weren't a bit pretentious. My parents were very impressed with Mrs. Rommack. Even though she came from a lineage of priests and we were of the peasantry, really, she made them feel so comfortable with people. She didn't put on any airs. My father was so impressed. She was very relaxed and charming. She was polite and spoke well.

S: I've just recently met her, and my impressions are the same. She is a very fine, elegant person.

P: I told you how she supported the church.

I was telling you too about the missions that we had here at the church. There was such reverence in approaching the Easter season. The missions were very spiritual and uplifting. This was in 1938 or 1939. A missionary from Canada came to give the mission. Sometimes missions were three days or four days, and sometimes they lasted a week. I might mention Vladimer Krajewsky.

S: That was the missionary?

P: Yes. He spoke only the Slavonic I believe at the time, maybe a few words in English.

S: I was going to ask you if the missions were in Slavonic too?

P: His were. Later the missions were Slavonic and English.

S: He really made an impression on you then?

P: Yes, he did.

S: Did you ever hear of him after that mission?

P: I believe he had another mission here at another time.

S: You mentioned how sensitive Father Rommack was. This whole period of the 1930's, I know, was a very controversial time period for the Byzantine rite with the celibacy issue and several other issues. Now in what way did Father Rommack help to prevent this split from our parish?

P: I don't know all of the politics at the time. Some of this is what I recall or otherwise it is perhaps what my father and mother discussed in my presence. When Father Rommack got his directive of whatever it was, he got up on the

pulpit and communicated with the people, his parishioners, in his own way--in his gentleness and his kindness. In fact, I recall his tears as he pleaded with the people to stick together and perhaps not to be in a hurry to make this break. During this time, there were only a few people who left St. Nicholas. This was perhaps the radical element of St. Nicholas Parish. Even though I don't know all of the politics involved, I think it was Father Rommack's influence that prevented a break here.

S: Do you remember anything at all about the thirty year jubilee that was celebrated in 1942? I came across an article in the Vindicator concerning that celebration.

P: I don't recall right now the specifics.

S: That is alright. Are there any other events that do stand out as major and significant during your teen-age years? Was there something that impressed you at that time?

P: Not that I can recall.

S: Okay.

P: Maybe it will come to me later.

S: What about some of the other liturgical practices then?

P: When I received my First Communion and for many years later . . . It wasn't until post World War II that we had confessionals in church. All confessions were face-to-face. Father would sit on a chair sideways and we would kneel on a kneeler either behind the altar or in one of the sacristies. He would drape the stole over your head during confession. I can't think of the name for it. He would drape that over our head.

S: Just draped it over?

P: Yes.

S: It didn't cover your face, did it?

P: No, he just draped it over our heads. When we said our prayers, he touched our head; then he said a prayer of absolution upon touching our head.

My brother was married here at St. Nicholas. This was in 1953. When my brother was married, confessions were still face-to-face. His best man was Roman Catholic. We forgot to tell him that he would see Father face-to-face. He was ready to leave. But he had to go to confession. We should have warned him beforehand. This was all new to him.

During the missions, lines formed from the front of the church to the rear of the church for confessions. Father would have helpers (other priests) in each sacristy and also in the back with kneelers hearing confessions. This was during the Lenten season especially. Of course, during missions we always had several priests present. Our confessionals came into being after World War II.

S: Do you have any idea why they were brought in that way?

P: Perhaps the Roman influence. Roman Catholic influence--the Roman rite influence--because the young people were exposed to another "custom", a Latin rite custom, during the World War II, either those who were in the service or by attending other churches. This was done here too.

S: Okay.

P: Communion was received kneeling. Around the altar people knelt. People were kneeling for communion.

S: Was there a communion rail, or did they just kneel along the floor?

P: You knelt along that step, that elevation. Then Father Rommack Jr. had a rail put in. This wasn't exactly the Roman rite type of rail, but this was just for people who were having difficulty in kneeling and then standing up. Some of the older people and the heavier people would kneel there, and they would sort of sway back and forth. This was done away with then, and we went up in single file or in a double line to receive communion.

S: When did you begin doing that, do you remember?

P: It was sometime during Father Rommack's time that we began. In fact, I went to my sister's funeral which was in Erie. I walked up to take communion, and most people there knelt. That was about twelve years ago.

S: Fairly recently.

P: Yes.

S: Could you tell more about the Church Slavonic?

P: When we first changed our church services were in the vernacular (language of the people). Our first English liturgy, the consecration, was in the Church Slavonic. The reason it was in the Church Slavonic was because when the priest, our resident priest here at the time, asked the bishop whether he should say the consecration in Slavonic, he was told to say this in Slavonic and the rest of the liturgy in English.

That particular priest continued saying it this way. Whether it was mandatory or not I don't know, but he continued saying the consecration in the Church Slavonic. The rest of the liturgy was in English.

S: Maybe that was a habit he had gotten into?

P: Some do, but I don't know. Father John Rommack said that he asked the bishop about that. Since he did ask he didn't want to say, "Well, I'll do my thing my way now."

S: He did whatever he was told.

P: During the early period of the English liturgy I feel personally that something was lost in the translation, the purity of the language. The liturgical music was written with the Church Slavonic words and language. Then when it was translated, it was a little stilted.

S: Right, it was not the same.

P: It wasn't pure, but then they refined it eventually. It is better. But at that point it was kind of awkward, yes. I think because of my language background I appreciated the purity of the Church Slavonic and the beauty of it.

S: You are a Russian major. You told me that.

P: Yes.

S: Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

P: This is all I have regarding the liturgical practice at this point.

S: Regarding the language change from Slavonic into the English what can you tell me about that? Was there a lot of disagreement among the people, or was it pretty well accepted?

P: I feel--I'm speaking of the various generations of generation gaps--because of the evolution of our change, I don't think it was as harsh. There weren't a lot of radical, physical changes. This is why our parents were able to accept it. But going back a little the first two Christmases--when we celebrated Christmas on the 25th--even though we celebrated the liturgy on the 25th, our Christmas tree was up for one month. Christmas Day, which was January 7, I took off work and I took my parents to Holy Trinity Ukrainian Church to hear the liturgy in the Slavonic because this was still Christmas. My parents, fortunately, accepted this change. They even rationalized . . . Well, we are not sure of the date of Christ's birth anyway; they accepted the 25th. The change was there; it was inevitable. The liturgy was there; the services were

there. So they didn't mind this at all. But the first two years even though we did celebrate the 25th and everything was done on the 25th and the Christmas Eve supper was on the 24th, we still went to church at Holy Trinity. Then they accepted the change totally.

S: There was one thing you had mentioned to me before, and I had forgotten about it. You said that when the church was built in 1919, the different villages each purchased something major for the church.

P: Yes.

S: Could you tell me anything about that?

P: There should be records available. For example, the people from Blazov bought one specific item. Another group bought another thing. The major items were the chandelier, the vigil light, which you probably might recall that it fell.

S: I remember seeing pictures.

P: There were also the bells, the pulpit, the gospel books. The gospel book was very ornate. I recall the gospel book from years back when Father Rommack Sr. was the priest here.

S: What do you recall about it?

P: It was beautiful. It was much larger than the gospel book of today and perhaps heavier. It was sort of a white ivory type cover. Even though I didn't see it up that close the pictures of saints and evangelists were circular. The pictures were decorated in gold leaf. The edges of the pages of the book were gold or red.

S: The outside?

P: The outside, yes. During the processions around the church it was such an honor to be chosen to carry the gospel book during the procession. Who carried the banners, who carried the cross leading the procession . . . Banners were carried by parishioners. I think various groups purchased the banners because there was writing on the bottom of banners, stating who purchased each particular banner. Each banner was purchased by a different group or individual. Maybe it was even a lodge who bought the banner such as the G.C.U. lodge (Greek Catholic Union). A man was selected to carry the gospel book, this was an honor to carry this in procession.

S: Was this for the holy day or for whatever?

P: Whenever we had processions around the church like the Monday after Easter or the Resurrection services at Easter. I

mentioned to you, too, about the beautiful lecterns that I remember. One was for everyday use. This was covered in a cloth like we have on our front table which is called tetrapod. The same type of cover was used on the lectern. Then, there was this special lectern. It was beautiful. It was like an eagle or a falcon with outspread wings. It had a white type of base. At this point I don't know if it was onyx or what, but it was a white base gilded in gold scroll around. It was very beautiful. It was something that was used Easter Sunday, Christmas. It could be used for some special service.

S: The very most important holiday.

P: Yes.

S: I read an article that in 1946 the parish acquired some property from the war assets administration. This was a cabin constructed by soldiers of Camp Reynolds. Are you aware of this, and if so, can you tell me about it?

P: I'm not sure, but Mrs. Rommack may be able to fill you in on this because she was here in 1946.

S: I think this was even the same year now, in 1946, that the parish was redecorated, the murals were painted. The church basement was finished; it had never been finished before. Am I correct? There was a new dedication of the parish. Do you remember anything about that day?

P: Nothing specific.

S: No?

P: But I do recall the beauty of the murals. The murals are still here. They are still in the church, and they have been cleaned several times. I do not know who the artist was, but these are priceless.

S: I believe it was Paul Daubner from Philadelphia.

P: But they are still intact.

S: What was it like before? Were the walls just plain before those murals were done?

P: Before those murals were done the arches had a type of circular pattern. Before this time, too, we did not have these chandeliers. We had a different type of chandelier. In fact if you invert a sombrero, this was the type of chandelier we had.

S: Really?

P: Yes, they were like an off-white color. Of course, they went with this type of architecture at the time. They were like rims with a large bulb.

S: The chandelier you are talking about?

P: All the lights in the church. That crystal chandelier has been there forever. The little lights that are on either side now are new; they too were different.

S: Okay, I was confusing that with the larger one.

P: That is a beautiful crystal chandelier.

S: Do you recall anything about the ordination or the first mass of Father Rommack?

P: Yes, I do.

S: What do you recall about that?

P: They had the reception afterwards. Of course, they were well attended. We had several ordinations. There was Father John Rommack, Father Gran, Father Horvath, Father Puskar, Father Benja. Those are about all I can recall. Our parish was noted for its vocations.

S: To what do you owe that special honor?

P: The influence of the pastor.

I think Mrs. Rommack was an asset to Father Rommack.

S: In your young adult years what organizations did you belong to in the church?

P: It wasn't my young adult years, but it was in my adult years. I was a member of the choir for some years. I was very fortunate to be in it. Of course, there was the parish council. When Father Duker came, I became involved in the parish council.

S: At what period in your life were you most active? Was it during the time of Father Duker?

P: Not really because during the time of Father Rommack Sr. I was obviously active then as a child. When Father John Rommack was the pastor, I always worked the festivals.

S: I'm sorry. I meant to say in your adult life.

- P: In my adult life, I would say when Father Duker was pastor when we had the choir, and I was always active in the festivals.
- S: Were the festivals always a big project?
- P: Yes, they were. Over the years we have always had festivals either in the church basement or the grove. We had bazaars in our church basement.
- S: Who was the choir director?
- P: George Hress.
We had classes at Byzantine Central for . . .
- S: Adult education?
- P: Adult education, I was attending those. Father Benya was one of the instructors at the time. Father Yarnovitz was an instructor. Father Rommack asked if I would be interested in the cadet teaching program.
- S: Was that when you went to college for two years and then began teaching in the parochial schools?
- P: Right, but I did not accept.
- S: Did he eventually want you to teach at B.C.C. (Byzantine Catholic Central School)? Do you think?
- P: Had I gotten into the cadet program I could have started almost immediately, because teachers were at a premium at the time and tuition would be paid by the parish. They needed teachers at the time.
- S: Then when did you become involved in the C.C.D. program?
- P: Father Levkolic asked me to teach, and I taught for a while. Then Father Petro was in charge and he asked me at that time to please continue teaching.
- S: Were those held at B.C.C.?
- P: Yes.
- S: When?
- P: Tuesday evenings.
- S: You have given me so much information now, and we could probably go on for a lot longer. But to try to tie it all up now . . . Are there any words of wisdom that you

would care to give to any future generations in our parish? Is there anything that you would like them to think about in regards to their heritage?

P: It will be different with the second, third, and fourth generations. Hopefully with leadership, with the priests who are already leaders of the parishes and the seminarians to retain tradition and not to lose identity. I know that it is going to be very difficult. I feel, too, that a kind of composite of words of wisdom from former pastors and assistants we can perhaps summarize it in a few sentences. This will have to come from the religious, especially those who have been here at St. Nicholas but not necessarily only from St. Nicholas but for all the Byzantine rite as a whole. I think it is very important because we can't survive in isolation; we can't survive if the priests aren't of one mind. We have to have something from the top of the church hierarchy than from our priests.

S: Okay. Is there anything else that you think is important that we didn't cover?

P: No.

S: I thank you very much. This has been very informative for me.

END OF INTERVIEW