

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERISTY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio Project

Experience in Research of Local History

O.H. 164

THOMAS J. KACHUR

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

May 7, 1979

THOMAS JOHN KACHUR

Thomas Kachur is the author of "Mecca", an in-depth study of the township. Mr. Kachur is the son of John and Mary Baran Kachur, who were immigrants to Mecca. They were originally from Czechoslovakia settling in Smock, Pennsylvania. Unhappy with Pennsylvania, they decided to move to Mecca in 1933 looking for greener pastures. They purchased a home and dairy business. The home has a long history having been owned by Franklin Powers, Noble Mason, Gideon Gault, and Mr. Wheeler.

Mr. Kachur was born June 28, 1930 in Smock, Pennsylvania and was three when his family moved. He began school in 1936 in a one-room schoolhouse. The school was torn down in 1943. Upon completion of the new school, he graduated in 1949. He entered Duquesne University and graduated in 1953 with a B.S. in Chemistry. After graduation, he was called upon by the Army. His time in the service was spent as a teacher stationed in the U.S. He was discharged in 1955. Mr. Kachur returned to Mecca and was hired by Republic Steel where he is presently employed.

Mr. Kachur has never married, devoting his time to local history and travel. He is president of the Bazetta Historical Society in which he is currently writing a book on the History of Bazetta. In the future he hopes to pub-

lish a second volume on Mecca.

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INTERVIEWEE: THOMAS J. KACHUR

INTERVIEWER: Beth Hanuschak

SUBJECT: History of Mecca, Ohio--experience in research
and writing about local history.

DATE: May 7, 1979

H: This is an interview with Mr. Thomas Kachur for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Beth Hanuschak on May 7, 1979 at 7:35 p.m. The subject is the History of Mecca, Ohio.

Mr. Kachur, your parents are John and Mary?

K: That's right.

H: You're immigrants here to Mecca?

K: Yes. We came from Pennsylvania, near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. My mother and father were born in Czechoslovakia. They migrated to this country. My dad was a coal miner in Pennsylvania and we moved to Mecca in 1933.

H: Why did they decide to come to Mecca, Ohio?

K: My oldest brother was a senior in high school and my father, being a coal miner, decided that he didn't want his sons working in the coal mines. He always had the desire to be a farmer, because that's what he grew up with in Europe, and he found this farm here in Mecca and we settled here because he had acquaintances nearby who knew of this area. And that's how he decided to come to this particular part of Ohio.

H: Tell me about your parents. Tell me about John first.

K: My father was born in Czechoslovakia. He came to this country for the first time in about 1910. He went back to Europe and served in the army prior to the First World War. Czechoslovakia was under Austrian rule at that time. While he served in the army, he served as a personal guard to Franz Joseph in Vienna. After he got out of the service, he decided that Europe wasn't for him and he decided to come back to the United States. That was about 1911. He came that year and my mother came a year later and they were married the following year. My mother and father were both born in Czechoslovakia in the same village and knew each other, but were never really that acquainted until they came over to this country near Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

H: Are they still living?

K: No. My father passed away in 1969, he was 84 or he would have been 84, and my mother died in 1975 and she was 83 going on 84.

H: What was it like growing up in a home where there was that strong heritage? Did they impress that a lot upon you? Were you very ethnic?

K: We were quite ethnic because my mother and father, even though they were Czechoslovakian, spoke Slovak in the home and the older children spoke Slovak when they were in the first grade. They spoke Slovak to us, but we usually answered in English. We taught each other, so to speak. It was never really drilled into us to be nationality oriented although it just came by second nature.

We went to a church that was our nationality church in Warren and I think, more than anything, we learned to respect it rather than to have it forced upon us. We're quite proud of it in our own way I guess, not that we flaunted it over others.

I've been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to go over to my parent's homeland. I stayed in the house that my father lived in and grew up in, and I also visited the house that my mother grew up in.

H: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

K: There were six boys in the family and two girls. Two brothers are deceased and there are six of us left.

H: And you're all living in this area with the exception of one that lives in Cortland?

K: That's correct.

H: That's who?

K: Steve.

K: So, your parents moved from Uniontown, came here in 1933. They purchased a home that was built by Gideon Gault? Is that how the story goes?

K: No, let me clarify that. The little town is actually Smock, Pennsylvania. I use the name Uniontown because it's the nearest large town. But we came and bought a farm down the road from a man by the name of Wheeler, and we lived there from 1933 to 1944. In the fall of 1943 they started to build the Mosquito Creek Reservoir and the reservoir took 77 acres out of the 100 acre farm. And my father was fortunate to be able to just come up the road here and buy this farm off of a man by the name of Baldwin. Albert Baldwin.

The way Gideon Gault gets into the act is . . . I have been doing research on this place and I don't have all of the owners to date, but one of the first men to own this place, and I believe he built the house, was a man by the name of Powers, Franklin Powers, who was related to the Powers' from Youngstown, and, I believe, related to the Powers' of Powers' War and Powers' Run in the Poland area. He was related to these people. Then the next most prominent man to own this place was Noble Mason. Noble Mason was a man of quite some character. At the age of seventeen, he taught school in Mecca in one of his father's buildings, and his daughter married Gideon Gault and they lived on this farm for some time. So, the farm was in the Mason's and Gideon Gault family for a large number of years, and then it was passed on to a couple other people who had it for a short period of time for about four years each, and then about 1914 or 1915, Albert Baldwin and his wife bought the place. They came from western Ohio. They lived here until we bought it in 1944. We've lived on it ever since.

H: I read that when you purchased it, you moved the house to one of the south corners of 46. Is that true?

K: Well, when we moved here, the house that sat here sat in front of this one and we lived in it for about four

years. The house had no central heating. It had no running water. We put running water in the house. We lived in it for four years and then we built the house that we have here now, and sold that house. And that house was moved up to the Mecca Center and it sits there now. That house was built in 1848 and we built this one in 1948, so it was one hundred years old when it was moved.

H: Tell me a little bit more about that house, this history behind it. What was it like living in a house with no running water? I'm sure that was such an adjustment.

K: Well, it wasn't an adjustment because it was something that we grew up with. The house that we had down the road, in fact, most of the people that lived out in this area didn't have running water in the homes. You had the outhouses and you had your cellar that was mostly used for storage. The house that we had didn't really have a concrete floor. It had a dirt floor and it was used primarily for storing your produce, potatoes and your canned goods and that sort of thing. This house was particularly crowded for us because there were ten of us and we had only really two heated rooms and you went to bed in a cold room and you woke up in a cold room. So, when we built this house, of course, it was a different way of life than we had been used to. It's a life that I think more people should sometimes have to suffer through.

H: So, the house that we are in now was the house that you grew up in? This house right here?

K: I lived in all three houses. I was three years old when we moved to Mecca. We lived down there for eleven years in my life. We've lived here since 1944 and I'm going on 49.

H: How many acres did all of this encompass?

K: There are 119 acres here, originally 120, but there was a half acre lot on that corner that was sold for a school. Noble Mason sold the property to the Board of Education. And then my sister owns a half an acre lot on the north corner. The school property has since been purchased and a private individual has built a home on it.

H: Did your father farm when he came here, strictly wanted to farm?

to farm?

K: He was exclusively a farmer, right.

H: What kind of farming did he do?

K: Dairy farming. He had dairy cattle. He sold milk to Isaly Dairy in Youngstown, and he did that from 1933 up until about 1959, and then he sold the dairy and then he raised beef cattle and continued to farm pretty much up until about five years before his death.

H: Was he more at ease with himself then? Did he really enjoy that type of life?

K: He lived and died with the soil. That was his life.

H: The children in his family, did they accept that way of life? Did all of you follow in his footsteps? Did you want to have that way of life?

K: None of us turned out to be farmers. I am the only gentleman farmer out of the group and my sister's boys, one in particular, the oldest. When my father gave up or discontinued the farming, our neighbor, Mr. Clark, farmed our property. And my nephews were growing up, the Drawl's, and as they were growing up, and they were able to start working, well, they began working for Mr. Clark and that's how they became involved in farming. The oldest one, Mark, is real interested and he's doing the bulk of the farming. He's more or less farming it on shares and I have a few cattle and he raises the grain and sells the grain.

H: You were born in 1930?

K: June 28, 1930.

H: You were born just on the brink of the Depression.

K: Yes, and it was at that time that my father was only working one or two days a week in the mine. I have to marvel at the fact that it was at that time that he decided to pack up and venture out with a family of ten of us and put his money into a farm. And in a lot of ways, I guess it probably was a blessing because, at least he could grow enough on the farm for us to eat and survive on. But it was a terrific hardship. My father was one who never believed in credit. What he

bought he paid for and of course, he didn't have enough money to pay for a farm, so he had to borrow the money.

- H: If you don't mind me asking, how much was the farm that he bought? How much did it cost him, roughly?
- K: I don't remember, but it was in the neighborhood of about \$5,000.00. But I do remember him telling me-- of course, I was too young to know--that whenever we got the money from the milk check, his first duty was to go pay the woman her monthly payment. When he finally paid that off, I guess it was just like somebody had lifted a big, heavy log off of his shoulders, because as I say, he believed in paying cash; he believed in paying his own way. The credit unions wouldn't make any money off of him today. (Laughter)
- H: What can you remember about your childhood in the 1930's? Mecca didn't seem to be affected by it too much because everyone here, being farmers, were able to survive it. They had their own crops.
- K: It was rough, there's no doubt about it, but everybody knew everybody. Cars were at a premium, not everybody even had an automobile. So, you grew up at home and you got to know a few neighbors, and usually the neighborhood children would play with one another. I was most fortunate, I guess, out of the group because I had no children in my neighborhood that were my age, they were always older. Even when I moved up here I had less because there was no one in this neighborhood my age. So, I lived down in this part of Mecca, and there weren't very many young people living down here. Consequently, I didn't have too many opportunities to play with other children except when we went to school.

However, on the other side of the coin, I had work to do on the farm, which I guess kind of made up for that because I was busy enough without having to worry about playing and that sort of thing. Then on the farm, I think a child has a lot of opportunities to do things, which, in a sense, you could call them playing, but he gets a sense of responsibility. He learns to drive the horses and hitch up the wagon and that sort of thing. Most kids that grow up on the farm play that way, but they play it in sort of a make believe way and this way I had the real thing to play with.

- H: Did you enjoy that?

K: I enjoyed it. There were a lot of aspects about farming because we did it in the old fashioned way. We didn't have a tractor until I was in high school and a lot of the farming we did was by hand and it was slow and it was monotonous. And as a kid I just disliked a lot of the work on the farm and then on the other side of the coin, there were a lot of things about farming that I really liked. Looking back on it, I don't think I would have it any other way. No life is, I guess, a bed of roses, but I enjoyed what I did.

H: What year did you start grade school?

K: In 1936. I went to the school which now sits underwater. The school was built in 1828 and it was the first centralized school in Mecca. I started in 1936. It was a red brick school very similar to the "red brick" that's up in Maplewood right now. The school was torn down in December of 1943. I was in the eighth grade when we transferred. Those on the east side of the lake went to Johnston School for a year, while they were building this school, and those on the west side went to Cortland.

H: What can you remember about your grade school years? Who were some of the teachers that you had and some of the kids that you hung around with so to speak?

K: I can't remember how many there were in my first grade class, but I graduated with a class of fourteen. Six of us started at the first grade, went the full twelve years together. There was more because a couple of them had moved away from when I started. The thing unique about living in the country like this and going to a school like we did, all twelve grades in one building, is that you had large families going. So, I mean, your brothers and sisters also had brothers and sisters of your friends in their classes. So, that was kind of a unique experience. My class for example, I said we had fourteen. No new students came into my class after the fifth grade. The rest of us just went on up through high school. We had people move in and out, but most of them in my class, when they came in, they would stay for a short period of time and leave. That was a little unusual to this area at that time.

Usually the lower grades, we had one teacher that would teach first and second grade. I can remember I had a Miss Rebecca Gates, who taught my first grade, then in the second grade I had Miss Marjorie Gates, and they

weren't even related to each other. Flora Haney was my third and fourth grade teacher. Then I went to the fifth grade and I had Gladys Hower and she was fifth and sixth grade. Then when we got to the seventh and eighth grade, we started having the same teachers that they had in high school, in which Gail Banning was the Superintendent. He's deceased. He died a couple of years ago. One of the other teachers that I had was Lynn Woofter, who now lives in Cortland and he's somewhat of an historian also. He's a buff on covered bridges. My most memorable teacher was a woman teacher whom I had who taught me English from the seventh to the twelfth grade. I learned more from her than I think I ever did any other teacher. I guess mainly because I respected her.

H: What was her name?

K: Her name was Frances Tyler. She was from Greene. She now has retired and is living in Arizona. During the war, we had a very difficult time getting teachers to teach and it forced her mother to come and teach and her mother had to be in her sixties when she came to teach us, but she taught me eighth grade math, and she was a very thorough teacher, her mother, because she taught from the "old school." She taught in the old one room schools in fact. I'm not sure of the dates right now, but in my book, I show her when teaching before she was married. She taught in the local one room schools. When we came back from Johnston and I went to where Maplewood is located now, it was still known as Mecca at that time, and we came back in January of my freshman year. That was 1945 and I graduated in 1948.

H: Do you have any memorable experiences in your high school years? Were you a member of the basketball team or did they have one? With fourteen people; I can't venture a whole lot.

K: We had a very small basketball team. I didn't play with the basketball team because I went through an unfortunate experience--broken bones. My bones were awfully brittle. I think within a period of like two years, I broke my arm twice and my collar bone once, and I guess it was time to call it a day. So, I was the scorekeeper for the basketball team.

Nothing that I can think of memorable right now. It may

sound dull, but it was interesting because we knew everybody in the school. It wasn't just that you knew those in your own class; you knew everybody and the classes were closer. You palled around with students that were not in your class, maybe the freshman class or sophomore class or the junior class.

H: Do you remember anything at all about World War II going on? You graduated just after the war had ended. Did you talk about that a lot? Was that a big discussion? Had Mecca had anybody that fought in World War II?

K: Yes. I had three brothers who were in World War II. We discussed it somewhat in school. I think that it made the biggest impact on us when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, really, before we got involved. We would have a teacher that would bring out something about how Germany was walking through Europe. We never dwelt too much on the war, as such, in the classes that I recall.

We had gas rationing and so forth. You went to school. We came home and worked. And I mean, what activities we had were somewhat limited, extremely limited in today's standards. I think that the biggest impact that the war had was on a girl in the class ahead of me who lost a brother and she brought the purple heart medal to school one day and I think that even though it is a beautiful medal, it kind of struck home in all of us, that it could have been any one of us that had received one of those.

H: How did you feel about the reservoir being built? Were you glad to see that?

K: I was really too young to really care one way or the other. I had a lot of nostalgic moments going down to the old creek which was the heart of the reservoir. I think, overall, it was a very good thing for Mecca because Mecca would have been a swamp land because that is mainly what that area was. I think Mecca has grown and progressed to it's present state largely through the reservoir. Had it not been for the reservoir, it probably would have stayed a very agricultural area such as Gustavus, Greene, and other struggling communities. We have had our growing pains with some of our problems and you always have those. We are kind of fortunate maybe that we haven't had more than we have.

- H: Another item that keeps popping up with people that I have been talking with is the animosity between East Mecca and West Mecca. Is the hostility still there?
- K: There is some, particularly with the old-timers. The creek made a very natural barrier between East and West Mecca. This stems way back from the beginning of time when they wanted to build a centralized school. They couldn't decide whether to build it on the East or West Side, so they ended up building two, one on each side. Then from that, they went into the one centralized school; just like when they built this one after we put the reservoir in. There was some animosity at the time. I think a lot of it has died down, but I have got to be perfectly honest, it still exists. And it still exists in our neighborhood communities much more between Cortland and Bazetta than between East Mecca and West Mecca.

And a lot of people have the mistaken idea that it is the reservoir that created the difference between the two areas. It really isn't. If anything, it was Mosquito Creek. You just couldn't go from one to the other without going on a specific road because of the creek. So, I think it was a natural barrier and it was just the means to divide the people, and whether they liked it or not it was there. It still is there somewhat.

- H: You graduated in 1948, what did you want to do with your life? Did you go on to college? Work?
- K: I had no idea what I wanted to do. I didn't, even up to the time I graduated, I didn't know what I wanted to do. And come the summer of 1948, and I wasn't able to find a job. Of course, I did farm that summer and it was that summer that I decided, really late that summer, early fall, that I was going to college, and so I went the following year. I didn't know for sure what I wanted to study, except that I always liked chemistry in high school, so I went to Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and I majored in chemistry; and even after I got out of college, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my chemistry. I figured that I would study chemistry and if I didn't like working at it, I could always teach. I always felt I could teach it if I had to.

Coming out of college, I went to work for Youngstown

Sheet & Tube for a brief period of time. Then I was called into the service and I served for two years and when I came out of the service, I kind of liked what I did at Youngstown Sheet & Tube, but I went back there for a job to see what they had to offer, and I wasn't too well received in the sense that: "Well, you are a veteran, we have to take you back," attitude.

A friend of mine, who I went to college with, and I, discussed that after we came home from the Army for about a month or so. That maybe we would head for California because neither of us had any ties and we just figured, well it was the time to go and see what the world was like. I thought if I could find something out there that I liked that I probably would stay. As fate would have it, his father became seriously ill and he had to have his leg amputated. So, he couldn't get away, and I stayed around the farm that summer and worked.

I started looking for a job about July and I went around to different areas and finally decided to accept the job that was offered to me at Republic in Warren. If I didn't like it, at least I'm in my own backyard and can always pack up and leave when I wanted. But here I am, 25 years later and I am still at Republic and I have had a varied number of jobs at Republic.

H: What do you do there now?

K: I'm now Manager of Environmental Control. So, I'm into a completely different field, but I find it very interesting.

H: You said you were drafted. Tell me a little bit about your years in the service.

K: Actually, I wasn't drafted, I served in ROTC in college and went in as a second lieutenant and served two years. When we went into the service, a group of us from school went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, which is an armored center. We had had our instructions in artillery and armor was a new thing for us. But we were there for about several months and then we went on to artillery school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, figuring after that time that they would have assigned us to an artillery post. Well, we all came back to Fort Knox, Kentucky and then I was put on the instructor crew and I taught for my tour of duty practically two years at

Fort Knox.

I taught mine warfare and I liked it very much. And I used to teach basic training and I ran into a number of fellows from this area that came in for training. Invariably, I would have them because I taught every company that came through Fort Knox. The most surprising thing was the fact that I ran into a college classmate of mine.

H: You came back here and eventually get a job at Republic. Did you ever think about moving away? Are you pretty much settled in your ways? Would you like to move away from Mecca?

K: No. This is God's country. I wouldn't trade it now for anything. I could move if the opportunity presented itself. I like this country, I like the changing of the seasons. I don't always like the cold and the rain, but I think I might get a little bit bored if I just had hot weather all the time. It might have been interesting had I followed my intuition at one time and had gone to California. I may not still have been there, but on the other side of the coin, I probably might have been. The set-up I have now, this is like a vacation home and I enjoy being here. I have people at work that jump into their recreation vehicles and they are taking off for the lake and what have you. I don't have to do that, I have it here year round. So, I am happy.

H: That is exactly true. Do you belong to any organizations? There is an Odd Fellows Lodge here. There are a couple of other organizations like the firemen. Do you belong to anything here in your community?

K: Not here in the community. I always felt I wasn't going to belong to any organization unless I was going to be active. I belong to one, the Pazetta Historical Society, which I helped organize and which I am now the president of. It's three years old. We are still strong with a handful of people although we have membership of about forty. There is usually the ten or twelve that do all the work, but we are going to press forward, because I feel I would like to see a historical society established; one that is active, which is most unfortunate in Trumbull County. We have a Trumbull County Historical Society which doesn't do anything except it seems to be a prestigious type of organiza-

tion. I think there is much to be gained from just having an honest to goodness working historical society.

I guess that I am some sort of a freak because I live and die in local history and I could spend every waking hour just working with it and I always say that work interferes with my extra-curricular activities.

H: One thing that I have noticed here in Mecca is that you are of the Catholic religion. There are not a whole lot of Catholics in this area. I have come across a lot of Jehovah Witnesses. Do you know why or if there is any reasoning behind that or why this area attracts . . .

K: Yes, there are a lot of Catholics now. There weren't any to speak of. When I was going to school, I was the only Catholic in my class and then two of the girls in my class married Catholics so they became converts. But there were only a handful of Catholics out here. There were other foreign people grouped here that were Catholic. But in the days of the Depression around the 1920's and 1930's a lot of the Catholics were discriminated against. A lot of people did not even let on that they were Catholic. And I think that the majority of the Catholic people who really practiced their religion lived on this road from Mecca south and we went into Warren to Church,

The other reason now, that most of those did not practice their faith is the fact that they had so far to go to church and not having an automobile, and then the next thing you know, they just gradually fell away and that was the end of it. We drove every Sunday into Warren and went to church and then in 1954 we broke ground for our St. Robert's Church here in Cortland. And at that time we were probably lucky to have 35 to 40 families move into that church. Now, we have got like 300 and the most of them are living here in Cortland. But there is a lot living up this way.

H: Why were they attracted to this area? Do you know?

K: Jehovah Witnesses?

H: Yes.

K: I don't know that they were so much attracted as they had a few families who started and they just enticed other ones to go. Really, I say that without a lot of

authority because I really don't know that for a fact, but I know from the families who are the Jehovah Witnesses and the most of those are related and that is why I say that.

H: Right.

K: Then the churches that we do have here now, we have a Methodist Church at West Mecca, but the other ones are really not affiliated with any particular faith. For example, we have the community church which has really no denomination. It used to be a Congregational Church. Then we have another one that has more or less just started up. I know very little about it. It's called the Stable or something or other. At one time we must have had five churches here and we're down to three now.

H: I would like to, now, talk a little bit about your book. More than a little bit because it is a fantastic source of information. How did you get started? Why did you want to write this?

K: I didn't start out to write a book. I, as a kid in high school, used to pal around with a few of my classmates. And one of the girls, Joan Falkner and her grandmother lived with them and when we would be up there maybe sitting on the porch, Grandma Falkner would come out and talk to us and she used to tell us about what it was like around Mecca when she grew up and I credit her with my initial interest in local history.

The next thing, I guess, that really prompted me to really start some research was when I found out that there was an 1874 Atlas and it had the maps of all the townships that showed where everyone lived. I was trying to locate an Atlas and I never had any luck locating one for myself. So, I borrowed one from a man and I copied the Mecca map. Well, as fate would have it, I since then found my own copy of the Trumbull County Atlas and from there I started finding out that there were other books on history where I could get information. And of course, then I started going to the library. So, I just started collecting a lot of information on Mecca, primarily for my own satisfaction.

After doing all this and having all this information, I talked to a lot of people in the community. I got to be rather a close friend of Frank Benton, who also had a daughter in my class, and who I am very close with now as far as we exchange a lot of information on the

history of Mecca. I assembled all of this information and decided, well, it's a shame that it just sits here.

Prior to that I found out that there were a lot of people that were interested and they knew that I had done a lot of this research and periodically I would be asked to come speak to the Boy Scouts and different organizations like that I would talk to. So, I decided to put this thing together and I would say that I have about twelve years of research in that book.

One Thanksgiving I sat down and I started putting it all together and I put it all together in that one year. I was doing it a step at a time, going blindly because I didn't know how I was going to get this thing published or what have you. I wrote to several publishing houses, which a couple of them still correspond with me and want to know when I'm going to publish my book.

I wanted to do it in two ways. I wanted to do it and I wanted to do it in the way that I thought was the right way to do it. But I also wanted to do it so the people could afford to buy it. I would have preferred to have it in hard-bound cover. But I knew that if I put the price up to where it is going to cost them twelve dollars or ten dollars, nobody was going to buy it. So, I went out and ventured on my own and scouted around and I found a man who works for a newspaper and he said, "I know a man who will print that for you for a very reasonable fee." And I said, "Okay, I'll talk to him." So, I went up and talked to him and he said, "Yes, I can do it." He said, "You tell me how you want it."

He let me pick out the type, he asked me what type of cover I wanted and I told him that I wanted a soft cover. Then I picked out the cover I wanted. He asked me how I wanted the cover made, that he was going to have somebody draw the pictures that I wanted on the cover. That's essentially how it came out. So, what happened was he gave me a price for 500 and he gave me a price for 1,000, and I decided that I may as well get the 1,000 because 500 probably wouldn't be enough. So, I printed up 1,000 and paid for them myself. I sold darn close to 900 copies of the book.

I had some of the most strangest requests for the book. The New York Library in New York City sent for one and different distant places. I did some of my research

in Hartford, Connecticut. The fact that most of these people did come from Connecticut, I just sent a copy, free of charge, to them. I don't know where it is now, but I got a very nice response from the State of Connecticut. They sent me this receipt that they received a copy of the book and that they were happy with it.

And I since found out, after doing that, and I had my book out, an attorney in Cortland, a friend, I saw him on the street one day and he asked, "When is your book coming out?" And I said, "Funny you should ask, it just came out." So, he wanted a copy. Then he said, "Well, now you've got to do Cortland." And I said, "Gee, after going through all this, I don't know if I would want to go through Cortland. It would be better if somebody local would write it, from the community." He said, "I know what you've been through because I do a lot of that work." And he does. He told me to sit back and relax a while, "and then you can think about writing another one."

And a couple of other women who were retired school teachers approached me about writing their history because their family goes way back. And I said, "Well, why don't you people do it now that you are retired?" And they said that was too big a job for them to undertake.

So, I finally said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'm doing. I'm going to start collecting information," because I'm interested in Cortland because a lot of the people who lived in Mecca, when they retired, instead of going to the city, they went to Cortland because it was like town, so to speak, and I said that it would be like a continuation of my Mecca history.

I started collecting information and I have volumes of it. So, now I'm going to put it together. I had intended to start this year, but one thing led to another. So, I started assembling, but it will be next winter because you can't do that in the summer.

- H: What kind of experiences did you encounter talking with people? Anything strange happen to you in collecting your history of Mecca?
- K: No, but I find out that you can't talk to people too much. (Laughter) You don't always get the right story. It's interesting how it evolves. I talk to people to get more or less what they grew up with, then after I

have it, I have to sit down and sort it all out. I sometimes find people tell you what they think they want to remember rather than the way things actually were. And I know that there are a number of people who will take exception to some of the things that I have in my book, but yet, I have put them in because that's the way that I found them. I know that I'm not necessarily right and I know that it can't all be wrong.

Just for example, you run into this situation of people spelling their names and they say that this isn't the way that you spell that name and because these people spell it this way. I find out that even in Cortland we have a family by the name of Everitt. One faction of the family spells it with an "i", and the other spells it with an "e". It was originally with an "i". They had a falling out in the family, so one disowned the other so they changed the name to an "e". That's the type of thing that you run across.

And people are very hesitant to tell you any history about their family because they are afraid that you are going to uncover a skeleton in their closet. I have found some of the people who I could have really got some information from were not receptive at all. And then, after the book is out it's always, "Oh, is that what you wanted?" So, it gets a little frustrating.

We have a woman up the road here who is living in a place her husband's ancestors lived in and she still lives there. And she told me that grandma's atlas and books are upstairs just the way they were because she won't touch them. So, naturally, I wasn't going to see them. And I'm sure that there would be papers there that I would like to see.

I had one woman who is still living, she's 93, and she lived in an old home over in West Mecca with the same situation. I told her, "If you ever break up housekeeping, and if you ever run across any old papers I would be interested in seeing them," because I knew that her grandfather-in-law was one of the early justices of the peace in Mecca. So, she must have had some papers or something of doings, goings on. So, what happened was, they broke up housekeeping and her son burnt a lot of those papers. So, that's the kind of information you lose.

Let's face it, I have uncovered information that is of delicate nature, but I don't put that in my work, because that's not my intention. I hopefully convinced the people when I put the Mecca book out, if I have delicate material, I'm not going to put that down.

But I love history. I could spend hours doing it.

H: Is there any one person that you enjoyed out of all the people you have talked with?

K: I would have to say Mrs. Falkner probably as much as anyone else. I enjoyed Nora Palmer. I enjoyed a number of them. But Mrs. Falkner is the one that I can remember the most, because I usually found what she told me was backed up by something else. She told it as it was in spite of some other people. Even to this day, some people will argue over a point like who lived where and they will say they never lived there, but then it turns out that they did, but this other party wasn't aware of it. So, you get into those types of things all the time. But that's all part of the game.

H: Your work is to be commended. It's great. And I'm glad you're carrying it on and going towards something else. Looking on Mecca when you were growing up and as it is now, do you like the changes that are taking place? It's growing. The road that I come to school on, Ridge Road, is just unbelievable. Would you like to see it growing as much as it is now?

K: No, no I really don't. That's because I get bombarded with people coming to me and saying, "Why don't you sell me a lot off your farm? I'd like to have a lot off the back or I'd like to have a lot over there." No, I prefer the country atmosphere. There was a sort of a closeness with the people. You knew everybody on your road; the people, you socialized. I don't know the people who now live right next door, for example. We have had umpteen people come in and out of there. I don't even know the lady who lives in the next house. I know who she is to see her on the street, but to talk to her, I don't know her. And before, all the farmers worked together and you knew everybody.

There's sort of a nostalgia with these older homes too, which you don't have anymore with the new ones being put up. I don't know if this place ever did, but a lot

of the places here had fences around them. The homes were fenced in. I sometimes wish we would have kept that old house just for the nostalgia, because it was a well built home.

There's a town hall up there. Bill Falkner has it on his place and he has offered it to me for a museum, but I have to move it. It's an old building. I don't want to move it. I don't know if I want to get involved with starting a museum. I even thought of presenting it to the Bazetta Historical Society, moving it to Cortland, but it would cost an arm and a leg to do it. One should be practical about these things and unfortunately, Cortland doesn't have an old building that is really suitable for a museum and that is most unfortunate.

Cortland has suffered more fires than any community I've ever known of, and it seems like a lot of the buildings that were there were destroyed or what have you. One of these days we will have something there, if we just keep plugging away.

- H: One thing that really interested me a lot is the Mecca Circle and I noticed in the Tribune they are writing more articles because of the people coming and going. In my readings, it seemed to be, at one time, just a beautiful place. You could go there and have a picnic. Now, today you drive past there and it's not like what it originally was meant to be. Does that bother you?
- K: Yes, in fact, I drove by it the other day and they are having a meeting tonight, but I really don't care to get involved in the argument they're having. It's really most unfortunate, the situation that's going on up there. And it's primarily out-of-towners that are coming in. That, I guess, is the bad part of it, too. I'd like to see that park replanted with trees, and I suppose I should get my feet into the act, but I don't want to get into a feud.
- H: The fact that the taverns are there and I know some of the people that own the taverns . . . I feel that anybody who owns a tavern and serves drinks, that's their prerogative and their business. I'm not going to tell them that they can or cannot sell. On the other side of the coin, I think what we need is somebody to enforce the law and say, "Okay look, we have a park here and it's closed at a certain hour," and that sort of

thing. But to have that, you have to have somebody patrol it. The man who does it has to be given the authority and the support to do it. And if you're not going to do those things, then you may as well forget it.

I know it gets bad up there, and I wouldn't care to live in that atmosphere. I don't want to shun the responsibility because I live away from it, but I also wouldn't care to tangle with some of these young kids in this day. Who knows what they'll do? It's a touchy situation and sometimes I condemn the media to some extent. Let the community resolve it. Don't make too much of a headline out of it because all it is going to do is promote more young to come up here and see what's the big attraction at Mecca?

H: There is no full-time police?

K: We don't have a constable or anything. The last man we had tried to curb some drag racing. Well, the drag racing has stopped. He didn't curb it, but it has stopped and I guess, this is going to stop, too, someday. But we all like to see it stop sooner than just to have it run its course. He tried to curb the drag racing and he did or at least he attempted to and then they spray-painted his house in black paint. I don't know who paid for that or if anybody did pay for it. But I would say if he's the constable for the community, the township probably should reimburse him for something. It's a bad situation.

H: Have you ever thought of getting involved in township government?

K: No, not really. I'm involved in so many things like I say. That's too time consuming. I can't do the things that I want to do. Taking on more responsibility?

H: Are there any other changes that you would make in your life? Looking back over your life, just you personally, is there anything different that you would do? Would you have always stayed here?

K: I don't know.

H: Do you think that you regret not going to California?

K: No, I've been to California since, so I don't feel I've

missed anything. I probably would have done the same thing over again. I'm not sure whether I would do the same things over again or not. There are times when I wonder, "Gee, I wonder if I'd have still studied chemistry how it would have gone on?" Although I enjoyed working with it, I enjoy what I'm doing now. But it just makes me sometimes think maybe I would have just as soon tried something else. It's very hard to say that I would do the same thing over. Although, as far as anything goes, this is God's country as far as I'm concerned.

H: Is there anything else that you think is important that we might add to our discussion that we have not yet covered about Mecca?

K: I can't think of anything else right now. As far as the history of it is concerned, I think that anybody who would read my book would get much, if not more, out of the book than they would from me talking about it.

However, I should also explain that while I'm doing this research on Bazetta, I have continued my research on Mecca and even though I've put stories in there as I've found them, I have found other stories which put a different light on some of the subjects and if I were to rewrite it or update the book, put out a second edition, I will bring these factors out just to let them be known, because I accepted what I thought to be fact in some of the instances because it was the only basis of information I had. And now, I can present, in some areas, a second view, which I'm not saying that one is more right than the other, but it would give a different perspective on some of the history.

H: In this project of the study of Mecca that I'm involved with, is there anyone that you know of that can help us other than the people that I have mentioned?

K: Well, unfortunately there is one man, but he is very ill. His name is Stanley Brown. He could have helped you. His father was a doctor in Mecca. Stanley grew up in Mecca and he knew a lot of the history. He grew up in the first house just west of where Bill Falkner lives. His father had an office in the front. His father died quite young, but Stanley Brown would know quite a bit about the history of Mecca.

Of course, you've talked to Bill Falkner and there is another man by the name of Ernest Falkner who lives down the road there who's an older half brother of Bill's and I've talked to him and he's real interesting. There are other old people, but it's amazing how much they say they don't remember. I've talked to them and they've been a help to me. I know that they grew up here and they are in their eighties and I know that they have lived here all their lives. There's more that they should know than what they're telling. But either knowingly or unknowingly, they are not telling me that they don't remember.

H: One name that keeps popping up is Meacham. Are there any of that family left?

K: Yes, Dr. Meacham lives in Warren. He's a retired gynecologist, I guess, is what he is. You might find him very interesting. I think you would find his life probably interesting in itself regardless of what he tells you about Mecca, because he must have had a very remarkable mother. Susan Meacham was her name. There were, I believe, six children in that family and Mr. Meacham died quite young and she raised the family. She went out and actually did work with a team of horses to put those kids through school.

The oldest son lives in Andover, and he's retired from Republic Steel, that's Alfred Meacham. Ralph Meacham is a doctor, and his brother Edward was a doctor, another sister is a nurse. So, they were all educated and she must have been a remarkable woman to raise those children and send them on to school.

There were a number of those Meachams and the place across the road, which includes that house, and where the Donegans live and Ruth Chapman's house, that was all Meacham property. They are from a different family. They are related, but they are cousins.

Meacham is a very early name in Trumbull County. Frank Benton probably told you that he was related to Meachams. The Meachams came to Kinsman, Ohio. They also came to Gustavus. So, it's a very old name in Trumbull County. I think you'll find Dr. Meacham probably very interesting.

In this work, surprisingly enough, I've made acquaintances with people from all over the United States, because, even though I'm not active, I belong to the Ohio

Genealogical Society, and people who have bought my book or read it through the Warren Library or Trumbull County's ask them for information on their ancestors and their roots and consequently, they are referred to me. I get letters from all over the country from people, when they know that somebody, once upon a time, lived in Mecca, quite often I am able to supply the missing link in their family history.

In fact, I was really amazed because this one woman made this trip down here especially to see me from Buffalo. Her grandfather was born in Mecca and her great-grandmother and her great grandfather lived here. She knew her grandfather because he lived with them in Buffalo. And they brought him back here to bury him.

H: What was their name?

K: Boone.

H: That must be related to Jennie Boone.

K: Yes, Jennie Boone would have been their great-great-grandmother.

H: I find that lady very interesting.

K: She was a very strong willed woman.

H: Yes she was.

K: Ruled with an iron hand I think.

H: She was part of the upper echelon. She was rather wealthy. I would have liked to have met her.

K: But anyhow, this woman, even though she lived with her grandfather, who could have given her a lot of this information I had, she didn't know it. In fact, she did not know that Nora Plamer is related and is still living and Ernest Falkner married into her family. So, I took her to see these people and gave her a family reunion. She was really quite surprised to find out that I had that much information.

But on the other side of the coin, I've had people write to me; for example the Dawson's were the first family to come to Mecca and I have records that they were here. Then I lost track of them. I don't find them in the

cemeteries or anywhere. And this one woman wrote to me, she wanted to know if there were any Dawson's living in Mecca. I wrote back and I said, "No, I can't find anyone." The ones I had records of I gave to her. The one she was looking for was this Joseph Dawson. So, she proceeds to answer my letter saying, "Well, the ones you're looking for are buried here in Lima, Ohio." And then another faction of them, I found out through this other woman, went to DeKalb County, Indiana. So, I've been able to further my history by talking to these people.

H: I want to thank you for spending this time with me. I find it very delightful and very interesting. I hope to see volume two of your work.

K: Someday.

H: I just want to thank you again for taking this time.

K: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW