

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Maronites in Youngstown

History of the Maronites

O. H. 322

ELIAS L. SAADI

Interviewed

by

Marilyn Rudawsky

on

November 22, 1978

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: ELIAS L. SAADI

INTERVIEWER: Marilyn Rudawsky

SUBJECT: Maronite community in Youngstown; Growth of
the community

DATE: November 22, 1978

R: This is an interview with Dr. Elias Saadi for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Marilyn Rudawsky at the Belpark Professional Building at 1005 Belmont Avenue, in Youngstown, Ohio. It is November 22, 1978, at about 3:30 p.m.

All right Dr. Saadi, would you please tell me a little bit about yourself, such as where you were born, when, and that type of thing?

S: I was born August 28, 1932, in Youngstown, Ohio.

R: Where?

S: At St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

R: Where were you educated? Tell me about it.

S: I went to Sacred Heart Elementary School on the east side of Youngstown. My first two years of grade school were in the Shehy Street School, one of the city grade schools which was sold and later became St. Maron's Church. I went two years and the school was shut down. Then I moved to Sacred Heart School on the east side, graduated from there, and I went to Ursuline High School. After Ursuline High School graduation I attended Youngstown State University for three years and I got my bachelor's degree and then went to Georgetown University Medical School and got my medical degree there. After that I spent a year internship at St.

Elizabeth's Hospital, three years of medical residency at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and spent a year in cardiology in Cleveland at St. Vincent's Hospital. I then came back and established my practice here.

R: Where did you live when you were a child? Do you remember the street?

S: I lived at 1207 Shehy Street.

R: Right near the school?

S: A block away from the old Shehy School.

R: Which became a church then?

S: Which became the second move for St. Maron's. It started out at Wilson Avenue and then moved to Shehy and then went to Meridian Road.

R: Do you remember where it was before it was at Wilson? Do you remember anything about that?

S: No, I don't. My recollections of the Wilson Avenue period of my childhood are not too good, but I think it started on Wilson Avenue as far as I can remember.

R: Where did your father come from? What town?

S: My father came from a village in Lebanon called Bijji. It is in the province or county of Byblos, in Arabic it's Jubail. Byblos is a district which includes the city of Byblos, which is the oldest continually inhabited city in the world. That's where we get our term bible, bibliography, et cetera. That's where we trace ourselves.

R: How far is this city from Beirut?

S: The city is about fifty-five miles north of Beirut.

R: What did your father do in Lebanon?

S: My father was a child in Lebanon. He came at age fourteen.

R: With his parents?

S: No, he came alone. His father was already here. His mother had died in Lebanon and a younger brother had also died; his sister was the only one left. She was

married and he came here at age fourteen, all by himself on the boat.

R: Did he ever tell you anything about the trip over here? Do you remember any stories like that?

S: I remember it took an awfully long time; it took about a month. I don't know what level he occupied in the boat, I don't recall. I think they all came the cheapest way possible at that time. They came into Ellis Island, I think this was the heyday of the mass immigration to this country in the early 1900's. I've always been amazed . . . I never quite understood how he got, at age fourteen, from Ellis Island to Youngstown, Ohio. He didn't quite come to Youngstown; most of the people from our district in Lebanon came south of Youngstown in the early 1900's. A few came to Youngstown, but others, the majority, went to a town south of here on the Ohio River called Wellsville, Ohio, and the surrounding districts of East Liverpool, Stratton, Ohio, all the way down to Toronto and in that general area. The reason they went there is because it was a boom town. It was flourishing with railroads, railroads were heavy there, and brickyards, they made bricks and pipes.

R: Was there any mention of potteries? Did there seem to be quite a few . . .

S: Pottery was one of the major industries. I was reaching for that word.

R: Was his father in Wellsville? Did he go to join his father?

S: He went to join his father, right.

R: Do you know what your grandfather was doing in Wellsville?

S: My grandfather operated a dry goods store. He had a little store where he sold men's and women's clothing, handkerchiefs, and things like that. He also went out, house to house, peddling. I think most people did that in those days. He carried a sack, rolled up, and they had their customers. They had a route like the milkman has today.

R: What about your mother?

- S: My mother was born in Youngstown. She went back, before she was a year old, to Lebanon with her parents. She grew up and was educated there until the age of eighteen, then she came here.
- R: They came back to Youngstown?
- S: Her parents came before her; she was left behind with her sister and her brother in the care of her uncle. I don't recall for how many years, but it was some time until they completed their education. The three of them came together.
- R: How did your parents meet? Do you know?
- S: They met here. My father met my mother here, in Youngstown. At that time, he lived in Wellsville, Ohio. The people in those days, they sought out their own and married their own.
- R: Did he move to Youngstown right after they got married?
- S: Yes, he did. At that time, there was a movement already starting from Wellsville up to Youngstown. Things were going bad in Wellsville. They got married here and stayed here. She never went to Wellsville.
- R: Did you ever hear anything about their wedding? Did they have a two week wedding?
- S: I heard they had a three day wedding. It seemed like two weeks.
- R: (Laughter) Do you remember what year they were married?
- S: In 1930, I think.
- R: I talked to some other people who had just gotten here from Lebanon and had gotten married, and they still had the very long wedding. So by 1930 were they cutting it down?
- S: The weddings at that time were a very lengthy prescribed ritual.
- R: What do you remember about the community you grew up in? Were there a lot of other Lebanese Maronites living near you?
- S: Yes. Most of the people that I knew lived around me in the area of Shehy, Forest Avenue, Rigby, Wilson Avenue, Jackson Street over at the Lincoln Park,

Lincoln Park Drive. Most of the people that I knew were Lebanese Maronites who came to this area. We knew their houses, where they lived, everybody that was in the house. Many of us would walk back and forth and visit each other.

R: What year did the church move to Shehy? Do you remember?

S: Memory fails me here. I think the older people would know.

R: I may have gotten that on another tape, but I was just rechecking. What do you remember about the community? What is your most vivid memory about the church community, the Lebanese community?

S: Most of the memory is a general recollection. It is the closeness which the Lebanese community had to their church. They seemed to retain the philosophy or the style of life that they had in Lebanon in the village where everything is centered around the church. The church always occupied the common central position in the village and in their life. The things I remember best is Sundays and weekdays, we knew that masses were at a certain time. The bells would toll and you could see the older people from all directions coming out of their house and walking toward the church, even on weekdays. Of course, during the weekdays, the men would be working, so it would be mainly women and old men that would be coming.

R: Do you remember what time they had morning mass?

S: I think they were about 8:00 a.m. in those days; they didn't have an afternoon mass.

R: You went to Sacred Heart School?

S: Yes.

R: You got your religious training daily? Did you go to a catechism at the church?

S: No, I did not. We had religion in our classes.

R: Your parents didn't mind so much that it wasn't a Maronite school, it was Latin?

S: Not at all. The Maronites, although they are attached to their rite, are really very Catholic, if I could use that word. There is absolutely nothing wrong with going to a Latin rite church or school. There is nothing wrong with that at all in their minds.

R: What do you remember about the church on Wilson Avenue? You said that you were just a child, but what are your recollections of that?

S: It was a small church, a standard shaped church, your usual imagery of a small church. It had a frame building with an attached house. There was a basement or a hall, as we called it, where most of the activities were held. The hall was as big as the church so it couldn't have been too big, but the weddings, funerals, and everything were held in the hall. I recollect going with my parents to church, or more vividly I think, to funerals and weddings.

R: Did you receive your first communion at the Wilson church?

S: No, I received my first communion at Sacred Heart.

R: With your class?

S: Yes.

R: Do you remember being confirmed? Where was the Maronite church at the time you were confirmed?

S: I was confirmed in Sacred Heart Church.

R: Again, it was right along with your school?

S: Yes.

R: What do you remember about Shehy church? What did it look like?

S: After it became a church?

R: Yes.

S: It was a very large building, but it had two parts to it. It was originally a school with two buildings connected, so they had to remodel it along the same line. It had a red brick exterior, which was veneered on the old building. One side was the church and the other side was two halls and living quarters upstairs.

R: For the priest?

S: For the priest.

R: What do you remember about the priest? Tell me about him.

S: My memory is really with one priest only, during that part of my life. Monsignor Peter Eid, Father Eid, was with us for thirty-two years. In essence, the Maronite church was Father Eid at that time.

R: There weren't any other priests in your church? Was he the only one?

S: He was the only one; he served alone. There may be priests that would come and cover. There is one recollection of a Latin priest who used to cover before Father Eid came, and I think for a period after he came. He stayed with the community; he would come and visit us. It was Father Hyland; I don't remember his first name, but he was an Irish priest. We got to know him quite well and he would visit us when he came back to town. He taught me how to pray in Gaelic. I don't remember a word now, but I remember the sign of the cross in Gaelic at that time.

R: What do you remember about the priests in the community? Did Father Eid visit a lot of the homes? Was there closeness there?

S: Yes. Father Eid visited; he had his friends like any other human would have. He was rather free with visiting. Once a year, he would try and get around to visit everybody.

R: Do you remember any other leaders in the community, any other people who were particularly active in the church; not necessarily the priest, but the certain people who surface, in all churches, in daily organizations or . . .

S: I think with sufficient thought I could come up with a few names. Do you mean aside from priests?

R: Yes.

S: Incidentally, I didn't mean to say that I only knew one priest. I can recollect other priests, but Father Eid was the main one. I have recollections of priests before Father Eid and of course after, but I'm sure that wouldn't be of interest to you.

R: Well, anything. This is mostly just talking about the church and whatever you remember.

S: You probably got the older history from the older people.

R: Father Eid told me quite a bit about it.

S: Leaders of the community, where do we begin?

R: Where do we begin? Mrs. Francis seems to be involved in the choir for a very long time, people like that.

S: Mrs. Francis served for years and her voice was a fixture at the church. She really did us quite a service in being there to give responses. Leaders within the church area itself . . . I can recollect others. There was a Thomas Saadi.

R: Any relation?

S: Yes, he's from the family. He served the priest; he was like a sacristan. He would be there with the incense; he would be on the altar. He would be like an altar boy, but really a sacristan. When there was a funeral, he would be with the priest, carrying incense and everything; he would go to the cemetery with him. He did this for years. His son, Assad Saadi, followed in the tradition. In fact, he was also working at the same time as his father, mainly in the choir. He would sing and take a lot of solos. He was my god-father incidentally. They really made the liturgy come to life. There were others, I don't know if I remember all their names . . .

R: Were there certain organizations in the church like the Latinates maybe that would help you?

S: Yes. There was the Immaculate Conception Sodality, Daughters of Lebanon, if that's the right title, because I'm not sure, St. Maron's Club, which they divided into the St. Maron's seniors and juniors. I think only the seniors survived. I wasn't active in these clubs, so I can't say much about them.

R: Do you know basically what they did and what their purpose was?

S: Service in various capacities.

R: Recently, if you go to downtown Youngstown or the Southern Park Mall, you see all of these food feasts. Do you remember if there was anything like that in earlier times?

S: I don't recall.

- R: How about now? Do the people from the Maronite church participate in any?
- S: They do to some extent, but I don't think they participate as a church body. It is more of an individual or group effort.
- R: Do you remember any nonChristian Lebanese in the area when you grew up, or even now? Do you know of any?
- S: No, I don't recall nonChristian Lebanese when I was a child. I don't think I know any in the area right now either. It was a Christian immigration that occurred.
- R: Do you ever hear any reference about them? Did anyone ever mention the nonChristian Lebanese?
- S: Sure. We knew our history; our parents taught us the history of Lebanon and we knew from the early years that Lebanon was half Christian and half Moslem. The Moslems did not immigrate.
- R: Was there an acceptance of the Moselms, do you think, there? Of course, they weren't in the communities, but . . .
- S: Yes, there was an acceptance, but I can't get close to this because our parents, with their kids, grew up here, so I don't think they know the relationship of the Christian, Moslem, and Lebanese. I never heard anything other than there were half Christian and half Moslem. What stories have been told to us . . . have been from the invaders, the Turks, certain elements of the Arab Moslems that came in the 19th century and caused the 1860 Massacre, invaded by the Ottoman Empire, et cetera. Within the country itself, I don't recall anything like this.
- R: What year did your father come here?
- S: 1914.
- R: That's just at the beginning of the First World War?
- S: Yes.
- R: What about jobs in the community? Do you remember any of the people having similar jobs? Did they go to similar places, maybe there was a language barrier, or . . .

- S: Most people worked in the steel mill, such as U.S. Steel, Republic, or Truscon.
- R: I've heard that a lot of people worked at Truscon. Do you remember any type of language problems that your parents might have had, or were they pretty together by the time . . .
- S: I think they had it together. I don't recall language problems or language . . . their accents. They weren't as facile with the language as they maybe should have been, but it was not a problem in communications.
- R: It didn't keep them from getting jobs or functioning in the community?
- S: No, not at all. In fact, my father never hesitated to make a speech in English if he had to, and he never went to school. (Laughter)
- R: He never went to school?
- S: No.
- R: At all?
- S: No. Maybe a few months, but no real formal training.
- R: What about your mom?
- S: She graduated from high school.
- R: What about women working, was there any type of . . .
- S: Yes, women working. The hardest working people are women.
- R: Outside of the housework which is definitely . . .
- S: Outside of housework, women of the Lebanese community, we take in several categories. First there were those who were home and took care of their family; made ends meet under terrible conditions.
- R: Were these normally large families?
- S: Not necessarily large, even average families have it hard. They did everything they could to keep the house clean, warm, and the people fed. My recollection of those families were, the husband was out really

working and dog tired and the woman was doing the best she could at home. They both worked in that area. There was something I remember about the Lebanese women, I don't know if it was unique, only historians could tell you if it was unique. Many of them came alone from Lebanon. I can name a number, if I stop and think, who left their husbands and families there. In certain instances, they were still children, young children, and would come over here to live alone or maybe with a friend. They would go out peddling. I mentioned the peddlers in Wells-ville, this was a common trade. They would have all of their wrappings, doilies, pillow cases, slips, or whatever and go from house to house. Some were ambulating, very few drove, most walked or took the bus or streetcar. They would take their package wrapped up with a rope on the streetcar and go house to house. They worked like dogs. They made enough money to send back to Lebanon to support the families and to educate their children. People were desperate there. What drove the Lebanese to immigration was starvation; it wasn't persecution. We never ran away from a fight as it's obvious today. There is fighting and standing the ground; there is starvation; there was no way to make a living.

R: What was the problem?

S: It was circumstances leading up to the war. They are really isolated there. If you cut off the ocean and the ports, you really isolated the country. It was an extremely mountainous country. The travel, at that time, was mostly on foot, very little vehicular traffic. When you were up in the mountains, you were literally hours, on foot, away from the closest supply line. You couldn't live that way; you couldn't be subjected to this threat constantly, so you had to do something.

R: Was this the Turkish blockade?

S: Yes. I'm not that good of a historian, but I think that sounds right.

R: What about kids working in the Lebanese community? Were you ever encouraged to get a job when you were young? Were others?

S: No, I was encouraged to get an education. I think

that was true with mainly most of the families. I'm not aware of any child labor abuses. I think some kids worked, but they certainly didn't work in the mills or things like this.

R: How about paper routes?

S: Yes, paper routes. The only thing I can say about a kid working is that the very first group that came, my father's generation, at the age of fourteen or fifteen . . . Incidentally, it seems that everyone that came over was fourteen years old. It was astonishing how many that came at age fourteen; I don't know the reason for that.

R: Perhaps they were considered adults in Lebanon.

S: Maybe, it could be. They did work. I remember my father telling me that he worked in the mill at the age of fifteen. He became a foreman at age sixteen. They didn't have the laws at that time. He worked hard when he was a teenager. None of the children, their children, went into this; they were encouraged to get an education.

R: Maybe it's the story of the parents always wanting their children to have better.

S: Yes.

R: When you were a child, were you encouraged to take a little bit of money and put it in the collection plate every Sunday, or did your parents do that only?

S: No, we did it. We were encouraged to do that.

R: Do you remember how much you gave?

S: A dime.

R: A dime?

S: Yes.

R: Would that be in the 1930's, the late 1930's?

S: Yes.

R: You were very generous with your candy money. What changes have you seen in your church, from the time that you can start remembering the church? What are the major changes in the Maronite church over the past thirty or forty years?

S: How do you mean, as the city or community?

R: Okay, organizations, social ties . . .

S: Our community here?

R: Right.

S: I think the changes are the development from the evolution of the ghetto church to a church that retained its spiritual heritage. Its membership was thoroughly integrated and assimilated to the community. All that encompasses . . . We were truly a ghetto church, but then we grew up. The Lebanese now are such a part of this community that you couldn't separate us. We are proud of the fact that we are solidly Americans. We have retained our spiritual heritage and still go to church to try and keep that spiritual aspect alive.

R: What about church organizations, has there been a change in these? Have these been constant over the years, the ones that you mentioned earlier?

S: Yes, those have been constant. The major change is that the community reorganized itself before it built the Meridian Road complex. It formed a parish council along the democratic lines of election. It's that council that really moved the community and put in place that complex; not alone of course, it was the rest of the community and the clubs and everyone involved. It formed . . . it laid down the plan and the blueprints for the future. That was the modern advance from that date.

R: Have you ever been to Lebanon?

S: Twice.

R: What were your most vivid responses to that? What were your first impressions?

S: The first trip was in 1973, the second trip 1974. The first impression was, even before I landed, from the air and certainly when I landed, the absolutely stunning beauty of the country. It was everything anyone ever told me it was. It's hard to live up to reputation, but it sure did. It is unique in all the world the way it is geographically situated.

R: You went again?

S: I went in 1974 and took my two older boys. At that time, they were fourteen and fifteen.

- R: How many children do you have?
- S: I have six. Five boys and one girl.
- R: Is your wife Lebanese?
- S: She's Lebanese.
- R: Where was her family from?
- S: Her family is from North Jackson. They were originally from Youngstown, but a few years ago they moved to North Jackson.
- R: Did your father ever go back?
- S: Never went back.
- R: Did he keep ties with the village?
- S: He kept ties with the village and with his sister. He helped his sister and her family through the long terrible years of the war, the depression and the war. He kept very close ties to his nephews and was rather proud of their academic achievements. One of them is a truly outstanding teacher and priest in the Lebanese community. He teaches at the Sorbonne in France. He never went back and we couldn't get him to go back.
- R: He didn't want to?
- S: Yes, the bottom line is that he didn't want to. I don't know the reasons. It isn't that he didn't have ties; he kept saying that if he went he would need a lot of time there. We are talking time in terms of months, not weeks, and the opportunity never presented itself.
- R: A lot of people in the church have kept ties with Lebanon and the community. Someone was telling me that they are sending blankets to Lebanon?
- S: Yes.
- R: Is this a typical thing? Is this a frequent thing?
- S: Yes. The Lebanese community had ties with Lebanon at various levels. The basic level is that the people here, almost all, have relatives, immediate family, or cousins in Lebanon. They have helped in various ways, either continually or if the need arose. The second tier of assistance has been the village concept, from

village to village. Most of the people here in Youngstown in the community, not most but a lot of the people, are from my village, Bijji. They have a club from the oldest chartered clubs around here in the state of Ohio, I think, for this type of club. Since the war in Lebanon, we are putting the finishing touches on an eight room dispensary, which we financed from here.

R: In Bijji?

S: In Bijji. It is a village of a thousand people who have no medical facilities. We are just finishing an eight room dispensary in hope that it will allow, if the situation arises, myself and a couple other physicians to go there to help with the equipment and education of the paramedical people. That is the city to village assistance. The third tier is that they have always responded on a national level. What we are having now is a national drive. We are collecting blankets, particularly blankets as a side issue, clothes, and money, to assist the refugees who are in need. Not those in the village, but those in and around Beirut. That is what the present drive is this week. They help the various tiers.

R: This is a continuous thing; whenever they could afford it they helped?

S: Yes.

R: Is there anything particularly Lebanese about your community? You said that you blended in with the community, sure you do, but your church seems very close and a unit. Is there anything unique about your unit in this area?

S: I don't know if it's unique, but it's just amazing to me how American everyone is. Although they are retaining features of the old country, as we call it, that they like . . .

R: Such as?

S: Such as the custom of following through on social obligations that are passed down from Lebanon. They are not necessarily American, that is their obligations, weddings, happy times, funerals, and things are taken as a matter of course. You go to the wake, the funeral, because there is a distant relationship or this person is from your village in Lebanon. It is expected that

you go, and you go. That goes from top to bottom, the highest level of the community to the lowest. These ties continue and it is just amazing how they continue. In times of religious celebration, the church is full; you can't find a seat. In times of need, like this drive we are having now, this is just an example of what we have. They retain their ethnic dances, I think everybody does that. Aside from that, they are so completely American that it's hard to assemble them to make the move as Lebanese.

I don't know whether you realize that the Lebanese American community in this country, up until a couple of years ago, was the only community that was not organized. This is true because I have been active on the national level for a number of years. Everyone from this whole world has an official recognized structure in this country except the Lebanese. I have been working at trying to give them this. I have been one of the people who have been interested in this because of the Lebanese war which needed support. It's awfully difficult because they are so thoroughly assimilated in society. They are known; their identity is very well known. They don't think ethnically when it comes to national issues; we think as Americans. That, I think, we can be proud of.

R: Okay, that's about all. Is there anything that you would like to add?

S: That's all! We're finished? There's a lot to talk about, but you have to be reminded.

R: What about social events when you were young, in the community? I heard that they had picnics, parties at the church, tell me about them.

S: Aside from weddings which were big social events . . .

R: Still.

S: Yes. There were picnics in the summer which were really big bashes. Everyone would turn out and it would go on all day long. Adults, kids . . .

R: Where would these be held?

S: Usually on the farm of someone in the community. A number of them had farms on the east side and they would go out there. There were contests; one of the more

popular things for the men was to lift a marble dish, a large block of marble about a foot and a half square, cubed. It was hollowed out in the middle so that they could pound the meat. They didn't have grinders in those days; they had a hammer, a mortar and pestle type thing. They would put a wicker stick in there and we would try and lift it above our heads. That was their favorite pasttime. It was a manly sport. Things like that; it would go on all day.

R: What did you kids do while these guys were lifting all these . . .

S: We ran around. The entertainment was very simple in those days.

R: Do you remember any particular games that you played?

S: "Kick the can" and "Hide and seek".

R: You are assimilated.

S: Yes. There are no special Lebanese games for kids.

R: I've read some other interviews, not with necessarily Lebanese people, but some of the people mentioned games that I certainly never heard of. They were games that, let's say, weren't familiar to my generation.

S: I may have forgotten, but I was young then.

R: What did the ladies do? Sit around and dish out the food all day?

S: Yes.

R: What types of food did they serve?

S: Arabic foods. The Lebanese kibbee.

R: What's kibbee?

S: Kibbee is lamb mixed with cracked wheat and salted with sufficient condiments put in. They eat it raw; that's an Arabic custom. That's their national food. There is a special salad with cracked wheat, and vegetables cut very fine. We call it tabouli. We made shish kebab, meat on a stick.

R: Did they roast lamb?

S: They roasted lamb, legs of lamb or whole lamb.

R: Who would bring these lambs? The people who had the farm?

S: No, the people who were coming would bring their own food. If they wanted a whole lamb or a couple of lambs, the various heads would chip in and buy it.

R: What kind of dessert? Did they make desserts?

S: The Lebanese were never really known for desserts in that sense. They had a rich pastry which had a very thin crust with honey on it and stuffed with nuts.

R: I had some of it at Mr. Hayek's.

S: Yes.

R: It was very good.

S: As far as pies and cakes go, that's more of an American tradition. We didn't have that.

R: What about yogurt?

S: It originated in the Middle East, probably in Lebanon. It's made in the homes with fermented milk.

R: I also had that at Mr. Hayek's; it was very good. What about card parties? They mentioned that, say, in the winter time, they would get together and have card parties, would the children come along?

S: Yes, they may. The kids would run around.

R: What if you didn't want to go? Would they have to get you a babysitter or would someone in the home take care of you?

S: Yes, there was usually somebody in the home, a grandfather or grandmother. The family stayed together; it was not at all unusual to find a newly married couple, or a young couple with children, having the grandparents in the house with them. They had a built-in babysitter.

R: When you were young, were your grandparents living with you?

S: My grandfather, my father's father, lived with us. He died when I was eight. He was my babysitter.

R: What do you remember about him?

S: I remember that he would take me to the movies with him.

R: What did you see?

S: Cowboys. Many times I wouldn't go; my mother would want me to stay home, but every Saturday he went to the movies. A couple of Saturdays, I'd go with him. He would stay with me in the evening when they would go out to take inventory in their store, or if they had to go to Pittsburgh to get stock.

R: Where was your parent's store?

S: On East Federal Street. It's all leveled now. It was 373 East Federal Street, I remember that. It's funny how you remember dates or numbers. It was the first block from Andrews Avenue.

R: You may have mentioned this before, but what kind of store was it?

S: It was a dry goods store, clothing and black goods.

R: Do you have brothers?

S: No brothers.

R: Is that unique for a Lebanese family?

S: Yes, not unique, but you usually find more than one child.

R: You said your father had brothers?

S: He had a brother and a sister.

R: Did they come here?

S: No.

R: When you were seventeen or eighteen, were you active in the church? That is something that isn't necessarily current today; a lot of young people aren't active in the church. That would have been the beginning of the fifties or mid-fifties?

S: Yes. I don't think I would say I was active in the church. I came to things out of respect of the com-

munity, but I wasn't active in that sense. I was more tied to Sacred Heart or Ursuline High School that whole year.

R: Which would be a religious activity though. Were you happy to be going to a Catholic school?

S: Very much, I enjoyed Ursuline.

R: What do you remember about it? Do you remember any of your teachers?

S: Yes, I do. I'm sorry I don't remember more, but I remember many of the teachers.

R: Tell me about your favorite teacher.

S: (Laughter) I don't know if I can remember that.

R: Or the worst teacher, those tend to stick out in your mind sometime.

S: That's a hard question.

R: Were there any Lebanese sisters at this time? I know there is a Lebanese order now.

S: Yes, but there were none at that time.

R: The Maronite nun?

S: The Antonine nuns at the shrine.

R: Where are they located?

S: They are located near the shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon on North Lipkey Road in North Jackson.

R: How long have they been here?

S: They have been here about fifteen years.

R: Is this a new order?

S: No, it's an old order, but they branched out from Lebanon and came here.

R: There was a sister at mass Sunday, I was there, who did the first reading.

S: Yes, Sister Isabelle. She is the head of the order now.

R: What organizations do you belong to with the church now?

S: I am in the Youngstown Chapter of the American Lebanese League which is mainly church members.

R: What do you do?

S: I'm a member.

R: What does the League do?

S: The League is a national organization with an office in Washington. It has a chapter in most major cities that have Lebanese. This is the first serious attempt to give them a national structure, national identity that I've spoken of earlier. I'm very active with this group. I serve now as national chairman for the board of directors. I've served as the president in the past. It's growing quite rapidly because of the events in Lebanon. Right now I think it's the only official thing I belong to. I've been active in various capacities in the church. I was the first president of the parish council.

R: What all is involved in the parish council? What all do they do?

S: They deliberate at church and act as an advisory group to the pastor. It takes many of the tedious burdens off of the pastor. When I was president, we started the building program on Meridian Road. We really took over the building program, the financing, and the architectural design.

R: Just from the Maronite church or did you get contributions from the Latin area?

S: No, maybe from the parishioners and a big mortgage.

R: And a big mortgage. (Laughter) That's a very nice center. When was it completed?

S: It was actually completed formally last year for the opening of the St. Ephrem Center.

R: The Maronite Center, in front of the church, is that just to rent out, to make money for the church, to help with the mortgage?

- S: It's all those things. It was built first with the idea that we could only afford one building so let's make it a multi-purpose building. We would have it as a church, but design it as a hall so that we could also generate income. We were so successful that we never stopped building. We moved from the center over to build the church. It turned out to be one of the nicest facilities in town and it does support the underwrite of the project.
- R: Do the church women have any direct contact with that or is there someone else who operates that?
- S: The center is operated by a separate board, people that are of the parish community, along with the pastor and the manager. That is regarded as a separate operation.
- R: Again, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW