

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Dorset United Methodist Church

Personal Experience

O.H 975

VERA MCCONNELL

Interviewed

by

Patricia Beckwith

on

October 28, 1977

Vera McConnell

Vera Mabel McClimans was born in Greenville, Pennsylvania, on August 10, 1914. She was the daughter of William O and Mabel I McClimans Vera graduated from Penn High School in Greenville, PA , and went on to earn her Permanent Teaching Certificate at Edinboro State On June 14, 1950, Vera was married to Russell McConnell They later became the parents of one daughter, Vickie

Mrs McConnell has worked in a variety of jobs She was first employed as a teacher by the West Salem Township School District, 1933-1942 From 1942 to 1946 she was employed by the First National Bank and from 1948 to 1950 by Steveson Motors, both of Greenville. Upon her marriage, Mrs. McConnell moved to Dorset and has since worked for the Kingsville Telephone Company

Vera is a member of the Dorset United Methodist Church, where she is active in the Friendship Class, and United Methodist Women She is also a member of the Dorset Rebekah Lodge Her hobbies and special interested include slides, cassette recording, and traveling

B This is an interview with Vera McConnell for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Dorset United Methodist Church by Patricia Beckwith, at 3266 Footville Richmond Road, Dorset, Ohio on October 28, 1977, at 10 30 am.

In order to get to know you and find out some things about you, first of all I would be interested in finding out about your childhood. Could you tell me where you were born and your schooling?

M Well, I was born near Greenville, Pennsylvania. I went through an eighth grade school at which I later taught. Then I went to Penn High School in Greenville and a University teacher's college.

B And your parents names where?

M McClimans, William and Mabel.

B So do you remember anything special about your elementary school? Was there any special teacher that stands out?

M Hazel McCliman.

B A relative?

M Yes. A relative, but good. She was one of the best teachers that I had.

B. What grade was that?

M Sixth.

B Why does she stand out?

M She was a good disciplinarian and she liked us. You could tell that she was interested.

B What made you decide to go on to be a teacher?

M Partly her influence. And I just always wanted to be a teacher. I used to teach my dolls.

B So this was your special training, your vocation training, rather than going on to college, teachers training?

M Yes.

B And you went for four years?

M No, I went two years Three years on campus, two years teaching Then if you pass everything else the superintendent decided whether or not you got a permanent certificate.

B Oh, so it is different then it is today?

M. Yes.

B Do you know why your parents came to the Greenville area? Do you know why they settled there?

M Great-grandfather came up there long ago

B So your family just stayed there Do you know anything about how your family went through the Depression?

M Well, they really sacrificed at home to keep me in college I was in college during the Depression. And when I got out and started working, I started helping my sister get through high school And then she went on to college

B So it was especially hard for them to keep a child in college?

M And college prices then were nothing compared now, but it was still a big expense

B So how did you first come to Dorset?

M I got married

B. Where did you first meet your husband?

M Digging ditches I was working for Andrews Company, and we had 11 semi's on the road They were always bringing new big parts, and one of the parts was a ditch digger And we girls were all taking turns going out and watching dig these ditches And he was working on telephone poles or something And he saw me but I did not see him So he went to our PBX operator and asked who I was and wanted to know if I would make a date I said absolutely not I did not know him and would not go out until he came around by himself So eventually we finally dated

B So then what made you decide to move to Dorset?

M That is where he lived

B Oh he was from here So what year was that?

M 1950

B Did you teach here in Dorset?

M Well, yes but not at first I got my four year provisional and my brother-in-law was on the country school board Then I did not use it because I was helping make out bills and stuff for the telephone company But I did start the first kindergarten here.

B I did not know that Was that a regular half-day kindergarten set up and you were responsible for setting it up?

M Yes, it was rough But Mr Scholms was good I had the principal's son and the second grade teacher's little girl and my little girl in kindergarten that year

B You knew someone was keeping an eye on your right?

M Yes

B Who first attracted you to this church? What made you decide to come to the Methodist Church?

M Well, for the first year that I was here the minister -- I do not know who he was -- he never called or anything, and finally Bessy Spencer called Then Don Silliman came as a new minister And I thought, well he is new and he does not know anybody so I will just start Then once I went a couple of Sundays, the people were friendly And there was a lady that after not too long, Mrs. Kennedy, I think it was that said, "Why do we not get her in the lodge?" I then really began to get acquainted with everybody

B Yes, in the lodge and church. Had your family always belongs to the Methodist Church?

M No, I was United Presbyterian.

B All right, but your family had gone to church?

M Yes

B So that was a kind of tradition that you carried on When you chose the church, why did you chose the Methodist over the Baptist?

M I do not know It was the one that the McConnells seemed to go to. Those

things on the communion table were donated by Russell's grandmother

B So that was their family church?

M Yes.

B So that was one of the influences you think?

M Yes

B Once you decided to attend the Methodist Church then, what are some of your earliest memories about the church, the people that were in it?

M Well, of course my first memories are of Silliman and Edith. She was all-out choir. She said that the dishes could pile in the sink and the ironing sit there, but she was all music.

B This was Mrs. Silliman?

M Yes. And it was good. They had a big choir and Don filled then church with people than left when he left. And that was a bad thing.

B What was so attractive about him? I have heard a lot of people say they liked him.

M He was interested in everybody, not just interested in this church. Anybody that needed help he was there. Edith said once that they met each other coming and going. Of course she was not a minister then. And then the kids, they had all these kids. And I had a teenage class that had the two boys, plus the Hoenich boys and all those kids in the Sunday School class. So I had always taught and then back home I had taught all different ages up to the teenage group. So I took the teenage group here.

B So you became active quite quickly then?

M Yes, because I went to the friendship class and they had a lot of meetings then. They were a big class. I liked to be in Sunday School class, too, because Bessy was a teacher. It was probably quite a few years though after I joined because I was just in the friendship class for quite a while. And then I taught this class.

B Now what was the friendship class? What did you do?

M They had meetings and they sponsored quite a few things, more like U.M.W. has now. Because as far as the friendship class, I do not know whether we have it or not. I have not heard of it. They call the group in the back friendship, but

whether it is or not

B: Let, is the only one, is she in the friendship class, or was that a different one?

M Yes They tried splitting it up and that did not work

B So they put on money-raising functions and stuff like that?

M Yes, the friendship class always helped with the bazaars That is why we had such big bazaars back then

B Now what date are you talking about? Would it be in the late 1940's?

M No, see I did not join until about 1952 So this would be around in the 1950's

B When you came to this church then in the 1950's, did you think that the church was much more evangelical in nature then it is today?

M Don was a lot more evangelical He had the height of all the calls Of course then, I was just out of the United Presbyterian Church and I did not appreciate the calls

B Did they have a lot of revival services and meetings?

M I do not think so

B It was just in his own personal ministry he was more evangelistic. Do you think that, do you wish that this would come back to the Methodist Church?

M Well, it would not hurt because when Reverend Keane had the Humbards up here in that tent, hardly any of the Methodists went over

B It was the community people?

M: They came more from Youngstown, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh more than they did right here from town In fact the people from town were so busy calling the Stainfields and saying all the nasty things they could about him for letting him use the land

B Really?

M Yes

B I did not know that

M Marjorie has told me about it. They would not tell who they were, just that they called and would say these nasty things. No wonder Merla and Marjorie quit the church. Although Merle hardly ever went, but with things like that, who would?

B I could see why. You were talking about your classes being a lot bigger and so forth. Why do you think attendance has fallen off in church? Why do you think the Methodist Church is going through this trend?

M Well, something that I could never understand is the way the ministers come and go. You see, I grew up with Reverend Gibson and his family. And his kids were close friends of mine, we went to the missionary conference in New Wilmington. Now I wish that I had listened more to Gibson's sermons because so many things that he preached about and predicted have come true. And at the time I thought, "Oh, he is nuts. Things like this could not possibly happen." Things just did not seem possible, like going to the moon and stuff like that. He got it all out of the Bible. Then we had Reverend Dugan. We kids just loved him because he was in the national quartet and famous. When we would go to the national convention we would say that we were from Reverend Dugan's church. And they would say, "Oh really?" Everybody knew us, but it made jealousy among the older people in the church. They finally got rid of him and split the church and half of them went to the Presbyterian, some of them stayed there. I got married and left.

B So you were used to having the minister staying there for a long time?

M Yes. And here you hardly got acquainted with him and he was gone. And I thought it was kind of hard on the kids, they had nothing to hang on to. So they have left. If you notice there are very few young people here.

B I feel like I am the only one here.

M What did you get in the Richmond Church that they are not getting here?

B I do not know if it was the church. I think it was the family. I know that, I think it is partly a family trend, too. People that have gone away from the church do not take their kids back.

M Well your grandparents went here, did they not?

B: Yes

M Well, she must have been in the friendship class. The church and the lodge were made up of the same people. But a lot of them died off, that is

what happened to a lot of them. And the next generation of these families are not coming. They had left town.

B I think that there are so many more outside activities. A lot of mothers are working, you have a lot of different choices to do on Sunday. Like before, what could you do on Sunday? Now the store is open, movies are open, people do a lot on Sunday.

M Well, they always blamed it on when they lost the high school, to Jefferson.

B Why would they blame it on that?

M They said that took too many kids. They were interested in out of town now. And well look at Vickie. Vickie married a Jefferson boy, got married and left. A lot of people have moved to Jefferson or Andover.

B So you think it is partly the trend of the town itself, where people keep moving out?

M. Yes. More retired people from Cleveland are moving in here. We can tell that from the telephone cards. And they are not bringing any young people in. That is the kind that you get out of Cleveland.

B And that pushes more people out. I think a lot of things are blamed on going to Jefferson, though. To me, that just amazes me because that happened about 20 years ago.

M Well, no. Vickie did not go up there until there were slides of the last eighth grade graduation here. That is right, I do not know when they built the high school then. But they went in 1964 when she started Jefferson.

B To the high school?

M No, to the seventh grade.

B So it would be in the early 1960's or late 1950's?

M. Yes, it would be in the 1950's because I remember they voted it down here and the Liezert's just went ahead with it anyway. Wilma was one of the school board directors or something and she wanted her kids to go to Jefferson. All of the town did not want their kids to go to Jefferson.

B When you were active in the church or when you were first here was there an active men's group? Was there a men's Sunday school class?

M They had a men's class Don Silliman went hunting one year And he wanted so bad to get a deer and they were going to have a big remission supper Russell was hunting and they said he shot at everything he saw They said, "Hey, do not shoot at everything that wiggles, wait and see what it is " He was just determined to get a deer that year So they must have had a men's group Partly it was Albert and Mr Lawyer, and well none of the ones that are there now I think Bob Herman

B So it was probably because of Reverend Silliman's interest that they had an active group?

M Yes

B I heard about him going fishing and going hunting with the guys But did he get a deer?

M No, he was awful disappointed. And Russell had never brought home a deer

B Did they have prayer services or Sunday evening services when you first became a member?

M Reverend Keane tried everything I was amazed, I found some old bulletins and I threw them all away, but I went through them first And he tried family night, and prayer meetings, and Bible study, everything that you can think of And maybe it would be the same few that would come out, and then it would fall through I think Don had Sunday evening services occasional I remember going over there for a singing, hymn singing or something

B But there was no steady prayer meeting or anything like that?

M Well, they must have had them at one time, but they have not had them for about 10 or 15 years

B From your experiences in the church, what do you see as the relationship between the church and the community? Do you think that there is a cooperating relationship?

M More when UMWCS was real active, they had about three or four -- I cannot remember -- committees They took turns having dinners over her

B At the town hall?

- M Yes, for the whole community or anybody that would happen to be working Now if our men were working near, they came Like if the road men were near, they would come And sometimes they would plan to be in the area around dinner time And that way we had around 40 or 50 women because there were 10 or 12 on each committee And they had real good lunches, they made money for the church I remember one time everybody was saving grocery slips and when you add the total, you get a percentage of that And if people in the town that did not really go to church heard of these things, they would contribute to them And then the bazaar was a big deal here with over 400 people here Of course, we were known all over Ashtabula County. And a lot of people say, "How come you do not have your bazaar any more?" And they came from all around
- B In other words you got cooperation between the community and the church?
- M Oh yes But I do not think there is so much They seem to be cooperating though, when they ask for clothes for that bus load I went over there and I thought, well I wonder if there is anything there yet. And I went into that entrance and it was wall to wall boxes. I do not know where they all came from but it was not all from the Methodist.
- B You mean when they took the truck to Kentucky?
- M Yes, a couple years ago [It] Took them to Cherry Valley
- B So you think there is some cooperation today with the church?
- M Yes
- B Then it is not entirely fighting all of the time?
- M Oh, no In fact, Sarah said that if the fire department needs any clothes or anything for families to come right there and get them. You are welcome The same ones that are in the church are in the activities of the community.
- B. Yes, I think in such a small community like this, if everybody does not work together, nobody is going to be able to do anything You cannot keep bilking the same people for the money all the time
- M Buelah used to be an active member over the years I felt bad, I really do not know what happened because she and Howard and the three boys were in church and Sunday School that has been quite a few years And that family is all gone, except Howard

- B Yes, I am surprised by that I asked her one time why she did not come to church, and she said she slept in Sunday
- M: Well, it was something that happened and they had to make the nasty remarks, and that is what happened to the young people They do not want any change and they more or less drive the young people out
- B I think it is just because that is largely older people And of course that trend will just continue because the young ones have decided they do not want to come in Do you think that, going back to the relationship of the community with the church, do you think that we have always had a pretty good working cooperation there? Do you think it is declining or getting bigger?
- M No, I think it is declining, more or less, because there are not that many demands I guess they are scouting in town, but not the active scouting that we used to have I just have three troops Mrs Grayson had a big, she started and then Mrs Holstein and I had a large group. We had a big Mexican fiesta over at the town hall And we had Joyce Kaszar's sister come and teach the kids Spanish and the hat dance. And we had a big group and we had the whole community there And then we had our 50th anniversary And I remember from slides that we had the town hall filled with some kind of scout thing and I have not heard of scouts for so long because if there was anything like that, I would be going to it So I do not know what happened to that The boys would always depend on the church if they needed something, either church for that matter The kids went to both churches.
- B So because other activities are declining, that puts less reavest on the church?
- M. Well they always said that it was harder for them to get the kids because they would come Well, we used to be able to use the school, when we had our meetings, we would go there and they would come to the scout meeting And then after Jefferson took it over they would not allow us to use it And now they had Bible Study every Friday night. They chased them out, so they went to town hall and then that finally fell through And "Head Smarts" tried meeting at town hall and in fact that is where we met for years And then after that Camp Unila, we would have to go up there for the whole weekend, over night I do not know whether they come over here or not I do not know anything about them I never see anything in the paper about them.
- B I know that there is a girl scouts, but I do not think that there is a boy scouts is there I do not think so

- M Well, if they do, they go to Jefferson and belong to the troop up there
- B Probably, because I never hear anything about a boy scout group
- M They have had them, they used to meet over there and they used to meet at the church They must have met in the Sunday School room
- B In this particular church, not the Methodist Church as a whole, but in this particular church, what do you see as the power of the church? The members of the congregation or the minister -- who has the last say?
- M Well, up until Reverend Briggs it was a member of the congregation which kept everybody else at each other's throat. Then he really cared too much about the Methodist Church And when I had my Sunday School class, I taught them, more or less, United Presbyterian. But then he explained Methodist to me and really got it organized and showed me how it would be He is ambitious and he will sometime, I bet, be at the top And this person who had caused so much trouble could not argue with him because he knew more He really knew what he was talking about I went over and begged him not to leave. But he said that he would not mind staying and fighting and helping us out But he was not going to have Karen browbeating all the time behind our backs We did not know it.
- B I did not hear anything, but I can partly imagine what was going on.
- M So I was disappointed and kind of lost interest when he left. He was going right back to where they were Now Sarah has a young group, a youth group, but I do not see them in church
- B They have a huge youth group, they have like 20 kids
- M Well, now, if they were getting the right influence, I would think they would be in church
- B They go to different churches
- M Yes, but some of them are Methodist are they not?
- B Yes
- M. Because to go back to the United Presbyterian days, we made a record one time singing And there were 36 there that night. And we went to all the national conventions and some of us would go to the missionary conference in New Wilmington But we were in church, teaching classes

or in class That was part of it, so you really did not belong to the youth group unless you were active in the church So that is something for her to work out. She is young and maybe she will get around to influencing these young people to get to church and get active in it

B Where is the pride? I think when, just a couple weeks ago, they had that big hayride, over 30 kids came from Dorset and Richmond They were bringing their friends which to me was a surprise, I did not even think that they would go I did not even think that they would want to go on a hayride And here they were bringing all of their friends and they had mothers calling here to make sure that it was all right and all this stuff I was very surprised

M. Well one whole page is youth news So when you read it, some of us anyway, I think, I would like to meet some of these young people

B How would you suggest that?

M Well, get them in church They have their slides for the thing this summer

B No, they have them ready They have shown them to the kids, to the actual group who went, and I think that they have shown them just this week down at Waynesville.

M. November 9th is here?

B I am not sure

M. I think they are coming here.

B Yes, they are to each of the churches, in the tent

M And we had it last year And every time that they had it, it was out of town or visiting someone

B I think they are going to each church and having refreshments and stuff like that I think that at Williamsville they had a pot luck dinner I think that would be nice to do that I do not know here or not, but I think it would be an idea Now, you were talking about the Sunday School What do you see as the purpose of the Sunday School? And how do you view it in our church?

M The purpose should be to reach these children, like Esther Stigliano did this summer We were amazed at the money and the kids that came So

if the people of this church would get God behind them they could do it, because that is how she did it. And we were planning on the same number that we had last year. And they kept coming and coming and coming, we ran out of all of our supplies and everything else. And I doubt if any of that teaching or training has been going on. It has in the Baptist Church, but not over here. And, oh gosh, they used to have a big Sunday School. They used to have 100 and some when Jim Comp was superintendent. And he had the kids go out and send up balloons on Sunday after Sunday School with addresses on them or something. And they heard from some of them and they went quite a ways. And all kinds of gimmicks to keep kids interested and coming to Sunday School. And I do not know, I think jealousy is the biggest things in most churches. And why, I do not know, that is one of the things that God hates above all things if you read your Bible. Anyway, he finally got disgusted and he resigned. And the Sunday School was active when Reverend Silliman was there. It was active when Jones was there.

B I think it makes it harder because the minister is now here. It is hard for the men to know what is going on. And it makes it hard to realize what changes are needed and to institute those changes.

M Yes, especially now because with Sarah leaving, being the minister. Her wife is not here to stay and teach and take on interest in the Sunday School.

B Of course it has always been like that at Richmond. This is because the minister's wife stayed here for church and stayed here for Sunday School, she was very seldom at Richmond. I think it is hard for a minister to know what is going on, to know the teachers and so forth.

M Well, Mrs. Jones, you have heard of her?

B Yes.

M She was active and she would go teach all day, and come to work like a dog at the bazaar, or what every happened to go on in the evening. Now some of them do not. I remember one minister's wife, she would do something if she could do it sitting down. She sold tickets one night. Well, maybe she was not well, I guess she was not. That is one of the criticisms of Sarah though, that she was not outgoing and forward. Of course, she said that she was bashful and backward.

B Well, she realizes this. If you do not realize it, or do not want to admit to it, it is going to be hard to change.

M Because when they had that, well you were probably at that meeting at the town hall, first ladies or something?

B No -- oh yes, I remember

M And somebody said, "Well where is the minister? Is she here yet?" And they said, "That is her over there." And they could not get her to talk to people And well like Marjorie said, "I am bashful," and so on

B. No, she does not make a show that she is a minister She never signs name Reverend She tells people to call her Sarah, which I think is unusual when most people do not It is hard to do that because you have always called the reverend, Reverend.

M Well, we were taught that at United Presbyterian. Because we had a youth meeting one night, we always had a big New Year's Party No cards, no drugs, no dancing, nothing like that But we always had the best time And Reverend Dugan usually showed up But this one time, we were eating and Ange said, "Hey, Dougie, do you want a pickle?" He said, "No Ange, I do not want a pickle " But the one New Year's, I do not know whether she ever made it or not, and we wondered what happened But he was down at Camp Reynolds talking to one of the boys that had to leave And when the boys had to leave their barracks and get on the trains there were lines, two lines of MP's with their guns ordered to shoot anybody that tried to make a break And they were so afraid that this boy would make a break So when we heard that, we understood why he was not there

B. Oh, wow. That was in World War II?

M Yes I lived through World War II as a junior hostess in the USO.

B What did you do?

M Oh, we went and played bingo and danced and talked to the boys.

B To give them social company?

M Some were leaving and some were coming back And if we wanted to get a rise out of them, we would just say, "Oh, guess what We are going to join the WACS "

B They did not like that?

M Oh, no

- B Why?
- M Well, Greenville was a little town, a quiet town and we got more of the nicer boys. Because we were just that way Well, the other boys went to Sharon. And that type of boy just did not want to hear about us joining the WACS.
- B What were some of the changes that would you like to see in the Sunday School then?
- M Oh, I would like to see it built up but we have talked about it And even if we could get John's family alone to come, think how many kids there would be There are 14 grandchildren And there are kids all over town on Sunday, running around on Sunday morning, not in Sunday School
- B So do you have any ideas of how we could draw in to Sunday School?
- M No, not really
- B I know it is hard
- M Because we have discussed it and discussed it at board meetings with Briggs, because they do have good teachers. June, she tried to interest them She had them make crafts I said, "Why do we not just leave those crafts there? And as you come up through the year, why do you not have them make them for different holidays and things?" She said that she would not mind because she likes to make them So we left it there, except when this group was here And our craft room was empty so we started hunting around and dumped everything down the cellar and we hauled it right back up And she has kept her class interested by having them make things And I did some, too She would give me ideas, too She would make something and say, "Here is an idea for your class "
- B I think that social activities help a lot, too, except that it gets to the point where they want the social activities more than the learning part
- M That is what is true of boys over here They said that they would not mind going to Sunday School, but they do not want the Bible story Of course, if you do not have the parents in church, you are not going to get the kids When the parents are in church, those kids are going
- B Right, I think it has to be a family-oriented thing I think you cannot pull the adults out and you cannot pull the kids out, you have to keep them both

- M It has to be something that will interest the adults and then the kids will be there
- B All right, is there anything else that you would like to say about the Sunday School?
- M No, only that I wish that there was some way they could bring it up because they have all that room there. But that is when it started to go down. And they warned them when they were building, they said that if you do not quit putting all of the money into the building fund, you better be hanging on to the Sunday school that you have. But they did not listen, everything had to go into the building fund and by the time the building was built the kids were gone and no one ever built it up. My two grandchildren like it, they just love it over there. In fact, that one Sunday, did you see that little girl crying because there was no Sunday school?
- B Yes, when they had the conference
- M Yes, that was little Peter's girl. She was crying because she wanted to go to Sunday School
- B Has there always been a financial hardship in the church?
- M Ever since 1950. And Don Silliman preached a sermon one Sunday and he said these people -- of course the church was a lot bigger then -- if they were giving one percent tithe, forget about the 10%, and they would have all the money that they needed over there. He and somebody sat down and figured out approximately what the incomes were. Well Comp was there then. He and Bernice and their kids were a loss. I do not know what these people give, but I think some of them give \$10 a year and they think that is a big deal
- B So you think that more people should be more conscientious about their giving to church?
- M. We had a tithe sermon at least once or twice a year at the Presbyterian, because they are great for tithing, and you do not hear it over here. I do not know whether these people are encouraged to tithe or not
- B: Do you think tithing was more prevalent at one time than it is today?
- M I do not know over here, but I know it was at the United Presbyterian. We thought that was the thing to do, was to tithe. A lot of those families, the first thing when they got their paycheck the 10% came out first. This was to be used for the church

B Yes, and I think what it is today, they will pay everything else and if there is anything left over they give it to church

M: And the churches that are progressing, according to this pamphlets they put out today, are the mission-minded churches This church is not mission-minded

B What do you mean by that?

M Well, we used to support a missionary The WSCS used to support a missionary

B We would oversee to help pay for this?

M: Yes, a woman I forget her name, but she wrote to us Now remember, I said that I used to go to missionary conference and I knew a lot of the missionaries in the United Presbyterian Church that were over seas When they were home on furlough, we met them Having them as teachers and talking to them and some of those people, boy When you talk to a missionary, this one lady, her husband had run out and grabbed a bomb and, of course, he got killed And we talked to her about how she was facing life after a thing like that She just had so much faith I mean, it had to rub off on you Reverend Briggs was helping us line up those offices in the church because a mission person should be somebody that knows the Methodist missionaries Have speakers on it Now I went up to hear the missionaries up here And I guess I was the only one there from this church And some of them went in the evening. But they were interesting, they were nice It felt good to hear a real missionary again But they do not have missionaries come They could have a thank offering service and sent that money to somebody. Now the kids do I was trying to work on the kids, get them interested

B Do you feel more personally connected with their work?

M Yes, we built a hut, so to speak We wrote and got this hut form And the kids brought quarters and dimes And you put your name on the brick and you put whether it was a quarter or dime And they filled that in no time And I said, "Well how about Esther? Aunt Esther is a missionary in a way, a home missionary " And they had \$25 to present to her I think she was kind of surprised because the kids went up and gave it to her -- one boy and one girl They had a kind of contest, and got their money and went up to her and presented it She looked kind of surprised when she saw that it was \$25 And she worked quite hard getting slides, and so on to put on a nice slide program for UMW And we took up a quick offering and gave her \$10 and it really should have been more like \$50

- B Is this one of the changes then that you would like to see in our church?
- M Yes, if it is not mission-minded, it is not going to go anywhere. Of course, if they would tell us exactly where our money is going, it would help
- B Yes, I know a lot of people say that
- M The same thing with now I got a care thing this morning It used to be that you could designate where you wanted that money to go Now they just want you to send it and let them decide So I do not send it anymore, support care.
- B If you knew that the money that you gave was going right to a particular cause and that much money was actually reaching that party?
- M Yes Every time that you mention money going out of the church, there is a couple that always says, "Oh, we need it all right here, we cannot afford to give it out
- B. One thing that I would like to see is people becoming more concerned with the world problems, hunger and things like that It is very hard for Americans to cope with these things, to realize those things and the importance of them. I think maybe that would be one way of doing that, and having missionaries that we know and support Maybe we can become personally connected with these problems
- M Well, that is it, you have to know the missionary because there are a lot of care packages The missionaries have said that they have seen care packages sit on the docks and rot. And not Unicef, I have no use for that Because that money is just left to go to some of these radical groups instead of the children that need it. Now Russell and I both donated to the Andover Church fund for Johnstown. Because they were sending it directly to a minister that they knew in Johnstown That money was going to the Johnstown flood
- B Here we have to send it to the district conference first?
- M Yes Well we donate down there because he is like that He is very generous, but he wants to know where the money goes They had contracted a minister that they knew in Johnstown, a Methodist minister, and they were sending the money directly to him with instructions that he was to use it for good or for whatever they needed there So I do not mind donating, but I do not want any of it to get in the hands of communism

- B So, this way you could trust somebody?
- M. Yes, if you knew a missionary I sent \$50 to Guatemala through a group that was sending it direct to a missionary there, because they had a tornado there And they were getting letters and telling about the conditions there, what you did not hear on TV or the newspaper And these people would write and tell about the things that were happening and what they needed And they said that they were sending this directly to this place and person so they can use it there So I thought it was okay I mean, the Lord kind of moved me to send it, so I did I sent it to this church in Canton So that is another thing, if you do not get acquainted with these people the missionaries, and work with them, you are not going to get the church interested You cannot blame people for working hard and getting their money and not knowing where it is going We never heard from build-a-hut, I suppose they built one
- B You did not get a letter or picture?
- M Like your little hut that has been built in such and such an area and some families moved in and they are using it for this or that But we never heard from them Or if anybody did, it was never brought up
- B The kids would get a big kick out of that, if you write to them.
- M Well the kids that did that, that was quite a few years ago
- B Oh, I thought you meant that was recent
- M No, the most recent one was Aunt Esther. And Dougie or somebody took up a collection, got busy on their own and took up a collection to Reverend Won to help him make his car payment So Aunt Esther got a new car, too I do not know how she is making out But she get as much here I guess you might say that the Lord provided. She got as much, I think, as she would any place Well, a great big church would have a lot more, but I thought we did real good
- B Do you remember a time, either in the United Presbyterian Church or in the Methodist Church, when it was much more against smoking and drinking and playing cards and so forth then it is today?
- M Yes When I was in young people's society, there was no smoking, no card playing, no dancing And yet we had the best time Even with these conferences on, there was never any of that stuff. At the Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, one time there were 2,000, at least, in this big auditorium And Reverend Will Orr was preaching. You could have heard a pin drop,

we loved to hear him. And I remember on Sunday afternoon, it was so hot and there was a big debate on whether or not our group should go swimming. And there was a 17 year old boy in the group. And he said, "I do not think we should." So we said, "Okay, Bobby," and we did not. And later on, even the lady that had written the song that I like so well, she was there. And she and her husband went in and it rained, and it cooled everything off. And we were so glad that we did not go swimming.

B He was willing to speak up and say that?

M Yes, 17. And I suppose that he would be one of the younger member of the group there. But that had got through to him. At our New Year's party and everything, I do not remember just what all we did. We just had fun. I know we would laugh and have a good time, and we did not need any of that stuff. Of course, we did not have TV and that stuff then, either.

B Do you remember any of the reactions that went on, or any of the criticisms or comments that were made when we joined with the church? Was there any noticeable differences?

M Not too much here. I think they were more or less against it like everything else. But I did not notice any change. Not in the Dorset Church, maybe in the cities. In fact, they say here that this church has its own special kind of religion.

B Would you like to describe that?

M I do not really know what it is. I know they have their own beliefs and they do not go along with anything. They seem content just to stay here and have their own little group and not bother too much with what the rest of the Methodists are doing. When Olive was President, she never even told us when there was a spring meeting -- you know, the spring and fall meetings. Now Sue has been more active and we have gone to some of the other church districts. And some condemn the lodge, but that is why I stuck to the lodge, to meet people all over Ashtabula County. And I would like to be a little more interested if the church would branch out a little bit - - especially the UMW -- and go to these meetings and get interested. At the big one at Middlefield we met Karin Briggs. And I think that there were about five or six of us that went and we had a good time. Of course, Karin always went in the evening, because she could not go in the daytime. And she and Brian were both interested, being the type of person that he is, he was interested. Well then, this Council of Dynamic Ministry, that has helped meet the other churches. I think that is a good thing.

B Yes, and it brings kids to participate. It brings cooperation. You

mentioned the UMW and the Ladies groups. What kind of changes have you seen in this group since you have been there?

M Well, it went from a big active group, like I said, that had these luncheons and were working together and making money for the church. And they had a big bazaar, they figured on serving sometimes around 400. And now it is down to nothing because, when the older ones started to ease off, our group took over. But when we got up in years and tried to ease off, nobody would take over.

B I think a lot of people would say that.

M So it just started to go to pieces.

B So you see this as part of the over all trend then, the decline in the Sunday school and things?

M Yes.

B How do you feel about the music program of our church?

M Well, I like it. And I know Mrs. Sally Hohnhorst. I liked it when they had their organ and piano solos or duets. And if the choir did not sing, sometimes Sally would play the piano and Wilber would play the organ. And that was good. As good as having the choir there. She had different ones that were supposed to have something, in the summer session especially, some kind of special music. Billy, my nephew, sang one Sunday. And Jane's husband sang, boy, what a voice he has got. The church really vibrated. He would be good in opera. Then she tried to keep that going, but nothing happened, so they just canceled the choir period during the summer.

B I think the choir adds a lot to the service. I think she does quite a job.

M Yes, I like the choir. I sang in the choir at home for years. We had what they would call the Greenville Songbird, Francis Pitch was our leader. And one of the men in it was a good singer. And when she quit, he took it over and kept it going. I do not know, it is probably still going, in fact, they might have about three choirs now. They have the big choir and a youth choir, and then another choir.

B. I doubt that. Do you know, or do you remember, any stories about Mrs. Moses? I like the paintings in the church. Did you know her?

M No, I never knew her. But a lot of the other people would know her, right?

Maybe not. Lois would be one that would know her. She is a relative of hers. Roby Vanwinkle seemed to know her. But I do not know her. She never came to church, that I know of, after I was there.

B I like those paintings. I think they add a lot.

M But now those paintings are not being put to good use.

B How do you mean?

M Well, there is supposed to be one in each Sunday School room or something. And there are about four or five in mine. I try to bring attention to it, so they would, the ones in my room there. Then when I had that teenage class, I had that picture -- I forget what it is called -- about Jesus. The boy is staring and Jesus is pointing, but he is not directing him in anyway. He is pointing out the way and you can go that way or not. And according to the authors, the description of the picture was one thing that we were studying. We had that picture in our class and we studied it. And then somebody stuck it back some where. This was so the kids would know what it meant. I hate to take it out of there but it is not doing any good where it is now. And then they had the picture of Jesus and that is up in front now.

B And that one about Jesus praying in the garden. What was your reaction to having a Korean minister, Reverend Won?

M First I thought, oh, I will never learn to understand him. And then finally I thought well, if I keep listening maybe I will catch on some how. And then he has opened up the area of the foreign people that I never knew before. I have sponsored a little Korean girl ever since he has been here. And she is my orphan. And well, they have gone off the air now or else they are on a different time, but these people that we send our VBS money to, they have orphanages in Korea. But I was awful glad he was here eventually, after I learned to understand him, to understand his sermons and to understand him. Then, especially, when his wife came. Then I especially hated to see him leave.

B Yes, she had only been here a year. I had a list of some of the old ministers, do you remember anything particularly amusing or special about any of the ones that you knew?

M Oh, they had this many ministers before Silliman?

B Yes.

M Now Reverend Stephens was the one that was here, I guess, before the first year and a half that I was here. But he never called or anything. And then Don, of course I talked about him. Ray Jones, I like him. He was a Presbyterian trained minister. And he had been the seminary. Now Russell went to church when he was here and Vickie was baptized by him when we joined the church. No, Russell joined the church and Vickie was baptized when Reverend Jones was here. Reverend Mackelroy, her name was Ruth or something. Anyway the kids were over here a lot. They were Vickie's age. And Reverend Shilling loved to have his picture taken. I have him in quite a few pictures, he loved to pose for pictures. So did one of the girls, the oldest one I think. He was, more or less, a Sunday preacher, although he did come clear over to the hospital to see me. It was a good thing I was not a heart case, I would have probably have had a heart attack because I never expected him to come over. You never knew what he did during the week.

Reverend King was one of the most active at soul winning up at the fair. Let us see, I do not think you were here, but when he left, and he said, "I hate to leave my babes in Christ." Because he had four rows of the Farmer family, every Sunday. And we miss them now. He knew that they were babes Christ because they were so new. Of course, they have all dwindled down to nothing. Edgar, I do not remember too much about him, except either he or she was having a heart attack most of the time. He had retired and then came back and called out of retirement. But he was almost passed preaching. James Anthony and Jim Spencer, I did not even know where they were.

B That was printed in 1970, so I really do not know where they are at now. That is where they were then.

M I do not think he is in Bellaire anymore.

B What do you feel about our clothing center in our church?

M I have not been over there, but it seems to be working out.

B Do you approve of it? Do you think it is a good idea?

M Well, I wish it did not have to be located right where it is. But it is too bad that they did not have a building where they could have had it by itself. That was a big criticism, that they have it more or less in the sanctuary. They brought up the fact that Jesus threw them out of the temple, the money changers. But yet that space was not being used for anything.

B I do not see how you can really compare money changers to clothing.

M Well they came up with it. Well, it was just because it was so close to the sanctuary and they did not want people running through there.

B Yes, I can see that point I think it is being used by the people, obviously, so I think that is good I know a lot of people do not like it

M Where do they come from, the people that are using it, I wonder?

B You mean in the community?

M Yes, how far away?

B People are bringing us clothes from Ashtabula And I know that there are people that come by Andover.

M Well, maybe eventually if it does grow, we can get a building It is funny, they bring things from Andover, because they have a similar place down there, do they not?

B I do not know

M What is in the old post office building?

B Oh, that is not a church clothing store, that is a regular clothing shop

M Oh

B. Next year is our hundredth birthday Do you have any suggestions or ideas on a celebration?

M Well I had always promised Brian, I guess it was that I would get my slides organized Was he here for the bicentennial?

B Yes, partly

M that I would go way back and show them some night, family night, and we never did get around to it And I never did get them organized

B So you would like to do that for next year, maybe?

M Yes I think it would be interesting because there is a lot of people in them that are gone now, and the slides are getting old They will eventually fade out, I will imagine I do not know

B You might as well use them while you can

M I have not done that since 1959, so my slides are getting to be around 20 years old And some of them I have of the scouts and things I will have to

go through and sort them out and discard I have too many of them -- I have hundreds of them, of the Lodge and school and the church Anything that went on, I would take slides of it Now it is mostly of my trips and so on

B You should maybe bring them to the people who are in them They might enjoy them

M Yes, I promised Mare Agardi that I would save or have a picture made off a slide of her little boy that was killed in school He is sitting at one of the front seats

B. As a whole, what do you see as the problems in our church? We have talked about quite a few of them

M Well, as I told Esther, they need to let God in the church You cannot have a church without him and that is what they seem, more or less, to try to do

B You think then these other things, like attendance and so forth, might just fall into place if they centered more around God?

M Well, for instance, take you. You can go to church in a pant suit, I cannot I do not know where or someplace along the line I feel that I just cannot do it Now maybe God does not pay attention to that, that is what one man on WTOS said But forget the long hair and the clothes and so on, and win the person, and then they will change It seems that once God gets into your heart, then you can be able to change yourself And with love, too

B Maybe that is the right word to use, is love

M Yes, I thought it was nice the way Reverend Briggs used to go down the aisles -- and that was the first time that I ever heard of such a thing -- and greet the people along the aisle and have them greet others and so on And also, I do not think anybody ever gets enough love as far as that goes And that is what maybe has driven so many people out of church Marjorie Stainfield was in there, working as she always does, with both hands and both feet when she does anything I cannot think who she was working with, but it must have been Reverend Shilling, maybe But he got interested in getting the history of the church and they had all these people, older people were there They had them up to the center They had a program for them and sang all of their favorite songs And then afterward had refreshments, punch and cookies and so on down, in the basement. She worked so hard, and yet the lack of love and the jealousy drove her out after that And she was the church I said something to

- Mrs Sissler about why she did not bring Marjorie with her. And she said that she tried, but she did not want to come
- B. Of all the ministers that you have heard in this church, is there any one sermon that you remember?
- M No.
- B Oh, gosh no The ones I like, the songs that Alice wrote, they have been my music for years
- B Her religious songs?
- M Yes, she wrote a song every year for the national convention, and they were printed in book form And it does not seem to matter on how low I get after the death of my parents on so on, I always have that book out and I always would sit down and play myself and get back into normal But it is her songs somehow And I taught them, two of them, one year when I had VBS I copied a couple of the songs and taught them And I was hoping that they would keep them going in the Sunday School, but I do not even know what became of them
- B As you look at the church as a whole, is there any one special characteristic that stands out to you? Good or bad?
- M Well, when Bessie had that friendship class, I know she worked hard and it kind of permeated the whole church She knew the Bible, knew what she was teaching and you knew that you were going to get something out of Sunday school Which is probably why they had three or four rows of ladies there each Sunday, and a good turnout at the meetings You have to bring the Bible in, teach the Bible, and have them understand what is in it, if the church is going to go forward.
- B So you think that is one of the changes that you would like to see made? One problem we would work on?
- M Well, that was God's command, was to go and preach to the whole creation And it seems that it is hard to believe that there are some people that still have never heard of Jesus But at least some organizations are trying to reach them. And I just wonder what will happen when everybody is reached
- B I do not know, I never thought of that
- M What is your impression of the church as a member who has always gone

to another church? Only coming here recently? Of course now you come from a small church to a small church I came from large city church to a small church And at first it just seemed strange Then I learned to love this church

B Since my grand parents lived here all most everybody knew me I did not necessarily know who they were, but they all knew who I was So it was very easy to feel right at home It did not take me very long to feel at home because I had heard their names all my life and things like that So I was able to fit in quite easily I thought

M Is this church anything like your church?

B People always say that the Richmond Church is more friendly I do not see that myself, but I have always heard people say that I have heard probably 15 people tell me that It is a friendly place down there Know what I mean?

M Yes, instead of a formal friendly I think that one of the things that they do not like new ideas being brought in And I was so excited when we got a woman minister, I thought that was fantastic I think this has been a good experience for people That is having a woman minister here She is so understanding, more understanding then I thought she would be, for her age Because, she said when she came here, "Well you are kind of in the middle " I said, "Yes I am " So I try to do the best that I can and I do not know which way to go. And she can understand that Well, are you used to a lot more activities down there? They seem to be, they seem to have less to work with but they do more

B. The women's group is still quite active Their monthly dinners is what financially saves that church Is that they pay for their bill and all of that So their monthly dinners are really a big help

M Well, here we pay the parsonage taxes, and we had to give up on the electricity Although we could probably do it now.

B What do you mean the electric?

M On the electric bill And the phone bill

B They pay for them both?

M I know that they pay some of them And I am pretty sure that they pay both of them

Well, one criticism there is that nobody ever knows whether there is a donation made or anything And it should not be hidden I do not know

why, the treasure feels that everything is very under cover.

B So you would like to see that change made in how the finances are run?

M Well, it might be the same idea. When we send our money, you know, to help in a calamity of some kind. I do not think the people understand the financial problems of the church. One minister, I think it was Reverend Shilling, used to put that in the bulletin. And somebody -- it was another lodge member -- saw it and they said, "Well I did not realize that the church was in such bad financial condition and we will be making a donation." They may have, who knows? You never knew whether they gave or did not. I guess some man who lives off a ways donates every year. And he should have a special thank you from the board. Maybe he does. The secretary of the board, I never requested that they send him a thank you or anything.

B Yes, they should let him know that it got here okay and to let him know that they appreciate it. Especially those who live far away, they could very easily forget about it. It would not take too much to forget it. Well, I guess we are coming up to our 100th birthday, what kind of goals would you like to see our church establish?

M. Well, to be more mission-minded. I mean by that, having missionaries come if they can. That would be up to the minister. I would say or somebody that knows about the missions activity of the Methodist Church and have the missionary come and talk to them. To get the young people interested and get more young people in the church and accept them and try to make them feel welcome.

B You said to make room for them. What do you mean by that?

M Well, I guess they were going to have John Sevelle, the youth representative on the council board, come to a meeting and to go to the other meetings. Well, actually the young people are going to have to. If the church is going to go on, you have to have the young people take over and make them see that you want their ideas and let them take office and so on in their capacity. I mean, start training them to take over the church because you cannot just dump it on their laps and they do not know anything about it.

B Right

M And, well, let us see, I think it would have been nice. Well, the ones of us that went to Reverend Briggs training session were wishing that the rest of the congregation could have been there and understand it. But they were not there.

- B Why do you think that some people did not want to be there?
- M Well, if they are truly Methodist, they should have been interested in finding out how it works. Valerie says, "Well, we are just a little country church, we do not operate like the big city church." Well you do, to a certain extent. And get interested in other churches near here. Of course, this council of Dynamic Rural Ministry has helped get them interested some in the other churches right around here. It has got to come outside of itself somehow. Why do we not have a meeting with the Baptist Church?
- B Well, what do you think about that?
- M Would it be possible? Now the Methodist exchange pulpits. Would it be possible for Sarah and Reverend Coleman to exchange pulpits some Sunday, just to get a different idea?
- B What do you think about the Baptist and Methodist church combining for Vacation Bible School?
- M. It works out beautiful and I love to work with Georgine. In fact, there before we had Esther, they are what brought the religious part to it. Because before, our Bible School, it was one big happy holiday.
- B Right. Do you think it is a good thing them to combine the two churches?
- M Yes. And I think we are lucky to have June Farmer, but if they do not watch out, they are going to lose her.
- B I have that feeling, too. What is your honest reaction towards having a woman minister?
- M Well, since she has come, I have been listening to other women ministers. There was an older one on television, she is off now. Not off television, but on the radio, that I used to listen to on Sunday evening. I do not know though. I like Sarah, and I think she has good sermons. But I have gone through the Bible with Doctor McGee, I have gone through it seven times.
- B This is on radio, Dr. McGee?
- M. Yes. And I cannot find just where, it does not say that women cannot be ministers.
- B That encourages it.

- M Yes
- B And we also know that at the time the Bible was written, it was completely male
- M And the fact that Jesus brought women out of servants, they were just more or less the same as cattle. And he lifted them as far as he could in that day. Now this lady on radio is very good. Now I would like for you to listen to her, but she is older and has experience, and that is what Sarah has to get
- B I think she does very good with the youth group
- M If she could just somehow work them into the church and into activities. Now the Benich kids help when it comes to Bible School, but you do not see them in church
- B. Yes, they come to youth group all the time
- M And Ellen is one of my kids for Sunday school. And I have been sort of worried because I have not seen Dougie there. Back then we had, oh gosh, eight, ten, a whole table full of kids. I learned as much from them as they did from me because you never knew. If the Sunday school lesson happened to appeal to us, we went by that. If not, we could have a whole hour or whatever we had, 45 minutes, of discussion of just ideas and talking. Kids love to talk and express themselves. And that is where I found that they come up with ideas that I would not have thought of. Karen Taylor's kids, now I have not seen them in church for a long time. She has not been here for a long time
- B Who are the people that you think I should interview for this project, that might be of interest in different insights into the church?
- M. You should interview Lois. She is an active, I mean she has been. They are both kind of past their prime right now. But she was active, so active in the friendship class in North Lima. She took charge of VBS. And their family sang as a family. It was some kind of a family night around Christmas time when the families were to get together. And, gosh, I forgot how many there were up on the stage, and they sang. But so far, Lois and Homer come. I have not seen the rest of them for a long time. Actually, Karen and her husband and the family used to fill a whole pew. And I had Freddy in Sunday school. And I think she would be a good one. She would know a lot.
- B Anybody else?

M Marjorie would not even express her opinion of it?

B I do not know

M She worked on the history of the church, back there with one minister

B Okay, is there anything that you would like to say before we close?

M No, except that thanks to Reverend Briggs, I understand the Methodist Church a lot more than I had over a period of 20 some years

B So it has become of more value for you then?

M Yes, because to try to understand how they do operate And for so long I was more or less against the church, but now except for the heads of it, I do not know, I do not trust them

B Well that is in any organization

M The United Presbyterians are the same way Although I never thought it could happen in a church, as strict as they used to be But I feel that now the main thing is to get people into God's church, not any particular denomination

B Okay, thank you

End of Interview