

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio

Personal Experience

O. H. 997

RUTH M. STAHL

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

April 23, 1979

RUTH MAXINE STAHL

Ruth Stahl was raised in Mecca, Ohio. She is the daughter of Elton and Mary Ellen Cator. They moved to Mecca in 1933 where her father worked odd jobs as a carpenter.

Mrs. Stahl began school in Mecca in 1933. During her high school years, she worked after school cleaning houses for 25¢ a night. She graduated in 1945 and began work at the Home Savings and Loan Bank in Youngstown, Ohio. She is hired as a teller and her monthly salary was \$90. She quit the bank in January of 1947 and was hired by Richard's Milling of Cortland where she worked until November of 1947. In that same month she married Robert Stahl and they relocated to Salem, Ohio. In Salem she worked for the Electric Furnace Company until 1949. She has not been employed since. She and her husband moved back to Mecca where they raised three children - Maxine, 29, Robert, 22, and Kimberly, 16. Mrs. Stahl is very active in the community belonging to the Grange, home extension club, and Maplewood Music Boosters. In her spare time, she enjoys sewing, crafts, gardening and cake decorating.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio

INTERVIEWEE: RUTH M. STAHL

INTERVIEWER: Beth Hanuschak

SUBJECT: Cleaning, the Great Depression, the Mecca
Community Church

DATE: April 23, 1979

H: This is an interview with Ruth M. Stahl for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the History of Mecca, Ohio, by Beth Hanuschak, on April 23, 1979.

Mrs. Stahl, during some of my research I found out that your last name is Cator?

S: Cator.

H: Cator? You have been here since 1936. You have been residents of Mecca since 1936?

S: Probably somewhere around then. I was quite small when we moved here. I was younger than that I think, maybe 1932 or 1933 I think that I moved.

H: Where had you moved from? Where did you come from?

S: Just from Madison, Ohio. We lived a short time in Cortland, but I was born in Madison. We moved to Cortland for a few months and then we moved to what is across from the high school now. It's a vacant lot now.

H: So you moved here then roughly around 1936. How old were you at the time?

S: It was more like about 1933, I think.

H: Okay.

S: I was born in 1927. I started school so I must of moved here in 1932 because I started the first grade down here.

H: Were you the oldest of the children?

S: Yes, I was the oldest of this family. My father and mother both had children by previous marriages, but I was the oldest in this particular family.

H: In this family was there Ruth, obviously you, Ruby, Robert and Rita?

H: Right. Rita was born after we moved down here to Mecca.

H: So you were quite a youngster when you moved to Mecca?

S: Yes, I was probably about five.

H: What can you remember about being five years old, moving from a new place and coming here to Mecca?

S: Well, I can remember when we lived in Cortland because I was always afraid. Our house sat kind of like in the woods. It was right at the end of Phillips Rice Road.

H: That was in Cortland?

S: Yes, it was in Cortland. I remember when we moved. I can remember that those trees looked so big to me, because it was in the woods. I was glad when we lived here because I never liked the trees.

H: Why did you move from Cortland to Mecca? What made you change?

S: Well, we bought the lot that we lived on. We rented the house in Cortland. My father was able to buy this house, the lot and there was a small building on it. It was like, maybe a double garage that he remodeled into a house. He bought it from the man he was working for.

H: Do you remember how much he paid for it at that time?

S: No.

H: Do you have any idea?

S: I don't have any idea. Not very much. It was going into the Depression. Everyone was poor, really. We were really dirt poor. Everybody was.

H: Moving here in the early 1930's you can remember the Depression?

S: Yes, I remember it.

H: Tell me about it.

S: I can remember. . .

H: Especially here in Mecca, what did you do to survive that terrible crisis during that time?

S: I can remember how my father went everywhere looking for work. He worked a lot of the time for this one man in Cortland who owned a lot of property. He remodeled and bought a lot of property during the Depression and remodeling. My father was a carpenter and worked for him. He also did masonry work and did remodel a lot of these places to rent and to sell, both. He worked for him a lot of the time. When he wasn't working for him he spent his time looking for work. All of his friends and almost everyone we knew spent a lot of their time looking for work.

H: What would your mother do during this time? I'm sure it would be hard raising four children during the Depression.

S: She was home. She never worked anywhere else. She was always home. She always sewed and canned and we had a big garden. We always had some sort of beef and pig. Even though it was a small lot we still had a building down there and raised part of our meat and most of vegetables. Everyone that I knew did the same thing. We didn't buy much at the store in those days. It was really hard times and as I remember we never had electricity until. . . Well the power lines didn't go down Route 88 until I was in high school. I was a freshman or sophomore before they had electricity then.

H: Did you use candle? What did you use?

S: We used lamps. Oil lamps and a type of, I think it was like a gasoline lamp. They called them Aladdin lamps. You pumped air into it and it had little mantels. I can't remember for sure what they put in it, but they called them Aladdin lamps which was made sort of like the coal in the lantern is today, something on that order.

H: What did the house look like that you lived in? Do you remember it?

S: Yes, I remember it because they tore it down maybe four or five years ago.

H: Why did they tear it down?

S: It had gotten in bad repair. It wasn't really worth saving anything.

H: Describe to me what that house looked like in Mecca?

S: Well, it was kind of a small house. It had originally been a double garage. My father built on two bedrooms on the side of it and a kitchen and a porch onto the back of it on what had been a garage. He also raised it up and put a cellar under it. What had been just the garage part was our living and dining room together.

H: Being the oldest during the Depression I am sure that you probably had some responsibilities. Even though you were young, but I'm sure that you would have to take care of your brothers and sisters. What did you have to do? What was your job?

S: Looking after the kids, partly. I sewed. I sewed from the time I was really young. I can't remember when I didn't sew. I always sewed and mended things and remodeled clothes and shortened things and lengthened things. We heated the house with wood and I always had to help carry in wood. I had to pile wood when my father was cutting wood. He would go to sawmills and get loads of slabs and scrap wood that was cut and bring it home then he had a small, I think he called it buzz saw. What you called it was a buzz saw with a big motor on it. He would saw up piles and then us kids would pile it in a neat pile rather than a thrown together pile. Then we would carry wood in every night for the wood stove that we heated the house with.

H: You did have a lot of responsibilities.

S: Yes.

H: What year did you start grade school in?

S: I graduated in 1945, so I must have started about 1933.

H: What was the name of the school?

S: Mecca Centralized School.

H: What can you remember about your elementary years in that particular school? Where was this school located?

S: In where the lake is now. Right in the middle. Just out on the west side of where the bridge is now, that's where the school was.

H: What can you remember about childhood?

S: Our first grade teacher just passed away this past winter. I remember reading it in the paper.

H: What was her name?

S: Helen Griffith--her married name was Raymond. At the time I was in first grade, we had the first grade and half of the second grade, and in the next room we had the other half of the second grade and the third grade. I suppose we probably had maybe 25 kids. I think probably.

H: Do you remember any of the kids you went to school with? Do you remember any of their names? Any one particular one that might stick out in your mind.

S: Well, by the time I graduated, I was trying to think this morning, I could only think of ten people that graduated and I think we had twelve or thirteen in our graduating class. Most of those started down here. I think there were maybe only one or two that graduated that didn't go all the way through school together. I know the Shipman girls moved in when we were in like the fifth or sixth grade. Other than that I think the rest of them started at the same time and a lot of kids have dropped out along the way. A lot more kids dropped out then, I think they did now, partly because of the war. A lot of the boys left to go into the service during World War II and didn't come back to finish, but some of them finished later and were able to graduate at the time I did.

H: After you completed elementary school, did you go on to junior high or was it automatically a high school?

S: It was all in the same building. Everything was in the same building. From grade one through twelve was all in the same building.

H: Was this at the time there was a Mecca Centralized School and there was a Greene and Johnson? Was that all three different schools?

S: It was three separate systems.

H: What was the rivalry between all three of them? I'm sure there was.

S: Some. The worst rivalry that I can remember in high school was always Bristol. I don't remember a lot of rivalries between Greene and Johnson, but Bristol was the one they always had the rivalries with for some reason. I don't know why.

H: I also keep hearing that there was always not only a rivalry maybe between schools, but between Mecca and West Mecca, or East Mecca and West Mecca. What do you remember about that? I hear that all the time.

S: Yes. When they built the new school it was a terrible rivalry because everybody in West Mecca wanted it on that side of the lake and everyone in East Mecca wanted it on this side of the lake. They finally bought the property from someone who was on the Board of Education, which settled the problem right there.

H: You did not attend the new school once it was built, right?

S: Yes, I attend for the last half of the year. I graduated in the first class.

H: The building which is on 88 right now?

S: Yes, right here where they are teaching now. I graduated in the first class in 1945.

H: 1945 is when you graduated.

S: I went there for the last semester of my senior year and that was the first.

H: There were twelve in your graduating class?

S: I'm not sure. The number thirteen runs in my mind and I can only think of ten.

H: What were some of the names?

H: What were some of the names?

S: Edna Brown and Helen and Edna Shipman, who were sisters, Frank Gladd, Waylon Trosper, Emil Stansik, Virginia Sass, Darlene Grow, Beatrice Vine and that's all I can think of.

H: Do you know of anything that these people are doing now?

S: Some of them are living around here. Frank Gladd lives around here. Darlene, well it's Elaine Kugi's mother, Darlene Grow. She has always lived here until just last fall she moved. Edna Brown is married and lives in Columbus. She was a home economics teacher. I don't know if she is teaching right now. Waylon Trosper lives in Kinsman and he is some kind of a contractor I think. I'm not real sure with him.

H: You kept contact with these people though?

S: I see some of them occasionally. Emil Stansik the last I knew was in Alaska. He was in the service for a long time and he just stayed in Alaska for some reason. I never heard that he ever came back so I suppose that he is still there.

H: You graduated in 1945, right at the end of World War II. I'm sure you probably know a lot on how Mecca was affected. You said earlier that boys that went to school with you had to leave and go to the service.

S: Yes.

H: Did they have to leave or did they just join?

S: I don't think they drafted kids out of school. I mean while they were in school. As soon as they graduated they would have. Kids that graduated earlier than that were drafted as soon as they were out of school if they didn't volunteer. Though, I think, in those days almost everybody tended to volunteer if they could.

H: What were the feelings here in Mecca about the war? It did affect you that these people did in fact leave and go fight. Do you remember? What can you remember most about those war years here at school?

S: I can remember. The rationing in this area. You didn't have gasoline to go anywhere and we were so far from everything. Nobody, during the years when I was a

junior and senior when the girls would normally date a lot, there was no one to date and no gasoline to go anywhere. If you ever went to town to Warren to a show, it was a rare occasion.

H: How much did you pay for a show at that time? A nickel?

S: No, probably .50¢.

H: So then, Mecca was probably hit pretty hard because. . .

S: Pretty hard, because everybody, all the men of age to go were gone, and my older half-brother was in England.

H: Was there anyone else? You just said your older half-brother was. . .

S: That's the only one from my immediate family. We had this boy who moved into our school like when I was maybe about a freshman, he left and went to the service and he was killed in a submarine accident. He was one of the few around here that were killed in the war. I was trying to think who was. That's the only one of my immediate age that I know of that was killed in the war.

H: Was a typical day like then, in high school, when you knew this war was going on? Did you constantly think about it?

S: No, not that I can remember. We did our sociology class and history class. We talked about the new developments constantly. Every day we would talk some about it, but I don't think we thought about it all the time.

H: Do you think then it was because it was in Europe and there was no fighting here, do you think that's why it was other than the rationing and the. . .

S: It affected you because of the fact you weren't as free to do the things that ordinarily you would have been doing. So, it really affected everyone. You couldn't ever forget. Not only was gasoline rationed, which was really the big thing, but also meat was rationed and sugar was rationed and shoes were rationed. That was a big thing right there.

H: Did you have to work at all during high school?

S: Yes, I worked after school.

H: Where?

S: For a couple different ladies. I went after school and cleaned house and ironed and washed dishes and things like that.

H: How much did you get paid, do you remember?

S: 25¢ a night. I didn't work a long time, I worked maybe a couple hours or something like that. Hey, that was a lot of money.

H: I'm sure it was. Were the people in this area that you cleaned for?

S: Yes, not anyone that's alive now.

H: Who were they?

S: Mrs. McBurney and Mrs. Terrill. I think also a Mrs. Brown lived there.

H: Where did those people live?

S: Real close to where I lived. Mrs. Brown lived in Niles which is behind the Dairy Queen now, which is now an apartment house. Mrs. McBurney lived in the West side of the circle which is where the Feddishs live now.

H: Very interesting. Making 25¢ a night. You're right, I'm sure it was a lot of money in that time.

S: If you hadn't seen anything that was a lot of money. Well, no one else could get out anywhere to work and everything evened out. There wasn't anything else you could do. You couldn't just go look for a job or get anywhere to work.

H: After graduating then what? What did you want to do? What was after graduation?

S: Well, I had a job before I graduated because the superintendent knew this attorney at the Home Savings and Loan and he got me an interview with this man. I went to work even before school was out at the Home Savings and Loan in Youngstown. This man lived in Cortland so I was able to get back and forth to Youngstown with no problem.

H: Who was the superintendent?

S: Gail Banning, he was the superintendent. I think he came there in the second grade. He was there long years after I left.

H: So, he arranged for you to get this job with Homes Savings and Loan and you went with this gentleman everyday into Youngstown. How many years did you do that?

S: I think around two and a half years.

H: Was it worth the drive?

S: Yes, I loved Youngstown. From being a small town and to shop and have your own money. It was real exciting. I was telling Kimberly we were down at McKelvey's the other night, we were going up the escalator and the thing developed a tick. I said, "I was here when they put this in. I remember when they got the first escalators in Youngstown." I said that was a big deal. It really was.

H: What did you do at Home Savings and Loan?

S: I worked in the legal department.

H: Doing what?

S: Typing, secretarial, taking shorthand.

H: Did you have any training for that or was it on the job training?

S: Just in high school. I knew typing and shorthand.

H: Did you have any thoughts of going to college after?

S: I had a scholarship, but I couldn't afford to go.

H: Even on a scholarship?

S: No.

H: Do you regret that?

S: Yes, I suppose probably now. At the time I didn't, though, I had been so poor all my life I was really anxious to earn money and get out and get away from all that.

- H: How much money did you earn, do you remember?
- S: When I started at the bank, I started at \$90 a month, I remember that's what I got when I started, but I got raises very rapidly. Even when I ended up out there I remember at the time it sounded like a fortune, if you never had very much.
- H: Did you have to give money for home? Did you have to help support the family?
- S: I didn't have to, but I did buy. . . Well, I remember I bought horns for the both the girls. I bought my sisters clarinets. I bought my brother a trumpet. I bought things for the kids. I didn't contribute like so much a week for room and board, but I did buy things.
- H: Let's look for a second and we will get back to what you have done after working in Home Savings and Loan. What were your brothers and sister like? You were the oldest, tell me a little about all of them, start with Ruby.
- S: Well, when she was younger she had some sort of heart trouble and she was tutored for quite a few years. Then she got over this and went to school. All my brothers and sisters were bright in school. My youngest sister was valedictorian, and my sister Ruby and Bob were both salutarorians in school. So they were all at the top of the class. They were all bright.
- H: What does Ruby do now?
- S: She works for the Warren City School System. What she does, I am not really sure. She does an assortment of things. She has five children and her husband is an electrician at Packard.
- H: How about Robert?
- S: He works at Lincoln Electric in Cleveland. He's a welder.
- H: And Rita?
- S: She lives in Chardon. She had two children. She works at. . . She just changed jobs. She is a computer. . . What do you call it? I can't think what you even call it.

H: Programmer?

S: Yes a programmer and she does key punching, but she does something else besides that. I can not think what you call it. I'm not that familiar with what she does. She did work at Champion Electric. Now she works part time for a bank and also for this other company which she has just gone to.

H: As children, were there a lot of arguments between all of you?

S: My brother and I didn't get along that well when we were kids. I think because I would like him to do things and he didn't care about doing things. With my sisters I always got along pretty well, but my brother we squabbled somewhat, but never anything long lasting. When we were older, why there wasn't any grudges or anything like that.

H: What were your parents, Elton and Marry like? Tell me a little about them?

S: Well, as parents they were older than most of my friends parents because as I said they had been married before and had families. Even though Bob and I, I think are probably older than the parents of most of Kim's friends, not that we have been married before, it's just that our children are strung out. My father was a carpenter and a brick mason. He could do a lot of different things. He mostly worked for himself in later years and just did different things for different people. He never really made a lot of money because by the time the war was over and things were getting somewhat back to normal he was too old to go to work at shops and things like that. My mother just kept house at home didn't go out and do very much.

H: Are they still living?

S: No.

H: When did they pass away?

S: My father has been dead for 21 years and my mother died I think seven years ago. When my father died, he had a stroke and was in bed for about two years before he died. He died when my son was like just about a year old. Bobby was just 22. So I think it's about 21 years since he died. He died on Memorial Day. They were

having graduation at the high school at the time he died. I remember that distinctly.

H: So was it a happy childhood?

S: Reasonably. Everyone I knew was poor and in the same shape we were. I suppose comparatively now you would say well we didn't have much really.

H: Did that bother you or didn't you know any different.

S: No, everybody else was in really about the same shape. Nobody had any money really. When I was real young everyone was poor. You can't believe it now the way things are now. The amount people spend on their children is just beyond all reason. It would have been at the time when I was a child anyway.

H: Very interesting. You worked at the bank for about two years. What did you do after that?

S: I came back to Cortland and worked at what was Richards Milling at the time. I worked in the office up there. That was because I was engaged and going to get married in the fall and decided maybe I should get away from the city where I could save more of my money and be closer to home. They paid me more money also than they did at the bank. So I was storing away my money until I got married.

H: You were engaged then?

S: Yes.

H: Where did you meet your husband?

S: A girlfriend that used to live in Mecca had moved to Boardman, knew him, and I met him through her. He's not from here. He's from Leetonia.

H: What were the social events? You worked in Youngstown I would think maybe well then, they were a lot of places then, the Elms and Idora Park. Did you go there or did you come here?

S: One of the big things in those days was that we would go to the Palace Theatre.

H: In Youngstown?

S: And hear the big bands. There were a lot, and we used to go, maybe like once a month or so there would be a big band coming in. We would go to dance.

H: When you didn't do that, what was here for you? What was here socially in Mecca?

S: Not very much. You would go see your girl friends and that's about it.

H: Did you have dances, church services?

S: I went to church. I never went to dances because I don't like to dance and Bob didn't like to dance either. So we never went to dances. There really wasn't that much. We used to go, whenever I was dating, we used to go to races a lot.

H: What kind of races?

S: Car races. At Canfield most of the time. They used to have real good races and we used to go there a lot.

H: You're one of the first persons I've talked with that has traveled outside and not stayed here in the immediate area.

S: I haven't been much of a traveler really.

H: Do you belong to 4H or anything?

S: No, they had 4H, I don't know why I didn't belong to it, but I didn't. They had it though. I don't really remember why I never belonged to it.

H: That was very quiet then. Did the school sponsor activities for you when you were in high school? Class related activities as we do today?

S: No not really. We didn't do much of anything. We had a lot more home work to do. I remember when I was in high school I did really a lot of homework. We didn't do much in the way of school activities. They had basketball, which I was never really interested in sports events. I went to basketball games. I was in music and things that the band played at. Really we had an orchestra we didn't have a band. That was one of the few pictures that I knew I could lay my hands on was a picture of when I was. . . In when we had an orchestra in high school and they would play once in awhile, but

really we didn't have nearly as many things going on at school as there is now it's like every night of the week or everyday.

H: What year did you meet your husband?

S: We were married in November of 1947 so I met him about a year before that. In 1946 I met him.

H: Did he fight in the war?

S: No, he had a disability in his arm.

H: He never then had to go to Korea either?

S: No.

H: He didn't do service at all then?

S: No.

H: Did you work when you were married? Were you working then?

S: Yes, I worked at. . .

H: Still in Cortland?

S: No, my husband was from Leetonia and he worked in Salem and I also worked in Salem. I worked at the Electric Furnace Company up until I became pregnant with Maxine, my oldest child.

H: Did you live in Leetonia?

S: No we lived in Salem.

H: Why did you come here? All of a sudden you're here in Mecca, then you're gone and then all of a sudden you're back here again. Why?

S: We just decided to get up here. There is better work around Warren than there was around Salem at that particular time. We moved back up here in 1950 and we got the lot that we built this house on in about 1950. We started building the house. He came to Mons, at that time Mons was a manufacturing work which was a lot better job than he had when we lived in Salem. I lived in Salem too at the time.

H: Were you glad to come back here?

S: Yes, because I knew everybody in Mecca. When I lived in Salem I didn't know that many people except the people I worked with. Yes, I was glad to come down. My husband likes it here.

H: Are the people neighborly then here?

S: Yes.

H: How? What is neighborly to you?

S: Being around somebody, talking to people when you see them. Run into someone you know you'll always stop and talk at least I do.

H: Do you like type of thing?

S: Yes, talk it up to some extent I guess.

H: So you moved back here in 1950 and your daughter Maxine was born.

S: She was born when we lived in Salem, but we had bought the property here.

H: Do you remember how much you paid for the property at that time?

S: Yes, we paid \$400 for two acres, but the house we built was for that money so I don't really know what we had in the house.

H: I'm sure there is a lot just by the looks of it. I'm sure if you were to sell it today you would get a nice price for it. What was Mecca like in the 1950's. Was it starting to build up like it is now?

S: Yes.

H: Today it is just unbelievable the houses I see going up.

S: Right.

H: What can you remember about the 1950's? The war, the Korean War was going on?

S: My brother was in the Korean War, Bob was in the war.

H: Did that affect you at all or is that just another war too?

S: It was more of a worry to me, I think when my older brother was in the other war. I suppose because I was older and realized more of the danger that he was in.

H: What did Mecca look like in the 1950's? What did the store that the Falkner's owned, was that still there? The house that Nora Palmer lived in one time was hit by a cyclone which is, I believe, still there.

S: I don't know what place she lived in. Now, the center, the things around the center, everything looked a lot like it does today, except that they didn't have the Dairy Queen there at that time. They did have a very small restaurant. We had little gas stations that sat where the Dairy Queen sits now. The whole down there. As soon as they put the lake in why, there were boats and everything.

H: Were you glad to see that lake come or did you like the creek?

S: I hated the moving of the school.

H: Why?

S: Well, because I had gone there all of my life and I hated to go to another school. But, I was so near out of school it really didn't matter to me. But, then the new school was nice. The little bit of time I spent in it. The lake didn't bring a lot of people to Mecca. It did increase the property value and a lot of people moved in on Route 46 down there.

H: Were you glad to see that? Were you glad to see the people more in?

S: Yes, I was glad. I thought it was good for the town, good for our tax evaluation and good for the new school you had to keep supporting. I was glad to see it, see the town grow.

H: What happened to your house, the one that you grew up in? Was it by the lake then?

S: No, it was almost across from where the high school is down here now. It is now vacant. Well, after my father died my mother wasn't ever able really to keep it up and

it just gradually got into such a bad state of disrepair. Then when she finally went to live with my sister when she got really infirm, and then she was in a nursing home a few months before she died. The house gradually went downhill. None of us were really financially able to put the kind of money in the house when it got into such bad shape. She sold it, and the property and all. So, they tore the house down when we sold it and divided the lot. It had been two lots anyway but they just used the western lot for a garden.

H: Do you remember how much she sold that house for?

S: No I don't. The house itself wasn't worth that much.

H: Did you hate to see that go? Did you hate to see it being torn down?

S: In a way, yes.

H: A lot of memories?

S: Yes. By the time they had torn it down it wasn't anyplace that I would have wanted to move back to, because of the noise and confusion down around there. It no longer looked like a desirable piece of property to me. In that respect I wouldn't even want to move back there. Since the school was there and the corner, I wouldn't want to live anyplace that sometimes is too close as it is.

H: That bothers you the way that center has changed?

S: Yes.

H: What can you do about it?

S: Not much because a lot of them are outsiders. Every township around here is dry except Mecca. It brings in so many people from other towns who don't belong here and don't care how they act when they get here. Of course some of the ones that live here don't act that great.

H: In my readings it seems to me that was such a pretty place. There were picnic tables and there was a caretaker, Mrs. Faulkner, an older woman. This was years and years ago. It just looked like that was the crossroads. It was just a beautiful place.

S: It was nice.

H: Now, it could be something very nice.

H: They used to have ice cream socials in the park. There was a pump there. People going by, like older people who had maybe places up the lake and lived farther down the state, would go through. They would stop there, get water, and eat lunch, but not anymore.

H: Has there ever been a committee today to try and do something about it? It's hard.

S: No, not that I know of. They had a committee a few years ago to try to get the park taken out of there.

H: Would you want to see that go?

S: No, and I don't think it is legally possible anyway because years and years ago in the deed around the corner the property was deeded, I think as I understand it the property for the park was deeded forever to the township to be a park and nothing else. And I don't think that they can legally do anything about it. I think it just has to remain there.

H: What year was your second child born then here in Mecca?

S: Bobby was born in 1957.

H: The same year your father passed away.

S: Yes. Bobby was born in April of 1957 and my father passed away in the next May. Bobby was about a year old because he was just learning to walk.

H: And then, Kim is the next one.

S: Yes, far apart. She was born in 1962.

H: Really then, nothing in the 1950's was that impressionable here in Mecca. You were glad to get back and to be with your friends.

S: Yes, and with raising my daughter.

H: Nice place to raise children. Do you think so?

S: Yes, I think so.

H: Would you advise people to come out here and raise children?

S: I don't know, I would be glad to get the last one out of school here, I'll tell you.

H: Why?

S: Why? Because the school seems like it is going to pot. I shouldn't say that I suppose. There are schools that are worse, I know.

H: So that, the Mecca that you went to, that school is just nothing like it is today?

S: No.

H: If you could change, what would you change? What would you do different to make it what it was?

S: The school you mean?

H: What would you do to make it, do you think, to make it desirable as to when you went? Obviously that must have been a nice time for you. You really enjoyed school.

S: Yes, I worked hard in school. Yes, I liked school.

H: What is the difference today between that school?

S: Kids don't do any work. They don't seem to learn very much either, I don't think. Because I remember this English teacher I had that everyone thought that was so good. We did Shakespeare and we did Coleridge just all these authors and literature. We just did a lot of it and we learned our grammar and we diagrammed. But we learned it. I thought Kim would never learn an adjective from an adverb. I'm not to sure she does yet.

H: Coming into the 1960's there was a lot going on with the Vietnam War and I'm sure that Mecca had to have been affected by that. I'm sure there were people that left and had to go fight. I know that the people I graduated with were involved with that. What did Mecca think of that? Were there people involved, maybe in your son's class or your daughter's graduating class?

S: My daughter was in college at the time they had the campus riots. I remember that.

- H: Was Mecca affected by that at all or didn't you see any change?
- S: I can't see any change around here at all, no. But I know we were concerned about all the riots on campus. Because I know, well my daughter had moved off campus after she was married and moved onto a side street, and the National Guard used to patrol up and down the streets in tanks at the time. This was after the trouble at Kent and it got really at Ohio State. What you would call the "bad element", I guess, who were against all the National Guard and all the Military would stand on the roof of their building and throw things at the National Guard who was patrolling the street.
- H: What school did she attend?
- S: She attended Ohio State. And things were really bad down there the last year or two that she was there. They had very strict ID's to get on and off the grounds. It was no longer a place you could just go down to Columbus and get off High Street and drive through the campus anymore. You had to have ID and business there.
- H: So that part bothered you because you did have someone there that was definitely affected by that.
- S: Yes, that bothered me.
- H: What was the reaction then of your neighbors, knowing that, "Hey, my daughter is down there." Did they think anything about that? Were they sympathetic?
- S: I don't know that anyone ever really thought about it. Everybody was wondering what in the world these college kids are doing, when they act like that. Really it was only just a small element of the whole class. Most of them were down there to get an education and try to get their money's worth. There were only a few who were really spoiling it for the rest of them.
- H: Let's continue looking at Mecca. It's just growing unbelievably. It's grown since your childhood and now.
- S: Okay yes, whenever I was in like the first grade, I think there was like six kids on this road. Now they get a bus load.
- H: What road?
- S: On this road right here?

H: Phillips-Rice Road?

S: Just on this end of Phillips-Rice. I think there were six children on the length of the entire road.

H: Do you like that wilderness or was it a farm?

S: No, it was just a dirt road at that time. It wasn't even paved or graveled or anything it was just dirt. At that time we only picked up six children on this road and now I think we get a bus load easily just on this part of the road. No, I'm really glad to see more people moving in.

H: As you said earlier, it's good for tax purposes.

S: Well, and mostly the people who are able to afford the property out here are fairly bright and. . .

H: Do you have any idea what property is out here? Can you take an estimated guess? What do you think?

S: No, I wouldn't know what they are getting for it. Well, the church just bought a piece of property down Phillips-Rice Road. A house that is now empty and there are thirty-four acres and they paid \$60,000 for it. The house is not that great.

H: What are they going to do with it?

S: They are eventually going to build a new church and also put in a ball diamond and a football field and a park for recreation.

H: What is the name of the church that is going to do that?

S: The Mecca Community Church.

H: Are you an active member in that?

S: No, I'm not. I go very rarely. I don't care too much for the minister who is there. But, in years past I've gone off and on and when I was a child I went. As I was growing up, I've gone off and on over the years.

H: Where is that located, the Mecca. . .

S: Across from the fire house, just north of the circle on 46. The property they just bought is south of 88 on Phillips-Rice Road.

H: How many years then have you supposedly been going there? Have you been a lifelong member?

S: When I was younger I went a lot, but as I grew older I went less and less and less. Only occasionally since I've been married and had children have I gone. For the last maybe five years I've gone only a couple of times.

H: Do you think that that is good that they bought that property? That's a good move? Are they going to keep that and just go with this?

S: Yes, think that gives them lots of room. I thought that was a lot of money to pay for it, but I suppose the property was probably worth that much. Property down Phillips-Rice is expensive. It will give them a lot of room to do whatever they want to do and they don't have enough room to build. . . They need Sunday school rooms and educational buildings. They have none at all.

H: How many people belong to that church, do you know?

S: No, I don't know. Jack Switzer would know. He is very active in it. But their membership is growing all the time and a lot of people like this minister but, the reason I don't go is because I don't like witnessing.

H: What's that?

S: Witnessing, where people stand up. Really, let it all hang out as they say. I don't like that.

H: Is that right?

S: Oh yes. Kim can't take it either. She doesn't go there either.

H: Did that just start or did they always do that?

S: Since the Reverend Kendall has been there they have been doing it. A lot of churches are going to that and a lot of people like it, and I hate it. Haven't you ever heard of witnessing?

H: No, I had never heard of that. That's very interesting.

S: People get up and say the darnest things. I wouldn't do it in a million years and I don't like to listen to somebody else do it.

H: Who was the minister when you were young, do you remember his name?

S: We had a lot of ministers. I can remember Reverend Davidson, Reverend Hood. We had Reverend Yukman for a long time. I was trying to think the other day of the one that I used to really like so much. I cannot even think of his name.

H: Did it scare you at all going to church? I can remember myself going to church. It was sometimes a very frightening experience because it was so dark and it was just. . .

S: They used to have evangelists come in and talk.

H: Yes?

S: Yes. This used to be a big thing. Especially when they would have Bible school in the summer. We always went to that. And they would get these evangelists come in their Bible school program. Some of them were really, well like today if I were to listen I wouldn't be able to keep from cracking up. When I was a kid I thought that they were really kind of scary.

H: Katherine Colman type of people?

S: I suppose.

H: Oral Roberts that type of thing.

S: Yes.

H: Did they heal people? Did they come and do this?

S: Yes. I've seen the healers. I believed them when I was a kid. I would believe them.

H: What did you see? Did they actually heal them?

S: Well. . .

H: Did people believe them?

S: People thought they did at the time. It was funny I suppose. When I think of it now, I don't know how I could have ever been taken away.

H: That's different.

S: That's different.

H: Yes it is.

S: But there are a lot of people around here, young families, who are really devoted to this minister and this church over here. That's the way it is now.

H: He's very influential.

S: But of the people that went there as long as I can remember, like Alice Clair for one, I mean I know you don't like Alice Clair, but like her and her husband were always the backbone of the church. They couldn't take it either and they no longer go there. They have gone there for as long as I could ever remember going. They were always there. Real active in church, like one of my neighbors up on Love-Warner. Evelyn Tomlinson, she was secretary and treasurer for Sunday school over there for years and years and years. She has gone now. Almost everyone that went there.

H: Really? Is that right?

S: Oh my, I just got out and its an entirely different crowd of people, of the ones who ever went there. Well even when my kids were in Bible school, about the only one that goes there now is Sara Gladd, I think. Other than that it's just completely different crowd. I know a lot of them are people who have moved in.

H: What other churches are available for you then here?

S: There is a Methodist Church across the lake at West Mecca, just barely across the lake. That's where most of the life long members are going because it's the only one that is close. There is also an older church which is clear down Park Avenue, which is a nice church. It's very traditional and formal.

H: We are talking a little bit about religion, I've noticed up here a lot of Jehovah Witnesses.

S: Oh yes.

H: Why? Why does this area attract them? I could not believe it.

S: They are all interrelated. The Knights were Jehovah Witnesses, because I knew all the Knights.

H: They lived in Greene.

S: They lived in Greene, yes. Well, not the Earl Knights that lived south they were never Jehovah Witnesses but the Knights that lived north of the center, Howard Knight's family, they were strong Jehovah Witnesses. He was a good friend of my father. And we used to go to their house and everytime we went to their house they would try, he would bring out the Bible and try to get us to go to these meetings. They never give up, never.

H: Do they still do that today? They do that today don't they?

S: They do that today. Mrs. Knight reminds me all my life.

H: Mrs. Dixie Knight?

S: This is Bernice Knight. I've known her all my life. Her son was in my class and her husband was a good friend of my father. She was a good friend of my family. She still comes to my door and I hate to tell her. I just don't understand it. I just don't believe it.

H: It really amazed me. I know talking with some people, the Catholic population is very small out here.

S: They are so anti-Catholic.

H: Yes, and there are a couple of people I know that have moved here and lived here all their life were not accepted by the community because Jehovah Witnesses are very anti-Catholic.

S: They are very anti-Catholic. They preach against the Catholic religion all the time and as far as their religion I can't understand it, they're so intolerant. All of the Knights are so prolific. They have so many children in their families and they seem to inner marry that there is really getting to be a lot of Jehovah Witnesses.

H: Yes there is.

S: When I was a child there were a few. But they were as strong in their beliefs then as they are now. During World War II, when everyone was so patriotic, they wouldn't salute the flag and their children were expelled from school for that. Their children did not go to school they just plain expelled them.

H: Did the law do anything to them, then? They just expelled them and that was it?

S: No, they just expelled them, and they went to court about it and eventually their kids were allowed to go back to school. They were not allowed to deny them an education. Their kids got behind, like Ernie Knight, he should have graduated with me and he graduated, I think maybe, two years later. I'm not really sure but I know they expelled just like that, an entire clan of them. Not only in our school but in other neighboring schools. Because they were so strong in their beliefs that no matter what, they would not salute the flag.

H: Did that bother you? Being patriotic and knowing that you had a half-brother fighting. Did that bother you seeing someone there that?

S: I couldn't see where it would have bothered them to salute the flag. I really couldn't. I still to this day can't think, when they are all making a good living in this country and our laws protecting their interest. I can't see why they can't salute the flag, but they didn't believe in then and they don't believe in it now.

H: Very interesting.

S: They have never moderated a single one of their beliefs in all these years as far as I can see.

H: Would you like to see industry move here? There is none other than farming now.

S: Yes, it would be nice.

H: Would that upset the community?

S: I would think so. I think we are needing more jobs and more jobs.

H: There is the land here and it is very available for industry to move in.

S: Yes, I would like to see industry move in.

H: For example, look what industry has done for Lordstown. If you could just get something like that here in Mecca. It would be a complete change.

S: Yes, that would be nice, even a small industry.

H: Would you advise people to move here? If I decide to move should I move here? What does Mecca have to offer me today?

S: Well, if you don't get too near the center, it is reasonable quiet.

H: It's pretty nice.

S: It's nice.

H: Travel doesn't bother you?

S: No.

H: To go to Eastwood Mall or Southern Park and you said downtown?

S: No, we do it all the time.

H: It doesn't bother you at all to travel?

S: No it hasn't. Now that gasoline is getting so high it's beginning to. Just in the last few weeks we're beginning to wonder. Like it's a 65 mile trip for Kim to go to piano lessons every week. Clear down on the south side of Youngstown down by Mill Creek Park her teacher is. It is a good long trip.

H: It has never bothered you up to now.

S: It hasn't bothered me up to now, but it is beginning to.

H: Just because of the gas.

S: Because of the gas. It's getting a real expense.

H: But otherwise it would be good to move out here?

S: Yes.

H: Clean, healthy living type thing?

S: Yes.

H: Do you farm?

S: Well, we only have two acres here. We have a large garden. We do a lot of work in it, around the yard, but we of course don't have enough.

H: No animals, no horses?

S: No, just one garden.

H: Did you want them? Did you have them when you were children? You had them when you were children.

S: Yes.

H: Would you want them now?

S: No, I don't think so. I don't think that they're profitable. We had a pig every year and a cow of some sort, because we needed them for food, but really there is so much work and they tie you down constantly. They have to be fed morning and night and taken care of. They are a lot of work really. I was never that interested in farming myself. My husband had really an interest in farming. He always liked it. Though he never lived on a farm he was a city kid himself, but he used to go to his grandmother's farm. He was always interested in that. He works now on a farm.

H: Where does he work?

S: He works for Landmark which is a farm supply company. He's really interested in that type of thing.

H: Isn't that on Route 46?

S: That's one part of it, yes. But, where he works is at Farmdale and they have the feed mill and the fertilizer at Farmdale.

H: Looking over your life and all that you have told me, would you change anything about it? Is there anything different you would do in growing up and living?

S: Well, I probably would have gone back to work, if I would have known how inflation was going to hit us now that we are getting older. I wish that I would have gone back to work.

H: Would you go back now?

S: I don't know if I can find anything to do now at my age. Now that I have probably lost all of my marketable skills, I don't know if I could find any. Time to time I think about it, but as I get older I get tireder. I wonder if I shouldn't have. That's about the only

thing. I don't regret moving back here because we have had a pretty good life. We built our house from scratch and the yard, so really it's been alright.

H: Would you want your children to stay and keep the home once your gone? Keep up?

S: I don't think any of the children really have that much.

H: Maxine, she lives in Maryland?

S: She lives in Wellsville at the moment. Her husband is an insurance agent. He's looking for better work, naturally.

H: Does Bob want to stay here?

S: I don't know.

H: Would you want your children to stay here?

S: Not if they don't particularly care to.

H: Would you want them to follow in your footsteps?

S: No, I think they should live their own life.

H: So it wouldn't bother you if they. . .

S: No.

H: If Kim one day says, "Hey, that's it. I'm leaving; good-bye."

S: If she takes up with some musician. . . No, if they don't have any great liking for the place, they should do whatever they want to do. I really doubt that any of them would ever live here again. I think when you raise your children to grow up and get out on their own that they should do whatever they want to do.

H: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us that maybe we've missed that's probably of importance to this interview about Mecca, concerning Mecca? The interesting thing you just told me about the church was very interesting.

S: I can remember when we first started school, we didn't go to school on buses but we went in cars. They hired different men to drive cars and pick up kids because

they didn't have busses. That's one thing that you don't hear of these days. I really can't think of anything else.

H: One last question that I always like to ask is, can you tell us of anyone else who can help us in this project, the history of Mecca?

S: Well you have mentioned the ones that I know of that really know a lot.

H: And they are?

S: Like Earl Knight and gee, I don't know. Like Evelyn Tomlinson, she's lived here a long time but I don't think she lived here all her life. But she might know something. That might be the only one I can think of.

H: I want to thank you for spending this time with me. I found it to be very enjoyable and got another insight into Mecca. In the past interviews I've had we never talked about church. That's good, you added a lot to our study. I really appreciate the time you have taken with us.

S: Well, I was glad to.

H: Okay, thank you.

S: I'm sorry I can't think of more though.

END OF INTERVIEW