Parishioner Experience

O. H. 548

JOHN KOHL
Interviewed
by
Mary Lou Shirilla
on
October 14, 1986
JOHN KOHL

John Kohl was born in Youngstown, Ohio, on June 23, 1908. He was the eldest of twelve children of Andrew and Mary Hromyak Kohl. He attended Lincoln Jr. High School in Youngstown, completing the 9th grade there.

As a youth, he distinguished himself in gymnastic competitions held by the Sokols, an athletic branch of the Greek Catholic Union. He placed first in overall athletic events at the G.C.U. convention held in Gary, Indiana, in 1929.

John held many jobs as a teenager, to help support the family, and upon reaching the age of 18, he began working at the Sharon Steel Hoop Company (1926-32). From 1934 to 1946, he was employed by the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company. From 1944 until his retirement in 1976, he was owner of the Sheridan Inn on Sheridan Road in the Brownlee Woods area of Youngstown.

He married the former Margaret Fedorco on September 5, 1936. They were the parents of three children: John, Mrs. Charlotte Bruce, and Mrs. Greta Marks. They celebrated their golden wedding anniversary this year (1986).

Mr. Kohl was a member of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church since it was founded in 1912. He was president of the congregation twice, and held many church offices over the years. He was also a member of the Byzantine Men's Association, and the Golden Circle senior citizens' organization of the parish. He was a fourth degree knight in the Knights of Columbus, Council 3813, a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Aerie 213, and past president of the Mahoning County Tavern Owners. He
S: This is an interview with Mr. John Kohl for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church project, by Mary Lou Shirilla, at Mr. Kohl's house, on October 14, 1986, at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Kohl, before we begin talking about yourself, what do you remember about your parents and your family?

K: In what way?

S: Were they born in Youngstown?

K: No. Okay, I see what you mean. They were both born in Czechoslovakia. My dad came here first. Then a year or two later he brought my mother over here.

S: Were they married here or were they married in Czechoslovakia?

K: They were married here. He was working, and he got her over here, and then they got married after she came over.

S: Did he come directly to Youngstown when he came from Europe?

K: Yes, he did. He came directly over here and so did my mother.

S: Where did they live when they came here?

K: When they came here, after they got married, they were in a boarding house, but with who I can't recall. After they got married they lived on Cherry Street in Hazelton. That
also served as State vice-president of the Ohio Licensed Beverage Association.

In the Greek Catholic Union, he served for two years as an athletic director, as assistant physical cultural director, and for 40 years as physical culture director. He also wrote a regular physical culture column for the G.C.U.'s newspaper, The Greek Catholic Messenger. He also served as athletic director, president and treasurer in District 3 of the G.C.U.

His special interests and hobbies included bowling, and all sports in which he used to participate. He coached the junior bowling league of the G.C.U. for many years.

*Interviewer's Note: Mr. Kohl died of a heart attack on October 30, 1986, just 16 days after granting this interview.
is where I was born, on Cherry Street.

S: That was your family home then?

K: That was the family home then.

S: And they lived there for a long time?

K: They lived there for a while. Then from there they moved to Campbell on Starr Street. They lived with Mr. and Mrs. Kucherenka. That is one of our own kind. They lived there for quite some time. My sister Mary and then my sister Catherine lived there. Then from there we moved down on Wilson Avenue in Campbell and lived in my godfather's home. He owned the whole corner there, so we lived in one of his homes.

S: What was his name?

K: John Gran. They own the bowling alley, Gran Bowling. Then we lived there for quite a while.

S: What year were you born?

K: 1908.

S: 1908, and at that time our church wasn't built yet, correct?

K: No, it wasn't.

S: It wasn't started.

K: The church was not built. My dad and mother and the people from around, our type of people, had to take a streetcar to go to church on the west side to St. Mary's Church on Florence Avenue.

S: That was the only Byzantine church, right?

K: That was the only Byzantine Catholic Church. From there we moved to Mr. Gran's place. I was baptized at St. Mary's. Then they built the church here. They didn't build it, but they bought an old church across the street from where the present church is.

S: That was the year 1912 when the church was first started, right?

K: Yes, right.

S: Those years prior to that then do you recall anything about going to St. Mary's as a little child?

K: No, I don't.
S: You would have only been about three or four years old.
K: Yes, I was only about three or four.
S: Actually you were one of the first families. You were included in the families who started the church.
K: Among the first.
S: Do you recall any of the reasons that the people wanted to start a church there?
K: Yes, they did. Well, we had a lot of families living here at that time. The steel mills were around then. That is where the people came over here to work in the steel mills.
S: Okay, so the Hazelton area had a lot of our families there.
K: Yes, it did.
S: The first church actually was the little building that was across.
K: The little building right across the street.
S: Do you have any memories from that little church?
K: Well, yes, I do. I was an altar boy in those days.
S: What was it like to be an altar boy in those days?
K: We wouldn't dress up in a cassock.
S: Oh, you wouldn't?
K: No. We didn't have a cassock. Then there used to be only two of us. There weren't any more than two because at that time we used to only have on liturgy on Sundays.
S: One liturgy.
K: We didn't have two masses. We just had one mass. At that time we used to have utrena on Sunday mornings. That is an early liturgy like. It wasn't a full liturgy. It was just a utrena.
S: Something like matins?
K: Right. Then we had the high liturgy at 10:00. At that time the liturgies used to last two hours.
S: Okay, I have heard that.
K: Very seldom less. It went more over than less time. By the way, on Saturday nights we always had vespers. Any holiday that we ever had we always had vespers the day before. Today they don't have that.

S: What were the vespers like? Prayer services?

K: Yes, prayer services. It was just like on Saturday nights now, prayer services.

S: Did those last long?

K: No, anywhere from a half an hour to three-quarters of an hour.

S: Those were every Saturday night and then before each holiday or holy day rather.

K: Yes, every Saturday night, and we had vespers every Sunday night too.

S: Did you?

K: Every Sunday night we had vespers.

S: Were the people faithful in attending those vespers too?

K: Oh, yes, they were.

S: All the time?

K: The church was full all the time. At that time people had no place to go; they had no car; there was nothing to do or no place to go anywhere but church.

S: So the church was the center of life at the time.

K: Right.

S: So then you said you were among the last altar boys of the old church.

K: At the old church and the first altar boy at the new church.

S: So the new church was constructed in 1919. Was it 1919 when it was finished? I believe that was when it was finished. Do you were in that neighborhood. What do you recall of the church being built?

K: I recall the church was built right on the corner because we lived the next street over on Montgomery Avenue. We kids used to go down there and watch them build the church from the ground up. I will never forget when they blessed the cornerstone. The people were outside there watching them
bless it. On that day when the cornerstone was blessed--that was Labor Day--I had a younger brother; he was born on Labor Day.

S: That same day?

K: That same day. My mother had all her children at home. There were twelve of them all at home. We all had midwives. That day my mother knew she was due, and my father still attended the service of the cornerstone.

S: The dedication of the cornerstone then, was that after the church was completed?

K: No, no, no. They always set the cornerstone before they complete the church.

S: They set it first.

K: From the foundation up.

S: I was thinking of the wall on the outside. So that was Labor Day. Do you remember how long that it took to complete the church then?

K: No, I don't. I really don't remember how long.

S: Did the parishioners do any of the labor themselves, or was it from outside?

K: Not that I know of, no, because at that time they didn't have time because everybody was working.

S: Most of them in the mill.

K: Everybody was working, and at that time people had large families. So they had to take care of their home first.

S: Was there a pledge drive to help raise money for the church?

K: Oh, yes, there was. There was a pledge drive. If you go down in the cellar of our church now, you will see those white boards with all the names on them. Whatever people gave that is what was marked on those boards.

S: I wondered about those names and what that was for.

K: Yes, that is what it is.

S: The original name of the church was St. Nicholas Greek Catholic Church, correct?

K: St. Nicholas Greek Catholic Church, right.
S: Then there was some confusion because people thought it was a Greek church, right?

K: Right.

S: Do you recall when it was changed?

K: So then they changed the name of it to Byzantine rite.

S: Is it in the cornerstone itself that says that?

K: No, on the cornerstone it says the Greek Catholic Church.

S: That is what it says? Right, that is what I thought. What are some of the other early childhood memories regarding the parish?

K: At the time before the church was built we used to have dances for the benefit of the church for the new building. We used to hold dances at the corner building on Center Street and Wilson Avenue, that three-story high building. We used to hold dances there on the third floor. We used to go up and down those three floors every time we held a dance there. We held dances quite frequently. It was always loaded because it was the only place that people could have gone. There were no radios and televisions then, so everybody congregated there and had a good time. That was where you got to meet people and talk. Then during the summer months we used to hold church picnics. We used to hold them up on the hill because there were some empty lots, so we held them there. That was for the benefit of the church. At the picnic there we used to raffle off certain items. We didn't have tickets there. They used to have wooden paddles that fathers and mothers used to use on their children. Then they had numbers on the paddles. They had three numbers of the paddles, and they used to sell the paddles for a nickel or something else. It all depended on what kind of item they were raffling. It was either 5¢ a paddle or 10¢ a paddle or 25¢ a paddle. After the drawing--they had many drawings, one after another--they would make sure that they collected all of the paddles because they had to sell them again.

S: Oh, I see, you didn't get to keep your paddle?

K: Oh, no, you don't keep the paddle. They had to have them back. They had a wheel that they spun around for the number, but those paddles all had to come back.

S: For the next time.

K: Every one of them. We just kept on raffling items off with those paddles.
S: I never heard that one before. Were the children a little bit intimidated by those paddles, do you think?

K: Oh, yes, they were. When we used to hold those picnics, everybody was there, all the children and all the grown-ups. Everybody was there because they had no other place to go. There was nothing else to do.

S: How often were those held?

K: They were hold several times a summer.

S: Maybe monthly.

K: It was the same thing for the dances. They were held during the winter months, the colder months.

S: Did the church rent space in that hall for dances?

K: Yes, they did. They had to pay rent. Like I said we had to go up to the third floor.

S: What kind of entertainment did you have for those dances?

K: We had gypsy music. That was the only entertainment.

S: The accordions?

K: No, no accordions. We used to have the fiddle and the bass fiddle and the cymbalist. Those were the only things.

S: Did you all sing along too?

K: Oh, yes, sure whenever they played something that we knew, hey, everybody sang.

S: What other activities were there then for the children?

K: Let me tell you other activities too. Since there was no radio, we used to have stage plays. The adults used to have plays, and it was all in Slavonic. Whatever kind of play it was, it was all in our language. Then at Christmas time we had the younger people who had plays in English.

S: The children? The younger ones?

K: Right. We had a little play, and then we passed out gifts. At that time I played Santa Claus. I was Santa Claus then, yes. I was in many plays. That was all we had. There was nothing else to do. In fact the only time the children were allowed to go anywhere was to church doings and lodge doings. They weren't allowed to go anywhere else. That was one place that you could go because people didn't have any cars.
S: What about religious instructions in the parish? Did the cantor handle the teachings for the children?

K: During the summer months when the children got out of the public school, we used to have catechism all summer.

S: Every day?

K: Every day, all summer, all day long. Before the new church was built, we used to go underneath to the cellar of the old church and had catechism every day. The professor used to teach us in our language which is more or less Rusin. We were being taught in Rusin. We were being taught how to read Rusin and how to write Rusin.

S: Who was the professor for your classes?

K: At that time our professor was Professor Ritzin. Then later on he moved away, so we had a couple of other professors. I can't recall their names exactly. Then we also had Professor Horvath. He used to teach. Then at the same time we used to have choirs too. The professors used to teach choir too.

S: Now the professor was the title that you gave to the cantor, right?

K: Right, well, he was considered the cantor.

S: Right. Now did the pastors also get involved in the children's classes too?

K: Yes, they did. He used to come down and help out. When we went there, we had to buy a catechism book.

S: Then who were the pastors when you were young?

K: Father Papp.

S: He was the original one, wasn't he?

K: Father Papp was a pastor here and Father Krusko.

S: Did they come from Europe?

K: No. Father Papp, yes, but not Father Krusko.

S: Okay, he was born here.

K: Yes.

S: Getting back to the building . . .
K: That catechism book was called Az Buka. They had the entire Rusin alphabet in it. It was just like your books in school. It was the same way.

S: Then were you taught to read the Rusin also in the catechism class?

K: Oh, yes, we did. We were taught to read and write in Rusin. I could have written in Rusin, and I could have read in Rusin. Now today I still could, but it would take a while.

S: Then they also taught you the religion lessons too.

K: Oh, absolutely. It was all religion that was taught in this school. When we had catechism, we kids were taught to read the Epistle and to read Viruju in church in our language.

S: What was that second word that you said?

K: The Epistle and the Viruju. We used to read that in our language when we were kids.

S: I noticed in the Jubilee book that you were very active with the gymnastics group.

K: Right.

S: The Sokols. What can you tell me about that?

K: We all belonged--most of us--to the Greek Catholic Union. That was a fraternal organization where everybody had a life policy.

S: Insurance.

K: Insurance, right. There was a man, Michael Dunay, who came here from Lorain, Ohio to start up a calisthenic team. He called the practice in the church hall at the time. The little church was already built, the church hall across the street. He started up calisthenics, and among the many boys and girls who came down, I seemed to have caught on the fastest; so he named me instructor for the local lodges which included Campbell, Struthers, west side.

S: The whole area.

K: So we got started there. That was back in 1927. In 1927 and 1928 we were practicing. Then in 1929 there was a convention in Gary, Indiana. At that time in our language we called it a slet.
S: A slet?

K: A slet which is track racing. It was considered a field day.

S: A tournament type of thing?

K: Right. We used to practice calisthenics, running broad jump, standing broad jump, high jump, 100-yard dash, relay race, and all that. That was why it was called a track meet. That was how we got started in 1929.

S: So you were what, twenty, twenty-one years of age at the time?

K: Yes. Then in 1932 we had a convention in Detroit, Michigan. That was where we had another track meet. At that time, I was old enough to go to convention. You had to be twenty-one to go to the convention. So that time I was elected as a delegate to go to the convention. I was elected as a physical culture instructor assistant. At that 1929 convention I was pretty active. I was very, very light. I used to love to run and jump. I won the all events at the track meet.

S: That was the one at Gary, Indiana?

K: That was in Gary, Indiana in 1929.

S: How many areas participated at the time?

K: The entire Greek Catholic Union. They came there from all the states.

S: The whole United States.

K: They came over there. It was something big.

S: Wonderful. What do the initials A.R.S. stand for?

K: That was when we went A.R.S. instead of G.C.U. A.R.S. meant American Rusin School.

S: But you just changed names for a time, is that all?

K: Just changed it to G.C.U.

S: Were most of the parishioners also members of the G.C.U.?

K: Yes, they were at that time; yes, they were. I remember a lot of people didn't have insurance and didn't belong to G.C.U. So we formed an insurance department in our church. Every parishioner paid $1 every month. Anybody who passed
away got $1,000. They kept giving them $1. Eventually the insurance departments put a stop to that because you would have to be certified to operate that way.

S: Like the state department of insurance or something like that.

K: We were doing that all on our own.

S: How long did that last?

K: It didn't last too long. Exactly how long I don't know.

S: That seemed like a good idea though.

K: Of course, at the time.

S: The G.C.U. at the time, were they politically active?

K: Not politically. This was strictly the church.

S: Were they concerned with the homeland and that type of politics? That is what I mean, not American politics but what was happening back in Europe.

K: Yes, right.

S: I remember reading about a G.C.U. convention which was held in Youngstown. Do you remember anything about that?

K: Yes, it was. Yes, I do. I was only a kid. But whatever they did I was so interested in them that I used to follow them. They had gymnastics in our church hall, and I used to follow them. Then we went for our track meet to Lincoln Park. They had the track meet over there because they had to have the jumping stands, and they had to have the ground dug up for running broad jumps and standing broad jumps and high jump and racing. I followed them all the way through. At that time the delegates whenever they came here to the convention, every parishioner was asked to take a delegate into their homes because at that time people did not go to hotels or motels. We didn't have that many, so I remember we had a bunch of kids, but we had two delegates in our house.

S: That was a nice Christmas thing to do, wasn't it?

K: Right.

S: In regards to this convention were you aware that the people sent a letter to Prague and the League of Nations in regards to Ruthenian representation in Czechoslovakia? Were you aware of any of that at the time?

K: You mean they sent somebody to Czechoslovakia?
S: No, let me recall. At the convention held at Youngstown, they decided to reconvene in Pittsburgh a few months later.

K: Right.

S: At that time they had some grievances which they sent to Prague and to the League of Nations regarding this.

K: No, I don't recall that. I don't recall any of that.

S: That is alright.

K: Several years later they had a big track and field day in Czechoslovakia. Our group, our Greek Catholic Union group, sent a team out there.

S: Did they really?

K: Yes, they did. Of course, I wasn't involved in it because I was too young. It was elderly in that.

S: Another group that I noticed was the Rusin Elite Society. Do you recall that?

K: Yes, I belonged to it.

S: What was the purpose of that group?

K: Well, they were more or less highly educated people. I belonged to it because I was pretty active. I got around, and I did everything for the church and the Greek Catholic Union. I was taken in although I didn't have that high of an education.

S: Did someone more or less have to nominate you to become a member?

K: Oh, yes, I had to be nominated. I had to be nominated, and I had to explain why they should take me in. The man who nominated me was Mr. Michael Holliday. I was accepted.

S: How long did this group function in the church? Do you recall?

K: Not too long because everybody went their way. The people were educated and they had to go out and look for jobs elsewhere. It didn't last too long.

S: Did you have meetings with this group?

K: Yes, we did. We had meetings every month.

S: What was their purpose for organizing? What did they do at their meetings?
K: I can't exactly recall, but it was more or less on the higher education quality. It has a lot to do with church too.

S: Now we are up to your young adult years. You already told me about the gymnastics and your involvement with that. Were you working at this time?

K: Oh, yes, I was.

S: Where were you working?

K: I was working from the time I was sixteen years old. Even before that I had outside jobs because I was the oldest of the family of twelve children.

S: You were the oldest?

K: So I was always working.

S: Where were you working at this time?

K: I worked at confectionery stores, in a butcher shop, in a grocery store; I peddled papers. I used to shine shoes to make some money to help the family out. I used to have one of the largest routes in Hazelton when I peddled papers.

S: Was it the Vindicator then?

K: The Vindicator and Telegram.

S: Telegram too?

K: They had two papers at that time.

S: Then eventually you went to work at the mill, correct?

K: When I became eighteen years old, I got a job in the mill.

S: Which mill was it that you worked at?

K: Sharon Steel Hoop Company. That was right down where we lived. I just walked there. It only took me about five minutes to go to work.

S: How did you meet Mrs. Kohl?

K: That is a good one. In 1936 I was the assistant physical culture instructor at the time. I went to a convention in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. We had a big track and field meet over there. From our group here I had over 300 children who participated in calisthenics.

S: That was a lot.
K: We also had between 300 and 400 adults who participated too. Margaret was a delegate from her district in Scranton, Pennsylvania. We were there for two weeks. It was a two-week convention. One day just before the convention ended we were going out for lunch, and Margaret was behind me. At the time I did not know her. She was behind me with an umbrella. It was raining outside. So I turned around and said, "If you let me under your umbrella, I will buy your lunch for you." She said, "Okay." So I have been buying her meals ever since.

S: And she's been letting you use her umbrella, right?

K: Right. The best part is that before the year was over we were married, in 1936.

S: That is right because you just celebrated your fiftieth anniversary.

K: She was from Jessup, Pennsylvania. That was the Scranton area.

S: How did you all get to Wilkes-Barre? Did you take a train or what?

K: We had to take a train. That was the only way we could travel at that time.

S: Did the children have to help raise money for the trip?

K: No, no. The trip was sponsored by a district. We had so many districts in the G.C.U., and there were so many lodges that belonged to the district. The district used to pay. No, we went there by bus. I'm sorry.

S: That is okay.

K: We went there by bus because the district pays for the transportation of the bus.

S: You mentioned one time that you were president of the congregation. Was that in the later 1930's?

K: Yes, it was. At that time the church used to have a full set of officers, president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, trustees, auditors, and I became president of the parish in 1937.

S: Just a year after you were married.

K: After that, yes.
S: That is quite an honor for a young man, isn't it?

K: Yes, I was the youngest one ever to be elected. Then during the course of the years, I was the treasurer, trustee, and auditor of the church. I used to collect in the church just like they do today. I did that years ago. The church used to have monthly meetings. Every month we used to have the congregation.

S: With everybody?

K: With everybody. It was once a month.

S: Where were those held? Right in the church?

K: Right in the church, downstairs in the auditorium. Then we used to elect a set of officers every year. Then in 1948 was when we changed our calendar. We used to celebrate on January 7th. Then we changed it to December 25th. I was the president then when we changed. I, together with Father Rommack Sr., signed an affidavit that we were changing the calendar, and that had to be sent and approved by the bishop.

S: Did the people of the church vote on this first of all?

K: Yes, they did. At the meeting they took a vote. It was a very close vote.

S: Was it?

K: A very, very close vote, but we won it. In fact we had to because at that time we used to celebrate both Christmas' anyway.

S: It was double for everybody.

K: It was a little bit too much. So that was one of the reasons we changed over.

S: And you said that was 1948.


S: When was the practice of having the church officers discontinued?

K: That exactly I cannot recall. I really can't.

S: Do you know if there was a reason why?

K: I will tell you this. I worked in the steel mills up until 1944. Then I went ahead and I bought myself a small neighborhood tavern. The reason I bought that tavern was that we were renting a home in Campbell. The home was sold, so
I had to move. Through my godfather, Mr. Gran, he knew that there was a small tavern for sale that had living quarters upstairs. So through him and with his help I went into business. Then when I quit the mill, I was busy; I was putting in work anywhere from fifteen to eighteen hours a day, so I really didn't have much time to do anything else.

S: Sure, you had less time. I understand that. That was the Sheridan Inn, your tavern? Is that what it was called?

K: Yes, Sheridan Inn. It was named that because it was on Sheridan Road. A lot of people when I tell them that I operate the Sheridan Inn, they think it is one of those great big Sheraton Inns.

S: I see.

K: But this is just a small neighborhood place. It is strictly a neighborhood place.

S: What about the time when you were a young father in the parish raising your family? What were their baptisms and first communions like? Do you recall them?

K: Sure, they had that right along, baptisms and first communions.

S: Were they different in any way than they are today, or are they pretty much the same?

K: No, they are all the same.

S: What customs did you especially want your children to carry on with their families?

K: The same as when I was brought up. We had to go to church for vespers and everything. When we lived on Montgomery Avenue, I used to go down to the new church and I used to ring the church bell at 6:00 in the morning, at 12:00 noon, and at 6:00 in the evening. That bell used to be rung at that time every day.

S: Every day?

K: Every day.

S: When did you do that? When you were just a child do you mean?

K: Oh, yes, when I was an altar boy.

S: Were the bells electronic at the time, or did you have to pull them by hand?
K: No, no, we had to do it by hand. We had long ropes, and we had to pull the ropes. On one side there was a large bell, and on the other side there were two bells. There were two ropes. I used to go down there and ring both bells, one with each hand.

S: I often wondered about that. What about the Easter traditions and the other holiday traditions?

K: It was the same as it is today. Those are big holidays for us.

S: Do you recall priests coming to the homes and blessing the Easter baskets?

K: Yes, he did.

S: Some of the other people have mentioned that.

K: He used to announce in church that on such and such a day he was going to be in this neighborhood and the next day in another neighborhood. We were waiting for him.

S: That was mostly because of the transportation at the time. People didn't want to carry their baskets all that way.

K: Do you mean the blessing of the baskets?

S: Yes.

K: Oh, no, no, we used to bring them to the church. I thought you were talking about blessing the homes.

S: Blessing of the homes?

K: Yes. We used to bring the baskets to the church.

S: Somebody had told me that he would come to the neighborhood to bless the baskets too. I just wondered if you remembered anything about that.

K: No, I don't. Maybe if the people were sick and they couldn't come down.

S: Or maybe the ones who were farther out like up the hill in Lansingville.

K: Probably so.

S: It was that area I was referring to. Maybe the ones closer in your neighborhood just went directly there.

The church's property was originally registered to trustees, is that correct?
K: No, to the parish itself.

S: Somebody had told me that they were registered in the names of the trustees originally.

K: Not that I know of.

S: What about when Shady Run was purchased? Do you remember anything about that?

K: Yes, I remember then. I know I was an officer when we were going to purchase that. I remember going up there. There were several of us who went up there with the priest. We looked the place over. That is a good place there. It was all wooded at the time. We walked through the woods there. It was all wooded at the time. We walked through the woods there. It was something like twelve acres. We really did get a fair sale for taxes. I was there when we bought it.

S: What were the original intentions for the grounds?

K: Church. The original intentions in time to come was to build a church there. Naturally we had to have a picnic grove, so we started up a picnic grove to make money for a new church.

S: Whatever happened to those plans?

K: Well...

S: They fell by the wayside. Were you involved with the school project at all when the decision was made?

K: No, I wasn't involved in that at all because I was in business then. I really wasn't too active then in the church affairs although I went to church. I was too busy.

S: Now I know you continue to be active with the G.C.U. with the bowling.

K: Yes, I am. I have been active with them ever since I became a physical culture instructor. I was an assistant physical culture instructor at first up until 1937. Then the regular physical culture instructor passed away, Mr. Kania from New York. After he passed away I was appointed as physical culture instructor. I used to go out and teach calisthenics. I went to New York, Chicago, Detroit, and traveled all over to teach. I was a physical culture instructor until 1972. That was forty years. When the Second World War started, that was when we had no activity in physical culture because the men had to go to fight in the war. Everybody was busy. They hung onto me as a physical culture instructor until 1972 anyway because I used to write articles concerning physical
culture in the G.C U. paper.

S: Did you?

K: Oh, yes, in the G.C.U. paper. We used to have an article in there every week. I used to go to the library and pick up articles concerning physical culture.

S: Did you save the article? Do you have a scrapbook of them or something?

K: No, I made that mistake.

S: Maybe they have them in their files at G.C.U.

K: Well, I have pictures. I have all kinds of pictures.

S: But not the articles?

K: I just don't have them.

S: Do you think the G.C.U. may have back copies of them if you wanted to go through?

K: Well, they probably do. They generally save everything way back. I used to participate in bowling in the G.C.U. That was something big. Last year we celebrated the fiftieth year of bowling, and I attended forty-eight of the bowling tournaments. I just missed two tournaments on account of the Second World War.

S: That has to be a record.

K: Oh, I was honored.

S: Are you going to go to Las Vegas next year?

K: God willing I am hoping to. We had a convention in Las Vegas already too.

S: Did you?

K: The G.C.U., yes, we did.

S: Did they have good attendance?

K: Very good, very good attendance. Next year we are having our national bowling tournament in Las Vegas.

S: I just read about that. Were there any changes that you would have liked to have seen come about, or were there changes that you didn't care for?
K: Changes in what?

S: In regards to the parish.

K: No, not really. The only thing is that years ago back when people didn't have cars they had no place to go, so they would go attend the meetings. We used to have lodges, and they used to attend the lodge meetings too. In fact at the lodge meetings at that time they used to have the roll call; now they don't. For a long time people used to come down and pay their dues and away they went. Now we don't even have meetings, only quarterly, but we send our bills to the headquarters now. There are no collections at meetings.

S: So the attendance has dropped way off.

K: Not exactly, no. They still have the attendance; that is the membership to the G.C.U. and belonging to it.

S: No, I mean at the meetings.

K: At the meetings, oh, yes. Now at the meetings, even quarterly meetings, you are lucky to have all of the officers down there. If you have anybody else, it is very, very few.

S: I suppose it is the same in most of the church's organizations too.

K: It is; it is the same all over. At that time right here in Youngstown we used to have the Junior Boys Lodge and Junior Girls Lodge, and then we had the Ladies Adult Lodge and the Mens Adult Lodge, and we used to have the Ladies Sokol Lodge, rather Sokolette, and then we had the Mens Sokol Lodge. Now it is all consolidated. Now out of all those lodges that we used to have, we only have three, but it is all consolidated now. Whether it is children, boys or girls, or whether it is men or women, it is all in one lodge now.

S: Is there anything that you think you can do to possibly build that up a little bit?

K: In what way?

S: I don't know. I mean with all of your experience. Do you think it is mainly because everyone is working and they just don't have the time or other reasons?

K: That is right. That and people have cars now. People go places. They go wherever they want whenever they want. Like I told you before, the only places we were allowed to go were to church doings and lodge doings, that was all.
S: That is true.

K: They go with their parents, and when they get of age and get a car, they go where they want to.

S: So the church was the center of everybody's life.

K: Right, that is right.

S: It isn't any longer.

K: Well, no, I wouldn't say that. It still is.

S: Well, socialwise.

K: In a social way, right.

S: We get together to worship but not for too much else anymore.

K: Right.

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

K: I think we just about covered everything, everything that I can remember, everything that I participated in, and I used to participate in church affairs more so before I was in business. But when you are in business, then you have to take care of that.

S: Oh, sure, yes.

K: I used to sing in the church choir, but after I went into business I could not go down to practice.

S: Okay, well, I think what you do recall is just like it happened yesterday. It is amazing the things that happened so many years ago.

K: I'm glad you called me when you did the first time. That gave me a chance to think and to reminisce as far back as I could.

S: Well, I thank you, Mr. Kohl. Is there anything else you would like to add?

K: No. I want to thank you for coming over here so that I can express my views of the years gone by which I do remember quite well.

S: Yes, I know. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW