

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Poland Methodist Church Project

Poland Methodist Church

O.H. 169

CATHERINE EPPS

Interviewed

by

Wilfredo Rivera

on

May 18, 1982

CATHERINE L. EPPS

Catherine Epps was born on June 23, 1912, the daughter of John and Lulu Lewis, in Allegan City, Michigan. She attended elementary school in Muskegon and also graduated from Muskegon High School in 1931. She decided to further her education by attending Muskegon Community College and graduated in 1933. She married George M. Epps in 1946 and is the mother to one child.

Mrs. Epps is presently employed as a secretary by the Poland United Methodist Church and has been a loyal employee for twenty-six years. She is an active member for the United Methodist Women, Women Prayer Group and Administrative Board. Her hobbies are sewing, reading, cooking and entertaining guests.

Wilfredo Rivera

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INTERVIEWEE: CATHERINE EPPS
INTERVIEWER: Wilfredo Rivera
SUBJECT: 150th Anniversary, Poland Methodist Church
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R: Mrs. Epps, where was your father born and your mother?
What are some of the stories you recall about your
family's past?

E: My father and mother were both born in Michigan. My
father in Allegan County. Well, they were both born
in Allegan County and met in Allegan when they were
young. I remember living there myself until I was
seven years old.

It was a charming little town on the Kalamazoo River.
I had two brothers, one older and one younger. Bob, the
older one and Phil, the younger one.

I remember a very happy childhood in this small town.
Then when I was seven, we moved to Muskegon, Michigan,
which is on Lake Michigan. That was an excitement to
me and to all of us, to live on a big lake. We had so
many happy times there because within ten miles there
were seven lakes. So, we were always able to go swim-
ming some place. We all went to school there in Muskegon.

We all three went to the Community College following
high school. It was a two year college. There was one
of us in there each two years for six years. Then, the
boys went on to universities. I concluded my education
there by taking a secretarial course.

R: What kind of work did your parents do?

E: My father was a printer. He worked with the local newspaper. In fact, he was the foreman of what they called the "back room", running the presses and he was an expert in linotype machines. My mother was just a hard working, loving housewife who very much enjoyed her family and her greater family, her relatives. She enjoyed entertaining and cooking and taking care of all of us,

R: What year did you relocate to Poland?

E: When I came to Ohio, was in 1940. I came to visit an uncle whose wife had just died. He had come down here from Michigan too. He lived here and worked in the Sheet and Tube for many years. I met a man, so I stayed,

We didn't get married right away though. Then I went to work for the Truscon Steel Company. That was just when World War II broke out. So, he was in the service for four years and went directly overseas. So, we weren't married until he got back.

Then we stayed here, although part of the time while he was in service I was back up in Muskegon. Then we stayed here after we were married. Except the first year when he was still in service, we were down in Richmond, Virginia.

Then, we bought a home over on the South Side of Youngstown and our daughter was born. When she was four years old, we had a chance to move out to Poland. We thought the schools would be better for her too. So, we bought a home in Poland. We joined the Poland United Methodist Church soon after that. Patty wanted to go to Sunday School with the kids she played with in the neighborhood. She went visiting several times when we still belonged to Westminster United Presbyterian Church downtown. But then, we followed suit and joined early in 1955.

Then in the summer when my husband died, the minister thought maybe I ought to work for the church. So, he asked me to. In November I started working for the church. I have been there ever since.

R: Who was the minister who hired you?

E: Norman M. Parr. He's the only one who isn't living. He died just a few months ago. He was wonderful to me. It seemed as if when I needed somebody just to talk to, there he'd be at my back door. He would come in and have a cup of coffee with me and talk. The parsonage

was right behind us on Massachusetts. I lived over on Delaware Avenue then. A year later I realized I needed a much smaller home. That was pretty large to hang on to for just the two of us. So, that's when I found upon this little house. We moved in here. I've been here for 24 years.

R: This Reverend Parr, could you tell me a little bit more about his background?

E: Yes, he had been there four years already. He was a well loved minister. He was so kind and so good to me. His wife and son Timothy were neighbors of ours too. So, that made it very nice. He had been in the Youngstown area. He'd been a minister at Hubbard and he'd been associate minister at Trinity U.M. Church in Youngstown before he came here. After he left here, he went on to be a district superintendent in the Youngstown District of the Methodist Church.

R: Approximately how many members were there to the congregation when he was minister?

E: About 500 at that time, I would say.

R: Who succeeded Reverend Parr?

E: Then M. Dean Marston followed Reverend Parr. He and his wife, Grace, and two daughters, Ann and Sally, moved into the parsonage. They became good friends of ours too. He had been here about nine months when the church burned, on April 1, 1957. I suppose you've heard that date before in these interviews.

I remember so well what kind of a day it was. It was just a cold, spring, rainy day. We stood over there across the street and watched the fire fighters. It was a sad thing. A lot of the people were crying and it was a very difficult time. I wasn't working that day. It was a Monday, and at that time I didn't work on Mondays.

R: Just prior to the burning of the church, what were some of the activities the members of the church did in order to raise the money for charity purposes or to help the church out financially?

E: We did a number of things like the women having soup sales at noon and bake sales. Especially one thing I remember their doing is making apple butter outside, a great big fire and one of those huge kettles. They'd take turns stirring it ^{with} a long wooden paddle. Just like you see

pictures of how they did years and years ago. They would sell that.

The people in the church were very active people and the young people were too. They had their camps and they went to Lakeside, Ohio for summer camp. Lakeside is sort of a Methodist Chitauqua. It's a place where most of us Methodists, who have been there, feel very nostalgic about, the recreational area as well as the religious area.

R: Was your church involved with other churches in the community? Would they all get together?

E: Mostly the Presbyterian Church, because the Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church, the Holy Family Catholic Church weren't here at that time. So, really the Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches. They did join together. We had Vacation Bible School together, for instance. We had our Thanksgiving service. It was usually a morning service at that time. We would have that service first in one church and then the other.

One of the things I particularly remember about in those early years was the wonderful church picnics we used to have. We had them in Columbiana in Firestone Park. All those early ones that I remember, they were great. Everybody went. More than now, you know, I mean a larger percentage of the congregation.

R: Could you tell me a little bit to describe the church before it burnt down, the structure?

E: Oh yes. We have such a beautiful picture of that church in our parlor in the new church. It was stone and gray and it had a bell tower. They had a bell in it that they rang every Sunday. It was one of the things that was prized as a job, to ring the bell.

That had been rebuilt so that the sanctuary faced in a different way than it had previously, as I understand it. But it was a lovely, homey kind of church. Just before the fire, in 1950, an addition had been built on for educational purposes. That is still standing in the back of the bank now, the Union National Bank. That part didn't burn, so that didn't have to be torn down. But the sanctuary and the office that I worked in under the sanctuary and the kitchen that was down there and the Sunday School rooms in the basement were all pretty well ruined from the fire. It went right up through the roof too.

We stayed in the building awhile. I remember April being one of the coldest Aprils ever, and it rained most of the time. I was in that office, freezing, and the only heat was just an open gas stove. I remember wearing boots and heavy socks and shoes and coats all the time I was working during all that month of April.

On March 26th, just before the April 1st of the fire, we had bought the house next door. We had known that we must enlarge. So, we had planned to buy that property and property behind us, which we never did get. But, we were very lucky to have bought that house next door. We moved the office over there. The minister's office was the living room; my office was the front bedroom. Where we did the mailing and the addressing and so forth was in the back bedroom. Then, downstairs, oh, it was a pretty old fashioned basement, that's where the women cooked to put on suppers and so forth.

I suppose some of the people have told you about how we started the Canfield Fair project about then. The women did the cooking for Canfield Fair down in that basement. We had a very big tent out there in which we served dinners, which became much bigger each year. We did it for eleven years. The whole project became bigger every year. But the first year they were cooking down there. Then, the people who were delivering the food out to the Canfield Fair would walk up and down those awkward old basement steps. Where I was in the office, just outside of my door was one of these great big registers through which all the smells from downstairs would come up. I would just about die all the time from all that food being cooked there.

Even before we started the Canfield Fair project and during that time, there were a group of women. (We called them the "Susy class".) It was really Susanna Wesley class. But, we called them the Susies. They baked pies and they became pretty famous for their pies. Before they were through doing it, they had baked 65,000 pies.

R: Who made up this group?

E: I wish I had all of the names. Should I give you some of them?

R: I would appreciate it.

E: Yes, Minnie Kenney was really one of the leaders, Rose Cotterman, Pearl Wilson, Ruby Bachen, Alice Dressel, Thelma McCauley, Mabel Miller, Carrie Tinney, and Mrs. Siegel. Oh, there were many others. I wish I had all of their names, because I hate to neglect anybody. Edith Myers and so many others. They took orders for pies and they baked them for organizations that had meetings and other things. They kept on until they had baked 65,000. They kept track of them the time of how many they were making.

This Canfield Fair project I was reading in a little bit of history this afternoon, the first year we made about \$3,000 clear. That was pretty good for the time. Besides, we had bought a great deal of restaurant equipment, good stainless steel cabinets for salad cabinets and storage of hot things. So, they invested a great deal of money into it too, that first year. That increased until they were making \$8,000 and \$9,000 most years after that.

We voted to stop. I think we'd worn out. It took about 350 people to run the operation. A lot of the people took their weeks vacation and donated that time to that project.

R: How involved were you with this project?

E: I was sort of in the middle. Being the secretary there was a lot of just keeping things running, you know, kind of a coordinator I guess you'd say. Phone lines were going all the time between the tent out there and the church. And then, helping supply workers that they need here and there and call people to give a little bit more time here and there. Then when Saturday and Sunday would come, I would go out to the tent and work and serve on the serving line too, because that was always fun.

The part I remember best was after it was all over. It would be after Labor Day about two o'clock in the morning we would have just taken down the tent and just dragged everything that was left over back to the church. Everybody would go home and just die. I'd come back to work the next morning and face all that leftover food and piles of aprons and dish towels and everything to be sent to the laundry. All kinds of things to be sorted out and things to be put in the freezer and sold. The leftover food was sold and so forth. So, I always remember that part so well. I wasn't sorry to see that end.

R: Who would you say was instrumental in implementing this project?

E: The men, well it was called the Methodist Men's Fellowship at that time. They really started it. Then, the Women's Society of Christian Service was the name of the women's organization at that time. They did it together, although the men really were the ones who started it.

Their president at that time was Chester Dammann. Chet was a wonderful leader in that sort of thing. And all the way through, he was really the chairman of the fair. Oh there were so many of the other men who worked so hard. Paul Fryman was our treasurer all during that time. That just took endless amount of work. He was another one who would take his vacation at that time. He's still our treasurer. He hasn't always been all through those years, but he's our treasurer now again and he has been for quite awhile.

Then Chester Dammann's wife, Arlene, worked so hard and gave so much time. Well, most of the people did. The people, you know as in any church, the people who are the active ones really got into that and worked.

But one of the best things about that whole project wasn't the money we made, it was the fellowship. All through the years, people would say, "Oh, I know him, I got acquainted with him at the fair, we worked together." I think that was one of the best things for developing a close fellowship with our people. In fact the fire was. It's funny to say that, but I think the fire was kind of a shot in the arm. There's something that melds people together when you have a disaster that you have to work for.

Needing a place to worship, you really have to work together and plan together. When we decided to build a new church, volunteers came from every place that were willing to help in their way. After we got started and the church was pretty well built, there were so many finishing jobs that people could do. We used to go over there and spend lots of really enjoyable evenings painting or scraping paint off windows or washing windows or doing all kinds of things and yelling back and forth and just having a good time out of it. It really was fun.

Of course being Methodist, we always had to drink coffee and eat pies. We enjoyed all that too.

For eight years, Reverend Marston was here. He was here longer than any of the other ministers I've worked for.

He was here eight years. That was during the time of the fire, the episode of the fire and then building the new church and getting it started.

The church burned April 1, 1957. I guess I kind of go around in circles here a little bit. But we were in our new building to use it for the first service on June 22nd, 1958. That was really good for the size building it is.

R: Where were the services held right after the fire?

E: Well, we had an opportunity to use the North Elementary School over on Johnston Place. We used that for the church services and for the Sunday School. We used their schoolroom for the Sunday School class. We had a few of our large meetings, just before that we had an Easter service in the high school auditorium. But then after we started at North Elementary, we stayed there until we were able to get in our new building.

When we went into our new building, it was like a shell. It wasn't finished inside at all. The building was up. We had concrete floors. We didn't have ceiling tiles at all. It was just all the wiring and everything up above us. The sanctuary just seemed so high. In fact, it was like heating all outdoors. That first fall we started to heat and our first gas bill got over \$400. At that time, that was shocking. Of course, they're up over \$1,200 now. It was just more than we could handle. So, we didn't meet in the sanctuary anymore that year. We went into the fellowship hall, which was easier to heat. We didn't have pews, anyway. We used folding chairs. We stayed in there then until well into the summer. We could use the sanctuary, but really we waited to go back into the sanctuary to use it all of the time in 1962 when we finished the inside of the building and all the plastering was in and everything. That's when we had our consecration service in 1962, April. Yes April 1, 1962. It looked very beautiful.

Then, it wasn't until we burned off the mortgage in 1973 that we had a dedication service. I guess there's something about you can't dedicate the church until it's paid for.

R: Why didn't the people decide to reconstruct the burnt structure of the church?

E: We had known that we would have to enlarge anyway and we'd been talking about that. It was funny we had just been talking about that quite a bit around that time.

Then, I guess I mentioned before that we had hoped we could buy the property behind us. But we weren't able to. Those people just didn't want to sell. There just wasn't enough available property there.

So, we had three acres of this given to us by members, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Withers. Another member gave us one more acre, which made four acres. Then, we bought the property from a Mr. Oswald on the west side of the church that had a home on it too, which we still own and rent to people.

R: Wouldn't you say this fire was suspicious in nature?

E: It would sound like it was, I mean in view of what I've been telling you and we used to kind of kid about it. But, I can remember a week or so before the fire saying, when I'd come into the hall down below the sanctuary, I'd say, "I smell something that smells to me like pine tar soap." I always remember that from when I was a kid. It was in the wiring of the organ. It must have been bad and kind of smoldering there before that. So, it is kind of funny the timing and everything.

I know sometimes I've heard people say from other churches "You sure worked that out just great. You needed money to build a new church." We got \$75,000 for insurance and we sold the property there for \$75,000. That was a good start on building the new church. Then, we borrowed from Mahoning Bank at 5¼% interest. Can you imagine that? They carried us on that all the way through. They didn't ever increase it.

R: What value did you stress most in your family during this period? Was it hard work, religion, education or a career?

E: My family is my daughter and myself. My daughter was just eight years old when my husband died. Our church was really the center of our life. Well, while my husband was living too our church was very important to us and our religion very important to us. It had been in his family and my family too. They had been Presbyterians and we had been Methodists. But we're the same type of people. Hard work and religion, they were important. I know my mother had been a teacher and had gone to college, of course. It was important to her and my father too, that we go to college. Then, it was equally important to me that my daughter go to college. She went to Mount Union College and became a teacher.

She taught several years, then she'd had it because teaching was mostly discipline. Well, she went back to school, but she didn't full time. She worked to get her masters in counseling education. Now, she's a counselor in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Pittsburgh. She loves that kind of work. Education has always been very important to her too. She still wants to go on and get her doctorate if she can.

Do you want to know about the other ministers?

R: Yes.

E: Okay, the next one that came was Reverend John Knox Hess. The John Knox sounds like a Presbyterian, but he was thoroughly Methodist. His father had been a Methodist minister too. They lived in the parsonage up here on Massachusetts too. They sort of made it bulge because they had six kids. That wasn't a very big parsonage. They sort of had them in layers in some of the bedrooms. They had four girls and two boys. They were a wonderful family. He was a very well loved minister too. I think I worked harder while John Knox Hess was here than any of the other ministers. He was just so full of new ideas. I had to work right with him on everything. I thoroughly enjoyed it. In those years I had more energy than probably I have now too.

But they had been here for about two years and the congregation wanted to put them in a nicer, bigger home. They really needed it and deserved it. They came from Coshocton and they had just moved into a new parsonage there before they came here. So, we considered building a home right on the property next to the church there. But, it was decided it would be better not to. So, we bought the house over on Shawbutte Street, 666⁴ Shawbutte. It's a lovely home. All the ministers that have lived there since have thoroughly enjoyed that home. It's adequate and not overly large, but plenty big for any size family. It's lovely entertaining space and a back sun porch that they all have loved and in a nice area.

He was here six years and Glen Lockard came. He came from Wadsworth, Ohio. We enjoyed him very much. He was a different type entirely. I've always said as far as I was personally concerned each of these ministers came along at just the right time in my life.

When Reverend Hess was here is when I had my first knee surgery. That slowed me down a bit. Then, I had other

surgery while Reverend Lockard was here. He was a very, well he pampered me afterwards. But he was more relaxed and not as highly organized or he didn't have the drive. But a real sweet personality and very calm. We loved him.

I think then we worked harder and took the reigns a little more, because of the type of person he is. You know with each leader the people react differently. He was only here three years. Then, he was moved by the Bishop up to Ashtabula. He's been there ever since.

I should maybe, as we went along, have told you who the Bishops were who appointed these ministers. Anyway, it was Bishop Hazen Warner was here at the beginning. I mean at the beginning when I was, when Norman Parr and Dean Marston were here, and the first years when John Knox Hess was here. Then we got a new Bishop Francis S. Kearns. He was here until about 1976 after Glen Lockard had left here.

The next minister was Hubler, Alfred Hubler. He came from the west part of Ohio. I guess I can't tell you. Anyway, he was appointed by Bishop Francis Kearns. Then during the time he was here, we got a new bishop, James S. Thomas. Al Hubler was very much loved by the people right away. He was younger. His wife Lois and two daughters, Sandy and Barb. He stayed here for six years.

Then our present minister, Joseph A. Santomen came. He was appointed by Bishop Thomas. He came from Greentown, Ohio, where he had been for twelve years. That's a long time for a Methodist minister to stay in one place. We hope we can keep him twelve years.

All the ministers I have worked for have been wonderful men and have treated me so wonderfully that it's been a real joy. My working in the church has been kind of a love affair with the people of the church. It's just been very pleasant and I love the people and they've been so good to me. I've been treated just great there. I've worked hard and enjoyed it.

R: Mrs. Epps, could you tell me a little bit about Reverend Santomen and some of his qualities?

E: Yes, well I've loved all the ministers and I've said sometimes I love each one more. But, he's a very special kind of person. He's very, very warm and so full of love. He loves a little tiny baby. He can't keep his hands off

of them. The little old ladies adore him and he is so sweet to them. Anyone who has trouble of any kind or illness or death in the family really appreciates his care. He's just right there with them. He suffers with them and he understands. He's Italian and affectionate and everybody responds affectionately to him. He brings out the love in people. He just has that natural way.

He's very, very talented in organization. Well now, he doesn't like anything about the office organization. He's glad to leave the administration to me. But in the administrative board and the council on administration in goal planning and planning for the year ahead and all that sort of thing, he has wonderful talent and ability for knowing how to do these things. In fact, he's trained in sessions and he has given lab schools on organization of council on ministry and administrative board, other areas too.

Another thing he is very talented in leading in what I term bridge building courses. I've taken one of those courses. It's a very concentrated course, 33 hours that we took in just a little less than a two week period. It's for reaching out and for reaching to people who are on the edges of the church, what they call the dropouts and the drop-ins and reaching them and learning how to listen and to relate to them. He is super as a listener, even though he loves to talk as much as I do. We told each other when he first came that we'd met our match. I think we did. We both like to talk so much.

But he is very well qualified for all leadership areas, as well as giving wonderful Sunday sermons too. Of course, you can tell I think he's just great all the way around.

R: What's his involvement with the surrounding churches in Poland?

E: In Poland, there's a Poland clergy organization that is really quite unique, I think. He, right from the beginning was greatly interested in that. It's the ministers of all the Poland churches, which are quite numerous now. There are Baptist Churches and Friend's Church and the Lutheran and the Holy Family Catholic Church as well as the original Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. They meet once a month for breakfast. They have organized many joint adventures. We still have Thanksgiving services now and it includes several churches.

We have the World Day of Prayer service. That is a joint service for all the Poland community churches. This year we started one new, one that we think we will continue, that is a Good Friday service at noon. I think five of the churches joined in on that this year and that was very good.

Then, we have an Easter sunrise service that is a joint effort of the churches. Our Vacation Bible School is a joint effort of the churches. Also, there's this organization we have now that's called the Poland Intrafaith Council. That's really the lay people and the ministers in the churches. That's been very effective. We call it the P.I.C. is there. They sponsor having the blood-mobile here twice a year. They have it at our church because our facilities happen to be just right for doing that kind of thing. But the people who work on it are from all the other churches.

A few years ago we sponsored a Vietnamese family through this Poland Intrafaith Council and all the churches worked on that. So, I really feel that Poland is rather unique in the churches working together that way.

- R: What has this present minister done in regards to preparing for the 150th anniversary of the church?
- E: He has set up a task force. I can't tell you who's on it, not right now. But to begin thinking of the things like this writing of the history and what kind of things we want to really feature as far as activities when we come to the celebration. He's rather excited about it himself. One of the suggestions that somebody made was that we organize a tour to the Holy Land. Then, several of us picked that up and said, "Well, why not?" It would be a wonderful thing. As many of us could aim toward 1984, taking a trip to the Holy Land. I don't know if we will. He and his wife had a chance to do that about a year and a half ago. He's been full of that ever since too with the idea of guiding another tour back there.
- R: What would something like this symbolize to the Church, the people involved in the church and yourself?
- E: Well, it just seems to me it would bring it all together, all the things. Just like these interviews have done and my discussing this with some of the people. Of all the things that people remember and bring together, there's something so unifying about remembering and getting all your memories together and say, "Remember when

we did this and when we did that," I think that's one of the big things just the way it unites us. Any big project that we work on unites us that way.

R: How many members are there to the church presently?

E: 930 right now.

R: And that constitutes approximately how many families?

E: There are many one person families like I am. But we usually call it about 500. When we're planning on every member canvas or something like that, we think about 500 families are represented. There are large ones and small ones of course.

R: How instrumental do you feel these people will be in this celebration's success?

E: Well, that's what it will have to be. If it's a success, it will have to be that most of the people really wanted to do this. We have a wonderful new working group in the church now, which is wonderful for us older people to see young couples and young families who are really vitally interested in the church. I think it will mean a great deal to them even though they didn't have a part in the history, but to be a part of something that has an on-going history. And to us who can remember a lot about it, it's so important too.

R: What would you like to see done in regards to prepare for the celebration in order to get all the people involved?

E: I'd like to see a lot of gathering people together in families. Of course, I love church family dinners and things like that. They get people together and explain and share ideas about what they'd like to see done and what they'd like to see the church be in the future. And also, I'd like to see some good goal setting meetings where people just shout out all different kinds of ideas that they might express and then give us a chance to discuss them and see what most of the people like to do and set priorities.

R: What role do you say music will play in this festival?

E: Great. Through the years, we've had a very, very good choir and other good music too. Our people love good music. We've had a hand bell choir. We don't have one

right now, but we have a wonderful set of hand bells, I'd like to see that developed again. Yes, I think our music would be important in that.

A few years ago, we bought an Allen Digital Computer Organ, in September of 1975. To just show how important music is to the people we took a loan for five years on it. I can't remember the price of the organ now, but it was a goodly price. People were enough interested in it that we paid it off in three years.

R: Would you say there's been a slight decline in the members of the congregation due to the social factors that are involved today?

E: Yes, and also just what's happened in the Youngstown area. We've lost people. We've lost a number of people, of course, who have had to be relocated. I would hate to say how many families. But some very important families to us have had to leave the area. That was very difficult. And yes, I think young people don't stay in the family church like they used to when they get out on their own. Of course, so many of them leave town, too.

R: In what respect do you feel this present crisis of ours is jeopardizing your church?

E: Well, financially it's a struggle. But we've always struggled financially. We haven't had moneyed people in our church, but we've had dedicated people. Whenever we've just had to do something, somehow the money comes, just like when we had to replace this organ and other items. People would come forth with the money when we needed it. Our people are a mission-minded church too. We don't have troubles reaching our goals in the outreach department for benevolences and the World Service. Just now recently a Helping Hand Fund has been started to help any of our needy families or needy families in the area. That has grown like everything immediately.

Just a few weeks ago we had a special appeal for the United Methodist Community Center, which is over on Pearl Street in Youngstown. They are hurting, especially with all these budget cuts and other problems. Our people were very very generous in their giving on that one Sunday specified for UMCC. So when they're appealed to, they can dig down, even though we never have more than we need to operate on.

R: How did your church react to the shooting of the Pope?

E: I think our people reacted as though he was one of theirs. These things are a terrible blow, And they're a terrible blow to good-thinking moral people. We had a special time of prayer for the pope and we've been holding him in our prayers ever since.

R: What are some of the activities that are done by some of the various organizations in your church that are used to raise special funds for special reasons?

E: Well now, our United Methodist Men just had an interesting sale. They have it annually or almost annually. They call it a Church Moss Sale. That is like a glorified garage and basement type sale. They do very well on that. At the same time then, the youth put on a bake sale. Yesterday to help this Helping Hand Fund, the task force that's working on it put on a snack lunch after church, a beef stew type meal. Many stayed for that.

The women's society, which is called United Methodist Women now, each year they have a turkey dinner in the fall. That's a good fund raiser. Some years they have a bazaar with it.

Then we have a missions commission that each year does an interesting thing. We hand out dollars to all the people in the church in order to multiply them by crafts or selling things or however they particularly enjoy making money multiply and then bring it back after two months. We've had different time limits on that. That's been an interesting project and we do well.

The youth do a lot of interesting things. They joined in this walk-a-thon last Sunday with the community center. We sponsored them at so many dollars a mile. Well, I guess all of them walked five miles. They're having a car wash next Saturday. They sell light bulbs. They're always thinking of ways to make money. Part of their money is to send them all to camp in the summer.

R: Where do you see your church going in the near future?

E: I hope it keeps going as it is right now. I just feel that it's really growing right now. I don't mean necessarily in membership or money or anything. But it's really growing spiritually. You can feel something happening in it. The minister and I have been discussing that lately. It's just something that's almost tangible that you can feel an enthusiasm and a sharing. In our church, I think the people have a real bond between each other.

R: One final question, Mrs. Epps. Is there anything that you want to share with us today that might be of some significance to this interview?

E: I can't think.

R: If not, on behalf of Youngstown State University's Oral History Department and myself, I would like to thank you for your time and your effort. Thank you.

E: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW