

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Poland United Methodist Church  
150th Anniversary Project

History of Methodism in Poland

O.H. 181

EUGENE G. MCCAULEY

Interviewed

by

Wilfredo Rivera

on

May 11, 1981

EUGENE H. MCCAULEY

Eugene McCauley was born on January 14, 1907, the son of John and Mary McCauley in Leechburg, Pennsylvania. He attended elementary and high school there, graduating in 1926. In that same year, at the age of 19, he married his wife Thelma. The next year, they moved to Warren, Ohio, where Eugene was employed by Republic Steel. They continued living there for eight years and in 1935, when Youngstown Sheet and Tube opened a strip mill in Poland, they moved to Poland. Eugene then worked for Youngstown Sheet and Tube for 36 years from June of 1935 until February of 1971. They still live in Poland at the present time.

Eugene and Thelma have three children, a son and two daughters, and six grandchildren. Eugene is an active member of the Poland United Methodist Church and is also involved with other local organizations such as Masonic, AARP, O.P.M. Chatter Box, Youngstown Nature Club, and Samaritins. He also enjoys traveling and bowling.

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INTERVIEWEE: EUGENE H. MCCAULEY

INTERVIEWER: Wilfredo Rivera

SUBJECT: Church relocation, family, values, events, ethnicity

DATE: May 11, 1981

R: Mr. McCauley, can you tell me where your father was born, your mother, and some of the stories you recall about your family's past?

M: My father was born in Leechburg, Pennsylvania and my mother was born in Natrona, Pennsylvania, which is on the Allegheny River about twenty miles apart. I don't recall of any stories, only that my mother, when she was seven years of age, her father and mother took the whole family and went and settled in the Kansas territory. After three or four years, they returned to Natrona and she was raised there in the Methodist Church, along with her sisters, graduating from high school there. At the age of 22, she and my father, the same age, were married.

My mother had seven children, so that her job was raising us in a Christian home, which the whole family were Methodist. Her father and mother and my paternal grandparents were Methodist.

R: What did your father do for a living?

M: My father was a molder at the Hyde Park Foundry and Machine Company that was making rolls for rolling sheet metal on, at that time. That was the way steel was made in those days, by hand mills and molders made and cast the big rolls that they used in the sheet mills.

R: Did he retire from this specific job?

M: No, my father passed away at the age of 59.

R: Where were you born and raised?

M: I was born and raised in Leechburg, Pennsylvania and graduated from high school there in 1926. In the same year, at the age of 19, I was married. We lived there about a year and moved to Warren, Ohio, where I got a job in Republic Steel Mill. We lived there for eight years and then in 1935, Youngstown Sheet and Tube built a strip mill here and Thelma and I moved to Poland--it was 1935--and brought our letters to the Methodist Church the same year.

R: And what was the first church you attended?

M: Poland Methodist, bringing our letters from Tod Avenue Methodist Church, Warren, Ohio.

R: Where was it located?

M: Here on what is now North Main Street. That church, since, was burned in 1957 and we relocated the church on Boardman-Poland Road.

R: Did you stress religion in your family?

M: Yes, my mother always stressed religion and my father was a violinist and played for different churches during his lifetime.

R: Are you presently retired?

M: Yes, I've been retired for ten years from Sheet and Tube.

R: You mentioned that the church was burned. What exactly happened? What do you remember about that incident?

M: There was a short in the organ, which caused the fire and no one being there, it got out of control and destroyed the building.

R: How did the people react when this happened?

M: Some of the people were very concerned about it because a lot of them had been married in this church and never attended any other church. At the time, where we were located, in order to build a new church to conform to population growth, we would have had to have dealt with nine property owners. So, it was felt that the church should be moved to another location where we could get acreage.

After a few months, Ernie and Mary Withers donated land on the Boardman-Poland Road to relocate the church, providing the congregation voted for it, which they did. We also bought three acres of additional ground. Our church is now located on, I believe, seven acres of ground between the Boardman-Poland Road and Wendy Lane, a rectangular piece of ground.

R: Did some of the members of the church, at the time, ever have any ideas of repairing or reconstructing the old church that burnt down?

M: Yes, there was a lot of people who had been baptized in this church and married in this church and they never attended any other. They did not want to make a change, but the majority ruled, and when they found out that we'd have to deal with eight or nine property owners in order to build a larger church, and the land was already donated for the new one, they went along with it. And to my knowledge, I don't think we lost any members over moving the church to Boardman Road.

R: Who was the present minister?

M: The present minister?

R: At that time.

M: Dean Marston was the minister.

R: Can you tell me something about his background or a little bit about his background?

M: The only thing that I know about his background was that he was in his second year here as our minister when our fire took place. He was a Methodist minister for a number of years previous to that. Of course, ministers in the Methodist church are governed by your District Superintendent and your Bishop, so that he was sent here by them to serve this church and he did serve here for eight years, from 1956 to 1964.

R: What was your involvement with the church at the time of the fire and the ideas of relocating? How did your family get involved?

M: We had two girls at home at the time and they were very active in their church and very concerned about the fire. And of course, Thelma and I were both serving on Boards at the church at the time. I was put on the Building Committee and was very much involved in the new building along with Thelma and her Sunday School class.

- R: What was done in order to get money funded for this reconstruction or construction of the new building?
- M: They still have, I guess, a committee out of the North-east Ohio Bishop's Office. They have people who are experienced in raising money and they sent a man here of that caliber and he raised the money through pledges so that we could start our new building. The old building was sold to D.D. Davis Construction Company and they in turn, took over the old building as a down payment on the new church, as he was the contractor hired to build the new church.
- We had a very fine architect by the name of Walter Damen, who worked very diligently with us and our committee-- Ernie Withers, C.E. McCormick and others--in building our church, so that we got a very fine structure for the amount of money we invested.
- R: Where were the services held?
- M: After the fire, we could no longer use our church. North Elementary School was made available to us for our church services.
- R: And Sunday classes for students, where were the classes held then?
- M: We held Sunday School in the school rooms, then we had church in the auditorium at the new North Elementary School. We were up there for over a year until we got our fellowship hall in shape to hold church services. Then, I guess it was about a year later before we went into the sanctuary, and it was not finished. We sat on folding chairs in there for about another year before we got it finished.
- R: And what year was your new church finally completed with the construction?
- M: I think it was 1960 before the sanctuary was finished.
- R: Who was the minister at that time when the building was finally finished?
- M: Dean Marston was still here because Dean Marston served this church from 1956 to 1964, so the sanctuary was finished when he was still here.
- R: Who was Hess?
- M: John Hess was the man that came to our church in 1964 as our minister.

- R: Can you tell me a little bit about his background?
- M: No, I don't know anything about him, only that he was a very fine minister.
- R: Around 1964, 1965, what do you remember about those two years in regards to the church? How active were you? How active was the community with the church overall?
- M: Our church has always been very active community-wise. We have always taken in just about anyone that wanted to use our church. If you would go up there any day of the week today, you would find as high as three different organizations using this building in one day, and this goes on four or five days a week year round. So, it is a community church. This new church has been a community church because of a lot of people in the community that get to use it.
- R: What are some of the ethnic backgrounds of the people who attend this church?
- M: We have people from all walks of life, but most of them are, you would say--English speaking people.
- R: How involved are young people in the church?
- M: To my knowledge, they are very involved. I believe that at the present time, they have two MYF groups going and they have Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.
- R: And that was started back in the 1960's when the church was completed?
- M: The Cub Scout Troop was started in 1938 in our church and then in 1948, the minister we had, Dr. Robert Uphoff, organized Boy Scout Troop II and we still have both Cub Pack and the Scout Troop are still very active in our church.
- R: Were you involved with these organizations yourself?
- M: I was. I served eleven years.
- R: Which one?
- M: Cub Pack and then went into scouting.
- R: And what values did you stress to these scouts?
- M: What else can you stress to boys, but live up to their scout pledge; and I think most of them did. A lot of them

went on to become Eagle Scouts and Life Scouts, so they got a lot out of it.

R: What value do you stress most in your family? Hard work, religion, education or a career?

M: Religion and education.

R: What is education to you?

M: Education is a mighty fine thing to have. Nobody can take it away from you, although I never got beyond high school.

R: Did you work when you were a child?

M: Yes. I cut lawns from the time I was able to push a lawn mower.

R: Approximately at what age would you say that it would be?

M: Oh, twelve, thirteen.

R: And after your lawn mowing days, what kind of pattern did you follow?

M: I drove a grocery delivery wagon. At that time, it was a horse and wagon, and then later on I got a truck. I drove that while I was in high school. Then, when I got out of high school, I went into the mill where I spent 46 years in a steel mill.

R: Who handled the finances?

M: Both of us, what's left of them. In a way, and sometimes I think I could have done and should have done better.

R: How many make up your family?

M: We have three children. We have a son 50, a daughter 42, and a daughter 37.

R: And do they attend the Methodist Church in Poland also?

M: They did when they were at home. Our son now lives in Fontana, California. He has one son, fifteen right now and I don't believe they are attending any church.

We have a daughter in Seattle, Washington with three very fine children, and they are very active in the First Methodist Church and went there when our former minister, Dr. Bob Uphoff, was minister there. She and her husband and three children are very active in their church and church work. Judy serves on the Official Board of the



Church and also is on the Retirement Home Board. They have a high rise there for retired people, which is owned and operated by the church, and she is also on that Board.

Our younger daughter has two children and they belong to the Methodist Church in the Ashtabula area and are very active in their church work.

R: How many years have you been a member of this church?

M: I guess about 47 years I've been a member of the Methodist Church. I never attended any other church, but a Methodist Church.

R: During the 1950's, what do you remember most about that specific church? What major event occurred for you in the 1950's?

M: In the 1950's?

R: Besides the burning of the church.

M: That was a big thing here in our church because that happened in 1957.

R: Nothing else really major happened before that?

M: No, not that I know of.

R: What was the church's involvement with the community during the 1950's?

M: At that time, we were a small church and the only program we had was our Youth Group and our Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. That's all I remember of being involved in the 1950's in our church. We had a very active men's club.

R: How many members were there to the congregation?

M: When our church burned, I think we had something like 400 or 450 members.

R: And how many families did that constitute, would you say, roughly speaking?

M: I'd say about 175 families.

R: And they had these Sunday classes on Sundays, is that correct?

M: Yes, there was always Sunday School in church.

R: During the 1960's, what major event do you recall?

- M: The shooting of John Kennedy was a big thing in the 1960's.
- R: How did your church react to the shooting of John Kennedy being that Kennedy was a Catholic?
- M: That didn't make any difference in our church. It didn't matter to us what anybody's color or creed was, they were welcome in our church.
- R: Well, how did the people react when John F. Kennedy did get shot? What was their initial reaction. What was done?
- M: There was a great deal of sorrow here. I do know that because they felt that he was going to make a great President-- and I really think he would have.
- R: How did the Methodists react to the Vietnam experience of the 1960's?
- M: Like most people, they weren't too much in favor of being over there and losing so many of our young men for a cause that we were really not involved in. Never should have been over there in the first place, I don't think.
- R: During the 1960's again, what did the church do to acquire money to get that church paid off?
- M: We ran two cafeteria lines at the Canfield Fair every year, which was a wonderful thing. The Susanna Wesley Class baked pies.
- R: How involved were you? Did you get involved with the Canfield Fair?
- M: I took a week of my vacation and drove truck. The food was prepared in our kitchen here at the church and it was hauled out to the Canfield Fair. For years, I took care of the hauling of the food, so that Thelma and I were both very much involved in our church until it was paid for.
- R: How long did it take until the church was finally paid off?
- M: Let's see, that was paid off during Glen Lockard's time: so it was about seven years ago, 1973. It must have been 1973 that it was paid off. In other words, it was paid off in about seventeen years, which we always said that we would never see the mortgage paid off, but it's either six or seven years ago, when under Glen Lockard, that the mortgage was burned and we celebrated.
- R: What do you remember most about the 1970's. What major event occurred that involved this church?

- M: The big event for me was I retired in 1971. We've been doing a lot of traveling and flying and bus trips the last ten years.
- R: And you're still active with the church now, is that correct?
- M: Yes.
- R: Who's the present leader or present minister of this church?
- M: Joe Santomen, who has been here two years with us now and a very fine minister, a very wonderful leader, too. He's doing a great job especially among the retired people. I think he's doing a wonderful job with everybody, but he sure is good to the elderly people. Preaches from the words of God and Our Holy Bible.
- R: What value does he emphasize in his sermons? What is he trying to get across to the people, would you say?
- M: To love one another and be a concerned citizen. He's a wonderful man, a wonderful speaker and he is, as I say, he's wonderful with the elderly people and the sick and shut-ins.
- R: Is your church today, involved with the surrounding churches? Do they get together and congregate?
- M: Very much involved in this Poland Ministerial Association, which involves all the churches--Protestant and Catholic are all involved in this. I think it's wonderful myself that everybody's working together for the same purpose.
- R: And, have you heard of this Interfaith Council that, supposedly, your church is involved with today?
- M: I've heard of it, but I don't take any part in it.
- R: So, you don't have any idea of its functions?
- M: No. I was a charter member of the OPM and still am. That's the Organization of Protestant Men. That was organized in 1946 or 1947. I still take a part in that.
- R: Let's retract to 1957 with the burning of the church. How did the other churches in the surrounding area react? How did they assist?
- M: Very helpful in many ways. The Catholic Father Gallagher came over right away and offered to do anything he could

to help us in any way possible to hold our services or anything else that he could do to help us. Also, the Presbyterian Minister, Hugh Gunn . . . That was the only three churches we had in Poland at that time. Since that, we've now grown to seven churches in the immediate area.

R: And they're all functioning together?

M: Oh yes.

R: How do you feel about that personally?

M: I think it's wonderful.

R: How about other members of the church?

M: I don't know how they feel. They must feel it's all right because it's successful.

R: How big is your congregation today?

M: Just under 1,000 members today.

R: And the majority are young people that attend?

M: We have a lot of young people with growing families. It's wonderful to go up and see the young people taking part in our church. It makes you feel good.

R: Are there any other organizations within the church that are rendered by the church to the people?

M: I don't understand.

R: Besides your Sunday classes, okay, are there, for example, they have these community action centers sponsored by the church for young people to come in. They pay what-- a dollar or whatever. Does something like that exist with your church?

M: The only thing I know is a retired group that meets on Tuesday. That is sponsored by the church. Of course, they have a ladies prayer group and a mens prayer group, which is all sponsored by the church. We help support Family Service, Redbird Mission, and the needy.

R: Have you heard anything about the 150th Anniversary celebration in 1984?

M: Mr. Veemeyer said they were going to have one. That's all I know about it.

- R: So, you don't have any idea what's being done in regards to preparing for it?
- M: No, I do not. Many members are working on it, much of the past history of the church.
- R: Nothing has been stressed by the minister?
- M: Yes.
- R: What would you say would be the most major event of the church history, so far, up to date? The one that stands out in your mind the most?
- M: The thing that stands out in my mind the most in history?
- R: Of the church.
- M: Oh, the history. It would have to be the fire and the rebuilding.
- R: Anything else that stands out in your mind?
- M: No.
- R: Where do you see your church going in the near future?
- M: There's only one way it will go and that will be up.
- R: Where would you like to see it go?
- M: From a personal standpoint, I would like to see it grow in numbers and spiritually; concerned about all phases of community and church.
- R: How's your church reacting to our present crisis of the Reaganomics and the cutting of the budget and all this stuff? How are they handling it?
- M: We are very concerned, helping in all we can do.
- R: How about in regards to the way people are reacting in your community towards the shutting down of the steel mills?
- M: Naturally, it effects us a great deal, but we're not going to let it get us down.
- R: How has it effected the young people in your church? Do you see them relocating to other areas?
- M: There are some who have relocated. Some of them transferred, and some of them are doing the best they can with

what they have here. We help wherever needed in any capacity.

R: Is there anything else that you can possibly think of that might help us to end this interview in regards to your church?

M: We love our church and all it's members.

R: Well, Mr. McCauley, in behalf of Youngstown State University and myself, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your time and your efforts today. Thank you.

M: Thank you and may God bless you.

END OF INTERVIEW