

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Paul Apostle Church Project

Church Background

O. H. 501

ROSALIE KUBUS

Interviewed

by

Jerry Hiznay

on

October 29, 1984

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

St. Paul Apostle Church Project

INTERVIEWER: ROSALIE KUBUS

INTERVIEWEE: Jerry Hiznay

SUBJECT: Organizations, Fund Raisers, Rosary Guild, Key Members, Pastors, Formation and Organization of Parish

DATE: October 29, 1984

H: This is an interview with Mrs. Rosalie Kubus for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church in New Middletown, by Jerry Hiznay at 57 Sycamore Drive, New Middletown, Ohio on October 29, 1984, at 9:00 p.m.

First of all Rosalie, could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

K: I am married. I have a son and I have a new grandson. I have been a member of St. Paul's since the church was started. I was born in New Middletown.

H: Is your husband from New Middlwtown?

K: No, he was born in Youngstown, but they moved to New Middletown. They lived on the Tkacik Farm. They then moved to the corner of Struthers and Calla Road.

I was born on Columbiana-New castle Road and the house still stands.

H: Obviously you have an excellent background of the area. When did you become involved in the formation of St. Paul's?

K: I think we were involved from the very beginning. We weren't the original ones who went to talk to the Bishop, but after the church got started, we were helping with all the fund raisers.

H: Could you tell me who . . .

K: Actively involved . . .

H: Actively involved from the very beginning of the formation?

K: I don't have their names. I know that Mr. Yasechko at the time when we were thinking of starting a church, had land across the street on Struthers Road and he was willing to give land to build St. Paul's Church, but our Bishop said it had to be on the main street. So that is where it was built. I think Helen Petrik and Mary Brentin had a lot to do with the starting. I don't have any of the other names, Jerry. I am sorry.

H: How was the current site finally picked out?

K: The Bishop came out and they saw the land and he said that this would be an ideal place for it. St. Paul's parish was created in June of 1952.

H: Once they decided to start the church, what people became very active in the building of the church and the construction of the church?

K: Steve Shirilla, I would say, after Mr. DeCiocco . . . He was our contractor. Steve Shirilla was more or less the overseer of the building of the interior of the church with the building of the altars. He had a lot of input from John, Mr. Pletnick. Every evening the men from the parish would go down from work and also on Saturdays. In this way, this more or less paid off some of the pledges.

H: How was a lot of the money raised for the building?

K: We used to have picnics, dances down at the Mikicic Hall in Youngstown. We had dances at the Croation Club in Bessemer, Pennsylvania. We had picnics out at Ohlin's Grove. We had bazaars and dinners. We had dinners all the time on Fridays and Saturdays right in a row. Then we also started the bingo games. That was after the church was started.

H: When the church was being constructed and finally finished and you entered the church for the first time, what was the impression the church had? How did it look back in 1954 when it was dedicated?

K: More or less the same as it does now. Nothing has been changed.

H: I was told that there were murals painted?

K: Oh, yes.

H: If anybody who is a recent member of the church, they have

no idea of what . . .

K: No. We had a big eye up on the back of the altar. We also had pictures painted on every block on the ceiling in the church proper.

H: Mickey Burke was saying it was the history of St. Paul.

K: I don't really recall that. He probably had more input to that than I did. It was rather . . . How shall I express this? Very busy.

H: Traditional?

K: Did Mickey say anything about when we had the masses in the cafeteria of New Middletown School?

H: He mentioned a little bit about it. What can you tell me about the first services?

K: Before our parish was even thought of, all of our parishioners, would go to St. Charles, Our Lady of the Lords in East Palestine, and St. Anthony's in Bessemer. When St. Paul's was started, we used the cafeteria of the New Middletown School for our Sunday masses. We started that on July 6, 1952. We would have two masses: one at 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. We would always assemble a portable altar and have all of the linen and flowers up for the mass. After the mass, we would take them all home and bring it back the next Sunday. We also had a portable organ that Elvira Billock would bring and play. We had our first mass held in the auditorium of the school. We moved from the cafeteria to the auditorium because there were so many.

H: About how many families would you say there were in those first years the church was being built out here?

K: I don't know how many but I knew that whenever I went to mass that I knew everybody. Now I don't know any hardly. Well, I know a lot of them, but it had grown.

Did Mickey tell you about the Holy Humility Sisters? We would pick them up from East Palestine and they would teach our children catechism. We had one Holy Communion that was a full auditorium in 1952. From there we went to the Villa Marie to get the sisters to teach the children.

H: The classes were still at . . .

K: No, we were in the church by then in the church basement.

H: Can you explain the first CCD classes that were held all over the place? Once the church was built they had them

in the basement and the basement of the rectory.

K: That was fun. We had the dividers, which were heavy green curtains on a wire. We also sold Christmas trees for fund raisers.

H: Do you know who they were donated by?

K: I don't remember who they were donated by.

H: Going back to the beginning of the church, since the church was dedicated in November of 1954, you had your first midnight mass. Can you recall what the first midnight mass was like?

K: Well, it was a very nice celebration. I can't really remember too much. I really can't.

H: How about the choir?

K: It was made up of men. Johnny Brentin was the choir director. It was before the midnight mass started that there were a group of men from the ethnic background that would sing a few songs in Croation and Slovak. It was kind of interesting.

Did he tell you that our first pastor, Father Pawlewicz, lived in small, rented house on Main Street?

H: He said that he initially lived . . .

K: In a small house on Main Street in New Middletown and from there he moved into a duplex catty-corner from the church and he bought the present parish house from William Ohlin and then a few rooms had been added on.

H: What was Father Pawlewicz like?

K: Father Pawlewicz was . . . I got along with him. He was just a nice, little priest.

H: That would be a tremendous task and burden to start a new parish?

K: True, it was a task.

H: What organizations were there in the early stages of the church?

K: We had the First Ladies' Guild. The name of the club was the St. Paul's Ladies' Club when we formed it. It was formed in August of 1952. It was at the Yasechko's picnic grounds on the corner of Struthers and Calla Roads. The

purpose at that time was to provide office equipment and altar boys' vestments and to take care of the needs of the altar. Mary Brentin was our president. Catherine Burke was the vice-president. Francis Hucko was secretary and Helen Shirilla was treasurer. We collected sales tax stamps to help our treasury. Now you know how far back that was.

H: Yes.

K: Helen Shirilla was an excellent seamstress and she made and donated surpluses for six altar boys and some of the mothers donated cassocks and the rest was donated by the Ladies' Club. The Ladies' Club always had bake sales monthly. We sold Christmas cards.

At that time, we also had a Holy Name Society. They helped a lot with the church.

H: When did the Holy Name Society disappear? It was active in the early days.

K: It was active and disbanded. I don't even think it was there for ten years.

The JoMar Club was started when Father Haidet came. The JoMar Club was like a couples club. The only thing that has lasted here is the Altar Guild.

H: Could you tell me about the Altar Guild? When the Altar Guild changed names from St. Paul's Ladies' Club to the St. Paul's Altar Guild . . . In 1954 the name of the club was changed to the St. Paul's Altar and Rosary Society. They were responsible for the communion breakfast. We always had communion breakfast for the first communion. We also had Christmas parties for the children. We would decorate the sanctuary for Easter and Christmas and we would clean for the Sunday mass. Back in that time, whoever cleaned the altar . . . We cleaned the altar every week, a different person would. They were responsible for the fresh flowers on the altar every Sunday.

We just had a lot of dinners and bake sales. We also had the concessions for the bingo which started. We would pop popcorn and sell all kinds of candy, hot dogs. We had card parties. Every year there was a card party, picnics, and bazaars.

The Ladies' Club purchased the Liturgical Altar. If I am not mistaken, Steve Shirilla built that and we must have just given him the money for the wood. We were always sewing altar linens.

H: Since you mentioned bingo, who were . . .

K: I don't know whether you want names mentioned or not. Do you?

H: Yes, whenever possible. Names are very helpful.

K: Our bingo games started and we did not have any money to start. Joe Savaet lent us money to start out bingo games. The Tabaka's donated the lumber for the bingo tables. The men from the Holy Name Society put the tables together. It has grown. We still have bingo.

H: Who were some of the men who were the callers of numbers?

K: Cy Hiznay. I think it was Cy Hiznay.

H: He was my uncle!

K: He was! Ed Bokanovich and John Rutana. He has moved from our parish, but he still comes out and calls bingo for us on Tuesday nights sometimes. Father Bissler used to call bingo; Father Haidet used to come down and sell cards.

H: Mr. Markotan?

K: He was involved in the club. That is about it in bingo.

Then comes our bus club. We wanted to send our children to Holy Family School. At the time, our children were . . . My son was born in 1952 and there was no transportation out here. The township would not bus the children. In 1958, we organized our bus club. We bought a used bus for \$300. The parents of the children would drive the bus to Holy Family. The bus finally broke down and we had to buy a new bus. It was an International. We bought that in 1961. To raise money to keep our buses going, we had stag turtle soup suppers down at Petersburg Fireman's Park. The men would go and catch the turtles and the Protestant women of Petersburg would cook the soup. That was nice. At the stags they would sell different items to raffle off. One good example of what they raffled off was a fifth of whiskey. That brought in \$100.

The bus club had a carnival on the church grounds. That was very interesting. We had rides, concessions, and fireworks to climax the evening.

Going back to the turtle soup supper, the men used to catch them, but later on they found out that they could buy the meat which was much easier. The same women would cook the supper. They started out with tickets for \$3 the first year. When the years went by, they raised it to \$5. They would play cards and whatever.

Then we started having the \$100 ticket dinners. The first

\$100 ticket dinner was held at the Airport Tavern on Route 422. Father Bennedentaro from the St. Lawrence Church in Hillsville was very instrumental in showing us how to have the \$100 dinners. On February 20, 1963, the bus club held a \$100 ticket stag at Palazzo's Restaurant. We gave away seventeen \$25 war bonds, one \$100 war bond, three Rambler cars. Rambler cars at that time were not that expensive so you could either take the car or the money. Most of them took the money.

H: They must not have valued the Rambler at that time.

K: It was only like \$1500, but it was nice. Then on October 16, 1968, we had another stag at Palazzo's. It was another \$100 dinner. We gave away a Cadillac.

H: Then, is that when . . .

K: We had our bus for seven years. Springfield Township started bussing the children to Holy Family and to Cardinal Mooney. The money that was left in our treasury was given to St. Paul's Church which was in the neighborhood of \$10,000. We really had a good thing going. That is it for the bus club.

H: Has there been any other organizations then that . . .

K: Now they have the Parent Boosters for Holy Family. Since my son is out of it I am not that active and know that much about it.

I can give you the list of the church blessing ceremonies. The solemn dedication and pontifical mass of St. Paul the Apostle Church was held on Sunday, November 21, 1954. The sermon was given by the Most Revered Emmet M. Walsh and the Reverend Monsignor Joseph N. Trainer. Reverend John Team of Barland was assistant priest. The deacon of honor was Reverend John Burbowski. The sub-deacon was Reverend Paul McNalley. The deacon of the mass was Reverend Michael Chenko and the Mast of Ceremonies was Reverend John Letauu. St. Paul's choir sang and a dedication banquet followed in the church basement. Reverend Robert Fannin was the toast-master. The first marriage to be performed in our church was Edward Knoll to Jeannie Biroshak on January 21, 1953. I think our first funeral was Mr. Kovach. Did Mickey . . .

H: Mickey had mentioned that.

K: That was our first funeral.

H: When was the first communion? When was the First Holy Communion in the church?

K: I'm sure it was in the spring of 1955. It was in the year

of 1955. Our CCD was . . . Father Haidet was assigned our pastor after the death of Father Pawlewicz. Father Pawlewicz passed away on January 13, 1965. Bishop Walsh had the mass of Christian Burial. Father Francis Haidet was our second pastor. He wasn't with us a long time. While he was there, the CCD building was built. Mr. Organ was the general contractor.

After Father Haidet left, Father Bissler came to us. While Father Bissler was here, we had the dedication of the CCD center. Going back to our bingo games when we started it, we had a bus coming from East Liverpool.

H: Bringing people up?

K: Yes. Bringing people up to play bingo.

Our first organist was Betty Biroeschak. Helen Shirilla was our first fill-in organist when Betty couldn't be here. Our first organ was loaned. Somebody loaned it to us. Our second organ Father Bissler got. He found it in Kent. I can't remember when, but maybe somebody can give you the input. Our last organ, our present organ, was bought new.

The dedication of the CCD center was on Sunday, October 12, 1969. We were holding classes in the CCD center and Sister Gabrielle Manley was our principal. She was an Ursuline nun. The Franciscan Fathers were helping us with mass on Sundays.

H: When the CCD center was built were the people out here hoping to eventually have their parochial school?

K: We thought so. When it was built everything was Catholic school, Catholic school. It just never got to be a Catholic school. It turned into a CCD center.

H: There wasn't enough money?

K: I don't know what the reason was. It was probably not enough children.

H: Since you have been a life-long resident of the community, when St. Paul's was first formed, and this being a rural community dominated by Protestants, how did the Protestant community accept the Catholic church out here?

K: There were a few who were not in favor of it. The majority of them finally accepted us.

H: Mickey Burke was telling me that if you went to one of the local taverns for drinking . . . A lot of the early members of St. Paul's were hunkies as he called them.

K: Right.

H: There were a lot of comments made, I guess, towards the hunkies because a lot of them still spoke the Slovak, Croatia languages.

K: I never encountered any of that, maybe that is because we didn't go to the right bar.

H: So it really wasn't that bad out here, was it?

K: Not for me it wasn't. I'm sure there was . . . Let's face it, this was not a Catholic community. There were a lot of ethnic people out here, but most of them were of other religions. We weren't many when we started. They have accepted us.

H: Looking at the church as it developed, when Vatican II occurred in 1965, how did the parishioners of St. Paul react to the . . . What was their immediate reaction to the changes?

K: Was that when we went into the turning of the altar?

H: That is Vatican II.

K: Naturally, we were all upset. We weren't really upset. Let's say we were surprised. It was a change. We went with it and we accepted it. It was hard to accept at first.

H: Was there any mass preparation or any preparation done beforehand to prepare the people?

K: No, they are not preparing the people like we are preparing the people now for the renovation. There was none of that.

H: It caught the people by surprise?

K: Well, not really by surprise. We knew this was coming, but it was not preparatory.

H: A question that presents that, do you think the changes brought on by Vatican II were positive?

K: I think they were.

H: In what way do you think they were?

K: Well, that is one that I should think on.

H: Mickey said that he thought that it made the people . . . You took a mass where you were non-participant to . . .

- K: Yes, true. You can participate now. It just seems more open. More people participating in it don't just sit there quietly, although some still do.
- H: Let's put it this way again, before and after?
- K: I think after there is more participation.
- H: You have seen both aspects.
- K: Oh, yes.
- H: One thing that I have seen being an altar boy during that era is the tremendous change. I can also begin to tell you masses before the Vatican II, I have felt, 50% of the people in church singing the rosary during mass . . .
- K: Well, they were doing their own thing. It was much quieter. It was very quiet. I remember when the priest would be coming in to say mass they would always ring the bell to get your attention. The little altar boys used to ring it at the offertory. That is all gone. Our railing is gone. We no longer kneel for communion. I will never forget poor Father Bissler. This is before we were allowed to have Eucharistic ministers. He alone gave out communion on Christmas Eve. It took him almost one hour. This is why it's good to have Eucharistic ministers.
- H: How did they people react at first to the lay ministers up here?
- K: They didn't mind the reading, but there was a lot of hassle of the people giving out communion. I, myself, didn't become a Eucharistic minister the first time I was asked because I didn't think I was worthy enough to do it. But upon talking with the pastor, I felt I could do it. It took awhile. If was after Easter and I went up and said, "Father, I think I am ready." And here I am.
- H: That was one thing I would be afraid to . . .
- K: Well, it was the same way that they reacted to men when they were first giving out the communion. I don't think there was so much talk of who was doing it, it was just that it was a lay person really.
- H: Looking at all of the pastors that served out here at St. Paul's, what impression has each one had on you starting with Father Pawlewicz?
- K: Father Pawlewicz was the founder and he had a lot of respect. Father Haidet was a very nice man. He was more or less like

an introvert. To some people you would think that he would be cold, but he was really a warm person, kept his feelings to himself.

Father Bissler was somebody special because he gave me my dog, my Basset, Happy. He was fun. He was a lot of fun.

H: I know Father Bissler from St. Brendan's.

K: Father Bissler was just fun. If it was a hot day and he was giving his homily at 7:30 in the morning, he would say, "I see the men want to go golfing in the back. I will make it short." He would just put the extra quips in.

Then we have Father Brobst. The first time I saw Father Brobst was at mass at St. Charles. He is an intelligent young man. I was always hoping that we could get a young man like him out here and we got him.

H: How about Father O'Neill?

K: Oh, Father O'Neill, I am sorry I forgot about him. Father O'Neill was a very educated man. He was a likeable person, but I don't think that anything in the church grew while he was here his ten years. We did get a new organ the last year that he was here.

H: Which of the four have been most dynamic?

K: It had to be Father Pawlewicz because he is the one who started all of this. He was with us and he grew with us.

H: Did his death come as a surprise?

K: It was quick.

H: Quick?

K: Yes. His housekeeper went in and found him dead in his bed.

H: Who was his housekeeper?

K: It was Madeline Zitnick. She was an excellent housekeeper. She would even help us over at the church. She would wash our altar linen. She was just great. After Pawlewicz died and Father Haidet came, when Father Haidet left and went to Immaculate Conception, Madeline went with him. When Father Bissler came in, we got a housekeeper by the name of Ann Kalibash. When Father Bissler left us, she went with Father Bissler. When Father O'Neill came he brought his housekeeper. I think her name was Margaret. I think she retired while he was still here. Father Brobst has a part-time housekeeper.

H: How long has the church had a secretary?

K: Let's go back to Father Pawlewicz. Doris Lockshaw was Father Pawlewicz's secretary. She worked about two days a week. Doris then went in to be Father Haidet's secretary. When Father Haidet left St. Paul to go to Immaculate, Doris did such a good job for him that he asked if she would be his secretary at Immaculate and she left.

After Doris left, Bonnie O'Krisky was Father Bissler's secretary. When Father Bissler left, Rosalie Shane was secretary. She has been a secretary since Father O'Neill came. That was since 1971 I think. They were always part-time, two or three days a week.

H: Reflecting on the last thirty some years of St. Paul's, what things were impressed upon you in the parish?

K: Well, the people themselves. I think just the amount of people that have moved in and the growth of the parish and the participation of the lay people in the masses themselves. We are allowed to do more things, help with mass. That impressed me the most. The change that we are allowed to go up to the altar and help give our communion is great. Now I am going to, hopefully, take communion to the sick in homes and nursing homes.

H: Since you are involved with the church council now, how do you think the people will respond to the renovation?

K: I am praying that they will accept it. I know there are going to be some diehards. I am willing to accept them. I am one of those people who were here when the church was originated. I just pray that the people will accept it as I have.

H: Is there anything that you can think of to add about the history of St. Paul's?

K: I really don't know what else to add.

H: What was the typical mass like in the early days? What kind of sermons did Father Pawlewicz give?

K: Well, they aren't the sermons like the younger priests give now. I really don't know how to explain them. I think the younger pastors have more, shall I say, input in their sermons. I think back in the olden times it was: Be good or else. But now, it seems to be turning another way. God forgives you. He loves you for whatever you do. I am just now learning more about my religion. It is just something different and I really don't know what it is yet.

H: Can you give me names of people who helped in the construction

of the church?

K: The Ohlin boys did a lot. Grandma and Grandpa Vinkler. Some of the older women who have passed on used to do a lot of baking. Mrs. Shander, Mrs. Macek are the two that stick out in my mind. Mr. and Mrs. Tkacik were very active. Josphe Savet, Huizdos family.

H: Going back to the Ladies' Club and all of that, where did you gather?

K: We used to hold them in each other's homes.

H: How frequent were these meetings?

K: Once a month.

When we had our laying of the cornerstone, we had a dinner at the New Middletown Cafeteria and Bishop Walsh was the special guest.

H: What do you recollect about Bishop Walsh?

K: I think he was a very mannerly person.

H: I can recall when I was in first grade the first time I met him . . .

K: You said, "Oh, Bishop Walsh!"

H: I think there have been two dynamic priests in my time I was there. Father Kennedy was one and Bishop Malone was another.

K: Oh, Bishop Malone, yes.

H: He was a dynamic person.

K: Right.

H: He was very concerned when he was out here. His presence was . . .

K: He was just like I said, so dynamic.

In 1983, the Altar Guild did buy a new stove, refrigerator for the church kitchen and also completed the nativity set. We also bought a mixer for the piroghy people because it was much easier for them. First they were mixing the dough by hand. They needed a mixer. The Altar Guild bought it so it is helping the piroghy people. We started making that in 1983. We sold them a dozen for \$1.25. They would quit for the summer and they started back and now they are selling the cottage cheese piroghy ten for \$1.

H: Any whimsical stories about the past?

K: It was fun working together and we really had respect for the older workers; we would work with them. There was a lady in Bessemer that used to come and help us with our dinners. Her name was Mrs. Sneznick. At that time, we took all of the help that we could get. Mrs. Lombardy was another one from Bessemer who would come and help us. We really worked together good with them. We had a lot to learn and they taught us. They really gave us a lot of input and also helped us.

H: Would you say that when the church was started there were a lot of young people because a lot of people are still around? Were there young married couples and old?

K: Yes. There was a mixture. The children of the founders are many and are still plentiful in St. Paul's.

H: I just hope that it stays that way.

K: You have to get into the high of it.

H: Thank you, Rosalie. You have been very helpful. You have opened some more doors for me.

K: It has been nice, Jerry.

END OF INTERVIEW