

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Romanian Culture Project

Mahoning County

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CHARLES CHETIAN

by

John Muntean

on

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INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES CHETIAN

INTERVIEWER: John Muntean

SUBJECT: Procedure of finding a new priest, Union & League
Society, Fathers Lazar and Stanila, Church Life

DATE: March 4, 1976

M: This is an interview with Charles Chetian, Jr. for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program regarding Romanian Culture in Mahoning County, by John Muntean, at 901 Florida Avenue, McDonald, Ohio, on March 4, 1976, at 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Chetian, could you tell us are your parents of Romanian nationality, sir?

C: Yes. My mother and my father, both of their parents were born in Romania.

M: Have they lived in Mahoning County a long time?

C: Oh, yes. Dad was born in New Castle, and mother was born in Youngstown. So the family has been in the area for over sixty years.

M: Oh, I see, so that they are really familiar with the Romanian Community in this area.

C: Oh, yes, definitely.

M: And you yourself have come from what community?

C: My dad's.

M: Could you tell us something about your childhood and early adult life then in regards to your family's association in the Romanian community and perhaps the Romanian church?

C: Well, the years while I was in elementary school I belonged to the old Holy Trinity Church down on Wilson Avenue. My

recollections aren't that great, but I do remember Father Stanila. The church was very small, and the one thing that does stick in my mind during that period was our Sunday school--if you could call it that; it was held on Saturday--and sitting with Father Stanila with five or six other people. The Sunday school lessons were the reading of the Bible in Romanian. Not being able to read Romanian at that time I used to sit there for an hour while the others read not knowing what they said, and that was Sunday school.

M: You didn't understand Romanian at all?

C: No, I was raised up until I was about four years old, we lived with my grandparents, my mother's parents. At that time I spoke nothing but Romanian. Then we moved, and then we got away from it. Then when I went to school, it was strictly English. Unfortunately, I lost all my Romanian ability at that time. Even to this day, I'm not as fluent in it as I should be. That one incident sticks in my mind. I will never forget that sitting in the cellar of that church as everyone was reading in Romanian and not knowing. It just sticks in my mind of that.

M: Do you recall if there were many students who would attend it at that time, or was it only about a handful?

C: Yes, no there were just maybe about six or eight. That is all there were. All of them--I might add--were much older than I was. I was probably--well, I was in elementary school. So I was less than twelve years old, and the others there were probably all sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old. So they were much older than I was, and I really didn't fit, but I was there. I didn't get too much out of it though. In fact I probably hardly got anything at all. But really at that time there was really no Sunday school such as we know it today. We really didn't have that. We were in church at 10:00, and when the service was over at 11:30, we went home. It was strictly one of those things.

M: Did you have Sunday school inside the church itself, or was it in the hall or what?

C: No, it was in the cellar of the church.

M: The cellar, oh?

C: Yes.

M: Was it fixed up as a Sunday school class?

C: Well, I don't know if you are familiar with those old churches, but all the churches had was a basement. They had a table sitting down there, and that is all there was.

M: Really?

C: Oh, yes. In fact there was one in Niles that we attended too with the same thing. Those were the social halls because at those times if you had a banquet, something like what we have now, if you had about fifty people there, the place would be jammed. That was about all you would ever get, see. The basement area of the churches was adequate for the number of people that would go to church.

M: When you would go to church on Sundays at the church on Wilson Avenue, did you people sit down, or did you stand?

C: Well as I recall the church, it was very small. If I remember correctly, there were pews that we sat at but also on the sides of the walls there were chairs where you could sit. They were like a little bit higher. I can't recall a choir loft. If I remember the cantors were at the right-hand of the church next to the altar. It wasn't very large; it was very small.

M: Were the services done in Romanian at that time?

C: Oh, yes.

M: Or were they done in English too?

C: The services were done in Romanian up until the time that Father Lazar came to Youngstown.

M: And that would be much later.

C: That is much later, yes, because Father Stanila didn't speak English that well, not near well enough to conduct services. This was one of the problems that at that time I used to argue with my father, that I wasn't getting anything out of going to church. I didn't understand what they were saying. He understood what I was saying, but we had nothing else. So if we didn't want to go to that church, we had to go somewhere else. We didn't want to do that.

M: Getting back to the question itself, sir, do you remember any kind of organizations maybe that they had to carry on the Romanian heritage or anything at that time? Do you remember any? Did you belong to any organizations like AROY's (American Orthodox Youth) or anything like that?

C: Yes, okay, now at that time the Romanian people seemed to go in cycles. At that time the AROY organization, I really don't know how established it was. I was not a member of AROY at that time. I belonged to an organization called the Uniunia Juna which was more or less a cultural organization. They really weren't young. The organization you could join

as a teenager, and you could stay in the organization until you were thirty-six years old. It functioned particularly as a branch of the Union & League Romanian Society.

M: Is it still an organization today?

C: It is still active today. The AROY at this period is strong and Uniunia Juna had dropped down. In fact it is in pretty bad shape right now. Well, I worked my way up to that organization a good many years ago, and I was never president although I became vice-president. I held many offices in the course of the years. The main function at that time was probably social. We had talent shows; we had bowling leagues; we had basketball leagues; we had football leagues. At that time the strong organizations were Youngstown, Alliance, Warren, Salem, et cetera.

M: About what year would this be, sir?

C: This would be from 1950 through 1958. We had clubs established in Youngstown--Warren was the one I was president of--Canton, Cleveland, Alliance. I believe there was one in Gary, Indiana and so on. But what we used to do was have dances. We would have a dance once a month; it was very pleasant. Then we had these leagues set up for the different sports events. It was quite an active organization. Membership I think at one time was around 400 or 450.

M: Was it only open to Romanian people?

C: Yes.

M: What if you were married to someone of a different nationality, would they be permitted to join?

C: You either had to be of Romanian nationality or married to a Romanian. That was the only prerequisite to belong to this organization.

M: You did not have to be Orthodox. You could have been a Romanian Catholic also?

C: Yes, that is true. As long as you were a Romanian, your church affiliation made no difference. This organization was sort of like a junior Union & League organization.

M: Did they enhance any type of Romanian culture through their activities? You mentioned about bowling and I could see that they go there, but I mean in their dancing and so forth, or was it entirely American dances?

- C: We had Romanian dance groups of the club. We had cultural shows similar to what the AROY has now. They have talent shows and things of that nature. We had those.
- M: And they are both in Romanian type of context?
- C: Yes, definitely. There would be Romanian singing.
- M: Sung in Romanian?
- C: Yes, in Romanian. That way was quite popular. We would have the dances, and we would put on shows or something prior to the dance. We had banquets and things of that nature, very similar to the AROY organization except in this sense all you had to be was Romanian rather than an Orthodox.
- M: In the course of having these culture activities, were the people allowed to bring the children also so that they could benefit by learning some of the Romanian and watching Romanian dances, or was it only exclusively for the grown-ups?
- C: Oh no, in fact, I learned how to dance Romanian by going to these things. The purpose of them was for the older people to bring their children. We would encourage them to take part in the Romanian activities. This is where I would say that the group is my age now, ninety-five percent of us learned how to dance Romanian and do all the Romanian dances. If you were to go to a Romanian dance today and you would see the group that was raised with me doing the dance and the group that is doing the dance today, there is no similarity between the two of them. We do it one way, and they do it another. They have their own transition.
- M: Have they made it more Americanized then in years?
- C: Well, no, I don't think. I think they have become more fancy than we were.
- M: They try to put a little extra touch on it.
- C: Yes, this is right, and we were fundamental in the Romanian dance, and the kids today have a little more pizzazz or whatever you want to call it.
- M: Mr. Chetian, in regards to that Romanian group a little bit, where did you meet? Did you have a special hall? Did you meet at the church, or where did you people hold your functions?
- C: The Romanian societies that make up the Union & League all

have halls. At these halls they have their meetings, and these halls then were also available to us as these union members. We would have our meetings there. In fact the one in Youngstown was torn down there a few years ago, but we used to meet down on Poland Avenue quite a bit down there. In Warren they bought an old Baptist church that they converted into a hall.

M: Do they still have that hall in Warren?

C: That hall is still there, but it is more or less a private club now.

M: That is for the Romanian people?

C: Yes, it is still there. The society is still up there. It is run as a private club, and all of the Romanian societies just about all over the United States has these halls. Alliance, for example, built one in about 1954 or 1956 which was probably, if not still, the largest hall in Alliance. It catered weddings and things of that nature.

M: Now where would the people in Youngstown belong to that club since that hall is torn down on Poland Avenue?

C: Well, I think they would have to resort to the church.

M: So the church then would be the focal point.

C: That is correct.

M: Now regarding different events, you mentioned about weddings. Do you recall any Romanian type of weddings that you might have attended when you were a little youngster?

C: Yes.

M: Can you tell us a little bit about what a Romanian wedding was like that you can recall?

C: Well, I think that normally the weddings were on Saturday. They would start on a Friday evening with more or less family and friends at the home of either the bride or the groom. Then the wedding would take place on Saturday at which time after the ceremony was over, you would go to the hall or wherever the reception was going to be.

M: The wedding would take place on a Saturday?

C: Yes, either Saturday or Sunday. I'm forgetting now but

we changed anyway.

M: I don't know because I know some of the weddings lately now have been on Sundays.

C: Yes, and it seems to me at that time they were on Saturdays though.

I can remember my mother always used to say that we get married with the Lord and not with the devil. The weddings were on Sunday right in the middle, but we changed because I think of the convenience of the people who were coming. So you go to the wedding and then you go to the reception that evening. Then the next day you would go back to one of the families again, and there would be entertainment there again. Usually what you would have is someone playing the fiddle or the violin or the accordion or something like that. It was more or less three days of entertainment continuous. Today on the other hand it is usually restricted you know, Americanized, and it is restricted to a one day affair. You have your bridal party on a Friday evening for dinner and then your wedding on Saturday and your reception in the evening. Then Sunday nobody else but immediate family is over at one of the houses but there used to be more gaiety in the older weddings as I recall. The parents particularly enjoyed themselves immensely, dancing and having a good time all the time. But again it has become more commercialized, and I recall at every wedding we were invited to we went. The purpose of it was so that when our parents' sons and daughters got married the others would reciprocate and come to ours. It was one of those things. But I think it is good. I think it helps oblige your study.

M: I noticed today a lot of the weddings and receptions are catered now. Was that the case back in those days too?

C: No, no. In those days the meals were prepared by friends of the family. They would serve a real Romanian meal; there would be carnati and chicken and everything. But this one is different. This was a typical Romanian meal. Today you go to halls where they have the buffet, et cetera, and you get American food. But I noticed that a lot of them are getting the different Romanian pastries and things of that nature to sort of offset it.

M: Moving along a little bit, is there anything else that you might want to add before we move on or anything? Can you think of anything regarding the society you belong to, maybe the church on Wilson Avenue?

C: One thing I might interject here. My personal affiliation with the church was really much hindered by what I was telling you about the Sunday school thing in not being able to understand

the Romanian language.

M: Yes, I understand.

C: So I would say that up until in the period of 1950 through 1960 which were the years of my affiliation with Uniunia Juna going to church and taking an active part in the church was nill. Very seldom did I go to church. Of course, four of those years I was going to college, and I was away.

M: Did you attend Youngstown?

C: I attended Ohio State for three years, and then I finished my last year at Youngstown. In 1960 when we got married, we got married in a Romanian church. My wife is not Romanian. We were living in Andover which is some sixty miles away. Going to church on Sundays wasn't very good there either. All of our children have been baptized in our church.

M: Does your wife or your children understand any kind of Romanian at all?

C: No, not too much. There are a few words that they understand things of that nature. My real involvement in the church has only began in, I would say, the last four years with regular attendance and participation in the church itself.

M: Okay, then, going to these last four years or so, when the church was on Wilson Avenue--you had mentioned that Father Stanila was the minister and when it moved to Wick Avenue he continued to preside over the services-- after while he became older. Can you tell us what happened then?

C: As he got older his memory and his ability to conduct services deteriorated steadily.

M: He would be up them maybe in his late seventies and like that.

C: Yes, definitely. You would go and you would sit there in the services. The choir would be responding or the cantors. Maybe it was cantors at that time, and all of a sudden the cantors would become confused because he would skip a section of the liturgy. The church services only lasted an hour and a half. A lot of times it was only an hour. As he got older you really couldn't blame him; he was too old. But the problem was that there was no one to take his place. We had a very poor . . . we don't have a program in this country for Romanian Orthodox priests.

- M: In other words, you don't have a program to develop priests?
- C: That is correct. So then when one of our churches gets a priest, they have him. Good, bad, or indifferent, he is there. The only way that he will be replaced is if he gets so old that he has to retire or he himself applies for another church. Now Father Sțanila was an honest man. No one ever wanted to see him leave. Whatever he wanted, he got. We loved him and that was it. He finally got to the age where he just couldn't handle it. He himself said, "I can't." So at that point then upon his retirement we got another priest. It was quite a difficult thing, but we finally managed that. Then Father Lazar came . . .
- M: Well, when did he come, about what year? Do you recall? Was that around 1965, 1966, 1967 or when?
- C: I think it was about five, and Father John has been here what, one?
- M: One year.
- C: One year, so six. So we are talking about 1970.
- M: 1969. So Father Stanila then since the 1940's . . .
- C: He actually served from 1930 to May 1969.
- M: When Father Lazar came over here, did you notice any changes that transpired between the shift from Father Stanila to Father Lazar?
- C: Well, I don't think there was any radical change in the attendance of the people coming to church immediately. But then Father Lazar started to conduct the services in English.
- M: Did he keep any of it in Romanian?
- C: Oh yes. I think what he did, he had one Sunday a month in English. Then the other three were Romanian. Then as he progressed downward, then half the service was in Romanian and half was in English. That is the way it has been ever since. Father Lazar was there; he actually was the priest, in reality, who brought back the young people to the church because people such as my wife who couldn't understand Romanian could now come to church and at least they understood half of the service.
- M: Part of the service, right.
- C: Then once a month it was all in English and they could

understand the whole thing. So I would say that his duration of time at our church did more for our church than Father Stanila did as far as getting young people back there at the church.

- M: Now when he decided to retire I think it was about two years ago if I'm not mistaken, could you tell us the procedure that the council went through in bringing the present priest, Father John Marmureanu here? Could you tell us the procedure of interviewing these different priests or having them conduct services?
- C: Yes, now the procedure is set up by the episcopate which is the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the United States.
- M: Excuse me before you proceed on I should make it clear on this tape over here that you have been a member of the church council for several years now and you have served as past president of the church council.
- C: Yes, that is correct. During this period I was vice-president of the council. The procedure is set up by the episcopate. When a vacancy occurs, the president of the council submits to our bishop the letters stating that we have a vacancy due to retirement. The questioning that we like to solicit from other priests is their desire to come to our church. Then the bishop will send out a letter to all priests advising them that there is a vacancy in Youngstown. They then apply to the vacancy. After they apply there is a certain period, maybe thirty days, in which they have to reply. The council then sets up a schedule whereby each priest comes in and conducts a service, a normal Sunday service.
- M: Do they have to conduct it specifically in Romanian only, or can they do it in Romanian and English?
- C: We don't specify; we just ask them to come in and conduct a service for us. After the service is over what we did-- I don't know whether this is done in other churches or not-- was ask our parishioners to stay there after the service and ask them questions pertaining to anything that anybody wishes to ask them so that possibly they could get a better understanding of what type of individual he is. After that is done then the names are submitted to the council. All the parishioners that belong to the church vote on the new priest. The procedure is--I think we had four or five this last time--you vote and the one who gets the least amount of votes you keep knocking him off until you come down to your final selection. Then the one who gets the most votes, majority votes is elected your priest. Now I might add one thing that I forgot; when we solicit the bishop

to advertise, we list on there the things that we offer. For example, we list the salary, the benefits, hospitalization, insurance, and things of that nature.

M: Could you mention basically about how much the priest gets paid for a month of that?

C: Well, to put a price tag on this is very difficult. We have had many digressions on this and many misunderstandings. I would say our priest in my opinion is making approximately \$12,000 a year. Now this is encompassed by a salary of \$600 a month, social security, his hospitalization . . .

M: That is all paid by . . .

C: This is all paid by the church, his taxes--not his income tax but the city taxes and things of that nature--all of these benefits, in my opinion, are part of his salary.

M: Excuse me, do you give them hospitalization too?

C: Oh yes, this is all paid for. We give them a car allowance.

M: What about the utilities of the church?

C: Now we give him the apartment above the church with no charge; that is theirs. We take care of the payment, and we furnish it for them; it is completely furnished and completely maintained. All of the utilities are free. We don't have any separate meters for what is used in the apartment or for what is used in the church and in the hall itself. We get one utility bill for what gas and that, and we just pay it. So, in my opinion, this is also part of his salary. You get into \$150 a month; you are going to charge it to his apartment; that is part of his salary. So I would say that we pay our priest approximately \$12,000 a year when you add all these things in. So we have to tell the bishop what we are offering. It wouldn't be practical for a priest somewhere else to come to Youngstown let's say for less money. You wouldn't think that they would normally do it unless they are dissatisfied where they are at. You have to tell them what you are offering. Then our tendency with our last two priests, Father Lazar and Father John, one year after they had been there, they got a raise which was natural I guess if you want to improve yourself.

M: Do they have to serve a probationary period before . . . In other words, I know for teachers and some organizations once you are accepted you have to serve a probationary period. Is that so at our church, or once they sign on, they are almost until the church decides or they decide they want to leave?

- C: Unfortunately, no. Once they are signed, they are there.
- M: So in other words there is no probationary period to see how well the people themselves like the way they conduct it?
- C: No, once they are there, once we offer and they accept, that is it.
- M: How was the church notified that these people were interested? Were they notified through the bishop, or did these applicants send a notice to the church themselves?
- C: That I don't recall. I know that we had letters from the candidates that were sent to us, but I don't know whether or not they went to the bishop first, and then the bishop said, "Yes, you may apply." I'm not sure of that part.
- M: Who presided over the election of Father John? Was there any priest in attendance at that time to preside over, or was it done exclusively with the church council itself?
- C: No, one of our local deans named Hategan presided over the meeting.
- M: Where is he located at?
- C: Cleveland.
- M: He came down especially for that?
- C: Right. When you have the general meeting of the church, it has to be presided over by the local parish priest or the dean of our parish or the bishop. It can't be presided over, let's say, by the president of the council unless the priest is there and so directs that the parish council president can do it.
- M: Who was the president of the church council during this time? Do you recall sir?
- C: Yes, John Curea.
- M: Now did he have to make the arrangements for these priests' to come a certain week, or was it at their convenience that they would come?
- C: Now, John asked them if they could be available on a particular Sunday. Now if they came back and said that they couldn't, then he, of course, would say, "Well, when can you become available?" We tried to get all of them to come in over a period of say like six weeks because what was happening in this period of time we were approaching

Christmas. During this whole thing, this whole procedure of getting a new priest, we were hiring other priests to come to our church to conduct services and paying them a salary plus expenses to come from these various other churches who were closing their churches on those Sundays to come to preach at our church to keep our church open.

- M: Could you explain for the benefit of the listeners and the people who are going to read this transcript why that was so? Was it due to the fact that Father Lazar retired, or was it due to the fact that . . .
- C: Yes, he had cancer of the throat and he couldn't speak fluently enough to present his sermon. We purchased microphones and stereo equipment so that we could hear him better. We tried microphones that we tied around his neck and everything which we could hear him, but he wasn't audible. So we felt that a decision had to be made as to what was going to happen. He voluntarily retired then. But from the time that he became, let's say, ill and until the time we got a new priest there were several months there that lapsed. During this period of time we had many priests in just to conduct the services to keep our church open.
- M: What if a death or something would occur during that span of time, who would participate in such a thing?
- C: This happened quite a few times as a matter of fact. What we did was contact a local priest in Farrell or in Warren or in Niles and have them conduct the services. We had quite a few deaths during that period of time, five or six as I recall, which is quite a few. This is what we had to do; we got priests from other churches to conduct the services.
- M: You mentioned that when these priests would come on a Sunday that you people paid them specially to come then. So it was not only done for either their own good, but they were getting payment for that also.
- C: They were getting compensation, and compensation runs anywhere from \$50 to \$100 for the one day plus travel expenses and like that. We had a priest come from Terre Haute, Indiana--not Father John; it was another priest that came from that area down there--and we paid him \$100 plus traveling expenses. Then we got very fortunate. We ran into an instructor from Youngstown State University who was an Orthodox priest. But he didn't have a church. We arranged with him to conduct his services at our church, and he charged us \$50. He at that time too promised that he would come as often as we wanted, and he would conduct funerals, weddings, anything that regarded him and he was

more than happy to do it. We used him quite a bit because he was close to Youngstown.

M: Most of the money that the church has, does it come through dues, or does it come more or less through donations, sir?

C: Well, our budget last year was \$31,000 which was the highest budget we ever had. The budget, of course, is credit to the amount of money that you take in. So we had \$31,000 and the dues last year were \$42 a person for members. For members that were retired it was \$20. But our total membership was around 200. So if you take 42 times 200, you get about \$8,000 I guess. The balance of \$23,000 would come from donations and banquets and things of that nature.

M: Therefore then the Romanian people must feel that the church is important in that they donate this large sum of money to help finance it because \$8,000 would not even be enough to pay the salary of the priest.

C: Well, now this is one of our problems. A bigger problem is that what we found is that our membership in our church is almost 50% retired people. These people are paying like \$20 a year, and the donations that are made we delved into it. Less than 100 people, 100 members of the church, are supporting the church. That is quite interesting that 100 people were paying most of the expenses and making most of the contributions.

M: They were making the church run.

C: This is right because of the retired people. We have very many elderly people in our church, and during the course of the year, they all give on Sunday maybe 50¢ or something of that nature which if it was up to me I wouldn't ask them to donate anything. They need their money just as bad as anybody or more so. At banquets they would donate \$2 or \$3 or something like that so that the other people . . . the balance of the people, say the people my age, are the ones that are doing the contributing to the church in the payments. I think this is good; I don't see anything wrong with it. The only bad part about it is that when we have a general meeting we find that the people who don't contribute to the church are the ones who make the decisions as to how the money is to be spent.

M: I see. I noticed lately that in the past year or two that the church has been asking for donations strictly for the parking lot. Would you enlighten us a little bit about the parking lot, how it developed and somewhat about it?

- C: In our location near the university there what we agreed on was quite restricted. All we had was a driveway coming into the church and a very narrow area in the back of the church, no parking facilities whatsoever. The Protestant Ministers Christian Organization, I believe, across the street from us just allowed us to use their parking lot. The Arms Museum next door to us allowed us to use theirs. We were at that time allowed to park on Wick Avenue. This was usually enough room to park the cars, but as the membership grew, we realized that we had a problem that we needed parking space.
- M: Especially when there would be a funeral probably.
- C: This is right. Any type of a funeral or wedding or anything of this nature, you would get more people there, and you really had a problem. So we became aware that there was some property behind us that was for sale at a reasonable price. We got the property much to the dismay of Youngstown State University because they wanted the property too. So we purchased the property and built a parking lot. It cost around \$27,000 or something of that nature. We mortgaged the church to get money. We asked for \$100 donations. Well, we raised probably I think maybe \$4,000. I don't remember. Actually the program is still going on asking for donations for the parking lot. The parking lot was actually paid by the mortgaging of the church. These donations if somebody comes in today with a donation of \$100 for the parking lot, it all goes into the general pot and becomes part of our fund. Similar situations whenever we want to buy something for the church, we do the same thing. The church will buy, and then we ask for donations from the people.
- Again I think if you would delve into that you would find the same thing. The same people are paying all of the time. Occasionally we get other people that will come in and contribute like wearing apparel for the priest or something like that. They will make donation of frying bowls and glass bowls and things of that nature that are quite expensive items used during the services. They are quite expensive because a lot of this stuff is bought in Greece and shipped over here; so it is quite expensive. When you know that we have been fortunate in having some of the older people in particular graciously donating this stuff to the church. But our basic pattern is that we build something or we buy something; we pay for it, and then the people try to contribute and make up the expense.
- M: Then such things as rummage sales or these festivals that they have do not add that much to it as the contributions would then, or would they add quite a bit also?

- C: Well, the expenses that you are talking about are basically functions of the lady auxiliary. Even though they are part of the church, they are somewhat like a separate organization. Their purpose really is not to make money; their purpose is to have these organizations pay for them, to get this money and do things with it. For example, last year they spent a considerable amount of money on the kitchen. They had it remodeled, bought a new refrigerator, a new stove, et cetera. They got through their rummage sales and bake sales and things of that nature. That is where their money came from to do that. When we furnished the apartment upstairs for Father John, they paid for it. They bought the new beds and the things of that nature. This money is not even included in our budget. It is the council's project, let's say.
- M: Does the council have any particular event like that to try to raise money? Do they have any dinners or anything like that?
- C: Yes, we have banquets during the course of the year that are strictly for that purpose to raise the money to help set off our bills. Then we share those banquets with the ladies' auxiliary.
- M: And most of the food and everything like that usually is paid by certain people too so that the money itself would be exclusively to . . .
- C: This was something that I started about a year ago when Father John came. Previous to that time we had mainly the anniversary banquets that were donated by different parishioners. Mr. and Mrs. Morar were quite active in that. I think they picked up the tab on the anniversary banquets for several years. One of the things that I thought of was that if you raised money have the different parishioners pay the expenses of the banquets. Then all of the money that was collected would go to the church with no expenses.
- M: Alright, Mr. Chetian, going back to the question regarding donations and we were talking basically about dinners in which the church council helps sponsor. Could you continue to enlighten us about this a little bit?
- C: What we did was that we had up until a year ago, I think, something like four banquets a year. Then my idea was that we should have, if possible, one banquet a month. This is what we set up. It worked out pretty well. We had a banquet almost every month. If we didn't have a banquet, we had a picnic or something of that nature. Then my idea was that someone in the parish would pay these expenses, and

this is definitely one of the contributing factors to the amount of money that we did raise because when someone in a parish picked up the expenses it seemed that people all of a sudden became more generous. They donated more than the members that were going to the church. Why this would have a difference, I don't know. They were going to church anyway, but it may be that it just made them feel here is somebody that is willing to spend anywhere from \$100 to \$500 out of his own pants.

M: That much really?

C: Oh yes, I had the anniversary banquet last year; it was \$495.

M: Could you tell us some of the things that might be served at such a banquet that might make the bill so high?

C: Okay, everybody tries to have something different. Let's say that the one banquet that always sticks in my mind is the Lenton banquet that we had with fresh and salt fish and we served a mamaliga which is a mush sort of cornmeal and what I called smashed beans--they are beans that just look like mashed potatoes. This to me is a Romanian meal.

M: Is this catered then?

C: No, this is all made by our own people. The fish is prepared the last several years by Mr. and Mrs. Besolu. The ladies prepared the food. On all of the banquets there is a committee selected. Our own women prepare the meal. There is one banquet a year on Mother's Day where the men prepare the banquet for the women. That is an experience in itself.

M: Did you participate in serving?

C: Oh yes, yes.

M: Could you tell us a little bit about it?

C: Well, we are fortunate. Again going back just like contributions you depend on the same people all the time. John Limbean has been the chairman of this Mother's Day banquet. So they know how much to buy of this and that, et cetera. Then all the men go down there together like on a Saturday and mix up the salad and peel the potatoes. We get so involved. It is really interesting. Then we serve.

M: Do you people follow the cookbook?

C: No, we cook from experience. It is sort of like when my wife was trying to learn the Romanian meals. Well, she cooks very well now. She would bring instructions from my mother. My mother would say, "Alright, you put in a little bit of this and a little bit of that." To my wife who goes from a cookbook at that time . . . didn't mean anything. So years of experience and this is where you go back to Victor Vlad and John Limbean.

Usually you have the same women when they are serving. They are the ones who know when they serve how many potatoes to buy for 200 people. They know how much roast beef to buy. Mainly I would say most of our meals would be basically, let's say, Americanized. You get roast beef, or you get the sausage and the sauerkraut and things of this nature, but more or less it is more Americanized than it used to be. Even to the extent the AROY had a banquet at the hall. They go out and get Kentucky Fried Chicken, and they serve that. Now they make the salad and the potatoes and everything themselves. They do that with the direction of some of the mothers, and then they go out and buy the fried chicken. Now there have been occasions there I believe at our anniversary dinner last year, I'm trying to recall what we had; I don't remember what it was, but that food was prepared in a bakery by one of our women. They went to the bakery and used their ovens.

Now the chicken was prepared in the bakery in one of the ovens. One of our women was there, and they had prepared the chicken prior to this banquet. I remember because they were late in getting it to us. The oven had broken down, so we had a problem then. But this worked out very well last year. It brought in quite a bit of money into the church.

M: I know that most of the entertainment at these banquets consists of speeches, but last year--I don't know if you attended the Father's Day banquet--they had the children dance Romanian dances. Has this been prominent in recent years, or has this just really started?

C: Well, I will change your question just a little bit because as president last year I was at every banquet. This was an idea of Father John's to have the orchestra that was formed and the dance group that was formed participate at these banquets. So we tried to have something there to entertain the people rather than have this idea of having a meal and listening to speeches. If you can recall last year during my president's speech, my speech was very short. In fact some of the people sometimes didn't want to try to collect the donations when I was through because I'm not a believer in making long speeches and sitting there. People have things to do. All of these banquets are held on a Sunday. They have things to do and they sit and listen for

three hours. It is too long. I have done it myself too many times, and I vowed that this wouldn't happen as long as I'm a member of that. So we did though; we had the dance groups and the orchestra entertain. It worked out very well.

M: Do you foresee that it might be carried on in the future?

C: I would hope so, but the one thing that we ran into that I just really wasn't wild about was that he wanted them there every time at the banquet. He wanted them there. I said, "No, I didn't think so. The people now heard the orchestra; they have seen the dance group; the orchestra plays the same thing; the dance group dances it, but you are getting back to . . . "

M: It is like a rerun.

C: This is right. Now we have to come up with something new and find some other thing to do rather than keep doing the same thing. Well, he disagreed with me because he said that he wanted the kids in front of the parents all the time to show them what they are doing. So we had them there. One other time we had a speaker in. One of our attorneys from Farrell was in discussing our visit at one of our banquets. A lot of the banquets we didn't have anything. We just had the meal, and that was it. My main thought was a sort of a selfish one, enjoy yourself every meal, make a nice donation to the church, and get out.

M: Where were most of these banquets held?

C: At our church hall which is connected to the church. It will hold uncomfortably 250 people, not many more, but less. Probably some day if we decide to get a new church, we will build a separate hall, et cetera, because of that. Right now it is satisfactory for our needs because our membership is only 200 or 225. Now that doesn't include the children; those are paid members for the church. So with 225 paid members might mean that there are 500 people who are actually going to the church. Myself, now I am one of those 225 of those members like that. So this wouldn't be collected in that. But our banquets usually average around 200 at the banquets. This would encompass the children and the wives and everything. So not all of the members went to the banquets, less we average about 200.

M: During the seasons does the church have or does the Romanian societies have any kind of functions for the Romanian community itself? Do you have any knowledge of it?

C: No. What we have been doing in the past year was a dance group that somebody like my daughter belongs too.

M: Who is their instructor, may I ask?

C: Mrs. Judy Shonn.

M: She is Romanian?

C: Yes, she is Romanian. Judy was very active in Uniunia Juna too that I was in. She and I dated for quite a few years. Her dance group this past year danced in several places: banquets here, down at the Federal Plaza, at the international exhibit at Stambaugh Auditorium. Stambaugh Auditorium has got a lot of tourist. I think the dance group danced four or five times there.

M: Do they practice a lot, or is just basically on Sundays?

C: No, they usually practiced just about every Saturday they were down there. When they first got organized, they were there every Saturday and sometimes during the week. Then they would take off. If they knew they were going to be dancing somewhere, Judy would start about three weeks before again and run it through. She is in the process now of starting some new things so that when they dance the next time . . . Now they are dancing at Federal Plaza again on May 10. Something is going on down there in the Romanian culture. There is some sort of a show down there; I'm not sure exactly what will be there, but nobody really knows. But one of the things will be the dance group.

M: Is this part of maybe the bicentennial?

C: Yes, it is; it is definitely part of the bicentennial.

M: Is the church planning any other kind of thing for the bicentennial?

C: Not the church so much. The Union & League Society in Youngstown is doing something for the bicentennial. There are more donors because that encompasses all the Romanians rather than just the Orthodox or the Catholics or what have you. So they are doing it as a group supervised by the society in Youngstown.

M: Is there anything else that you might want to add regarding your ten years as vice-president or president of church council?

C: Well, not really, no. It was a very enlightening experience. You do your best.

- M: Well you did a marvelous job. I must state that.
- C: We tried; we tried. We had a lot of friction, but they are not the kind of things that couldn't be resolved. One thing I will say about our church is that we argue, and we get pretty excited in the argument. But the one thing that I have found in my experience is that the minute we are through arguing, everything is forgotten that I argues with so and so and he argued with so and so because the council, which was the best one of our church, consists of thirty members. I don't think any two members feel the same way about any given issue.
- M: Excuse me, when do you meet, and how often do you meet?
- C: We have to have eight meetings a year. We normally have one a month. Then if we need special meetings, we will have those too, but normally twelve meetings. Eight meetings a year, if necessary, sometimes we will have twelve. Now during the period when we elected a new priest, we must have had twenty some meetings. Yes, but again the comment I wanted to make was that in that council--take all the people that belong to the church--in my eyes, I feel that everybody has the interest of our church first. They don't care about anything else. They honestly believe that if they say something, they think that they are doing the best thing for the church. If they disagree with me, that is fine because they feel the same way I do. It is the church that survives. I heard one of our parishioners say many times, "I don't care what happens here, we will resolve our problems, but I want to make sure that this church is here when I need it." I think this is true with a lot of people that belong to our church. It is not a big church, but it is a place for us to go and see our friends, people with the same background.
- M: Now the church itself it says Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church, but it is not exclusively for Romanian people. As you mentioned your wife is of different nationality. Could people of entirely, maybe a married couple of entirely different nationalities attend, or does one of them have to be Romanian?
- C: No, we would never refuse admittance to anyone. If they want to come to our church, they are more than welcome to come. What we would try to do is try to indoctrinate them into the Orthodox philosophy. We would try to get them to sit down with our priest and learn about Orthodoxy and become like the members of our church.
- M: So in other words, Orthodoxy is the most important thing of our church, not Romanian?

C: Oh, yes. No, Romanian makes no difference.

M: Right, I wanted to get that clear.

C: No, this makes no difference. Many of our parishioners for example belong to Orthodox organizations in the area, and we don't care whether they are Serbian or Greek or whatever they are. It is Orthodoxy that we are concerned about.

M: Even if they are not Orthodox, say they are Jewish or Catholic or something like that?

C: Oh, they could come. We would welcome them with open arms. We don't care and they could come. They don't have to participate; we don't care about that either. We would like to see them learn our version, learn Orthodoxy, and become active members of the church, but we are not going to say to them, "If you don't, you can't come to this church."

M: And also like this can go on the tape too as a member of the church myself, we members and you as president, if people of different races would come, we ourselves would welcome them. I know I would.

C: Oh, definitely.

M: Right, and just because right now it says Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox on there, it doesn't mean that if you are Negro or if you are Chinese that you cannot come if you wanted to.

C: No, our church is very liberal in that way. An interesting story again when the Romanians moved to Youngstown, they all settled primarily down around Poland Avenue in that area down there. The Negro population lived there. Two Romanian women were riding the bus. This colored gentleman got on the bus. One woman said to the other woman in Romanian, "Boy, is he a big black one." The colored guy turned around and said to her in Romanian, "You are a small white woman." So they could speak the language. They lived with them, and they learned. I'm not going to say anything. If they want to be interested in Orthodoxy, then let them. They are welcome in my book.

M: One question I want to ask about the council itself, where do you hold your meetings?

C: Our meetings are held in the church hall.

M: In the church hall? Is it after services, or is it at a special time?

- C: No, there was something else that I did. Normally meetings were held during the week at the request of the president on whatever night was convenient for him, and that was the night that you had the meeting. Well, I didn't like that because what it came down to was that we used to have meetings where there were thirty members we would be fortunate to have ten.
- M: Do you need a quota to a degree?
- C: Yes, well, you have to have with thirty . . . I forget and that is something I should know.
- M: You probably need about a third of them.
- C: I'm trying to think. We needed one more than something. I can't think of it right now.
- M: Maybe if you think later on you can bring it up.
- C: Our attendance wasn't that great. So then I felt, well, to move them would be the best thing. John Curea was out of town from Monday until Friday every week. He would be out with his business. So he had ordered meetings on Friday nights which was very inconvenient for a lot of people. What I did so that it would be convenient, well, it varied. We would have them on Tuesday, Monday, any night, but then one other thing. We would have meetings on Sundays after church because I had one complaint that people worked steady 4:00 to 12:00, and they can't come during the week. Well, what I found was that my meetings started averaging fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and I even had one meeting with twenty-nine members in it. It is unbelievable, and it was primarily on Sunday because they would come to church. What we would do is serve them coffee and doughnuts and et cetera to keep them there. They would stay for the meeting. I had an agenda set up; this is what was conducted: let's get it done, do what we have to do, and get out of there. If the meetings lasted an hour, it was a long meeting.
- M: When you would have these meetings which are thirty people, was the minister also in attendance too?
- C: Oh yes, he was there. Now your council was made up of thirty active members plus the parish priest, the president of the ladies auxiliary, the president of the local AROY chapter, and the two delegates to the episcopate. So you are talking about thirty-five people that are actually there for the meeting. All had equal voting rights.
- M: Could you have a meeting, say, without the priest? Could you have a meeting without him?

- C: Oh, yes, definitely. I can recall even starting meetings without him because he would be detained somewhere maybe talking to someone. I recall on occasion where he had some people in, and he was giving lessons to them on Orthodoxy. He got tied up with them then. We proceeded to start without him, and then he came down afterwards. We could have it without him.
- M: If somebody wanted to join the church of a different nationality or a different race and they wanted to become a member, would they have to contact the council, or would they just pay their dues and then become a member or do they have to be baptized also in the Orthodoxy?
- C: No, they have to make application to the church through the priest. Then he will further investigate them closely.
- M: Do they have to be baptized into your Orthodoxy?
- C: Well, I guess so, yes. All of our people are baptized. Again they can come to the church without becoming an Orthodox. But in order to come to share in the full benefits of the church, they would have to meet the requirements of an Orthodox before they could become a member of our church. Normally what we have is people who are Orthodox that haven't gone to church apply to become one. Then our priest will go talk to them, and then he will come back. He will then recommend them. If he comes back and doesn't recommend, then there is a general discussion. If someone wants to argue, you argue. The council then either accepts them or rejects them into membership.
- M: I didn't even know how that procedure went. Has that ever occurred to your knowledge, recently?
- C: Yes.
- M: I won't get into it.
- C: No, I won't say.
- M: Is there anything else that you would like to add, sir?
- C: No, I don't think so.
- M: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW