

## **INTERVIEW OF STEVE CONJELKO**

By Mildred Allen Beik

March 13, 1984

Windber, PA

SC = Steve Conjelko (1907-1992)

MB = Millie Beik

### **Beginning of Tape 1 Side A**

MB: Is it alright if I just lean on the table? Yeah, okay [Laughter]. It would just be comfortable, that's all. There isn't any reason not to be [Laughter].

SC: The thing is, a lot of this stuff on the spur of the moment is hard to place, you know?

MB: Well, on the other hand if we don't try, we we'll never know. [Laughter] And you remember a lot, I think.

SC: Who?

MB: You do. You were telling me things last time when I visited you and then, then we didn't do anything. Yeah, that's working.

SC: I didn't want to tramp on it.

MB: It should be okay. I don't want you to be uncomfortable though while you're talking to me. [Laughter] The whole point of this is to be comfortable and just talk the way we normally would. You can sit here. I can rest on this.

SC: No, no that's okay.

MB: Why don't you tell me what your full name is, is it Steve Conjelko?

SC: Steve...that's right.

MB: And how old are you, Mr. Conjelko?

SC: I am 77 this year.

MB: 77, when's your birthday? [Laughter]

SC: November the 18th.

MB: What year would that have been?

SC: 1906, I think it was.

MB: 1906, oh boy. Were you born here in Windber then?

SC: Yeah, I was born right out there in Cambriana.

MB: Oh boy.

SC: I was born and raised in Windber.

MB: Because Windber was founded so late, in 1897. You're one of the earliest residents then. So you know...

SC: Where we moved in the far end in the homes out there in Cambriana, they were just built, and my dad they bought one of the first houses that came along.

MB: The first ones, hmm.

SC: And they moved in.

MB: Where did your parents come from, Mr. Conjelko?

SC: Well, they came in from Austria...um, Czechoslovakia, part of...you know it is now.

MB: Austro-Hungarian Empire, then?

SC: Yeah, and they moved in from [inaudible, foreign name, Track 1, 2:21].

MB: What is it?

SC: [inaudible, foreign name, Track 1, 2:23] Mrs. Schuster, she knows it.

MB: Oh, okay. [Laughter]

SC: She more than likely mentioned it.

MB: Oh, okay. She mentioned something. I don't remember what the name was. Do you know how to spell that?

SC: [Ikubya]?

MB: Yeah, that is the name she used. Yeah.

SC: [Ikuybanan, inaudible foreign name, Track 1, 2:46] That's a valley, no, a county they live in. Well, on the spur of the moment, you just can't place it.

MB: Okay. Just tell me what you remember. Don't force it. Just what you do is fine.

SC: I wasn't there, but...

MB: What you remember hearing about, sure.

SC: I know my mother and dad, they used to talk, and my dad was a section boss in a mine. And he used to drive headings in a mine and he all his clan. He knew who could do work and who couldn't. [Telephone Rings]

Didn't work...that's fine [referring to phone]. He used to...well, he didn't, he would tell them, now we have a contract for driving this heading. They have those, you know, in a mine. Were you ever in a mine?

MB: No, I have to go in one while...

SC: You see, they are just like a street, or a town. They have the main street and they have the avenues and they branch off and all these headings that they have. Well, they can mine the coal out of one section and they branch off, and then they take this here out. Then they take the rooms out. And the first thing you know, and then they have to take all of the sections out. Then they take the pillars, and then the whole thing will cave in.

MB: I see.

SC: That was what they would call a killer, because so many men lost their lives on it. Because the roof wasn't solid, and the pillars weren't...they didn't have the experience with those, these here, what they call the headings. Why, they didn't know how solid the roof was and when they pulled out the supports, the whole thing would come down, it would come down right on them. My wife's dad, he was in one of them, he used to pull out the pillars and he got caught under one. He was killed. I remember when they brought him home. They didn't bring him home, they took him up to the undertaker's parlor. And he was just flattened out.

MB: Your dad hadn't been a miner in Europe, had he?

SC: No, no. No, when he came over, he was only about 16 or 17 years old.

MB: I see.

SC: And then they came in, I know on my trips going around is an ACRY organizer for the Nazis. Why, I used to go to New Jersey quite often and I know how many people out in Perth Amboy...and they used to say, I know your dad when he was here and when your mother they got married, you know.

MB: Were they married in Perth Amboy then?

SC: Yeah

MB: Before they came to Windber?

SC: Well, yeah, well, they still had old-fashioned ideas, you know. If you like the woman, marry her. They didn't fool around with long engagements. See, the ladies would come in to Perth Amboy and that's where they...the people from Europe used to come in. And then you take these fellows who used to work for my dad, Mrs. Shuster would know them because her husband came in through them. And she came through there, and they used to go to Perth Amboy when they were here anytime, the [inaudible, Russian word, Track 1, 7:06]. You know what a [inaudible, Russian word for "green horn", Track 1, 7:07] is? It's a green horn.

MB: Oh okay. Yeah, I know what that is. [Laughter]

SC: Well, they call them [inaudible, Russian word for "green horn", Track 1, 7:12] and all these ladies that come in, the young girls that come in, and they, when they get old enough and they get married why they used to go to Perth Amboy and inaudible, Russian word, Track 1, 7:30]. Do you know what that is?

MB: On the edge?

SC: No, no. [inaudible, Russian word, Track 1, 7:33] Like a cousin.

MB: Oh, okay. Yes, yes, yes.

SC: [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 1, 7:38-7:45] And they said inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 1, 7:46-7:54] one thing or another.

MB: Good worker. [Laughter]

SC: And then, they would make arrangements before she left. She would go to New Jersey then and somebody would go with them, you know, because you couldn't send the green horn out. And they used to go out there...even when we were living on the east end out there. When there were different ones, there were two people that married brothers. They were married and he got killed in the mine. That was sort of common.

MB: In the early days?

SC: Because it was quite a hazard. A miner working without having an accident in ten or twenty years, he was darn lucky. Anyhow, he lived right down here at the bottom of the street here. She married the oldest brothers, she married, and then he died—I don't know, he was sick...anyhow he died. Then she married the other brother. She married two of them. And after he died, why she was a widow to two brothers. They had children and one was [Colson], I think is their name. One of the boys, it was a priest. He's still a priest now. He is a Uniates. So, they used to say how it was fortunate for them. She already had somebody to take care of her, you know. So, she married the brothers. Well, that's always good [Laughter]. She's still living and the children are living, they used to go to school here.

MB: Well, what about your own parents, Mr. Conjelko? Yeah, where did they meet? Did they meet in Europe, or did they meet in New Jersey, then?

SC: No, no. They were in Europe. She in [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 1, 10:24] that's like a village, you know. Well, they knew one another and they would get a letter and they'd say inaudible, [Speaks in Russian, Track 1, 10:33-10:43] and he used to go visit her. And naturally, after they lived here for a while and got accustomed, they became homesick. So they used to go back and they meet [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 00:16-00:19] and they meet one another and they come back and they get married. In our home, I remember quite a few weddings they used to have. My dad knew quite a few of them, he and my mother, and they were all clans you know. They would, like my uncle, he was working in a steel mills.

MB: In Johnstown? Or in Pittsburgh?

SC: No, no, in Pittsburgh. He came one day and he says, we need to know... he was going out to making calls on single girls. He got married and they exchanged views and tell one another, you know, this girl is better for you than that because she's not a spendthrift and stuff like that. Well, we had about four weddings in our house.

MB: Oh did you? Oh boy.

SC: And those were weddings. When they had the weddings out there in East End, where we lived [Laughter] the beer used to come out the windows. When they had them, the police, I know, they used to say, hey, there's a wedding up in Conjelko's, he said, you better have extra police up there. Next day, they were best of friends again. But one thing there, when they used to have a wedding, when they had a first one, the wedding and they wanted to get married in church. And then they go to church and they get married and when they came back, they had a big dinner. And celebration, dancing and all that... [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 2:05]. You ever hear?

MB: Gypsies, yeah sure.

SC: And there would be dancing there, all day and all night. And the next day, why they come in and all of [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 2:22] and the girls, the flower girls, they would come in there, and [inaudible, Track 2, 2:30] come in for supper. And they would have a celebration again, there would be dancing and all that. And then the sun would come up, and well [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 2:39-2:55], and then there would be joking around about the babies were going to be coming and all that [Laughter]. And the next thing you know, he says, well now, he says [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 3:05-3:11] then get a bowl of...well, like a big bowl of...and get a lot of soap in the water, you know. And then they said [Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 3:20-3:30]. And they said, alright, you first, you sit down at the chair and we're going to shave you. And they get this soap water and all that, and then get a dull knife, you know, and then go through the motion of shaving them, and they slobbered more water on [Laughter]. And then after he got through shaving, we had to pay them a collection, you know, and they put it in [[inaudible, Track 2, 3:57] and that was for the bride and the groom. Now you had a pretty good, you know, jolly crowd, you know. Why, they would make a nice place. And then later on, when they would get wore out, you know, get lost, they would have a...well you're shoes need a little fixing up, he said, now we're going to shoe the [Druzby's,

inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 4:28], get the [Druzby's, inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 4:30] all lined up and then get hammers, you know. And then [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 4:37], "the shoemaker", he would fix their shoes. And some of these [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 4:42] they had muscles. They would take out the hammer, you know, and banging, you know. [Laughter] A few of them, most of them were good, you know.

MB: How long did a wedding last? More than one day, some weddings?

SC: The first day, they got married you know and dancing and all that. And then they wait until the next day and [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 5:08-5:12]. And then they would come out and they would get acquainted all over again. And that's when they would start these different... first you start off with giving them a shave, then the next one would come around and say, give them a haircut, and then the third one would come around and say well, you need new shoes on and we'll fix your shoes. And you had to have money. And then you take, they used to have... there used to be Ukrainian groups. Like my brother-in-law, he was Ukrainian. And they had a plate, they had... [inaudible, Track 2, 5:57]. It was up to you, if you wanted to dance with the bride, you had to throw in a silver dollar in there, and break that plate. And when you broke the plate, you danced with the bride. And if you didn't break it, you were just out of luck. So, they used to be quite fun. They used to have that plate in a big dish, and they used to have these cheap dishes that always broke easily. They used to have this here cover over it-- like they have a cover on a basket. And the money wouldn't bounce out. Sometimes it would bounce out, but most of it... They would hit that plate and it just went right [inaudible, Track 2, 6:41] [Laughter]. My uncle, that's my dad's brother, when they were getting married, the automobiles had just come in, and, well, that's the Shuster family—see they married a [inaudible, Russian name, Track 2, 7:08] and she's a... and their family is a [inaudible, Russian name, Track 2, 7:13] and that's a [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 7:14-7:17] just like out here when you have a Weaver, you have a family. And the whole clan are Weavers, and Murphy's are over here...

MB: And Conjelkos here [Laughter]

SC: Yeah, Conjelkos. And they had nicknames for all of them.

MB: Oh yeah, like what?

SC: Well, they had one fellow there...I don't know their name. He lost his sight in one eye and they used to call him [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 7: 47-7:55], "the old devil eye." But it was all in good humor it wasn't ill intentioned. When they got mad they used to call him pretty harsh, but you think Mrs. Shuster, and her...she had the aunts and cousins, the [inaudible family name, Track 2, 8:18], Shuster's, and [inaudible family name, Track 2, 8:20] and there were a lot of them. They had a click, around here. They had quite a few. And when you had one of them... when they had a christening, and when a baby was born, they had sort of like a party, and they used to go and visit them. And then some would bring a chicken, and some would bring a ham and some would bring...everybody would bring something. And then [inaudible, Track 2, 8:58] would come around, he would come around about Friday or Saturday. They would give you all those gifts, and then your [inaudible Russian word, Track 2, 9:06] would help

you, they would prepare that, and they would have another big feast. You would see them a year later after the wedding.

MB: [Laughing] So, tell me more about your parents. When did your father come to America? Do you know the year, Mr. Conjelko? Do you have any idea about when it was? It doesn't have to be exact. But if you have any idea...

SC: Well, I was born in 1906. My dad came over in about 1900.

MB: And he went to New Jersey and then to Windber?

SC: When he came in from Europe, he went to Perth Amboy-- that was his point of destination.

MB: How did he end up in Windber then?

SC: Well, the thing is, so many fellows knew that the coal mines were out here. And their friends were here. Some of them were here before them.

MB: Did he have relatives who were here before him then?

SC: No.

MB: No one else he knew from his family then?

SC: The [inaudible, Russian word, Track 2, 12:00]

MB: Oh, the cousins.

SC: They were here and said [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 10:07-10:15]. And we had a boarder, he was just like a kid, you know. He was...anything they told him, he believed you. My mother used to say, if you don't get out of my way, she said, I'm going to hit you with this broom! [Laughter] And he would run.

MB: Did you keep one boarder when you were growing up?

SC: Well, we only had one boarder because he was sort of a pet of these men. Anytime they wanted anything they said, [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 10:45-10:53]. He used to go down there at the bottom of the bucket, the dinner bucket and they would come up, for a quarter, to fill up that bucket. They would get about three or four fellows, and they would have a bucket of beer. And it wouldn't get them drunk. The thing is, it would satisfy their thirst. And then, I know I used to go, I was just a little kid, I used to go along, but I wasn't allowed in the hotel. I used to go, because on pay day they used to have the whole big table there, and they would have it all filled up with all kinds of cold cuts. We used to go in and [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 2, 11:29-11:40]. They'd fill it up and bring it over to us. They used to have fights too, it used to be between the [inaudible, Track 2, 11:48] and the Hungarians, and then the Slovaks and the [inaudible, Track 2, 12:00]. It all depends on what mood they were in. If they had a good

day at work, and when they came home they were in good spirits, everything was fine. Unless something going on there and it was miserable among them. Bingo. They would have a fight and everything else.

MB: You remember some of those, I guess?

SC: Oh yes. I had seen them. I know, I was just a kid. I used to come home, I used to go to the movies around about six o' clock and I would come home about nine. I would see a guy lying in a ditch, drunk, and he couldn't get up. They used to have ditches all around. Well, it ain't nice, but I would go out and say, Hey, John, [inaudible, Speaks in Russian/Czech, Track 3, 00:56-1:06]. And I would say, all right, put your arm around my neck, and I would give him a hand and he would crawl out. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 3, 1:13-1:19] Then when he would get paid, he would come over and give me a quarter. [inaudible, Russian word, Track 3, 1:24]. Candy. Buddy-buddy.

MB: So, was your father a miner, then was he the section boss, Mr. Conjelko? How did he make his living, then?

SC: My dad was a coal miner, that's where he started out. When they were driving headings down in the mines, they would say, Mr. Conjelko, you are a pretty good boss. So, we're going to drive a heading through this section. And when they drive a heading, they go in about twenty feet or ten feet, or whatever it is, then they would put a side track in through the mines. You know, that those cars go on. And they would get in this section and then they would have the crewmen start digging coal. That's when they go in so far, and they have to have a branch out. See, they have a crisscross heading, [Someone enters the room, Whistles, Track 3, 2:27] air space where the air used to go through because if they didn't, then it would get foul, an explosion it would cause. Like they have now, every once in a while you hear about after [inaudible, Track 3, 2:42] they call it. But, they have to have the headings, and they have to this here air shaft that the air goes in. And then, they used to have curtains, regular heavy curtains, like...

SC: Getting miserable?

MB: No, no. I'm just changing my position, that's all. No, I'm fine.

SC: They would take and put these curtains over these headings, over the openings, so that they would change the air, which way it was supposed to go through. They would have a section and there would be a certain time, right before they quit for the day, they would shoot the [inaudible, Track 3, 3:30] because sometimes it wasn't all coal, it was sometimes pretty rocky. The miners would...that's where my dad would come in, he would have his crew of men and the guy, the section boss would come in, and say, John, you get your men here. We're going to drive a shaft here. We're going to take this coal out. He have too much stone in here. So they would have to go on down and he would get paid for so much a foot to clean that out. He would have his men, it all depends, and he would have from eight to ten men, maybe to twenty men working on that section. When he would get mad, when they weren't able to work when the other fellows were working on that, they'd work in the night. And they could depend on my dad because he had leadership with his clients. A green horn, he would come in, and John, [inaudible, Speaks in



Russian, Track 3, 4:38]. And they wouldn't know what doings. They would go around and tell him, we're going to do this and do this, and we have to drive a shaft here, we're going to have a heading over here, and put rooms in here. And they understand when my dad would tell them.

MB: Your father was speaking in English, I presume?

SC: No.

MB: No, he was speaking Russian to them.

SC: And the funny part about it is, my dad, he couldn't write a word. But he kept time. Every one of them fellows, kept their time. I used to laugh, I said, well, Dad, how did you keep those fellow's time? Well, [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 3, 5:19-5:24] [Laughter]. And he kept it. And the place where I, this store here, that Mrs. [inaudible, family name, Track 3, 5:30] used to have, and she used to take care of the miners. She had a book, and had a ledger, and they just about killed her because she would give them credit, you know. This one fellow there, he was smart, he says, you know [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 3, 5:54-6:10]. Did you understand?

MB: Parts of it, tell me in English just to make sure.

SC: He took his pass book to the store. And he got things charged. And every time his wife went in, she got it charged the same. And they saw, he thought he was taking over. So, he used to keep track of the dollars because they were, you know, separate. There would be a dollar forty cents, a dollar twenty cents, two dollars...and he used to keep that separate on the side. So when he got paid, he said [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 3, 6:45] why didn't he get more money because he says, I worked more than I did last week, last pay day, and he says, I got less. So, they went over it and here this fellow every time he starts checking out, and he took and he said, hey, over here I had one, two, three, one dollars, I had three, four, two dollars. And now I have three dollars and five dollars, I never bought that much. They found out that they had just about cleaned the whole store out. They thought because they were greenhorns, you know, they could get away with it. Still...

MB: So, how long did your father work in the mines then in this job that he had? When did he start and then how long did he work?

SC: When he had come in from Europe, that's the first thing that he did. He worked in the steel mills with a group, but he didn't like it. He come out with this one group that come out. The one group. Because that the [inaudible, Russian word, Track 3, 8:01] are. Well, when they have [inaudible, Russian word, Track 3, 8:04]. They can associate with one another and everything else. My dad used to have a, well this neighborhood used to be all Slovaks.

MB: Oh, did it?

SC: And Polish down there at the end in the next two blocks. That was all Polish. I'll tell you, they used to get together on Saturdays and get some beer and sandwiches. They would sing

away and [inaudible, Russian name, Track 3, 8:35] he used to...that was his nickname, he was one of these guys, a happy go lucky guy, and he used to get that accordion and he would start playing and sing along. And you'd take in the summer time, you could hear them fellows singing clear on down the main street. But, they were satisfied.

MB: That must have been nice. But was that common, that everybody lived in different parts of the town? Like each nationality, then, in the early days, that you remember?

SC: The thing is, they used to get together quite a bit. And whenever you got somebody from Europe, you got a letter.

### **End of Tape 1 Side A**

### **Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (March 13, 1984)**

MB: Then what happened when they got the letter?

SC: They would come over and get the latest news. And he, most of them couldn't read anyhow, you know. They'd have to get some interpreter, there was always somebody who knew how to read or write and he would read the letter. I said I will try my... [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 4, 00:26-00:37] [Laughter]. It used to be quite a scene there. And then they would start counting amongst [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 4, 00:45]

MB: Did your father ever go to school at all anywhere or not?

SC: No, he studied himself.

MB: Did he know any English when he came to America? At all? Did he have to learn it all after he came here?

SC: None of them. The Shuster's, they were oh..., what they called, they were taught in Europe how to read and write.

MB: I see.

SC: That was to their advantage because when they came out here, they could read out of books and stuff where most of these other fellows they were green. Like, you take my dad, he started a store. He couldn't keep no records. We did all the keeping records. But, the thing is, where there's a will there's a way. When you got ideas, you make them work. That's what my dad did.

MB: So he worked in the mines? How long did he work in the mines then in Windber? From about when to...?

SC: He worked from the time he came in here, around about 1900 until 1922 when he come out on strike.

MB: He worked that long in the mines? That was a while.

SC: When we got out of school, my dad says, well we got four boys here, he said, we're not going to starve around here, so he says, we'll build a store.

MB: 1922 he decided this?

SC: That building down below on Eighth Street. That store there. That's the one we built. I never worked in a store. My brother Jim, he worked in the company store. But, me and my brother Mike, we used to go out and kill beef, cattle, and these salesmen used to come in and show us what cuts of meat and how to cut it and stuff like that. They taught us. And we had a pretty good business. A very good business.

MB: Well, that must have been hard to start at that time though. To get a business going in 1922? How many children did you have in the family? The four boys, did you have any girls? Any other brothers and sisters?

SC: We had one sister, she got married when she was fifteen. Thing is, she got married before I got out of school. I know when she was getting married, she said, Steve are you going to stay with me tonight? Says, I'm getting married. I said, well you are going to have a husband anyhow and she said, well, I have to get used to him first. [Laughter]

MB: Did your parents arrange her marriage?

SC: No.

MB: Or did she know somebody too well?

SC: He was a greenhorn. And the greenhorn knew Alec-he was another greenhorn and they came over to see my dad. My daughter, not daughter, but my sister, she had about four or five proposals from different ones. It's funny, these fellows would come in and they'd get paid and they'd come over to see my dad [inaudible, Russian word for sister, Track 4, 4:26]. She was only fourteen. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 4, 4:35] My mother knew right away what they were after. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 4, 4:46] They kept pestering him and finally there was one fellow there, my brother-in-law that she married, they started going to dances and she couldn't go to the dance unless I was with her.

MB: You were a chaperone?

SC: Yeah. And they used to give me a quarter every time I went out with her. And the dances, oh I was only so high.

MB: She was older than you then?

SC: Oh yeah. And I was afraid to go home by myself and I had to wait for her.

MB: Oh boy. [Laughter]

SC: But that was the style. When they came into the dance hall, like the Slovak Hall, the mothers or their sisters, or brothers would sit on the side. That's why you see in them halls before, that's why you used to see benches along the sides and on the ends, the whole way around the hall. That's where they sat until after the dance was over and the boys would come in and their sisters or their aunts or their mothers would come for them and take them home. My brother-in-law, he always used to take me to Platt's candy store down there on Fifteenth, Sixteenth Street and he used to buy ice cream sodas because I was a good boy. But, I brought them home.

MB: You did your job did you? With them?

SC: But the thing is, when I brought them home, she come to the door, she opened the door and said, mom I'm home. Okay honey, ten minutes. And then I would go upstairs and go to bed. Ten minutes was up, he was gone.

MB: People were stricter about all of things back then.

SC: But things happened even then because I know some of the girls, their mothers were strict too, but they didn't, it happened. But, I'll tell you, whenever they had church dances you know, it was customary around like this because they had to have entertainment or something. [inaudible, Track 4, 7:18] and weddings and christenings. And when they had that, the church would sponsor the weddings, not a wedding, but the dances. And they used to come down and any girl that was of age, she was there. So was the fellows.

MB: A way of meeting one another.

SC: But the thing is whenever they, like I said before, whenever they had a letter, somebody got a letter from Europe, that was a centerpiece for that street or that, because they used to be in the center, you know. And if one got anything, they all knew. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 4, 8:00-8:03]. You know they wanted to know about Europeans and their friends and relatives and that used to be just like a newspaper.

MB: Right. That's interesting. Did you read any newspapers when you were little? Any other language newspapers then? Did you have some Russian newspapers around?

SC: I used to go to school, you know, church school.

MB: What did they have there?

SC: I wasn't much...

MB: Saint. Mary's then? The Byzantine right one then? Is that the one you went to?

SC: Saint. Mary's, uh...

MB: Or what was it called then?

SC: Saint Mary's Church.

MB: Oh, okay.

SC: Russian church.

MB: Yeah.

SC: But the thing is, now it's Byzantine.

MB: Oh, I see. Okay.

SC: Because they have to...

MB: [Let me move closer] How long did you go to school Mr. Conjelko and where did you go to school?

SC: Here in Windber.

MB: Which school did you go to?

SC: I went to the public school.

MB: Which one? The East End or West, let's see, where were you living then?

SC: I started out at the East End.

MB: I see. [Banging noise]

SC: And then when they, I didn't turn anything off did I?

MB: No, it's fine.

SC: Whenever I got past fifth, ah, fourth grade, he sent me out to the West End.

MB: Okay.

SC: And I was there and I graduated.

MB: From eighth grade?

SC: Eighth grade and that's when I got my job.

MB: I see.

SC: I got out of school at dinner time and in the afternoon, I had a job.

MB: What were you doing? What job did you have?

SC: My brother-in-law bought a store. And I was running the store for him. No experience.

MB: Where was this store? [Laughter] What was it called?

SC: It's tore down now. Right across where the brewery is, used to be, you know where that is?

MB: Yes, Right across the street there.

SC: There used to be a...oh...custard stand, not custard stand, ice cream stand. Windber Ice Cream Company. And my brother-in-law bought the store. And I worked in there and they come out on strike, all of them, the following month, and everybody run out of money and he went broke. Because all his friends, they'd come in and say, hey Alec, I'm broke, he says, are you going to trust me on some tobacco and stuff? Sure, sure. They had probably maybe a month or two-three weeks, something and it'd be over. It didn't. And everybody owed him money and then they didn't show up. And it wasn't like now, when the strike lasted, you didn't get pension or relief, or stuff like that. They didn't give you nothing then, and so they quit coming. So then Alec...

MB: Was this in the strike of 1922 then you're talking about? Is that where you were then? Working there then and then your father, when did your father, how did he decide to start a store?

SC: Well, that's when he started.

MB: In that same place? Did he go in with him?

SC: We went out on strike, well, I did, but my brother...

MB: Your brother was a miner then?

SC: Yeah. Jim and Mike. He only worked for a couple months. And they come out on strike and in the meantime, I got a job in the store. So they come on strike and they were out for about a year.

MB: Yeah, that's long time.

SC: In the meantime, dad got his henchmen that worked with him in the mine, he says, you fellows want a job? He said, I'll pay you. He says, I'm not going to pay you like a contractor but, I'll see it keeps you up. They said, by God, we'll do anything, we'll work for you. So he hired them, about ten fellows and they built that building down there.

MB: Down there?

SC: Couple of fellows were carpenters and they built it up.

MB: How did he have the money to be able to do that then?

SC: Well, he was working...

MB: Was he, he had saved money?

SC: He had money because he had these contacts [contracts] in the mine. And he told these, whenever he hired these fellows, you work for me and I'll take care of you. And, your Aunt Anna when she got married, you know when he had...

[Another person interrupts]: Oh, how that guy came and was bargaining?

SC: Well, he came in with a bag of Hershey's and wanted to see, come to my mother and says [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 1:51-1:56] she's just a kid. She's not old enough even to have a boyfriend. [Laughter]

MB: I guess it was common in those days for people to get married, women to get married young then?

[Another person interrupts]: And they were like sold off, like he was telling about his sister.

SC: Well, he come in and there were about two others who come in before that, you know, or his buddy, you know, or his brother.

MB: [Speaking to other person]: Thank you.

[Other person]: Okay.

SC: He would come in and he'd lead of the show, you know. He's come and knock on the door you know, [Knocks] [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 2:28-2:30] and buddy-buddy you know. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 2:32-2:53] and then my mother seen the [inaudible, Track 5, 2:56] because she went through the same experience.

MB: How old was she when she got married?

SC: She was only about eighteen. Same thing. She come in Europe, from Europe to Perth Amboy when she was only about seventeen years old, sixteen.

MB: Did she work in Perth Amboy for a while before she got married then?

SC: She was working, but I don't know how long. And she didn't stay long because she meet my dad there and right away [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 3:23-3:35] [Laughter] My mother's name was Zuzie.

MB: Zuzie? How do you spell, Zuzie...?

SC: Zuzco. Well, Susie. The other one was more of an "S."

MB: What was her maiden name? Do you know that?

SC: [inaudible, family name, Track 5, 3:49]

MB: [inaudible, Repeats family name, Track, 3:59] Okay. Did she come with a lot of relatives then or?

SC: They come in a, well just like now, when you go to Europe to go on an excursion you know, or to see a, like when you go to a [inaudible, Track 5, 4:08] well, that's like they used to go. [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 4:10-4:17] First thing you know, they had a boatload. They had to pack them in like a bunch of pigs. It's a wonder they, well a lot of them, some of them didn't make it. Because they used to put them in there and they used to pile them in and they'd get a decent meal. And it depends on who they..., it used to take them a month to come over.

MB: Oh, yeah. Oh, boy. Did you hear stories about that from your parents then? About that trip?

SC: They used to talk about it and we'd listen and we'd ask them questions you know, and they'd say to us. And they'd tell us about the time they got on the boat and you know and they start coming up on them [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Track 5, 5:00]. And they'd come up on them and they said that the guys that working there that they'd have to get the buckets and scrub the decks because it was terrible. Because you can't help it.

MB: Oh yeah. That must've been awful.

SC: My mother says, she thought for a while that she was going to die. Couldn't hold nothing down.

MB: I'm sure you'd think that. So she came to Windber with your father and then all these other things transpired. Wow. So, tell me more about starting the business then. You four boys then got together and then, did you leave your brother-in-law's then and come with your father after that working in that store or?

SC: Well see my brother-in-law when he couldn't make out because they were buying, but they weren't paying.

MB: Right.



SC: So, he said well, I'm running out of money [inaudible, Track 5, 6:10] I don't know if he got his money back or not. He never told me. But, he's dead, but his children are still living around here.

MB: Do they have a store now or no?

SC: Oh no. They don't have nothing. They closed the store. They made a house out of it.

MB: Oh, okay. But your father must've had quite a job to do getting a new store running in those times and then after he got established with all of you.

SC: Well, here's the thing. In them days, the fellow that had the know-how or the, get-going, he's the guy that made out. It's just like today, if you have the gumption, or the ability to prove yourself, you can make a living. A darn good living. In a lot of things. I know, I helped start that store down there and I built this store here. And my dad said, what do you want to start up a store? You're just a couple of blocks away from here? I said dad, I said, don't worry about it. I says, you're going to sell meat and groceries here, I'm going to sell up there in novelties and ice cream and on Sunday's. And I used to feature, you take on the Fourth of July, I think I bought fireworks around about eight hundred dollars.

MB: Oh wow.

SC: Yeah. I sold them all too. And that was an annual celebration. And I used to have these fellows come in from down Maryland with a load. I'd buy them. I'd make a nice profit. For a grocery store, it's out of the way for them because you know, you're not in that. And I used to have a lot of, like for Easter, I would load up with Easter baskets and I used to go to Pittsburgh and buy [inaudible, Track 5, 8:22] while I was out there. And I would buy maybe five hundred dollars' worth of baskets of all shapes for the store. There was nobody around here selling them.

MB: The company store wasn't selling such things then?

SC: No, they didn't care for them because that was out of their [inaudible, Track 5, 8:40]. And I used to stock up with them and all kinds of Easter novelties and stuff. I made money.

MB: So did your father have a store from 1922? How long did he have the store that he had then?

SC: He gave it to the boys after, around about nineteen..., let's see. About 1945 around there. The boys, he says, well, the store's yours, go ahead.

MB: When did you start your store? When he had his and you started yours up then. Two blocks away...

SC: [inaudible, Track 5, 9:22]

MB: Yeah, you said at some point you started a store.

SC: About 1965. Around there.

MB: Oh, I see. So it was later? Much later that you started this one? So, did you work then, in the other store until then?

SC: I was running the meat market.

MB: Okay. I see. Okay.

SC: And Mike was running the slaughter house.

MB: I see. Okay.

SC: And Jim, he was in, the fellow, hey you didn't pay, when you going to pay? And he liked that because he was on the out all the time. And he was an overseer. And he was the oldest one. Joe, the youngest one. He wasn't, well, he used to deliver stuff. And he used to deliver groceries. And in 1970..., oh, before that, my brother Jim died. He got, something like cancer. He liked to go out and sun himself. And the doctor said he got a suntan and it burned him so much that it turned cancerous.

MB: For heaven's sake.

SC: He died from that. And my sister, she..., my brother..., no his son, Jim's boy, died right after that. He was going to be a priest. Then the other boy, he did, he's still a priest. He's out in Indiana, the state of Indiana. So, then John, he worked for the Atlas Company that made hospital equipment. Now he's retired. He's not working.

MB: Oh boy. So, after 1922, did anyone in your family work in the mines anymore?

SC: No.

MB: Were they out of the mines after that?

SC: When they came out on strike, none of them went back. Because when started working in the grocery store, we built up a nice business.

MB: Successful and...?

SC: Yeah, a nice business. We had a nice business until 1970. And my brother Jim, he died and then...whatcha' call...there was somebody else died there. Anyhow, two of them passed away. Mike died. And I says, well fellows, I says, I have over fifty years in the service in here, I think I'm going to take it easy. I says, if you fellows want to, you can sell it or run it. I think they said, we'll split it. So, we figured out how much everything was worth and that's how much it was and that's what you can have of it. So, we split it up.

MB: I see.

SC: So, the guy, the one that bought it from us, he paid us the full amount and we split it among ourselves.

MB: That sounds fair.

SC: Well, it was worth more than all that, it was a good store, but the thing is..., you know?

MB: Yeah.

SC: No matter how good it is, you can't drag it with you. I had a good...

MB: Well, tell me more about when you started. I think with Eureka store still being so big and powerful in those early years, I think you would've run into problems with Berwind-White then. You guys were competition or something.

SC: The thing is, what they used to do, we used to deliver up at thirty-five and thirty-six and forty. And when they seen our truck drive up with..., they would have a company truck follow us. And they used to take note what we were delivering. And they would take and keep track of it and what number of the house and the next day, they got the same identical order from the Eureka stores, and it was charged to their account.

MB: Well, for heaven's sake. Well, didn't that hurt your business then? Didn't people stop coming?

SC: No.

MB: No? It didn't?

SC: The thing is, the trade we had, that wasn't... that was just the fringe of it.

MB: Oh, I see. So who were the main people that traded then?

SC: Right down here. The Slovak and the Hungarians and the Polish traded.

MB: But, the company didn't do that with them? Reporting it?

SC: No.

MB: Just in the mining camps?

SC: In the company houses.

MB: These weren't company houses then?

SC: No.

MB: Oh, I see.

SC: And then on top of it, [Telephone rings], I think like Mike and me, he used to go over [inaudible, Telephone rings, Track 6, 3:42], and we always used to have a lot of fun, you know. And I used to go over with the Slovak girls, and the Russian girls, and I got cold feet because Mike told me, he says, hey Mike, hey Steve, he said, see old Mary there? I see her, why? Take her out. He says, she likes you. I took her out, man..., I tell you'd never seen a little vampire..., I couldn't take her home. She was only around about fourteen, fifteen years old. I was just a kid myself. [Laughter]

MB: Trying to get married right away, huh?

SC: No. No. She just wanted to have a lot of fun.

MB: [Laughter] Oh boy.

SC: But the thing is, her husband and her [That's alright, that's just a bag], he married..., she married [Mike, inaudible name, Track 6, 4:47] and he's a..., plays in an orchestra. And he lives out in California now. And every once in a while he comes out here, he was here about two years ago and he came over to see me in the store here. And he give me his hand and I says, I don't know you. I said, who are you? He said, you know me. He says, you know that girl that used to work for you named Mary? I said, Mary? I said, we haven't had any girls by the name Mary here for a long time. He said, well, that's right. That was about thirty years ago. I said, you mean old Mary? Yeah, that's the one. She told me to come and see when I come out here. And he says, whenever you come out to California, I said, my daughter lives out in California. He said, you come out there, you just give me a buzz and I'll pick you up no matter where it is. And he said, I'll take care of you. I says, well, I don't know. I don't know what she told you or anything, but I just better stay away from it. [Laughter] Because I didn't go with a girl until I was about twenty-three years old. And the girl I got..., I married, she died just about twenty-five years ago.

MB: Twenty-five?

SC: And we were married twenty-five years.

MB: Well, tell me about her. How did you meet her? Tell me how you met her.

SC: Used to be our neighbor out there, on the East End. And her mother always liked me. And she used to tell my mother, she says you know, Steve would make a good son-in-law. And my mother told me and I said, well, I can't help her. I don't want to get tied up. I used to go past there and me and her brothers used to play cards, you know. We used to play in the cellar down there and different places. They used to come out and see us, watch us play cards and her brothers used to get mad. One day they told me, they said, Steve, play cards, play cards, if you come to see my sister, go ahead, see her. But, she was an awful nice kid. She...

MB: She Russian too?

SC: Yeah. Her mother..., her father got killed in a mine. He was drawing stumps. He was pulling out the old coal out, the back headings and coming out the front, and he pulled the props out of one section and the whole roof come down.

MB: Was she very old when that happened?

SC: She was 'round about fourteen. And then, she was nineteen when she got married. I was twenty-three.

MB: Did her family come from the same region too? In Europe? Or was that not important anymore when you were living here?

SC: No. They went to the same church. But, as far as Europe, her mother and father came in from [inaudible, Track 6, 8:04] and went down there from..., the Russian mountains.

MB: The Carpathians, yeah.

SC: Yeah.

MB: Yeah, Uh-huh. That's interesting. Did you..., what kind of a wedding did you have?

SC: We had, well, she lost her father and stuff like that. I didn't go for any big wedding.

MB: Did she have a big family too or lots of brothers and sister when he died?

SC: She, well, she had one sister. Susie. She was a flapper and she had a way with herself and she could sell anything. And she went, her sister, Edie, she was working here for the American stores and when her mother passed away, so she went out to California, that's where she met somebody and one thing is, she..., now Susie, she was a dresser. She likes dresses. And she got in touch with somebody in Cali...LA. And she fooled around, dressed up. And some of the people there in LA, in Hollywood, got in touch with her, they used to pay her money to [inaudible, Track 6, 9:42] and pick out pictures of different clothes...fancy clothes. And they would brief her on it and tell her and she used to go to Paris and England and then see these gowns. And they give the power of attorney to buy these clothes. And she made a killing. And she used to go over there for maybe two, three months. And some of these clothes here, they would pay for it. And she was out there, I was out there to see her in California and there were all these big shops.

**End of Tape 1 Side B**

**Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (March 13, 1984)**

MB: Give us a couple seconds before we start going. So we don't lose anything. It should be okay now. Yeah. So, anyway, in California, you're talking about in California and her and what else?

SC: She used to ah..., they bought this home and it was all mirrors inside, stairways, and everything else, I said, Susie, I said, you have? Oh, I better not say it. [Laughter] I said, you have mirrors in your bedrooms and everything? She said, oh yeah. That's what all the homes here in Hollywood have. And when I there the following year, I used to go out there quite often. And I stopped in there and I said Susie, how's everything. Well, we don't have that home anymore. I said, why? Well, you don't know it, but, the land out here has earthquakes. Every day you have maybe two or three vibrations. And she said, you see them mirrors? They're put close together and if you have a pretty strong earthquake, why they shatter. And you couldn't have a baby in the house because them splinters would fly around and might get in your eye and you might lose an eye over it. So she said, we used to have to carry, put glasses on your eyes to keep..., watch you didn't splinters. So she, they sold. She got another home out there and on top of it, Susie's husband, he was a pipe-fitter around here. He got a good out there. Got a pension. They traveled all over the world. They used to write us when they were coming down from, down in Egypt, down through Africa.

MB: This is your wife's sister, right?

SC: Yeah.

MB: Okay, I'm just making sure I got the right person we're talking about.

SC: She was a [inaudible, Track 1, 2:05].

MB: So how many children do you have Mr. Conjelko altogether?

SC: We had four. The first one died.

MB: Oh, I'm sorry.

SC: It's what they called, today, they won't say this but, that was what they called a blue baby. Now, when we had our second baby, that's [inaudible name, Track 1, 2:24], they had our past history, you know, what happened, so when they took her to the hospital, they had everything ready for her so in case the baby was going to have the same problem-blue baby, they were going to change the [in audible, Track 1, 2:42] right away. Never happened.

MB: It's nice it didn't happen. You had two others?

SC: Two others.

MB: Boys or girls? The other children.

SC: A girl and a boy. Now Bertsy, she's in California. And she's a chip on the old block. She left here day after she graduated, got out of high school. Her boyfriend was in Texas. He was in the service. They got married here, next day they went to Texas.

MB: Oh. Goodness.

SC: And when he got discharged, from Texas, she went up to LA. And they bought a home, and paid for it. And I just talked to her about two weeks ago. And she said, Dad, she says, don't forget, she says, it's our twenty-fifth anniversary coming up. You going to come up to our anniversary? So they're going to have a big shindig out there. And..., so what are you going to do?

MB: Well, that would be nice if you could go. That would be great.

SC: Oh, I would be gone all the time! I don't mind that. I got an invitation to go to Scranton. All expenses paid. It's a lodge and I, they were striking up in Scranton, and I knew this fellow, I met him at one of the conventions and he asked me about helping them get new members. So, I got them forty-six members.

MB: Now, this is the lodge. Why don't you tell me something about your lodge that you had in Windber and so on? What was its purpose and what did you do and all that kind of thing? Why were there so many lodges in Windber at one time? For insurance purposes or other reasons?

SC: Well, the thing is, when these people come over from Europe, they had nobody to..., they could look back on, you know, and depend on. So, they all got, the only place they could get together would be going to a hall, and they had monthly meetings. They would come in and talk about their Europe and everything else. Fraternalize. And then, when anybody would die, they would get a thousand dollars and that was a lot of money in them days.

MB: There weren't any other benefits if somebody died. I guess the company didn't provide anything.

SC: No. At first, but toward the end, they used to give..., they had lodges and stuff. And then the union used to give them so much, but that was only payments. Thing is, what they used to get is benefits from the state or county or stuff like that. But, outside that, you didn't get much. But anyhow...

[Someone interrupts]: Don't we have any more eggs?

MB: Now you were active in the lodge for a lot of years? Right? [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 1, 6:00]

[Someone interrupts]: Excuse me.

MB: Lodges and more?

[Noise, Moving things around]

SC: Well, I was just saying something...

MB: Oh, that's fine. [Referring to whatever is being moved]. You can put it on the [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 1, 6:07] there. Looks like it would be sturdier. No, the other way. Can you get it or not? I don't know how you had it.

SC: There it is.

MB: I don't know how you had it. Oh, there you go.

MB: Well, did the lodge have dances and things or just was it purely for insurance and other...?

SC: Well, see in the old days when they...when they come in from...when anybody died, all those used to belong to the same valley, or the county in Europe, they'd all come to visit. And they...when somebody died, they would have a parade. They would march from the home. They used to put a big bouquet of flowers on the outside. You knew when anybody died, you had a light on there, that only after to let electricity come in. Before electricity, they didn't have no lights on. They'd have this big basket of flowers outside, and they'd have a..., after they got electricity, they left the lights burning on the outside. They used to go to the wake and they would stay there all night. What happened there, if you belonged to a lodge, the members of the lodge would come to the wake and stand guard. And they'd have a feed for them and stuff like that. And after they'd get older, they done away with it because... Well, my dad, when he died [Banging Noise] they buried him from his home. But you take now, they bury them from the funeral homes.

MB: Did the...what was the lodge that you belonged to then, Mr. Conjelko? What was it then?

SC: Greek Catholic [Eunuch, inaudible word, Tape 2, Track, 1 8:10].

MB: Okay. It was called that? Did it have any other roles? Besides these other roles...did it have anything to do with getting people--making people citizens or anything like that? Or were there any organizations that did that? That you remember?

SC: Well, you couldn't very well have them come around and get the guy to join--be a citizen when they weren't capable of giving them answers. Because... did you ever go to a citizens?

MB: No. I mean, I don't know what the process was. I don't know how it worked. Tell me about that. I don't really know. Do you know anything about that?

SC: Well, sure. When you have a... when somebody wants to be a citizen, and wants the privilege of voting and stuff like that, well, they had classes, and they would give you instructions, and then they would have somebody there from the neighborhood that was familiar with his background and answer for them, you know.



MB: I see. Character witness and...?

SC: And their standing in the community and any troublemaker or a builder. And after he got his education...you know what the United States stands for and all that. And when he was ready for his citizenship, then you'd.., I sponsored the Scotch lady and her husband. Carruthers [Check spelling, Tape 2, Track 2,]. Scotch. And they couldn't get nobody to sponsor them. So, she asked me, I was in the market, she says, Steve, will you do me a favor? I said, what do you want Mrs. Carruthers? I said, if I can help you, then I'll do it. She said, I've been going to an American school and they teach me how to be a citizen. [Banging Noise] And she said, all I need now is I have to go to Somerset and get a character witness. And I can't get nobody because the people who knew her and all that, they were afraid because they had just come in themselves. I says, well, I'll do that. I says, what do you want me to do? She said, well, we're going up Somerset a certain day, you go with me and a judge will ask you questions. The citizen guy, the instructor, he'll ask you questions, and if he don't know then you can tell them what it is. So, I said, sure and we went up to Somerset. And his wife and him both. They both died now, just about a couple, about a year ago.

MB: That's too bad. Who else ran the school? Who ran the school that gave the classes then? Was it out of the schools themselves? Or?

SC: They had American classes.

MB: I see. Okay. Were there many Scottish people in Windber? I don't remember? Were there many? Maybe there were some that I didn't know?

SC: There were quite a few of them.

MB: There were?

SC: Oh yes. We had a Scottish rite, you know when they had these different Scotch things going on. Yeah, we had quite a few Scotch.

MB: I didn't know that. I didn't know.

SC: Oh, yeah. When they talk, you know, you had to listen, because they talk such...brogue, you know.

MB: What about Swedes? Do you remember any Swedish people in Windber?

SC: [First Name?] Lindstrom [Check spelling, Tape 2, Track 2, 1:19] down here, he was in the World War II and he had his jaw shot off.

MB: Oh, how awful.

DC: So he used to come to the store, and Nelson's, and Dalver's [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 2, 1:32].

MB: Was there a little Swedish community? I know there's Stockholm Avenue, but I don't know...

SC: Oh, we had quite a few. Mr. ah...., oh the Swede here, he was a bricklayer. And he built a chapel in our cemetery. He said, after he got through, he said, Steve, and he talked to the pastor and he says, I did something for you that I never done for anybody else. I said, what's that Mr. ah...what the heck's his name? And he says, I want you---you can tell them about that I built this chapel and everything else, but don't them how much I charged you for it. I said, why? He said, if anybody hears what I charged you for it, he said, they'll tell me I'm crazy. I said, why? Did you charge me too much? He said, Hell, no. I should've got twice as much. He cut stone and everything else. I don't know if you've seen it or not.

MB: You're talking about Saint Mary's now? The cemetery wall or what? Which, what are you talking about?

SC: Saint Peter and Paul.

MB: Oh yeah. I've seen it. Sure.

SC: My dad was...when he come on strike, he got all these fellows together and he says, come on, we're gonna' have a party. And he said, come Mr. [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 2, 3:02-3:06] one of the ringleaders too.

MB: Tell me about that and how that all... the church and the cemetery and everything.

SC: Well, we lost our church. Saint Mary's, they got the...

MB: The split in the church?

SC: Yeah. They got that there...

MB: What was that over? Can you tell me? Why was there a fight in the church like that?

SC: Well, the thing is, Uniates, that's Roman. The Pope in Rome, put a degree out that to be a member of the congregation of church, you had to be a member of the church. You had to be recognize the Pope as supreme. Our church does not recognize the Pope. We, we have a... the head of our church is down Constantinople. So, they had court cases coming on, and the first thing you know, they took the churches over. They told us, you're out. So, we lost our church. And when we built our... we used to have to go to church on Fourth Street, but that church burnt down. It burned down. I guess it's been burned down because...they tore it down later on. But, we got together, we went around looking for stone and everything else. And finally we decided to go ahead and get it built. So we built a church on High Street.

MB: I see. Was that hard to do? Was it hard to get the land? All of that?

SC: No. The Berwind-White Coal Company, because we were all coal miners and all that. They gave us land. Well, that land there, for the coal company, for the first church, we bought the land from the bank. Because Harding owned that land on Ninth Street and he lost some money or something like and the bank was going to close up on him. So we bought it for ninety-five hundred dollars.

MB: Where Saint Mary's is now you mean? No? Now, which one are you talking about now?

SC: On Ninth Street. You know where that stop light is? Well, there's an empty lot there next to Dimond's Funeral Home.

MB: Oh, Okay.

SC: Well, that used to be our church there.

MB: The one that burned?

SC: Yeah. You see, the parish house was down on the alley. It's still down there. And the front there, is empty.

MB: Tell me about getting your church going and your cemetery and everything.

SC: So, we got the people, as a whole... people are good. You just tell them what's the trouble, we got a group together, and we got all these fellows that worked in the mine, like old man [inaudible names, Tape 2, Track 2, 6:02-6:10] and one thing or another. They were all big guys, like my dad, he was six-four, and he says, we'll show them something. We'll stick together and build our own church. Within in a years' time, we had our own church up. And within eight years, we had our church paid for. And everybody couldn't understand how we did it. Then we got the, we went up after them and they wanted ground for the cemetery, so we went to the Berwind head office, [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 2, 6:48-6:52] interest in it, okay. So they fooled around and talked about it and give us promises and everything else. So, Andy [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 2, 7:00] and the other officers in the church, and I... we got one of our members—a surveyor, we got the land surveyed and everything else. And still no answer. So, we turned around and built a stone wall out in front, and cut the trees, big trees. We had big, high, fifty foot trees there, that were there. We cut them down and everything else. And leveled the ground. And after we had everything ready, we asked them to give the okay because we said we have all the place tore down and we have it all leveled off, ground cultivated, and planted grass on it. They said, you have it all done? You don't own it. I said, well, you promised. So, then in about two weeks we got a deed for it.

MB: Well, that was good. If it had turned out differently, it would be bad.

SC: The thing is, about five years later, we seen people were buying lots, so we took, same way, land's here nice, I says, you know in another twenty years we'll need more land. I said, let's ask for it now. So, we did the same thing. We got these fellows, they weren't, they were retired, you know, we cut out the land and everything else, and we just doubled it. They said, hey, you pulled

a trick on us. They said, we gave you that land and now you want some more ain't it? I said, that's what we're here for. He said, I tell you what, we're not going to give it to you, we'll sell it to you. I said, we're not pushing that. He said, that's your prerogative. I said, you...how much you want for it? He said, well, give us three thousand dollars. I says, you don't know how much we want. He said, whatever you want. I said, okay. So, we doubled it. Curved it, down and around. Did you see the land up there?

MB: Uh-huh.

SC: Got all that for three thousand dollars.

MB: So, you were really active in your church Mr. Conjelko?

SC: I was president from the time that...my dad told me, he said, well, what are we gonna' do when we [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 2, 9:22] off. All the young people are gonna' go to the city and looking for jobs and stuff like that. And he says, we are going to be building a church and we'll pay for it. And that Mrs. Shuster that was here, you know? You talked to her?

MB: Yeah.

SC: Well, her husband, his son...his brother was Joe and Steve Shuster. They...they said, we'll sign a note to get enough money to build a church. And all the men around, they all...and my dad, they all signed notes. And we got a contractor and they built the inside of it. Inside two years, we had a church there. No problems at all.

MB: And you were president right from the beginning? From the first years? So, when did you serve? Your office, your positions were. I've seen some of your awards and things, but just tell me so we have that.

SC: I was the president of the church. From the time they begin until...

MB: That was [19]36 when it was founded or [19]41, I guess. You got your watch that says that, doesn't it? (He showed me).

SC: 1941 to 1980. This here is just recognition of me being the president of the ACRY.

MB: That's the American Carpatho-Russian...

SC: Youth.

MB: Youth. Yeah, okay.

SC: But, see that was, we had the thing going, we used to have the Sons and Daughters of the Eastern Right before.

MB: Oh, I see. Tell me about that. I don't know much about that.

SC: They'd call a meeting and we had a meeting we went to in Pittsburgh and we organized and got all the youth, the Nicely's and [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 00:36] together. I had the biggest [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 00:40] at school. [Laughter]

MB: So they named you president, or head of it? [Laughter]

SC: Yeah. Some of the guys were sorry and some were not.

MB: [Laughter]

SC: So, they elected me president and from then on we had meetings, oh, quite a bit, books you see them.

MB: Uh-huh. Those are nice. Nice awards there.

SC: Huh?

MB: You have some nice awards there. That were given to you. Beautiful.

SC: Oh, I have more awards that I haven't put there because...

MB: Oh, no, you want to protect them

SC: It's a trademark. The first award that [Nicely] gave out was to Mr.....from Johnstown.

MB: I wouldn't know the name.

SC: Anyhow. And Mike [Goss] another one.

MB: And you.

SC: And me. And then there was the fellow there, he died in office. But, he was good. Just like that.[Snaps fingers] Forget it.

MB: Can you explain what the relationship between this church is and Johnstown Carpatho-Russian Church and the seminary? Was there...?

SC: The seminary down there is, aren't seminary, there aren't no priests. We helped them build it. We were one of the sponsors. And all our priests graduated from that seminary. And Father Ukinsen [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 3 2:26] was the pastor down at Mount [Seignior] used to be in Windber. He was my buddy. He was the guy that used to be...well, Steve, let's go. We're going out...Brooklyn today. Next day, he said, we're going down Philadelphia.

MB: Oh, you really travelled?

SC: We travelled. We travelled a lot. The only thing is...one thing I'm sorry about is, my wife, she wasn't feeling good she had cancer and she was a sick person. She never kept me from going. The only thing is she said, well, just take care of yourself. How many times I'd go to a meeting and I'd get a phone call that said your wife's not feeling good, you better come home.

MB: It was hard?

SC: It was tough.

MB: I bet. You put lots of time and energy into your church activities then. I guess you would call yourself religious, wouldn't you?

SC: I don't know. The thing is, we were one of the first ones around here that started bingos.

MB: Oh, were you? I didn't know that.

SC: Sure, I was president of the bingo group and I had darn nice workers. And we used to give the church a donation around about three thousand a year that we used to make from bingos. And I tell you, that three thousand dollars was a lot of money in those days. And I had good workers, good sponsors, and...

MB: You were very important in getting that church built and running it.

SC: I used to go down Pittsburgh, I used to go to these Jewish shops you know. We used to buy lace curtains, and we used to buy blankets, and used to buy...wash kits and stuff like that and display them on a stand in the hall. People used to come from all over. They wanted a certain thing and they'd play for it. And that's what we used to have. I had good ... I had John Rush, he was a...oh, he died, Mary Rush's husband, he used to give me a hand and work like a [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 4:50]. I said, John, bingo night, we used to have twice a week.

MB: Did you have bingo at the church or somewhere else?

SC: No, no. Down the hall.

MB: Down the hall? American-Russian club?

SC: I'm the president of that hall now.

MB: You're president of the American-Russian Club now?

SC: They wanted to take it away from us.

MB: Who does? Who wants to take it?

SC: The woman's...So, I told them. You can't put, you don't own, didn't work-ah...We took and paid everything off, the mortgage and everything. And I said, well, here, I think I done my

work, here's fourteen thousand dollars that we have left over. I said, that goes to the church treasurer, I said, I'm retiring. In a month's time, they bought forty thousand dollars' worth of silverware. They were going to make a catering service. And the pastor went along with it. He wanted to start the same thing that they had down there at the Christ the Savior cathedral down there, you know. You ever see that catering service?

MB: No, no, I didn't see it.

SC: They were going to do the same thing down there you know. And they were going to out-do them. I said, you can't do that. You don't have the people down here. I said, they have around fifty-thousand people in the neighborhood. They have something to draw from. I says, be yourself, don't worry about doing that. Three months, they were broke.

MB: What a pity. You left it in good shape and then....

SC: Well, they had a [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 6:33] and everything else. That's all paid for. But, down there...but, up here they tried to...I told them, I says, first, get the money in and then talk. We had a court case almost...we had two lawyers... [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 6:53].

MB: Same thing. Well, no, it isn't and we'll let you...what you've said about that. Anyway.

SC: The thing is, sometimes, you have misery. We used to have cash nights. When you come in, you couldn't have...if you didn't come early enough, you couldn't sit in.

MB: So, you were really successful. You drew in people then.

SC: Oh, we had nice crowds in there.

MB: When did you have bingo? When did you start this?

SC: It was the first time we had bingo in town.

MB: When did you have...when would that have been about, Mr. Conjelko?

SC: Used to be Tuesday's and Thursday's. It was twice a week.

MB: Was that in the [19]30s or the [19]40s or....1930s or 1940s or...?

SC: To tell you the truth, I don't know.

MB: Oh, okay. I just wondered about that.

SC: No, no. Back then, we had...that was the mainstay of our church.

MB: I see. Okay.

SC: Because we had no income coming in. Guys weren't working. And these people used to come in from all over, even from Johnstown.

MB: Yeah. Come to that, yeah. I was trying to think what else I wanted to ask you about Windber.

SC: And we started ACRY, we, ah, we had the first meeting here in Windber. And then we invited the Johnstown group, we had it in Johnstown. We got a bigger attendance. And then we spread it out and went as far as Pittsburgh.

MB: But, it began really with you and Windber? The idea of it?

SC: Well, we started around here because I found out that by going these different places, how these young people...we were isolated. The Roman Catholics had nothing to do with us. They [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 3, 8:45]. We went anyplace, they'd say, here comes the [inaudible slang term, Tape 2, Track 3, 8:49]. And that used to burn me up. I said, well show them. So we started having these affairs. We had one time, we got Mr. Smutko, and he was a captain in the Army. And I says, Mr. Smutko, you're a captain now? He was here visiting his mother. I says, tell you what, how about helping us out? He said, Mr. Conjelko, I can do for you, I'll do. What do you want me to do? I said, well, you got a lot of airplanes out there, how about bringing a squadron out here Sunday and we'll have a picnic and put on a demonstration. He said, I think that's a good idea. I said, well, I'd be proud to hold it. He said, if you'll bring the actors. He said, I'm going home and I'm going to call up the base. And he said, if he'd be allowed, I'll let you know. He went home and called up Washington, they give him the authority because it was at that time there was a war scare or something. So, Smutko, he got permission, he said, Steve, he said, two weeks. So, we passed the word around. And do you know, when them planes come out here and started putting on the maneuvers, they had...we were up the park, we were having a picnic. Them guys would come that...straight down, clear down until they almost hit the ground and then they flew back up. You couldn't get on the highway from Johnstown to Windber. And they...I told...

### **End of Tape 2 Side A**

### **Beginning of Tape 2 Side B (March 13, 1984)**

SC: I talked to those guys, how did you guys get them, how did you [inaudible, too much noise, laughter, Tape 2 Track 4, 00:03]

MB: Was this after World War II, Mr. Conjelko?

SC: No, before.

MB: Before World War II? Heaven's sakes. That's early with airplanes.

SC: So, no it was before the war.



MB: Well, I mean, you know, not really early. The planes have advanced so much during the war and after.

SC: After the first World War.

MB: After the first World War, oh boy.

SC: First war and then the second war. But the thing is, we have so many people come up even for days after that, they had come up to the park to see it. How we got so many planes up here. And I tell you, we had the talk of the town.

MB: I bet.

SC: Well, you talk to [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 4, 00:46]. He'll tell you.

MB: Was there ever any Russian sports team in town? Because some of the ethnic groups had their own baseball teams and things—was there ever a Russian one?

SC: Yeah.

MB: Was there? What was it called? What did you have?

SC: We played the...we had the Sokols. That's a lodge. We sponsored the...well, we weren't the winners, but the thing is, we sponsored the play off. The Meadowlands and a team from east, and they played up the park. And Mrs. Rush, she cooked the spaghetti dinner for all of them.

MB: Oh really. [Laughter]

SC: We didn't get anything out of it though. It was just honorary. And they thought...and top of it, the Sokols, the home office, they thought we were great for doing it because we publicized their lodge. And they thanked us a lot for that. Even now, the fellows down there in the home office, anytime they see me, they speak to me you know and any affairs we have. Sometimes, they have the president of the UCU lodge, he was running for office and he comes to George [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 4, 2:12] and me and he says Steve, we're having an election for the president of the lodge. It's the national and we would like you people to support us. So, George, I says, what have we got to lose? So, sure we'll line up. [Laughter] So, we got the Johnstown district, you know, we voted for him. He got in, he made it. He said, Steve, any time you want anything, let us know, we'll be glad to help you. He's still president of the headquarters. And they have a nice group down there in Pittsburgh. They have their own country club and it's expensive to get in.

MB: Do you ever get to go?

SC: No, I don't care for that.

MB: You mentioned elections. That makes me think. What were elections like when you were growing up in Windber? Even for president or for town things. Do you remember much about that?

SC: I was no politician. I helped out with the different ones that were running and asked for help, and why we would give it to them. But, outside of that, I was president of the Windber Borough School.

MB: Were you? When were you that Mr. Conjelko? [Laughter] About when? I know it's hard to place...

SC: The year after I graduated. No, about two years after I graduated.

MB: Okay, you would have...you were born in [19]06, so if you left...sixteen, twenty-two...after the strike in [19]22? Or before, after that?

SC: Yes.

MB: After that? So, you were there? Do you remember anything else about this strike? I guess some people were thrown out of the company houses. Do you remember any other stories or things about what went on during that?

SC: They didn't throw people out up there. Thing is, there were not very many that went on strike, they just closed up. One day, they wouldn't pay and they'd throw you out. But, those that were paying their rent they kept them.

MB: Because, I understand that there were tents. That some people lived in tents for a period of time during that strike.

SC: It may be, but I don't recall.

MB: You remember anything about that at all or the Coal and Iron Police? Or any stories from that time?

SC: The Coal and Iron Police, I remember seeing them out here in Windber. They used to strut up and down the street. Big tall, six foot guys, State Police, but outside of that...

MB: You don't remember any incidents or anything with them or?

SC: No. I never had any reason to be involved.

MB: You were in line, I guess.

SC: But, outside of that, it was rare that we had any trouble with the police at any time.

MB: I guess they did not have them anymore in the 1930s, I guess, with the union and Roosevelt came in and all of that?

SC: In 1932, they had strikes. They had a meeting right down here in Scalp. They had a lot of speakers and stuff like that, but they didn't get far. They listened and that's all. But there were no displays of any kind.

MB: What did your family think of the union? Of unions and so on?

SC: My Dad just told us, keep your nose out of it. When we had a store, we were organizing the store clerks and all that, my Dad says, let them go. We got, it was just the family you know? He says, you want to join a union? You? No? You? No? He said, okay, you are pretty good boys, give them all ice cream and then give them soda. When the guy from the union came up and saw my Dad treating them all like that, he said you'll never get in [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 4, 6: 38] with them guys. He said, take them out. So they pulled out the pickets. We weren't bothered at all.

MB: Did your family have any idea about the United Mine Workers though? That union? Not the other ones?

SC: No, because in 1922, we started building. We got out. We didn't bother.

MB: I just wondered. Do you have any impressions of FDR then and the things he did or John L. Lewis at all, living in a town that is a mining town? Do you have any feelings or thoughts about them?

SC: They didn't bother us, so we didn't bother them.

MB: [Laughter] Well, is it true that Windber was Republican until the 1930s, voted Republican, and then with FDR then it voted Democrat?

SC: That's right.

MB: Do you know anything about that? Is that right? That's what my impression is, but I'm not sure.

SC: Yes, the thing is, the company was Republican. And the only thing they wanted was a Republican. If you was a Republican, you got elected. And after that, when FDR got in, why, it was Democrats.

MB: Do you think the town changed a lot, like after FDR came in from the way it had been before? Or when the union...FDR comes in around the same time with the unions and the whole business. Do you think the town was a lot different before then and did it change a lot or not?

SC: Well, before that, whenever you didn't have the union, they had the Coal and Iron Police, and everything was Republican. But, after they got the union in, then they got a chance to vote to what they wanted.

MB: I see. I just wondered. Did you ever meet any of the Berwind family themselves? Because I guess, they didn't live here. Didn't they live in Philadelphia?

SC: Yes.

MB: Did you ever get to meet any of them? I haven't met anyone who's met them, but I don't know. They didn't live here so...

SC: The Whites and the Berwinds, they were mostly in Philadelphia. The only time they came into Windber, they come in on a special train.

MB: Oh really? I didn't know that, a special one, not the regular one?

SC: They would come out and they'd stay in the train. If they had any business to do, they would bring their own cooks and everything. Then they used to have...right in the top of the...where they had...you know where Eureka Stores is? At the top of the hill? That used to be the country club. That is where all the officials, when they used to come in, they used to go in there. They did not mingle with the town people.

MB: I see. Did they all sort of come from the outside then or they weren't townspeople themselves? They didn't rise up from the townspeople, they came from...

SC: No. Barefoot and Newbaker, them guys, they were all out of town, they were living here, like the general manager of the mines...

MB: Who was that? Newbaker or...?

SC: Newbaker.

MB: Yeah. Okay.

SC: He come in Windber, only on special occasions. But, he stayed down Philadelphia. Then they, like the company houses and everything else, they were on the outskirts.

MB: And I guess there was a Burgess, right? Ben Burgess? Was that the most important person in the town in the old days?

SC: Wayne [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 5, 00:08] He was the...he was on standby. He was elected and he stuck there to the last. And he was alone.

MB: Was he more powerful than the council? The borough council?

SC: Oh, yes. He'd tell you that, we don't want that--you moved it out. Because if you didn't you didn't have a job.

MB: Did the council have much power at all then? Was that elected? I guess that was elected.

SC: It was elected, but then the guy that were elected were the guys that were the company right-hand men.

MB: Oh, I see. That all changed as time went on, I guess? Is that how that worked? I was wondering if you could sing me a Russian song or something. I was just thinking. How about...could you sing the words to Ochi Chyornye for me? So I can have that? Do you know Ochi Chyornye?

SC: I know, Bob and I, you should get him. He knows how to sing that.

MB: Well, you can sing it too?

SC: He was in the choir. I can sing it, but I won't have accompaniment. I don't know it.

MB: Oh, you don't. Some other song? Could you sing another song? A Russian poem or something? What could you say for me in Russian that we could have?

SC: If I did, [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 5, 1:34].

MB: [Laughter] I mean, you've said some things before in Russian but, I'm just trying to think of what else we could get that...

SC: I used to sing in the choir.

MB: Did you?

SC: Oh, I was in the choir for about six years. We used to go out different picnics, dedications, and stuff like that. And out Johnstown, we used to go down into their...they used to have dedications and stuff like that.

MB: And you would have services in Russian and so on, all those years until recently?

SC: Oh, yeah. That was the law. You wasn't allowed to talk in...

MB: English?

SC: In the English because you're breaking the law. The rule was the [inaudible Russian term, Tape 2, Track 5, 2:39-2:42]. That's what they used to say. Well, when I worked in the store, some of the people couldn't speak English, and when any of them wanted to meet the Druzby's, they'd come to Mike or me, and talk to us. My brother, Joe, he understood them, but couldn't speak.

MB: In other languages you mean?

SC: No, in Russian.

MB: Russian, I see.

SC: Mike, he used to go with a Hungarian girl. He couldn't speak Hungarian. And I could understand Hungarian—some of it, but I couldn't speak it.

MB: When you were growing up Mr. Conjelko, could a Hungarian marry a Russian? Or a Roman Catholic marry a Greek Catholic or not? Tell me how that changed over time.

SC: Look, if you wanted to get married, there was nothing there to stop you. The law doesn't say that you're not allowed, but they happened to marry. And then sometime, you had no say-so to it. You married them. Now, the only thing is, we had trouble when we were kids. These, Johnny-bulls, they'd come around. We used to have Sunday services you know, Sunday evening vespers. And the people used to go to church. There was no place else to go. They had no automobiles. So, they all used to go to church and well, I used to go too. These Johnny-bulls used to come up and go right down here to the Slovak church. They'd line up along the sidewalk. They'd park their cars and they'd just stand there. When the church people would come out of the church...them people, they'd didn't ride in automobiles, they walked. And they used to meet these girls and they used to try and get them to go with them in the cars. Well, some of them. Nice girls. Beautiful girls. They made a monkey out of them. Especially with the Polish girls. I know Mrs. Standish, she come up one day, and we had a store right down there, she come up and she said, what are you bunch of Johnny-bulls want here? Why are you picking on the girls? She run them all out. She said, you won't meet them on the main street or any place. When you come down here, where it's in the dark, you try to get these girls to go along with you. And they had cars. We didn't. So, she used to run them off.

MB: Was it hard in school too? With the Johnny-bulls?

SC: No.

MB: No, it wasn't? That wasn't so bad?

SC: We took care of that.

MB: How did you do that? [Laughter] I have a feeling there's a story here.

SC: We didn't take no sass off of them. We used to come from school and they would push us off the sidewalk. You know, before they used to have ditches. And we used to live in the East End, there was a big tenant house. And we'd be walking along that house, and these big guys, big, smart guys, they were just a couple years older than we were. And they'd push us. [Banging table] Well, it lasted for about a year. So, one day, they were pushing us off the sidewalk, and this kid pushed me off and pushed me in the ditch. And I landed there and there was a hatchet

right there. And I picked that up, and I give this kid, I got up and I said, you pushed me boy. I said, you're paying for it. He said, what are you going to do about it? I said, nothing, just this. And I hit him right in the head with it. Knocked him out. I thought I killed him.

MB: Oh boy. You must have been scared.

SC: Blood was going down the side. So, I went up on the hill. Afraid to go home. My brother come after me and he said, Steve, you can come home. You didn't kill him.

MB: [Laughter] You were quite relieved, I guess?

SC: I was afraid the cops come straight for me. But, that was the best thing that could've happened.

MB: It ended the problems then, I guess?

SC: From then on, they never bothered us.

MB: Did you think that some of the American born people were...the English-speaking people, were they able to get better jobs than some of the...? Cops? Can you give some examples or something? You want to explain that?

SC: Just [inaudible name, Tape 2, Track 5, 8:08]. He was a Johnny-bull. He was nice.

MB: So, that must've been really hard on these people. Did you speak any English went you first went to school, incidentally, or did you speak Russian at home? Tell me about that. Was that hard? I bet?

SC: It wasn't hard. The only this is, we didn't understand nothing.

MB: Did your teacher get mad?

SC: No, no. The teacher was pretty sensible. She turned around and give us paper and crayon, and then she'd give us something to draw or paint. Well, the first year, that's all there was. Second year, they'd give you something to say a little bit. The third year was when we started reading out of the books.

MB: I bet it was hard?

SC: My brother, he come home and the teacher give a coin so him so he could draw it on a paper. And he brought it home. Them were the days though. The teacher would ask, boy, what's your name? Johnny. Well, what's your name? Johnny. All he knew was, Johnny. And I used to laugh. I'd see that kid and I'd say, hey, Johnny. He got over it. But, he was a drunk. But, when we went to church, we had church trouble here, he used to call us, [inaudible slang, Tape 2, Track 5, 9: 46].

MB: What does that mean? Roughly equivalent? I don't know that word. It's a curse word I presume?

SC: No. It's, you know those fellows in Russia that have the long beard?

MB: Cossacks?

SC: Not Cossacks. They have a long beard, you know, and...

MB: Oh, I know who you mean. The Asians? The nationality. I see.

SC: They used to call them [Cutsops, inaudible slang, Tape 2, Track 5, 10:19].

MB: I know who you mean now.

SC: They weren't the more intelligent. They were just a rough gang. They'd say, here come the Cutsops. They classed us because we broke away from them. We never paid attention to them. That hurt.

MB: Did anyone ever talk about the Russian Revolution? What was going on in Russia then?

SC: No.

MB: Did anyone call anyone Bolsheviks in town or anything like that?

SC: Well, if they did, nobody ever paid attention.

MB: I just wondered if they kept much in touch with the old country, what was going on. Well, that wasn't the old country because Austria-Hungary was the old country, but the Russian language was I guess....yeah. I don't know, Mr. Conjelko. Is there anything else that we've forgotten that you want to tell me about? Life in Windber? If you want somebody to understand what life was like here in the old days?

SC: I better not tell you.

MB: [Laughter] Oh, do, please. It sounds like it's going to be juicy.

SC: Just the regular life of a country place, that's all. If you asked for it, you got it. If you wanted to see things, if you looked hard enough, you'd find it.

MB: Okay. So what do you like about Windber, Mr. Conjelko?

SC: It's my home.

MB: Anything else you like about it particularly?



SC: It gave me a living. Well, I tell you. If you go around these country towns, mining towns, and see what they have, and see what you have, you're glad you were living in Windber. Because I've been around. I tell you, some of these places, it's really like stepping into another country.

MB: They look so depressed today.

SC: Who?

MB: The mining towns around. Very economically depressed today.

SC: You take like some of these places you go, they don't even have good sidewalks or roads or homes. Some places where they have a good living, they have beautiful homes. But, outside of that?

MB: Is there anything you don't like about Windber?

SC: Maybe.

MB: [Laughter] You can tell me. Well, everybody must have both feelings. Good things and the things they wish were different or something. What would you like to see that...Is there anything?

SC: Nope.

MB: No. Okay.

SC: We have nice people. We get along with. And, I get along with everybody. You know, if you ask for it...If you ask, you'll get what you're asking. And sometimes, when you're looking for trouble, you'll get it. And if you take and meet the guy halfway, you can avoid a lot of trouble. I know. I've been there.

MB: You have lots of experience.

SC: I mean, I've been the president of the church there during them rocky years, and I'll tell you something, they were pretty rough.

MB: I guess that was pretty bitter. That split.

SC: Well, when you take a woman around about 40 years old and she gets hysterical because somebody says, he's got a knife, watch them. And she screams and says, oh my God, he's got a knife, he's going to hit you! You know, she jumps on his back and they had to get two men just to pull her away. And the guy, no way she seen that in him because he wasn't that type.

MB: And he didn't have a knife?

SC: No. In fact, we never had a fistfight or anything at our meetings, but it was pretty bitter. Some of the time. They were...

MB: Is it healed over now?

SC: Well, a lot of them. There's only some of them, every once in a while you get a diehard that mentions [inaudible, Tape 2, Track 6, 4:00].

MB: The younger people probably don't have the vested interest in it anymore.

SC: You don't even pay attention to him.

MB: Well, I want to thank you very much.

[Break in recording]

MB: That will be a nice little story about singing and someone. Just tell me again.

SC: We used to have folk singing and stuff like that. When we'd have our church picnics and group together. Or even in the cemetery, we used to have like on Memorial Day and they'd have an outing like that you know. They'd have sandwiches and things out for people. And they'd get a group together and dancers, at these pavilions. And you'd take our group, we got a nice bunch of group, singers, dancers. You ever see them dancers?

MB: Yeah, I have. It's beautiful. I guess you get the tamburizans from...?

SC: No, no, we have our own...

MB: You do?

SC: No. The choir singers. They had their own Kozan dancers.

MB: They still do now?

SC: Yes.

MB: I haven't seen them lately.

SC: You outta' see them. Around about eighteen?

MB: Oh, I would love to.

SC: And sixteen. They dance for school. High school. They have their plays.

MB: You'll have to tell me the next thing you hear about that. You'll have to tell Pete for sure or something.

SC: Well, Pete knows.

MB: He should. I'd like to go see some of those.

SC: Now, during the summertime coming, you going to be around here?

MB: I'll be in and out, but I don't know exactly when yet. I will be coming back. Right. Is there a time? A certain month or a week or something when some of those things are planned? Maybe I can work to come back for that if it's going to be at a certain time.

SC: The thing is, they have a Russian Day down in Kennywood. And they have these different dancers from different churches. That would be nice. Especially if you have like, Homestead, when they put on a show and they have the top dancers. And, some they even around here, we bought on Sunday, we bought a school bus...not a school bus, one of these here cars, ah, vans. We'll take a whole, oh around about twenty, twenty-five people when they have that for the choir for when they're traveling. They'll be going out different places. But, you take in the summer time, that'd be an ideal, to have this. And you take a guy that has a movie camera. Well, that's ideal.

MB: I'll try to do that if I can find out when it is. That would be nice. When you know, be sure you tell Pete and tell Pete he's to tell me. Or you can contact me directly, too, but tell Pete. You won't tell me anything if I'm married right? [Laughter] Do I have to...well, you don't believe in divorce I bet? It's all right. It's just fun anyway.

SC: [Inaudible, Tape 2, Track 6, 7:40] I'll catch it up to you later.

MB: I don't think so. Oh, boy. Yeah, well, Mr. Conjelko, thank you so much. It's been really...I'll let it run to the end. I know we're both finished. It's just got a minute or two on it. You've just given me a wonderful interview. I wish you would say something in Russian now.

SC: [Inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Tape 2, Track 6, 8:06]

MB: [Inaudible, Repeats what was said, Tape 2, Track 6, 8:13]

SC: Talk in Russian.

MB: [inaudible, Attempts to speak in Russian, Tape 2, Track 6, 8:20-28]

SC: [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Tape 2, Track 6, 8:28]

MB: [inaudible, Speaks in Russian, Tape 2, Track 6, 8:33-8:41]

SC: See, the trouble is, whenever you translate it, the way you say it, isn't the way you want it. Sometimes you think, if you only knew what you were talking about, you won't say it. Right?

MB: Right.

**End of Tape 2 Side B (March 13, 1984)**

**End of the Interview**

Transcribed by: Valetta M. Keener-Shuppe, February 11, 2015