

INTERVIEWS WITH PETER "PETE" GERULA

Windber, PA

By Mildred Allen Beik

February 26 and March 15, 1984

MB = Mildred Allen Beik

PG = Peter "Pete" Gerula (June 10, 1923-November 23, 2009)

Beginning of Interview on February 26, 1984

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A (February 26, 1984)

PG: Well, you tell me when to start.

MB: Yeah. Why do you go ahead and start now. Just you tell me what your name is?

PG: My name is Pete Gerula. I was born in 1923. June 10. Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

MB: What town were you born in?

PG: Paint Township which is RD 2, Windber, Pennsylvania.

MB: Okay. That identifies you. Alright. Would you tell me where your mother was born? Was she from Windber too or what?

PG: No. She was born in Austria. Galicia.

MB: Do you know the name of the place over there where she was born?

PG: The town itself, let's see, it's...

MB: What is it?

PG: Galicia.

MB: Okay. And where was your father born?

PG: He was also born in Galicia, Austria.

MB: Was he born in the same place your mother was?

PG: Yes.

MB: Same place? Did they know each other there then?

PG: Yeah.

MB: In Galicia they knew one another?

PG: Yeah. They knew each other. Yeah.

MB: Before they came to America, they knew one another?

PG: Yeah. My dad worked on a farm there for some Jewish people.

MB: And he met your mother there?

PG: Well, where he lived on the farm.

MB: Did they get married in Europe then?

PG: No, they got married at Mine 35.

MB: So, when did your father come to America?

PG: 1906.

MB: 1906. And did he come right to Windber or somewhere else?

PG: Ah, he came to Windber and then he went to Ralphton. Then he came back to it.

MB: Some people went to Clearfield.

PG: He went to Coalport which is in Clearfield County.

MB: Had he been in Clearfield at some point?

PG: Not that I know of, no.

MB: He wasn't married to your mother there right?

PG: No.

MB: He came as a single man? Do you know why he came when he did? Are there any family stories about that?

PG: I never heard why he came here, but evidently, he knew my mother before that. After a while he lived here, he had someone write a letter and told her to come. Some of them say he met her here, but he knew her before.

MB: What was the village that they were from like? Do you know anything about that? Did they talk about that? Were they farmers there or was it a town?

PG: Yeah. He worked for a farm.

MB: Did his parents own land?

PG: Yeah. They had a small farm.

MB: Do you know how old he was when he came, about? Do you know when he was born? What was his birth year?

PG: 1888 and he came in 1906.

MB: Oh, so he'd have been eighteen? [Phone rings]

[Break in Recording]

MB: We were talking about your father and him coming here, do you know if he ever went to school in Galicia before he came?

PG: He went two years to school. Grade school.

MB: Did your mother go to school at all?

PG: She went some yeah, but she could write pretty good.

MB: Did she work when she was growing up do you know or anything about what she did before she came to America?

PG: She cleaned house- housework, that's all.

MB: For her family's house? Do you know anything else about this area that they lived in in Europe before they came here? Anything else they ever talked about like relatives or anything?

PG: Well, my dad's two brothers... There were only two that I know of.

MB: Did he come from a large family do you know?

PG: [inaudible]

MB: Huh. Did somebody from the family come to the United States before he did?

PG: No, my dad was the first one.

MB: He was the first one? Did he ever talk about why he decided to come like when he heard about America from someone?

PG: Trying to think. No.

MB: That's okay. I just wondered because sometimes people talk about those things, but I guess sometimes they just assumed them. That's fine. So, he came in 1906 to Windber, then to Ralphton, then back to Windber again. What did he do for a living when he came

here?

PG: He went in the mines for two [months].

MB: In the Windber mines area?

PG: Yeah. He worked for [Mines] 42, 36, 35.

MB: How long was he mining during his life then?

PG: I think forty-two years.

MB: So, he was here very early in the town then? You must remember a lot of things so, when did your mother come? How did she come or how did your parents meet again? So, he asked somebody to send her? Is that what you...?

PG: Somehow, they had communications, but they'd never tell you. One time they'd say this, one time they'd say that. But, they had what was like steamship agents. You'd send arrangements. My dad knew when my mother was coming, supposed to come. He made arrangements to make sure she was on that ship. Then, they would get in touch with my dad. They had like steamship ticket agents. I don't know if you've ever heard of them?

MB: Tell me about it because I don't know much about that.

PG: Men made contacts here. Say they wanted so many men for a job here. Say, in the mines. Okay, then the steamship agent-ticket agent would get in touch with a fella in Austria, or Poland, wherever they might be wanting to come from. You know, they had contacts already. Then these steamship agents here, they'd make a few bucks on the side for doing all this work. Lining jobs up and this and that.

MB: Is that how your dad came then?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Did he work through a steamship?

PG: No. The guy he worked for was a Jewish fella. He paid for his ticket. Then when my dad went to work, he sent him and paid him back.

MB: I see. Must've been fairly typical. So, he was the first one in the family to come? Did he ever go back then to visit his family?

PG: No.

MB: He never went back? He just stayed in Windber and worked? And did your parents have a wedding some place that they talked about? Where were they married? Did they

talk much about that?

PG: Let's see. It must've been St. Mary's Church. Yeah. St. Mary's Church.

MB: In Windber?

PG: Yeah. My neighbor, Dave Birchall, he brewed beer in two courses.

MB: For their wedding?

PG: Yeah. I think he said that they had thirty-five barrels of whiskey. Ah, beer. Because beer was made in Windber then.

MB: Oh, at the brewery company.

PG: Thirty-eight gallons. Kegs.

MB: They were married at St. Mary's at the Byzantine? Not the Hungarian right?

PG: Yeah. It was called St. Mary's Greek Russian.

MB: And had your parents both been Orthodox or Greek Catholic in Europe? Which one had they been?

PG: Greek Orthodox.

MB: So then, they went to St. Mary's here and got married. Was it a big wedding? Must've been if they had that much beer.

PG: They said it was big. I don't know.

MB: Well, did they have many children then? They didn't? Your parents didn't have many children?

PG: Oh no. Not when they got married.

MB: No, I didn't mean that. I meant later [Laughter].

PG: Oh yeah. There was Ann, the oldest one.

MB: I thought you were gonna' deny there were any children. I thought you were gonna' be a little stubborn here. Tricky. So, how many were there in your family then?

PG: Some of them say there were twenty. Some of them say there were nineteen. Eleven girls and nine boys.

MB: Now you have a hard task because you have to name them all for me. In order of birth if you can.

PG: I'll try as close as I can. There was Ann, Mike, Catherine, Andy, Mary, Margaret, Frank, Polly, Nick, Andy, Anita, and Allen, and Molly.

MB: You didn't say Alec.

PG: I missed one. Okay. Andy should be up here some place.

MB: I have Ann, Mike Catherine...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight...I have fourteen. Were there two Andy's in your family?

PG: Just one Andy. There was two Mary's. One Mary died and then my mother had another girl.

MB: That's still not nineteen.

PG: No, I know. Oh, Verna, she was between Mary and Catherine. Oh, Mike, he was there. Helen.

MB: Yeah. There was Helen.

PG: Polly.

MB: I have sixteen here so far.

PG: [inaudible. Too much loud background noise].

MB: So, that's seventeen. Well, we'll have to think about this maybe then. The whole family. But we can verify it was a big family anyway. Boy, I don't know how your parents managed with so many.

PG: We never starved.

MB: How did your father work then? Did he work in the mines full-time?

PG: He worked in the mines full-time. He worked on the farm.

MG: Oh, when did he do that? About?

PG: About 1920.

MB: 1920.

PG: Before I was born.

MB: Before you were born? Were you born on the farm actually?

PG: Yeah.

MB: So, did he try to farm and mine then?

PG: Yeah.

MB: How long did he try to do both those things?

PG: To 1946.

MB: Then what did he do? Not [19]46.

PG: No, not [19]46. [19]54.

MB: [19]54. So, he stopped working in the mines in [19]46?

PG: Wait. He stopped working in the mines in [19]43 when I went into the service. He stopped working in the mines. Then he was a full-time farmer until about [19]54.

MB: Then he retired?

PG: Yeah.

MB: And, did your mother have any jobs outside the home?

PG: No, earlier when she was married, she had boarders.

MB: How many? Do you have any idea?

PG: There were six or seven.

MB: That was before they bought the farm? Where did they live before the farm?

PG: I think it was around [Mine] 36.

MB: What language did you parent's speak?

PG: Well, it was Russian, but it wasn't the strong Russian.

MB: What about English? Did they? When your father came, did he know any English?

PG: No, he didn't know anything. My mother, she picked it up after they were here probably ten-fifteen years.

MB: Must've been hard.

PG: Yeah. They had some interpreters here, you know.

MB: Was there a Russian community here?

PG: No, not really. They were scattered all over.

MB: They were able to manage and speak somehow anyway? They never went to school or anything when they got here? What they had learned, they had learned... Did they speak anything besides this Russian? Any other languages?

PG: Oh, they could speak broken Polish or Slovak.

MB: So, when you were growing up, what language did they speak in the house?

PG: Mostly Russian.

MB: So, did you also learn English from them or did you have to learn English when you went to school?

PG: Well, I don't know how I done it, but I...there were enough English people around that I stuck with English. Still couldn't understand it, you know.

MB: Did you feel more close to one of your parents then? Did you feel particularly close or distant to your mother and father?

PG: Oh well, with a big family, you can't get close to them when you have a bigger family. I didn't get that close. We had more children.

MB: Did you have to work a lot when you were growing up? What was that like to grow up? I guess you grew up on a farm right? When you were a child?

PG: I grew up on the farm. We got up at 5:30, first thing you do is milk the cows. We sold milk to the dairy. At one time, we had our own milk route. That was before I was old enough to milk.

MB: What was your milk route like? Did you go through town or...?

PG: Yeah. We just had Mine 35 and Mine 36. We'd go around with a horse and buggy. That was late [19]20s, early [19]30s.

MB: You helped with that? Did you do any other chores on the farm?

PG: Yeah. All the farm chores. All the work. They were regular farm chores.

MB: Did you help plow or with the animals or...?

PG: We plowed with horses. We didn't have no tractor.

MB: Did you have many animals?

PG: We usually had about fifteen milk cows, younger ones. About seventy-five chickens, maybe. Twenty-thirty pigs.

MB: And you drove the horse and buggy and sold certain things? Anything besides milk?

PG: Yeah. We'd sell corn, beef, potatoes. We used to raise about twenty thousand bushel of potatoes a year. We had people that were buying in [Mine] 35 or [Mine] 36 and they'd come out and help us pick. They used to stay a whole week.

MB: They did? Where did they sleep then?

PG: In the barn, on the porch.

MB: They came up and you remember them doing that? What was your farm house like then in the 1920s? Do you remember it when you were a child? Or around 1930, you'd be six or...?

PG: We didn't have no electric lights or anything. It was all kerosene. Had a coal stove for cooking, hot air furnace.

MB: Did you have running water in the house?

PG: No. We didn't have no running water.

MB: Where did you go to get water from?

PG: We had two wells. Just pump our water.

MB: So, how did your mother work? What was housework like? What did she have to do?

PG: We had a wooden type of washer that had a handle on it, that would turn the wheel, and that would turn the agitator. That's how they washed clothes. That's how the agitator washed clothes. By working that handle back and forth. Then later on we got a gasoline Maytag washing machine with a motor on it.

MB: Must've been hard work though.

PG: Well, you got the motor going, it was alright. 'Course, the washer was in the house and you had a hose that stuck outside so you didn't get all the [inaudible].

MB: So, you started helping out with all the odds and ends and things around the house and the farm then. What about going to school? Did you go to school in Windber then?

PG: No. Here. Out here in [Rummel].

MB: In Rummel?

PG: In Rummel out here, there was a one room school house. One room.

MB: Where was this? I don't know about this.

PG: Well, you go down that road where your mother, Bertha lived. Right at the top of the hill there. It's a house now.

MB: Oh, there was a one room school house there? I didn't know that.

PG: There were eight grades and one teacher. Some years, there were sixty-five students and there was just one teacher.

MB: Were they all from the farms?

PG: They were all from the farms.

MB: So, what was your school like beyond that? Did you walk to the school then and back?

PG: Yeah. We walked. They didn't have no school buses then.

MB: So, what was the day like in the school here? Did you have to do chores and then go to school?

PG: Yeah. First you done the farm chores and school started at 8:30. Then you got out at 2:30. You had one hour for lunch and two weeks [inaudible].

MB: Was this about the same for your brothers and sisters? Did they go to the same school?

PG: Some of them, my older brothers went up across [inaudible] Park and took the short cut back to [Mine] 40 out there. And my sisters did too.

MB: Older sisters?

PG: Yes. In fact, Ann went down Mine 41, there used to be a school there.

MB: She had to go that far to go to school?

PG: Well, we were in between Huffman Crossing and [inaudible].

[Inaudible, Tape 1, Track 3, 2:40-3:00]

MB: Well, I didn't know that. Some of those buildings aren't there anymore or else they're used for something different.

PG: Well, Mine 41 used to be right across there from where we live now. Before it was that way then the school changed hills.

MB: I didn't realize that there were that many one room school houses around that don't exist anymore.

PG: Oh, there were a lot of them. The buildings still exist. People just made homes out of them.

MB: So, how long did you go to school?

PG: After I graduated from grade school and then I walked two years in high school. Then I quit.

MB: Why did you quit at the time?

PG: Well, my dad needed work at home and I'd been walking four miles one way every day. In the wintertime especially, it's rough. There were no school buses.

MB: Was there anything that you had wanted to do with your life? Did your father want you to become a farmer? Did he want you to become a miner? All this time, he's working in the mines too, right? And in the farming? So, did he have something he wanted you to be?

PG: No. He never...all he knew was work, work, work.

MB: Same for your brothers and sisters?

PG: Same way. He felt that a woman's job was in the house. She didn't need to be educated.

MB: Did your mother agree with that?

PG: Well, sometimes.

MB: Well, what about your sisters? What did they think about all of that?

PG: Well, they wanted an education.

MB: What about your older brothers and sisters? Did they leave school at a certain time? You brothers and sisters?

PG: Yeah, they, well, I don't remember how many years my brothers Mike and Andy...when they were young, Andy got killed in Mine 36. He was eighteen years old.

MB: So when he went into the mines, how old was he?

PG: I think he was eighteen.

MB: Whenever he started in the mines? Had he been working there long?

PG: No, he didn't work there long. Just a couple months.

MB: Had he gone into work...sometimes fathers worked with their sons in the mines.

PG: Yeah. He worked with my dad.

MB: Oh, he did? It must've been an awful experience for...

PG: A piece of rock came down. They got the rock off of him and they took him to the hospital and he died, I think six weeks later. I was only about eight-nine years old then.

MB: That must've been hard on the family then?

PG: I can remember, see before, they used to keep the bodies at the homes instead of the mortuary.

MB: So, you remember the funeral rather well? Was this an Orthodox funeral?

PG: Yeah. St. Mary's Cemetery.

MB: Did you have some other brothers and sisters who died? Like were there some diseases or something? Were there any epidemics or anything?

PG: Like Nick and Alec, they died in the [inaudible], that's what they said. I almost died of it myself. I think that was like [19]27 or [19]28. I remember scarlet fever and whopping cough then. That was the epidemic. And my sister Verna, she was in an automobile wreck and she had a bad head injury. Then, she was good for a while and then she died probably 1942. She got cancer or something from that. That's what her doctor said.

MB: So what did some of your other brothers and sisters do for a living? Did many of them go in the mines?

PG: Well, my brother Mike went, Frank.

MB: And Andy? What about Mike and Frank? Were they very old when they went in the mines?

PG: It was 1920.

MB: What did some of your other brothers and sisters do?

PG: Well, my sisters, they done store work. And my oldest sister, Ann, she done housework in New York City.

MB: She left here?

PG: Yeah. She left here when she was young. My sister Catherine went there too, but she came back. She didn't stay there.

MB: Did they have relatives or someone there? How did they leave your parent's home?

PG: I don't know how they made connections. I think a friend of Ann's left and then she lined up work up there.

MB: How old were you when you left your parents on the farm? Or did you go out on your own before and at least they do now...

PG: Oh no. After I started working at the store I still stayed there. I worked two or three years at the stores, then World War II started, and then I went to the service. Then I came back. I still stayed there. [Inaudible]

MB: When was that?

PG: 1952. [Laughter]

MB: What was your first paying job outside of your parent's?

PG: When they were doing Route 56, I was working for Harrison Construction. That was one or two years' worth of work

MB: Then you did something after that? You hauled for the stores?

PG: Then I hauled coal for the strip jobs. Then I started to drive truck for the stores. 1944.

MB: Can you tell me what kind of a job that was in those years before you went into World War II.

PG: Well, I hauled explosives to the mines.

MB: On a horse and buggy or...?

PG: No, a regular truck. After I got through with explosives, I'd haul furniture. [Inaudible] And on Saturday's, I'd haul groceries.

MB: Was this for the Eureka Store in Windber? What was it like working there then? Were you paid well?

PG: Well, I wasn't paid the highest, but you didn't starve, you know. But then again, forty-five cents an hour.

MB: And you grew your own food at the farm I presume?

PG: Yeah. And I worked at the stores six months and they gave me a twenty cents an hour

raise. Which was a lot of money then for the early [19]40s.

End of Tape 1 Side A

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (February 26, 1984)

PG: Oh, my parents were real strict. They'd tell you to be in at ten o' clock, you better be in. If you weren't, they were standing with a razor strap at the bottom of the steps.

MB: Your dad presumably? Did you mother agree with these?

PG: Oh yeah. She agreed.

MB: Well, what kinds of childhood memories do you have? Your parents, and brothers, and sisters, and this large family?

PG: Oh, a lot of good memories because before neighbors used to get together, everyone. In the evenings, some of them had instruments, they'd play instruments. We'd sing, we'd have corn roasts.

MB: Did you do anything in fall or harvest time then?

PG: We'd husk corn. Have a corn husking party.

MB: At your place?

PG: Yeah.

MB: How many people would you get together?

PG: At least twenty or thirty [Phone rings].

[Break in recording. Recording becomes audible]

MB: So, you were telling me about some fall harvest times when people got together and childhood memories and things?

PG: We used to have corn husking parties. We'd haul the corn in the barn and we'd husk it in the barn. We'd have a bunch of young couples. My mother would have apple pie ready, sandwiches. The best part of the party was if you'd get a red ear, that way you got to kiss any girl you want to or if a girl got a red ear, she got to kiss any boy she wanted.

MB: Was this something that developed in America or was this some custom that they had in Europe?

PG: Oh no. I imagine this was an America custom. The neighbors used to do the same thing.

MB: What other childhood memories do you have?

PG: Well, we used to have about two corn roasts a week in the fall. In the summertime, we'd have wiener roasts. We'd get together two or three evenings a week. Neighbors would have a guitar or banjo. We'd sing till about ten or eleven o'clock. Go home, go to bed, then the next morning work all day then go singing again.

MB: Did your parents sing then?

PG: No, just the younger group. The single ones.

MB: Did you sing English songs or Russian songs?

PG: English songs.

MB: In your home life, did you sing songs that were different kinds of songs.

PG: Yeah, at home we'd...like the brothers and sisters.

MB: What would you sing?

PG: Oh, we'd sing church songs that were used in different plays. I sang in the church choir for about fourteen years.

MB: So, where did you go to church then when you were growing up? At St. Mary's where your parents were married then?

PG: I went to my first communion at St. Mary's. Then they had churches...different ones broke away from St. Mary's church, then they went to St. Peter and Paul Eastern Orthodox Church.

MB: Oh. They founded a new one and split up?

PG: Yeah. 1936.

MB: And your family went with the new one? This St. Peter and Paul's? Do you know what the issues were at the time? Why was there this big split?

PG: Well, some of them wanted to be under the bishop, and the Eastern Right didn't. They were under the bishop and the other group was under the pope.

MB: And your group went with the ones under the Eastern?

PG: Yeah. That was under the bishop. We didn't want to be under the pope. Same as Roman Catholics. We didn't want to be under the Roman Catholic jurisdiction.

MB: So, you would be under the jurisdiction of Constantinople then? So, you went to that

church and you went to communion. Did you have any other religious thing in childhood that you remember like that?

PG: Well, I was altar boy there for a while.

MB: And you were in the choir.

PG: And I was in the choir.

MB: What language did they speak at your church then?

PG: Oh, it was Russian.

MB: And they sang songs in Russian?

PG: Yeah. They sang...

MB: And your family sometimes sang?

PG: Oh yeah. Well, holidays, we knew all the religious...songs with the season. Christmas songs or Easter songs.

MB: Did you sing any other songs besides religious ones?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: Like what? Got any favorites?

PG: Ocha Chyornye.

MB: Would you sing some of that for me? I'd like to hear that.

PG: Not right now.

MB: Can you just sing just a little bit?

PG: I'll just sing a couple words. [Sings a little of Ocha Chyornye]. I used to know all of that. I haven't sang it for forty years.

MB: People don't do that the way they used to I guess.

PG: I need to get the words of it. I'd like to teach Linda that song.

MB: Well, that would be nice. So, there were enough people who spoke Russian that they could have church services in Russian, were there any other Russian groups? Was there a Russian club?

PG: Yeah, there was what you called the Russian Educational Club. They had their lodge

meetings there and society meetings. I was a good place for most of the church members to get together you know. Do a little BS'ing, talk, and...

MB: And was your father a member of the lodge? Do you know what lodge it was? What its name was?

PG: Greek Catholic Brotherhood Union. Whenever he was still at St. Mary's see? That part, they never did break apart.

MB: They kept the lodge.

PG: Because it was like and insurance. They had the monthly dues they paid twenty-five cents a month. That was for hospitalization, not hospitalization, but insurance.

MB: That was for if somebody died or...?

PG: Yeah. I think a policy was worth about five hundred dollars. But, you had to pay lifetime into it. It wasn't a twenty year endowment or nothing, you know.

MB: Yeah, I guess in those days, there weren't other forms of insurance?

PG: No. There was no insurance.

MB: So, your father had that and if he had died in the mines or something, there would've been that insurance?

PG: Yeah. They called it compensation.

MB: Did your father ever talk much about working in the mines? What the working conditions were like when he first came? He started in the mines in 1906? That's so early. A lot of things would change in time.

PG: Well, he did. Well, he said there were bad places and good places. Sometimes you had poor water that you had to work in. Then there was a lot of dead work that you never got paid. You got paid by the ton. And there was a lot of dead work. Like putting the track in-that was dead work and you didn't get paid. If what they had...they worked in what they called stumps, an area in the mine where there was no coal. It was like muck. And you had to dig that out and throw it in what they called a gob on the sides, you know. That was all dead work. They had what they called rolls, where the coal actually rolls, like this. It wasn't straight. Well, they'd have to dig that coal out and that hump, they'd have to dig out so the cars could go through. The coal cars.

MB: So, what was his job? Was he a loader or...?

PG: Yeah. Years ago, they didn't have machines to dig the coal. Before they put in a cut,

what they mean by cut is they dig about eight inches, twelve inches high then they dig underneath it and then mined it with a pick. Then they'd use black powder to shoot and maybe four or five ton of coal would come down at one time.

MB: Did he work a lot of hours in the day, do you know? When you were growing up? With this farm work, he did work a lot of the week at the mines?

PG: Before he went to work, he'd wake us up and make sure we got up in time to start milking and after he'd eat breakfast, he'd go to the mines. He'd tell us what to do during the day and he'd be home from work maybe about four o'clock and eat supper and then would go work more out in the farm.

MB: Did he work every day of the week then when you were growing up like that then?

PG: No. There wouldn't be a lot of work at the mines. A lot of times he'd work one or two days a week.

MB: So, he was able to supplement that with the farming?

PG: Yeah, with the farming.

MB: Now, if he was here in 1906, maybe he was here during the 1906 strike. Do you know? Did he ever talk about that at all? There was a strike in 1906. Do you remember him ever saying anything about that?

PG: Yeah. I heard him talk about it and other talking about it.

MB: 'Course you weren't born.

PG: Yeah, I was born then.

MB: Not in 1906.

PG: Oh, no.

MB: You don't remember him saying anything about that? When he talked about working in the mines and all that, did he have any plan or goals? Some people wanted to go back to Europe and buy land and some people were here for good or something. Did he have sort of any dream or thought, or plan that you know of?

PG: He never talked about going back or nothing there. He never had a goal. His goal was work. [Laughter]. No kidding. It was. That's all he knew. Like one of the girls wanted to get married...It's funny, he never picked who he wanted to marry the girls. He said, whoever you pick is yours. You made your bed, that's how you're going to sleep. Whenever you have problems, don't come to me. That's your problem. And he stuck by that. One of them would say, we're not getting along too good, something about

marriage. That's your problem! And he'd tell 'em off too.

MB: So, you don't remember him talking about the 1906 strike? Maybe he didn't know?

PG: He, himself...I heard fellas talking about it. I didn't pay much attention, but I heard fellas talking about it.

MB: Did he say anything about the 1922 strike? Do you remember any stories from childhood about that? That was another big one in this area-maybe the bigger.

PG: I heard him talking about it. See, I wasn't born until 1923.

MB: You don't really remember much?

PG: No. Later in years, fellas would talk in a bar about it.

MB: Is there anything else he'd say about the working conditions or anything in the miens at all that you grew up hearing about? You never worked in the mines, Pete, so you would've heard...just overheard things, but not actually in the mines.

PG: I was in the mines, but I never worked in them.

MB: Well, let's think about more then about your church and the holidays. Would you call your family a religious family?

PG: Oh yeah. We all went to church.

MB: Every Sunday?

PG: If you didn't go to church, you had to have a real good excuse.

MB: Like what would be a good excuse?

PG: You'd have to be dead, sick...

MB: Well, how did your family celebrate holidays? Did they do anything for New Year's?

PG: Well, not really. Not for New Year's because living out here, there was no place to go. We'd shoot off a bunch of guns, you know.

MB: Guns?

PG: At midnight whenever the New Year was coming in.

MB: Did you family have guns then?

PG: Yeah, sure.

MB: Were they hunting guns?

PG: Hunting guns. Twelve gauge shotgun.

MB: Did you go hunting as a child?

PG: Oh, yeah.

MB: Did your father hunt?

PG: No, he never hunted.

MB: But, you did and your brothers?

PG: Yeah. Frank and Mike and Andy.

MB: So, that was sort of how you celebrated New Year's?

PG: We'd have a party with the neighbors. The boys and girls would come and we'd sing and have some hard cider. Homemade brew. I made a little bit of white lightning.

[Laughter]

MB: What's white lightning I hate to ask? Is that homemade brew?

PG: Yeah, homemade whiskey. Moonshine.

MB: Well, what did your family do at Christmas time? Did they celebrate Christmas in the Orthodox manner or December 25th or how did they celebrate?

PG: No. January 7th.

MB: What was that like?

PG: My mother and dad, they done everything the old custom way. They'd put hay on our table, you know, the dining room table, and they'd put a tablecloth on top. And we had a shock of wheat in the corner with an axe by it. That's one of the church traditions, you know.

MB: What is that to signify, do you know?

PG: The Axe is to keep the Devil away and any intruders. Then we'd have straw on the floor and if you'd drink too much white lightning, you didn't have to worry about hurting yourself if you fall. [Laughter]

MB: Is that why they put straw on the floor?

PG: Probably not on the floor.

MB: So, what else would they do for Christmas?

PG: We'd have a big meal-Christmas Eve meal. Pierogi and fish and twelve different foods.

MB: Twelve different foods? Like what? Was it some traditional...?

PG: Yeah, traditional. Like pierogi, sauerkraut, fish, (I can't name them all) garlic was one that chased the Devil away. I'm not sure, onions, mushrooms, lima beans... That's only about seven or eight. There's twelve of them. I can't name them all right now. Bertha has them all written down because her and I would go through this every year, you know.

MB: Oh. We should get those so we can do that another time. So, what else? Did you have a big meal on Christmas Day or was this Christmas Eve? Did you go to church or...?

PG: Christmas Eve supper. Then we had to walk to church. It took us over an hour. Going down through Mine 41 through there. Pitch dark. There were no streetlights.

MB: You walked to church and have a mass of some sorts?

PG: Mass and it started at twelve and it lasted about an hour and a half. Then we'd get home maybe about three in the morning. Winter or summer. Well, this would be winter. It would be cold walking.

MB: Did you exchange any gifts at Christmas?

PG: Yeah, we'd exchange gifts. There wasn't too much exchange because you didn't have that much money to buy. See, we didn't get electricity until in the [19]30s. We had a kerosene lamp and we'd make, of course, our Christmas decorations for the tree.

MB: Like, how would you make them?

PG: Like, we'd link chains out of construction paper. We'd glue it together. And then we'd use that crepe paper to decorate from one corner to the other. And put icicles on it. We saved the silver from chewing gum to make icicles. We didn't have the money to buy it. We made our own popcorn because we raised our own popcorn.

[Break in Recording]

MB: That's all for tonight. But maybe you could continue with some stories about Christmas. Do you remember special Christmas' as a child?

PG: We'd have a big Christmas Eve supper and then following day, got done with our farm chores and then we went to church. Then in the afternoon, come home and eat dinner and about one o'clock or so. We'd have a big dinner then. Then there were religious holidays after that. What they called the Four Kings.

MB: Tell me about that.

PG: I don't know too much about that. It was a religious holiday when all the religious groups got together, you know.

MB: Different religions?

PG: No. Orthodox groups. I don't know the whole story about it. Later on, the priest would come around and bless the houses. Make pastoral visits.

MB: When did he bless the house?

PG: Wait. The Four Kings-that had something to do with blessing the water. Then whenever the priest would come to the house, then he'd use your water to bless the house. If you didn't have any, he'd always have his own too. They still do that.

MB: Do they? Did they do that this year to your house or...? So, you had that time like in January? What would be the next holiday you would celebrate? Would that be Lent or...?

PG: Something that would be about six weeks before Easter.

MB: How did your family celebrate that or how did they observe that I guess?

PG: We'd have what they call the blessing of the baskets. The Easter Midnight Mass, we'd have what they call paska, which was ham and cheese, eggs, butter, salt, garlic. You'd take that to church at midnight to bless it in church. Then Easter Day, all that blessed food, you'd have for dinner. There'd be kielbasa with it too.

MB: Did you have to fast during Lent?

PG: Oh yeah. Six weeks.

MB: So what was that like? Was it all the time you couldn't have meat or have meat at certain times or what?

PG: Some of them were stricter than others. You weren't allowed no meat on Friday's. On Friday, definitely no meat. Some people were stricter with the fast than other. If you

were working then, you had to eat more. Far as meat on Friday's...

MB: Regularly, you didn't have that?

PG: You didn't have it whether it was Lent or not.

MB: So, what else did you do? Any other with customs in connections with Easter? Are special Easter foods in there?

PG: For Lent, they'd give up like going to the movies, no dancing, no [inaudible], no drinking beer, alcoholic beverages. They'd give something up for Lent.

MB: Then on Easter Day, you got the food blessed and then you ate that that night? Did you have communion? Did you have confession?

PG: Yeah. That was a general thing you went to all the time.

MB: Was there anything else you did at Easter?

PG: There was one of the customs, it was years ago—Ducking Day. I don't know if you remember it or not?

MB: Tell me about that.

PG: On Monday's, we'd go from house to house. We'd get a bucket of water. Well, say there was a girl's turn. On Monday, you'd duck the fellows. They'd get a whole bucket of water and throw on the fellow, you know. Kids had a lot of fun. You'd get all wet. We'd chase each other for half a mile just to get maybe a quart of water on them. By the time you'd get there with the bucket, you'd lose...

MB: So, you did that yourself?

PG: Yeah. Girls used to come up to [Mine] 35 and fellows up here.

MB: And do that to you?

PG: Not only to me, but to Mike and Pat and Mary. All of them. And then, the following day, the girls would chase the boys with buckets and vice versa.

MB: Do you remember doing that?

PG: Oh yeah. It was called Ducking Day.

MB: Do you know when that stopped?

PG: It stopped about early [19]40s when World War II started. After that, fellas never went back to it.

MB: So, they did all that. Did you family celebrate May Day at all? Was there anything with that? Nothing with that?

PG: No.

MB: Well, let's see. There would've been Memorial Day...

PG: Memorial Day, yeah.

MB: Did they do something with that?

PG: Well, we had to work extra hard that day.

MB: Why?

PG: Well, so we could get the work done so we could get to the park in the afternoon.

MB: Oh, because there was a celebration?

PG: There was always something on Memorial Day.

MB: What kind of a day was it at the park?

PG: If you worked real hard, you got a quarter and that was your spending money for the day. You could spend it on whatever you wanted to up at the park. Buy a pack of gum or get a ride for a nickel.

MB: And, let's see. There would be July 4th and similar then?

PG: Well, that was another day we had to get up...by then, the corn was up and we had to weed the corn patch. And my dad would always tell you, you pull all the weeds in those five rows, you can go to the park today. Knowing that, you'd get up at the break of dawn and make sure you got them done. You had to be back at five o'clock to milk the cows though.

MB: So, did your parents just give you a small allowance sometimes for that?

PG: But, you had to do so much work that day before you got it or else you didn't get it.

MB: When you first started working at the jobs you did and at the store, did you give most of your money to your parents then?

PG: Yeah, I give it all.

MB: All? They give you back something then?

PG: If I wanted five dollars to go to the movies or take a girl out.

MB: Did you get to go to the movies or very much?

PG: We used to walk down. In the summer, we used to go to the opera house. Well, it was a nickel to get in and we'd see Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. And then there was that one that continued from one week to another. I just don't remember what that was.

MB: Did you get to do that very often?

PG: Oh, every weekend. Then after we come out of the movies, we'd go up Nelson's Store. They had an auction every Saturday. Like, instead of keeping bananas over the weekend, they'd auction them off. Same way with cakes. Cakes this big, you know, eight inch cakes. You could buy six-seven pound of bananas for ten cents. Maybe there'd be five or six of us fellows, one would bid on bananas. We'd get maybe ten pound of bananas for ten cents while the other fella would bid on the cake. Well, maybe we'd get it for ten or fifteen cents. A cake like that. Well, that's all we'd buy and we'd start walking home, eating bananas and cake the whole way. And that was our Saturday. We enjoyed it. And that was Saturday after Saturday. Go to the auction. Go to the movies.

MB: Did you celebrate Labor Day at all? What was that like, do you remember? Back when you were a child or a young man before you went to the war.

PG: For that there, we used to...that was the day to fill the silo with corn with the machine that blew... cut it up and blew it in the silo. It was a yearly thing.

MB: On Labor Day you did that? That was something your father started that you had to do? That particular day?

PG: Yeah. It was hard to get help because some of the fellas were going to school and you had to get it done whenever you had lots of help.

MB: Do you mean Labor Day was just a day to work?

PG: It was a day to work.

MB: You didn't go up to the park on those days or do any of those things?

PG: Well, later in years, yeah.

MB: But, not back in the late [19]20s and [19]30s? Did you celebrate All Saint's Day or Halloween in any way?

PG: Oh yeah. We used to pull our prankster stuff.

MB: Like what?

PG: We'd put the neighbor's car on the roof or something like that. We'd take all the wheels off, we'd take the frame off the bed, get the frame up there, get the wheels up with ropes and ladders. It'd take about four hours. Well, Shane [inaudible name] place, he had a spring wagon. Sits this high, you know. We took everything apart. We took the frame up. We had two big ropes. We had to use four ladders. We got that up there and we finally got the wheels up. Once we got it balanced in the middle of the roof, it couldn't go nowhere. Then we finally got the frame up, not the frame, the bed. That was the biggest. It had one of those where two people could sit in it.

MB: So, was Halloween the day of prankstering then? Did a lot of that go on?

PG: Oh yeah. If he'd have found out who done it, he would've killed us. It stayed up there for about three weeks because he didn't know how to get it down. I wasn't going to tell him how we got it up because if I told him how to get it down, he'd figure out that I had something to do with it. Took four hours. Six of us.

End of Tape 1 Side B (February 26, 1984)

End of Interview on February 26, 1984

Beginning of Interview on March 15, 1984

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (March 15, 1984)

MB: You are Pete Gerula?

PG: Right.

MB: How old are you Pete?

PG: 60.

MB: When were you born?

PG: In 1923, June 10th near Creation Park which is near Windber, in Payne Township, Somerset County.

MB: Okay, are you the son of immigrants?

PG: Yes.

MB: Like a first generation immigrants?

PG: Yes.

MB: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, maybe start with your Mother and who she was?

PG: My mother was born in Austria.

MB: Do you remember any of the town names?

PG: Galicia [Eastern Europe].

MB: Galicia, that's the province there?

PG: Yes.

MB: Do you know what year she was born or anything? You may know that.

PG: No.

MB: Can you just tell me a little bit about her and what you know about her life in Europe.

PG: Her maiden name was Klimek.

MB: How do spell that?

PG: K-L-I-M-E-K. When she came to the United States she came to Coalport, a small town in Clearfield County, then from there, she came to Windber.

MB: How old was she when she came to America, to Coalport? You may not know exactly. Was she a grown up woman?

PG: She was about 18.

MB: So she was a young women. What kind of family did she come from? Did she come from a large family or did they farm in Europe?

PG: She worked on a farm.

MB: What did she do?

PG: Regular...

MB: Did she work in the field?

PG: Worked in the fields, yeah.

MB: Did she have any stories about what life was like?

PG: She never did say too much, really. She come to the valley about six and they didn't have too much room. She said they so they had to carry their water and use candles for lights. They had two cows of their own, chickens and pigs. Then, she worked for some well-do people, she did house cleaning. That's what I remember.

MB: Do you know how she came to America then?

PG: She came on a ship.

MB: Do you remember the name of the ship or anything? Did she ever say?

PG: No.

MB: What year exactly?

PG: I don't know what year it was.

MB: Did she come with some relatives or friends?

PG: No, just a whole bunch were coming and she came.

MB: From that same area then, they must have been coming from.

PG: Yes.

MB: And what language did she speak? Did she speak Russian?

PG: Russian mostly and there they spoke between Russian, Slovak, and Polish because they were all mixed up.

MB: I see so she knew all those, did she know any English when she came?

PG: No.

MB: None at all.

PG: But she picked it up here. And she could read Russian lettering, a certain amount of English, too. She could read it.

[Break in recording]

MB: You were talking about your mother and her background in coming here. So, she went to Coalport? Do you why she went to Coalport instead of some other place?

PG: Well, she told me that the whole bunch was going to Coalport. They went by train then. She knew a few of them there from her home town.

MB: So, they got settled there. What about your father? Can you tell me something about him and his background and how he got to America and so on?

PG: He come on a ship in 1906 and the fella he worked with on the farm he paid his passport.

MB: So, he came from an agricultural area too and he worked on a farm?

PG: Yeah, in Galicia.

MB: Did he come from a large family or small family or do you know what his parents did?

PG: They were farmers too. They had probably six children. The only ones I remember were [Wasil] and Charlie.

MB: Was he the only one of the family that came to America then?

PG: No, Charlie and [Wasil] came too, but that was the only three.

MB: So did he come by himself or with them when he came in 1906?

PG: He came with a group from his home town.

MB: And where did he go when he first came?

PG: Ralphton, which is down by Jeannette, towards Greensburg.

MB: And what did he do there? Were there mines there?

PG: He worked in a coal mine there. He worked there for a while and then he came to Windber.

MB: So, how did your parents get together?

PG: He saw her cross the street and said, I'm going to marry her. That's what I was told.

MB: Now, what version do you believe of their meeting? At one time, did you tell me before that you thought they might have known each other in Europe or their families?

PG: They knew each other in Europe, yeah.

MB: Can you tell me more about that or what do you know about that?

PG: That's all I know about that. They never discussed it too much.

MB: Did your mother or father have a chance to go to school at all in Europe before they came?

PG: No.

MB: They never did? And, did your father speak Russian? Was that his native tongue? Did he know any English when he came, do you know?

PG: No.

MB: And, did your mother work for people when she got here? What she did for a living when she first came to Coalport.

PG: She done cleaning for a while until she got married.

MB: And then, your father was working in the mines? Did they get together in Windber itself then later?

PG: Yes.

MB: Okay, do you know when your dad did come to Windber the first time?

PG: Well, 1906.

MB: So, he came here from Ralphton? Went to Ralphton and then...?

PG: He worked there for a few months and then he came to Windber.

MB: And then he came to Windber. So, he really goes back to the early days of the town, Did he ever talk much about what the early days of Windber were like at that time?

PG: Well, then it was work, work, work. You worked from the morning when it was dark, till the evening when it was dark. They didn't have no set hours.

MB: And he worked in the mines? Do you know which mines he worked in?

PG: [Mines] 42, 36, 35.

MB: How long was he a miner, Pete, for a long time?

PG: Thirty-eight years.

MB: So from about 1906 to...?

PG: [19]46 I think he quit the mine.

MB: [19]46. That's a long time

PG: Something like that, yeah. Yeah, that's what it was. [19]46. But, he went full time farming then. You know he farmed before that. Whenever we bought...my dad bought the farm up by Recreation Park, where I was born.

MB: Do you know when that was about? Well, that was in the [19]20s then, is that right?

PG: Yeah. That was in the 1920s. About 1920...1920 they bought it. They were living there four years. Then, 1926 we moved here in November.

MB: So, the family homestead I guess? When did your parents get married? About what year would've they been married?

PG: Let's see...Forty-seven...About 1908, I think.

MB: 1908. Oh boy. Did they have a wedding in Windber then?

PG: Oh, yeah. They had a big wedding up [Mine] 35. That's where they lived at.

MB: Did they get married in a church or a house, where did they get married? Tell me what you had heard about that.

PG: All I heard about was, my neighbor Dave Birchall. At that time, Windber Brewery was in operation. They had thirty-five eight gallon kegs at their wedding because Dave Birchall brewed the beer. Then I guess, they had moonshine and all that. It was a four day affair. Weddings, they started Friday. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

MB: Do you were some ceremonies that they had before the wedding? What was the wedding like?

PG: Oh, they went through the old, so called customs.

MB: Like what for example?

PG: Oh, let's see. How was that? Like on Mondays, that's be two days after the wedding, they all go back to the wedding, how would I say that? They'd fix the shoes on the new bride and they had some kind of sparks when they hit the lady's heels it would spark and it would throw some sparks and some would burn her leg and she would squeal. And all those involved would go through the same procedure. I don't know what the old...what it meant. Why they done that, but there was some old, I guess, witchcraft behind it or something.

MB: So, were they married at St. Mary's?

PG: Yeah, St. Mary's

MB: The Byzantine Right Church?

PG: It wasn't Byzantine then.

MB: What was it called then?

PG: St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church. Russian. Greek Orthodox Russian Church. The one across from Judy's there.

MB: I guess lots of people went to that church who were from the same area in Europe.

Lithuanians and...

PG: Yeah, Lithuanians.

MB: So, were there any other relatives of theirs in Windber then when they got married?

PG: No.

MB: None of them? But, they had friends I guess and the church community and so on?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: Did they have any other stories either of them? If they were married there in 1908, they must've remembered those early days. Did they ever talk much about those first years in Windber?

PG: They never talked much about it.

MB: They were so young. Well, how many children did your children have?

PG: Twenty.

MB: Twenty?

PG: I found who the other two were, there were a set of twins that I didn't mention.

MB: Okay, why don't you name them all again. You had twenty, which one were you?

PG: About the middle.

MB: About the middle? You were like the tenth child, okay, let's go down, I have a list that you once gave me. Let's see which ones you get. Go ahead and start naming them. I got it here.

PG: Ann, Mike, Catherine, Verna, Andy, Mary, Margaret, Eva, Pauline, then the boys Mike, oh, did I mention Mike?

MB: No,

PG: Mike, I mentioned Andy? Then there's Frank, myself, Pete, John, Paul, then there was Nick and Alec-they're both dead. Is that nine boys? Then there was a set of twins that were...I didn't say Mary did I?

MB: No, you said one Mary, but I think you said there were two.

PG: Then my mother had a set of twins, one of them was named Mary, but they only lived a couple weeks. I don't remember what the name of the other was.

MB: So you were about the tenth of this twenty? Something like that? And, you were born in 1920...?

PG: [192]3.

MB: So, they had quite a family and you were living much of this time before you went to the farm in Mine 35, they had been living?

PG: Yes.

MB: So, what kind of stories did you grow up hearing about in Mine 35 then? Did you hear much about Mine 35? Or were your stories most farm stories.

PG: Mostly farm stories, yeah.

MB: Did your parents keep any boarders?

PG: Yeah, when they lived up [Mine] 35 they did. I think they had six at one time

MB: Plus, this family that was growing rapidly?

PG: Well, there weren't that many yet.

MB: And were they going to Saint Mary's the Greek Orthodox Church all along?

PG: Yes.

MB: So, they were one of the earliest people, families involved with that church?

PG: In 1936 whenever they broke away from that, that was under the Roman Catholic then. And then, they broke away from the Saint Mary's church and they built another church called the Saint Peter Paul.

MB: Can you tell me what that schism was about? What that break was about then?

PG: Well, it started off was that one group wanted to be under the Pope, you know the Roman Catholic, and the other group didn't want to be, so they more or less formed their own here. Then they're under the Bishop instead of the Pope.

MB: My understanding is that was a pretty bitter struggle. Caused a lot of hurt feelings.

PG: Oh yeah, what they call the Unity group.

MB: And your family went with Saint Peter's and Paul's. Were your parent's very religious people?

PG: Oh yeah, they wouldn't miss church for anything. If a holiday fell during the week,

church was first, work was next.

MB: Do you remember any stories about like going to church? Did you yourself have to go to church all the time then?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: And you're living on the farm.

PG: Yeah, we'd walk four miles to go to church.

MB: What calendar did your parents keep to with the church?

PG: Well, the Julian calendar.

MB: So they celebrated the Orthodox Christmas on January 7th and all of that?

PG: Yes.

MB: Did your parents celebrate all the holidays like that then?

PG: Yes.

MB: Do you want to talk to me a little bit about some of those holidays? How did they deal with Christmas then?

PG: You had Lent and it was like any other group did and we used to always have the old fashioned. We would put a shock of wheat in the corner at the bottom of the steps all the time and we would put straw on the table. We had the regular Christmas food-twelve different foods.

MB: Can you name those? I ask hard questions?

PG: No, I can't remember them all. Well, salt, butter, garlic, fish, sauerkraut, [Interruption], beans, pierogis.

MB: Beans and what else? So, were there any other customs? Did you go to mass at night?

PG: Yeah, midnight mass all the time

MB: You walked to go to this mass and walked home?

PG: Yes, we wouldn't get home until about three o'clock in the morning.

MB: Did the priest bless food?

PG: That was for Easter.

MB: That was for Easter? Can you tell me about that and how Lent was?

PG: Well, all that lasted six weeks and we always had ham, eggs, horseradish, kielbasa cheese, and butter, and you know that was all blessed by the church.

MB: You took your food to church and then they blessed it there?

PG: Yeah, they made a bread that you call paska, and that's always blessed-eggs...

MB: And then you ate. Did they give this food to the animals at all the way some families did with the blessed food?

PG: No, after it was blessed, like egg shells, we'd always put them in the furnace.

MB: And did your family celebrate Easter Monday and Easter Tuesday the way some do with the ducking customs?

PG: Oh yeah, we used to duck girls. Mondays, you duck the girls and Tuesdays we ducked the fellas. That was a lot of fun.

MB: When you lived up the farm up here did you go to other places to do that then?

PG: Oh yeah, we'd go to [Mines] 35 and 36. [Laughter]

MB: They come up here to get you too?

PG: They get a whole bunch and come up here.

MB: Let's see what other holidays would you have celebrated? Did you have anything for May Day or...?

PG: No.

MB: July 4th, did you do anything on that Holiday?

PG: Well, we'd work for about half a day and then we went to Recreation Park.

MB: What would go on up there then?

PG: You would see all kinds of rides and you would eat. There would be a baseball game. Then at night, they had fireworks.

MB: What about Labor Day?

PG: Well, that was later years. We worked...we usually filled silos. We worked all day, but in the evening, we would go up to the park.

MB: Did you celebrate Thanksgiving then?

PG: Oh yeah. The usual turkey, stuffing...

MB: Did you have any other particular religious days or holidays that you celebrated that might be particularly Orthodox or anything? Customs?

PG: Well, there's what you call four kings. It's after Christmas.

MB: What did you do then?

PG: Well, it's almost like Christmas supper. Then you have St. Michael's Holiday, Saint Peter's Holiday.

MB: Are those name days for the Saints?

PG: Yeah, for the saints.

MB: Did you do anything particular in those days?

PG: No, we went to church.

MB: Since you had all these children in the family, did you have a big christening?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: What were those like?

PG: Well, after the child was baptized at church, the girls, some of them stay home, well most of them stay home, and they get a meal ready. It was an all-day affair.

MB: Did you have music?

PG: No.

MB: At christenings? Did you have music for other Holidays?

PG: No.

MB: You didn't have any bands or musicians at all or singing? Did you sing?

PG: Oh, we used to sing, religious songs.

MB: Any other types of songs? Folk songs?

PG: Not too many. For Christmas, we'd sing Christmas songs and for Easter, we'd sing Easter songs.

MB: Did you sing Russian Christmas songs? Christmas songs in Russian?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Do you remember any of those? You could sing me one? [Laughter]

PG: I have to think, I use to know a lot of them.

MB: I would like to hear you sing one- any one. Whatever comes to mind?

[Break in recording]

MB: Well if you can't remember some Christmas songs, maybe you can remember something for Easter?

PG: [Russian singing]

MB: Okay, well that's nice.

PG: Then for Christmas we would just sing...I can only think of one that's [Russian singing].

MB: So, did you speak Russian in your home?

PG: Mostly.

MB: What was it like growing up with a family that size? Now your father mined and farmed most of your life as I understand it. Tell me, maybe before we get to that, tell me what kind of life did your father have as a working man? What kind of things did he do? What was his life like typically as it might have changed over the years?

PG: Well, he worked from sunrise to sunset. He'd go to work in the morning come home at 3:30, then he'd grab a bite, yeah, he'd work the mines. And you know, he'd grab a bite to eat when he came home and then he'd do some farm work.

MB: And, did he do this all when he had been a miner?

PG: Yeah, most of the time and us boys we done a lot of work too.

MB: Were boys expected to do a lot?

PG: Oh yeah. We had fifteen milking cows and milk them by hand. We'd do our barn chores. We had chicken, geese, pigs, horses.

MB: What were your chores?

PG: Routine. Milk cows. After we got through with that, we ate breakfast in the morning. Then in the summer time, we would have to go out and ploy, harrow, plant, pull weeds.

MB: What about your mother's life, she worked very hard with these children at home. What was the farm like when they lived here in this home?

PG: Oh, it used to be a nice farm.

MB: Did it have all the modern conveniences?

PG: No.

MB: What was it like?

PG: We had well water, no bathroom, coal stove. My mother spent most of her time cooking.

MB: She bake her own bread all the time?

PG: Oh yeah, bread, pies. Then she canned a lot. We used to can one hundred quarts of blackberries a year we'd pick.

MB: Did she have to go haul the water in from outside and bring it in?

PG: Yes.

MB: Is there any story in your family about how your father got a farm? Working in the mines? Was he able to save enough money to buy a farm?

PG: Well, he borrowed the money for the first farm, then we sold that one, and we bought this farm, but he still had to borrow some more.

MB: Do you think his main income came from the farming or from the mining?

PG: I say about half and half.

MB: With that family, I guess you had to do both then anyway to make a living.

PG: See, the mines weren't working too good then .Sometimes, you had to work there one day a week, sometimes two. You know those days they could get by three bucks a day for working.

MB: Did your father ever talk about the strike of 1922?

PG: Some, not too much.

MB: What do you know about that from him or from other people you heard talking about that over the years?

PG: I never heard really knew too much. I was just talking about the strike of [19]22, how rough things were then.

MB: But, you weren't born yet?

PG: No, I wasn't born yet.

MB: So, you don't know much about it, okay. Then you were living on this farm. Where did you go to school then?

PG: Up here at old Ashtola.

MB: Where is it exactly?

PG: About one mile from here.

MB: And you walked there?

PG: One room school house. We walked. One teacher and about sixty-five students, eight grades.

MB: What were the schools like then? What were the teachers like?

PG: Well they weren't bad, like any other teacher, if you listened they wouldn't bother you.

MB: And how long did you get to go to school, Pete?

PG: I went eight grades and two years of high school.

MB: Did you go to Windber High then?

PG: Yes.

MB: Did you walk there?

PG: I walked, yes.

MB: They didn't have any school buses then?

PG: No.

MB: What about your older brothers? Did they go to school that long?

PG: No.

MB: What did they do?

PG: Well, after they were around seventeen and eighteen, they went in the mines.

MB: I see, now who would have gone in the mines?

PG: That would have been Mike and Andy.

MB: And were they miners all their lives?

PG: Well, Andy had only worked about six months and he got killed in the mine.

MB: Did he go in with your father?

PG: Yes.

MB: Because that was a common practice. And he was a young fellow?

PG: He was eighteen.

MB: So, it was a mining accident then?

PG: Yeah. Rock fell and hit him

MB: You remember that?

PG: Yeah. 1936. No, [19]33, it was. Yeah [19]33.

MB: It must have been hard on your family at that time. And your brother Mike he was a miner all his entire life?

PG: Yeah.

MB: And he just passed away a couple of years ago?

PG: Four years.

MB: Four years ago?

PG: He was seventy years old.

MB: How old was he when he went into the mines?

PG: He was seventeen or eighteen. I'm not sure.

MB: Did he begin work with your father? That was the common practice then.

PG: Yes. When he first started, but he was the motorman-spraggerman most of the time.

MB: None of the rest of the boys, did any of the other boys, you or the later ones go in the mines then?

PG: Well Frank went.

MB: Oh, Frank went in the mines? Did he do that for a long time or all his life?

PG: About thirty years.

MB: What was your work life like? What did you do when you left school?

PG: I worked driving a truck for a stripping company-haul coal. Then one summer, I worked on Route 56 driving a truck whenever they relocated it. 1941 I started driving trucks for Eureka stores.

[Break in Recording]

End of Tape 2 Side A

Beginning of Tape 2 Side B (March 15, 1984)

MB: So, you had a lot of experience then? Did you work mostly at the main company store then in Windber?

PG: Yeah. All the time.

MB: So, you really saw that aspect of things?

PG: Oh no, I went to all of them. I hauled all the supplies. I hauled explosives to the mines every day. Then I hauled supplies to the stores after that.

MB: Did you start doing that in the forties and then...?

PG: Yeah, in [19]41.

MB: And, when World War II came along...

PG: Yeah. In 1943, in March, I went to the service.

MB: Did you come back at the end of the war?

PG: Yes.

MB: Did you resume your job at the store then?

PG: Yes.

MB: I see, then when the Eureka stores closed, then what did you do?

PG: I left there before it closed. I went to [Ikan] lumber.

MB: When did you...what year would that have been?

PG: [19]68.

MB: And you've been working there and are still working there now? Okay, so you really lived all your life in this area and then this experience in World War II, so you would

know a lot about it. You really know a lot about this area. Can you tell me more about your childhood memories? Do you have some vivid memories of being in this large family and what were your parents like? What kinds of things come to mind when you think of your childhood? What were your parents like?

PG: They were strict. When they told you to do something you better do it or else get your hair pulled, or else they get the big stick. [Laughter]

MB: So you listened pretty well. Did you have to get up early then being on a farm?

PG: Oh yeah. About 5:30, 6 o'clock

MB: Did you wake up or did you get called?

PG: I got called.

MB: Who called you?

PG: My dad. All he had to do was yell once and all the dishes fell out of the cupboard.

MB: Did he stress certain values a lot with you boys growing up especially?

PG: What do you mean by special values?

MB: Oh, like work and religion, other things. Education. What kinds of things...?

PG: Well education, he really didn't care for education, it was all work and religion.

MB: Can you give any examples of his attitude toward work?

PG: He made you keep moving all the time. You didn't sit around. When he told you to do something, you didn't quit until it was done.

MB: Did that adhere to everyone?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: What did the girls have to do in the house?

PG: Well they done the ironing. Well, summer months, they'd help out with the fields pull the weeds and plant. Plant corn and potatoes. We used to raise a lot of potatoes. We raised about twenty thousand bushel a year

MB: Wow, that's a lot. Did you peddle them?

PG: Yeah, we peddled them all.

MB: Where did you take them then?

PW: Well, Mine 35 and Mine 36 all throughout Windber. We'd get a bunch of people from [Mine] 35 and [Mine] 36 and bring them up and instead of paying them we give them potatoes, apples, milk, and cheese, and cream. That was their pay.

MB: Oh, I see.

PG: Some of them would come up Monday and wouldn't go home until Saturday.

MB: So, you had people actually help out with the farming sometimes with that?

PG: Yeah, it'd take a couple of weeks to pick all those potatoes.

MB: Goodness, yeah, that was a lot. Did you ever run into any problems with the company store with that kind of thing?

PG: Oh yeah, they tried to stop us.

MB: Oh did they? Well, tell me about that.

PG: Well, Ford Christy was the manager of [Mine] 35 at the time and they tried to stop us. My dad went down and almost choked him. And, Bill [Smutville] pulled them apart. And from then on they didn't bother us.

MB: Really? Your father made his point I guess somehow. Goodness. Because I have heard that different people have tried to peddle things and they ran into problems at times.

PG: They only tried one time and that was the first and last time

MB: Goodness, so you had all these people coming up, did you have any special traditions connected with the agricultural season? Like at harvest time, did you do...have any celebrations at the end of the harvest?

PG: Well, it wasn't exactly a celebration. We used to haul all the corn in the barn and husk it. If anyone got a red ear, you got the kiss any girl you wanted to. Then, after about two hours of husking corn, we'd come to the house and my mother would have pie and coffee and milk or cream and hard cider.

MB: And your parents are speaking Russian at home all this time, right? And their basically speaking this, you must have learned that language pretty well in your family?

PG: Oh yeah, I still understand ninety percent of it.

MB: When you went to school, did you know any English?

PG: I knew English all the time.

MB: Oh, you did? Do you think you learned from other people or from your older brother and sisters, the English then?

PG: More or less from my older brothers and sisters. Around my neighbors, you know.

MB: Did the farmers get together very much with each other in those days? The early days?

PG: Well, usually in the wintertime, or mid-summer, when the work was a little bit slower. Everything was planted, but then the neighbor boys and girls would come up here and would sing and we'd have corn roasts. We would musical instruments and we'd sing.

MB: What kinds of musical instruments did you have?

PG: Most of it was guitar and banjo and a violin.

MB: What kind of music did you have?

PG: We didn't have any kind.

MB: Well, I mean, when the events took place? Did you have square dancing or Russian music or...?

PG: Not here. No. I done some square dancing in Windber.

MB: Did you go to many ethnic events? What kinds of dances...?

PG: Whenever I was younger I did. I was in the church choir for fourteen years. We used to put plays on in different places.

MB: You were active in that than? What else did you do?

PG: Well, at one part, I was singing. I was married to a Whittleworth from Chicago. I don't quite remember now. Some of the girls would sing solos or duets you know. And then, we had one fella he would do the Russian Cossack Dance. We had our own musicians with us. One would play the violin, guitar, and banjo. They played Cossack songs.

MB: Can you sing any of those?

PG: No. I wouldn't know them now.

MB: But you use too I guess. Did you have the sense that more people got together then?

PG: Oh, more then. Yeah.

MB: More than then now?

PG: Oh yeah. Today, no one has time. We'd see neighbors seven days a week. Now you're lucky if you see them twice a month.

MB: And I guess you have such a big family.

PG: Yeah. One of the boys would come see the girls and the neighbor girls would come see the boys.

MB: What did your parents expect from the girls? Were they expected to get married or work somewhere or what?

PG: Well, my dad was the type, he didn't care who they married, but he always said if you have trouble don't come to him. You made your bed, you sleep on it and he meant it too. Far as him about religion and getting married, he didn't care whether they were Protestant, regardless what they were.

MB: Did you ever have the sense that when your parents got married, that someone had arranged the marriage? Or did they sort of pick each other out?

PG: They picked each other out.

MB: Did they have the same attitude about their kids, or did they want to have some say in the people, who the kids married?

PG: No, they didn't say.

MB: So, your dad is working in the mines and your mom is working at home with all these kids, all these events are taking place. What else do you remember from your childhood? Anything else that stands out in your mind? Did you read newspapers at all? Did you have any ethnic newspapers?

PG: We used to get the regular church paper.

MB: What was the name of that do you remember?

PG: Greek Catholic Brotherhood Lodge.

MB: Oh did your parents belong to lodge?

PG: Yeah, they belonged to a lodge.

MB: Did that have any other events or was that mostly for insurance purposes?

PG: Well, it was for insurance, but they had what was going on with different churches, who the officers were, and all the events coming up.

MB: Well, what was Windber like when you were growing up?

PG: It was a nice town. A lot of churches. Thirty-four beer gardens and seventeen churches. [Laughter] No. That's what there is and that's counting Scalp Level too.

MB: That's part of it.

PG: Two beer gardens to every church. [Laughter]

MB: You must have been a child during prohibition? What do you remember about that? Did it work?

PG: Well, some of it worked, but some people wanted make white lighting still kept on making it.

MB: Well, in Windber, the way the town was laid out, do you think that the Hungarians lived in one area of town, others in another or Italians in another or Polish in another?

PG: Well, to a certain extent yeah. Later in years, there was a lot of intermarriages.

MB: In those years or were there?

PG: Well, later on. Where a lot of Hungarians lived they married into Polish people and back and forth and it all got mixed up then. At first it was more or less, try to get in the same area.

MB: Do you think there would have been problems if someone married outside of their ethnic group or religion?

PG: There was a certain amount of trouble, yeah. Because some though they were better than the other-the other ethnic groups.

MB: What about your family in relationship to people you knew who spoke Russian in relation to the people who were born in America? Generations ago or were English-of English decent? Did you ever feel that there was any discrimination there in school or in other places?

PG: There was a certain amount, yeah.

MB: Can you give me any examples of that or...?

PG: Let's see. How can I explain it? Well, like in the other group, each one sticks to their own. Like you take a lot of these foreign people, the first thing, they didn't have the education which all these Protestants had. And naturally, Protestants got all the good jobs and the foreign people were hard workers. Where the others had the office job.

MB: What about when you were in school did you ever feel because you spoke Russian and you knew Russian and you were of Russian...Carpatho-Russian decent, then that

counted against you?

PG: Well, I can't say it did, because anyplace I asked for a job I always got it. Well, they knew the background of the family you know. We were pretty well known.

MB: Yeah, You had so many of you too and you were all involved.

PG: I was never laid off in my life, I worked all the time.

MB: When you think about Windber, I guess you weren't born yet when they had these big flu epidemics and things? Do you remember any diseases and things that were important in the town? People dying?

PG: I just know what people told me.

MB: Did some of your family members get sick?

PG: Oh yeah. In the early [19]20s, I was real young whenever scarlet fever more or less an epidemic. Two of my brothers died from it. Whooping cough and...

MB: Anything else like that? What effect did the Depression have on your family?

PG: Well, it didn't bother us too much because we always had plenty to eat you know on the farm and a lot of people who didn't have no food used to come up here to work so they get some square meals.

MB: Where did they come from? From Windber?

PG: Windber, yeah. [Mine] 35, [Mine] 36.

MB: So, you continued to work the farm after that and I guess your father still mined whenever the mines were working with that? Do you remember any other incidents related to your fathers mining that he talked about anything like that?

PG: No, he never talked really too much about it. The only thing he done was work, work, work. [Laughter] [Speaks in Russian]

MB: Well, maybe you can tell me a little bit more in detail about what kinds of things you did working for the company store then? You talked a little bit about loading dynamite and stuff? Tell me more about what you did.

PG: Well, I hauled explosives to all the Berwind mines, like [Mine] 37, 30, 31, 32, 35, 37, 40, 42, Saint Michael, and Wilmore.

MB: Wasn't that dangerous?

PG: Oh yes. Thirty-eight pound pressure would set it off. I used to haul maybe... I'd

make three trips, I'd maybe have...I didn't have a big truck, I would haul maybe sixty cases at a time plus the blasting caps. You could squeeze them together and they could set your whole load off. Well, I take them till dinner every day and after dinner I'd haul...

MB: You did that every day?

PG: Yeah, five days a week. And twice a week, I'd haul groceries and meat and produce to all the Eureka stores.

MB: Where did you get them from?

PG: The main store.

MB: From the main store to the others? I see.

PG: Then, I would go to Houtzdale and [Becarry] once a week, then one day I go to Herminie, two stores down in Herminie, that's south of Greensburg. Then once a month, I would go to West Virginia stores. That's a three day trip. Those stores there were called New River and Pocahontas stores.

MB: So, did you did this up to [19] 68, and you really drove and drove and drove?

PG: Most of the time. Yes, drove, drove, drove. Sometimes I hauled furniture to New York, Washington D.C., Buffalo, New York.

MB: Did you ever have anything to do like with the credit arrangements with the store.

PG: No.

MB: So, you were just strictly delivery then?

PG: Delivery, yeah.

MB: Who was your boss?

PG: Norm Layman. Well at first, Yeager was and then, Yeager went to work for the railroad and then Norm Layman was truck boss. Then Layman retired, why then, I was promoted to truck boss-warehouse manager.

MB: Who headed the Eureka stores? Was that Ruel Holly then?

PG: Ward Crist. Ruel Holly was manager, but Ward Crist was general manager. He was in charge of all it in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

MB: So, did you ever met any of the Berwinds then?

PG: Yes.

MB: You did? You are one of the few people that has in this town, I think.

PG: Well, I meet the son. He worked with me one summer.

MB: Which one was that?

PG: That was Graham.

MB: Graham? What did you do? How did he work with you?

PG: Well, he was a good worker. They told him he could work like everyone else so he did.

MB: He went around driving with you delivering things?

PG: Yeah, delivering, yeah. Then he done that two summers and the following year he worked in Mine 40 mining. It was part of his training for each subsidiary.

MB: What years would that of been? Just approximately.

PG: Around the [19] 50s.

MB: Did you ever know any of the other Berwinds? Ever meet any of them?

PG: I met Charles Berwind and Dunlap.

MB: Oh did you? Did they come to town? How did you meet them then? At the store?

PG: Yes, at the Eureka Store.

MB: Were they passing through or just checking up? They didn't live here did they?

PG: No, they came in three or four times a year. Then we met at the Eureka stores because they had a lounge.

MB: So, you got to meet them that way. So, is there anything else that you did with your job? You got to know a lot of people I suppose?

PG: Sure, I got to know everyone.

MB: That's one of the reasons you know everyone in town. Do you have any vivid recollections of anything that you can think of in connection with your job at the store?

PG: Not really. I had a good driving record. I never had a wreck in twenty years of driving. As for my childhood, oh, whenever I was eighteen- I was only seventeen, the three of us bought an airplane, a biplane, together. Then, we had it assembled and we had it inspected. We had it at Boozer's airport, then he tested it out for us. He went up and

come down and then we went up. That was my first airplane ride. Then whenever World War II broke out, I was a spotter for civil defense. Every time an airplane would go through, we would call national defense and tell them which way the airplane was going. What time we saw it and everything like that. That's how I got interested in flying.

MB: So, you became a pilot then?

PG: A pilot, yeah.

MB: Did you fly in the service then?

PG: Yeah. I was a spotter for the artillery.

MB: Where did you serve, Pete?

PG: The Pacific, I got shot down twice.

MB: You got shot down twice?

PG: Yes. One time I parachuted out. The other time I just landed along the beach, turned the airplane over.

MB: You were lucky to be alive?

PG: I guess, yeah.

MB: Where were you in the Pacific?

PG: I was in New Guinea, Dutch East Indies, Halmahera Islands. Most of the islands in the Philippines and Okinawa. Before that, I had my basic training at Miami Beach in Florida. I stayed in a Hotel. Then went to Drew Field in Tampa, Florida. Then New Orleans. Then Panama, South America, Rio de Janeiro, and then Australia. Then I went to New Guinea and [finished].

MB: Do you think that this experience in the war marked you in certain ways?

PG: Well, it didn't mark me, but it taught me a good lesson in appreciating what you have. We complained, but we really didn't know how good we had it. Sure we paid a lot of taxes and that. Our worst here, is most countries best areas in appearance, you know.

MB: Well if we could get back to what Windber was like little maybe now. I was wondering, if you lived on this farm, did you feel like you were a part of Windber? It's a little Ways out? How did you feel about the relationship between the farm and Windber exactly?

PG: Well, I just thought it was part it. Because, whenever I was young, we went to the

movies every Saturday, that was clockwise, you know. Opera house and... We walked down because there weren't that many cars yet. We went out to the movies. We went to Nelson's store. They had an auction every Saturday and we'd buy bananas and cakes for practically nothing and on the way home we would eat cakes and bananas. Maybe about fifteen pounds of bananas and maybe three cakes. And that was our Saturday and that was rain or shine we walked.

MB: So, you didn't stay on the farm all the time? You went into town?

PG: Yeah, we went to town Saturdays. It only cost you a nickel to get into the movies.

MB: So, you did that. When you think of Windber, when you were growing in that, who did you think were the powerful people or groups or whatever you might have? Who were the powers in Windber?

PG: Well, there were some from the Protestant decent, you know. There were some Irish. They were pretty powerful, too. And some Scotch, couple of them. But, they never bothered me or the family because we always meant what we said. [Laughter]

MB: Did you ever get into any fights with them or the family?

PG: No, never. No one ever touched me.

MB: Well, that's interesting. Goodness. I understand that the people of Windber generally voted for Republicans until the 1930s, and the Berwinds favored the Republicans. Do you have any stories or know anything about that?

PG: Well, if you weren't a Republican, you didn't have a job. That was more or less the saying until later in the years. Like at first if you weren't a Republican you didn't have no job.

MB: Do you think a lot of these immigrants...my impression is that a lot of these immigrants couldn't or didn't vote? Do you think that was true too or some weren't citizens and some were?

PG: A lot of them weren't citizens. That was the whole trouble. My Dad didn't become a citizen until the late [19]30s. Till he got his citizenship.

MB: Do you think he might have wanted to go back to Europe at some point?

PG: He didn't want to go back.

MB: No? But earlier? Some immigrants came and they always planned to earn money and buy land back in Europe.

PG: See my dad had land there, but they didn't pay the taxes on it and I guess the county

took it back.

MB: Do you remember any elections then that your family talked about?

PG: My mom and dad never discussed it too much. They said they didn't know how it was run anyway, you know.

MB: Oh they didn't understand?

PG: Yeah, the system.

MB: So, when did you get interested in elections?

PG: Mostly in the early [19]40s. During World War II.

MB: Oh, I see. Did you have any impression of Franklin Roosevelt?

PG: Yeah, in my lifetime I thought he was the best. He was for the working people because he started Social Security so these people had something to work for. You know, for their old age.

MB: Well, when your father and I guess, your brother Mike were in the mines in the [19]30s too, the unions came in, do you remember them talking much about that at all or changes in working conditions over the years? What kinds of things were they...?

PG: Well, a certain amount, yeah. Before they used to do what they call a lot of dead work. They didn't get paid. They just got paid so much a ton of coal. But if you had...what they used to call...if you had a lot of dead work, you got...rolls. What they call in coal, rolls, you know. Well, they had to level that all out, that was all...it wasn't coal, it was rock though. Well, that was all dead work. You didn't get paid for it until later in the years you did. You got so much what they called a yard. Every three feet. Then when the Union came in, it was a different story. You got paid more for your dead work, plus you got paid for loading, whatever the price was for loading coal then. Unless you were, like some of the fellows, they were called company men. They worked in the headings. Putting timbers up for trackmen and they were called...they were company men, you know. They were not in tonnage basis.

MB: Do you remember any other strikes? I guess you wouldn't remember [19] 22 since you weren't born, but do you remember any other of those things?

PG: I remember whenever they were striking in the late [19] 40s. That was about two months or three months they were striking.

MB: Do you remember anything else about why or what was going on at the time?

PG: Well, more money. That was the name of the game-money. Then their motto was--

no contract, no work, and they stuck with it.

MB: That was when the mines were thriving more than they are now?

PG: Oh yes.

MB: Do you have any impression that the mines worked well around the area?

PG: During World War II, they worked real good. About till late [19]40s. Then the beginning of the [19]50s, they worked pretty good, but later on in the [19]50s, they started to close and they were getting a lot of foreign coal in that just hurt the market.

MB: And then, the Berwinds sold off these mines? Leased them off.

PG: Yeah, they closed them, then they leased them out. Then they had a lot of stripping going on and they leased land out. Wilmore Coal Company would get a royalty off the coal.

End of Tape 2 Side B

Beginning of Tape 3 Side A (March 15, 1984)

MB: ... wait a minute. I was wondering if you knew anything about the position of burgess, not the name Burgess, like the burgess of the town. If you remember...I guess there was someone named McMullen that people talked about.

PG: Oh, he was Chief of Police

MB: Oh, he was Chief of Police, he wasn't the burgess. I guess it was Barefoot.

PG: It was Barefoot.

MB: Okay, I'm confusing. Do you remember any stories about any of those people or...?

PG: Well, what Berwind told him, he done.

MB: Did you ever have a curfew or anything? I guess at Mine 35 they had curfews.

PG: Yeah, they had curfews.

MB: Did you have one out in this area at all?

PG: No.

MB: And the farms? None of that extended out that far, I guess. Do you remember when you got electricity at your farm at all?

PG: I think it was 1941.

MB: Really? What was it like growing up without electricity?

PG: Well, if you don't have it, you don't miss it.

MB: Did you have kerosene lamps?

PG: Yeah, we had kerosene lamps. But, whatever lamp type we had, they would throw as much light as those two up there. We had one of those Aladdin lamps, you know, when you lit the wick, then there was like another film above it, each one. There was two of them in each lamp. Then this wick would get hot and it would light that film. And made a real bright light. It almost threw as much light as that does.

MB: Did you have to clean those lamps?

PG: Yeah, the girls done that. That was there job.

MB: Was there a strict division of what the girls in the family did or what they boys did with the chores?

PG: Well, more or less. Girls done the house chores, plus they helped out in the fields.

MB: And do you remember when they actually came in and put in electricity? Did it affect your life in any way?

PG: No, but it was a blessing.

MB: It did effect your life then. It was a blessing. So, your mother, I don't suppose, ever worked outside the home?

PG: No, not after she was married.

MB: Did you ever keep borders on your farm then?

PG: Yeah.

MB: You did have borders? How many borders did you have?

PG: Two that I know off.

MB: Two, okay. Were they relatives or just people?

PG: No. Just people.

MB: And did your parents, were they real active in your church then? After that? What kinds of things did they do?

PG: Yeah. Well, whenever we broke away from the other Saint Mary's, my dad was one

of the Officers.

MB: And did he help with the cemetery or something. Getting that built?

PG: Yes.

MB: What did he do for that?

PG: We had horses up there pulling stumps out. Same way when we built our church, we used the horses with a scoop to grade it out. That was 1939 or [19]40.

MB: So, did you live at home and basically except for the war, until you got married then?

PG: Yeah.

MB: When did you get married Pete?

PG: 1952.

MB: Who did you marry?

PG: Bertha Kuhlman.

MB: Oh, I think I remember that.

PG: July 19th.

MB: Did you when you were working for the company store, maybe before you went off to the war, did you give your earnings to your parents?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Did they give you some money back or part of it? How did that work?

PG: If I won five bucks, then they'd always get it, you know.

MB: What about your brothers and sisters? Did they...?

PG: They gave most of theirs to them. Yeah.

MB: Most of theirs to them. And did your mother have anything to do with the finances in the household or your father handle those things?

PG: Well, they handled it together.

MB: Could they read and write in Russian or English?

PG: My mother couldn't. My Dad could.

MB: So, when you were growing up, did you ever want to do anything else, Pete? Did you want to become something that you decided to become in school or anything like that? Did you have any other ideas?

PG: Well, after I come out of the service, I had a chance to work with Goodyear down in South America, but then my mother said, no, you got a job, just stay here. So, I listened to my mother.

MB: That's what people did.

PG: Well, I was going on twenty-two then.

MB: So, how old were you when you got married?

PG: Twenty-nine.

MB: Where did you get married?

PG: Saint Peter and Paul Church.

MB: Did you have a big Wedding?

PG: Oh yeah. About three hundred and fifty.

MB: What it was like? Tell me about it.

PG: What do you mean what was it like?

MB: Your wedding? Was it at Saint Peter and Paul's? Was it a big mass?

PG: Yeah. We had two priests. We had the reception was at Tenth Street Hall.

MB: That was a big event. How many children did you have?

PG: Six.

MB: Can you name them for me?

PG: Carol, Jenny, well, Nancy's dead, Maddie, Shirley, Peter.

MB: Did your father have any feeling about you becoming a miner? Did he ever want you to be a miner?

PG: Well, he just told me to look for a job.

MB: Look for a job. He didn't care what?

PG: No, he didn't care what.

MB: So, they didn't stress you to get more education particularly?

PG: No.

MB: How do you feel about education?

PG: I wish I'd had more. You can never know too much.

MB: Do you have anything else that you think is important about Windber that people should know about at all? If you were trying to describe what Windber was like to somebody that had never seen it?

PG: Now or before?

MB: No, before when you were young.

PG: It was a prosperous town that... All different types of work. We had quite a few stores, railroads coming in, a highway-main highway. We also had a football team.

MB: Is it different now?

PG: Yeah well, the mines are closed. A lot of people moved away. The population is only half what it was years ago, that's all it is now

MB: The population is a lot older too than it used to be.

PG: Yeah. There's no work so the younger ones are moving.

MB: Well, let me ask you some questions just a little bit maybe about this farm life. Did you ever have to buy from the company store? You didn't? Because you lived on the farm, you never had to?

PG: Never had to. Well, we brought like flour and sugar.

MB: But you didn't get most of your food from there at all?

PG: No.

MB: What were the usual foods when you were growing up that you ate? The usual kinds of things.

PG: Well, eggs, pork chops for breakfast.

MB: Pork chops for breakfast? Did you have big breakfast because of your family?

PG: Because you had done already two hours work before you ate breakfast. We had pancakes. Buckwheat cakes.

[PG's grandson]: I like pancakes too. I eat them.

MB: What did you have for a typical lunch or dinner?

PG: Well, most of the time potatoes. Well, we done our own butchering. We had beef, steaks. We butchered our own pigs for pork chops. We had milk and butter, homemade milk, I mean butter and cheese.

MB: Well, when you butchered animals, who did it? Was it his family itself or did the neighbors come around?

PG: Just the family.

MB: You had enough people in your family I guess, to do it anyway. Did the men have certain jobs and the women certain ones in this butchering process?

PG: Well, as far as butchering the pig, the women had to clean the intestines out to make kielbasa and sausage.

MB: Was that the only thing the women did?

PG: Well, they'd help grind the sausage, pork, and my mother would season it. Then they helped run it through the sausage packer. Then we used to make a whole lot of homemade sauerkraut in fifty gallon barrels. That was an all day ordeal.

MB: When you butchered things or put up all this sauerkraut, did you have a special celebration afterwards or anything?

PG: No.

MB: It was just a regular part of life?

PG: Yes. It was just daily work.

MB: And you had cows? Did you have any other animals? And pigs?

PG: Yeah, pigs, chickens, horses, ducks.

MB: Did you ever try to sell milk or any of those products?

PG: Yeah, we had a milk truck down there in [Mines] 35 and 36.

MB: Oh, for how long? A long time?

PG: For about five years, we delivered on horseback and buggy.

MB: Did you?

PG: Yeah, every day.

MB: Oh boy. How many cows did you have when you were doing this?

PG: Fifteen.

MB: Well, did you use any animals for work, for plowing at all?

PG: Well, horses.

MB: Horses were used for plowing and you mostly butchered cows and pigs? Both?

PG: Yeah, we would sell them too.

MB: Oh you did?

PG: Yeah, we would butcher them. People would buy a front quarter or back quarter. Back then, it was about fifteen cents a pound.

MB: How would you preserve the meat when you butchered an animal?

PG: Well, we used to, like cows now, we'd butcher in the late fall when it was cold. We'd just hang them up in what we called our slaughter house—just a regular shanty, is what we done. And they would set over night or so and the following day we would deliver it. Like it would be November and it was cold already. Well, for refrigeration we didn't have electricity then, we had what we called an ice box. We had ice that you'd put in this here ice box. It's a refrigerator, but ice kept it cold in there.

MB: And your mother canned lots of food?

PG: Oh yeah, four or five hundred quarts.

MB: Of what?

PG: Everything. Tomatoes, blackberries, cherries, cucumbers... And she canned beef too, and pork because you didn't had much refrigeration, so you canned it.

MB: Did you have any special foods that you ate sort of regularly on Sundays?

PG: Usually it was halupki.

MB: Can you tell me what that is?

PG: Well, it's called stuffed cabbage. It's ground up hamburger with rice and you wrap it in cabbage leaves and then you boil it, not boil, but cook it.

MB: Anything else you had on Sunday's that you didn't have over the week

PG: Usually soup.

MB: Oh, what kinds of soups did you have?

PG: Mostly beef soup.

MB: Did you have any particular Russian foods that you ever had?

PG: Well, my mother would make pierogies like for Friday because that was always a fast day, no meat.

MB: You ever have borsht or S'chee?

PG: Oh yeah, borsht.

MB: Did you make any drinks at home. Did you make wine or cider or anything like that?

PG: Oh, we used to make cider, yeah a lot of it. We had a lot of wine, home brewed beer, and we had a little bit of white lighting too/

MB: What is White Lighting again?

PG: It's moonshine.

MB: Did you drink it on special times? Did you drink on a Sunday or Saturday night?

PG: No, I never drank that much. My Dad did.

MB: When you planted or harvested food was there any special ceremonies that went with it?

PG: No.

MB: Did you have any religious prayers with harvesting or planting?

PG: Well, my dad would. He'd bless the field and hope that it would produce good.

MB: Did he? Did he have anything else he did with that or was that something he just informally did?

PG: Yeah, he done more or less on his own. If he butchered a cow or pig he would bless it.

MB: Did you have prayers as part of your life when you were growing up? Did you say grace at the table or any of those things?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: Did you say those in Russian

PG: Well, my dad would say ...

MB: For an example?

PG: We would cross ourselves and then name the Father, the Holy Spirit, amen.

MB: Are there any other times your family did anything like that?

PG: Well, like the holidays we would always have like, blessing of the food and all that.

MB: Do you remember any big weddings or anything in your family other than the ones... You didn't say too much about yours, but like any relatives or anyone with...?

PG: Well, they were all big weddings.

MB: They were all big weddings. Tell me what those were like. Did you celebrate on the farm too?

PG: Well, some of them like my sister Pauline got married and Margo got married when World War II started. When I was in the service, Frank got married when I was in the service. I wasn't at any of those.

MB: Did you sometimes have big celebrations at your place?

PG: Oh yeah.

MB: Do you have the custom of the priest coming to blessing the house once a year like some of the ethnic groups?

PG: Yeah.

MB: When does the priest do that?

PG: Usually in the spring.

MB: In the spring. When would he come?

PG: Well, in February he was here. Yeah, the first part.

MB: In February? He goes to each person's house in the Parish then?

PG: Yeah, now if you don't want him to come, he won't come.

MB: I see. Was Russian used as the language in the church?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Until recently?

PG: Until recently. Right now it's about three-fourth in English

MB: I see. What else was there when you think about the Russian community around Windber? Can you think of anything else that they did together or...?

PG: They use to have what they called Russian day.

MB: What was that like?

PG: Well, the Russian church would have a yearly picnic, and all ethnic groups came.

MB: Where was it held?

PG: At the church cemetery. We would always have it the first Sunday of August. We had it that way for almost fifty years.

MB: Did you have special foods for that day?

PG: Yeah, we had halupki and goulash, corn, pigs in a blanket.

MB: Did you have any music?

PG: Oh yeah, we had music, yeah.

MB: Did you have any dancers? Kozan dancers or...?

PG: Yeah. And in the evening they'd have a dance. People would dance.

MB: They still have that?

PG: They still have that, yeah.

MB: Do all the ethnic groups have their own things like that?

PG: No, not like the used too.

MB: What did they use to have?

PG: Well, like the Hungarians they used to have their picnic up by the cemetery years ago, you probably don't remember. The Polish church always had theirs by the Polish cemetery then till the last eleven years, they had it at the park and they call it Polish day. But, the Italians, I don't remember them having anything. Their clubs had picnics, but the church itself, they don't...Or the Irish church, they don't...

MB: Did Windber have big parades?

PG: They used too, yeah.

MB: Can you tell me about that? When they would have them? What were they like?

PG: Well, they had a fiftieth anniversary of Windber. I think that was 1947. That lasted a whole week.

MB: Did it? Did you have any part in that?

PG: Well, World War II veterans groups marched, and there were a lot of other bands. And I drove a team of horses; I was delivering for Eureka Stores. I was in that. That was only two times. But, they had parades every day, every day for a whole week. People from all over Pennsylvania came.

MB: They had parades on certain holidays too, like Labor Day weekend and July Fourth and Labor Day and things. Anything on Memorial Day?

PG: Memorial Day and Fourth of July.

MB: I seen some photos of when they had Christmas Day parades, do you remember any of those things?

PG: Yeah, they don't have them anymore. They used to. They had them for a while, yeah.

MB: Do you remember anything about the Sokols, the lodges, or anything that they did?

PG: Well, if one of their members died, they would march on Graham Avenue in uniform, you know they had uniforms. Then they carried the casket down Main Street and they would have the band playing in front of them.

MB: What band was it the community band or an ethnic band or Sokol band?

PG: The Sokol band. The only other time after that I saw that done was on the Philippine Islands. Burying a fella and they had a band in front of them. They was carrying him from the church to the cemetery and they and played it. The first song they played was Pennsylvania Polka. Honest to God, I couldn't believe it.

MB: Do you remember any funerals like in Windber when you were growing up? Do you remember what a funeral was like in those old times? Like the earliest funerals you can remember?

PG: Well, they're almost what they're like today.

MB: Really?

PG: See years ago, instead of having the body at the undertakers, the body would be at

the people's home. Then, any mirrors that were in that room had to be taken out or else covered with paper. I don't know what the reason for that was. There was some reason for that, but all mirrors had to be covered. Then they had guards posted for the night. A lot of Sokols down there and they'd stand at attention all night.

MB: And they walked to the cemetery?

PG: Yeah, right from the funeral home. And they would carry the body a lot of times, unless it was winter, then they'd have to, what they call a hearse—a horse and buggy.

MB: Can you think of anything else in Windber that's changed like that. Where you don't have that lodge activity anymore? Things that used to happen when you were growing up that you don't see that much anymore?

PG: Well, they don't have 4th of July parades like they...the firemen have a parade, but it's not on the Fourth of July like it used to be. They don't have no activities up the park on the Fourth. Polish day is the only activity. If you want to have a picnic up there you can go up there and have a picnic.

MB: So, that's all changed?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Is there anything else that you could think of like, that happened that characterized life in Windber? What about the use of languages, things like that? Has that changed a lot? Other languages?

PG: Well, I think more or like, what I said before, there was so much intermarriages so that it's more or less like one group.

MB: Okay. Well, is there anything else you think someone should know about Windber or the Russian community?

PG: Windber after the mines closed and that, the town started to go down. All the miners, there was no work, and they were all getting up in age, and they weren't as active as they used to be.

MB: And the stores that you worked for no longer exist?

PG: Yeah.

MB: Is your lumber company that you're working for now, was it once owned by Berwind?

PG: Yeah.

MB: And they sold that off too then eventually?

PG: To Buchanan's, then American [made] bought them out. All Buchanan yards.

MB: At one time there was a brickyard and a brewery and there were other things around...?

PG: Yeah, Berwind had their own power plant, their own brickyard, their own bank, their own water company, and they owned three-fourths of the houses, lumber company. Most people bought at Eureka stores.

MB: Did you hear much about coercion and some of the mining camps having to shop at the stores?

PG: I heard talk, you know.

MB: But, you didn't experience them yourself because you didn't live in that situation?

PG: No, I always lived out in the country.

MB: And you were a policemen for a while,

PG: Yeah, I was chief of police for seven years in Paint Township.

MB: That was part-time though?

PG: Yeah, that was part-time. Then I worked a stadium for twenty-five years as a policeman. Fifteen years at the high school.

MB: And that was for the sporting events mostly?

PG: Yeah, sporting events.

MB: Were sports a big thing in Windber?

PG: It used to be, but its dying out.

MB: What were the sporting events like when you were growing up? Like, when you were in high school, what kinds of teams did they have?

PG: They had good football teams.

MB: In high school or did they have a town teams then? Like, they had baseball teams and others?

PG: They had what they call Mine 40 Wildcats football team one time. Then they had one up [Mine] 35 and [Mine] 37 and they played each other.

MB: Their own football team? Did they have baseball teams too?

PG: Oh, they all had...all the mining towns had baseball teams. [Mine] 30, 35, 36, 42 Rummel, 37, they all had baseball teams.

MB: They played each other at the park?

PG: Well, they all had their home fields, too. There was one in Rummel. Even new Ashtola had one. Years ago, there used to be one right over here. That was old Ashtola team. New Ashtola had their own, Rummel had their own, [Mine] 30 had their own. Well, Reitz Mine, those fellas that worked at Reitz 5, they played theirs up in New Ashtola. [Mine] 42 had their own field, [Mines] 35 had theirs, 36, 37, and 40--they had their own fields. They used to draw crowds too.

MB: So, did the Sokols sponsor teams too or was it mostly these locations?

PG: It was the locations, but most of them, the Berwind's sponsored most of them. They'd furnish all the uniforms.

MB: When did that end you think?

PG: Well in the late [19]30s.

MB: And there were no more after that, huh?

PG: No more after that. They tried it, but it never worked.

MB: I see.

End of Tape 3 Side B (March 15, 1984)

End of Interview on March 15, 1984