

INTERVIEW OF MARY KOVALSKY

Windber, Pennsylvania

By Mildred Allen Beik

March 5 and March 6, 1984

MB: Millie Beik

MK: Mary Kovalsky (born December 25, 1912)

Beginning of the Interview (March 5, 1984)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A (March 5, 1984)

MK: I understood that maybe you're an exchange student?

MB: No I'm writing a dissertation I'm working on a doctorate in History, that's what this is for I have to this in order to receive my degree and I had to choose a topic and I thought, well I always like the immigrants from this area and all of that So I decided to do something one that.

MK: This is what my son is doing, the writer the one who called today. And this is what he wrote about my like two books, but he's not writing now though, he has three kids and a wife I said you see now you have to stop. If you would have been single then you could of continued to write. Because nobody would bother you, but he'll pick it up again. Cause his books were good and they were published.

MB: What were the names?

MK: One is well I had them, but I don't even know where I put them. One is the Russian is Red the other one is the early days in August.

MB: What name did he write these under then? Was it John?

MK: John Kovalsky, I have the books I can so you, so it comes to me but I have a short memory. I usual can't find them and then I hate myself, so I usually stick them under a pillow. As the

robber would come in he would find them, Yeah he wrote two books now he made good on those two books, but then he got married and he was 28 , he stopped cause you know this is different life now, but they don't want to listen to mother, cause I got married young at 14 and I'm a sorry I'm a widow after 42 years, he died young my man, I don't get no black lung, otherwise I raised the children how I did and I didn't have a home like it is now. It's just like a dilapidated farm house, no heat just stove. My god, and this is how I made it, my son moved me here because I didn't live here when he died I lived in German club you call it, it's still here. But it used to be on that new road, you know the one they have now running. I was in my late 20's with four kids. Oldest one was 17, now he's old Man, he says he's old, but he looks good. How about me you don't care about me

MB: When were you born?

MK: December 25th 1912

MB: Oh you were born on Christmas day?

MK: Yes, my mother was not able to read or write, my father was killed in the mines here. Nobody told me but it must have been the first Christmas, nobody told me. We celebrated Christmas on the 7th.

MB: Were you Orthodox then, Byzantium?

MK: Yes, Father Slovisco, I talked to him he's such a swell fella, do you know him?

MB: I meant him last summer

MK: Oh he's a wonderful man he's going to be elected here in November, man of the year cause he is wonderful that's what Tricia told me, she works in the what do you call it the place, the museum, so she has a lot of record I go there to visit her we look through.

MB: Where were you born?

I had a godmother, my mother could never tell me the month, and she knew it was Christmas, because in Europe they have straw, but I had a godmother here, she came before we did to America. And when we got here naturally we went to visit her. Now when she was feeling sick she was in Somerset home and I visited her. And I talked to her and asked her where I was born? Because I was trying to get my social security, I had nothing I rode there where I taught Petrosy, I said if I was born there I'll write there, because my family got married there, like my mom she was from Russia. My dad he was from Czechoslovakia.

MB: So one was from the Russian Empire and the other was from the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

MK: Yes, my dad was a typical Russian.

MB: What did he do over there before he came to America then?

MK: His parents both died in Russia and he wandered into Czechoslovakia I believe there were two children and he worked there Czechoslovakia and I guess that man was well off more richer than him, and if he worked for him in the field with the horses you know how they plan. And he married my mother but the marriage was fixed, my mother never cared for him, use to call him crazy Russian and all. She never did care, it took 50 years then she finally died, it took 50 years to go up there and enjoy him, she never did care for him. But he was a handsome man, and one

of my sons looks like him. He could tell me everything if he was living enough, but he only lived 5 years and then he lost his life in mining accidents. So this godmother Ms. Zygotas, she belonged to the other church, but I didn't care, she said I could tell you because I was 16 when I sponsored for you in Europe they call young man and young girl for the first child. And somehow they got a hold of her because my mother had nobody there that they both knew. So she told me plenty, the place where I was born is must be one in the Wilderness in a old castle. And my father worked for that rich man tending horses plowing fields and that's where I was born, in a couple of rooms whatever they wanted to take. But my mother was young and she was afraid then, because something was scaring her, in Europe they have that idea. You called that nothing. Might as well say because this was the only building there. In that old castle, but Petroce, they were married.

MB: Is that the Czech today?

MK: Yes it's still there, it's under Russian rule.

MB: Is it near any big cities I might know?

MK: It is by Miliosi, people shop there, it's big like Johnstown, but nothing like New York. So in Petroce I was born but they baptize me being that there was no Greek-Catholic church, because that's what they were both my mother and father, they took me Topolani, just the way it sounds, so I was baptize there that's my Godmother, because when I was applying for the papers, the citizenship papers you know I had no proof no kind, and whatever papers we had when we arrived my mother threw it in a fire. Or passport and everything, I had nothing and she could not tell me much because she was not able to read or write my mother. You know when we were coming I was a great help to her even though I was 8, when your arriving from another country

to here you got to sign your name 300 times, and they used to put her to shame for it. And your daughter little girl she could do it and you can't. Well it wasn't her fault her parents could not send her to school I would, and I must have had whatever three years catholic school, I don't know where it was but it was a catholic school. Not like here.

MB: In Petroce?

MK: In Petroce.

MB: Since she never gone to school, did she have to go to work and get married young?

MK: No, she was 22, and the parents had money because my Grand pop was well of he was working for the count and he used to take them to Vienna for the winter, so this was the job he had, but there were 13 children and you know maybe they had money, but they didn't care whether they went to school or not. It was like that I guess, because she didn't care, she used to keep me home here for headaches, she had a headache. Now the teacher didn't like that I was missing you know, and start crying. And first she sent me to polish school, now why the hell were not even polish, because my cousins lived in this house sown the road, and two or three boys were going there, and I would of got lost without them guiding me. So for two years I attended polish school. I didn't need that, and finally my father came to his senses, cause he lived here 5 years already after I arrived. He said well this child will never speak the language, I got to send her here to public school. He didn't know how to either talk in American because he was only here 5 years.

MB: So he came before you

MK: he came before then soon the war was over in 1919 and he sent passports for us, and he wrote letters, the first letter I remember because it was in a village because I remember I was barefooted to get it, from here to Rummel, pretty far, and I came crying to the post office and this letter was from America of course. And right away from that the next letter I'm writing and sending money and you are coming to America, and I thought why am I going to America what is that? You know I was happy going but I wasn't well, my mother was pretty strong woman a big huskie woman maybe 200 pounds. But I got worried sick on the boat; we were traveling maybe six or seven weeks. Yeah, we started out at about April and we got here about July. The boat alone took 21 days.

MB: Do you remember what boat you came on?

MK: America

MB: Do you remember what city you left from or the port

MK: From there you mean?

MB: Yes

MK: Holland.

MB: Amsterdam maybe?

MK: Amsterdam, we waited two weeks because as we arrived to Amsterdam the boat just left, so we had to wait two weeks. And it came back the America to pick us up. It was History because I loved it when I arrived to New York, and I'm sitting up on deck looking through the water you know those big fishes, and my mother was laying on the bed and she said "You going to fall in why don't you stay here, all of a sudden it didn't take long maybe a day maybe a half day Im

seeing the light of New York the Statue of liberty and I ran down and I said “mum, mum come on up, I see already where dad lives. I knew where he is, he should of stayed in New York but he came here to work in a mine and lost his life. Now that would have been, because we arrived there then I was for two weeks in Elias Island there. But no we need to come to Windber, so whatever they did with us they lead you like a dummy.

MB: Did you know any English at all, either you or your mother?

MK: No, how could I? I knew am Slovak, but I knew more than she did. So for two weeks at Elias Island there and she’s thinking now what they going to do with us, cause they got to show you where to go because you would get lost. It’s all water, and color ladies all these cops stood around the water so that we could not fall in. And they showed us a movie, it was 4th of July, and stage play, I remember because that colored lady who came up to me was dressed as a cop. Not in pants but shirt and she touched my hair. You see I was blonde and hanging. And curly, natural curly I had. And she just went over like this She gave me 50 cent I don’t know what that is even and an orange and whatever she was saying to me, I guess so I don’t fall in you know cause that was there responsibility, there was lots of people coming to America not us. A lot died on the ship, and you know they throw you in.

MB: Oh really?

MK: Yeah, really, one Jewish lady and two boys, and she died and they buried her in the water, oh how the Jews was crying because a lot of Jews was on that ship. They were praying so hard, they do throw because mom said to me honey don’t be sick because if you die, they gonna throw you in. So I kept myself I walk around everybody talking to everybody.

MB: You came in 1920 then?

MK: I would say 1920.

MB: July 1920?

MK: We came here later in July, because in July we were there in Elias Island, I saw that when my children took me to New York

MB: Oh you saw that?

MK: Yes, we were in there you know they just fed us that are all and no money to come to Windber, no body heard of Windber it must be a dickey little town , when we came here to Windber I said “ I would have been so nicer in New York I said what is this”. We’re going worse than what we saw, but um I got used to it here I am, because I don’t like big city, my daughter lives in New York, I don’t like it over there and she don’t want to come over here. And she was born here raised here graduated; alright I’m not going to New York because I don’t like New York Especially now she moves from Long Island to Queens. And I don’t like that noise I can’t stand it too much for me, and I said this will be yours if you take care of me, because I’m coming to the point where I arthritis, I have heart complications, and everything maybe is going wrong because you know its old age. I thank God that I am the way I am, that I can take care of myself I do my own washing everything I have, I want nobody to do it, and I says if you’ll near live in Windber I’ll never go to New York. Because I go with her and I’m waiting for when I’m going to leave.

MB: Well it is nice to have your place, and be independent.

MK: Right when I come here I’m home, she would like to have me there, but I don’t like it. I didn’t like it when she lived on the Island; because you know what I tried it she’s right on the

ocean. I got deaf I say gee I'm not hearing. She says mom I'll take you to Bill's place, he's up state so she took me there. I don't like it, I have to sleep upstairs where it is dry my house is dry. And I get her so just so she say with me, because she the only girl I have I, I have three sons, but she won't come, of course she has a husband and a daughter, one daughter she has, and he has three from his first wife, but there grown up. So we argue on the phone when she's asking me, because I do shed tears. She would be like Teresa saying graduated together.

MB: Oh I see

MK: And Teresa said to me, she sometimes hollers at me, well she has to live her life. Yeah, but if she was working there, now 500 dollars a month rent, she saw that house on the Island for 65-60 thousand, how long will it last and he's an old man he is way older than her, he could be like me and her age. And he doesn't have a job no more because you know he's retired. But I like my trip from Czechoslovakia to, so child might know it but how do I know that? We took the train from Petroce and we traveled to Coastresta, it was nothing but Soldiers on those trains, and we were the only two civilians only. I was scared of those soldiers. You know they all stand there is no sit to sit down just stand. From when we took a train from Petroce, my Grandmother took us to the train, I even remember how she was crying and how she was kissing me and the train pulled and she still was standing in black dress. In a distant far away, I don't know where she went, whether she went back home cause you know they walked before now they don't. They don't walk now they have like what we have here, buses and all. So Crossties, we went I don't know where we stopped but we stopped at some place not a big place but a little city, then Prague. We stayed there for two weeks in a hotel, my mother left me and she meant a soldier there. From the village where we were living and I even know his name Mike Wargo, and he took he all over, and me in that hotel myself sleeping in those bundles, whatever we were

bringing. Father said not to bring nothing, my Dad said just feather bring that, but bring nothing else. So I came in a paper dress and barefooted, imagine because I had a bleeding foot all the way from Czechoslovakia when we came to Holland I count even walk to the bus, that's how sore, it worked for me because I didn't know why my legs hurt. You know, on the bottom of my foot, barefooted walking on those pebbles. So barefooted and in a paper dress, but you tell it was paper or designed just like what you're wearing but it had flowers on, you could wash it. With Clorox of course. When we got here I came up across tracking that red house right over there, it still is red, my aunt lived there. You see?

MB: Yeah, right over there across on 17th street

MK: Yes look over there, where the garage has no door, and the big house, we came there

MB: Was your father a boarding there?

MK: Yeah, boarding there.

MB: When did he come?

MK: He came before WW1, he must have been here 5 years without us.

MB: Did he have relatives that were here before?

MK: No just her my mother's sister, he had no body because one sister I don't know he never got time to tell me what happened to the sister, there was a sister in Russia, they came to Czechoslovakia both because they had no body the parents died and they wonder off, I don't know how old they were if they can go and walk like this. They went by feet, because there was no transportation like there is right now. He didn't know much about her because he came to America, he tried I don't know how many times, his death was waiting for him here, cause he

only live 5 years, when we arrive, we arrive into town to that house like he did, he wasn't here to long and he could not speak English either.

MB: Did he speak Russian then?

MK: And how, he could read and write, I didn't know, I couldn't tell him I didn't know it, because he would say "Why don't you know it", it's not like my kids, they could get away with murder.

MB: Did your mother speak Russian too?

MK: Yes

MB: So she spoke Slovak also?

MK: Yes Czechoslovak more.

MB: But they understood each other?

MK: We understand each other, I could understand them. I can't speak the language as good as they did but I watch TV how many times so I still knew what they were saying. My father when he was still living he used to say don't swear because I'll understand. Yeah, I can pick up languages, but some are still real hard.

MB: Yeah, some.

MK: Like Polish, even Ukraine or we in our church we have Romanian. And Greek Catholics, yeah, it's good to know those things, it's good to know because my son, you know I have a son from West Point.

MB: Oh yeah you mentioned him already

MK: This is the boy that called this morning of course he's not like that now, he's 40, but this is my Son, He said when I retired we'll, he wants to go to where I was born and where we lived. You know that was the address I first lived with my cousins, I don't know them they don't know me, so I don't because he's not mentioning now that he wants to go. He cannot go there he can't speak a word. They do not talk English, because when my sister was visiting they did not speak to her in any English. I said if you do go I have to go with you. He's been in the army now 30 years my oldest one. He looks my Dad, and this one was 3 years old when my husband died then came the youngest.

MB: So tell me like what life was like when you arrived then? Was it just you and your mother who traveled over here?

MK: Yes that's all, because one girl after me she passed away in Europe. And Daddy couldn't make it because we could not correspond with him because the war broke out no letters were coming in those days.

MB: Was that very hard, do you remember much about that?

MK: I know we were hiding under the, we dug my mother of course was digging, the men were digging those ditches, and we would go in.

MB: Because of the war?

MK: Oh yeah because they were shooting just like in Richland, and our village was right by a battle zone, so everyone was shaken.

MB: So your mother must have been a strong person?

MK: Oh yeah and she was left with three small children, I had another sister but one died one years old, now I just have one. She lived in that household and after that she just moved here. Couldn't stay too long, because me and my husband had 7 kids, they had no room for us. So we got the old house down the lake where my sister used to live. We had neighbors over there.

MB: So what was life like when you were first here in 35?

MK: Well it wasn't easy for me, I could a little English, I sort of picked it up as I went on, but I was afraid to talk. Cause they were laughing. In school they were whipping me up, first grade baby I was 8 and those kids are 6, see this is where I had to go because I couldn't speak, and I knew some things, of course Catholic school is more religion and nothing else but I'm not bad I'm good Catholic and after that, not to long I had 6 years I think under public school and I meant this man he was Lutheran, but he showed me money and I was young and drawn to him, he was 28 and I was 14, but it happened my mother said I'll kill you. "If you go out with that man is going to kill you I would carry coal, I used to rake buckets of coal out of the mine, we didn't buy any we used to steal it was on the run you cleaned it up, you cleaned the rooms out, and sure enough at that time I did get married to him, I was 17 years old at the time. I had 4 kids with him and then he soon died of the Silicosis, because he come from the old country and he worked in the mine from 8 to 13, that killed him, because he was more than loading coal, because he was on the loader and that sand because I had autopsy performed on him and he died and his lungs were like cement, that's what I was told but I had no money when he died. Because the lodges he had three he belonged too, the largest that the general club that's a lodge he paid so much a month when he died thousand dollars, and he joined just maybe three years before he died belonging to two lodges. And from there, that was no money compared to now, I could never afford to live on that. But that money somehow I had to get out of that place, that's a club I

couldn't live there, I had to get out of that place because I had no husband. But I asked to stay one year and I was so afraid I used to be afraid of the dead whenever I was young I am not any more but I did, and I had only this house, if you were to sell this, it's like a barn on a farm, no bathroom, no heat. No heat you there 7 rooms in here no heat, were going in there, I didn't want too, I went with the real-estate man all over to see a home but see that was dumb, I should of asked the bank If I could get a loan and buy a home. But that time 6,000 you would of bought a beautiful home. Somerset I have no where

End of Tape 1 Side A (March 5, 1984)

Beginning of the Interview (March 6, 1984)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (March 6, 1984)

MB: So your Husband died in 1942?

MK: '42, November 13th

MB: Well it must have been hard when your father died, was he killed in a accident?

MK: Up here in 35, I was living here, and people all from all over, I go what they doing, these people outside and here it was my dad, the ambulance, why not when I find out I felt weird because I didn't even know him, but he brought me here to America. And he was making little, at that time if you were making 20 dollars after two weeks that was a big pay. Not like now, never enough, you make money you have to spend because the food is going up, you over 20 dollars you buy nothing, I spent 20 this morning I said what did I buy? I'm looking because maybe I left something there. I never had a easy life, my life in Europe it was hard because I didn't have proper food no wonder I'm sick. My mother when there were no men they were all

taken to the war the women took over, my mother she had to work and me I was wondering from house to house, I was undernourished and sickly so maybe right now that's why I am the way I am. No body to comb my hair I had long hair cause she no time, she used to go early and would come back when it was dark so we had to do what men did

MB: Like work the fields

MK: Work the fields, chopping wood for winter, she had to have something to keep warm, it's not like now because my sister was there and she says are relatives have better houses like you or me. Because she lives across the street in the old house my mother and Dad lived.

MB: Oh I see.

MK: My mother lived with her

MB: I see

MB: That's how I got married, from there to here, I didn't know nothing about marriage. But what am I doing hes giving me money this is what I like. Well you know at that time 12,000 he had that's a lot of money. But maybe 50,000 thousand now, this is what he had, people were talking, you because my mother said they were talking that Kuwartzski has 12,000 dollars, and this is what got me, and he was so generous he bought me this wrist watch and love, he showed me this, at home I didn't it, my mother was hitting me every day like I was a boy, but I was a god child I think, but you know how they used to be the old-timers, and if she came in the house I probably would not even say a word. I was ashamed of it as I was growing up then outside she hit me over my head and pull my hair for no reason because I don't think it was because of that because I raised three boys without a father. I didn't do that, we talk inside make sure nobody

see, but my mother was the type. In Europe I guess they do that. I didn't have a good home after my dad was gone.

MB: Did you have borders?

MK: Boarders? Oh we had six of them.

MB: Did you have to help with that?

MK: oh those dinner buckets, no wonder I order entrees now. You know they had a shine no cleanser sand.

MB: What year would that of been that your dad died then?

MK: 1926

MB: Do you remember the strike of 1922?

MK: Oh and how.

MB: Well can you tell me something about?

MK: 1922, they put dynamite on my husband's porch right here. The old lady his mother was almost killed, He was killed from the bed, now that was company because he wanted the Union. And he was trying to get the Union in Windber. And that's why the company did that to him, because he knew he was good, but he would be good here to tell us. So when they said my mother was going to house to house whoever was going to scab work they were not allowed unless you lived in the mine area. Because my aunt she was a scab you call them. Her men went to work in order to not bring the Union in. My dad did not go to work but it happened that mom got sick, she had a dead baby born, and she could not be admitted to Windber hospital unless you

signed that you going to work. You know my dad did not want to sign, he borrowed the money he still did not go. My aunt was just the opposite she made money because those men were sneaking into work I don't know how they ever got in. They were washing there and everything and she would take their lunch there. Not only her, there were lots and my mother was hitting everyone. Up here through the Alley all over, she would hit everyone. Those scabs they call them scabs.

MB: I guess some people were evicted from 35 and 36 too?

MK: Yes

MB: And you remember the time where they were evicting people out of their houses?

MK: Out of the houses yeah sure Just like my dad, he didn't want to sign for my mother, now they won't admit her she was in an ambulance sitting. They won't take her to the hospital because the hospital was company. So this is I remember that 1922 my sister was born and I remember I was holding her, and I came here to see this house. This house wasn't like it is now I did all of this. He was standing up here and he said get out of here or I'll kill you, my husband I used to tell him when we were married how he used to chase me. Oh yeah, that's was something my parents they fought for everything. Was your father a coal miner?

MB: Yes he was

MK: My husband since 13 the child came from Europe, now why did they send him in the mine? The only boy they had you see how stupid they were.

MB: Where did he come from in Europe?

MK: Stropkew in Czechoslovakia, in Austria-Hungary. But now it's Czechoslovakia because Russia is over them. My sister she was writing to me about how her neighbors had such a nice place. Don't let them fool you like they don't because they have everything that we do right here. There under Russian rule, so what they used to be Holy Russia. Why are they making such a big deal, just stick your big noses in America, keep your noses out of their business. They have everything, so you know when she came she was fighting for him for money. Mom send money there, she going to go back and build a house, but that money is in a bank that poor guy don't have it so she fought with him the cousin. And I don't know him, she don't know him, her husband retired from the navy and they went for three weeks on had a good time. And he lied to me again, he said Marsa, your name was supposed to be Marsa. Little girl he says I don't know you, but your sister was here and she fought with me for two months for that money I cannot give it to her. Because it the bank here wont trade with the one in Europe. So the money will not come from the bank here. So she called him a communist he say" You know the way they pay music that's the way you got to dance". He was smart, I cursed in front of him, I could write to him, I ask him" Did you understand what I wrote" and he said " Yes perfectly"

MB: Oh that's good; you guys don't have a language communication problem?

MK: No, because he don't speak English, but I don't know because he wasn't even born when I came to America, but that was my mother's sister his mother, so you know they all are gone the older generation. The youngest, she said they had a good time they fed her and she slept a lot. She slept on, they even had a bed suit. Well that's jealousy I thought to myself why would go over there to fight? After all he came out; they would have possibly killed him if he didn't follow their rules. She's different person than me, she's so smart she knows many things now like when

she was older. She wouldn't talk to you like I do, she's more educated like I told my son Michael. Listen you might be educated in books but in life you stink.

MB: Oh boy the experience of these miners and what their families went through when they were trying to get a union.

MK: You know they used to live in little house maybe 3 or 4 families, there was no living quarters for them, and they would sneak in those pussyfoots what you call it, and they would sneak in there , they used to hit them hit them the ones that don't work . Outside they would push you outside, one little girl was taken to the hospital they push her on the street.

MB: Did you ever hear about a rape in 1922?

MK: I didn't know about a rape, but if it was how would I even know? I guess, I guess because now they sort of just talking about this women was raped she had a child from those pussyfoots. I don't know what they were, I guess pussyfoots, they came on horses here, the company Berwind company they brought them here.

MB: Yeah, those were tough times.

MK: Oh yes we had nothing. They used to give us Surplus like now, because I go for surplus. The same thing was then but even clothing they had to give us, there was a store and you could go and it was from the Union, yes they give you whatever they give you it wasn't go, but better than nothing.

MB: I understand there were some tents where people had to live, do you remember that?

MK: Right in Tents that's true, In this house I think about 5 families were living, because it's a seven room house, in the back room area I think they lived I don't know. We have a nice little

back room there, my husband used to wash himself when he came from work. There was no bathtub, we don't have no bathroom.

MB: Yeah that was the condition for a lot of houses.

MK: I tell my sons; Bill has 6 in his house I say hey. You have it made, but you should of saw your daddy and he was healthy, he had to go to the other side of the house to dry off. And he washed his face under the pump, there was outside pump. Yes it was exciting and I remember all of that, now my mother would say to me" how you can even speak that wretched Russian, you was never in Russia", I say "But I pick it up I want to know it.

MB: So did you go to Saint Mary's then?

MK: Yes that was my church. In Saint Mary's we were together before with all of us, but I don't we have problems all of us.

MB: Do you know what caused the split then?

MK: Split? They don't want the Pope of Rome.

MB: They don't want the Pope?

MK: They don't want the Pope, they not going to listen to an Italian that's how I see it. I was already married, I had to sit and listen through court every day, I have two children and lived in a club, and I used to tell my mother in law you come and stay with children and I go, now my husband went early, and not in an automobile. But they walked together and everybody went. Now not everybody from the church but they went there side and or side and they were fighting like animals and you know some didn't make sense at all, and me I got myself, I'll go later, when I send the children to school my mother and law would watch them here because they used to

come home for lunch so I made their lunch and the chief of police was there that whole summer and that was in 1935 and I said to “Ray Can I come with you to Somerset?” He says with me I said Johns here early in the morning he left. My husband but I want to go he says” Well I don’t care about it if he’s going to tell me something I’ll slap him good. I said don’t worry about that Ill straighten it out and when we came to Windber he gave me a ride, we got there, maybe it takes a half a hour to Somerset. But I’m sitting behind my husband and he’s listening, he’s not even looking back to see who’s behind them. I was there maybe hours, then he got up to go for lunch we had to go a restaurant naturally where you going to eat. Until recess and then again court procedure starts, he say “how in the hell did you come here”.

MB: What do you mean by court, what court were you in?

MK: Well about the church if it was ever

MB: Was this at the church or at the court?

MK: It was at the court we brought each to the court it was the same party. That they had a church behind the park and us we were saying the church was always under Rome because it was. My mother even says in Europe it was, but they claimed no. See they wanted something else, that’s why were spilt but I wish we together because some people I like.

MB: Do you remember when that was?

MK: 1933 I would say, oh ok. 1933

MB: Where did you get married how did you get married?

MK: I got married there in that house where my sister used to live, but I had a wedding in a brick hall, the Slovak hall on 14th street there. 14th street big wedding big shindig that 1200 went. It

was the biggest shindig you ever saw in your life. He spent every cent on that wedding. He invited everybody and everybody ate for free. Oh coarse they went with a plate for everything, but how much we lost everything. I says but I didn't you me Dummy. I'm just dancing like crazy I don't know what he's doing. He spent all that money and never made anything back, cause that time if they give you a dollar on a plate that was good, that like now, so the money went but he says Ill show them that I got married.

MB: That was in 1926 then when you got married?

MK: 26

MB: Oh boy then you had 4 kids

MK: Oh Fourth of July, not on Fourth of July, but Valentine's Day. And that was my anniversary Just February when I got married just before the lent started. A train always runs this way, you see how the noise trembles the house.

MB: Yeah, I heard some complaints about that.

MK: Oh and how much I was demonstrating even on TV, the road is bad splashing mud on my windows, those homes old fashioned were built out too far. Cause if I built it I would of build it in the middle of the yard. Right on the side walk.

MB: So when you got married did you stay in 935 then?

MK: No, in here, from there I came here

MB: Ok across the street, the other house in 35

MK: From there to here, and when he bought me in here, I said “No lights, no electricity, the house was not wired because my Husband did not want to spend money, he said the house belongs to my mother, she don’t want to give me the money, something happens to it, she would never give it to him, one boy she had so he said “Ill fix her for good, and this he would not pay taxes. So just before he died he took a lawyer and then bought the place for the amount of money that we owned for taxes. And she didn’t even know it, in the mean time she died. So I had this when he died when he was going to Somerset I said make sure my name is on that deed. Oh yeah, I better put it in there because I know you and naturally, he wanted to put it in my name too, I wouldn’t had a problem, because 1,000 dollars in the bank and I couldn’t get it, because he died, he worked in August and November and he died three months only, I couldn’t get that money, I go to the bank and the funeral and I’m asking them Mr. Olson he was the president and he knew me well he knew my Husband, he said” Mary you can’t get it, you have to go through court, well I said” Your telling me I have to go to court me”, but I was able to get 300, but I didn’t get 1,000.

MB: This was in 1942 after he died?

MK: Yes after he died.

MB: Were these private houses and maybe not company houses?

MK: Maybe they were, not that I know.

MB: Were you able to live through the 1922 strike in the house?

MK: Yes, my husband lived her with his mother and two sisters and we lived in ours.

MB: So you didn’t get thrown out of the houses then?

MK: No, no nobody bothered us, I guess I don't know how, but they threw them out, I heard in 35 they were throwing them out. But not us, my mother has a house there across the street. Just 17th street, my sister lives there and it's a double house. We were not thrown out and all these people that lived around here, my aunt lived in the red one, they weren't, must have been at 35 it was something, but I guess the company don't want them in the house, company houses they were. See these were private, the other in 35 were company houses.

MB: Oh but these weren't?

MK: These weren't.

MB: Oh I see that's something I always have trouble keeping straight.

MK: Now see this is the way it is, they wanted them out, alright maybe they thought they going to join they not going to fight.

MB: That's why you can have 5 families here?

MK: Yes, they lived in cellar at everyplace, From 35 they used to move out and sleep any place. They used to have cots to sleep, I know that 5 families used to live in this house, there was a kitchen in the back and I mean how could they but they did you had to.

MB: Did you say something about moving to a German club?

MK: From German club I lived here 5 years. I had two children and my husband was a member of the German club. And they wanted him to live there because that's how it was they had Russian house, brick house, and polish house, they elected him to live there, and it was during prohibition and he said "Well I just got married and my wife will go crazy in here". It was a big place, a big dancing hall, bar, I lived on the third floor. But when they elected next year I said to

him I want to go there, because I didn't like to live with his mother, she had her ways, and Michael was already 5 he was, so went to the German club we had a bathroom there big nice house, nice rooms, its old fashion hall, but oh I didn't care how long I had to work but I worked there, A lot of men see me know like I went to school with a friend and he told me" Mary I could of ate from that floor", See I used to scrub it, you see my hands no wonder they hurt now.

MB: Did your husband continue to work in the mines?

MK: In the mines, three jobs he was holding, bartender, mines, Sunday he worked in the store.

MB: He worked in Windber mines then?

MK: Yes in the Windber mines, in 36 he walked far it's from [Bumgardnier] Ave, way up to 36 he walked everyday but he got it, he got that Silicosis you know, and he just died so fast I didn't know what hit me and I didn't even have the baby yet. I'm expecting this baby and he's dying on me, he's in bed already upstairs and Johnny he wasn't tending bar no more like for three months he suffered and I put him in a hospital I called the officers from the hall, and I told them Johnny is sick would you do me a favor and take him to the hospital. So I couldn't take him to Windber hospital because they were all with the Berwind. The company hospital too, not like now, so I took him to Johnstown, I had to pay 300 dollars. Being that owned this dump here, I had too. After that you know, when he died I had to get out, and I went to the same place that I lived before but I had no mother in law, and my Husband was gone, he died 4 years after his mother.

MB: But you had 4 children?

MK: I had 4 children.

MB: How old were they when your husband died then?

MK: How old?

MB: Yeah, your kids

MK: Well Michael was 17 he would of graduated from High School, he was still in High School and Mary Jane was 13 my daughter. And two babies, three years old, and three weeks.

MB: You had quite a spread in between. So did any of your sons go into the mines then?

MK: Never, I knew they would of died, the doctor had told me at the hospital that my husband was going to die. You be strong but I'm telling you because you have to take care of these kids, but you know I still went to pieces. Because I didn't know what hit me, a lightning bolt, so I had to move out of there, but this place anything but this place. This street I hate it. I like it now, you know I fixed it up and it don't bother me no more.

MB: So how did you manage to survive with all these kids?

MK: I was getting 53 dollars social security, that's all because the money what he left me 2,000 went to the wrong son, see I was young I didn't understand and I never should have gave it to them because this son tells me now that I didn't give it to him. Well you know I feel Like I choked him myself that's why I did it, because I could have had a cellar I could have had heat here, for the 2,000 I could of did a lot but he asked me, Michael said "Mom if I get to this point you'll be sitting on the top of the world". I had a big argument with him already, I said on what top of the world, I'm going down in the ground, what are you talking about, because we argue now he like to deny that I gave him money, I didn't spend it at no bar, I could have had a cellar here, a cold cellar it wouldn't of been hot, I didn't have oil, I have oil now. And I would of managed better but I couldn't because some in west point I'm bring coal, one mile or two miles I

would be carrying buckets, my hands out of touch. My border who use to live here would tell me “You’re married, everything going to come out of you, and I had the same problem. Those heavy buckets, maybe you remember coal buckets, maybe you seen them I have one I could, show you I would fill it up, lumps and I would go, I put one baby in the crib and the other one who was standing there, they were both crying, I said you don’t cry You going to freeze. I don’t know how I did it, this winter, how did I ever go there. You know I didn’t wear slacks or nothing. I froze my whole body. You know when I talk to someone about my life, it’s just said, because I told the so many times. And I brought the buckets as fast as I could, I even stole from the mine, I would climb up and have to hurry to fill my buckets. I go back, and they would be crying, “We were crying for you mommy where did you go”. I says “coal, we going to freeze in here” Because we almost froze at night, I always said to my mother who had a double house because when he was dying, he said “Go on live with your mother don’t go and live in that old house. And my mother did not want me, because she had a pretty house and three boys, she didn’t want me, she said you go over there. And I did the best I could I didn’t go to work, so what could I have done. Maybe work.

MB: But you had little kids you couldn’t leave them.

MK: Yes who could I leave them with, nobody would take care of them, so I would not go to work, and I didn’t go on no relief or nothing, just like how I lived, we had food, like even now the boys will tell you, we had food but we did not have anything else. This house you could see your breath you couldn’t sit in this room every. We had a big sheet hanging there. Still in there, one in the kitchen, one in the back room I still have. I don’t say other people don’t go through that, bt it was dreadful I don’t know how I did it. Its zero I had no boots, and I ran out where ever the tipple was, where they were dumping coal and neighbors would see me, because he didn’t

leave me no money he didn't think he was going to die at 40 and that's, I tell my sons and I thought they would be better if they didn't carry me on their arms but they want to go away because they thought "Mom what am I going to do in Windber" And they have jobs and they live nice out here there is no work, this youngest one she works for a company that sent him to Fordham university in New York, but he got married and after he got married he didn't finish because the kids, the baby come and when you're working and going to school at night that will get you. Now he is a big man, if you see the son I had, my husband was going to raise him. Tis one is the biggest 6 3 he sits over there, I tell him "William I don't know how I ever carried you up stairs but how about you take me upstairs. What a giant of a man.

MB: Well that's really something.

MK: And they all when they graduated one by one left.

MB: You stressed them getting a education a lot?

MK: Yes

MB: Was that different from your parents?

MK: You betcha, I worried about them, when Michael told me he was sick, I said, I'll take you on my back and well go to school and I took him, and the teachers all looked at me, He sick I told them, and then when I took him he was alright, oh I took them to school I wanted them to get a education. How much they had, well of coarse my Son he is in College, he could be anything, he's 30 years, he spent 22 months in the army I signed for him he was 17 and he went he moved me here from the home in May.

End of Tape 1 Side B

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (March 6, 1984)

MB: You were staying in a German club, now was that during prohibition?

MK: Well I went there during prohibition, we got married during it, because he would have to go into the woods to get that liquor. He had about 5 barrels, you know that cost him a lot of money, he had nice money, but I tell you he had a big shipment. He says I will show the good people I got married.

MB: How was he able to save up that much money?

MK: I think the mother was skimming, they had nothing here, just a stove, such an old fashion covert.

MB: Did you when you went to school, did you have problems with your name?

MK: Yes

MB: Tell me about that?

MK: Well whoever took me to school, I can't recall who it was that took me, my Dad took me once, but that was to Slovak school. But this women, somebody went with me on this street and naturally the teacher would say spell it, and even the lady could spell it. And me I didn't know nothing I couldn't even understand what the teacher was saying, and then as I was in school longer than I wrote it down myself It would be Ideal KOVALSKY

This is the way my mother has it on her tombstone. A lot of people know us, and my father could pronounce it. Then my two sisters who attended my school, they both graduated with that name. Just like I showed you, because that's there, and I guess he is Russian if he has a name life

that. Romicko that's his name that's how they pronounce that this person belongs to a certain person. What was this person that just died, ah his name was Anderko, you know what that is in English, Andre. But I mean this at the end that's his, cause with our name it's an I at the end. When Michael was appointed to west point they knew he was Russian, they said" Look at the Russian name we have here. Well he must be his to, but it's not as bad as ours is long in title. Whatever our name is, as long as I have a name and look at this one she's a lawyer she named the baby after me. She wrote me a letter saying Grandmom I hope you don't mind but I gave Alexander your middle name. I said, If you want it that way, because I didn't see her, one time she was a infant they were going to stop by and see me, they bought her in as a little tiny baby. I haven't seen her, she was getting married and I wrote her a letter saying how I never see you as a infant and that was it. See he's not like that my son I don't know what he means by that he's educated man, but I don't know, you know he told me on the phone that you're coming here and I have everything ready and I need you to come. And I said, Okay, I'm coming, I'm going to see everybody. His hometown is in Florida, he says well that's something I need to see and I'm telling my friend when we're having coffer she tells me, Mary, I'll tell you something call your son If he is the way you talk about him he will want you there.

End of Tape 2 Side A (March 6, 1984)

End of the Interview