

INTERVIEW WITH SUSIE SHUSTER AND KATHERINE RODISH

Windber, PA

Interviewed by Mildred Beik

March 12, 1984

MB: Millie Beik

SS: Susie (Gulasie) Gulasy Shuster (1892-1987)

KR: Katherine Shuster Rodish (1915-2006) daughter of Joseph and Susie Shuster

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A

MB: Could you tell me your full name?

SS: My name?

MB: Yeah

SS: Susie Shuster

MB: Ok, what was your maiden name before Shuster?

SS: Gulasy

MB: Could you spell that?

KR: I would imagine G-U-L-A-S-Y or it could even be S-I-E

MB: G-U-L-A-S-Y or I-E

KR: Or an I-E at the end

MB: Ok, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, where were you born and could you tell me how old you are?

SS: I was born in Yakubane

MB: Ok, and where is that?

SS: In Czechoslovakia. That's a town named Yakubane.

MB: Could you spell that? Or could you write it for me?

KR: No, her writing is limited. Y-A-K-U-B-A-N-E that was the name of the town and that was really Austria, right mom? Austria-Hungry

SS: Austria-Hungary, yeah, at that time.

KR: Now it's Czechoslovakia

SS: Now it's Czechoslovakia

MB: I see. And when were you born?

SS: 1892

KR: She had a birthday a week ago Sunday

MB: Ok, so that would be March the fourth

SS: Yeah

MB: So happy birthday a little late, so you're 92 then

SS: 92

MB: Yes, you're looking good, that's wonderful, very alert

SS: My birthday was Sunday. Children was here, but my son he went on vacation and he wasn't back yet.

MB: So, could you tell me about your parents, maybe a little bit about your mother? What she was like, what she did? Was she from this area in Austria-Hungry?

SS: She was a very nice woman, she was working hard in Europe then she come to America and she was here before we was here, she took my oldest sister with herself and then after 7 years and then she came back to Yakubane and she didn't stay very long, she stayed from March until August and August the seventh she went back to American again.

MB: Do you know what year that would have been or what years it would have been around?

SS: That was- I come here in 1907

MB: You came in 1907 and she had been here before

SS: She was here about 7 years before

KR: That would be about 1900.

MB: Was she a young woman, was she already married or was she a little girl when she first came?

SS: She was little

MB: She was a girl

SS: She had four daughters already

MB: Four daughters? Which one are you?

SS: I'm the third one.

MB: The third one?

SS: The first one is dead already, the second one is dead already the last one, in Florida that's the baby in Florida

MB: What kind of area did your mother come from, did they farm? Did they grow crops or do you know anything about that?

KR: It was farming, right? They each had a piece of land, right?

SS: In Europe, everyone is farming. In the city, it is different, but in the towns, everybody is farming. That's how they make a living. Potatoes, cabbage, oat, barley, rye, everything and that's the way they earned a living.

MB: Did they own the little bit of land or mostly work for other people?

SS: They have the land.

MB: They have the land?

SS: Each person has their own land.

KR: I would like to add, I don't know if you got it, but when her mother came to American, she was a widow

MB: O, no.

KR: She lost her husband in Europe they were just left with their grandmother, she took just the one, the oldest and the other three stayed with their grandmother. So that's the circumstances there.

MB: So what made her decide to come to America at that time? Did she have relatives here?

KR: Did she have relatives here?

SS: Nobody.

MB: Nobody!

KR: Well she must have had somebody, friends or somebody.

SS: That's what those people would do, they didn't have no one. They just come and come here and try to get the work and try to get the place to stay that how those people were.

MB: She might have known someone maybe from the village or the area to help her a little. Did she have someone here to help her, maybe a relative or a friend or someone from the village.

SS: Well the one that was here, my mother's sister's daughter was here.

MB: So she had some link with someone here.

SS: I think because when I come here I was only 14 years old.

MB: You were 14 in 1907. So your mother was a widow. So what did your father do for a living, I guess she married him in Europe.

SS: In Europe everybody worked on the land. Plowing, sowing, and hauling home the hay, the wheat, the rye, for a living

MB: Did they have a chance to go to school, your parents, in Europe?

SS: The children go to school.

MB: Did you go to school in Europe before you came?

SS: Maybe one day, that's all.

MB: Did you have to help with the farming?

SS: After I was 8 years old I went to work.

MB: What did you do? Tell me about that.

SS: In Europe, when you have a baby, you baptize the baby and then you

KR: a little feast, a celebration.

SS: With your friends and the people were sitting and the children were playing outside and the window was open. You could see from the inside out and from the outside inside. And one woman, she was a young woman, her husband was in this country, she had 1 boy and she said to me through the window, hey little girl, take my baby. So she gave me her baby and I watched the baby after she was finished, when she was going home, she said could you come to my place and stay and watch my baby and my mother wasn't there, she was in America yet and so I told grandma- because I was staying with grandma yet and I said "Grandma, I want to go to her." And she started crying because I was merely 8 years old. I'm going to her because she promised

she's going to buy me nice boots, nice babushka, so I said I'm going... So I said I'm going to go and she said, you're not going to go, and I said, I've got to go. So she came for me the next day, and I went. I watch her baby, I stayed there, I stayed there 4 years with her. Her husband was here in America. Then her husband come back, she had 1 boy before, she had another baby when he come back, they stayed maybe, I don't know how long he stayed. He stayed maybe 3 years, maybe more, maybe less. Then he said he going to go back. He said he didn't want to stay anymore. He want to go back well she said, we have to go. Well when they go, I have to go out and get another job someplace.

MB: So you were about 12 then.

SS: So I thought to myself, where am I going to go now? I was 8 years old when I go to their place and then I was 12, where am I going to go now? So my uncle and my mother's sister's husband- uncle, she said, you come with us. But before I go with her, the people I stay with, his mother was living next door and she took me in for the few days. But I didn't feel good. I lost the baby because I was minding the baby, you know, so I didn't feel good. So I went to the uncle's place. Then the uncle came and the uncle said, you're going to stay with us. They say spring, then this is summer already we're going to plant, we had a lot of work we were all summer, working on the land. So it was working all summer. After the summer passed, uncle said, now you have to look for the work. Where are you going to go now? I was so sad, my Grandma died already. My younger sister, she stayed with the uncle. I'm going to find someplace and I went to the parish house and I asked the priest's wife, do you need any working girls? I have enough sense to ask her and she said it could use it in there and in Europe it's different that here. In Europe, when the priest, we had two girls working, 1 in the kitchen, one in the rooms and 2 fellas working 1 with the cow and 1 with the horses. He had so much, more than here. Here they don't hire no girls. So she said yes, we can use a girl like you. OK, that was good. So I got work again. Then after that, the summertime come, the children, the priest's boys was in the college. In the big city, Presso and the mother, the priest wife mother was living there and then the boys were in college, in the college in the big city, Presso so I went there. My mother was still in America. She said in a letter, when you are in Europe, you're going to work, you're not going to work just 1 or 2 days and that's all. Have to work for a month, another month, a year, 2 years, 1 year left. So my mother send a letter from here to say don't sign a contract for a whole year because I might come back. I might come home, and I might stay and I might not. So after that, she came back so I sign it for just 6 months.

MB: What did you do?

SS: Everything. Washing, cleaning, wash the clothes, iron the clothes, everything.

MB: Ok.

SS: Just working like I was now. Working on everything after my mother came back. Then I come back home and we stay, it was in June and then we go back and we stayed into August, it was August 27th 1907 we went back.

MB: What was your mother doing in America while you were growing up? Was she in Windber or someplace else?

SS: She was, in the beginning she was working. After she took the rooms- we had two rooms and she would have a boarder. My brother in law and his brother

MB: Was that in New York City?

KR: Mom, was that in New York?

SS: In New York, after they come back from Europe and America. How different and then they went on a ship and then there's a cow. Mom there's a cow! I thought maybe in American they didn't have no cow. My mother knew there were cows there.

MB: Had she been living in New York until right before she came back to get you then?

SS: Then she go back from Europe and she take me and my sister

KR: But she was in New York the whole time and she left from there in the beginning and then she went back, she was in New York the whole time, no other place.

SS: No

MB: How was she supporting herself in New York then? Just with the boarders did she work- some people work in textiles?

KR: Did your mother work out of the house at a job or just taking in boarders?

SS: She was working for other people,

KR: housework

MB: Ok, I see.

SS: And she stayed with the oldest daughter and then after she took the rooms, she took the two boarders, the brothers. That's the way it was. Wasn't like now. Now is nice, because when you think of the time, my oh my. Now you don't speak English, my kids make me because I can talk in English.

MB: What was your native language?

SS: I tell them, mind your own business. I tell them all, mind your own business.

MB: What is your native language? Is it Russian or Slovak?

SS: You mean?

MB: What were you speaking when you came?

SS: It's not the hard Russian, it's like in Czechoslovakia, not is Russia. The Russians, they have it real hard

MB: So sort of Karpathos

SS: Rusky

MB: Did your mother know any English when she first came or did she have to learn everything when she first got here, too?

SS: She understood a little bit, but she didn't understand very much.

MB: That must have been very hard.

SS: It was pretty hard because you couldn't understand any time anybody is talking, you don't know what is what everybody was working and then they come here and there was working for a woman, she had 1 boy she was working, a Slovak woman there was 1 baby boy and she hired me and I was working in there and after I stayed I don't know how many months and I stayed in her place and then she became pregnant with a second boy then she says soon I have to go because she's not going to work anymore, she was working every day, you know. She was working, her husband was working and so they needed somebody with the baby then I went to work for the Jewish people. For the first month that I was working, a \$7 month. That's a big pay.

MB: 1907

SS: \$7 a month.

MB: Oh boy.

SS: I went to the Jewish people because I was a lot smarter now. She asked, how much did you have there? I put it \$2 more and they said, will it stand? I said \$9 and they ok, I give you \$9. And I stayed with her, I don't know how many months I stayed with her. And then after my sister was working in the restaurant, and she said Sue, I'm going to quit and they're going to put you in my job in the restaurant and she had \$6 a week. It was a big pay. She had \$6 and they put me in the same place, but they give me a \$1 less. They gave me only \$5 and I was working there for 3 years and then after that I was going to get married.

MB: Tell me about that, where did you meet your husband?

SS: Well, my husband, the people from Europe, there was somebody in New York and a lot of girls in New York, New York, Pittsburgh, a lot of those girls there from Europe and if a boy want to get married they're going to New York to look for the wife, maybe go to the Pittsburgh to look for a wife.

MB: Oh, I see, all these little towns.

SS: And just in case, he went to his brother's wedding.

KR: He was in Winder, right? Dad was in Windber when he went to the wedding, right?

SS: He was in Windber and he was going to his brother's wedding.

MB: I see.

SS: He was Austrian and there was bridesmaids that's the way we meet.

MB: I see.

SS: And he was dancing and he asked me, would you like to go to Windber? And I said, I don't know.

KR: It was interesting.

SS: Do you like to marry me? Go after me. And I said, wait just a minute.

KB: Go after me, there was a difference.

SS: Go after me, I say I'm going to go after you. Well then he come home and he was thinking and I didn't expect to see him. Now his brother, the one that was married and had the wedding, he come back with some other fellas because so many fellas was in his wedding they didn't have no place to put them they had two rooms, no place to put the people. So he come from the New Jersey and then he come to New York and then some other place and asked my mother if he going to take my husband, his brother for the night because I don't have no place to put him. My mother said she know his father, know his mother they were friends in Europe, mother said yes, why not, let him come for the night. So we just have two rooms, but that's the way the people were living not like now where you have the rooms for the boys and the girls and to put the mother with the father, no. He stayed through the night and the next day we went to the thing, the ... was playing every day by the ... so he was there and he asked me if I was going to marry him and I didn't say yes and I didn't say no.

KR: They hadn't known each other before that.

MB: I see.

KR: That's the first they met at the wedding, right?

SS: Yes. Well then we come back and he asked my mother, he said Mrs. Gulasy, will you let your daughter Susie marry me? Mom said, why ask me, why not ask her? Ask her. That's the way the way we were, we didn't say yes, we didn't say no. We got married.

MB: Where did you get married?

SS: New York.

KR: New York. After he came back. In a matter of 2 weeks he went to the wedding, was an usher, she was a bridesmaid and two weeks later he's coming back to Windber with her as his wife. So it's rather interesting because they did have a good life.

SS: I tell you, it was completely different then. People used to go, like I said, get married and they're working here in the mine, maybe in the factory, not very many girls here somewhere to work for the girls, like in the city, they have a lot of work for the girls.

MB: I see.

SS: So they want to take a trip for the wife.

MB: That's interesting, I haven't had anyone tell me that. Fascinating.

KR: That's the way they used to do it.

SS: If you wanted to impress a boy, there was I was going with him and I was about 10 years old, he was the first one to ask me to marry him.

MB: Who asked you? Your mother?

SS: No, the boy.

KR: You were in Europe then?

SS: When?

MB: How old were you when you came to America? You said 12. No, no.

KR: 14.

MB: 14.

KR: If you were 10 years old, Mom, you had to be in Europe.

SS: He was in America and I was in America.

MB: So you had to be a little older then.

SS: He come from Europe and ask my mother, and my mother know he not very good.

MB: I see.

SS: Every mother look out for her children's best. My mother said to him, no, she's never going to get married, yet, she had time to get married.

KR: I should say.

SS: That's the way it used to be.

MB: They asked the parents in those days.

SS: Ask the parents, if the parents say yes, yes. If the parents say no, no. So my mother said no and she told me after that, he wasn't very good.

MB: She knew something, I guess, about him.

SS: Young people don't know much about others, but you know the parents, they know more, so they don't want something bad for the child. They wanted something good.

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

SS: 18.

MB: Was that the usual age? Or did girls get married much younger than that?

SS: If they want to get married, they get married. \

KR: But they were younger, right, than 18?

SS: Yes. If they wanted to get married, they could get married. Mom said no, not yet. I think at 18 years is not too bad.

MB: No. That's at least better. So that must have been 1910 then? I guess, that must have been about, if you were 18. Was that 1910 you got married?

SS: 1910.

MB: Did you come right to Windber then? You have to tell me about that. Must have been a surprise after being in New York and Europe.

SS: We got married then we stay one week and the mother went to Windber. He was living in his brother's place. So I stay there for 3 years. Second house.

MB: Was this in 935 or 36?

SS: Second house.

KR: Second house from the rail road.

SS: She have 8 boarders. She had a lot of work. We have only 2 bedrooms, that's all. She was sleeping in the front room, it wasn't like people now. Where everyone is special.

KR: They had more than 2 bedrooms. Didn't they have more than 2 bedrooms, Mom?

SS: That's all they had.

KR: Where did all the boarders stay?

SS: All the boarders stay in the one room.

KR: Then where did ... and ... stay?

SS: Front room, downstairs.

KR: I see. I got it.

SS: That's the way it was. There was no parlor.

KR: A lot I'm learning too.

MB: Was your husband's family from the same place, region in Europe? Did he come from the same Czechoslovakia, Austria-Hungry area?

KR: Our dad came from the same village as you?

MB: He came from the same village?

KR: But you didn't know him before that.

SS: I said before, my mother know his mother.

MB: I see. Ok, I didn't catch all of that, that's really something, so.

SS: In Europe, the young boys, they know each other, but I was too young yet.

KR: My Dad was 8 years older.

MB: I see.

KR: So that would have made a big difference.

MB: Sure it would. Did you have a church wedding, or did you get married at home or a hall?

SS: We had a big wedding. Go get the picture.

KR: Your wedding picture.

MB: I'd love to see it. That's a beautiful wedding picture, that's something nice to have. That really is. Are you Orthodox or Greek Catholic?

KR: Orthodox Greek Catholic, that's the way it's called. Your uncle goes there too?

MB: Yes. I just wanted to make sure I. It's all mixed. Pete is my relative by marriage, so I really, I've gone to his church, when I'm here, sometimes I go.

SS: Are you single?

MB: No, I'm married with two boys in Illinois.

SS: Big boys?

MB: 19 and 13.

SS: Oh.

MB: Now Mrs. Shuster, tell me more about coming to Windber or your wedding which would you like to talk about? What was it like, what was your impression?

SS: We stayed one week with my mother and then we went to live in Windber. I didn't know anybody in Winber.

MB: Did you come by train?

KR: Did you come by train, mom?

MB: You remember that, when you first got off and you looked at this town? Must have been pretty different then because it was new.

KR: What did you think when you first got off the train and you saw Windber?

SS: I said it was looking to me like Europe.

KR: It looked like Europe?

MB: Did it?

SS: The farms, the trees, very different than New York, you didn't see that.

KR: See, the train used to come right into Windber. Did the train used to come right into Winber?

SS: Yes.

KR: That's the library now, where the train station was.

SS: It comes to Windber, my husband brother's house and we stayed for 3 years. Lot of work, but I didn't mind the work because I was young. And it was big help for a woman to stay to help in her home. Much different when you're working by yourself. The woman when you have so much work, make the breakfast, fix their buckets, scrubbing every day, the floor, because there was no cellar now people have more cellar now so there was undressed in the kitchen. Men were undressing and the woman would stay in the other room and then they get washed and then another one then third one, fourth one, so many work, the dishes, but it was different. They used to have everyone their plate, they used to put the [Short Gap in Recording] I was sick and she was sick.

MB: I see.

SS: And the people, they wasn't afraid, like now they might get disease, you might get sore throat, but we were like one family. A whole lot different now.

MB: You didn't have any electricity in the house then, did you?

SS: No, no electricity.

MB: What about running water, did you have to get water from outside, or was there water in the house?

SS: They have their water, but we didn't have no electricity, just kerosene lamp.

MB: You had to clean those all the time.

SS: Everyday, you had to clean the lamp. Clean the thing inside. We still have 1 lamp in the room, did you notice we got one lamp?

KR: You mean, the one in the living room? You don't have any upstairs.

SS: No, I wanted that one even when we get the electric. Want to put it in the cellar and I don't know who told me, don't put it in the cellar, that's something to remember so we put it in the

front room and they stay in there. So my children know, my grandchildren know and the great grandchildren are going to know.

MB: Good.

SS: That thing. We were the first to get it.

MB: You remember when they put it in?

KR: On this street.

SS: On this street. First one. Before it get dark you had to check that the lamp is filled with kerosene that the glass is clean, clean it, light it. More work than now.

KR: Well, I remember, the lamps, I do. I remember when got the electricity and was that wonderful. Press the button. I remember that.

MB: Conveniences. Had you husband been in Windber very long?

KR: Was Dad in Windber a long time before you two got married?

SS: He was from Europe, I don't know how he – how long. After you past years, 80s, 90s, you're not going to remember everything.

MB: You're doing just fine. I don't know if I could remember things.

KR: She was ok in her 80s she just had her ninetieth birthday and has been kind of forgetful.

SS: Many times you go from the cupboard to the stove and you forget what you wanted.

KR: I just did that.

MB: I do that. I go to find something upstairs and I forget what I went to find. Then I come down and I remember and I have to go back up.

SS: You ask yourself, what did I want?

MB: So don't feel bad if you can't answer everything I ask you, I just don't know, I'm trying to find out what you do remember, that's all. That's my way of getting you to talk, to tell me about things. So what kinds of impressions did you have, those first years that you were here?

SS: Just work every day, that's all. And like I told you before, it was rough living with his brother.

MB: How long did you do that? How long did you live with his brother?

KR: How long did you live at Aunt's?

SS: 3 years.

MB: Then did you move into a place of your own?

SS: We had 2 babies in the house, I had mine Sunday and she had hers the next Monday.

MB: How many children do you have Mrs. Shuster?

SS: 6, 3 girls, 3 boys.

MB: Oh boy. First-girl, second-boy, third-girl, one boy, fourth and fifth were one and then the other.

MB: That's interesting.

SS: When you're young, you work, work, work, I said good thing God gives you children, then you're old if God gave you children when you're old, it would be too hard for the women, but when you're young, your children are young, your husband is young.

MB: Did you have midwives deliver your children, did you have midwives come to the house or did you go to the hospital.

SS: Midwife.

MB: Do you remember who that person was?

SS: I had the last one in the hospital.

RK: Well how old were you when you had Steve? Tell her that.

SS: 42.

KR: Change of life baby.

SS: I said, I'm 42 and my husband was 50. I said to my husband, I'm 42 and you're 50, and we're going to have a baby, it's going to be terrible and he said, never mind, we're going to raise him. And we did, but he got sick. He was working hard in the mine and he was working hard, 12 hours, not like now.

MB: Tell me about that.

SS: 12 hours a day, they leave the house before 6 and they come home after 6 and it was a big job and long hours.

MB: Some miners say that they didn't see any sunlight in those days.

KR: That's right- some of the miners never saw the sun.

SS: Sure, he went in it was dark, he come home it was dark.

KR: I remember my dad used to come home from work and he said, I have to go back in so we had a coal stove and it was like catty corner and he said, I'll lay behind here because he had his dirty clothes on and he took a little bit of sleep while she fixed another bucket and then he'd go back into the mine.

SS: And he'd go back to work. Men were working real hard and the women were working hard and then men were working hard. The children and the mothers bake the bread and they didn't buy no bread, they make the bread. I baked the bread last week.

MB: Did you? Do you know how old your husband was when he first started working in the mine?

SS: I don't remember now, he was young. I know he was young, but I don't know how old he was.

MB: Do you know how long he worked in the mines, did he work his whole life in the mines?

SS: Working a long time in the mines because we got married in 1910 and he was working before that and he died and he was still working before he got sick and after he got sick, then he quit.

MB: What year did he get sick then, Mrs. Shuster?

SS: I have to stop and think.

KR: I got married in '35 and he was still alright, so it was- how long was he sick? Do you remember how long he was sick, then I can give you a better year.

SS: 7 and a half years.

KR: Well then he got sick about- well, he died in '45.

SS: '45, yes.

KR: So you take 7 away from that and that would be after I was married I guess, about a year or 2 after that. He couldn't work in the mines anymore.

MB: Did he have Silicosis?

SS: Silicosis, yes.

MB: I guess in those days, you didn't get anything for that if a miner had that.

SS: He was coughing and coughing in the night and he didn't sleep. He sat like this in the night. That's the way he slept. With 2 cushions behind his head and sitting because when he would lay down he was worse and would cough too much, so that was pretty hard. But what would you do, you had to take it. Like it or didn't like it, you had to take it.

MB: Things were very different then, I guess.

SS: Different, now it's completely different, the men don't have to work so long, not so hard like they used to be, but the ... coming from Europe was working hard.

MB: Do you remember anything about the attempts to get the union in? Like there was a big strike in 1922.

KR: She remembers that.

MB: You must remember. Can you tell me what was going on then? Can you tell me what you remember about it?

SS: During the strike, it was pretty hard.

MB: It was a long one I guess.

SS: I live in those 2 rooms and there were people in 35 Mine the company houses, the company drove the people out, no work, no house. So people were looking for a house, we took the one family in, she didn't have no children, only husband and wife.

MB: Is your house private then? Or was it company houses?

KR: This was our own house.

MB: I see. That makes a big difference in those days.

KR: Company homes were up.

MB: But 17th St. never was.

KR: These were company homes. I remember they were building them. They were company homes, but had since been sold to the individuals. They were company homes,

MB: In those days, not before.

KR: Not when the strike was on, but a few years after the strike,

MB: I'm just trying to get straight.

KR: But there was nothing there, it was all bare.

MB: I see. Go on Mrs. Shuster, I didn't mean to interrupt, I was just trying to. So they were thrown out of the house.

KR: About those people who lived here Mom.

SS: After they, there was a strike, it was pretty hard. Because those scabs, there were so many scabs coming in and taking the work, taking the job the people were working, living in here and somebody else come in and they take the work- fighting when those people were living in that room- because we have a door here, so people have the 2 rooms because it was man and wife- they were scared because there was no work. So many people was coming around the house looking for work.

KR: When they were moving out

SS: When they were moving out because they went to work and it was still a strike.

MB: I see, ok.

SS: And so many people come in hollering and he said don't let him- throw him out and he they sent one Polish woman and she was

KR: It was a cupboard like this, but I don't think it had any glass.

MB: And there was a man on the back and a man on the front and the woman, well she pushed that man.

KR: They were trying to get through the gate.

SS: And after that they put the thing down and went for the cop, well the cop come on the porch- have a big stick and all like a policeman going back and forth and people were hollering hey Mrs. Shuster, throw him out! Throw him out, what could you do. I told him get out, this is my property you have no business on this property. He didn't pay no attention. There was a piece from that cupboard on the table and they told him go- he said he's not going to say anything. I took that piece and I hit it against the table and I said get the hell out of here- that's my property. And he grabbed me, he grabbed me. Good thing he didn't break my ribs. Grabbed me but he let me go. I jumped in the garden and I picked something up and said you son of a bitch, you come back I kill you.

MB: Who is this that grabbed you?

KR: The policeman. There were also, maybe she doesn't remember, but there were also- they might have called them mounted police then, but on the horse.

MB: I heard about them. I didn't remember them from my lifetime.

KR: I remember there was two that came here on the horse. They just went right through the crowd and luckily no one was hurt because someone could have been badly hurt. But then we went to school, we were just little. So after that we-

SS: Well, then they said they would make it a case. Well I went and the Polish woman went too. She started, I was hollering, but I thought to myself, I thought what's the use, I don't got nothing to say. So after the case was finished, she said hurry up, let's go, let's go. She wanted to go home because she was the one who started it.

KR: The one who started it.

SS: It was hard, but I don't know. People were living in the back- there were houses there.

MB: Do you remember tents? People living in tents sometimes too?

KR: No, somebody living in tents.

SS: No.

KR: But my husband's family lived in a tent.

MB: Did they?

KR: They lived up at it was called 38 Senior and they lived in tents. They were chased out of their home and lived in tents.

MB: Oh boy.

KR: But around here, these are all individually owned. All these, with a few exceptions.

MB: See, in Mine 40 they had tents.

KR: Did they then?

MB: Apparently. That's what someone told me then. Goodness.

KR: Because people had no where to go, so the union provided them with tents, but yeah, my husband often talked about that.

MB: Do you remember some people coming from New York? There was a commission that came from New York and they tried to hold hearings in Windber in 1922 about the strike. I don't know if you remember anything about that or not.

KR: I don't remember ever hearing anything about that. [speaking another language to SS] ...hearings, you know.

MB: Unofficial sort of, not really court.

KR: Yeah, just that they go together and talked about it.

SS: Well then there was scabs, there's a union, everywhere you look they're just fighting, just afraid you don't know what is going to happen.

KR: Well what about this incident, Mom, with this little girl, she was hit by the car. Was she killed then or just hurt badly.

SS: Who?

KR: Remember, we were just talking about it on Sunday – was it Norris who was coming down in the car and he wanted to go that side street and he hit that little girl- remember?

SS: I forget, who was the girl?

KR: I forget too.

SS: They were living in the ... house

KR: No, no, this was on the other side of the street. He was coming down from where the mines were. I don't know if it was Norris- Harry Norris. You don't remember? We were just talking about it. Don't you remember that little girl being hit and the people got around him and he was in danger there for a while, from what I heard.

SS: Many thing now I forget. Everyday I have to stop and think.

KR: I can't remember if she was killed or just hurt badly.

MB: That was in connection with the strike?

KR: Yeah, that was in connection when the strike was on.

MB: Do you remember anything about a rape? A woman was raped and it was sort of in the newspapers at the time.

KR: You know what rape means? Ok.

MB: I don't know if you ever heard anything about it, I was just wondering if you ever did.

SS: Well a man come in the house and the woman was all by herself. She had to do something, let him go or not or she might be killed.

MB: There was a big case in 1922 where the Coal and Iron Police supposedly raped this woman.

SS: If you don't make yourself go to him, they're going to kill you. So you don't know what to do.

MB: Yeah

SS: You don't know what to do. You think, you let him go to myself and sin, if I not, he's going to kill me.

KR: There were incidents where these people when they were going home to 35, 36, and let's face it, everybody walked then, scabs and these union men had beaten up more than one person, get them right at the top of the hill as you start going down. There were quite a few that were beaten badly. That was also one of the incidents.

MB: Do you remember where these people came from who took the jobs and the scabs. Did they come from outside the area? Some of them.

KR: It seems to me, I mean, I always had the impression that it was just the people who stayed up in the homes and worked. Rather than go out on strike with these others. Now I really don't know if they brought in more people from the outside, they might have, but I was pretty young then too. In '22 I was only 7 years old.

MB: Yeah, you wouldn't remember as well.

KR: Well, I remember you know, some of the things and then what we talked about.

MB: Those must have been hard times.

SS: The fellow was working and hollering about taking work away and no work for you fellows- and the fellow get mad and start hollering and get in the fight already.

MB: But the miners lost that strike and I guess the unions didn't come in until later then. Do you remember anything – I think that was under FDR when they really got the union.

KR: The unions were in yet. Weren't they?

MB: They lost that strike, it was 17 months long.

KR: It was more or less between the workers and the company.

MB: Yeah, they lost that and they didn't get – well the union existed, but not here. Not in this area.

KR: Did you look a lot of this stuff up?

MB: Some of it. And I have a lot more of that to do.

KR: How many- can you tell me how long the strike was?

MB: I think 17 months. It was a long one. They lost.

KR: There was no trouble here because these were all people, they weren't scabs. They were out on strike, so as far as- I mean, this one incident at our house when these people were moving.

MB: That was interesting.

KR: In fact the union came back and took a picture of us. I'd like you to try to find it.

MB: That would be interesting. A picture.

SS: Try to find it-

KR: My mother, my father wasn't home and us four children. There were only four of us then and I remember we had just gotten a bath, you know and my brother was standing there with his pants up like this.

SS: I looked all over and I can't find it. It's somewhere.

KR: We found it here a couple of years ago and then it's lost again.

MB: Oh dear, I hope you find that. It would be nice to have. Was it in a union newspaper or something?

KR: They might have had it in the paper, but at that time

SS: It was in the paper, they used it-

KR: But that was taken in connection with that incident that happened. When these people were moving.

SS: They used to put it in the paper everything from the union side, from the scab side. I tell you it's tough and a strike is tough. Fight and scary and get killed, you don't know what is going to happen.

MB: Were there any others like that? Did you ever hear about the 1906 strike? Of course you weren't here then, but there was another big one then. But that was earlier. Maybe your husband would have known something. Or talked about it, but otherwise you wouldn't have been here. Well, let's see what else, you mentioned the flu epidemic before.

KR: The flu, when everybody was sick with the flu.

MB: Can you tell me something about that? Was there a lot of people dying?

SS: What do you want me to say about that? People was dying, that's all. One is dying, one is helping another, this one is walking, the next day he's died already.

KR: Did anybody in the house here have the flu? Did any of us have the flu?

SS: I don't know who had it- I guess (David? Daddy?) had it a little bit.

KR: Did he?

SS: He didn't have much, but I know there was, D- Didn't feel good and there was nobody here, D- was working and someone else was sick, I don't know which one. I know Ann was sick and another one was sick and one was howling, Mom! And I didn't feel good neither. I was going up and down the steps – hey mom and the husband was hey Sus- they would yell.

KR: Well what was it that our dad went to work in Nanty Glo to work in the mine? Was it a strike here or what?

SS: It wasn't that there was a strike that time because that was –

KR: Was that a strike?

MB: In 1922 did he go to Nanty Glo? Many people left and went in 1922.

KR: Was it the big strike in 1922 when dad went to Nanty Glo to work?

SS: I have to stop and think now.

KR: It's hard for her to remember some things.

MB: Because so many people did. It's hard to believe so many people they left.

KR: We stayed here, but he went out there with the miners.

MB: I see, that makes sense.

SS: There was scabbing, they was happy, making big money at that time. They was making fun of the strikers. The strikers was paying attention to their mistake, you know when they cut somebody, if you're not working, but they was happy they were working and making big money like those people who stay in here. After they go out my husband wasn't here and the cop on the horses, boy, I tell you it was something. And the horses go loose and they don't know.

KR: They went right through the people, they did. Well you know mom, since dad wasn't here, that might have been when he was working in Nanty Glo.

MB: Because that was a union mine in Nanty Glo.

SS: It was a union place, but I forget where.

KR: I think, where else would he have been, we hadn't even gone to school.

SS: He was working in the union place. Yes.

MB: But you had the private house that you could stay in. You didn't have to worry. Some people had the company houses and they had to worry. Makes sense.

KR: Well, these people moved out and my mother had to ask them, why are you moving and they put it because we have no money and they probably ran out of money and that's how a lot of people started to go back up there.

MB: That's true. What other memories do you have Mrs. Shuster? What else would you like to tell me about? What about your church? Why don't you tell me about your church.

SS: What about the church? What could you say about it? It was like it is now.

MB: Did you always go to the Byzantine right church in those days? Was it built then? Because at first there was just that Polish Church in town.

KR: They had that little one. Are you familiar with the church on 8th street? The byzantine?

MB: Yeah

KR: Well they had an old building with the steps. That used to be the church when I was a kid and I guess when she came here. Right mom? That little church is where you went when you came here.

SS: Yeah.

MB: So did you go to church a lot? Did you go every Sunday. Tell me something about church life.

SS: Well, I started going there was church on Monday, church on Friday, church on Sunday, vespers, in the morning- like on Sunday they had ... then vesper, people was more God ... especially the young ones. Everybody come from Europe and then to the church and working together, but not like different. People didn't have somewhere like they have now. Now they have a lot. But they was just happy with what they had. If you had more you had more, if you didn't have much, it was too bad if you didn't have enough they give it to you, but now they didn't give it. You just felt sorry for the children because they know anything about what happened. And now it's not bad because people are going to go and get the food.

KR: But getting back to church, she was a strong church member and goer and worker.

MB: I bet.

KR: She was always working at the church, always helping, crocheting for the church. Things like that. She was a member of the altar society, but my mother never missed church unless she was sick, but she hasn't been to church now- it's going to be a year in May.

MB: That's hard. So when you were raising your children Mrs. Shuster, did you want them to be religious when you were raising them?

SS: Sure.

MB: Were you a strict mother?

SS: Yes.

MB: Tell me about that.

SS: You have to be strict with everyone.

MB: Tell me how you were strict.

SS: You had to tell them not to do this, not to do this, pray before they eat. Now people don't even get up in the morning, wash your face, or cross themselves, they eat already. Wasn't like that, no you get up wash yourself, kneel down on your knees by the table and then after you pray you can eat. Many times now, they didn't pray, they didn't kneel, they just say let's go. You want to raise the children to God so you have to know what to do and you're not going to let them do what they want. They will be good, but you have to be strict with them. Then there comes a time to go to church, a time to rest, rest. Not going to be anymore like there was before.

KR: We have kept up all the traditions too that she brought over.

MB: I wish you'd tell me about some of those. I'd like to hear about some traditions.

KR: Different things we do like you did in Europe. You know, like holy supper, blessing food, just all sorts of things. All those, like she said, praying- it stays with you then.

SS: Holy supper, no kind of fat, water, that's all.

KR: Good, clean living. Different things, you know. I mean, right off hand I can't- even church we bless candles on certain day, bless flowers on a certain day and things like that. Everything that she brought over that she believed in she did here. Very strict.

MB: How did you celebrate Christmas? Did you celebrate Christmas on December 25 or on the other date, January 7?

SS: You celebrate Christmas before Christmas.

KR: You celebrated on January 7.

MB: Can you tell me about how you celebrated? What is involved with your Christmas?

SS: In the morning you get up pray, wash, pray then go to church, then from church you go home, you eat, and that's the way it was. And now, I don't know now.

KR: There was advent. We used to go to church a lot that time. Advent before Christmas. We'd go to church Wednesdays and Fridays. Long time ago. Then you had your foods that you made. Special foods. Like the holy supper you're supposed to have 12 foods.

MB: I see.

KR: And we had a cow one time.

End of Tape 1

Beginning of Tape 2 (March 12, 1984)

She would take a plate and she would take a spoonful of each food and that the cow got.

MB: I see.

KR: Then you took a straw. We only had a bundle under the table with an ax on it but a lot of people, I had a friend, they put straw all over the floor. But we never did that.

MB: I see.

KR: We all knelt and prayed a good 20 minutes to half hour and then once we sat at the table, and we were kids we couldn't leave the table for no reason, we had to stay there until supper was finished then we all knelt again and prayed.

MB: I see.

KR: Then we had services at midnight and there was this custom of having a basin of water with a 50 cent piece in it and you washed in that water, well it couldn't be at midnight because we all went to church, but we washed in that water I guess when we came back- what was that for now that we washed in that water with the money in it?

SS: Too much thinking, I know it has to be in my head, but I can't-

KR: Well, I think it was for well-being or so we'd always have money.

SS: I remember the water, but I forget why we was having that.

KR: It seems to me like it would have been so we would always have money.

MB: I see.

KR: Maybe wish for money. And then in the mornings, of course we would get up and all go to church then you had your traditional foods for Christmas like ham and stuffed cabbage, but on the day before Christmas the boys used to come around to homes. My brothers always went to extend wishes to the people in the home and then they gave them money, a nickel or something, and the women didn't go, just the men and they used to believe that it was bad luck if a woman came to your door and knocked on the door before anyone else. Just supposed to be a man or a boy usually.

SS: Boy or man.

KR: They say it was just supposed to be bad luck if a woman came and knocked on the door before anyone else came.

SS: They didn't want no woman.

MB: Why do you suppose that was? Did they ever say why that was?

SS: No women to the house, the women would stay in the house. A lot of boys used to come around.

KR: Oh yeah, they'd come around to all the home. It was nice.

SS: I used to give everyone just a nickel. I didn't give much. Just a nickel.

MB: It was plenty in those days.

SS: I'd change in two dollars for nickels and everyone would come knocking and singing and wishing, saying they wish they'd give me a nickel.

MB: Did the girls ever get a chance to do anything like that?

SS: No.

KR: No, not at Christmas, but most of the boys would come knocking and wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year's more or less, you know. She was very good with poetry, with making up sayings so she had my brothers, just my two older brothers, but she made up this saying and it was a real nice long saying and people always mentioned it to us.

MB: Could you remember that Mrs. Shuster? Could you say it for us?

KR: (something in Russian) Say it- it has to be in our language.

SS: (the saying in Russian)

KR: And then they would jump. That's more or less health, happiness, and that you lived to next Christmas.

MB: That's beautiful.

KR: I'm surprised she remembered that, because I didn't remember it.

SS: Now everything is left, nothing now anymore, now nobody comes around.

KR: Yeah, that's lost. And then at Easter, Easter Monday, they boys would, they used to what they called dunking the girls with water. Do you remember that?

MB: No, I don't remember that, but some people have mentioned that.

KR: You heard about it and that's when the girls got a little bit of a chance. On Tuesday, they would get them.

MB: I see. Did they do that in Europe Mrs. Shuster? Did they do this dunking custom in Europe?

SS: Oh yeah, we would get dunked a lot. But in Europe they would use a lot of water. Some of them would take buckets and put it on you.

KR: They used to do that here mom because you had the baby, I don't remember who was the baby and you said please don't get me too wet. She was soaking from head to foot when they got done.

SS: I asked them because when I had the baby and then the milk get cold and baby going- so I said please don't make me too wet, but they don't care. It was all over the floor.

KR: At my aunt's house the second day, the women were dunking the men, they would go upstairs with buckets of water and just wait for somebody below. So that was sort of a nice custom.

SS: The fellows were standing below and they got soaked. We got them.

MB: Do you have any other favorite holidays or customs? Things that you used to do that you'd like to tell me about?

KR: Do you have any other holidays? That were special like? I don't think so.

SS: Christmas and Easter, that's all.

KR: You have these other holidays that you went to church and then you just didn't do anything the rest of the day.

MB: Can you tell me why there was a split in the church? Do you know what the issues were at the time when the, I guess it was in the '30s that it split.

KR: I think it was the late '30s.

SS: When they split the church?

KR: Yeah, the church.

MB: Do you know what caused that?

SS: Because they want us to be on the Roman Catholic side and the people don't want it. They want it like it was before. They want to stay the same and they want to change it and the people say no, we're not going to do it. They said we're going to do like we used to from the beginning and we're going to do it again, so the people separated.

KR: See, from what I understand, there was some sort of agreement with Rome, but they weren't under Rome.

MB: Right.

KR: And this was an issue that they wanted our church, rather than be independent I guess you'd say, be with Rome like the Roman Catholics were. And that raised a big issue, very big issue.

MB: Was that a bitter fight in the church?

SS: Well people would say they're going to do what they want to do or they left.

MB: So lots of people left?

SS: People left.

KR: They held services. Do you remember Grant's in Windber or not?

MB: No.

KR: When they held services before Grant's was there, it was on the second floor in that building. They held services there when they left the church.

MB: I see.

KR: And then they built the church on Ninth Street, the one that burnt.

SS: When it was peaceful, why didn't people let it go like it was in the beginning? The people want to pray like they used to pray, why did they want to stop them? Why did they want to change them? On the Roman Catholic side the people said, you're never going to do it. We're going to stay the way we are, so that's the way people went. Find us a place- you can pray to God anyplace you want.

KR: It was a big issue. They went to court and everything. They lost the church, but they got the hall. We weren't here at the time. But it was a big issue.

MB: Do you remember, did you go to Russian club or any of those- they had dances- Russian dances?

KR: Russian Club- our dad was one of the founders. Wasn't he? He was one of the men who more or less started the idea of building the club- the hall.

MB: What kinds of things did you do there? Dances? Or insurance? I guess, lodges.

KR: What did you do in the hall, what did the church? How did you- what did they hold in the hall? They used to hold dances. We used to call them balls, not dances. When we were real young.

SS: The people didn't have any kind of separate thing they had it all in the hall.

KR: Weddings, banquets. Probably, like you said, they had for lodge to hold the meeting there.

MB: Did your husband belong to a lodge? In those days before they had all the things they have now many people belonged to lodges for insurance.

SS: The lodges would help pay, you would pay to belong to the lodge.

MB: Was there a separate Russian one? From the others? They do it by ethnic group.

SS: They have a group, if you want to stay, you stay, if you don't want to stay, they change it and you get into another one.

KR: They had no Russian lodges.

MB: No?

KR: No.

MB: Ok.

KR: In fact I still belong to one. And it was more or less where it was just a Byzantine. I'm not sure if you're familiar, they have the Sokol Lodge and then they had the (?) After the church trouble we still stayed in the lodge. I think, from what they told me, these people were threatened to be thrown out of the lodge. To lose everything they had put into it. But they stayed in.

SS: Sokol and ...

KR: But when you had the trouble they wanted to throw you all out- out of the lodge.

SS: They wanted, but people said no.

MB: Do you remember any big town events? Any Windber events? Especially older events. I saw so photographs where they used to have parades on Christmas even Columbus Day that I don't think they have anymore, but in the old days.

KR: I can just sort of remember, just being a kid, they used to have a circus come into town and they always had a big parade with the animals and everything before the circus. Then of course Halloween they used to have a parade- they still do, but not like then. Then the 4th of July same thing, they used to have big doings up at the park on the 4th of July. Then the Eureka stores used to have a picnic which was a big day for the kids. Everybody went. Just not the ones who worked at the store. Well, I was going to say something else and I forgot- they used to have what I think you call a Chataqua. They used to have it right where the Eureka store is, that empty lot. And I remember they used to put up a great big tent and they would come into town and have that. Things like that.

MB: How did the different ethnic groups get along with one another? Did they cooperate or did they fight with one another?

KR: How did the different people get along with one another? Like the Hungarians with Slavish and the Slavish with the Russians?

SS: There was no trouble.

KR: Everyone seemed to have their places in Windber where they lived. Up at 35 and 36 you had Hungarians up at the end near the high school you had Italians and then this up on the hill you had the big deals, you know what I mean- the English we would call them. Bosses and doctors, they lived up there and below Main Street you had our kind, you had Polish, Slavish, and the Greek Catholics.

SS: Irish.

KR: I don't remember as a group about the Irish- they more or less were here and there, but you didn't have certain sections of Windber.

MB: That people lived in.

KR: Of course that changed.

SS: They didn't have no fight between. They didn't fight each other. They'll go to theirs and I'll go to mine.

MB: But would they go to each other's ever? Like to the clubs when they would have a dance. Did a Hungarian go to a Polish one or a Pole go to an Italian club or were they really separate.

KR: I really couldn't say. The younger people maybe. Really not the older ones. Now my mother had neighbors, as long as I can remember, Hungarian on both sides. Right mom?

SS: What?

KR: We had Hungarian people living on both sides. From the time I can remember.

SS: Yes, no fighting.

KR: No. Little things with the kids sometimes.

SS: The children.

MB: Did you feel that there was a difference between the English or American born people between all these ethnic groups from Eastern Europe, were they fair or did they discriminate against people who were from this eastern European background who came from Europe?

KR: I really think they sort of looked down on our kind of people. But you had the nice ones and you had the ones who were snobbish. Even in school, when I went to school some of those kids were nicer than others. Some of them really put their noses in the air, but some of them were nice maybe even.

MB: Did you go to high school then Mrs. Rodish?

KR: I graduated Windber High School.

MB: You graduated though. A lot of people didn't.

KR: Yeah, I know. A lot of my friends that I went with didn't.

MB: Did you stress education with you children Mrs. Shuster? Did you want them to go to school, your children?

KR: Did you want us to go to school?

SS: Of course, I didn't want to keep them home, I wanted them to learn something.

KR: That's right. She did stress it a lot. And she even visited the school when parents visited the school. She took a great interest in our education and we had better not come home with bad report cards. My brother used to hide his report cards in the cellar. Which one hid his report cards in the cellar? Was it John or Joe?

SS: I don't remember.

KR: It was one of them. And even my younger brother, we were all away from home, but he had to bring good marks home or else. She did and she believed that we should graduate because others, no sooner they became the age 16 the parents made them go out of town and go to work, but she didn't. Both of them. Then my dad said when my oldest brother graduated, not the girls- at that time they didn't believe in the girls going to college, so maybe people who had more money, but my dad said he's going to go to college, he doesn't want him to work as hard as he had to work.

MB: I see.

KR: So he did go to Indiana State Teachers College and he worked out there, he tried to earn some money because let's face it, our people didn't have that much money and I know he was, he help with life saving and he used to try to hitchhike rides. He did everything he could to make it easier on them. Then he graduated and my other brother was ready to go and he helped my other brother. So they went in for teaching and then the same thing with the baby of the family, he went also then they helped him out.

MB: So none of your brothers ever became coal miners?

KR: No.

MB: Did you not want your sons to go into the mines Mrs. Shuster?

SS: No my husband said, and he was talking like this- he say you know what, your father killed himself working in the mine, but not the boys. The father said none of them are going to go to work in the mine. I kill myself with the work, but you're not going to do it. Then he said they're going to go to school.

MB: Amazing.

KR: So my one brother graduated, he retired from teaching from Windber high school. He has passed away though. He was the one who was living at home with her, he never married and it will be 8 years at the end of this year. And my other brother started teaching and he just didn't like it too well, so he ended up in Pittsburgh working for ALCOA. And he retired just about a year or so ago. I think it was ALCOA. Then my younger brother went into college on ROTC and he stayed in the Air Force until about seven years ago. He's only 50, but he's been retired about seven years and he retired as a Lt. Col. So that was their aim, for them to not have to go into the coal mines.

MB: So what was it for the girls then?

KR: Nothing. The girls went out and worked.

MB: Were they supposed to work or get married?

KR: That's the idea. Girls get married and boys have to more or less be the support of the family so they went to school.

SS: The boys have to support the family the girls have to stay home.

KR: They worked, that was the life, believe me.

MB: Did you want to have a say in who your kids married?

KR: I don't think she quite understands it. Did you have something to say about who we married?

SS: No I don't.

MB: Some people, their parents tried to arrange their marriages.

SS: What they like, they get it. If something happened with that they might blame me. Can't blame me, they have to blame themselves. I didn't say nothing about who they married, it's up to you. You like it- if I say something might be wrong with them you can tell, he's no good. Maybe he's a drunkard, maybe – no. She got the nice husband and I got a nice husband. My oldest one she married a Roman Catholic. Isn't he a very nice fellow?

KR: Oh yeah. Very nice.

MB: Well, that's good. So living on 17th Street, where did you go shopping in the old days? Did you go down to the main Eureka store or did you go up to 35 to the company store up there?

SS: I didn't go to 35, that's too far

MB: And up hill.

SS: 35, they belong to 35. We went to Eureka, but I tell you after the family was working, it was pretty hard, if you don't buy from the Eureka they were going to fire the men. If you buy something from the farmer the Eureka store bring you the same thing.

KR: Say a ¼ of a beef or ½ a beef or something and they found out about it you got the same thing.

MB: Oh boy.

SS: A bushel of potatoes you get another bushel from them from the store.

KR: There was a little market- Gerathy's (sp?) Meat Market we used to buy a lot of our meat there. You had to go on the tracks and as you came around it was right on the corner. And then there was a little store down here Solomon's – he was Arabian. And he had little things. Bread or milk.

MB: So you could buy those and not get in trouble.

KR: No, no.

MB: I guess it was, in the old days it was a tightly controlled town in lots of ways, too.

SS: I think people, in their old age the people worked hard, but it was not bad. People were nice to each other, their family, the neighbors, didn't fight over this or this.

MB: Did you ever meet any of the Berwinds? I haven't talked to anyone who ever ran into any of the Berwinds yet because they didn't live here.

KR: No they didn't.

MB: And I haven't found anyone.

KR: The ones who owned the coal mine, Berwind. You never met any of them did you? Did you ever talk to any of them? The people who owned the coal mine, Berwind.

SS: No.

MB: They didn't live here, but I haven't found anyone who has ever met them yet. That I've talked to. So they, I don't know. Who were the powerful people back in the old days. Who would have been the names if you thought of power in the town? Do you know?

KR: Really I don't know to tell you the truth. Well, you had the- they didn't call him the mayor at the time, they called him the Burgess. He and I remember the time we only had one cop, one policeman. But he was a policeman. McMullen was his name and he was good, very good. Really I guess some of these men who lived up on the hill who had businesses. I mean I don't really remember one person or a few people who had a lot of power I mean they're the ones that ran the town, so they did to that extent, but well growing up in this town you don't really pay that much attention, but I don't see where there was that much problem at that time.

MB: Do you know how people voted in the old days. Did they vote? My impression is that they voted Republican – that the town was Republican until the '30s like in elections. Do you know anything about that?

KR: The only think I know is that when the election time was coming. It was surprising how many of these politicians, like even the Burgess himself knew you and spoke to you on the street. I mean just from hearing my parents talk. After the election they didn't know you and not only that they used to come around and now this I remember and they would be showing the people how to vote. Individually. At that time you put an X down. Straight Democratic or straight Republican, but I remember when they used to come around and talk to my father and showing him the ballot where he should put an X and that's how I think the elections went. I know Beckwith was Burgess for the longest time.

MB: Many years.

KR: Many years. But outside of that because like we say we went away after I got out of high school.

MB: When would that have been Mrs. Rodish?

KR: I graduated in '32. So then I went to New York and got a job out there and that was Depression time. And we worked out there. Well, I got married. First my husband was from Windber and we were living nearby out there. When I started going with him until we were out

there because he was 8 years older than me so when I was going to school that was a big difference.

MB: Sure it was.

KR: Anyway, we came back and had the wedding and we still lived out there until I was to have my first daughter, but we never liked it New York. So my daughter was a little over a year old and we came down here and he got a job in a bakery.

MB: He wasn't a miner then?

KR: No, he did work in the mines some, but not too long before he worked for Eureka stores. He worked for Eureka stores, but we were out there so when I came here I didn't vote for a while, but then I did register and start voting.

MB: When did you come back here to stay then?

KR: It was 1946 I believe, no I'm wrong, I'm thinking my other daughter. We came back in 1941 just before Pearl Harbor, that fall. Then later on he went into welding so he worked for Bethel Steel.

MB: I see. So Mrs. Shuster, what was it like to live in the Depression here?

SS: The Depression you just have to do the best you can.

MB: Did you have a garden and animals yet?

SS: Yes.

MB: So that helped a lot of people I guess.

SS: We had a garden and we had to plant everything I was really afraid I wouldn't have enough.

KR: Like I said, we never went hungry.

MB: Did you can foods?

SS: I used to can a lot of things. Now you can count 400 jars. I canned everything. She canned a lot too.

KR: Not like I used to. In the fall people raised pigs. You've heard of that.

MB: I can't imagine all these animals and all these people all together.

KR: Raised pigs then when they got big enough they were slaughtered and when you slaughtered the pig you didn't do it yourself. You had all the neighbor men come and help. And they would slaughter the pig and I remember the big pots of steaming water where they would scald it to remove, what? The hair?

SS: Yes.

KR: Then they would cut it up and they would smoke certain things and I guess-

SS: Kolbassi, ham.

KR: That's how they got along. And then maybe the next day or so someone else would slaughter a pig and they would get together and help that party. So it was nice.

MB: Mrs. Shuster. Do you think people helped one another a lot in the old days.

SS: Oh yes. I tell you those days never come back. Never come back, but the people have it good and they think God is good to us.

KR: People did help each other. My mother spoke English fairly well. I don't know how she learned it, but she did. Even now she doesn't speak it badly. If anybody needed going to the doctor or something they came to her. She went with them. If anybody was sick or a baby was born. Babies used to be born at home. The women used to go over and help. They would cook, they would wash clothes, they would clean. People did help each other a lot.

SS: Now nobody know you now.

KR: Well, today is different, everybody is independent.

SS: A woman got sick, like Mrs. Popolish got sick we all go and

[Short Gap in Recording]

KR: They did help each other a lot. They had compassion for each other.

SS: When a woman was sick, all the neighbors around her helped. Now you can die and nobody sees.

KR: Each takes care of their own. That's the way it works today.

MB: Could you tell me what a wedding was like and what a funeral was like in the old days. The earliest ones that you remember here in Windber.

SS: You mean weddings?

MB: Weddings. What was a wedding like when you came in 1910? When you went to the first weddings then.

SS: Weddings were the same as now.

KR: No, it was a little different, mom. Maybe the dancing and all that. Well, for one thing everybody came to the house, neighbors and everything. The bride was of course, dressed and the groom came to the house and then the parents sat wherever they sat on the couch or whatever and the two young people would ask for forgiveness from their parents, right mom? Then not the best man, but the master of ceremonies he would also say a little bit of a speech asking them to forgive, I just forget how it was stated. It was written up and they would use the same thing, copy over and over. It would be passed on from one to another. And he would make this speech, he read it from the paper and then they left for church.

SS: Mother and father would give them a blessing.

KR: Blessed them, that's what it was, they were asking for a blessing and forgiveness. Then when they went to church it was very seldom, the mother never went, the father never went, the women. They were too busy preparing the food and stuff.

MB: I bet.

KR: When I got married there were a couple of my friends in the back and just the wedding party in the front. That was it that was the way they did it. Today it's a big thing, everybody goes to church.

SS: Different.

KR: Of course then you went to wherever the reception was being held- what was it they used to do at the door- they wouldn't let the bride and groom in until they paid or something and they met them at the door with a loaf of bread.

SS: I forget.

KR: They did a little bit of something and they wouldn't let them in until they paid or something.

MB: I see.

SS: My head now is-

KR: I know, I know. You remember a lot of stuff from when you were little. And then of course then it was the dinner and the dancing. You have two meals, two big meals and then you had

dinner again at night and then dancing and that lasted until midnight. That was your wedding then.

SS: It's so hard to remember everything. You reach an age and then you forget.

MB: You're doing just beautifully.

SS: There are many things where you have to stop and think, was it this or was it that? You get it sometimes not.

MB: We're all like that Mrs. Shuster.

SS: Because years have gone down in your mind, you don't remember.

KR: For the wedding too, all the neighbors would congregate out front and watch the bride and groom go off and also they had musicians at the hall meet them at the door. They had gypsies play mostly.

SS: Gypsies play. There was a wedding for three days. Second day going on and third day was going on.

KR: That's true. I forgot that. The second day we went to a movie and they were all doing something here, something with shoes or collecting money.

SS: I forget.

KR: Something about fixing, you know pretend, fixing shoes and at the same time money was involved.

SS: I can't remember everything. Many things.

KR: It was nice though, really nice. And a lot of weddings were held out of the house.

MB: Tell me about your wedding. Anything more than what you said. Well, mine was different. Well, no, we had to ask for the blessing and for the forgiveness and then my brother-in-law we read this speech about forgiving and all. It was pouring rain, so there was nobody outside at the time. People were already going to watch the bride and groom leave. We went to church and like I already said there was a small group. A couple of my friends in the back and because I had been in New York for a while these were just a couple of girls I went to school with and then we went to hall and I remember they met us at the door and they wouldn't let us in. And I think they had a loaf of bread, I can't remember and the musicians were there and we had gypsy musicians. We had a dinner because it couldn't be called a lunch because we had all the food in the afternoon and the women were downstairs cooking and we were upstairs and there weren't too

many people there yet, but then in the evening we had a private wedding. It was during the depression and we didn't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry, coming in especially with the drinking. Before that weddings were a lot of people would crash the weddings. They weren't invited, but – I used to do it when I was around 15, 16 and we decided to have a private wedding and we got tags and this little figure of a man in a tuxedo and he stamped the tags and everyone wore one then we had a man at the door and if he knew who you were and you had a tag he let you in, otherwise you didn't get in. Then we got three weeks off from work. We were working in New York at the time and we stayed here and then we left soon after. It was a lot like the weddings today, but it was combined with these traditions. That our parents had.

MB: I know what I didn't ask you Mrs. Shuster. Did your mother ever get remarried then? She was a widow when she came here and she had these children. Did she ever marry anyone else?

SS: She did.

KR: That's right, she did. I forgot that.

SS: She did. Pretty hard for the old people to get married. Different than when a young one get married.

MB: I see.

SS: Better to stay by yourself.

MB: Must have been hard for a woman to have those children and try to raise them.

KR: It was rough.

MB: In those days. It's hard now. It must have been much harder then. Did your mother ever want to go back to Europe to stay? So many people who came here, or did you yourself want to go back? Or your husband. Some people say that their families just wanted to go back. Some of them came and wanted to buy land back there or something. And go back and live, but they wanted to get rich here. I don't know.

SS: America is a sweet country, God bless America.

MB: So you really didn't want to go back once you got here?

SS: I didn't want to go back.

MB: You were here to stay.

SS: I was there once.

KR: She visited.

MB: Oh she did?

KR: She visited her village with my brother. He was a teacher and he used to go on these educational tours and she would go with him.

MB: How nice.

KR: So she was there, she was in Africa, she was in Russia, and she was in Alaska.

MB: Oh for heaven's sake.

KR: She was in south- Puerto Rico- twice. You were in Florida too when Mary lived there. She really traveled. We used to call them the traveling Shusters.

MB: Really? That's wonderful.

SS: I was all over the world. When the time come for my son to go, he went. You can't say no. When the time come, you have to go. You can't say, I'm not ready, you have to be ready. You don't have the bread for tomorrow, you just have the bread for today and then you're ready. Because you don't know if you're going to eat tomorrow or not.

KR: Well mom, tell her about when you went back to your village. Tell her about the people in your village. She still corresponds with somebody in Europe. Tell her about the people in your village when you and John went back. What you did and all that. They go out to the fields.

SS: Johnny get up in the morning and he go to the fields with the men, cutting in the hay, bring in the hay, grind the hay, hauling the hay. That's what everyone do.

MB: What did you do?

SS: Me? Sit and talk.

MB: When did you make this trip? How long ago?

KR: Well, John will be gone 8 years, so say anywhere, 15 years more or less.

MB: Was it a nice time? Did you enjoy seeing people again? Did you see people that you had remembered from when you were a child?

SS: I met someone who was growing with me and we're just sitting and talking. It was a long time ago. About the people living now, the people working now. Some have it more easy than a long time ago. People were working real hard and now people have it more easy. Even the

children now, long time ago when I was a kid if you got candy you didn't care what kind it was as long as it was candy. And now they kids they look at the kind of candy in the store I don't like this one, I like the other one, but I don't like the other one. But we never used to say we didn't want candy. Just as long as there was candy. Now they have it good. They have it better than a long time ago.

MB: But still farming region just like it was before.

SS: But now I don't know, I was going to write to the priest, he used to be in that town, but now he's in the big city, so I'm going to write to him and I'm going to send one of the pictures from my birthday and I'm going to ask him, he's such a nice fellow, wonderful fellow, when he was in the town there was trouble between people and priest, the good people was in the beginning and they're going to be, and the bad people in the beginning they're going to be troublemakers and there's still the devil in them making trouble.

MB: So he moved to a different parish I guess. So you're going to write to him.

SS: They'd have a party every week then you're there.

KR: You mean every day. Every day or every week?

SS: Every day.

KR: As soon as someone would enter the house, right away they're having a party. All the food goes out on the table.

SS: They have the wine, they have the whiskey, they have the – what do you call the other drink?

KR: Vodka?

MB: Beer?

SS: One other one, I forget.

KR: Wine, whiskey, beer.

SS: There was one other, I forget. They make cookies, they make cake. They didn't have vodka, they made this other.

KR: Well how about when they go to the store. How did they do it when you go to the store to buy something? Do you remember that? Can you buy anything you want or do they just-

SS: You can buy anything you want.

KR: Just as long as you have the money.

SS: No different, you can buy anything you want, just as long as you have the money. If you don't have no money, so.

MB: How long were you there?

SS: We were there for a whole month.

KR: Well tell them what happened when you were trying to bring those pillows back and you were going through customs.

SS: I forget everything.

KR: Remember they wouldn't let you bring the pillows. They wouldn't let you keep the pillows.

MB: Duck feathers or something?

SS: I don't remember.

KR: Well, anyway some of the people went with them to where they were supposed to get the bus or something, a plane, they saw them off to a certain point. They wouldn't get on the bus. Well, they got to customs and these people could go just so far and that's it, and I think that's the way it was and she had these pillows they gave her 2 pillows, I guess you brought back.

SS: I guess it was two pillows.

KR: Yeah. And they wouldn't didn't want to let her through with the feathers. And she asked what are you going to do with them and they said, well, we just have to keep them here and he said, first send them back with the people who came with you and she said those people already are gone. And he said you can't take the pillows and she said I'm not leaving without the pillows. My mom can be pretty stubborn. Finally, he kept insisting that she cannot take the pillows finally she told him, if I can't take the pillows, I'm going to burn them right here. Before I let you have them. These people gave them to me, their hard work and everything else, I'll burn them. So they have her the pillows.

MB: So you have the pillows Mrs. Shuster?

KR: She's asking you mom if you have the pillows.

SS: I don't know.

KR: You must.

SS: I used to have my own pillows because I had ducks and geese and so I gave her two pillows when she got married. Everyone gets two pillows when they get married.

MB: Is that a tradition?

SS: Everyone get. Six, no just five because Johnny get no married.

MB: Did you make feather ticks too?

SS: Yeah.

KR: They were that thick.

MB: That's what my grandmother used to make.

KR: She made some, she and my sister did. A couple of quilts for her grandchildren in Seattle and who else did you make quilts for. Did you just give one to Nancy and them? Quilts- you made one for Dorothy and her daughter. I don't know what else. But they worked on them. My sister and she did and they worked out. They're nice.

SS: Many things I forgot already.

MB: Mrs. Shuster do you remember your father at all? Or did he die when you were very young?

KR: Do you remember your father?

SS: I can remember my mother, my father, my grandma, my other grandma.

KR: You remember all of them.

MB: Do you?

KR: I think she remembers her father because she said he was lying in the casket right in the hut there or whatever they had.

MB: I wonder how old she was then.

KR: How old were you when your father died?

SS: I don't remember.

KR: She must not have been very old because her youngest sister, the baby and then she comes next, she's the one, the chores had to be done, so she was out doing the chores and her sister got up into the casket and was trying to lift her father up by the neck and "Daddy, Daddy why are

you sleeping so long, why don't you get up already." Remember that mom? You just told us that no long ago.

SS: She tried to lift him up and said "Daddy, Daddy, why do you sleep so long" because we didn't know the difference from dead and living. As children we don't know.

KR: Ok, how much older are you than Aunt Mary in Florida?

SS: I was 1982 and she's 1895.

KR & MB: 3 years.

KR: Ok and how old, she must have been about 2 years old when she got into the casket. So she would have been around 5.

MB: So pretty little.

SS: 2 years old and my mother she went to milk the cow and she got into the casket and she put her little hand behind the head and "Get up, get up- why you sleep so long?" Mother opened the door, she cried so hard.

MB: It must have been hard to be so alone like that.

SS: She cried. She went to the casket and she said "Mommy what's the matter that Daddy sleep so long?" What are you going to tell her, she don't understand.

KR: Tell her what kind of a home you had. Would you be interested?

MB: Sure.

KR: What kind of a home you had in Europe.

SS: One room.

KR: Well explain it to her.

SS: One big room, like those three, maybe bigger yet. One room.

MB: What kind of a floor did you have?

SS: Just a floor.

MB: Ground floor?

KR: Just a ground floor, just the ground.

SS: Wooden floor.

MB: Ok, you had a wooden floor.

SS: In a family, if the one son get married they stay with you. They have a bed with you. If another one get married, they stay with you. But now it's different, now they building homes, making three bedrooms, two bedrooms.

KR: What all did you have in this room? This 'isha' (Russian for room/house?)

SS: You have the chairs not chairs there were '...' (Russian word for benches), benches.

KR: Benches.

MB: Ok.

SS: Stove, not the stove like this, but the opening from outside but the stove is inside the house. This is how you make your house warm in the cold. Make a fire and keep it warm. That's the kind of stove they had. And beside the stove they have a chimney, you cook in there. Now they have it different. They have it just like here.

KR: They brought a lot of pictures back.

SS: A gas stove.

MB: Did you make your oven, did you bake bread together. Did your mother bake bread with your grandmother or other women, or did she just do it by herself. How did they bake bread in Europe.

SS: In that big stove.

MB: Each person made their own for their family?

SS: One person marry, another person marry, but they call it all one family. Then they have big stoves, opening on outside and you have someone on the inside of the house and they make them put the wood in and make the thing hot and they make all the room warm.

MB: Did you have to go collect wood sometimes for this stove?

SS: No, it'd kill me. The men get the wood.

MB: That was the man's job.

SS: The hauling and the cutting, chopping, when the stove is built and beside that is an opening and you can go there behind and on the top, the stove on the top goes through the ceiling and

behind there is the opening and this side is around benches so where the children sleep and that's the way they sleep.

MB: I see.

SS: They didn't all have a bed like now. Now everyone has a bed to themselves. Everything is different.

MB: What else can you tell me about when you lived there.

SS: I don't know. If you would have come to me when I was about 60 years old.

KR: Even later than that.

SS: But now my head, many, many things I forget.

KR: She does.

MB: I think you're doing fantastically, but I don't know.

KR: She was also in Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

MB: My goodness. You're well traveled.

KR: You were in Jerusalem too, she would have liked to have gone back there one more time, but she never got the chance.

SS: In Jerusalem they showed you the last judgment, that's going to be something. Everybody should prepare for this. But the person don't always think. You don't think about the last judgment. Who is going to be on the right hand of Christ and they're going to be over here or they're going to be on the left hand in danger of going to hell. I don't know if the people think this or not. But it will come.

KR: I'm sure a lot do and a lot don't.

SS: They're going to come, on the last judgment, they're going to come. Many people they say that the story is not the story, it's going to be, Christ is going to ask them at the last judgment I was hungry you give it to me, I was lost, you found me, take me in, everything he going to tell them, but he going to tell them the one on the left I was hungry you didn't give it to me to eat, I was thirsty, you didn't give it to me to drink, like lost and you didn't take me in and the people going to say when did I see you? You didn't see me, you saw my brothers. The people, but the people don't think this, but when the time comes it's going to be too late. You can't say, you can't lie. You have to take what comes to us. There will be a few on the right and a few on the left. But the one on the left, it's going to be pretty hard. I pray hard. But people don't think this,

they should think every day. They should be on the front of their eyes. Are they going to be with us or where are they going to be on the judgment? You can't say I didn't do that or I don't want to do that. No. Everything will be laid out. Just have to think it. But someone say that's not true that story. That's not the story and then the time is going to come and it's going to be too late for you. You can't say I don't know what and he said to the people in the desert Moses, there's a cross, make the people look at the cross and Moses, if you don't listen to things, you will listen to me and many people say that's not. That's bologna too (?) Can't say anything else, so they just have to watch, but those times they come so fast. Today you're living, tomorrow you're gone. What I always said, if you ask for the bread only ask for today because you don't know if tomorrow you're going to eat that bread or not, but many people it don't mean nothing to them. After you close your eyes it's too late.

MB: Could you say to me a poem or a song that you used to sing. Can you sing any songs for me that you used-

KR: Oh she used to be a great singer.

MB: Could you sing some songs for me?

KR: Do you know a song or a poem that you could- can you sing for her?

SS: (In Russian)

KR: (In Russian)

MB: A folk song or anything.

KR: Anything.

MB: I'd like to have one.

SS: (Sings in Russian 59:16-59:28)

MB: Oh, that's fabulous.

KR: That's what the- this group would come representing the shepherds and they'd come and sing and that was another one of our traditions. They would sing that song just before they left.

MB: I see.

SS: (In Russian)

KR: But at weddings, the younger people, not the ones that were age, just wait for Mrs. Shuster to come because once she came, she sang. And she knew all the songs. Also, she was a great dancer. My dad wasn't, but she was.

SS: But now, Mrs. Shuster get too old.

KR: Mrs. Shuster is still doing good.

MB: Can you sing (title in another language- Russian?)

SS: I forget everything.

KR: I don't think she knows that one.

MB: Ok.

SS: I go to the store, I don't know what I want.

MB: We all do that.

KR: Do you know the song (title in another language- Russian?)

SS: (response in Russian)

KR: What about (title in another language- Russian?) Can you sing that one? That's, I'm a Russian.

MB: I don't know that one.

SS: (sings in Russian 1:00:43-1:01:09)

KR: That's good mom. I wouldn't remember that. That's about Russian and bringing the mother and father –

SS: (in Russian)

KR: Is that enough or did you want more?

MB: Well if she's got another, there's just a few minutes left. I was just going to let it run until it runs out so whatever we say or talk. I really don't have anything else to ask. If you can think of something or some great story.

End of Tape 2 (March 12, 1984)

End of the Interview