

**INTERVIEW OF VICTORIA DEMBINSKY, MARY CHMAJ, VERNA TRUNACK,
STANLEY F. MAY, HENRY HIRSH, JOSEPH ZACZEK, MARY ZACZEK, AND
REVERAND STANLEY J. ZABRUCKI (PARISH HISTORY OF ST. JOHN CANTIUS
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH) MUCH OF INTERVIEW IS IN POLISH**

By Mildred Allen Beik

October 5, 1986
Windber, PA

MB = Mildred Beik

VD = Victoria Dembinsky

MC = Mary Chmaj

VT = Verna Trunack

SFM = Stanley F. May

HH = Henry Hirsh

JZ = Joseph Zaczek

MZ = Mary Zaczek

REV = Reverend (Father) Stanley J. Zabrucki

Beginning of the Interview

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A

[Multiple conversations happening between the group]

I'll throw another roll of film in it.

Get it all warmed up, that way we'll be set.

[Polish] President Reagan [Polish]

[Polish]

He's going to ad lib a few

Okay, the whole group.

Right.

Okay, you're going to have to turn this way, sir. And you're going to have to turn, just a little bit. That's good, I think.

MB: You want to get her in because she's going to be a little bit hard to get. Some angles I thought from that-

If you could just go this way, Joe

[Polish]

Get real close

[Polish]

Okay

Sir, can you move your chair back? Okay, now sit right back in the chair.

That's good now

MB: Some space

Now we got everybody.

Okay, now everybody just look this way.

Forward a little bit, Joe. Just a little bit, not too much.

[Polish]

MB: This way.

That's the way.

[Polish]

Put your chair back. Just a little bit. Okay, now Joe, just yours just a slight bit. Good, we got everybody now.

MB: Oh, great.

That's real good. See if we can get this up. Okay, give me a nice smile everybody, look right here at the camera. Beautiful. One more.

MB: Then you have to take mine.

[Polish]

MB: Get everybody laughing.

That's beautiful. Just like that. We'll take 3 of this one. Everyone look right at the camera. Okay, excellent. One more.

MB: Just going to make sure.

[Polish]

I see.

[Polish]

When you have this many people, one picture you're never sure. Okay, everybody look at the camera. Beautiful. Okay, I think will do it.

MB: Now, do mine, please while everybody is sitting like this before we all move. I don't have. You just push the button, you don't have to do anything else with that camera. The only kind I know how to use.

You'll have to come out to Grand Avenue.

MB: It's hard. I know. It's just a simple Kodak.

Good, everybody look this way.

MB: Thank you, I appreciate it.

(Telephone rings)

This is the official photographer for St. Benedicts Church in Gastown, he does a lot of picture work down there. I did some work here for Father Vernon.

Yes, I remember that. Take over Windber work, Sister Baniballista, yeah, she is going to let me do all the Confirmation and Communion down in this area.

Oh, good.

I've been working for her, too. I guess she's in charge of all of that.

Is this your livelihood?

Yes, this is all I'm doing and the custom frame business. With the two. The picture business is going real good. Shooting about 35, 40 weddings a year. I was down here last Saturday for Christy wedding.

Yeah, Joe's wedding.

MB: Pass this around and have everyone sign their names so I can get names correctly spelled.

Sign them in?

MB: Your name. Just anywhere on here so I know.

What's your first name?

MB: Millie

Millie, I'm Stan. You're going to find out that my name has been changed, too.

MB: Oh, okay.

I don't spell it the way my mom does.

MB: Well, if you want to put both, or however you want to do it is fine. I just

Did you change it?

Oh, yeah, in '48. When I got back from overseas. It was a very unusual name.

What did you do?

I just dropped the H. Legally it was changed. But it was 20 years later and the Bureau of Statistics didn't even have a record of it.

They didn't?

No!

They didn't have my husband.

See that?

MB: That's beautiful. It's beautiful.

My hand is numb.

MB: Well, I take so many notes that my handwriting is terrible.

[Polish]

Same with my husband, his name was changed when my father-in-law got his citizenship. But when Stanley-

I haven't seen her in 3 or 4 years.

MB: Well, it's a nice occasion to get together isn't it. That's great. Worth it just for that.

I always thought that she was older than me, but she's a little younger than me.

MB: Well, I certainly want to ask you what your birthdates and things are on tape.

I switched over to black and white, so I have it both ways.

I see.

Same thing, it's just going to be black and white.

You don't care if I get closer there, do you?

You Floridians! I'm telling you. Pennsylvanians are different see.

Same price?

I said I don't mind.

I see, I see, I see. Pass this on, who?

MB: I did, I wanted to get everyone's name down. We need it. So we know we have everybody. You probably know that. I don't necessarily.

No, I don't. Myself, I've just been here a few months. I'm just getting acquainted to it. With everybody.

Joe you want to step back, just a little bit. Black and white is real sensitive, so I'm going to have everybody sit real still, okay, just freeze on this one. I'm not using a flash here. Sir, the first gentleman, just step back- that's perfect. That will be real good. Real good. One more like that. Okay. I'm just going to get the ladies again if I could.

MB: So you want us all to move?

Yeah, just the 3 ladies.

Oh boy, telling us to move again.

[Polish]

MB: Maybe you would want to put them on the sofa, this small – that's a nice picture there.

[Polish]

I think it would be real nice.

[Polish]

MB: If it's not too much trouble for them.

Hey, Mom!

[Polish]

I'd be afraid, too.

Okay, okay

MB: We're getting beautiful pictures of you.

[Polish]

Don't take your pocket book, they're just going to take a picture.

MB: You don't speak Polish in Florida? You don't have a Polish community there?

No. We have a lot of –

I thought that you re-located in the Johnstown area.

No, we went to Florida. Sarasota for 18 years or so.

MB: That's a long time.

No, not with this.

Okay, ladies, look right here.

They're all making sure.

Very good.

MB: That will be a nice selection to choose from.

I'm shooting more in black and white. It's more expensive, but-

(phone ringing)

And if you want to use one for the register, you'll have it. Okay, I'm going to just try and throw a light in there. Okay, that should be good.

A real comedian

[Polish]

I know down in Central City, I was down taking pictures of a mass-

[Polish]

I usually work in about a week's schedule. Do you need them sooner than that?

No, we don't need this for the next 12 years, for the jubilee. Oh, okay. I'll have them here next week.

You ready?

[Polish]

Okay, you want to do that?

Who cares for pie?

MB: Fancy meeting you here.

[Polish]

MB: What did you say about me?

She says she recognizes your voice.

That's not what I was going to tell you.

Who cares for pie or-

That's not what I was going to tell you.

MB: What were you going to say?

He told you the truth, I was going to –

You were going to ad lib a little bit.

Napkins

MB: Thank you.

I was going to get somebody in trouble, I think.

Oh really?

Here, Joe, pass those out over there. Who cares for pie and who wants cookies?

Cookie

You want cookie.

Isn't there ice cream?

I'll get it

Who wants pie, ice cream?

Lemon pie?

Lemon pie, sure. Do you want some ice cream, too?

No.

Okay, who wants lemon pie? I have more in the kitchen, don't-

Go and pass it around to them.

MB: I don't care for any, thank you.

Dessert, mom. And I would like to have a cup of coffee.

I'll do that, just the coffee for me.

How about, Mom?

Cookie.

Anybody else for pie?

You need your forks.

[Polish]

Pie?

Okay, and I'll get these around.

[Polish]

I see. You know what she's talking about? She says Polish people have a way of comparing –

Now we have coffee or juice.

I'll have coffee.

Coffee, black.

They have a sayings of course of the changings of the seasons and stuff like that after certain Saints days the rains come or this comes in and so forth, so she's talking about mushrooms after Saint Martin's Day and the mushrooms come in.

[Polish]

That was the way of their express in the Polish language and Polish culture.

MB: Thank you for translating here and there. With help.

[Polish]

After St. Ann's the evenings are chilly and so forth. They have a saying of that, mind you. A lot of this weather and then of course as far as planting is concerned they would be after the feast of St. Joseph and if you plant this and then on this feast day you plant this and so forth. That's the way they set up their thinking.

Give me a little bit of coffee, that's all.

[Polish]

Coffee or juice.

Coffee.

MB: I'd like coffee, too, please.

She don't want anything.

[Polish]

St. George. I'm not paying attention to what is going on.

Juice or pie.

I'll have pie.

[Polish]

We always said St. George.

[Polish]

Isn't George

[Polish]

If his name is George, but we could be wrong, too.

[Polish]

I can see that you people are having difficulty, you have to remember some of these Polish names and what the similarity is in English. I have often been asked by my wife, how do you pronounce that name in Polish or what is that name. And I said, well, I can't think of it. There are certain names that come up that I can't relate to what the comparable name is in English.

But if it's pronounced a different way in Russia

But I rather see that these professionals here are having problems

Yeah

I can imagine with novices who have been down in Florida away from the language so many years.

I transposed a couple letters to Poland for the Kaisers here about a week ago and I just put the name down as I could do in the English language because I couldn't transpose it from one to another.

Yeah, they should

And I had a Polish-English dictionary. And I just had an abbreviated, but they don't have the names.

They don't have the darn names in the dictionary. They wouldn't have it. Somebody

[Polish]

Maybe this group could write up a dictionary.

With the changes, everything is always different.

I need one to see what they were always hollering about in the house at home. I'm in the dark.

You're in the dark all the time.

You are in the dark all the time.

Like a mushroom

Some I couldn't even find this year.

[Polish]

We got a few, but not much.

[Polish]

Tell Father that I just brought the Reader's Digest up, December '85-ish and in that issue is the story that Father Jersey Poppolichko and I brought it up with the idea of reading the whole story to my mother because it is rather lengthy, however, she said, well, I can read it, let me read it real slow. So she's reading it. It's a sad story, unfortunately and I just thought that she would be interested in reading something in detail. Moreso than what you had in the papers. When this particular instance. So she's reading it.

That's wonderful.

[Polish]

25th anniversary

He's asking you.

[Polish]

MB: Father, before we get started, could we ask the people to give their names so we have that on tape and their birthdates and where they were from.

Okay

MB: So that we have that sort of basic information.

[Polish]

Victoria Dembinsky

[Polish]

Mary Chmaj 1914

1914

[Polish]

1894, December 30

December 30, okay.

[Polish]

Mary Zaczek

[Polish]

Mary Zaczek

[Polish]

Good thing I wasn't there.

[Polish]

Now that we have that, are there any other questions, basic questions?

MB: I don't. You did ask when they came to Windber. Or this area.

REV: No, not this area. Only when they came to the United States.

[Polish]

Chicago

[Polish]

Chicago to Pennsylvania

REV: She came here to get married.

[Polish]

Don't talk to her, she don't understand a word you're saying.

MB: A little.

REV: Mrs. Chmaj [Polish] Windber? Lowell, Massachusetts

MC: [Polish] 1916

REV: 1916 she came because her husband was from here, they met there and became acquainted there and they got married there and he brought her back here. Mrs. Trunack

VT: [Polish]

REV: [Polish]

MB: One questions, were they all married to miners, then?

REV: Evidently, yes.

MB: So they came to work in the mines?

REV: Yes. For your understanding the needle industry was in New England states, therefore most of the women came to New England, New Jersey and they worked there. So the ratio there of women to men was fantastic. I don't know what the ratio was, so the men went over there because they knew there was a lot of women there and they met up with the women and married and came back where they worked because they were the main supporters.

[Polish]

REV: The girls wouldn't come here because there wouldn't be that much work here, you see, but the needle industry was there in the United States so that, of course, is where the girls came. And the men knew that, they went. So we have 2 instances of that here in this case, you see. This was so typical, you see. You found that in many other places. They will all tell you the same thing. I don't know what the ratio was, but it was quite high of women in the New Jersey, New England states. Any other questions? Is your tape still going?

MB: Yes it is. It will automatically pop up when it ends and then I'll have to turn it over.

REV: Okay, you know your tape.

MB: I'm just keeping an eye on it to be sure that it's moving. I don't want to lose anything. They both came in 1916 to Windber so they wouldn't maybe know stories of St. John's earlier. They wouldn't know firsthand. And I forgot when she said.

REV: '15

See, now my mom didn't come

[Polish]

REV: So a '15 and two '16s. [Polish] the 16th of October. October is what?

[Polish]

REV: [Polish]

[Polish]

I forgot his name, but I know.

REV: So that is the first record we have here and that's probably what we're probably going to go by, but if we find out that their parish was in existence before that, then we'll have to go by that. But as of today, I have no evidence of one way or another because we have no history therefore I have to go by October the 16th when they are the first records of a first baptism. But now it's possible that the parish existed a couple months because right after the first baptism we don't have one until December. So, you see, the first one-

End of Tape 1 Side A (CD timestamp Track 3 12:13)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (October 5, 1986)

Was pretty young in 1898

You were born in 1918.

I'm glad that I'm the youngest here.

I think that you are. Maybe she is.

No, the youngest here? Possibly.

What do you mean?

What about Millie?

We're not talking about her, we're talking about us because she's only a little spring chicken.

MB: Well, thank you. That's not true, but thanks anyway.

I had a sister that was baptized in 1915

MB: This may have been a mission of Johnstown.

What year was Cecilia baptized?

1916

MB: Do you think?

1919

He was like Leo.

REV: [Polish]

[Polish]

They built this around the small church.

[Polish]

Somerset and Cambria country [Polish]

REV: The first Polish parish because Johnstown came after that 1902 so this one was the first. No, evidently if they came here, they had to belong to some churches around here, I don't know where they would have travel, how far they would have to travel to go to church, but certainly there was nothing here in town. This was the first parish.

MB: But this wasn't founded as a Polish church, I don't think.

This was a catch-all, I think, all the people.

REV: From the parish if would see that it was Polish because Father Kopera would be Polish. So, it was founded as a Polish parish, but since there were no other churches, all other nationalities joined this parish because they had no place else to go.

Slovak church after

REV: Second was a Slovak, is that so?

[Polish]

Slovak church was before the Polish church?

No, no, no

Slovak church was 1945

1960

I'm talking about '98

MB: My understanding was that this was the first Roman Catholic Church so anyone who was Catholic came here because there was no other. Then there was the Greek Catholic which was founded in 1900 which Greek Catholics went to at St. Mary's Greek Catholic church. There were the 2 Catholic churches.

Did that originate in 1900?

MB: Yes and those were the two earliest ones

The one they just tore down?

Yes

MB: From historical things, but then you have the changes with then the Roman and then the Greek and it was just those two at first. But if there are already lots of Poles in 1898 coming to this church and the priest was a Pole and then-

REV: If there's a Polish priest assigned, it might be, but not necessarily so. You see, the priests at that time were well versed in many languages and it was not unusual for a priest to know six, seven languages. And they took care of the Italians and the Hungarians and the Slovaks

Irish...

REV: Irish and so forth you see. And they knew many languages. So, it didn't necessarily mean that it would start as a Polish parish, but if we can find any documents, we'll know.

Right

REV: At this time, all we know is that the priest was Polish, but we have no evidence that this was established as a Polish parish. We have no evidence of that, unless somebody can come up with some document stating that very fact.

I think they could have some kind of document that could be here in this office somewhere. Maybe you didn't run across.

REV: It's possible.

MB: Maybe it could say on the deed. I don't know.

REV: We also, the diocese has a history on some of the parishes and we'll look into that, but as it stands now, we don't have any documents here in front of us. In December 22nd of 1900 we have a signature which seems to be Father Bogski. Are you familiar with that? Bag or Bagski? It might be a visitor. It might not be even-

It could be a visitor.

REV: Because back then we go in May '99 back to Father Capera.

MB: Father, I read that diocese history and it does sort of say that there were a bunch of visiting priests. Like every year or so they change until Father Sasco and then he's here such a long time, but until then after Father Capera leaves, it's a series of people, a bunch of names, who weren't here for very long.

I think Father Sasco came from McDonalnton?

MB: And see, he wasn't Polish. So, you know, trying to think of how. There's a reference in the history from the diocese to the fact that there was a problem between nationalities in Windber and he's assigned to come and straighten it out. But it doesn't explain. It just says that fact. And then the diocese assigned Sasco-

Who married you in McDonalnton?

James Queen

See, an Irishman.

[Polish]

Brothers, John and James, but I forget which one married me.

MB: Italians? Any other groups? Of course, they don't have a church until later either.

[Polish]

[Conversation in the background about remembering things]

I can hear what he says.

MB: Speak up people

[Polish]

I came here, I have to listen and look at your face to know what you say.

REV: The name that I quoted before might be the same that I see quite a few entries in here. Now, it seems- it's a little clearer, it's B-A-C-Z-S-K-I [Polish]

If there was somebody baptized, maybe there's somebody left in the family.

REV: 7, 8, 9- well, there are quite a few baptisms, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19- [Polish]

That makes it that he was probably here for a while.

REV: Yes, he had 19 baptisms though not necessarily so because they were all in December. No, it's not so. He wasn't here that long. He was only here for 1 month, but he had all these baptisms and they are all December.

Wow, that was a good month.

MB: Maybe they saved them all up for that month.

REV: Well, if the parish is just beginning and evidently there must have been an effort to bring these people in and have them baptized so it was the following year or 2 years, 1900. The end of '99 and the beginning of 1900 is when all these baptisms took place.

We don't know of anybody.

REV: So this priest probably came energetic and got these people. Went around looking for them possibly and baptized them. This goes on, let me see how far this goes, now. Now it's clear, it's Baczski.

In 1900 the parents would have to be 18, 19, 20 years old.

The child would be 86 if he was baptized in 1900.

[Polish]

There isn't any who are 86 who were born in the United States.

REV: So he was here about a year I presume because in March of 1900 we have now Father Miskevich and he baptized them also in March and April, May or wait now, just a minute. April and May. Now again he wasn't here too long. In a few months, he baptized all these children and then the first entry of Father Capera is May the 6th. So in the beginning of May, Father Copera came in and from there on we had Father Capera baptizing all of the children.

So he was probably the first parish priest who stayed here for an extended period of time.

REV: An extended period of time. I see, but how are we going to decide how many priests we had here. It might be possible, it might not. If they only came for a month or two then we might not assign them as in residence here, but rather as just visitors.

MB: Father, one of the things that I'll do, I have read the area newspapers.

REV: Oh, did you?

MB: What I will do and I have notes on things I've read, there are some little articles about these people. What I will do, I don't have it at my command. I don't remember the names and all that, but what I will do, when I'm home, where my notes are on this, select out those articles and send

you what they've said so you don't have to go through all the papers for them. Because I've already done it in effect.

REV: We appreciate that.

MB: So there is some information about that. Which will help, at least it will have the names.

Was the Era in existence?

MB: It started in 1898. 1899 there was also another newspaper, so there were 2 of them. But they don't have the complete runs of the newspapers. They don't have all years, so there are parts and whole years and sometimes 3 or 4 years, so all I can give you is that they have. But what I have goes on up to the '40s. So important church articles. Now Father Capera I learned, tried to have plays that were brought in. That was one thing from the newspaper. Passion plays of the sorts they did them in Europe, often. So he brought in certain, for raising money and things, purposes. And tried to organize that. So will send you copies of that because it is at my fingertips and won't be hard to assemble and it will save somebody going through those newspapers.

REV: What did I saw Father Capera came in? What was it?

MB: May 6th 1900

REV: So 1900, so for 3 years he stayed here then because May of 1903 is when Father Sas came in. So Father Capera was here for 3 years. So we will now, for the record consider Father Capera as the first priest here. And then Father Sas the second. That's how we'll compute it on down the line. And those others we'll consider visitors until, unless somebody gives us some documents showing that they stayed here longer which is not indicated by the baptismal records here. Okay?

MB: Okay, sounds good.

REV: So Father Sas came in 1903. Alright, and the Father Sas came from where did you say?

I thought it was McDonaldton up there.

[Polish]

But then he might have been the McDonaldton priest before she got married. So he must have left there –

To come to Windber

MB: That was in the diocese history. There's a sketch on him. I should have brought that stuff. I have – I didn't think. There's a little write up on him in the diocese history.

I think it was in there just lately, wasn't it?

MB: Well, the thing that I'm referring to was written in 1930, but there's a little history of him.

REV: There's a history of the diocese. Don't quote me on that because I don't know for sure, but I thought that I read that somewhere.

MB: It tells the different parishes that he served until that 1930s piece. You can find that out.

REV: So now, what do we know about Father Capera? What do we know? Nothing. You were not here at that time, so you do not know. I mention because if you came in '14, '15, '16, why that was already 10 years already gone by and they were already talking about Father Sas than the previous priest. So we know nothing, not much about Father Capera, but we'll try to find out. Now, about Father Sas. He was of Polish-German.

[Polish]

MB: He wasn't Polish

[Polish]

REV: He was German then.

MB: Did he learn Polish?

I would imagine, as he said, very fluent in the Polish language.

Mother seems to think positively that he was not Polish. He spoke Polish very well.

[Polish]

REV: So, from all indications, at that time if he was here, this was not considered a Polish parish then. Because if he was not Polish, they would not, they wouldn't think of sending anybody who was not Polish. If it was a Polish parish. So therefore, it had to be started as a mixed parish would be possible. And that is going to be important in future years because, as the shortage of priests is evident and they start merging the parishes if this is considered, I have to look in the directory, if this is considered a Polish parish it will have to revert back to a territorial parish and not a national parish. So, that of course, time will tell just how that will work out. So it might lose its status as a Polish parish and take on that of a territorial parish. Okay, now what happened here? Who built the first church here? Did Father Capera build the church? The first church?

I think Father Sas

Oh, no.

REV: The first church, I understand goes by 1910. Is that correct?

Father Sas

REV: Or am I wrong and was this church built in 1910?

MB: This one was started in 1910.

This one was started over the old one

REV: In 1910?

They had services, to my understanding, in the old church and they were building the new thing around it so there was still a place.

MB: The old one, from what I understand from the Polish people that I've talked to was an old wooden one that had a stable behind it and everything. That people from all over would come, but it was small, very small compared to this one now. But that it had served from early 1900 until they built the big one because they needed a larger space as the community grew.

REV: So we don't know what the first church was built, in what year, we do not know, do we?

No

REV: Nobody remembers [Polish]

[Polish]

This was already blessed when they came.

[Polish]

REV: So at the time, the money, they were raising it and those who worked in the mines, the dues were collected at the mine, for the church, it was taken out of the pay. Was it?

No

REV: It was voluntary at the paymaster's office? Was that the way or was it not?

[Polish]

Personally they give.

REV: I'm wrong then.

In other words, they were pledging then towards the construction of a new church. Not paying dues, but pledging certain amounts of money.

REV: I was thinking, like even in Canada today, your church dues are taken out of the pay. But they didn't have that system here.

No, they used to have collectors, parishioners that would come around.

REV: That was monthly.

Yeah.

REV: Almost every parish had that. They had certain collectors for the monthly.

[Polish]

REV: We'll get to Father Chicora next. He's another one, she believes, knew so many languages. That was characteristic of all of the priests of that time.

He was a good priest.

REV: Yeah.

MB: Father Chicora?

REV: Yeah, but we're still on Father Sas.

Do you 2 want to stay or do you want to go?

I could go.

If you want to stay, you can.

No, I can leave.

If you want to stay, please.

Okay, I'll stay.

You're going to stay? I don't want to put you in this –

Just make sure that you learn the Polish language, that's all.

MB: Just think if you have any stories about Father Sas that you want to tell us about him

REV: Now, as far as Father Sas is concerned, him being fluent in a few languages. What else can we say about Father Sas, what was he noted for?

The old people say that he was a good priest.

[Polish]

Yeah, he was a good priest.

He worked hard for the church. He gave of himself

[Polish]

REV: Alright, and he came in 1903 he must have then started to raise the money for the new church because – am I right then, in 1910 the church was dedicated then?

MB: 1914.

REV: It started in 1910 then. Okay, 1910 he started and in 1914 it was dedicated. So he didn't start immediately, but it took him 7 years to raise the money and start and then by 1914 it was complete.

[Polish]

REV: Okay, does anybody know just how much the church cost? What was the cost of the church?

I know, but I forgot.

[Polish]

REV: During Father Sas's time, what were the working conditions here?

[Polish]

Sometimes was good, sometimes not.

[Polish]

She said, strike.

REV: When was the first strike?

1921

REV: '21. Well he-

And one in '22

MB: There was also a big one in 1906.

REV: 1906

MB: He would have been here, but nobody remembers that because you weren't here. I don't know if you heard any stories.

I was here.

MB: Not in 1906, though.

REV: You were here in 1916. Now, 1906 was a big strike. Anybody know anything about that? Nothing. Nothing.

MB: No.

REV: But that you say, for the record, was 1906.

MB: Right.

REV: You mean to tell me that there was no big strike from 1906 to 1922.

MB: Not that I've found. I don't mean, necessarily that everyone was happy, but there wasn't this kind of strike. 1922 was a very big one in the whole region, not just Windber, but the district, the whole area.

I know in 1922 we got chased out of Windber.

[Polish]

Didn't want to scab, you know. So we went to Huntington County.

[Polish]

REV: Because at that time all the houses belonged to the company, right?

[Polish]

Right.

REV: So the church donated the land, the mine donated the land for the church.

[Polish]

REV: The company donated the land on 17th Street, but there was more Polish people living up 40 and 37 then up 36 and 35 so the company ruled that they didn't want it up on the hill, they want it over on 7th Street. That's what I heard. So I don't know.

[Polish]

REV: I see.

Joe, could I ask you a question?

Yes, sir.

I wasn't even aware of this that the company forced the people to move out of 37.

If you didn't want to scab, you know what a scab is?

Yeah

They asked you to leave. Forcibly and I mean in those days you left, they had the strong arms.

[Polish]

MB: Do you remember the tent colonies? There were a number of people who lived in tents around, different places.

They weren't seen there at the time, but in Mine 37 you found them peak full of them.

[Polish]

Also, for your information, they company store was run by the coal company and if you didn't buy there, if you wanted to go someplace else and buy it cheaper, your credit was cut out. And also, if a farmer came into Windber trying to sell produce, he was run out because that cut into the company store business.

[Polish]

I don't remember that, but I've heard stories.

I worked for the company store for 2 years. 2 summers.

[Polish]

They were the iron hand. They were the rulers period.

REV: This I'm saying, of course, from my years here, and the people giving me experiences.

[Polish]

REV: I came from the hard coal region and it was a little different there, but basically it was the same results. There was a situation where the men went on strike and they tried to picket and the state police would come on horseback and disperse the crowd and, of course, you couldn't beat the horse and the police. Of course they had a club, so they had you disburse that way and also, the working conditions, in some mines, were worse than they were here. It was different type of vein of coal and you went through a lot of rock or maybe I should start off from the beginning. There's a difference between a soft coal and hard coal – the way the mines were operated. In the hard coal region, when the place was cut in the mine, that place was given to a miner. That was his. He provided the tools, that was his place and it all depended on him on how many workers he wanted, laborers. So the miner was in charge of the place they assigned him. And he had to go out and look for his own labor and when he got paid he shared it with the laborer. But he had to provide his own tools

End of Tape 1 Side B

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (October 5, 1986)

REV: So because of that, the economic situations were different, but these coal people, for tax purposes they were gentleman farmers. They had the farms and he wanted to sell his produce, so he would sell it to the miners and it would be deducted from the pay. It happened on one occasion that I remember, that I remember a gentleman telling me, that he only worked one day. It was very slow that year, that season. So he went to the pay office to get pay and the pay master says to him, wait a while, we don't owe you any money, you own the company money. Because from that one day of pay- I think they were only getting 50 cents a car of coal at that time and when they started deducting the pigs and the produce that he bought- and also dynamite, you see, and the powder. Then he had nothing. So times were very, very difficult and also, in my stay in the hard coal region and here, I would run across people that knew about the hard coal region because if you had a strike here, you went into hard coal. When the strike would be over, they'd come back- and vice versa. The hard coal region, if there was a strike there, they'd come here. Work here and back they'd go when they hear that the strike was over because they didn't want to go in and scab. So they left their wives behind and the wives and children had to make the best of it and then came here and worked. I don't want to reminisce on this thing, because of course, we want to find out the history of the parish, but there are many more interesting things.

MB: Can I ask you one question? Where were you in the hard coal region?

REV: Wilkes-Barre

MB: Wilkes-Barre, okay.

REV: Okay, we are still with Monsignor Sas then, 1906 you say the strike was on, so he was only there 3 years, but nobody remembers how the church faired out during the strike?

MB: No stories about that? Nothing at all?

REV: Nothing

MB: Okay

REV: When did Monsignor Sas leave?

MB: '22 or '23. I have seen both dates.

REV: At the time of the strike?

MB: Well, the diocese must have been- you can explain- when they opened up the church of the Holy Child. The English speaking people from here left. Who were going to St. John's and left it exclusively Polish and the priest said they wanted to assign a Polish priest here at that time. Which is fairly late if that is when it becomes a Polish parish. So I don't really know. Now what relation is this to the strike? If there even is any. I mean, you people were here.

REV: Does anybody know anything about Monsignor Sas in conjunction.

That's what I hear. He kept a little bit with the company.

REV: He sided with the coal company?

That's what I heard. That's all I know.

REV: Well you were here by that time.

I was here.

REV: 1916

[Polish]

He advised people to go to work.

[Polish]

REV: I see, he advised them to go to work.

They not going to win and people get mad.

REV: I see. Then he decided that he, if that be the case, he's going to leave.

He was a good priest.

REV: But it was just the situation that some of them – the diehards wanted the strike and he thought that they should go back to work and when he saw that quite a few people were –

What was the purpose of the strike here? What was their grievance? I know that there were a number of them, but basically?

MB: They wanted a union.

Definitely

Back in '22?

MB: Yes

Was John L.

REV: in at the time?

MB: He was national president?

But he might have been

Yeah- he was there

MB: It was a national strike, it wasn't just-
They want a union they didn't get it that time.

MB: Not until the '30s
'34, '35, something like that.

MB: With the Roosevelt legislation.

REV: So what else can we say about Father Sas before we turn not to Father Chicora. What else do we have, what other recollections? Any other news? A good priest?

A good priest.

He was a good priest

REV: Good with languages, good administrator.

Good priest.

REV: So forth. Unfortunately-

He was giving out some bum advice.

REV: Well, not necessarily bum advice, but advice that was not pleasing to some people.

MB: Could I ask a question, some of you who have lived in Windber- do you think in those times that any priest who would have stood by the miners could have held his job? I have the impression, perhaps that no priest would have been able to stay in Windber if they had sided with the miners. This is my impression. I mean, the churches wouldn't rent out their halls to union miners either.

REV: I don't think so.

MB: No church, I'm not just talking about this church, no church at that time would have. Miners couldn't find a meeting place. They didn't have any buildings, not until the '30s. They had to meet in a field somewhere. So that is, that was different from some other mining towns. And some places for priest, but it was the company town feature of this town. With one company was different that some of the others. I don't have the impression that any priest could have stayed.

REV: I don't think so.

I don't think so.

REV: They dominated.

MB: No one else has any stories about Father Sas, no recollections? Any christenings or weddings that they went to? Any stories about anything about his personality that they could have remembered?

[Polish]

REV: How long was Father Figlevsky here?

He was few years here.

REV: After Father Sas was Father Figlevsky.

Yes [Polish]

Figlevsky and then Chicora

No, no, no, no, no.

REV: I'm going to try to make a transition- Father Sas went where from when he left Windber?

[Polish]

MB: In those early years, when Father Sas was here, I don't know if Father was going to ask this, but it interests me. How did the activities fare with World War I going on? Independent Poland, was the church involved in any kind – anything to do with independent Poland? Does anybody have any recollections about that?

[Polish]

She says that before, when Father Sas was here, Poland was still together

[Polish]

I guess they cut it up after.

MB: It was cut up before and then World War I and they had the independent – was the church here involved in any of the attempts to have Poland reunited. The three partitions, to come together to independent Poland, did it have any relationship?

No, not too much. I know the Polish Falcons recruited for the Polish army. Whether here in the parish itself, I don't know.

MB: You don't know of any spokes people who came or who were part of the church? No? That's okay. I just wondered. It was a dissident sect in the hard coal region, where Father Zabrucki comes from. The Polish National Church and I wonder if anyone had had any relationship at all with that. Father, I never came across- I only recently became aware of the Polish National Church in the hard coal region.

REV: Yes, correct.

MB: I don't know of any relationship between the Windber parish and anything with that, do you? Ever come across anything?

REV: I don't think there was anything as far as Windber is concerned.

When does this come in to be, Polish National Church?

REV: I don't have the dates on that.

There still is a Polish National Church in existence.

REV: There is.

They're still in resistance in (name of city unintelligible). When they came into being, I don't know.

How widespread is that? We have one in St. Peter.

MB: Maybe Father would know. I don't know.

Aren't they getting a little close now, Polish National and the Roman Catholic?

REV: No, not now and they never will.

Don't you think so?

REV: They never will. There's a hard feeling and they never will.

Oh, I thought that they were sort of-

REV: No, they joined up with the Episcopalians and they'll never come back to the church as a large group. Individually and so forth, yes, but as a group, no.

So individually, they could.

REV: Yes, individually they could. Because they have valid ordinations. I don't know what year it was, but it started in the hard coal region in Scranton. Neighboring town from where I lived. The bishop's home at that time was in Nanty Coke which was another neighboring town and he went to Rome, petitioned in Rome that Rome would make a Polish Bishop that would have jurisdiction over all the Polish parishes. Rome declined because she knew that then the Slovaks would ask for it, then the Hungarians and then the Italians and then you would have a lot of bishops sitting here over and loads of bishops and there would be conflict. So, Rome, in its wisdom says, no. You belong, you have a bishop, regardless of what he is, he's a Catholic bishop and that's where you're going to belong. So, using that as a pre-text, he went to Holland and was ordained by the old Catholic church. They dropped away from the church, but they had the

rightful ordinations, they had the power of ordinations and therefore Bishop Holder was rightfully elevated as a bishop. So his ordination, consecration is valid.

So the priests were valid?

REV: It seems, from all indications, that the power has been passed down, they have valid ordinations, it would seem.

So then the transition wouldn't be that difficult, would it?

REV: It wouldn't, it's just that the animosity is there. The pride is there. And that will be the stumbling block from them ever coming back, so when they realized what was going on, then they hooked up with the Episcopalians.

I didn't realize that the ordinations were valid.

REV: Yes, they are.

MB: But they're never was anything in Windber to do with that.

REV: No, there was not.

MB: I didn't think so, but I thought I'd just better ask.

REV: There was an attempt made in Southfork, Boswell had one. Which is defunct. Moxton is still in existence. Central City they made overtures, but they didn't get very far because Father Pilsbury was very popular

He appealed.

Yeah.

REV: So they didn't get very far. But, maybe in other towns, too they made attempts, but they didn't get very far. They were only successful in Johnstown, that one parish. I should say Boswell, they were successful, but after a while, they fell apart. So, maybe actually three places in a diocese they established these parishes, two are defunct and only one in existence today. Now, if we're finished with Father Sas we go into September 24, 1922 and Father Figlevsky baptized Antonina Stabash. Antoniette. So it was 1922. Is that when you said the strike was on?

MB: Yes.

REV: Well, that was in that strike period, then, where he probably decided-

MB: 17 month

REV: 17 months and then he left.

MB: He left in the middle of it then.

REV: So Father Figlevsky. Does anybody have anything to say about Father Figlevsky? He was Polish from the-

To me, he was good. When I go to church, I don't look at the priest, I pray and I go. He didn't do no harm to me. He didn't do no harm to me, so I can say nothing.

See, they had the right idea- they went to church to pray, not to criticize. We'll have to remind the younger generation of that.

When you go to church, you do no harm, so- it was good.

REV: So, by that time, the church was dedicated and it was about 10 years already so there's – we don't know when the school started, do we?

MB: 1905 I think.

REV: 1905 under Father Sas, then.

[Polish]

REV: So this was a convent here, and then they transferred- the sisters went into the rectory and the priest went over. So, now that was Father Sas that build the convent which is the present rectory. Alright, now we come with Father Chicora. Father Chicora baptized the first one March the 7th 1926. 1926, Father Chicora came in, so that was – Father Figlevsky was only here 4 years then, right? Alright, what do we know about Father Chicora, again, being a Polish priest.

[Polish]

REV: In 1926 the mines weren't working then? I'd imagine that they were working for some time-

[Polish]

Not too good you know.

People didn't have money.

[Polish]

See he was left with a big debt here when he took this parish over. He tried to the best of his ability. He was a priest who did a lot of things, as she says, but he used to do it on his own. He would, like I was in the choir at the time and he used to make – he used to direct plays, he used to write songs, lyrics and songs for us and we sang different songs and we had different plays. He was very active in that manner to try and raise money for the parish. Anyway he could raise a couple of bucks.

[Polish]

Which was smart. He was a good priest.

MB: Do you think the debt was from the original build? I mean, to pay it off?

The building? They accumulated all this debt on this new building and this rectory, at the time it was a convent. Furnishing it.

MB: And the miners weren't working, so they couldn't pay that much.

The miners just – it was impossible. But he tried to the best of his ability and I think that was his downfall. I think that's what caused him to get sick. To be truthful. He worried so much about trying to pay off the parish's debt and it took to affect his health.

MB: Was he here during the Depression, too?

Oh, yeah.

The Depression, yeah.

[Polish]

She said it's 3:00 and I said, yes, time goes by fast when you're having fun.

REV: Right. Okay, now, we're – what else do we have to say about Father Chicora because Father Chicora was the last baptismal entry for him was September 21, 1940. So 1926-'40 Father Chicora was here and what else to do we have to say about him at this time? So, it was the Depression and he was here when the economy just started pulling up because Poland was invaded in '39 and things start blooming here with the war and so forth, but the economy picked up and he was not here long enough to – he was here mostly.

He was sick.

REV: He died here?

Yeah, he died.

REV: Oh, yeah, he's interred at the cemetery. I forgot, he's buried over there.

[Polish]

REV: So he died here. So he was here under really hard times.

Very.

Very, very.

REV: Under Depression, so he took the brunt of all of the debt, all of the hard times.

Right.

MB: The newspapers talk about a 30th anniversary and Father Chicora was here and they brought back the priests, whoever was alive at the time and they had a parade and festivities. Does anyone recall anything about that?

What year would that have been?

MB: 1930. Maybe 1930? Maybe I'm not remembering it right, it might have just been, I think it was the church they did this for or else it was a totally Polish event with everything to do with Poland. But the church was featured prominently in it and the banquet was here. But all the Polish societies in town paraded in and everything. I don't really-

[Polish]

REV: Well, that would have been right before the crash. Before the crash of the stock market.

MB: Well, it would have been the late '20s or early '30s.

REV: No, it was '28. It was 30 years in 1928. That was- and 1929 was the crash. So when they had that celebration, things were blooming and really, the economy was real well. The crash came in 1929.

MB: But nobody remembers that event?

No.

I was just born in '28.

MB: Okay, well that would explain it. I will send you these newspapers.

[Polish]

MB: You collect clippings?

REV: We end with Father Chicora and his death. And now comes Father Walter Brutz his first baptism was November 24, 1940. He baptized Jean Marie Killian.

[Polish]

REV: Now where did Father Brutz come from? Anybody remember.

[Polish]

Bruton I think.

Now, he come here because Father Chicora was sick.

Yeah

He was here because Father Chicora was sick and he was brought in to sub.

Yeah

REV: Well the, Father Chicora died after September '40, then. How long did he linger?

I don't know, you'd have to look up there because that's his tombstone.

REV: Has when he died.

He came in just to relieve.

REV: Okay, well, then he probably didn't stay too long.

'41 I think he died.

REV: Okay, the last baptism from Father Brutz was December 7, 1941.

MB: December 7, are you kidding?

REV: December 7, 1941.

MB: Pearl Harbor Day.

REV: That was the last baptism, on that day.

Who was baptized on Pearl Harbor Day?

MB: Pearl Marie Cott.

REV: So on Pearl Harbor Day Pearl Marie Cott was baptized.

[Polish]

REV: Pearl on Pearl Harbor Day. Okay, so Father Brutz stayed from '41 to- what did I say?

He was a nice priest, too.

MB: He was? From November 1940 was the first baptism.

REV: And his last was baptism December 8, excuse me.

MB: It wasn't Pearl Harbor Day then.

REV: On the feast of the Immaculate Conception. He had a convert then.

MB: I'm glad he had another one then.

REV: So that means about a little over a year he stayed.

Of course the parishioners wanted him to stay on, but the hierarchy up there says no. They had a little, maybe you don't want to enter this in, but they had sort of a –

[Polish]

REV: The bishop says no, that's why he sends a Franciscan, Father Francis Wade baptized 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, another Franciscan baptized- there are 2 more, 8 baptisms placed by Franciscans placed here as transitional. Filling the parish until May the 24, 1942 when Father Michael Machoviak was placed here.

[Polish]

During Father Giles time we used to have outdoor toilets out there and he put a couple indoor toilets where you have the present ones now.

REV: Oh, is that so?

Yeah

Because we had the school kids and he thought it was very unsanitary to have those outside toilets.

That was the year I was supposed to graduate from school that year, but we didn't have it.

I graduated from the Polish school in 1932. I went there for the 7th and 8th grade.

MB: What didn't they have school, then. When would that have been?

Between the time, Father Fritz was here and Father Machoviak came. I think it was '42

MB: Was that lack of staff or money?

Lack of priest. Because we all went to different churches just because there was no church.

MB: No church at all? Because people didn't like them?

No, we had no priest.

[Polish]

They didn't send us a priest.

Rebellion

My sister had to get married in the Irish church.

[Polish]

REV: Now, Monsignor Machoviak is here and what do we have to say about Monsignor.

He was a good priest.

REV: We got that.

She was still going to church and praying and not criticizing.

REV: He came from South Fork.

Did he come from South Fork or St. Ann's?

REV: He came from South Fork. From St. Ann's he went to South Fork and he came from South Fork here. And what highlighted his administration? Was there anything? I guess not, the school was built, the convent was built, the rectory was built, the church was built. Did he come here with a debt?

[Polish]

They wanted to know and there was \$82,000 or \$87,000 when Machoviak came here.

REV: Is that how much the debt was when Machoviak came here?

Yes

REV: About \$82,000

[Polish]

In other words, what she is saying is that there was a \$127,000 debt, but like the Eureka stores and the places we had obligations with, they forfeited their debts and it come down to around 80 some thousand dollars and that's the debt he paid off and more. But he was the one who instituted the idea of doing everything on the QT as it is now. He introduced the envelopes into the church. No meetings, no bazaars, no nothing. He was a man who said, we'll take care of this church on a no murmur basis. Like if somebody came in and I think I understood. If somebody came into the rectory and told him that this and this is going on. He'd say, talk is cheap, let's forget about it. He didn't want to listen to no gossip whatsoever. He was that type of man and he was a man that got around everywhere. He was interested in the community, I mean, anyplace Father Machoviak and then Monsignor Machoviak was there. But he was the one who put it on a self-operating basis.

REV: I see.

You weren't here then, were you?

No, I don't think so. I was only here a very short time.

[Polish]

Of course, he was here when the economy was good, too.

MB: It made a big difference.

[Polish]

REV: It was because of Monsignor Machoviak that the bishop didn't enforce which the Vatican Council wanted, the parish committees, parish councils, he was the one who advised the Bishop and says Bishop, don't do it, don't force it because we old priest know what happened, under that time when the people gathered here, they gathered together there were no priests and they took the collection themselves and everything else so they built the church and when the priest came in they still had jurisdiction over the finances. And you had stories, like in my home parish, when the priest died, the committee came into the rectory and was counting all the forks and knives, everything right to the last and if some were missing, they were accusing the housekeep of taking those because it was supposed to be there. There was nothing said about, maybe during his time some things might have gotten lost or smashed, not so, they were counting everything so that's how detailed these committees wanted everything accounted for everything here. So because of that, you had difficulties. They had control of the purse strings and they could stop any priest from coming in. If the bishop sent a priest in and they didn't like it, they stopped him from coming in and Monsignor saw that and, not so much here, but in the Scranton diocese where he came from. And that's why he advised the bishop not to enforce these church councils in this diocese. The bishop left it up to the priest. If they wanted it, they had it. But it was not mandatory as in some diocese. That turned around this parish to be truthful, it did- financially and other ways, too. So what else do we have to say about the Monsignor? He was civic minded and he was interested in the parish.

The parish and the community, he was just all around priest.

He was hard working priest.

Very well liked.

He was strictly for the community.

[Polish]

MB: Could I ask, since we're going through all the priests. How did the church here get along with the other churches, like the ethnic base, like the Hungarians and the Slovaks and the Italians like through this whole time? Did they work together on large projects? You were talking about the community, the larger community.

I don't know whether they all pulled together or not, but I never saw any pulling apart as far as that's concerned.

MB: Could you think of any events that they would have cooperated with?

If I would have known about any bad events I wouldn't have told you because you don't bring up old tales.

REV: They were very nationalistic they loved their language and the community, they're customs and that is why they petitioned the bishop to have their own. And that's why, of course, the Slovaks broke away so they could have their own Slovak priest, their own sermons, and their own hymns and everything else which was understandable at that time.

And after all the church was going to be too small anyway because the community was growing. They had to have other churches.

MB: Did they have such things, back in the forties, when Father Machoviak was here, did they have things like Polish Days or is this an earlier event or later event?

That's a later event.

MB: That's a later event, that didn't yet?

Father Machoviak started it.

Polish Day was Father Machoviak, first. Yes.

The Falcons

[Polish]

If he wasn't building- if he wasn't doing one, he was doing the other.

[Polish]

That's it.

Do you understand what she said?

MB: I heard BINGO!

She said she used to go to Bingo and dad used to go down the Falcons have a beer or two.

She at least went to the church.

[Polish]

He was talking and my mother said, Father, he don't understand you.

REV: So, what else do we have to say about Monsignor Machoviak?

[Polish]

REV: He, too died here as I understand. And both Father Chicora and Father Machoviak are buried at the cemetery, the parish cemetery. Then after Father Machoviak came Father Bernard Shebotsky so that was in what year?

How long was he here? 10 years?

I don't know.

REV: Maybe 12 years.

Maybe 12 years.

MB: So Father Machoviak was here from 1942 til

REV: Well he retired, well, he was here, but he retired, so he didn't have jurisdiction. He was pastor emeritus here for, during his sickness.

Yes

REV: Correct

MB: He must have been here a long time if he was the predecessor.

REV: The last baptism that Monsignor Machoviak had was August, excuse me, September the – well it was September the first 1974.

MB: Oh, wow, so he was here a very long time.

32 years.

32

[Polish]

I thought it was around 32.

It's 33 years.

REV: But he did not die, he just resigned, he went to live in the former convent and Father Bernard took over. And when did Monsignor die? What year?

10 years ago

REV: 10 years ago?

Yes

REV: He lived 2 years then.

[Polish]

REV: 10 years ago, so '76 probably.

Joe, it was February 14, 1976

We knew we kept you for some reason.

MB: Yeah, she was right.

I knew it.

REV: Okay, so, Father Shebotsky ran the parish then, while Monsignor was still living and Father Bernard was from '74 to '86 which is when he left this parish. Now under Father Shebotsky's time it's recent and we know – we have the records.

MB: That's the easy part.

He was a good priest, too.

REV: You better put that in because I'll get Father Bernard after you because if you put every priest and not Father Bernard. The other ones I couldn't go in the grave and pick them out.

He knew how to sing.

And I endorsed him.

I didn't have anything against him.

MB: You liked all the priests. Is it fair to ask you which one you liked best, or not?

Oh, yeah, she liked him.

Everyone got their own favorite

MB: Oh, we all do.

Sure we do.

REV: Okay, now, just for the record, we say that Father Bernard remodeled the church, he excavated the basement of the church, built the hall, the kitchen under the church, remodeled the rectory, built a breezeway. Well the breezeway connection. And build a 3 car garage-

And the chapel at the cemetery.

REV: That's right, Joe.

And take care of the rest of that.

REV: That's right.

Is that paid for, Joe?

Oh, yes, it's paid for. Father took care of that.

REV: I have an easy job here, you see. I can go on vacation, 11 out of 12 months because it's all here, handed to me.

I don't know about that.

REV: Let's see, what else, small details of the liturgy that he put in and the services and so forth and programs he put in. We can fill those in, but in general.

The liturgy according to Vatican II. Father Monsignor Machoviak was old school, he didn't want the changes.

REV: We changed a lot of things, but when Father Bernard came in, he did.

MB: Does anybody remember when was Polish and when was Latin, and when was English used in the church service?

Father would know.

REV: It's difficult to say. The transition was such a gradual, over a period of time. It's difficult to say just when this transpired. We wouldn't know.

As far as the Polish mass is concerned Father Shabotsky used to do that because I was one of the Polish commentators.

I don't remember Father Mach ever having Polish.

No, no, no, he did Latin.

Latin I remember.

No, he was getting sick.

REV: So that is about the general information of the history of the parish in the 1998, which the – 12 years in 12 years we will be celebrating our 100th anniversary and that's why we wanted the picture taken because we'll have that in the jubilee book. Unfortunately it came about so that we don't know, on the silver jubilee why there was no history recorded at that time. At the golden

jubilee which should have been in 1948, who was here at that time, Monsignor Machoviak, but he just came in.

MB: He came in '42.

REV: Oh, well for some reason.

We had some kind of celebration.

[Polish]

I think I had a paper.

MB: If you have anything, Father could use it.

I think I was home on leave and maybe in uniform and I sat down there on the 25th.

REV: That was 50th anniversary with Machoviak.

I look for my paper.

MB: If you have anything, please do.

All those papers and books.

REV: First was 50th and then he stayed the

I think I have a book from 1970

REV: '73 was the 75th anniversary and by then he was too old to do anything. He, a year after '74 was when Father Bernard came in. So, had Father Bernard come in a year earlier or 2 years earlier he probably would have had a history, but he came a year after the jubilee 75th and therefore had no opportunity and in 12 years there wasn't any opportunity to get the history and that is why I used this occasion to get and we're going to be looking more and more for some historical facts because it will be showing up, people might be coming and be uncovered and we'll be building on this history, so when the jubilee comes up, the 100th anniversary the centennial, we'll have something, we'll produce it, with photographs and –

Are you taking reservations for 1998?

REV: If I knew I was going to be here, I'd take it, but God didn't give me any guarantee that I'm going to be here. But I figured I might as well start and I'm sure that the priest who is going to be here, if it's not going to be me, the priest that is here will appreciate this and the parishioners will appreciate it also.

Definitely.

MB: And Mrs. Dembrinsky says she has a bunch of materials and she said she might have a silver jubilee

Maybe. I have to look.

MB: Well, if there was any, it would have to be then, because the 25th was written up in the newspaper and there's a little tiny reference, but nobody knows about it, but if you've got something in drawers. I don't think so, nobody knows of anything. So if you have something stuck away in a drawer, you'll help everybody.

Do you remember, the town had it?

MB: Well, that was the celebration of the town in 1947, but that's not the church.

The church had it the following year.

MB: But nobody knows of any. I mean Bishop Hogan doesn't know of any.

I forget when we had our Falcon convention. I don't remember anything.

Falcon convention? Where?

We went down the Falcons. I was president at the time, was that '47 we had the convention? Because we all marched down up here to the church, we had all that parade up here. I don't remember.

MB: But if you have any historical materials, bring them to Father here because that will help with the parish history and if you have something from other Polish or other organizations because this is a very rich ethnic area. And you know that history will be lost if everybody just sticks their things away in drawers because everything is gone.

The Falcon convention was one of the big doings here because that was the first time we ever got the district convention to come here.

MB: When would that have been? What year was that?

It would have been, like you say, around '45, '47

MB: Okay.

Because that should be written up here in the papers somewhere, too.

REV: So we will compile all of this information. We might pass it around, but even if we don't pass it around, the people will know that we have it and when I go around, they will probably pick up stuff and probably start handing me the thing and we'd just be adding on and adding on.

When you're making your rounds, she could probably pick up a lot of material.

REV: A lot of the older people, we each chose the three because they're in the 90s, but there are quite a few women in the parish and men who are in their 80s.

80s yeah, they could remember

REV: And they could have the records. And something.

Especially those that were born here.

REV: Right.

If there is anybody that was born here.

MB: Or old photographs for the future parish histories so they don't get thrown out or something. Someone may even have of the original church because.

REV: Someone located one and they had it up at the picnic grounds.

The picture?

REV: Yeah. Where did they find that?

I don't know where they found that, but they found it, it was a year ago or 2 years ago.

REV: Yes, a year ago they found it.

MB: But these things can be copied and so people can have them returned to them. You know, today they can do all sorts of things with.

REV: They blew it up, so now it's a nice size picture. But it was from a postcard or something of that nature.

When you go to visit Paul Westmont, you grill him because he probably has a lot to recall.

REV: Okay.

[Polish]

What year was you born? '16?

1918

Paul is older than you.

Where is Paul these days?

He's living up on Cambria Avenue. At presently he's Falcon president down there again. He's just taking on all these dumb responsibilities.

MB: Could I just ask one question, I'm sorry, I keep interrupting-

REV: Go ahead.

MB: How important, now with all the organizations in the community, what do you think, how important was the church, St. John's to the lives of people here?

Very important.

MB: Do you have anything special to say about that? It played a big role.

And the parish priest used to participate. Did they have you as chaplain of the Falcons? If they don't, then you're going to be because I'm going to mention it to them. I know Father Bernard wasn't, but Father Monsignor Machoviak was and you should be, too. Because that's a Catholic organization and you should be a chaplain down there at the Falcons. I'm going to have to mention that down there to Paul.

Millie, I can comment on that. Of course, I can't tell you-

That's an honorary chaplain, you understand what I mean.

I can tell you what part the church had to play in my life. Probably the family had as much to do in my maintaining my belief and my religious attendance at church in the years I left home because I left home when I was about 18 years old and I went off to school and then I spend 22 years in the service and after my service years I was in Washington, DC and I'm presently in Florida, but it just seemed that all the time that I was in the service when it was so easy for people to sort of become lackadaisical in their attendance at church, to me, it just seemed to be very important and it was a part of my life that was so important to me in my formative years, here in Windber and going to church with the family because we attended church services every Sunday morning as a family. And I maintained that throughout my lifetime, so it has been my lifestyle.

Not only that, like you lived in Mine 37 and I did, too. I remember we used to go to church for mass in the morning, for vespers in the afternoon and if they had anything in the evening and we walked from 37-

MB: 3 times a day?

3 times a day, oh yes. Rain, shine, snow, or whatever.

[Polish]

We didn't have no busses when I was in school. You walked back and forth.

[Polish]

That's everybody.

She said, don't leave your schoolbooks on the porch and bring them to church.

But it was a good influence.

It was worth it. Oh, my childhood was the Catholic school until I moved away. I went from Kindergarten to 8th grade.

Well, I just started here in the 7th. I went to the 7th and 8th grades because we were in Seward at the time.

I moved to New York.

[Polish]

My children went through Catholic school. My daughter didn't because there wasn't a Catholic school for her.

MB: When did the Catholic school close?

REV: We don't know.

That was early, like we said, way back in 1905.

MB: 1905 I'm remembering, but it was early.

REV: That was one of the things, after establishing the parish, building the church, immediately they tried to have a school. Every parish tried to have a school and it was usually the organist was the teacher. Instructor because he got paid as an organist, actually, what other job would he have, teach in the school. So we started off with maybe one class and they developed into more. And then the nuns started coming in from Europe and they were getting local vocations and then the nuns started taking over. And up until the Vatican council, it was the nuns who were operating the Catholic schools.

Right

REV: From the Vatican council on, the nuns started dropping out and lay people were taking over, so now that there's more lay teachers than nuns.

74 years at St. Benedicts. Nuns were there and now it's all lay. The teachers they got and quite a bit in the school.

MB: I heard something about somebody wanting to sing. I don't know if that was real or not.

REV: Sing? Who would want to do that?

MB: Somebody wanted to sing.

REV: Somebody mentioned [Polish]

She said Father Bernard used to sing all the time.

REV: Father Bernard used to sing.

MB: Before we started this, I heard somebody wanted to sing some songs- when we first came in.

Well I think we'll put the record on mother's back because mother observed her 90th birthday 2 years ago and Dottie and I flew up from Florida for the occasion and after having the service we had a luncheon up at Rizzo's and we had something like 40, 50 people there and some of the songs that they sang there, particularly the about time goes by so fast and life is so short and it was really a moving scene to see so many of these people who were moved by the singing of a song. That they all knew and they joined in. It was really a momentous occasion.

So you mean you want us to sing right now.

REV: Joe has the voice, so he can start.

[Singing in Polish]

MB: I congratulate you, beautiful.

That was the very song they sang there and what a moving scene.

[Polish]

REV: Okay, well [Polish]

[Polish]

Okay, that's a lot, Father

MB: Thank you all, very much.

[Polish]

End of Tape 2 Side B

End of Interview (October 5, 1986)