

Interview with Mary. K. Miketinac

Hermansville, Michigan

June 8th, 1988

Interviewer (I): Interview with Mary Miketinac, Hermansville, Michigan. June 8th, 1988. Okay Mary, before we really get started were you born in Hermansville?

Mary Miketinac (MM): Born and raised in Hermansville.

I: What year were you born in?

MM: June 10, 1924.

I: Oh so you have a birthday coming up. Okay, let's start off. Could you give us some general background about the Croatians coming to Hermansville?

MM: Right, yeah. The first Croatian immigrant, Ivan Rodman [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], came to Hermansville in 1878 in route to the copper country. Mr. Meyers [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] spoke to him in German and convinced him to settle here. The reason he could speak to him in German is because German is taught in the Yugoslavian schools before English is spoken. By the early 1900's there were nearly 200 Croatians all settled near the factory and the mills. My dad came here in 1897 at age 18.

I: Okay, and his name?

MM: Steven Miketinac.

I: And what town was he born in, in Yugoslavia?

MM: Its called Selo, Yugoslavia. And my mother was born in Zaluke.

I: And how do you spell that?

MM: Z A L U K E. Same time as John___ those are neighboring villages. And my dad first came to Joliet, Illinois were he had an uncle and later came to Hermansville.

I: What year did he arrive in the United States?

MM: I had that on that obituary, I think it was, he came to the United States in 1897 I mentioned that, and then to Hermansville 1902 and then my parents were married in 1904.

I: Now what was the Croatian community like? Now you said the first Croatian came in 1878?

MM: Yes the year that the foundation for the lumbering factory was being put in, and that was his first job, to put up posts foundation in.

I: I see, I see, and then did Croatians, this became kind of a stop for Croatians?

MM: Due to this fellow writing back to Europe encouraging others to come here because there was plenty of employment.

I: So then in terms of Croatians coming to the United States Hermansville was one of the places that,

MM: That they heard of, yes. And then later on some went to neighboring towns because they heard the pay was a little better,

I: So let's go back to the start and then we will get to the present. Where did the Croatians live in Hermansville here?

MM: In back of the factory there was a settlement, there was apartment buildings and some individual homes. And then what is now county road 388 that was a little settlement.

I: Did these settlements have names?

MM: No, No. they just call them Austrian town.

I: Was there one called pest...

MM: Pest House that's that county road 388. They got that name Pest House because they had some sort of epidemic, some illness. And they had a host of, they put the men in and quarantined it and so that's what got the name pest house.

I: I see, I see. Now what do they call the other places?

MM: They others don't have, one was called number one boarding house, another was number two boarding house but they were actually apartments. And there were real close to the work, that's why they all liked to settle there. Nobody settled in the town _____. Your French and German did, but most of them lived right in this little settlement.

I: Now how many people were in the community, say at it's...

MM: By early 1920's couple hundred, it ran between 2 and 3 hundred. And then in 1902 they decided they should organize this lodge so that they would be able to maintain their tradition and their social life and so they immediately got fifteen members to join along with that you had life insurance coverage. Which in those days meant a lot because of those industrial accidents and stuff, so you were entitled to get something so they learned about insurance coverage early in their stay here. And then...

I: Now, wait a minute, getting back to the lodge could you explain the name of the lodge and then the connection with the national organization?

MM: Each lodge could name its own, choose its own name. And most of them were of religious origin and ours was called Holy Cross Lodge and then your number run from 1 upward and we were number 259. And see we were organized in 1902 quite early in the organization its going to be a hundred years old in 1990. And the headquarters is in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania we are affiliated with the headquarters but you have your local lodge officers and claims and so on. Most of the old timers got a chance to hold office at one time or another and there was enough of them to change officers. Now it's a time that you have to hold office because there is no one to hand it on to, I inherited that form my dad, twenty five years ago and have maintained it.

I: What was the, who was the founder hereof the lodge in Hermansville?

MM: John Sudac [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was one of the original organizers.

I: And how do you spell that?

MM: S U D A C. And a few other men. And then they decided to, they rented hall space in the beginning to have their meetings and so on, and then in 1913 they constructed their own hall near the beach and had possession of that until 1972. And the membership dwindled and they weren't using the building anymore and then that was sold to the local sportsman's club and the building still stands and is renovated and is being used.

I: Did you have any, have you said, did they have any regalia like flags and buttons and sashes and things?

MM: Yes they did they had boxes of it and we never went to clean out the place and the sportsman I guess just, I do have a cap in the garage that my dad had, I could show you that, and when we went out

of the 4th of July we had pins and sash to show their office and you know, they marched with our flag, the American flag and the foreign flag, and one man carried the sword I don't know what that signified, and they were quite an impressive group you know and they marched, if they got placed in the parade behind the Italian lobs then they were insulted, they always wanted to be the first in the line. The Italians got the first place because they had a band. We never had a band, so they had the parade. But we were more in numbers.

I: So all of that regalia and whatnot is just lost when the sportsman...

MM: Nobody went off to keep it you know... it's just too bad.

I: Did anyone, did you keep the minute books of the organization?

MM: I've got books that are a continuation, not the originals where they were filled up they were left out there too in the building hall. But what I've got here is now since my dad had it an then I have it, yeah. But they do not go back to the original date. And I had one old membership roster that dated 1978 to Gene Worth [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and that is how he got all of those names that he listed in our book for the registrars roster and that reached I think a peak of 164 members. And the present day membership is 24.

I: What are some of the activities that the club would do during the year, like social activities?

MM: Mostly dances, and they were kind of fundraising affairs, and all the family went. It wasn't just the adults that went. You took all the kids and everybody joined in the, the whatever took place in the hall building. And then when you had an anniversary year you had the roast of the sheep and a kind of a banquet there.

I: Was this in the summer time?

MM: Mostly summer activities yeah. And when a member died you didn't lay in a funeral home you laid in that hall. And you had a long light week, members would take turns and they kept vigil all night long, you were never left alone. So the last one to lay in the hall building was my dad in 1957, after that you couldn't get enough members to keep an all-night vigil so that went out of practice but they thought a lot of that. The membership turned out in a body when somebody passed away and once a year they went to church services in a body.

I: Did they, were there any regulations where you had to go or...

MM: You had a penalty, you had a penalty if you didn't attend the meetings, if you didn't attend the funeral you were penalized so it was a must. So you always had a good turnout because it was, and the only way you could belong was if you were Croatian or if you were married to one. Its exclusively, not any nationality can belong, and then of course the children automatically, you had what you call a junior lodge so that the children also were covered, and the children were treated at Christmastime for their membership. The junior lodge now is nonexistent, there aren't any young, you have to be under the age of eighteen to belong to the junior lodge, when you maintain eighteen then you transfer to the senior lodge.

I: So back in its hay day you did have a junior lodge?

MM: Very very large one. When a child was born it was automatic, they were just enrolled in the lodge right away. So we were all members from childhood. And then we kept it up ourselves afterwards.

I: Did they have accident or health benefits for the members?

MM: You do have, what they call, a sick benefit coverage but that's only a dollar per day and a certain injuries and operations are covered. But it's a very very keep tight of policy and of course your benefits are not... now they started with a hospitalization coverage with a flat rate per day and then carried that most people in the group are covered for hospitalization.

I: Was there also a death benefit?

MM: That was the original way, that was the first one you got, your death benefit. And that ranged 500 dollars, a thousand dollars, that's what it cost you to be buried here that's what it carried. They never carried enough to be a little taken care of like you do now, it was just basic coverage.

I: Do any of these lodges have meetings where they all came together?

MM: Every four years you had a convention, a national convention. And that takes places in different cities, the last one was in Hollywood, Florida. And you have to have a member of 200 to elect a delegate. So some lodges that are 200 and above they had their own. We are small and so we were always matched with 2 or 3 lodges together. Now we would be with Escanaba or maybe Calumet or something like that. So the first one to ever go from here was my dad in 1912. He went to Kansas City, he was a delegate. And the last one to go was myself and I went in 1964 to Pittsburg. And we have delegates, Frank Robins [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] dad was a delegate once and Mr., who was it who

lived to be 95 he was a delegate twice. So we were represented a few times even though we weren't that large because it's kind of hard to get that number of votes to..

I: Now is there anything else you want to say about the organization?

MM: I guess that pretty well covers that part.

I: Was the terms of the immigrants that settled here, were the Croatians ever, living in Hermansville, were they all from a particular town or a particular area in Croatia?

MM: Mostly neighboring, small neighboring towns. Now when I went to Yugoslavia my dad had a nephew in a town called Prolutina [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], and so I asked, my mother's village, how we could get there so it was directly south of that. So I went to that town and...

I: How far was it mile wise?

MM: Oh, I would say 3-4 miles, not very far. It seemed far because _____ and I stopped, they had a little store and tavern there, and there were some men standing out on the street. And we stopped and my aunt was with me and so she got out of the car and she said to this group of men, could they direct us to a Frank Miketinac. And this one guy takes off his hat and he says I'm him! What was really a surprise, and then I got out of the car and then I said who I was I identified myself and I wanted to look up a relationship and he said, never did I dream that somebody of my uncles family would ever look me up. He was man 63 years old at the time. He kept repeating, your dad sent many a package over to us, this boy's dad died young. That's another thing that this people did from here, the money they earned, they would send money back to help their family and clothing and stuff like that. so he said that he would never forget that, but he was like European boy but he wore big overalls from the United States you know and stuff like that and he remembers that so well, and he kept repeating that that my dad was so good to remember him and his mother and send stuff like that. Like I said he had a home there in Yugoslavia that I heard about where your living quarters are upstairs and the barn is down below and there was a big outside stairway to go there and I heard that that's the way they were constructed but like I said, actually saw that that's the way they lived. He was a widower at the time and he had a daughter in law living with him but the son was working in Germany. A lot of them go to Germany so they could earn money like they used to come here to this country and now they go to Germany and earn enough so they can earn farm equipment like a tractor or maybe buy a car and that's the only way you can do it. You never are able to have enough money right there in the village to purchase anything large.

I: Was the community here in Hermansville, the Croatian community, did the people maintain their culture, their Croatian culture?

MM: As much as they could. They tried to keep up a lot of their traditions and they had, there was always weddings taking place because all these young fellows came over here and also the young girls were coming over here as teenagers. Somebody would send enough money to buy a ticket and then they would come over here. And they had these weddings that lasted a whole weekend and you had a lot of music and dancing, everybody who was invited, these weddings were a big thing and they had, three days of celebrations.

I: Now were these, I want to ask you something about the celebrating but before that were the people into arranged marriages?

MM: Some, in the beginning most of them were prearranged. Parental arranged and there was no objection or anything that you didn't want to go through with it I guess the girls just accepted whoever their parents had picked out. That was the last of the, probably 1920's or so. After they allowed the women to work at the flooring factory then they got to know the other nationalities boys so that's where the mixing started.

I: But before that women couldn't work in the factory?

MM: No, no there was none of that. Just the men, they had a department after that, they had the girls working it. And like my mother said there was no choice but to come here and get married because what was there to do, you know? There was no jobs or schools for anything so, that was the only alternative that you had. Was to raise you family and...

I: Did the women keep, you know that were at home, did they keep large gardens and chickens and..

MM: Every home had large garden, a certain number of chickens, a couple of pigs, and a cow for your milk. So one thing we say nowadays that we were really raised with foods with no additives and never a shortage of anything you know you had so much right at home. So what you got at the store was just staples you know. Everything produced, and then they also purchased from farmers that came around and so, they would come around with bushels of potatoes or apples or things like that so you always had a lot of fresh products. You didn't have supermarkets, you bought locally.

I: Did the women like go out in the countryside and the woods and collect berries and fruit and things like that?

MM: Us younger kids did that. I don't remember my parents ever going out and picking berries but we did as kids, yes.

I: But I mean not just small amounts, you picked enough for large..

MM: So that you could make a can. But like I say a lot of that you have a bunch of kids and not much left for canning, you ate it. Ate it fresh you know. But later years you would can from the garden and stuff like that, when those women first came to here, to this country they didn't know what canning was. They learned that as the kids started to grow up and so on. You learn things at school from Home Ec and then you brought those things home and taught your mother. I remember the first time that I made a cake and my brother said to my dad, eat that Mary made that, he says does that little one know how to spoil flour already? [Laughter] My dad was kind of a comic he would come up with the darndest things and you would have to laugh it was kind of a joke. I was the last one of the family so I was always the baby or the little one.

I: Now you were talking, we kind of got side tracked here, but I want to go back to the wedding ceremony. Could you describe a typical wedding celebration that they would have here?

MM: I guess they marched to church, and it was always early in the morning that the church ceremony would take place. And they always picked out attendance that were close friends, and they, in the beginning they tried to kind of use the dress, the European style of dress for a while. Then they found out there was some lady in town that was a seamstress so then they would have their clothes sewn for both wearing at home and they didn't go to the store to buy a dress or anything like that you know, most of it was sewn.

I: But wait a minute now, your saying originally they dressed as they did in Europe..

MM: Right they came over here, I don't know wherever the picture is but I remember my mother in one of those long dresses you know and several petticoats they used to have underneath.

I: And they would wear this as regular wear or just on special days?

MM: They wore that, up until the time that they could get clothes sewn for them by this lady, in an American design. They would buy material, there was a department in the store that had material, they would buy the material. In fact the husband would probably picked out the material because he went to the store, and then they would got to this lady and she would sew for them. But the men there, when

my dad was a youngster he wore those big white like knickers in Europe, but by the time he came to this country they had already changed the men's clothes. Not the women's. And they...

I: Wait a minute, so then the bride would wear an ethnic costume?

MM: Kind of picks it from the old ethnic way yes. And they would go to a, there was a photographic studio, located near one of the mills, I guess or something, it wasn't downtown. And so they had pictures taken, so most of them had old time wedding pictures. And they had, and then the ladies in the neighborhood all got together, there was nothing catered and they all got together and cooked up all this big food and baked for days in advance, you know baked all this pastries and breads and stuff like that.

I: Now could you explain some of the foods that they would have?

MM: Well these loli polies [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was always a must to have there.

I: Which is in Croatian is?

MM: Polli pizza [SPELLED PHONETICALLY]. And walnut is your most famous one and like I said it can have filling of cheese or apples that's more on the sweet side. And then they made all kinds of breads, maybe not a plain as white bread that they were used to in the day. They would make it a little more richer for that, and a lot of roasting of the sheep out in the pasture and that took from early hours of the morning until about noon time to roast these. And they, the ladies at home roasted these chickens and they bought pans in the store and salads and, not, nothing much that was fancy, but there was no wedding cake like you have today or anything. And they'd have, the local tavern came with a horse and wagon and brought these kegs of beer stacked up and the most successful wedding was the one on Monday that hauled back the biggest number of kegs, they'd say that was a good wedding because they had a lot to drink and that was your drink at the wedding, not much hard liquor. The wine that you had at home and this beer that they got at the tavern. They also could go to the tavern and get buckets of beer. That's how they brought it home too, by the bucket. Some of the men would pay to, of course, by the bottle and they did patronize the bar to the...once in a while. And then your music started in the evening, and a lot of these weddings took place in the homes, they moved everything out and then they had their dancing and everything. Then when our hall was built, then you had a facility. And then if you were a member of the hall it was free. So a lot of events took place there. And the next day you would still continue because you still had food left over and the people came from Escanaba and Iron Mountain and anyone who would, they would hire a car somebody that had a car they would hire and

bring a whole carful of people to these events so you had neighboring towns come to weddings that were invited. Verbal invitations no written invitations. And then that is about as much as, I really didn't get in on those wedding but that is what I heard the way they described them. And then I remember when my uncle died, he was a man only in his forties so that was a really, he was a millwright at the mill so he was well known there. And for his funeral the Italian band played, marched and played. So that was something I always remember.

I: Okay, so let's, we were talking about the weddings and so on, were there any other special celebrations? Like you had the saints day, could you explain some of that, how they celebrated the saints day?

MM: Yeah, they usually, the father in the home had his name day, they called it a name day.

I: Oh for just the father?

MM: Just the father, whatever the kids were named given to observe for them. But just the father that was important, and especially those that fell, like St. Johns and St. Stevens fell during the holidays. So I said it was almost like another Christmas, to have that, to have your father's name. Now St. Josephs is in march so that was a different time of the year so those were not celebrated in between there you didn't have readers so there was kind of, and we always had a lot of foods displayed on the table. Like you made the roly pollies [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and you decorated them with candies and stuff like that, you didn't have a food bowl like you have now, you have food all the time and the nicest apples and oranges displayed in a bowl and bowls of nuts and stuff like that. That sat around the table while you were doing almost all your Christmas vacation from school you know? So that lasted more than just a Christmas day, so that extended but not in all households because some of them didn't have, the mothers name wasn't celebrated.

I: And how about the children?

MM: And the children it wasn't either.

I: Just the father.

MM: Just the father yeah. And the children's birthdays that you have nowadays birthday parties, that wasn't all that important either. Because it was tradition, everybody had large families, you know, ours was seven and your neighbor was nine, Frank Robins [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] family went up to thirteen I think. So you had large families and then so you had your own groups of kids to play with in

the neighborhoods you know, you didn't have to, the only time you associated with other kids is when you went to school.

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MM: Near the factory in the mills, we saw where our parents worked you know, like make paper print out a film so the kids could see where their parents work and the paper we got a copy of that. I said I actually saw my dad putting the lumber, he was what they called a ripsaw, and I used to run meet him at night and wait there and I could punch his card in the clock and that was a little treat and you wore a plate around the lumber piles you saw those men out there working. Today you have an insurance regulation that wouldn't allow kids to go around them, but we actually were raised right amongst the industry and that's why now when I take somebody to the museum I can tell them different things you know that I actually saw in operation and actually grew up with the lumbering industry. In one way, I said, we had advantages over kids now a days in some ways they talk about the poor old days or hard old days you know but we didn't look at the that way, because like I said we were well taken care of with little means. Not much but still it was all appreciated and thought we were well raised. And I never remember any delinquency problems amongst the kids or anybody getting in any kind of trouble, we were all well behaved and the teachers in the school always said how they could always trust the kids and... our upbringing was good and it was strict and yet when you brought home a report card parents didn't even understand what the marks meant you know. I remember once when we would look at each other's cards, the kids, what did you get in this what did you get in that, and this one neighbor boy said, oh my god! And my mother said is it that bad? She thought that I had a poor report card you know, she said to the kid is it that bad, he said it's too good! Because he made such a loud remark she thought I had poor, so she couldn't even know what kind of marks I had in school but yet they took pride in the kids achieving, the marks even though they didn't understand and thought, we are all for continuing education. Because they were deprived and hadn't the opportunity so they really were anxious for the kids, no matter how much sacrifice it took they still wanted the kids to go on in better education. The only time the boys worked was for summer vacation you got a job at the factory, at the mill, and then you got ribbed by the other fellows and saying, is that what you're going to college for? And all you did was try to earn some summer money, so you took a job in the summertime but they, the other

nationalities we didn't see them, like the French or those that lived around in the town area, they stuck with the factory and the mill and didn't for a better education, good school, and then they were old enough to get a job, you know sixth or seventh grade, and they just stayed there and worked.

I: And how about the Italians?

MM: Very few of them went on to college. I can find the name... but like I said most of them really tried to better themselves.

I: The Croatians.

MM: Especially.

I: Was there, I think we heard it before, maybe you want to reiterate it about the sausage that they made, did your family make sausage?

MM: Yes we did. Yes we made sausage, when you first butchered the pig you made what they called blood sausage and in fact it consisted of some meat, and rice, and the blood from for the hog and we had that. And then the smoked sausage that took longer and that you could keep year long before any kind of refrigeration because it smoked so well. Today I buy it from a fellow that lives up in Perryville [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], and makes it for us from Christmas and Easter. Frank and buy it. And it is about the closest we can get to ours but if you keep it for a long time we freeze it because it's not smoked that hard so we can't keep it without freezing.

I: Did every creation home have a little smoke house?

MM: No, one man in the neighborhood would construct a smokehouse and then you brought it all to him and he charged you two cents a pound, something like that, to smoke it and they liked Applewood the best, that was the best for smoking, so they cut down a little apple trees and they would keep that wood and smoke it. It was a pure smoking like your smokehouse meat now that you buy you will see where it says something added you know like an anti ____ but this was, he just salted it down and had that drip for a while and then brought it to the smoke house and you made sure, you poked in it which a knife and I guess to make sure it was smoked right to the bone and then it was done. There would be no rule for how many how many number of days it would take. This fire had to be kept round the clock, so this man really earned his money that did the smoking. But no that wouldn't pay for every family to have one, so that was one or two that took on that responsibility and did that. Now the freezer plants they have new smoking facilities and everything, but some farmer might do it. In those days we weren't

farming but we were small scale anyways, gardens, not that large that we were able to sell anything. You always produced for your own use.

I: Do you remember what the people, you know like your father and his friends and so on what they thought of working at the mill here?

MM: Well they thought that they worked hard but yet it was a better life than they could have had in Europe. And the fact that you got a paycheck and were able to buy necessities and so on. They didn't ever care I guess to be able to buy a whole lot, like my never owned a car, never learned to drive. That was kind of an unusual thing you now like John there, he went into partnership and bought a car with another man. They usually did that so then they made money by being hired to transport, somebody would have to go to Escanaba for a wedding or something and they made money. The pay was quite high in those days I guess. And then another thing that took place a lot was these baptisms. When a baby was baptized that was a big deal, heck when my brothers were born they roasted a sheep and had a big party for the baptismal thing. And then baptismal parents came from Escanaba and Iron Mountain and so they'd have to hire transportation to bring them here and they spent the whole day because that also you invited the whole neighborhood and that was a big event, and especially for boys. Because they always figure that the boys were going to be the providers and you were much better off to have a family of boys than girls. Like in our case we had five boys, my dad was always happy with the boys but the girls he though I'm not going to benefit too much but that's the way they looked at it.

I: Now they had the god parents, what's the Croatian word?

MM: Kumin [SPELLED PHONETICALLY]. In Italian you say kumpati [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], yeah you say Kumi, so there isn't too much difference.

I: Did they have, did the godparents have a special relationship with the child?

MM: Well sometimes they took the name of whoever the godparent is, they might use the name, but a lot of times they didn't. But the god parents felt honored if they did give the child their name. And then everybody that came, you didn't buy material gifts but it was all cash gifts. I remember going to a baptisms of a Kavashik [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] family that lived here at the time, the baby would lay of the bed and any woman that came there she laid the money at the head of the child, at his head. That's where they placed it, it was nothing on paper or anything but that was the tradition to place your gift at the head of the baby. At the weddings I guess they put the gift in the hand, they didn't have cards or anything like that but it was mostly cash gifts. And then another thing I forgot to mention, weddings

was a dance with the bride for a dollar and any many to dance with the bride had to give a dollar, I don't know where they hung that dollar but they call that the brides dance. Something different. I didn't go to many weddings, I remember when my cousins got married I seen that, at that time she married an Italian so a lot of Italians were there too, and it was at the hall so they had quite a bit of money there so. And you only turned around once, you didn't actually dance, one step or two and that was it, the next one came, they would stand in line. But that was a must you had to dance with the bride and a dollar in those days was a lot of money too.

I: Probably, why don't you mention a little about, could you tell us a other Croatian communities, well wait a minute, when did the community start coming apart, people leaving Hermansville, when did the Croatians start leaving?

MM: Most of your young people left the beginning of the war. Either they went into service or to go to cities to work in the defense plants.

I: How about in the 1920's with the Ford plant up in Kingsford?

MM: That was always where, that was a bigger group going when Ford started but like I said a lot of them went to Escanaba. It was a lumbering mill just like here but they went there because they heard the pay was a few cents an hour more. That's what it was the same type of work. But what happened when Ford came, they came around here and started selling lots up there. And they wanted people to really move and purchase land and built there. My dad bought a lot. Held it there for about 30 years, you know, never went. Never had any intention of going but he happened to by one, somebody was cashing in on this so they came around to these little towns and said to people well why don't you move up there and so a lot of them did. Stayed and did well working for Ford you know, and a lot of them buy, John Robin [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] bought and never went up there. Later after my dad died I sold it. But that was kind of a group encouragement to go there because there was this big company coming in there which was a lot different from what they were used to. But a lot of them didn't care about this big money, or to go there, and looked at something different than they were used to. Certain number of drove there, lived here and, that had cars and they would get a car and drive there. Same thing with your foundry that came there after there would be several cars from around here that drove up there and worked thinking it would harness favor. You know people that commuted like the do in cities, but they did that here too you know. Some of these fellows that didn't want to stay on in the factory wanted to better themselves a little they did that. When the company suspended operations, I think '48 was the

final one and then they had to look for something different so my dad went to silver fox farm. That was a big industry here. And that's where he ended his working days. And then up until that time you rented from the company. Everybody was in company houses but when you went to work for others more people bought homes and renovated them and had their own property. Up until that time there was nothing but rent and the company, like I said there was a company house, and there was the company store and it was like in that song... what life was mostly like. And then with the war coming along that all changed, the company did want to comply with minimum wage laws and things like that so they just thought it best to suspend operations. This other industry came in, like what John worked for he had kind of a, but he came from a city and rented a factory space and employed quite a few men and those men got paid much better than they were used to getting paid, had a few more benefits, so some of them ended up there of their working days. And then you also had that ____ that made furnaces and air conditioning equipment that was another ____ business and my oldest brother worked for them until the final... he was the only one who stayed around here and worked and the rest of the boys it was just summer jobs.

I: So what you're saying is that they jobs changed there was always employment but not for additional people, not for the sons of the workers but just for them. You went from the mill to the Ford, but then there was the fox company, the air-conditioning company, and that just kind of helped the people that were already here and out of jobs.

MM: Like some of those fellows that were in my brothers' age brackets, they got married and settled here like their parents. And they kept those jobs. And then some of them were made to move when they could get jobs in the defense plants and then they stayed there and when they were near retirement a lot of them came back to the home town. So that has helped with housing, there isn't as many homes for sale, a lot of them purchased homes and were able to fix them up a little later on and so on. The community is much nicer now than in the days of the rental. Because everything is private land now.

I: You mean back in the company housing days people really didn't keep the place up..

MM: Well no, you weren't gonna use your own money to fix anything up and they just gave you the basic things maybe to paint a little inside or something like that. It was mostly getting the rent. So you didn't have such wonderful living facilities and so on. But like my parents said it was a good place to raise kids and when we would kind a needle them and say, oh we were raised in a little house and

cramped up and my mother said you all grew up big didn't you? [Laughter] that was her answer though, which is true. We did. But now when you look back and think, my gosh, you didn't have much in the days when you needed it and then I says look at today here I am in a great big place, one person. So you wonder it really isn't justified you know. But that's the trend of the ages and so on.

I: Well talking about the Croatians towards the end here can we talk about the other communities of Croatians around the Upper Peninsula, starting over in Manistique, there were Croatians over in Manistique?

MM: Yes, well some of these communities we got to know because that's where we did our visiting when we had transportation you know, Iron Mountain, and Escanaba. I can tell you about where any Croatian in Escanaba lives, because we went there a lot and associated with them and they in turn used to like to come to visit over here too you know. Manistique now that was a little out of the way.

I: But there were still a few in Manistique.

MM: There were few there, like I say Mrs. _____ she was born and raised there in that____ so that's why we know of them, but you don't see them hardly ever. Also up in the other way, I have never gone to visit Croatians along the copper country or anything like that. I've been there maybe to some church ladies convention or something and I run into them, I see the name and I run into them. And talk to them and so on, but we are not that well acquainted. I do read when they put articles in our weekly Croatian paper. Now there is an English section in there and there is a Croatian section so, Frank and I always read to see what is going on at other places, what they are doing and so on. So that is one way that we kind of keep in touch. Frank now he goes to a postal convention and whenever he sees a name he looks the person up and being that he was in sports and that he knows a lot more people that I have contact with and so on. When I've gone to Chicago or something like that you know I've gone to these great big Croatian picnics they have their own grooves and stuff like that and I've attended those things and then in Milwaukee but never have, I've got a lot of classmates living in Milwaukee that's where most of my classmates ended up. So I keep in touch by mail but not that much.

I: Now, if you are most familiar with the community in Escanaba could you talk a little about it, what brought Croatians to the Escanaba area?

MM: Because the pay was slightly better.

I: For the?

MM: For the lumber company. Stevenson [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] lumber. The, it really didn't pay for them that much to move you know, but they still... little better income, that's why some of them went over there. Originally settled here but then went over there. Some of them came right from Europe.

I: Now where was the Croatian community located?

MM: Marta [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] Swedish and Croatian.

I: Now how many people were living in that area?

MM: Up until a few years ago their lodge membership was what ours originally was, 160 some members. Not too many years ago they still had that. So I would think there's two, three times more people there than there were here.

I: Like 600? 500?

MM: I would say so.

I: Now were there Croatian businesses there like salons and stores?

MM: Mrs. Spratsky [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] had a salon. Mrs. Spratsky's [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] brother in law he had a gravel business, the son is still operating it till this day. Their name was Markovich [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], they changed it to Marvic [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], the boys did after they grew up. Those names, they said they were ashamed of their name, you know, which is a awful way to look at it I think. So they changed the name, like there's a family that was in Chicago that had our name, originally they lived in Escanaba and they moved to Chicago. And the fellow said there was no other name in the picture ___ home book like that so they changed their name to Mikan. So, no matter how much my brothers were in sports and service and everything, none of them have ever, now I've got nephews their coronal in the army and he always says, here's the way you pronounce my name and here's the way you spell it. He is proud of the name, but some of these people they shortened it or changed, did it legally you know, court and everything, and my parents used to say, how is anybody gonna know that they were from the ___ because that everybody changed their name they thought that was terrible. But there are some whole families that they did that. Like I say in Escanaba later on you had mate [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] paper and like my younger brothers father in law, he worked at mate [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] paper. So that was employment for them, for the lumber company to make paper. So they were able to work towards a pension and stuff like that which they didn't have here, there were no pension rights here. And benefits, there being a little bigger town you had different

operations, you were entitled to different kinds of benefits. And same thing what you said with Ford there, they had a little better, they talked about making five dollars a day, that was big money. And so some of those people like I said we would get in touch with and come visit them up in the Iron Mountain area.

I: Now were there Croatians in Niagara?

MM: Yes, but whatever happened they had a lodge of their own and when my dad was first president talk about mergery these days, he had that lodge merged with ours. And maybe thirty, forty, members we got and they belonged here for a number of years. Eventually they either died off or they cashed in their policies so today we don't have any members from Niagara. But that was one of the things that strengthened our lodge here, what made my dad ask, there's a lodge in Iron Mountain, or the one in Escanaba, but he got the one in Niagara to merge. Now Niagara, they went there for the paper mill and there was a good train service I guess.

I: You mean from here to Niagara?

MM: Mm hmm yeah.

I: Not going through Iron Mountain?

MM: No. They called it the ____ Niagara line or something I don't know. I heard them talk, talk about that. So I don't know if many from here went to live in Niagara I can't think of any but people must have come directly to Niagara from Europe or Iron Mountain... I only know those two families in Niagara, one is my sister married a brother of this one lady who lived there and she is Croatian, she married a French guy. And then Mrs. Proprich [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] is born and raised Hermansville. So she lives up in Niagara.

I: Now are we said earlier that there were some Serbians up there?

MM: That's what these Proprich's are. And there are dark complected, and we are white. But the Serbians are more darker.

I: And they at one time moved here, in Hermansville?

MM: Not those people, there are some Serbians here. One thing I remember of my folks talking about having a few borders that were Serbian, and they used to the Serbian was very very proud of his nationality and his title because they used rib on him. They'd say, you're not a Serb you know, and my

mother said to prove it to you they'd say yes yes I am if you have a knife to my throat I'd still holler I'm a Serb. That's how strict they were, and my mother said that they were very strict in there, you know how we have our fast days and stuff like that, and she said that she had to cook a little bit different for them but they wouldn't use butter because they said they might as well eat the cow. They wouldn't eat eggs because they said they might as well eat the chicken, and she said your Serb was very very strict on his religion and observed his fasting rules and so on. So that's what I remember about the Serbs, evidently they didn't stay around here too long.

I: Now these were just single men?

MM: Yes. Single men that boarded here or there. I guess we had one or two I think before my time.

I: and then some of them, there was a group of them at Niagara?

MM: Might of went up there from here, could be.

I: Now you said there's an orthodox church in Iron Mountain, where some of the Serbian families still attend service?

MM: Yes they do. But some of those names that frank was giving you that belong to this church, they don't sound like Serbian names you know.

I: No I think some of them are Lebanese.

MM: Well maybe that's it, well you mentioned Gaycups [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and this other name that begins with an A. Yeah... so those must be just more and more, orthodox, but their origin is probably Lebanese like the Seeklies [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] in Escanaba aren't they Lebanese?

I: They are Lebanese. Some of them are orthodox and some are catholic and that's what that must be what you have in Iron Mountain. Where you have and Orthodox Church that's attended by Greeks...

MM: Now Mrs. Proprich [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] she was a catholic here but when she married into that family she joined the Serbian orthodox church because of her husband. So it's more strict I think than membership of our catholic church was as far as their beliefs and traditions and stuff like that, they strict to them they don't... like a lot of people get away from it.

I: As we finish up here Mary could you repeat that Croatian, little I don't know whatever you call that,

MM: Departing. We say Asbogam [SPELLED PHONETICALLY],

[TAPE CUTS OUT ABRUPTLY]

[END OF INTERVIEW]