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CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

ETHNIC WOMEN OF CLEVELAND

Oral History Project

Interview with

ANNA M. SPODNIK

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Women's Comprehensive Program

History Department

The George Gund Foundation

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Interview with: Anna M. Spodnik

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Interviewer: Jeanette Tuve

JT Mrs. Spodnik, what was your maiden name?

AS My name was Furijes.

JT When and where were you born?

AS I was born here in Cleveland, Ohio. July 16, 1914.

JT Were you born in the Buckeye neighborhood?

AS I was born at City Hospital at that time. Today it's called Metro General.

JT Where were your parents born?

AS Both in Hungary.

JT Did your mother and father come to the United States together?

AS No, separate.

JT When did your father come?

AS My father came here in 1906 and my mother came in 1907.

JT Did they know each other before they came?

AS No. They met here in the Buckeye neighborhood.

JT Why did your father come?

AS To get away from the Bolshevik war, if I'm not mistaken. And my mother came because her parents picked a boy for her to marry, and she didn't want to marry him and she came to this country. He was much older than her.

JT Had her family arranged the marriage?

AS Oh, yes. Well, they used to years ago, but she came here and I guess she was here about four years before she married my father.

JT Why did your father come to Cleveland?

AS He thought he'd have a better chance working here. He was like what you

would call a cabinet maker. And he had a brother here . His brother wrote to him to come, that there is work here. And there wasn't much doing back in those days in Europe.

JT Did they live near Budapest?

AS Oh, yes, my father lived in a small town, I can pronounce it, Gimer-magyar. And my mother came from the little town, Ameresh, in Hungary. And at that time it was all Hungary, and later on it joined to Austria, and not Hungary.

JT What did your father do in Cleveland?

AS He started to work as a cabinet maker, and later on he got into a foundry and was making molds, different kinds of molds. From Cleveland he went to Chagrin Falls, they had a shop there, and he worked there for years. And later on he had a candy and grocery store up around 79th and Woodland.

JT Were your parents active in the church?

AS Oh, my father and mother both were. My mother belonged to about three or four lodges at St. Elizabeth's. And my father, he was Protestant, he was active in the Reformed Church about three or four doors away from where we lived.

JT So your mother went to St. Elizabeth's and your father to the Reformed Church and your mother was active in many lodges?

AS Like the Rosary society, and then they had about four of them where they helped to take care of the poor or the immigrants that come to this country. As far as I can remember. And, then, of course, she raised a big family.

JT How big?

AS Well, if we had all lived there would have been eight children.

JT How many lived?

AS There's just three of us left.

JT Were you the youngest in the family?

AS No, I was the oldest daughter. She had a daughter before me, but she died at the age of 19 months. And my brother was really the oldest.

JT What language was spoken at home when you were a child?

AS Hungarian, but my mother could talk very good English.

JT Could she speak better English than your father?

AS Oh, my father had a very hard time learning it. He could understand you and he could say "yes," or "no," but neither of my parents had any schooling at all. But Mother, she could talk seven languages, but she couldn't read or write. Because she never went to school.

JT That's interesting. Did your mother work outside the home?

AS After we were grown up she was a cook. She cooked in quite a few Jewish restaurants. Very excellent cook.

JT She cooked Hungarian specialties?

AS Yes, absolutely. She could make strudel thin as this tablecloth and not have a tear in it. I've tried and tried. . . . And she made all of the different Hungarian dishes. And, of course, she worked for the Jewish people and she could cook Jewish foods. But my father he was more or less--different jobs. I think the last job he had before he retired was over here on 140th. He was some kind of a grinder during the war.

JT So, all of you children learned to speak Hungarian? Where did you go to school?

AS In Chagrin Falls I started out in the first to third grade. Then we come here and I went to Kinsman, at East 79th and Kinsman, where Bob Hope went to school, but I didn't know him.

JT You're a little younger than Bob Hope.

AS Oh, I think so. He's in his eighties.

JT Where did you go to junior high school?

AS I didn't. I went two weeks to the eighth grade and I had to quit school to go to work.

JT How old were you?

AS Fourteen. I stayed home and helped my mother half the time, because at

that time she had 13 boarders beside her family.

JT I thought you said she didn't work, and now you say she had 13 boarders.

AS That was at home. She didn't work outside the home. And I had to stay home and help her, wash, and help her cook.

JT You were the oldest daughter; did any of the other children have to stay home and help your mother?

AS No.

JT You were the only one? You had some special responsibility because you were the oldest daughter?

AS Yes, I did.

JT Did you feel badly about quitting school?

AS Well, I liked school. And I did pretty good at school, I could say that. But--I went one week two days and the next week three days. One time the truant officer came and I was washing clothes. Mother says, "Well, I need her to help me at home." And he didn't say nothing. Today you couldn't do that. And I think it's a wonderful thing, and I just hope that some of these children realize what a wonderful thing it is to have a good education.

JT Many of them don't.

AS Uh, huh.

JT Were the boarders at your home Hungarian, too?

AS I don't think that mother had anyone that wasn't Hungarian. Yes, they were all Hungarian.

JT Were they recent immigrants?

AS Some were recent immigrants and some were here before my father, because they were just about in their age bracket. But they were all Hungarian and we had some nice times with them. We had some very happy times.

JT You had them for holidays?

AS Oh, absolutely.

JT They had no other home? Your home was their home?

AS Uh huh, uh huh. Sometimes I don't know how my mother did it. I don't know how, but she did it! Of course, she had help.

JT Did she have a big house?

AS Yes, we had a very big house. I don't think any of the rooms were as small as my living room, they were all big. And we didn't have no running water in the house, outside of a little pump by the sink. But you know our holidays were beautiful compared to today. Christmas was Christmas! And we celebrated for a whole week. And Easter the same thing. Now you come to church and come home and that's it. If I could go back, I would. But you can't.

JT What was your favorite holiday?

AS I think they were both. Because mother always saw to it we had on nice outfits, you know, for Christmas and for Easter we all dressed up for Easter. And we celebrated Easter for three days. We had a custom like, I don't know if you ever heard about it, but Easter Monday the boys would come around with perfume water and sprinkle the girls. On Tuesday the girls would go and catch the boys. And then mother always had hard-boiled eggs and cookies or kalaches to serve them. And our Christmases were really wonderful. We never saw our Christmas tree until Christmas day, although we saw the tree when my dad and brothers went out in the woods and brought it home, but we never saw it decorated until Christmas day. And it was beautiful. Like I say, you have your fond memories of the nice days, like they say, the good old days. And the family got together and it wasn't commercial like it is today.

JT Did some of the boarders spend the day with you, too?

AS Oh, yes, uh huh. And some would take off with their friends, and some had friends here in Cleveland. At that time they had trolleys or streetcars that come from Chagrin Falls so far.

JT It was an interurban, wasn't it?

AS Right.

JT So Christmas and Easter. What other holidays?

AS Those were the big ones, and like Fourth of July. And Palm Sunday, but they weren't quite the same as Christmas and Easter.

JT Did you participate in any music or plays as a child?

AS When I went to school I was in a couple of plays. But I didn't have too much time for that because I had to go home and help my mother. Make noodles, every day. And, I'll never forget. One day I wanted to go play basketball, and I had to make noodles, and my mother was out talking with a neighbor, and I got mad and I took a big wad of noodles and I threw it up to the ceiling. And part of the ceiling come down and I tried to knock it

down with one of those long rolling pins we had. I tried to knock it off with that and part of the ceiling come down. My father, God bless him, he was so good about that. He helped me clean it up. "Make another batch," he says. That way I didn't get a licking. My mother was very, very stern. My father was a very gentle man. He had a temper, and it took an awful lot to get him angry, but my mother, she batted us around. We had to toe the line, believe me, we couldn't do what some of these kids do today.

JT She didn't have time to fool around with you.

AS OH, no, she was strictly business.

JT Did she sew your clothes and things like that?

AS Not too much, our clothes. She made a lot of baby things, when she was pregnant. She made all the diapers and little nightgowns and little kimonos and I had to embroider little squares with the criss-cross little animals in them and she sewed them together. But, no, she didn't have time for sewing. When you stop to think of it. Oh, the garden we had. And we had 500 chickens at one time. We had our own milking cow, we had our own pig. There was a lot of work, believe me. And then when it was time to pick potatoes we'd all--my mother and I, my father and brothers--we'd go and pick potatoes on big farms, and for every ten bushels we picked we got a bushel free. So we had enough potatoes for the winter. When you stop and think about it, people say about the good old days, well, they were. You had to work hard, but your holidays were holidays, your week-ends were week-ends. Like when we lived in the Buckeye neighborhood, we always had this fall festival, where they would have pears and grapes strung up, and they would have the dances, and all the costumes from countries around.

JT Did you have a costume?

AS No, I was just a spectator. I never had a costume, but I used to dance like crazy when I was a kid.

JT Was this folk dancing?

AS Yes, the Hungarian dances.

JT Did you sing Hungarian songs?

AS Oh, absolutely. All kinds.

JT Did you play an instrument?

AS No. I always wanted a piano. Even as old as I am, still every time I see a piano I have that feeling. But no, I never had any kind of instrument. My brother played the ukulele, if you want to call that an instrument. No, we didn't have time for that.

JT What did you do for fun?

AS For fun? We used to go for walks in the woods, in the early spring when the

strawberries, we'd go pick strawberries, and then we'd go pick mushrooms this time of year, and blackberries. We used to have fun different ways. We'd go swimming in the creek. Well, it wasn't a creek really

JT So you quit school at 14 and you worked for your mother. How long did you work at home?

AS Well, until we moved back to Cleveland, and then I went to do housework.

JT What kind of people did you work for?

AS Oh, I worked for Jewish people, Hungarian Jewish people, and I worked for mostly Jewish people.

JT How did it happen that you worked mostly for Jewish people?

AS I guess they were the only ones hiring maids, you know, girls for housework. I had two or three really beautiful people to work for. I'll never forget them: Mrs. Newman and Mrs. Oppenheim. And then I worked for Mrs. Cohen. I only worked for her a week because--I worked 16, 17 hours a day, but I only worked a week for her. I worked for Mrs. Newman about two years, and I worked for Mrs. Oppenheim about the same time, and then I got a job as a waitress.

JT When you worked at housework, did you live in the house?

AS Oh, yes, I lived in. They were wonderful people. I was very lucky. Of course the wages weren't what you'd brag about today.

JT But you got your room and board.

AS Yes, room and board, and they treated me just like I was family.

JT When you got the job as a waitress, where did you live?

AS Well, when I first started I worked downtown at Stoners. I lived at home; we lived on 79th and Woodland. And then I got a job out here on the corner of Saranac and 152nd. And then my mother and my family, they moved out here, to this neighborhood. Then I went to work in a restaurant across from Collingwood High School. It's gone now because they tore the building down. That's where I met my husband 52 years ago.

JT How did you meet him?

AS In the restaurant.

JT He was a customer?

AS Yes, but I didn't like him when he first come in there. Well, you know, this young fellow came in there and he'd watch me in the coffee--the big coffee urn. I thought he was conceited. And my sister-in-law was working there as a waitress at the same time, and I says to her, "Who is that?" I think I called him a jackass. Anyway, she says, "That's my brother." Then he asked me to go to the show with him, and I went to the show with him. That was a couple weeks after I met him, and then we went together. We only knew each other about three months, and our marriage lasted 51 years

and seven months.

JT It lasted until death parted you?

AS Right.

JT That's a wonderful record.

AS Oh, we had a good life together. I had a good life. Of course, he was Slovak.

JT I noticed that your name is not Hungarian.

AS No, he was Slovak. But, like I said, now my mother was Hungarian and Slovak. Her father was Slovak, her mother was Hungarian. My mother and my husband they could talk real good the Slovak language. A few words I would know, but that's all.

JT Did your husband know Hungarian?

AS No, he didn't know Hungarian, he was strictly Slovak. His family came right from Czechoslovakia.

JT His name was Andrew Spodnik? But you always talked in English.

AS Andy and I, yes.

JT Where were you married?

AS Right here in St. Mary's Church on Holmes Avenue.

JT Did you have a Hungarian wedding?

AS Oh, yes. It was nice.

JT Was it a big wedding?

AS Oh, no. I think we had about a hundred people. 1934 was a bad time. The depression was still on when we got married.

JT You were 20 years old?

AS I was 20 years old. And my husband was 29. We were married at St. Mary's Church and it was nice. We had the Hungarian gypsies. They played the music as we went out of the church. Then we came back and had our breakfast at home; we didn't go no fancy place. Then we had the reception, well it was like a converted store. And we had our traditional Hungarian meal. You start out with chicken soup, and chicken, stuffed cabbage, and potatoes and a vegetable and then, oh all kinds of pastries. Mother baked crullers, we call them angel wings, and nut rolls and strudel and a wedding cake that was home made.

JT Did your mother make the cake?

JY No, my mother's friend made that. My mother and father did the cooking for my wedding. Believe me, it was good! And a long time ago.

JT Where did you live after you were married?

AS Well, my daddy and I we got two little furnished rooms on Aspinwall, corner of 149th and Aspinwall. We've been in this neighborhood ever since. And then we found a three-room house, about ten doors up, and we rented there.

JT Did you continue to work after you were married?

AS No. My husband, he worked, and he was funny. He wanted me to stay home. He says when I got married I want my wife to get along on what I make, and I've done it ever since. I did go to work during the wartime.

JT What did your husband do?

AS He was an assembler, when we first got married at Great Lakes Aircraft. And then of course that went bankrupt. He had a chance to go to Bridgeport, but I didn't want to go and leave the family. So he says, "Don't ever complain." And I didn't!

JT How many children did you have?

AS I have two adopted daughters. They were my sister's. My sister died when she was 29 and I didn't have any of my own, so I adopted my two girls, Roberta and Floy. In the meantime I was their godmother, and daddy and I were godparents to them, so we adopted them. Now I have my two daughters and eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

JT When your children were small did you speak Hungarian or English?

AS Just English. Because, see, when I adopted the girls Roberta was 10 and Floy was going on 8; and in the meantime, during wartime, my husband and I wanted to adopt children, but he was always ahead of that draft so they wouldn't give us any children. So, then, when my sister died, we really were real down. And she said, "If anything happens to me," because she had had a very serious operation, "I want you to have the girls." So I did. But they are like my own because they're my sister's. I don't feel like they were adopted. And then I got Terry--Eddie, Terry and Julie--my youngest daughter is the mother of Terry. [Note: Terry, a student in JT's Women's History class at CSU.] Then Roberta had five. She had four girls and one boy. Then I have four great grandchildren, two boys and two girls.

JT So if you were married in 1934 and you adopted the children when they were 8 or 10, you had several years in there when you were a housewife without children? What did you do?

AS I did a lot of crocheting and embroidery and I used to sew little dresses for all my nieces, and I used to read a lot. I tried to go out to work, but the way it worked out daddy was working the day shift and I was working the night shift and I'd get everything ready for him, but he didn't like that too well. I was working up here at Weatherhead at that time. So I stayed home and I haven't been sorry.

JT I see you have many beautiful crocheted things here.

AS Oh, I've got a lot more. I've got a tablecloth that I wouldn't sell for \$200.

JT And you did a lot of sewing for your children?

AS OH, yes, I used to make a lot of their clothes. But after they got in high school, then they more or less wanted the boughten stuff.

JT They wanted what everyone else had.

AS Right. And then , of course, they went to St. Joe's and for the last two years they were wearing the skirts and blouses. But otherwise, I didn't do much sewing for them **after** they got into high school. They had their special middies and skirts. I never learned to sew. I picked it up on my own, just like ~~c~~rocheting. And I made a lot of afghans, and, oh. . . . I'll have to show you some potholders that I make, they look like little dresses. I think I made about 300 last year. Then I give them to the church for the bake sale and gifts for different people.

JT Were you active in the church during those years?

AS Holy Rosary Society, but I wasn't too active. I'm more of a home type. I like to stay home. I didn't like to go galavanting around. I'd go downtown maybe once in every two weeks and meet some friends down there and have lunch and that's about it.

JT Did you like to shop?

AS Well, I'm not a compulsive buyer. If there was something I needed I would go get it, but to go down town and just buy anything you see like some people do, no. I didn't mind going looking around. There's a lot of things that I see-- I have one sister that if she sees something and she likes it she's going to buy it whether she can afford it or not. I'm not that type. But I used to love to go grocery shopping. I don't any more because you mark down one thing and you come home with something else.

JT And you did a lot of cooking, I suppose?

AS Oh yes , a lot of cooking.

JT Did you make your own noodles?

AS Oh, absolutely.

JT Do you still make your own noodles?

AS Yes, I still do, and my home-made bread. Since dad died I've not made bread, but I make noodles and my own pastries and everything else. One Christmas I made over 2,000 cookies.

JT What did you do with 2,000 cookies?

AS Oh, I give them here and I give them there. The kids used to love to--we would stay up to 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to decorate them. This was Christmas time.

JT Do you still make strudel?

AS No, I'm not good at strudel, I have to admit that. Bread and cakes and other

pastries fine, but don't tell me about strudel. I tried it a couple of times, but I just couldn't get that dough to go for me like my mother did. She made all kinds; she made the cheese, and the fried cabbage, and the prune, and pineapple and cottage cheese. Oh, that was so good! I can cook, and I can bake, but I can't do it like my mother did. I always marvel at it because she couldn't read or write and yet she could make such marvelous things.

JT If she couldn't read or write how did she know the recipe?

AS It was all in her head. And she went to work for Jewish people and she could make their gefilte fish and their kreplas and blintzes--well, that I can make. I like that for when the kids were home for Christmas Eve supper. I make 60 and 70 of them and they all go. Mother, she used to make them like crazy. She couldn't read or write, but you know she had more nerve than I would. She'd go any place. Now I would hesitate before I would take a chance to go to the west side on the street car or bus. She would say, "Well, you've got a mouth, you can always ask." She really did.

JT She sounds like a very strong person.

AS Oh, she was, she wasn't afraid of nothing. Now me, my kids are telling me, "Fly, fly, fly!" No. I told the doctor one time, I says, "I'm scared to death of flying." He said, "Well if God had wanted you to fly he would have given you wings." I'm scared to death of a plane. I have yet to go up in one. Now I'm not afraid of a boat or a car or a train. Dad and I went on quite a few trips on the bus and the train. The last time we went was when he retired. His last vacation check was mine, because all the other years he'd go fishing to Canada. I never said nothing because he liked his fishing and he'd go with his buddies. Oh, I could have went I suppose, but what was I going to do there with his buddies? Go with them, I said!! No, I stayed home. But I'm scared to death of a plane.

JT How about an automobile?

AS I'm not afraid of an automobile, or a boat, or the train. Oh, that trip [on the train] was just beautiful. We were thinking of going again, but then he got so sick. For two years he was very sick.

JT Did you ever drive a car?

AS No. He did. But something happened when he was very young and he always said he would never get behind a wheel. He didn't want to hurt anybody. If I'm not mistaken there was six of his buddies going home from a dance, and a car come speeding down and three of the boys jumped aside. Three got killed instantly and dad, I don't think dad ever forgot that. So he never had a car, at least since we were married. I tried to get him to get one, but no way. He would just as soon go on a bus or the streetcar

at that time. And, like I said, we took those trips to California and all the way up to Canada, to Montreal, Quebec, we went by bus and train, but otherwise, no, he would never go on a -- drive a car. But he'd go in a car. But he wouldn't get behind that wheel.

JT So he used to go to Canada fishing. What did you do while he was gone?

AS Well, I'll tell you the truth, what I did, I'd go over and clean my mother's house. Cause mother worked. I'd go there for a week and clean her house and then I'd come home and I'd clean his work bench. But after he retired I didn't touch his work bench. Now I got a big job down there. I just got through cleaning out the garage. He held on to so much junk. It took me three days to clean out the garage. And I still got some to go. Dad and I used to do puzzles, you see, after he retired. We'd sit over there at the card table, he'd sit on one side and I'd sit on the other side and we puzzled. Big puzzles.

JT What kind of puzzles?

AS Picture puzzles. I think I got about four or five hundred boxes in the garage.

JT Jig saw puzzles?

AS Uh huh. Oh, we were good at it too. I got some over there that are brand new in the corner. See?

JT Oh, those are big ones!

AS Oh, I've got one with 25 hundred pieces there. We got it for our 50th anniversary. Our priest gave it to us, and we never got to it, because I don't like my dining room table cluttered. That card table wasn't big enough and dad was going to make a board to fit it, but he never got to it because he got sick.

JT Did you have a big celebration for your golden wedding anniversary?

AS Oh, we sure did. Beautiful. I **didn't** want anything to begin with. But I guess dad knew. He says, "Oh, no. We're going to have a party. We didn't have a very big wedding, we'll have a party." So, we had it up at the parish hall. About 140 people, it was beautiful. The church was beautiful and I got some beautiful pictures of it. And memories. My girls were here, only my granddaughters, Terry and her sister Julie, I see more of Terry than I do of Julie. We got some beautiful things, some things we'll never use, they're still in the boxes. But we had a beautiful 50th anniversary party. There were only two or three from the original bridal party. Four bridesmaids-- and one of the ushers, he died. Our best man, we just lost track of him, he's been moving all around everyplace else. We had a wonderful party.

I think daddy, he was real happy about it. And for him to talk as much as he did, even my daughters were surprised, because he was a very quiet person. We had a nice turnout and it was just beautiful in the church. And our priest was wonderful. I can't explain it but he was more like one of the family than a priest.

JT Had you known him many years?

AS No. We knew him about three or four years. But we have been in St. Joe's parish since we were married; 51 years.

JT He understood that, I'm sure.

AS Oh, yes. Of course the parish has gone down. It is not as big as it used to be, you know. Like all the neighborhoods, the way they change.

JT But it is still operating and some of the churches have been closed.

AS Oh, yes, St. Joe's is still operating.

JT Your daughters both went to the school connected with this church?

AS They both went to St. Joe's and graduated from the eighth grade and then they went to Collingwood High.

JT Did they go on to college from there?

AS No, neither one. My daughter, the oldest daughter, after she was married she went to college out there in Arizona. It's an institute of technology or something like that. And my younger daughter, she only went through the eleventh grade. She met her husband and got married and that's it. She was going on 19 when she married Ed Zahler. She didn't graduate; Roberta did.

JT Did Floy work after she dropped out of school?

AS She got married right away. We wanted her to wait, but no, no. They had a very quiet wedding. My older daughter had a beautiful wedding, but Floy, I guess she wanted to get married and have a family. Well, she did. She's been married three times, my youngest daughter. And she's divorced all three of them.

JT She will never celebrate a golden wedding anniversary.

AS No, I don't think so.

JT But things are quite different now, aren't they?

AS Oh, come on. I'm so glad when I raised those girls. Today children are so aggressive. I think a lot of children try to tell their parents. And if those kids don't get what they want, then they get angry with their parents. And this is not good. And, then, of course you almost have to blame it on some parents because they both work, they don't have the time. See, that's one thing, my husband says when we had the girls. I went out and I did day work, and he said, "No, I want you home when those kids come home from school." You can't let them go on their own. But in a way I'm very glad that I did, because a lot of times they tell me, "Oh, Mom, how different

it was when you were raising us and what the kids are today." Of course today kids are going to college more, a lot of them. But then again some of them go to college and do you think they really learn something?

JT Well, yes, I think so.

AS They learn something, but at the same time they don't learn the basic things of life.

JT There are values that you can't learn in school that you learn from your parents.

AS Yes, that's it. The values. But there's a lot of parents, you know, that come home and they're too tired to take time with them or to do things together. With our parents we were always together. Today the parents are too tired, "Oh, don't bother me," they say, "Go do this, go do that." And I still say children need discipline at the same time you show them love, but at the same time you show that you're the boss. My husband said and I believe too, "As long as you put your feet under my table you go by my rules." When you are on your own then you can't come back at me. He was a quiet man, but he was smart. And the girls, oh, they would never tell anybody that that was not their real father because he was more father to them than their real father was. But I still say if a lot of women would stay home, of course today the work opportunities are so great and it almost takes two really to raise a big family. At the same time, if you want your kids to be good and bring them up right. Did you ever hear of all these young kids, 12, 13, on dope like they are today? Why? Because they're on their own. And parents sometimes say, that kid is not wrong, somebody else is wrong. Well, no, the parent is wrong. This is the way I feel about it.

AS Well, children have more money today. If they didn't have money they couldn't buy the dope.

AS That's why you find a lot of these young kids that are crooks. My God, you're afraid to walk down the street. If you see a young kid coming toward you you'd better hold onto that purse or the kid will grab it from you. For why? I was surprised when I saw on TV not too long ago where some of these very young children are on dope. And where do they get it from? Some of the parents.

JT What happened to your brothers and sisters?

AS I have two sisters left; I'm the oldest and I have a sister Betty and a sister Marge.

JT Did they marry Hungarians?

AS My youngest sister did; she married a Hungarian boy. And my sister Betty, she married a Swede and Finn. One parent was Swedish and the other Finish.

JT Do any of the young people speak Hungarian?

AS My youngest sister had three sons. They could talk it, but not fluently. I can still talk Hungarian, but I have to think what I say because after almost 52 years of talking English all the time. As long as my mother and father were alive we talked Hungarian to each other. We had to, especially with my dad because he couldn't understand all the English words. My mother, like I said, she could talk real good English. And she was self taught. She knew how to talk seven different languages. Today kids go to school and they still can't read and write. And they probably can't even talk as good as she did.

JT Do your daughters cook Hungarian?

AS Oh, yes, oh, absolutely. I still cook Hungarian. Hungarians and Slovaks are very much alike. And I don't think there was a week that I didn't make my husband different kinds of soup, and stuffed cabbages, and chicken paprikash, and what they call goulash, that's with the pork and sauerkraut and sour cream. Oh, yes, they are both very good Hungarian cooks. And our green bean soup. And during Lent, in our house, we never had a piece of meat, except on a Sunday. My mother always improvised different kind of meals. Like we'd baked potato dumplings and fried cabbage and she'd make a soup like what they call egg drop soup. And all kinds of soups she could make without meat. And a lot of people don't stop and think, you don't need all this meat that people eat today, although I like a nice roast. And we still like our chicken. And our dumplings, and our blintzes. We used to fight over the cottage cheese and noddles. She'd have to make a big pot of that. And I used to stand there and make those dumplings. I still make them, whenever I make paprikash my husband would say, "Mama, make a lot of dumplings." He'd rather have the dumplings than the chicken. As far as the girls are concerned, they cook Hungarian. They use a lot of garlic and parsley.

JT Paprika?

JT Not too much. Because sometimes if you use too much paprika it can be bitter. But that's for the color more or less. Mother used to make a saffron soup. When she came to this country she brought a bag of saffron. And then she'd make a soup, not during Lent, she'd brown the meat in onion and then put vegetables in it and water and then she'd drop dumplings in that.

JT I know that your daughter Flory does not work. Does Roberta work?

AS Yes, she is in technology. She and her husband both work. They are both in technology.

JT What kind of technology?

AS He goes to different parts of the country. He sets up these big computers. I got a letter from her and she says they are kind of phasing off part of the company. They laid off 400. And she's in computer technology. I don't understand it, because, like I said, I only went to school two weeks in the eighth grade. I don't know what good it really does for the children to learn by computer. Everything is in front of them, how can they use their brain?

JT Time will tell about computers.

AS I suppose. Just like my husband, now he went to school and he worked with a man that went through college and when they come down to the math and figure things out, the man that went to college he had a page full and my husband could figure it out in a short way. And he says to my husband, "How did you learn that?" And he says, "Well, by using my brain." So sometimes you wonder.

JT Does Roberta have children?

AS Yes, she has five. Four girls and a boy. The oldest girl will be 25 in November. Scotty will be 22, Sharon was 21, and then there's Connie and she's 18. and then Micky is 14.

JT Does the 25-year-old cook Hungarian?

AS Oh, absolutely. I had to send her a recipe for my green-bean soup. And then mother used to make a marrow bean soup with smoked spare ribs, I had to send her that recipe. They all like the Hungarian food. When we were kids, my father he used to butcher our own pig and they'd make the Hungarian blood sausage. And then make our own kielbasi, and he smoked our own ham and our own bacon. We all had that good stuff. And we'd render our own lard. I gave the 20-gallon crock to my nephew. Mother, when she rendered the lard, it was just like snow. She did it slow, because, what the heck, we had coal stove. I still like the coal stove. Oh, you should see the loaves of bread she used to make. We could hardly wait to get that first cut off the crust. Of course, in Europe they had these outside ovens, like you see the Indians have. My father made one like that for her out in Chagrin Falls. She'd heat that up, shove the coals aside, put the bread in there and the whole neighborhood would smell it was so good.

JT Did Roberta's children go to college?

AS Sharon went to college. Judy graduated. And Connie went on a scholarship. I don't know about little Micky. Scott quit when he was in the 12th grade. And then he signed up for the army. But then when he was a kid he had a heart defect, so he is in the reserve. And my granddaughter Terry is going to Cleveland State. This is her last year. She is a hard-working kid.

JT Yes, she is. She is a very nice girl. And I know she also works at

Walden Bookstore.

JT She was here two weeks ago, she came and stayed over night with me.

AS Oh, that's nice. Does she cook Hungarian?

AS I think she does. Then at Grandma Zahler's, she's Slovenian, and she cooks a heck of a lot like the Hungarian people do. But there is a little difference. Terry can cook and she can cook Hungarian. When she was here I made the green bean soup, you make it with the buttermilk and the sour cream and a bay leaf. You should see her eat. She ate two bowls. And when I asked her if she wanted anything else, she said, "Oh, Grandma, I'm full." When my grandchildren came from Arizona I had to cook that and I made stuffed cabbage for them and everything Hungarian and they just loved it. My daughter cooks Hungarian, but Sharon and Connie do most of the cooking because she works. Oh, yes, they still like their Hungarian cooking, and like Christmas Eve when I make mushroom soup and blintzes and then we make like bread sticks and you cut them up in small chunks and you pour honey over that and poppy seed, well, that's traditional at New Years. Or Christmas Eve.

JT Anyone interested in Hungarian music?

AS They love the Hungarian records I have. But as far as playing instruments, no. My granddaughter, Connie, was interested in the piano. Now how far she went with that I can't tell you. My granddaughter, Julie, I taught her how to crochet and she is now working as a therapist. Sharon likes to fuss around with cooking. Connie and Micky, I can't say, I don't know what they are really interested in.

JT Do you read any Hungarian papers?

AS Oh, I can't read Hungarian. I couldn't read and write in Hungarian, no way. I could figure it out because mother used to get mail from Europe. And I could read it for her. I spelled and pronounced it for her and then she would understand what it was. Her older sister, now, she went to school so she could read. And she'd come over and read the letters, whatever she got from Europe. They corresponded for years. They are both gone now, and I don't know if my one aunt is still living or not. She was the younger one.

JT Did you help to take care of your mother when she became old?

AS Oh, yes, she lived with me for three years and she died here. Oh, yes, I took care of my mother. My father died in '62 and my mother will be gone 20 years this October.

JT Are you interested in politics.

AS Not me. Not really. My husband could understand it because he had an older brother who was very much in politics. In Pennsylvania.

JT Was this an ethnic neighborhood when you moved here?

AS Ok, it was all white.

JT Were there a lot of Hungarians?

AS Hungarians, Slovaks, Italians, Irish. There was Irish over there and Hungarians here, and Slovaks there, and then German on the other side. And Slovenians.

JT There are not very many white folks left now?

AS On this street, about nine families. But they're nice. No way can I complain because they are very nice. Kids are rambuncious, but after all, they have no place to play. So you've got to listen to a little bit of noise. But when I go to bed I take my hearing aid off, I don't hear nothing. All in all the neighbors are nice, I can't complain about them. But then you can't tell when somebody will come in from outside the neighborhood and act up.

JT Do you listen to the Hungarian radio programs?

AS Oh, I listen to them all the time. Every Sunday. Oh, yes, I'm still interested. And I can still sing a few lines in some Hungarian songs. But some you forget. But Daddy and I, yes, we danced our charandashes and our polkas.

JT Did you ever talk about going back to Europe to visit your homeland?

AS My parents, yes, they wanted to go back, but they never had the chance to. But things have changed so much over there, too. Now my father, his oldest brother went back and he wrote , "Oh, stay where you are, it's about the same here." My mother and father talked very much about going back, but they never had the chance to. Don't forget that when they came here, they came with nothing. They raised a big family, they had their home, and it just seemed like they didn't have the money, they went through the depression and they made ends meet. And that's one thing about my father and mother, they never owed nobody a dime. In fact, my mother and my father they fed a heck of a lot of people, people would be hungry my father and my mother never refused nobody. A lot of times I say if there is a heaven there is a place for my father and mother.

JT I'm sure there is.

AS They never refused nobody. If they were hungry they fed them. And, in fact, we had a boarder who died. He didn't have no insurance, my father and mother buried him. God looks for the good you do, not the bad, and if people would just stop and think and do those things I think it would be a better world for all of us. A lot of these people say, "Oh they're foreigners." No, my father and my mother might have come from Hungary, but let me tell you they didn't let nobody go hungry either. I remember when we lived in

Chagrin Falls we were maybe a block away from the railroad, and we used to have a lot of those hobos. Some would offer to work and ask for a piece of bread and my mother would give it to them. My mother was funny, "Ask me for food," she'd say, "and I'll give it to you, but don't ask me for money." And there was quite a few that came there and they fed them. Some of them were good, they wanted to work for it. My mother had a big garden and animals around. We took care of our own and I believe in that. Feed the hungry and clothe the naked if you believe in God, and this is the way people should be. Right?

Jt I agree with you, but there are a lot of selfish people these days.

AS The trouble with a lot of people today, too, is they look down on you if they have more than you.

JT Hasn't that always been true?

AS Well, yes, but what this world needs right now is a good depression. People would come together again like they did years ago. Everybody was a friend, because everybody was in the same boat. Today is not the same. My mother and my father believed if you have something you share it. They also said don't look up to somebody who's got more than you, but don't look down on anybody that has less than you.

JT Those are good lessons.

AS And my mother always said, "Don't make fun of anybody, if you see anybody crippled or down--because you don't know what's ahead for you." I go along with my parents and it doesn't take an awful lot of education to know right from wrong and to do right.

JT Those are very good values and, as you say, they are values that come from the home.

AS That's true. There are a lot of smart and very well educated people, the ones who are really well educated will not use that against somebody that isn't. Not all of us have the same opportunity. A lot of times I feel bad about not being able to go to school or graduate, but it was something that I couldn't help.

JT But you say you have read a lot.

AS Oh, yes, I learned a lot by reading. I try to make good use of it too.

JT What kind of books do you like?

AS I like adventure stories, and I loved history and geography. I was very good in history and geography in school. I like a good romantic story once in a while. And then I like to read different things that go on in this world.

JT I see you read the newspaper.

AS Now the Plain Dealer I don't like. I never did like it, but I get it every

Wednesday and on Sunday.

JT Why do you get it on Wednesday and Sunday?

AS For the shopping news. I never liked the Plain Dealer. But the Press; I'd get the Press and I'd read it from front to back. We missed that. I guess the Plain Dealer is all right, but I never got into the habit of reading a paper in the morning. Because if I don't get my work done in the morning I don't get it done.

JT Do you like to watch television?

AS Yes, there are certain programs. I don't watch a lot of these programs. I don't watch soap operas during the daytime and I don't watch Dallas and I don't watch Dynasty or Falcon Crest, because to me -- I don't believe any family, brothers and sisters, could hate each other that much. And that J.R. I watched that show until I got to the point of calling him dirty names. And daddy would say to me, "come on, it's Friday night, start swearing." I thought to myself it's not worth it because there's no human being, I don't believe, could do what he does, go to bed with every

JT Not really. They're not realistic.

AS But these young kids watch this and that's where they get their ideas from.

JT Yes, they do watch the soap operas.

AS And it's greediness in a whole family instead of a family sharing. And that Falcon Crest is nothing but all greediness. I believe this way: if you see that your sister or your brother is trying to make a go of it and they are having a hard time, you try to help them, but these people will kill each other for that lousey, darned money. And they make sex a dirty thing. Like my mother said, "God had a reason for sex. It's supposed to be a beautiful thing between husband and wife, but when it goes beyond that it's filth, it's dirt." You look at so many of these young kids today-- Why are there so many pregnancies? They don't do it because they love that other person, they just do it to say I did it.

JT I think television is partially responsible because our young people are exposed to immoralities all the time.

AS And they think nothing of showing it. And some of the good shows they take off. The Waltons, I like that show, and The Little House on the Prairie, and I watch Highway to Heaven.

JT I've come to the end of my questions. We thank you very much for your interview.

AS You're very welcome.