Interview with Frank Plautz

Calumet, Michigan

November 22, 1982

Interview by Myrna J. Boutin

MB: This is interview with Mr. Frank Plautz of Calumet Michigan, the date is November 22, 1982. Okay, can you tell me when you were born?

FP: Maybe I'll give a little introduction

MB: Okay fine.

FP: I am not a Slovenian woman, so you may be wondering what I am doing with this interview. My mother was a Slovenian I did live with here for the last 36 years of her life, and the first 35 years of my life, and as a result I probably know a little bit about Slovenian women because most of her friends are Slovenian women, and after all I wanted to pick things up. So I guess as a matter of desperation I am being a substitution to the Slovenian woman that was really ____.

MB: A very willing substitute

FP: So I will answer the questions as though they were being asked to my mother were she alive and to the best of my ability I will answer them.

MB: Can you tell me when you were born?

FP: Okay, now I will do the third person. She was born 1881.

MB: And where was she born?

FP: She was born, somewhere in the province of Slovenia, Yugoslavia, somewhere in the general area of the… Levania [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] somewhere not too far from levania [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], it might be a little town called Shunoma [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], I don't know, I think it's somewhere in that general area.

MB: Okay, what were their names?

FP: Me or her?

MB: Her parents' names.

FP: Her father's name was George Strussel [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], and her mother's name was Barbara Strussel [SPELLED PHONETICALLY].

MB: Okay and your parents' names?

FP: My parents of course my mother married someone called Joseph Plautz, so she would be Mrs. Joseph Plautz, Mary Pope [SPELLED PHONETICALLY].

MB: And at what age where your parents married?

FP: Well my mother would have been approximately, well now do you want me to speak as if I was speaking for my,

MB: Your mother.

FP: Okay now as far as when her parents were married I don't know exactly, it might simplify maybe if I gave you just a little background profile of the situation and I may just automatically answer some of the questions that are coming up.

MB: Okay.

FP: Her parents, had just gotten married and had been married a few months when her father, that would be George Strussel, came to America, and left the wife behind, and she remained with his family with his mother, that would be her mother in law, and George Strussel then came to America to seek his fortune like many of the people at that particular time, that would have been around 1880, they thought of America as a place where the streets were paved with gold and ____ and so on and there was a great deal of immigration at that particular time. He was a woodworker, a lumber Jack I guess you could call it, and apparently he must have had some sort of ____ and he went to an area called Manistique in Upper Michigan, around the Manistique area, and he worked there, and he worked and saved enough money to send for his wife, at any time she, by the time he had left she was pregnant, so my mother was actually born in Yugoslavia I think somewhere near the border between the border the province of Slovenia and Croatia and well she was approximately, less than two years old, just starting to walk, just

starting to get around a little toddler when she and her mother then received the fare, their passage, and then came to America. And the father, George Strussel [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] met them at Ellis Island and brought them to Manistique, and okay I'll stop there.

MB: Okay the next one, did your mother have any brothers or sisters or was she the only child that came to this country?

FP: Okay well she was the first born, and the only one born in Yugoslavia. After they got here and moved to Manistique area, as the Old Catholic tradition was there was the ever two years and she had quite a few brothers and sisters I couldn't tell you an exact number, but I would say approximately, they were approximately a family of maybe 7 or 8 children.

MB: Do you know when they came to copper country?

FP: Sometime I would say when my mother was probably 12 or 13 years old, something like that. They moved to the copper country and of course the reason for moving to the copper country was because there was a rather well established Slovenian community or little ethnic group in the copper country which many of our friends were here, so ethnic.

MB: Okay you yourself in this part, do you have any brothers and sisters?

FP: Oh yes. Do I have any brothers and sisters? [Laughter]

MB: Maybe we should back up first, did your mother meet your father in the copper country then?

FP: Yes, in fact I think my father's family were my mother's landlords. They owned the place where my mother lived when they moved to this area and their whole courtship involved, I probably could sum that up rather quickly. My mother only able to go through about the 5th grade, she loved school and in fact she loved education or learning, whatever you want to call it, all of her life. And I think it was one of the real heartbreaks when she realized when she was about in the 5th grade she had to leave school because there had to be, in those days, only the wealthy people could afford to let their children continue to go to school and she had to go to work, she was probably only 12 or 13 years old when she had to get out for work. And of course the type of work that girls had in those day would be considered house work. She would become

something similar to that of a maid except in many cases the families that they worked for were not that well to do in their particular thing, they just thought of them as helpers.

MB: So then your mom was a helper for…

FP: She worked in several places, again I can't give you any specific details but I remember some of the stories of some of the places that she worked and the people that she worked for. She worked as a house maid and worked from about the time that she was 13 to about 16 or 16 and a half and she was married to my father when she was only about 16 and a half which again was not unusual in those days because you find that your Europeans your Italians your Slavs and so on tend to mature rather early and in those days a girl of 16 or 17 was definitely ready for marriage. So she married my father when she was about 16 and a half, and I had another interesting part of her life, that would be Joseph Plautz, my father's father, was a widower, left three little children, besides my dad, one of the little children was less than a year old, his wife had died in childbirth form when that child was born, so my mother started out her marriage, imagine being a 16 and a half year old girl starting out her marriage with 3 little children to take care of.

MB: Now was your father Slovenian also?

FP: Oh yeah, full time. So I said she started out with 3 children, within a year she had her own birth child, that would be my oldest brother who was born in about 1899, just before the turn of the century. And then from that point on she proceeded to have a child every two years that was the tradition, having a grand total of 15. I was fifteen in line.

MB: You were the last one.

FP: I was born when she was 44. As the Old Catholic tradition was in those days even a rhythm method of birth control was indecent and improper and being very staunch Catholics they followed the pattern. So every two years for thirty years, can you imagine thirty years of diapers?

MB: No.

FP: This is before the washing machine this is before the electric iron etc.

MB: So by the time you were born…

FP: She had fifteen children of her own, she raised my father's three brothers and sisters and then after me she took in one more. My cousin, this was during the heart of the depression, and his boat separated and his mother was working and my mother took my cousin Walter when he was about 9 months old and raised him. So she really raised 19 children.

MB: She must have been awfully tired. Now did your dad work in the mines in the area?

FP: No my dad, he might have when he was very young in one of the periods of his life he worked as drill boy and very early in life he gave up mine work and never did go back into the mine. He was a bartender for many many many years in those days being a bartender was almost a profession. The mines were booming and they were working 3 shifts, there was a very prominent local saloon right on the corner of 5th and pine street run by some Jewish people called blum [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], it was known as blum[SPELLED PHONETICALLY] saloon and my dad was there bartender for 20 years or more and in later years he was a night watchman and a village policeman… probably early 60's for all intentional purposes pretty well. He died when he was only 64 I believe.

MB: How old was your mom then when she died?

FP: My mother lasted until she was, let's see I have the exact date here, until she was I believe 78.

MB: She must have had a lot of grandchildren.

FP: Oh yeah there were many generations. It was an unusual family in that when I was born she was 44, but some of her older children were already married so the minute I was born I was already uncle to something like 7 or 8 people.

MB: Oh my goodness.

FP: So I have several nieces and nephews that are older than I am. She died on February the 20th, 1960.

MB: One of the question is, you were born at home, did the doctor or midwife attend your mom?

FP: Oh that again is very interesting. My mother had a doctor for her first child, that would be my oldest brother, and of course that would have been about 1899, somewhere just before the

turn of the century either ’98 or ’99. She had a doctor for her first child and that was it. From that point on it was too much of an expense, so for all the other 14 she either had them alone, with a friend a friend helped, or with a midwife. A rather interesting little sideline, years later I found out that the women who was the midwife when I was born was also the local abortionist.

MB: I did realize they had those!

FP: Oh yes! In fact when I confronted my mother with the information she chuckled and said how did you find that out? And I explained how I found it out, and I said well-being a good catholic did you know she was an abortionist? And my mother said well of course everybody knew that. And I said well why did you have an abortionist? And she said well she had a sick husband and she had to earn a living so if she didn’t do it somebody else would have, apparently I don’t think people don’t realize that many of the old timers were much more tolerant and practical, pragmatic is a good word for it, than we realized. They took things in stride.

MB: Well I didn’t realize that they had an abortionist at that time, being catholic, having one child after another…

FP: Well of course the Catholics, they would have never had an abortion. I mean they, this was a multi ethnic community and there were many other people in the area who were, and there were sometimes unusual situations in which I guess abortions were, let’s put it this way they weren’t very common, but if a young girl got into trouble in those days, a very illegitimate trial was such a unheard of thing I would imagine and abortionist…

MB: Oh my goodness. Okay. How much did you help around the house or the yard, you know being young,

FP: Are you talking about my mother or?

MB: You yourself now, you yourself now.

FP: I am myself. Well, being the youngest I naturally inherited all the jobs. In a large family jobs are passed on, you reach a certain plateau and then you acquire a different job. But being the last one I eventually had them all and of course my mother being 44 when I was born and by the time I was high school age she was getting up there in years and having had all those children and she was very heavy, this was her picture, so I ended up with all the chores. I washed clothes…

MB: Oh that's a beautiful picture.

FP: Oh she was a very attractive women, one of the advantages of being fat I guess is that she...

MB: She doesn't look… now how old was she in this picture?

FP: Now when that picture was taken she would have been around, oh I would say, probably around 60 to 55.

MB: And she has no wrinkles!

FP: Nope in fact I'll show you another one that was taken later, it was taken much later,

MB: Not at all! She is a beautiful woman.

FP: This was taken a year or two before she died. And if you can compare them,

MB: She has changed very very little! Hasn't changed at all!

FP: There was probably twenty years between those two pictures.

MB: And she was mother of the year?

FP: Yeah she was the elk's first mother of the year.

MB: I bet she was very proud.

FP: Oh yes, it was a very nice gesture. I want to say that was about 1958, a year or two before she died.

MB: Oh that's really nice. Now did your parents live right in Calumet?

FP: We have lived in eh same house, in fact our family has lived in this house since the mid 1890's. Every one of my brothers and sisters were born in this house, not only, both parents died in right in the house but both sets of grandparents. So the house is saturated with…

MB: Did you grandparents live in the house first then?

FP: Yes, it's an interesting old house, it's got twelve rooms and at one time, you can see where it was built. It was built partly as income property because in those days, people weren't used to a lot of pay, so actually there was four separate families living in here at one time. So there would be these three rooms would have been one separate household and those three would have been a

second one, and then there were two families upstairs. Each one had three rooms, each one had a little section of the basement and the attic was kind of a general, each one had a little section of the attic but the bulk of the attic was the place where they hung the clothes in the winter time to dry.

MB: So your mom had all 15 children in this house?

FP: Yes and not only that but the amazing part was upstairs,

MB: You lived upstairs?

FP: Right, in fact after I was born that my mother and father moved into the downstairs and had the entire house, but up until, from the time they were married until about 1898 1899 just before the turn of the century until 1925 they only had a section of the upstairs. All of the children were born up there and all, if you would see it you wouldn't believe it because you would wonder how…

MB: How did they ever fit?

FP: How could they fit? It's been a mystery to me to this very day while my older brothers and sisters visit I say come on mom just show me where everybody, we've never been able to quite figure it out. Of course by the time that I was born some of the older ones had already moved away and were already married and had families of their own. So there were never 15 children actually living.

MB: But a good number of them.

FP: Right if fact my oldest sister I didn't see until she came home from my father's funeral when I was about 15 years old, I didn't see her that was the first time. But it is rather amazing that there was always the same closeness with all of the older brothers and sisters even though we didn't grow up together as you would have in many families. We always felt like brothers and sisters we knew about each other of course.

MB: There couldn't have been very much privacy I mean your parents couldn't have been,

FP: No very little,

MB: No privacy at all. Did everybody sleep in one big room there?

FP: No I think they had their own bedroom, my parents had their own bedroom, and in their bedroom of course would have been the crib and the buggy. So the two smallest, the most recent babies would be in with some. In other words the very new baby would be in the buggy, and the one that would be the toddler would have been two or three years old would have been in the crib. All the others were [laughter]…

MB: Did they have bunkbeds in those days?

FP: Pardon?

MB: Did they have bunkbeds?

FP: No… I guess the smaller kids would sleep across this way, well like parallel parking. There would be three or four of them.

MB: Did you have a kitchen then? Was one room a kitchen?

FP: Oh certainly and not only was it the kitchen but the clothes had to be washed in that room. There was, the clothes would be washed in large tin tubs.

MB: All by hand no washing machine…

FP: Oh god no. The first washing machine that my mother had was after they moved downstairs after I was born, maybe 3 or 4 or 5 years old one of my older sisters managed to get her a washing machine. And they were down in the tubs with the old scrubbing board, and the water had to be heated in the copper boiler,

MB: A wood burning stove,

FP: Uh huh, a wood burning stove. Right then the irons where the old flat iron which had to be heated on the stove and then,

MB: Well she must have had to wash every single day…

FP: Yes, one of the main, that was another thing that I was fascinated was trying to figure out how they managed to manipulate things and from the best I could figure out was that they didn't have that many clothes. Most people in those days don't have clothes like the way they have them now. They had, well two or three things and that was it, so every night after the children would go to bed the clothes would have to be washed for the next day and the would have to be

hung up to dry inside, in the attic. The attic had clotheslines. And things would have to be done that way. Also I guess, they lived in what I would consider a complete lack of order in that there were clothes hanging all over the place, because we have, the house is a draw room it doesn't have single closet, there is not a closet in anywhere in the house. So in most bedrooms we had what is known as a wardrobe, in fact you can see the one in here.

MB: Oh ok! [Far away talking, voices in a different room]

FP: If that is where we are headed why don't you shut of the tape a moment and I'll show you some of the other things.

[Tape continues after a short pause]

MB: After a very interesting tour, we are now back again. I might add, in fact that is beautiful! If he ever wanted to sell it he would know where to go! Okay the next question is what were some of the home medical remedies of the day?

FP: Okay well first let me, being a big mouth, let me kind of elaborate on this sort of thing,

MB: Oh that's fine!

FP: Doctors were for rich people, and the poor people just had to get along without them. So what a person did in those days, maybe as a wedding present, or shortly after they were married they bought what was known as a doctor book. If I were to dig around the attic I could probably find my mother's doctor book. And it was like a regular, encyclopedia of aliments and all the treatments, and they followed the doctor book for any of the things that most people today would send their children to the doctor for. And of course if you had a boil or something like that you did get a poultice I remember having poultices put on me. Now I can't really remember all the ingredients except for that I do remember ____ soap was one of them.

MB: So what was the poultice was it a rag?

FP: Well it would be a cloth with something inside that was put on the area in order to as they call it to draw out the poison.

MB: ____ soap was,

FP: I remember _____ group up __- seed as being some of the ingredients in some of the poultices. Now the Slovenians were traditionally great for herbs and many of our remedies were herbal remedies. For instance there was something called pelin [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] which that was the Slovenian name for it, I couldn't give you the English equivalence but I know it was used for stomach aches and that sort of thing, sort of a, carrot top herb that would be dried in the attic and would be made into a tea. And another common remedy for stomach weakness or stomach disorder was called kimilca and in Slovenian, and kimilca is nothing more than chamomile. So if you, I found out later to the astonishment that the Italians also have a word for it very similar to the word chamomile for their remedy and you can buy it anywhere, in gormet shops, chamomile tea.

MB: Oh I've heard of that.

FP: And another simple remedy was machgamezela [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] which is nothing other than catnip. Actually cat nip was used for, I can't remember what it was used for but I think it was also made into a tea. But there was always some of that drying up in the attic and used as a medicine. Then there was penocia [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] the Slovenian penocia [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was a wine known as budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] and budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] is made from the blossom of the elderberry bush and it is made very similarly to dandelion wine, in other words you make it the same way as dandelion wine is made except that you use the blossom of the elderberry bush rather than the head of the dandelion. And later on if we talk about wine making the process itself is identical. Budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was the penocia [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], it was used for everything from impotent to _____ you name it. Definitely it was considered an aphrodisiac, it was also considered something to put you to sleep it just had absolutely every possibility, I still make budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], once I think I found, I have several friends who have developed a taste for the budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] they don't want anything else considering that the best of all those wines. Then of course there were always traditional other types of wines, there was the blackberry which was used for dysentery and that sort of thing. And let's see, raspberry juice for some particular reason seemed to be a remedy for something, again I can't remember exactly what it was used for but in those days the poorer people dint make what we call jam, they made

something called preserves. They were much more watery than what jam would be and of course had much less sugar in it, because sugar was expensive so you didn't have raspberry jams you had raspberry preserves, strawberry preserves, and they were a little more watery and they would be served in a little dessert dish. Well I got to think a minute…

MB: You mentioned about the herbs, did your mother grow her own herbs, did she have a garden?

FP: Oh yeah! The Slovenian, the Yugoslavs are the southern Slavs and of course they are the first cousins to the Russians who are the northern Slavs, Yugoslavs in general, the old days you scratch a Slav and you find a peasant, they are all farmers. Even if they lived in the city all their life, I can remember when my poor old mother, in her later years, struggling to go out and work in that garden and my practically begging her not to, I was quite young at the time and I think my main reason was that I was ashamed for the neighbors to see her out there because they would think that I should know better than to let her in feeble condition out working in the garden.

MB: But I am sure that is something she wanted to do.

FP: I would ask her, finally one day I said gee mom you have to do this. And she said yep I have to do it. I just have to. I remember them finally understanding that it was something that she had to do. So I let her go and I vowed that after she was gone I would never again have a garden, I wouldn't have anything to do with a garden because I always hated it.

MB: Do you have one now?

FP: I certainly don't and I never intend to.

MB: Do you remember some of the things that she grew in this garden?

FP: Yes, rhubarb was always a part of it. Rhubarb was the string tonic and it was the dessert of the poor people. And I remember resenting rhubarb because the other kids that I played with had ice cream for dessert we had rhubarb. And pretty thinly treated rhubarb, I remember thinking that I never wanted to see rhubarb again and of course as I grew older I did also commend a taste for it and now it is one of my favorite foods. I would rather have a dish of lightly tart rhubarb than the most elegant pettifor or any other type of elaborate dessert.

MB: Did your mom put up a lot of the vegetables then?

FP: Yes and no. The fall procedure when I was a little kid as I remember we would have, this was the time where we would have maybe 12 or 13 people sitting around the table and one of our, the fall was always a very very busy time. You would get in your supply of potatoes, you had a big wooden bin in the basement. We had a dirt floor basement, we still have. And the temperature would be relatively constant, so it was really like a root cellar in way. You had these large wooden bins that would hold, oh approximately 30 to 40 bushels of potatoes and you had another apple bin that would probably hold 15 to 20 bushels of apples, and then every fall we made sauerkraut you would get and equivalent of about 100 pounds, but I can remember the day that sauerkraut was made I still have the mechanism, a very large cutting device called a ____, something like that. And so hard it tipped over a large tin washtub and it had a little wooden bobbin that slides on it and you would corner the cabbages so it cores it, so maybe three or four cabbages that have been cored and you would push the box back and forth across these cutters and it would shred the cabbage into the large washtubs. And then we would fold it down and packed into barrels, we always had barrels in the basement, and in between layers of sauerkraut you would have what we call the sauer head, the entire head, quarter head would be placed in the, oh six inches of sauerkraut and the whole layer, and more cabbage packed around it and then another layer of head would form. And these heads were used for one of the better known Slovenian ethnic foods which is Slovenian, we refer to it as senalazalow [SPELLED PHONETICALLY], which literally means filled with cabbages or cabbage rolls. Cabbage rolls made from the leaves of the Saur heads are much much tastier than the ones made from sweet cabbages. I still make senalazalow [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] today but I use the sweet cabbage but I pack the sauerkraut around it to get some of the flavor but the sauer heads where, it was an ethnic delicacy. We would have maybe two barrels of sauerkraut. Then after the cabbages were folded down, we put a large plate over it and then a big rock. And periodically as the sauerkraut was fermenting and processing itself, the juice would come to the top and periodically they would have to go down there and clear out the top so it wouldn't mold. It was quite an interesting process… and Christmastime or so the sauerkraut would be ready and of course you would have it all winter. And of course carrots and turnips and so on would be put in ban and they would keep well into the winter. And we'd have dried garlic, and…

MB: Were the children then expected to go out into the garden and weed it?

FP: Oh yes, one of the reasons why I hated gardens was because lots of times I wanted to play I had to either go out, and we didn't have a hose and watering system the way they have today, you have to carry the water out in buckets and then you use the watering pail that the shower head like arrangement on it, and hauling water for the garden and weeding and so on were things we had to do first… Also it was like the wood situation, we had a wood burning stove of course and chopping and piling the wood and storing in the basement and piling it in the basement and carrying out the ashes and so on were things that… you had to do them, of course you bitterly resented it. In fact, even now that we don't have to do them anymore I find that I have a camp with a stove and a sauna and neighbors would follow and then making wood with four or five inches of snow and loving every second of it, because I don't have to do it.

MB: When you were little then, did you go out into the woods and chop the trees or did someone…

FP: No you usually buy the wood, by the time, what they did earlier I don't know, but by the time I was a kid growing up which would have been in the 1930's heart of the depression, we would have the wood delivered and loads of flats, hardwood flats. I remember price was usually around 5 dollars a load, talk about 5 buck to get an entire truckload of flat and it would take maybe 3 or 4 of those loads, you'd save it through the winter. And of course you also had coal and coal was delivered to the house and long iron chutes that would go from the truck into the basement and I can remember the excitement of watching the coal be shoveled into the chute and going into the coal room…

MB: You mentioned wine and your parents making wine, could you talk about that? What kinds of wine and how they made it?

FP: The Slovenians had a very, I think very sensible attitude towards alcohol in general. As my mother used to say, it's like fire, if you control it properly it warms the house but if you let it get out of control it burns the house down. Therefore if you have little children you are not given the idea that alcohol was something mysterious and something for adults only, it was a natural part of life and it was always to be used properly and in moderation and a part of the ethnic tradition was to make your own wine. Now in our, in my day of course I have carried on the tradition but I tend to feel that the only wines that I want to make are wines that things that are different. In other words they have to be made from things that grow locally in the woods. So in the spring I

make, budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] made from the blossoms of the elderberry bush and dandelion and then in the fall I'll make choke cherry and wild blackberry and I have tried, I have experimented with different things I've made, a little rhubarb, and I've made ____ which is fascinating, and strawberry, went to a strawberry farm and picked a few strawberries and is one. The process is relatively simple we used the old peasant method, no fancy paraphernalia or elaborate equipment, would you like me to go into the whole recipe?

MB: Yes please.

FP: Okay let's start with the blossom wine, whether it be elderberry or dandelion blossom. The process is relatively simple. You pick the heads of the dandelion, try to keep as little green as possible on them where you only have the blossom head, the golden part, and you have to catch it when it is loaded with pollen, you get the best color and get the best result if you shut the tape off am going to go get you a sample.

MB: The blackberry wine is delicious.

[Short pause in tape]

MB: The dandelion wine is also delicious.

FP: Okay now you got to play it back so I can see where I left off.

MB: Okay.

[Short pause in tape]

FP: Okay so you pick the blossoms via either dandelion or the budick [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] the blossom of the elderberry bush you have to be very careful. If you get the blossom at just the prime time when these blossoms are loaded with pollen and very easy to find, at that time taking the blossom and hitting it into your hand there are a few yellow spots you can see that the blossoms are ready, also the blossoms on the tree, they do not always reach their peak at the same time, there is something like ____ picking his coffee seeds, from any one tree you will only get a certain percentage of blossoms that are at their peak. You eventually train your eyes though you know. So you pick these blossoms and again with the elderberry blossom you strip the blossom and [TAPE CUT SHORT]

[END SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

FP: Okay as I said you pick the blossoms the same way that you would just run your hand, run the lilac between a couple of fingers and get a handful of little lilac blossoms, then you bring your blossoms home and cook them in a large urban word crock. Every time we in those days we have to carry the crock, 5 gallon crock, 10 gallon crock and so on. And you put the blossoms in the crock and then you cover them with boiling hot water and if you wanted a recipe or proportions you would use about two to one. In other words for every measure of blossoms that you have a double measure of water, you would use a pan, a quart size pan or a two quart sized pan for every quart sized pan of packed down blossoms you would use two of the same pans of boiling hot water. You cover it with the boiling hot water and just cover it with cloth, with any kind of heavy cover on it. And let it sit overnight, and then the next day when the mixture is cooled down you wash your hands thoroughly and then you just get in there and dig. I mean you dig out the blossoms and squish them together into a ball, get all the juice out of them and you toss them aside or put them aside, and get all the blossoms out and then you strain that juice, let it settle for a couple of hours so that the heavy material goes to the bottom, strain it out and then back into the kettle, put it on the stove, bring it to a simmer and add your sugar. And the [CUT SHORT BY PHONE RINGING]

FP: And the proportions of the sugar would be 2 pounds to the gallon if you want a relatively dry wine, and up to about 2 and a half pounds if you want a relatively sweet wine. Through trial and error you get to know exactly what proportion you like best. So you let that cool another 24 hours and then the following day you slice on top of the crock, you never fill the crock all the way up there has to be some room for the later expansion when the fermentation is taking place, never fill the crock more than three quarters. On top of the crock you slice two oranges and one lemon per gallon, gives it the extra flavor that you taste. Then you stir it every day and then in about three days it will start fermenting, I do not use any yeast in mine, some people use yeast, I find that if you use yeast it ____ whereas if you allow it to ferment naturally there is enough bacteria in the air anywhere so that within about three days it starts fermenting and you stir it every day. Make sure that no mold will form on top of the oranges and lemons. Then you stir it every day and when it starts to ferment it usually takes about, the blossoms are usually picked

generally around Flag Day or early spring the blossoms come out, and it's about the fourth of July as a rule before the fermentation is complete. You can always tell because when you stir it you don't hear the action anymore you don't see any action of it fermenting. The blossoms, or the orange and lemon slices are removed after about two weeks because if you don't remove them they tend to get really soggy and they start to deteriorate. So after about two weeks when you see that they start to get soggy and maybe you can pull them out. That's about it, when the fermentation is over, you I siphon it into gallon jugs and I put the jugs aside for about a year and watch it. At first I of course, tighten the caps of the jugs and every couple days I will go down and loosen the caps to make sure there is not still fermentation taking place because if your jug is too full and your cap is air tight you could have an explosion. Usually trial and error you get to know when fermentation is completed. The whole secret I think is with the wine is temperature. You need a relatively warm while it is fermenting the kitchen or the shed, but once the fermentation is finished you need a relatively cool spot and I think my modest success is the fact that I do have a cool basement, therefore the cellar temperature, the basement temperature tends to be relatively consistent and it doesn't really get hot in the summer and it doesn't really get cold in the winter, it is relatively constant all year round.

MB: Okay what about sausage? Did your parents makes sausage or do you make sausage?

FP: I don't make it myself but I remember very vaguely my parents making it. For the Slovenians the main type of sausage was something called, generally referred to as Austrian sausage, very very similar to the polish sausage that you buy today. It is primarily a pork based sausage with a lot of garlic in it and the meat is in smaller pieces it's not all ground up. It could be very tasty, actually ____ I think it is tastier really than the polish sausage. And then of course blood sausage was a tradition of that almost all of, I noticed that the Fins also have their own variation of the blood sausage something called blood red and blood soup and so on. But the blood sausage sometimes they refer to it, Kishka [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] is a blood sausage made with rice and it is considered a very nice gesture if you happen to live on a farm and you were slaughtering pigs and cows and if you wanted to give all of your friends a bucket of blood so that they could make blood sausage... If you grow up with the taste for it, it's very delicious. The Germans of course have their___, very similar. Okay.

MB: Okay now going on from food to another subject. Where did you go to school?

FP: All of our family as I said we lived in the same house since mid-18… my paternal grandfather had the house built about roughly 1895 and we have lived in it ever since and as I mentioned before, not only did both parents die right in the house, but both sets of grandparents died in the house and every one of the children was born in the house…

MB: You went to school right in Calumet then?

FP: Yes.

MB: Who were your teachers? Do you remember your teachers, do you remember anything about them?

FP: The thing is I don't think we are supposed to be talking about me, because the original plan was to really interview a Slovenian women, and therefore let me try to answer that from the view of my mother and the things my mother talked about. Now my mother, as I said she only got as far as the 5th grade and she went to school in Manistique, they lived in Manistique at that particular time and she had very very fond feelings about her teachers, I remember when I went in the field of education she always felt that teachers were somebody very special. Apparently some of them were very kind to her, and being a child immigrant and so on I think there was always a feeling of discrimination, the feelings of not being considered in the same class as the Anglo-Saxon oriented children that she might have grown up with and so on and I think the teachers acted as a buffer and were very kind to her, excellent feelings about them. She loved school, just the culture was really strict, now her dad did not believe in novels or anything, you were only aloud to read your school books and her catechism and if you were caught with anything else you got a good licking. She loved to read, I remember her telling me how she used to hide, or borrow a book form someone and have to hide it and live in terrible dread because she knew her father ever caught her with anything other than her school books or the catechism ____she lived in mortal fear of being caught with reading material other that than. English of course was here second language because she spoke Slovenian at home, and certainly she was relatively bright and had no trouble picking up English, in fact I'm kind of amazed when I realize now that here's a gal who only had a 5th grade education and she not only learned English but she taught herself literally taught herself how to read and write Slovenian. Now of course she was fluent in spoken Slovenian but she never went to school to learn to read or write Slovenian and I remember asking her once how she ever managed to do it because she wrote letters to

friends in the old country and she got the Slovenian newspaper she taught herself! And I said how did you do it? Well that Slovenian newspaper around the house she said I kept asking people what words were until I taught myself to do it. So she became relatively fluent in reading and writing Slovenian along with speaking it.

[Phone rings]

[Tape starts again]

FP: Okay before, I'll finish.

MB: Okay.

FP: Then not only then was she relatively fluent in Slovenian and she had a neighbor who was a Serbian and the Serbian language is quite different from the Slovenian language, the Slovenian language for instance uses the roman alphabet and the Serbian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet which is a different alphabet entirely and it, she and the neighbor and the spoke no Slovenian and no English and she was able to carry on very fluent conversations with the neighbor in Serbian. And she was also quite good in German, I remember when I first went to college I was taking a course in German, I had this girlfriend who used to call me on the telephone and for practice we would speak in German and I assumed my mother had no idea what I was talking about so until day I realized that she was very well acquainted with German and knew exactly what I was saying and had been hearing my conversations for months and I thought she didn't know what I was saying. So she was quite good in German, her German was good and well I think it is rather amazing that these people… she also spoke and could read Croatian which again is different that Slovenian and never had any problems with, she had Croatian friends and spoke with them in Croatian. Okay that's it.

MB: Okay,

FP: Well maybe you would like to know about the language at home.

MB: That's what I was going to ask about! What language did they speak at home?

FP: With my older brothers and sisters, some of the older ones, and effort was made to teach them Slovenian and they knew a lot of it, but the younger ones I would say the last half a dozen or so that got discontinued. Apparently it was just too much effort also I think they discovered by

not teaching the little ones Slovenian, they had a private language for their private conversations. So we were not really encouraged or taught our original tongue at home and as a result my Slovenian is atrocious and I only know a handful of words but it was their way of, my mother and father and their older friends, it was their way of being able to carry on conversations in a room full of kids and they didn't know what was going on in their private…

MB: You mentioned that your mother had to quit school when she was in 5th grade, did she expect her family then to finish high school because she wasn't able to and she loved school?

FP: Very much. Very much, you might say a booster of education. She sees it she recognizes the importance of it and we were all highly encouraged it however some of the older brothers and sisters, it just wasn't financially possible. I mean just, having to be able to feed them and buy their clothes to go to high school was overwhelming, plus the fact that my oldest brother had originally started high school and I think he had maybe a year or two years then he got himself involved, he got married very early and things like that and I think a lot of bitterness set it so I would say the first seven or so did not finish high school. I think my sister Rose [SPELLED PHONETICALLY] was the first one to finish high school and Rose was born in about 1915. From that point on all of the others did complete high school and were always encouraged to do it. And of course when I came out of the service and after WWII and came home and I contemplated the idea of going to college under the GI bill and there was tremendous encouragement and actually there was a tremendous amount of sacrifice involved because by then the others were all gone and it was just my mother and myself and that meant that during the four years that I was going into college I was really her main support and it meant some really frugal living but there was never any hesitation about it, always very encouraging to get as much education as I possibly could. She loved reading, in fact during the years when she was reading all of those children's, one of the few times she used to always tell me, one of the few times she had to read was when she was rocking the baby to sleep so she always had her little magazine handy to read when she was rocking the baby to sleep and that was about the only chance that she ever had and she would just devour them. I used to get a kick out of those magazines. When I grew up it was the heart of the depression and everbody was in a rough place so she used to have a magazine club or something like that and she would get something like 4 or 5 separate magazines every month for a dollar a year.

MB: For 4 or 5 magazines?

FP: Right for 4 or 5 magazines, a dollar a year. Some of these magazines, one was a farm journal we all kidded about that because we always lived in town that just happened to be one that was available. Another one something called Good News from Augusta, Maine and there were a couple of them that were flimsy little women's type magazines and of course people did a great deal of exchanging in those days if anybody bought a magazine or got their hands on a magazine it would get to 5 or 6 different places before it would practically end there, before it was discarded.

MB: Do you remember your family ever taking vacations? Were they ever able to go away on a trip?

FP: Not in a modern sense, now my mother had, I think she got to Detroit twice, I think the main reason she even got there was despite of the fact that a good number of her children were settled there I think the reason she got there was that after I was born, about a year after I was born she took on the raising of a cousin of mine, and when she took him in he was about 9 months old and she had him until he was about 10, and then his folks, his mother had remarried and had a stable home situation and wanted him back. Of course it was one of those really traumatic heartbreaks because he was part of our family and it was a horrendous situation in fact to this day this cousin still thinks of my mother as maybe his ma and he has always been closer to my family than he is to his own. Because he was in Detroit with his blood family, I think that was the thing that kind of got her to Detroit in one of the other relatives had volunteered to bring her there so that she could see Walter, so a couple of times, twice that I remember that she went to Detroit, but that was a horrendous undertaking in those days even just going to Detroit because there are still six or seven of us children at home and the older had to take over while she was gone and but that was the closest thing to a vacation that she ever had.

MB: How did she get there?

FP: Pardon?

MB: How did she get to Detroit, was it by train?

FP: Somebody drove her. I think somebody came up and brought her back, I think one of my older brothers or sisters and she went by car. But at first regular vacations that we have now didn't exist. We always had a great deal of company because the older ones had gone away would always try to get home for at least a week or so in the summer and we always had a lot of company in fact to this day I still have third generations of company all summer long. I still remember one weekend two years ago I decided that ___ and that particular week in August we had seven cars and 19 people staying in the house and the camp.

MB: Oh my goodness wow.

FP: So the pattern of relatives, and it wasn't only brothers and sisters, one of my second cousin's first wife when she remarried brought her second husband here on her honeymoon even though she had abandoned my cousin she didn't want to abandon the family and from that point on for a period of ten years they came every summer so there is just any number of assorted relatives kept coming. My mother is very ____ she loved people and they all loved her and she had a terrific sense of humor she, she was just good company of course she was an excellent cook an excellent baker…

MB: Now your parents belong to the Catholic Church?

FP: Yes the church was really the center of life for these people. The church and the lodge. The lodge is where usually is affiliated with the church now. My mother was very active in her lodge, there was one in particular that was called the order of foresters, the Roman Catholic order of foresters which she was the financial secretary on board for 30 or 40 years so it was interesting with insured type lodges. The ethnic groups came over they didn't trust the American insurance companies, they set up their own little lodges and this particular one they paid their dues every month and then when one of them dies they got a death benefit, a little of insured type policy. The women who belonged to it would have to come to the house to pay their lodge dues so one of the reasons why I volunteered to give this interview was because I thought well god I certainly know a lot about Slovenian women because all the while I grew up there was always this parade of Slovenian women coming into the house to pay their lodge, as long as a remember. So all the while I grew up I grew up surrounded by Slovenian women.

MB: Was that also a social type lodge then?

FP: Yeah they had their Christmas parties and so on, that was lodge number one. Then there was another lodge that was directly affiliated with the church called Alter Society which again was primarily again a service oriented type of lodge, the women ___ from the church and carried the alter with them and did that sort of thing and so on. And then the third lodge was a _____ which literally means the women's Slovenian union and this was the most technically oriented group and they were the most social and the most colorful of all. In fact I used to pick on them because they would have a password and I can remember laughing and discussing with my mother and saying oh here are you allowed to ____ hunky women, all you hunky women who have known each other all their life, what possibility is there of any, some person every getting into your church hall and attending one of your meetings, why do you have to have a password? Well the reason I got to the subject of the password was that one of the officers was a master in arms, and I said what is the duty of the master of arms? They stand at the outside of the door and give passwords and such. And the lodge was extremely out autocratic we had a rugged old Slovenian woman who had been the president for I don't know how many years again my mother was the secretary of that articular lodge and the elections were I guess kind of hilarious because a hunky later would pound on a table with a gavel and say it is time for the elections, next year I'll be president, my daughter Annie she is going to be vice president, Mary Pope is going to be financial secretary and so and so is going to be trustee, are there any objections? And of course there would be a big silence, and then she would pound with the gavel and say elections are over. So as I said that was the most social and the most technically oriented lodge.

MB: Do you know what they did?

FP: Oh I think they played bingo, and they would get, they would bring a prize for their bingo. Again they had a small death benefit I could see maximum in that particular lodge was maybe 500 dollars policy and they kind of policed one another and kept each other in line and that sort of thing. I don't know if, almost 90 percent social.

MB: When someone else asked that question of an old member she said, all we do is sing and pray sing and pray and that was her, she said that was all they did. But there was more to it than sing and pray?

FP: Oh yeah they played bingo and I think they would ___ they would have lunch and gossip and that sort of thing.

MB: What about Christmas in your house? Did you have in a Slovenian tradition…?

FP: Well, the food of course was always Slovenian. We had our ____ which was always a must for the, but I would say the rest of the, by the time I came along, the rest of the traditions were pretty much American, we had the Christmas tree and we had the presents,

MB: Was there Santa Claus?

FP: Oh yeah. It was pretty well Americanized, except for now it was much more traditional holiday for Slavs in general is Easter. Easter is, ethnically Easter is much more important from what I have studied and read of Russian it's really similar in Russia. And there the traditions are much more dialyzed or set and one of the things that we did that I always thought was rather interesting was that we always had the food blessed. On the Holy Saturday everyone would bring their basket of food to the church and then the priest would say the prayers and sprinkle the incense and sprinkle the holy water, and the food would be blessed and that was always very important. The food had to be, there were definite things that had to be there, you had to have hard boiled eggs because they were symbolic of something, and you had to have horse radish because that was symbolic of something, and you had to have ____ or your Easter sausage which is really similar to stuffing, it was a bread and egg thing with ham, chopped up ham and green onions and so on, and then you had to have __which was ham and ____ sausage and the best food was eaten first thing for breakfast on Easter morning. It all followed a very technically traditional pattern and I looked at, for some reason Easter because it represents the resurrection I guess a much more important holiday really as far as the older Slavs. We had a neighbor who was Serbian, and Serbians follow the old calendar and they had Christmas at a different time, about maybe around the 10th of January and they had very strict traditions there I remember whenever, it was one, generally it was called Three Kings Day and I remember on that particular day this woman was a widow who lived alone I used to always have to go to their house, my mother would make sure before I went to school that I would go to this woman's house on her Christmas because their tradition was unless the first person who came in the house on Christmas was a man, a male, they would have bad luck all year so they would have to be very careful to plan it so that a male would be the first one to enter the house and of course you would be, she would always have little oil lights lit, which some of those things you get now with water and then oil and a little wick floating on the oil…

MB: Okay one of the final last questions, do you remember when your parents first had electricity, inside plumbing, telephone…?

FB: I don't remember that because as I said I was born in 1925 and by the time I was growing up we already had everything, we had indoor plumbing and we had electricity and we were actually really early in the town, even though we were a very poor people we were very early in having a telephone and I think one of the main reasons was because the telephone always paid for itself, there were so many older sisters that were babysitting and I was running errands and my brothers were errands for people and so on, actually the telephone tended to pay for itself. It was necessary to have to get some of the babysitting jobs and so on so we were one of the early telephones... It was rather strange house in that we seemed to have everything, we had a piano because my mother was very fond of music and always encouraged us, and wanted us all to have that opportunity there. I think when my grandmother died the money that my mother got from her insurance was the one thing that she insisted on doing was buying a piano so we had a piano, we had a relative who had a flare for electricity and we were on of the earliest people who had a radio again which was another unusual in those days because the poor people just didn't have these things. Somehow seemed to have what I considered everything, it might not be cut rate quality…

MB: But at least you had it. Okay,

[Mumbling and many voices at once]

MB: Thank you, is there anything else?

FP: Oh I could go on,

MB: I know this has really been interesting!

FP: There are in fact, what I intend to do some day if I ever get ambitious enough…down and write some of this out.

[END OF INTERVIEW]