An Interview with

Joe Gubanski, Tony Chudy,
Frank Szymanski, and Arthur Kitta

OH #32

Conducted by Philip L. Frana

on

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Immaculate Heart School
Marche, Arkansas

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Left to right: Frank Szymanski, Anthony Chudy, Arthur Kitta, Joe Gubanski.

Abstract: Marche is a community located in Pulaski County twelve miles north of Little Rock. It was settled by Polish immigrants from the Upper Midwest, particularly Milwaukee and Chicago. In this oral history, four local men – Anthony Chudy, Arthur Kitta, Joe Gubanski, and Frank Szymanski – talk about life in the community since the 1920s. Topics discussed include immigrant origins, marriage and family, religion, schools, native wildlife, environment and agriculture, men's and women's work at home and in nearby industries and military facilities (Vestal Nursery, Camp Robinson, Maumelle Ordnance Works, Union Pacific Railroad, local garment factories, theaters), suburbanization, festivals and holidays, music, and food.

This oral history is conducted under the auspices of the White Oak Bayou Wetlands Management Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to involve landowners in the watershed and various government agencies, including the city of Maumelle, in an effort to protect the area and manage development of the watershed. White Oak Bayou comprises about forty-two square miles of watershed and fourteen hundred acres of wetland in Pulaski County, Arkansas. The bayou lies mostly within the boundaries Marche, Maumelle, and North Little Rock, and originates inside Camp Robinson. The bayou empties into the Arkansas River within the boundaries of Burns Park.

FRANA: Could I have each one of you introduce yourselves this morning? I'll start on my left.

SZYMANSKI: Frank Szymanski.

CHUDY: Anthony Chudy.

KITTA: Arthur Kitta.

GUBANSKI: And Joe Gubanski.

FRANA: And we're all here for the White Oak Bayou Project, here in Marche at the Immaculate Heart School, up on the hill – Blue Hill, it's called?

GUBANSKI: Jasna Góra.[1]

FRANA: Very good. The date is November 21st, 2010. The interviewer is Phil Frana from UCA. So let me ask you some questions. Who among your ancestors actually came from the "old-country" to America? Do you recall their names? Who was the first of your family?

SZYMANSKI: My grandparents came on a train.

FRANA: Did they come from Milwaukee or Chicago?

SZYMANSKI: My daddy's parents came from Milwaukee, and my mother's parents came from New York. How they got on that train I don't know.

FRANA: What part of Poland were they from?

SZYMANSKI: Poznań.

FRANA: Poznań? Okay.

SZYMANSKI: It's between Warsaw and Berlin.

FRANA: About midway in between? Okay.

CHUDY: The only one I know of is my grandfather on my mother's side, Michael A. Lukaszewicz. He came over here from Poland when he was twelve years old. That's the only thing I know about either one of them. I don't know if the others came, or when they came over.

FRANA: You don't know where they might have gone first, if anyplace, before they came here?

CHUDY: I don't have anything that shows that. I just did find that by looking on Ancestry.com. A friend got me on to that and it showed that he came over here when he was twelve.

[1] Or "Sky-Blue Hill," after a shrine in Poland.

FRANA: Very good. Pretty young.

KITTA: My grandparents on my daddy's side, evidently Adam and Victoria, they came from Poland. We tried to trace the roots back as far as we could. Now we found out where they came from in Poland, but we never could determine how they got into the United States. We do know they did not come through Ellis Island.

SZYMANSKI: There was no Ellis Island [in those days].

KITTA: Well, I don't know.

SZYMANSKI: There wasn't.

KITTA: There is no record where they came into the United States. Although I feel already Marche was established back in 1880. And they came in through one of the ports. And then they came straight through into Marche – the best we can determine. And then my grandfather on my mother's side, George Bawiec, he came in as a young boy, a child. And again, we're not sure how they came into the United States.

FRANA: Very good. Mr. Gubanski?

GUBANSKI: Alright, for me – we mostly kept up with my dad's parents. And how they got to the United States, like Arthur is saying, we don't know. But I do know the word 'Milwaukee,' grandpa didn't like it up there. It was just too cold. They got on the train when the call came, and they all came down here. His name was Wiktor Gubanski. And his first wife was Katarzyna, and he had several children. I think like six. She died, and then he – I've got a marriage certificate there **[motions to certificate]** – where he was acquainted with some people that were kind of related. I always heard daddy talking about them, and somehow he knew of a single woman in Poland. So grandpa wrote to her. And at age forty five – his age forty-five – she was twenty-eight. She had come over here, and they married, and they had six children. And my dad was the third oldest of those six children. And from my mother's side, I think part of it is in the picture **[points],** my grandmother's maiden name was Eva Sarna, and she married a Blaise Andrejas. And they had five or six boys. And when he died, she married Thomas Szezepaniak, and he had three or four children. And then they had three – my mother, my aunt, and uncle. And that's basically my mother, or my grandmother on my dad's side, she was Aneila Gubanska – it's written on the marriage certificate there. So as we talked before, I'm the youngest of the family. And I find that God blessed me because, you know, here my dad was born in 1897. And my grandmother there that I remember, she was eighty-eight – Eva Szczepaniak – when she died. I remember her. And she was born in, like, 1865 during the Civil War. You know? And I find that isn't that something that I was blessed to be here to know those things.

FRANA: What have you all been told about what your ancestor's lives were like in Poland? Were they all farmers? Were they druggists? Merchants? Do you know what your families were doing over there in the old world?

SZYMANSKI: I think they were living in the countryside over there. You don't hear too much about what they raised or anything like that. My parent's grandparents on my mother's side – Nowitzki – they slipped out of Poland. They left there at night and got on a ship. And when they come out they were on the ocean already.

FRANA: And why did they have to slip out of Poland exactly?

GUBANSKI: Oppression.

SZYMANSKI: A lot of it, of course, was the Russians were trying to rule Poland, and they didn't even let them study Polish at school.

FRANA: Was it Russian or Prussian oppression?

KITTA: Prussian, Russian, and German. Poland was mostly ruled by somebody [else] over the years. They were split between three countries. And some of the Polish people here in Marche, they came from under a different government in Poland, and they had their disputes. They couldn't get along very well, you know, because one of them was Russian, one of them was German, and then one of them was Austrian, you know.

SZYMANSKI: That's right.

GUBANSKI: And also the dialect – you could tell the dialect was a little bit different. Malachowski's had a higher pitched dialect than some the rest of them did. But I think oppression is, from what I've heard from my dad speaking about, that they were oppressed. They had to leave otherwise they might be killed or shipped off someplace else. But I'd like to add that, you know, sometimes we don't think very highly of ourselves here, you know. Poorly educated, but some of those people were very educated.

KITTA: Oh definitely. They had a good education. I mean, they could all read and write in Polish.

GUBANSKI: In fact, my wife's grandfather Pawal Wilk, I don't remember him, but he was a college professor.

FRANA: Well, if you think about what would have been required to get all the way across an ocean and halfway across the country –

SZYMANSKI: Stepanoski, you've all heard about Stepanoski? He was called a noble. You know, he was educated. And that's a reason why father didn't get along with him. And he just wanted to know a little bit about things, about the parish and so on. So –

KITTA: But there were Poles back in those days – there were different classes of people. There were the owners, the people who owned the property, and there were the servants who worked for the big guy, you know. And then, during that time Poland had a mandatory military service, because I remember my grandpa talking about being in the Polish Army.

FRANA: Anticipating my next question –

KITTA: And that's why a lot of them left Poland on account of having to serve in the Army. And a lot of them changed their name when they left Poland. And when they came to America, they changed their name, so they couldn't be traced back to whatever they had done or whatever they had been doing.

FRANA: Did a lot of these families know each other before they moved to America, or send for other families when they got here? Do you know if much of that happened?

GUBANSKI: I really can't answer that question.

FRANA: Oftentimes the whole community would get up and leave, and replicate itself here.

GUBANSKI: I think that probably that would be true in certain respects, because some of the Zakrzewski families, they were – weren't they distant cousins when they moved here? Because some of them are not directly related real close. So that could have been true, you know, they might have been a cousin or so forth over there and said, you know, "We're going."

SZYMANSKI: A lot of them, went under the boss. That's the way they were. Had a guy oversee them.

FRANA: Almost like the medieval manor system, where they were peasants and had a vassal system lasting into the twentieth century.

SZYMANSKI: A lot of them didn't have to worry because they were being taken care of.

KITTA: [answers in Polish]

SZYMANSKI: That's right. **[laughs]**

FRANA: Any idea what they did when they got to Milwaukee and Chicago, and the Great Lakes region? What kind of jobs they ended up with?

SZYMANSKI: My grandfather, I never heard what he did. He lived in Milwaukee for about four years. Of course, two of my daddy's brothers were born there in Milwaukee –

KITTA: My folks didn't come through that part of the country, so I don't know a thing about it.

GUBANSKI: I think grandpa, if dad talked about it I don't remember I was just a kid, and you don't comprehend everything. But I know that he had an older son, and I think his name was Ignatius Gubanski. And he was a teenage boy when they came down here. And obviously he had to be up there awhile, because he didn't want to leave there. When he came here and seen what they had to do, farm and, you know, clear property and stuff – he wanted to go back and he ran off. And grandpa went and got him and brought him back and he took off again. And [grandpa]

said, "Let him go." So he might have had a girlfriend, so you think he might have been there awhile, you know, to establish some kind of relationship or something. It's just an idea, you know.

SZYMANSKI: One more thing I was going to say, when they came over here, there was, what, about three hundred and something families here. And when they got off the train and saw what was here – some of them went back.

KITTA: Half of them went back.

GUBANSKI: A lot of them went to North Little Rock where the railroad had a shop there.

SZYMANSKI: Even later, like Jablonski. When he died his wife went back.

FRANA: Why did so many decide – well, the ones who didn't return because it was so underdeveloped – why did so many of them settle here? Were they looking for land?

KITTA: They were looking for an easier life. What they'd seen, they'd have to clear the land to farm it, and a lot of manual labor involved. And it just wasn't probably what they were looking for.

FRANA: They liked the idea of warmer weather?

[general agreement]

KITTA: Well, that has a lot to do with it.

SZYMANSKI: That's the reason old [Charles] Choinski came here.[2] It too cold for him, so he came south.

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[2] *From Goodspeed's History of Pulaski County, Arkansas* (1889): "Charles Choinski, a representative farmer, and one of the leading merchants of Pulaski County, was born in Poland, on November 17, 1858, and is a son of T. and L. Choinski. The father was born in Poland, and a graduate of two of Germany's most famous universities, in one of which he was afterward a professor for a number of years. He took part in the struggle that Poland made to throw off the yoke of Russia, and after the war was over migrated to America. He first settled in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1873, and after learning the English language, his superior knowledge upon other branches soon placed him as a teacher in the public schools of that city, and professor of German language in "Engelman's Academy." In 1876 he left Milwaukee and moved to Pulaski County, bringing with him a colony of 200 Polish families, who had left their native country on account of the dark cloud of Russian tyranny that hung over it and made them slaves. In 1847 he was married to Miss L. Dembinska, by whom he had ten children, seven of them yet living, Charles being the fifth child. The Choinski's are of noble birth, their forefathers being among the leaders of the aristocracy in former days and favorites of the king. Charles Choinski came to Pulaski County with his parents when eighteen years old. He was educated in the public schools of Milwaukee, and instructed in the higher branches by his father, and before twenty years of age started in business for himself at Marche, and has been successful at every turn. In 1884 he was united in marriage to Miss Martha J. Ray, a daughter of Joseph and Sarah (Frazier) Ray, of Tennessee and Alabama respectively. Three children were born to this union: Roy, Carrie and Josephine. Mr. Choinski rapidly made a reputation for himself and became widely known in the surrounding country. When only twenty-one years old, he was honored by the people of Pulaski County in being elected to represent them in the legislature, and served through the term of 1882 in a manner that won distinction for himself and gave satisfaction to his constituents. For a

KITTA: Well, originally the railroad owned all this property. And the government gave the railroad this land for them for settling. And they're the ones who advertised, and brought all these people down here. And they had all this property, and they sold it for little or nothing, or give it just like this eighty acres where the church is on. It belonged to the railroad at one time and the railroad deeded it to the church – for the community to build a church.

SZYMANSKI: A man lived over here off of Clinton Road back in the '30s. He bought forty acres for fifty cents an acre.

FRANA: A pretty good deal. It was originally called Warren? Is that right?

KITTA: Warren, yes.

FRANA: And it was supposed to be an industrial town?

KITTA: That was a railroad name. See the railroad, they established – you know where Malachowski's store was – there was a post office [there], and of course they called it Warren. And, of course, they decided they had another Warren in Arkansas. So they changed this one to Marche. Now why? Don't ask. I don't know.

SZYMANSKI: It was Marche first.

KITTA: What now?

SZYMANSKI: It was Marche first.

KITTA: No, after Warren.

FRANA: Before and after?

SZYMANSKI: French people came here and built Marche. They called it Marche.

GUBANSKI: Well, that's another kink to the story I didn't know.

KITTA: Well, that's another story. Far as I know, my momma used to say that was before Marche. Marche came later.

GUBANSKI: I had Phil to get this. I was telling Tony – my sister had some property there in where the store was. And when they surveyed this property, it's still on the record in Pulaski County as Warren, Arkansas. And there are about four streets. And we looked for it and I could not find it, but I will one day and I'll pass it on to you.

CHUDY: I've got that somewhere.

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number of years he has been postmaster of Marche. In politics he is a strong Democrat, and in religious faith attends the Catholic Church."

KITTA: You know that old Zuber place, you know, where Bawiec lived? I've got a plot, where it was plotted out to be a city. It's got streets and everything. And originally they were going to build a town right there.

SZYMANSKI: Well that's where Choinski lived. Isn't that the Choinski that came here? That's where he lived.

KITTA: I don't know.

SZYMANSKI: That's right. He died in 1891.[3] They buried him in that yard over there – that front yard.

KITTA: Well, that, I never heard that.

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, that's right.

GUBANSKI: They exhumed the body and moved it to Pine Bluff.

SZYMANSKI: When the family moved out of here, it went to Pine Bluff.

GUBANSKI: And then did Zubers' buy the place after that?

[general agreement]

FRANA: Well, I'd sure like to see that place sometime.

SZYMANSKI: Well, the house is pulled down.

FRANA: Is the road still there?

GUBANSKI: The road going up to the house is still there.

SZYMANSKI: The Marche Road and the driveway towards the house is still there. Schmidt I think owns it now.

GUBANSKI: No, Hillerman. A guy named Hillerman owns it.

CHUDY: Where is this?

GUBANSKI: Where Hillerman lives, when you cross the railroad crossing and go to your house it will be the first driveway. It's got all the cedars lined up.

CHUDY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

[3] Actually, 1890.

GUBANSKI: That used to be the Choinski place, you know, the person who brought all of these Poles here. And the way I understood it a lot of them were angry that they wound up here.[4] And it kept gnawing at him. And I heard he had committed suicide, but I don't know if that's true. But he was buried, and then when the widow and the family decided – I think to Pine Bluff – they exhumed his body and took it. And then Zuber bought it, and then the Bawiecs bought it from there. And now Hillerman has it.

SZYMANSKI: The Choinski's daughter married a Schnable. And they went to Pine Bluff Iron Works.That's Schable's. It's sold now, you know. They had one daughter, and she was a lawyer in Pine Bluff.

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[4] From the Department of Arkansas Heritage <http://www.arkansasheritage.com/discover/the_people/european/polish.aspx>: "Polish citizens arrived in Arkansas as early as 1877 and established the community of Marche in Pulaski County. The Polish people, governed at various times by the Russians, Prussians and Austrians, endured oppressive behavior, were deprived of their civil rights, and suffered several small-scale insurrections, forcing many families to leave Poland after 1863.

A Polish colony was established in the state after Count Timothy von Choinski, a member of the nobility in the province of Posen, Poland, inquired about the availability of land in Western Arkansas. Choinski and his family had fled to America after 1863 and in 1877, Choinski and 22 colonists toured land owned by the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad Company in Pope, Conway, Faulkner and Pulaski counties. They settled on approximately 11,000 acres purchased from the railroad company, located 10 miles northwest of Little Rock at an old town site originally named Warren Station. Twenty-six Polish families settled here and by the end of the first year, over 200 Polish families had established residences in Arkansas. Most of them had come from Posen, Falicia and Silesia provinces in Poland.

Choinski and the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company were responsible for this immigration. Both encouraged members of the Polish community living in Northern states to settle in Arkansas. They paid for the transportation costs of immigrating families and gave them assistance in building their new homes. When colonists arrived, many were disappointed. Land had to be cleared before it could be farmed and the amenities were rudimentary. For example, a defunct sawmill and a two-story, 14-room shack were used as a picnic and dance hall.

Disillusioned and feeling misled, a number of the families went back North while others got jobs working for the railroad company in Little Rock. Choinski, the primary investor in Marche, felt obligated to assume the burden of feeding and housing these people during the early days of the settlement. Choinski's daughter, Helen Schnable of Pine Bluff, remembered that many 'arrived with only personal baggage, slept on straw and hay spread on floor with a blanket for cover.' Schnable explains that 'such beds are no hardship for peasants of European descent, used to such living conditions…cooked our meals in iron wash kettles, ate fish, game, and other wild fowls, corn pones and mush made of corn meal…In the evening we all sat around camp fires and sang patriotic and church songs…We exchanged visions of the future, which kept our soul glowing, gave us a good night's rest and zest for the next day's work…There was plenty of work, but no hunger or hardship, for there was plenty to eat if a man was not lazy.'

The families that stayed purchased a home site (usually 80 acres) and built a home from scratch. The members of the colony assisted each other with building the cabins and established an agricultural community. It was a bilingual community where English and Polish were taught in the schools. In 1896, Warren Station changed its name to Marche (pronounced Mar-Shay), a French word meaning "market." The name was appropriate since the community served as a trading and agriculture center for the surrounding area. The dominant religion of the original settlers of Marche was Catholic.

Its founder, Count Choinski, died in 1890 and was buried on his farm. Descendants of the original founders still live around Marche, or within a radius of several miles. Present-day Marche lies off Highway 65 in Pulaski County.

FRANA: Well, let me ask you about – you mentioned the deeding of the church land from the railroad – what was the importance of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church to the community in those early days. Was that the center of everything in those early days? Were there any other places –

SZYMANSKI: They stayed here. They wanted a church.

GUBANSKI: Religion was a central thing to them.

FRANA: What are some of your earliest memories of the church here in this community? You grew up in the church? Who is the first priest that you recall?

SZYMANSKI: Hertel.

KITTA: The first priest I remember is Father Hertel.

SZYMANSKI: The first one was [Father Anthony] Jaworski. You know that booklet that they had about the anniversary.

KITTA: Yeah, that was before our time.

SZYMANSKI: You've got him in that book there.

FRANA: I've got a copy of that I think.

GUBANSKI: Which priest do you remember first Frank?

SZYMANSKI: Hertel.

GUBANSKI: That's the one I remember Tony lived in town so he –

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, I was born in '23 and Hertel came here in '07. So , see, Hertel was here for, what, forty years.

GUBANSKI: Forty-nine years I believe.[5]

SZYMANSKI: The last part of that book will show all the names.

GUBANSKI: Dr. Phil got a copy of that booklet.

FRANA: Let me just pass this around here. Do you recall any of these? Thomas Prendergast?

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, he came here later, in the 1950s I think.[6]

[5] Hertel served the parish from 1907 to September 1949.
[6] Prendergast served the parish from September 1956 to July 1970.

FRANA: Do you remember him?

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, he was here after Hertel left.

FRANA: McCormick, then, came after that?

GUBANSKI: Yes.

SZYMANSKI: I think Scheider was first, and the Prendergast, and then McCormick.

GUBANSKI: Schneider replaced McCormick. Yeah.

SZYMANSKI: Is that the way it was?

GUBANSKI: Yes.

FRANA: Then Malone?

[general agreement]

FRANA: Then Dienert?

FRANA: There were always nuns out here as well?

SZYMANSKI: Benedictines.

GUBANSKI: What I remember, yes. Up until Arthur, you were the last one to be working with a nun here, her name was Sister Loyola [Schmucki]. That was the one who did the interviews. And that was back in 1978, and it wasn't long after that that she was called back to the Motherhouse, and the school went under a – you know – a civilian religious principal.

SZYMANSKI: You know, this was a public school.

FRANA: Oh, it was? Before it was a Catholic school?

SZYMANSKI: No, it was a Catholic parish school.

FRANA: Oh, I see. It's county supported. It's part of Pulaski Special?

GUBANSKI: It's just Pulaski County. I remember if you look at that school down there – it has a couple of windows right there up there at the top. Sister used to post a kid up there, you know, using one of the smarter [ones]. **[laughs]** But anyway, they would keep keep an eye out because, uh, I forget that principle's name from Oak Grove – he made surprise visits. And you know, religion couldn't be taught in a public school back then. So they kind of snuck that around, but they had a guard posted up there and whenever they saw a stranger coming up the road they

shouted out the alarm and everybody would put away all of the – That went on for years, I remember some of that.

SZYMANSKI: And the Father was around the school, and when a car was coming up. **[motions]** He went out the back.

FRANA: Is that right? What was everyone hiding from?

GUBANSKI: Well, conflict of religion being taught in the public school.

FRANA: Oh, I see.

GUBANSKI: The Sisters were contracted. They were paid by the county, and they were the teachers.

FRANA: The priest couldn't be present and visible when the school was in session.

KITTA: And it was a public school until Father Bartodziej changed it.

GUBANSKI: And I can't remember. See Father Bartodziej was Tony's pastor in St. Mary's parish. And then he was transferred out.
KITTA: He came after Father Hertel.

FRANA: You all went to Catholic school then?

CHUDY: I went to St. Mary's.

KITTA: We went to the old school by the cemetery there. That's where we got our formal education.

FRANA: Do you have an anecdote that you can share from your school days?

GUBANSKI: Not that we can put on tape.

[general laughter]

KITTA: Well, I know that the school session was split in two – two different categories. You got out early enough for the farm planting, and then you went to school during the summer, and then you got out again during the harvest.

SZYMANSKI: That's right. We got out in May, and six weeks we stayed home, and then back to school for two months, and then we was out six weeks again. [Not] going back to [school] until October.

FRANA: During the summer months you –

KITTA: During the summer months we went to school barefooted. And you heard the old saying, you know, "You went to school five miles"?

FRANA: Yeah, uphill both ways?

KITTA: We did!

[general laughter]

KITTA: Because we lived way back towards Cato or where Camp Robinson is. And we walked from way over down here every morning and every evening. And then sometimes we'd go back home after school and momma in October would send us back for rosary services in the evening – she'd send us back for church services.

FRANA: Probably wore you out – all that extra energy.

CHUDY: I asked dad how long he went to school. I asked him, "Well, how long did you go to school?" And he said, "Well, I don't know. A couple times a year, three or four years and that was it." Well, when daddy was thirteen he had his belly full of this farm down here and he went to town and lived with his sister Anna Berry. And he went to work for Vestal's. He was thirteen.

SZYMANSKI: Who is this?

CHUDY: My dad, Jack Chudy.

SZYMANSKI: Jack. Jack. One-Eyed Jack.

CHUDY: Yep.

SZYMANSKI: Yeah I worked at Vestal's for awhile.

GUBANSKI: You know, I was luckier than these gentlemen were because daddy still farmed but I was just a kid – I didn't get in on a lot of that. But to walk to school and back, yeah, we did. The only reason they brought me to school was because I hated it. And they threatened to tie me up to a tree over there, and finally I just decided, well, I better stay here. I caught hell. It was something. It was an experience. But I remember that, you know, as a kid you test the teachers. Well, Sister Bernardine used to ring that bell that recess is over. Well, we decided that we'd go over that hill a little bit further and we won't hear that bell. She didn't fool around, but she just said, "Put them hands out there and she took that **[makes slapping sound]."** I tell you what, before that bell rung, I knew it was going to ring, so I was on my way back up the hill.

SZYMANSKI: He got some education though.

FRANA: Education and some discipline, you got them both.

SZYMANSKI: About two years ahead of Oak Grove.

GUBANSKI: But the other thing I want to add – what Arthur was saying about turning around and going back to church – being a Catholic community we had Marian devotions in October and May. And this church was full. This church was full of people. And now we have transportation, we've got all the time in the world, and we may be lucky to get fifteen people. I think the other reason for that was socializing. You know the kids just loved to be around each other. We played down there. We had a ball down there, and then the older folks would talk. They didn't see each other, so it was kind of a social activity too.

KITTA: And it gave you something – to do something different. There were no radios, no televisions. No nothing. So you were glad to get away from the chores of the old homestead, and go visit with somebody else.

FRANA: Tell me about some of those chores, though, some of the field work you had to do, or the jobs you had when you were younger, before you were on your own?

KITTA: Number one was milking cows and slopping hogs – soon as you were big enough to do that. And then the farming, you had to chop cotton, pick cotton, chop corn. Just general farm work. And towing wood and cutting wood every winter with that old cross-cut saw. You never had time to play. Your folks would find something for you to do.

GUBANSKI: The emphasis was on the work. These days – here you have more sports activity than anything. But back then I remember I was expected to get home and they kind of watched the clock to make sure I got home. And then daddy had work for us to do. And I remember one of mine was, you know, when daddy raised corn we had a corn crib. And you had to get the corn ready for the chickens and the hogs. And they had a little hand grinder. That was my job. I had to turn that thing and grind that corn.

FRANA: I'm sure you were hand-picking with the glove that had the hook on it?

GUBANSKI: Well I didn't use those, but I know they had them. And then hay. We were expected to get out there and work in the hay. And daddy cut it with a mule or horses, and a horse-drawn sickle. Raked it by horse or mule. And then we'd get out there in the morning and start shocking that hay. We called them *kuklia.* And then we had a wagon, and I remember this, with your uncle Pete – he's my godfather – but I helped him one summer for a while with a wagon, you know. I went out there and, boy, that was a learning experience too. When you went out there to work for them people, there was no sloughing off. You had to work. There was no sloughing off. You had to work.

KITTA: You had loose hay and you had to pack it into the barns and all that. And man, in the summertime it was hot, dusty. Man, it's unreal.

GUBANSKI: I was a runt and so they always put me in a hayloft where I could get in there and they didn't have to worry about me.

KITTA: And then later on they started baling the hay, you know, which was a little easier.

FRANA: You made these *kuklia* to dry the hay?

GUBANSKI: After it dries you put it into shocks, into small haystacks and then you come through with a wagon just packing that down.

SZYMANSKI: Talking about church over here on Sunday. Pretty near all the people had a buggy. Hitched up, they had a one-horse buggy, or two mules. They didn't walk. A lot of them did; a lot of them didn't. They rode buggies to church. They had a place right down here. I don't know how many there were. Church started at 9 o'clock and we didn't get out until about 11, and we didn't have to walk that.

GUBANSKI: I showed Dr. Frana a lot of those trails, you know, where different people from different directions had a trail –

FRANA: Yeah, I saw some of that. This wasn't cattle country in those days?

KITTA: Oh, all farm country. Cotton country. People raised cattle for their own use. They raised cows, hogs, chickens –

GUBANSKI: In fact, it was free range –

KITTA: – but not on a big scale like they do now. This was all farming country. That's why this particular area right here, where the church is, to the railroad was a worthless piece of property because it couldn't be farmed. So they gave it away.

SZYMANSKI: I heard that when the people came here on that train they got $200. The railroad gave them $200.

KITTA: Now that, I don't know.

SZYMANSKI: That's what I've heard. Because listen, if they didn't have that they wouldn't have survived.

GUBANSKI: That's true.

SZYMANSKI: That's what I've heard.

FRANA: So farming was difficult here, especially on forty acres –

KITTA: – oh yeah, life itself was difficult.

FRANA: So you were all self-sufficient – you were all canning all your own things?

KITTA: Oh yeah. Exactly. If it wasn't for that we'd have all starved to death.

FRANA: Who owned the bottomlands then? I've heard those were more productive lands. Down in Marche Bottoms or the White Oak Bottoms?

GUBANSKI: A lot of that wasn't developed, actually. It was just let out.

FRANA: So people just mainly used that mainly for fishing?

GUBANSKI: Fishing and hunting.

SZYMANSKI: There was some bottomland over here on the way to Conway, now Wilks farmed that. You know what I'm talking about?

GUBANSKI: Between Morgan and Mayflower –

FRANA: Right, yes. Nice flat, dark soil.

KITTA: But as far as the Marche proper – at one time it consisted of a lot bigger area than it is now, until the Second World War. There was a lot of people lived where Camp Robinson is now. And they decided they was going to develop Camp Robinson. So they came around and said, "Okay folks, you gotta move." So during the 1940s, before the war, I imagine half or close to half of Marche had to move. And that's where we lost a lot of the people. Some of them didn't have no place to go, and the government didn't care so long as you moved. So a lot of them moved to North Little Rock, a lot of them to Conway, a lot of them moved closer in to Marche here, you know, where it is now. And so the parish itself really went down during that particular time. A lot of the young men were in the service –

GUBANSKI: Some of them moved up to Granite City, Illinois. My uncle did because they had steel mills up there and they could find work. And there were several of them that married and moved up there.

SZYMANSKI: Several of the girls left over here. Some went to Chicago and some went over there, and just left here.

FRANA: Joe had said that there are still stakeholders in the land, if the camp ever does close? They have the first right –

GUBANSKI: That's the way I understood it. When the government bought, like my grandpa's place over there. I thought there was a stipulation in that – that if that land was ever to be turned back to public use, that the owners that were originally there would have first choice to buy it back.

KITTA: Exactly. That's right. It never materialized.

GUBANSKI: No, it probably never will.

CHUDY: You wouldn't want it anyway, because they wouldn't sell it to you for what you bought it for.

FRANA: You might not want it back anyway –

KITTA: My daddy never got over it, having to move away from there. We moved down here in Marche proper. And he was used to the hills. He loved his hills up there. And down here is more or less bottoms.

SZYMANSKI: How much land did you all have over here? You didn't have very much land over here did you?

KITTA: Thirty acres. Bought it from Dombrowski. Yeah, I had thirty acres.

FRANA: What about some of these other – was there a lot of animal wildlife around here and plants? Did you go picking berries?

KITTA: Well, we picked a lot of blackberries over here, but the only animals – the only animals was rabbits and a few squirrels. Almost everything had already disappeared.

SZYMANSKI: No deer.

GUBANSKI: No deer.

KITTA: No deer.

GUBANSKI: You'd be surprised.

SZYMANSKI: No 'coons in there.

GUBANSKI: I rarely – when I was a kid growing up, you know, real young? I don't remember seeing very many deer at all.

SZYMANSKI: There wasn't no deer.

GUBANSKI: I think I was a teenager when I saw my first deer.

FRANA: Mr. Chudy, did you have a job in town? Were you working for Vestal with your dad at all?

CHUDY: No, of course – when I graduated from Catholic High School – well I really wanted to go work for Sherwin Williams paints. I went to work for Sears and they laid me off. I went and worked for the telephone company and stayed. That one stuck. Then we moved out here. Well, this was my grandfather's place originally. Him and Max Malachowski bought eighty acres, I think, and they split it. And, when he died, actually he left it to two of his sons, and one of them, who was the oldest, decided that that wasn't fair, so he talked my other uncle into splitting it up

between the six kids. Well, they wound up with forty acres split this way **[makes motion].** Everybody had 107 feet wide, and whatever it takes to make that. And of course the railroad went through in the middle of it. Well I finally, two years ago, I got the last piece back. I just wanted to have it. So I've got that back, and it's mostly, the biggest part of it, is between the railroad and the freeway. The freeway took about an acre apiece off of that land where the freeway come through. But I've got that back now, somewhere about thirty acres.

FRANA: Now when the freeway cut through Marche – that took some people too?

GUBANSKI: It took my dad's eighteen acres.

KITTA: Took ten acres off our property.

GUBANSKI: Split ours in half.

KITTA: It went right through the middle of what was originally called Marche. Ran right through the middle of it.

FRANA: Right through the middle of it. Okay.

GUBANSKI: And it was kind of like the government taking the land for Camp Robinson. They just said, "Hey, here it is."

FRANA: They just condemned it and gave you what they thought it was worth.

KITTA: You asked Tony if he worked for Vestal with his daddy? Well, I did. I worked for him for fifteen years.

FRANA: Is that right?

KITTA: He was a good man. He was a good man. I tell you, I really learned a lot from him. I sure did.

FRANA: I've been told that some of the major employers, if you weren't farming and surviving, you could go work for Camp Robinson, say, or the railroad yards down in Argenta there, or Vestal Nursery. Were there other places that people were going to work?

GUBANSKI: Well, I think, besides the ones you mentioned, is Fort Roots employed a lot of our guys. You know, when they came out of the service there was a good employment place for them.

SZYMANSKI: There was work everywhere.

FRANA: How did people get down there? Did they drive at that point? Or could they take the train?

GUBANSKI: Well, they carpooled. I know dad had a truck, and my brother built a homemade camper on that thing. And the guys, you know, whoever worked at the shops, they just got in that thing and went.

KITTA: Most of the guys got on at the railroad. The older ones –

FRANA: So there was passenger rail service.

GUBANSKI: Well, we did. But, yes there was.

FRANA: When did that end?

GUBANSKI: Oh gosh, well, it ended in the ’50s or’60s. I can’t remember. It would have to be in the mid-1960s.

KITTA: What’s that?

GUBANSKI: The passenger train going through here.

KITTA: Yeah.

GUBANSKI: I think it would have to be in the mid-1960s. As they, you know, evolved, daddy farmed and he worked for a railroad, everybody double-dipped, so to speak.

KITTA: Only thing about it, you went and applied for a job at the railroad, if you had an “S-K-I” at the end of your name you magically got hired.

FRANA: Oh, is that right? So preferential hiring of Poles?

KITTA: The Polish people had a reputation for being good, honest hard workers.

FRANA: Were there places where you had trouble getting hired?

KITTA: What’s that?

FRANA: Were there places where you actually had trouble getting hired because you had a “ski” at the end of your name?

GUBANSKI: I don’t think –

KITTA: Well, not necessarily. Most of the guys at that time, like my daddy and Joe’s daddy, they didn’t really have a whole lot of education. And they couldn’t read and write very well. But they knew how to work. And they overlooked that part of it as long as they got the work out of them.

FRANA: Gotcha. I have heard from Joe that the creeks and bayous in the 1950s, especially after Camp Robinson got built, experienced some chemical spills. You guys know anything about that?

GUBANSKI: Arthur may remember, but I know my brother and sisters remember – where Maumelle is we called it Acid Plant.

FRANA: Maumelle Ordinance Plant? Is that what you are talking about?

KITTA: They moved the people out for Camp Robinson. A year later they came back and told those people where Maumelle is now they had to move because they took over to build what we called – we called it Acid Plant. What they were doing was manufacturing picric acid for artillery shells.

GUBANSKI: They had a spill one time that went over into the lake down there and killed a bunch of the fish.

KITTA: It killed all of the fish.

SZYMANSKI: All the way to the river.

GUBANSKI: Now I'm not sure we want to put that in there because that'll destroy Maumelle and they might all jump up and leave.

SZYMANSKI: And at that time there was no such thing as OSHA. And there was a war. And that's all they were studying. They weren't studying about safety.

KITTA: There were some guys, they were working at that plant, and they all had a yellow cast to them from picric acid. And they smelled like they were –

FRANA: Now, that was just normal. That wasn't just because of the spill? That was because they were working –

SZYMANSKI: And some of that acid, I heard, was shipped to Russia.

FRANA: Is that right?

SZYMANSKI: They put it in tank cars, you know, they had a train come in there and loaded it up.

GUBANSKI: Just another unrelated fact: You know on the other side of Maumelle down there is Palarm. Well, between Palarm and Marche, actually, were a lot of black people living there. And they called their area West Marche.

SZYMANSKI: And that's what they call it now.

GUBANSKI: They call it West Marche.

GUBANSKI: Everything is either Maumelle or Morgan. But from Oak Grove on out it was Marche.

SZYMANSKI: Wasn't hardly any people living in there. Of course, they couldn't farm. It was too hilly. There's nothing but hills there.

FRANA: So Marche has been squeezed and squeezed and squeezed again, and now it's being squeezed by expansion in Maumelle. How do you feel about that? It's bringing new people into the church. Joe had mentioned that.

GUBANSKI: Yeah.

SZYMANSKI: Well, you go to church over here and, you know, four people you're doing good.

GUBANSKI: Well I, personally for me, I'm on the steering committee and stuff – I'm concerned about it really. We enjoy this freedom up here. You know, you don't have all of these regulations that Maumelle has. You know some people are not satisfied with some of this stuff. But you know, we've been here so long, and do what you want for so long, and you see that being shut off, being squeezed out, and –

SZYMANSKI: Let me tell you a comment I heard one woman say about these cemetery lots. They're going so high on them, you know, or raising the price? And she said these Polish people ought to get together and say, "Listen, we've been here all our lives, paying here all our lives. And now we have to pay just the same what the ones who've been here six months."

GUBANSKI: That's true too.

SZYMANSKI: And that what she said, "You all ought to get together on that." And I said, "Well, I can't comment on that. That's the way it is."

FRANA: So there's been a lot of rural character and now it's being kind of suburbanized.

GUBANSKI: Right, suburbanized.

SZYMANSKI: Even one guy said years ago, "I don't think I ought to pay. Why should I pay all that? I've been here all of my life."

GUBANSKI: Well, for instance, I like to keep livestock. Well, you know, Maumelle is just right across the highway from me. Well, you know, people move in and say, "You know, I don't like the smell of that cow poop." You know, well, that puts – you've been doing that all your life – and you use it. And then all of the sudden that kind of gets cut off. It's a little chipping away at your freedom.

FRANA: When did you first notice that? Was that after the freeway went in here in the 1960s?

GUBANSKI: I think it was probably when Maumelle became a city, is when it probably started. And the reason that happened is North Little Rock bought what is now Maumelle. North Little Rock bought that property. And I don't know the mayor, Laman,[7] was in a financial bind or whatever happened. He sold it to a guy named Jesse Odom, who was an insurance owner.

SZYMANSKI: He didn't have any money to do anything with it.

GUBANSKI: And he didn't have any money, or you know, back then regulations changed. I don't know if he was using the insurance company's money to try to build that city? But anyway somehow the government got involved. And the government had in mind to have model cities. It so happens that they decided this would be a good trial right here, we would make it Maumelle. And that's kind of how it got started. Well, what happened then is that North Little Rock said it made a mistake by selling that property. So what they want to do is kind of annex all of us into the city just to get that. You know? And we put up a few little battles where we would go out and vote. I remember going out in North Little Rock and passing out fliers to vote against this annexation, or we'd have all been sucked into it.

CHUDY: Even Maumelle, is – I didn't know this until at *Karnawał* time I asked one of the deputies there, "Well, how come I see in the paper Maumelle went to an accident here at the Shell station, at the liquor store and all that stuff." And she kind of looked and *woo* – and I knew I had kind of hit a tender spot – and she said, "Maumelle has annexed that Shell station, the liquor store, and Razorback Pizza." That one little island there because it's businesses. She says, "If you drive by there and look, you'll see a Maumelle strip marker." You don't notice that, but that's there.

KITTA: – from the interstate going all the way in to Maumelle.

SZYMANSKI:

CHUDY: They didn't get all of it. They just got that one spot.

SZYMANSKI: The taxes are higher.

GUBANSKI: It's always for revenue base. That's what it is.

SZYMANSKI: The taxes are higher over there.

FRANA: Well, how do you suppose that will eventually play out? Will there be an incorporated area in Marche? Will this become its own town? How do you –

GUBANSKI: I would like to see it become like Cammack Village in Little Rock – it's just a little separate piece of property, where they've got their own mayor. And they just survive and they are happy.

[7] William F. "Casey" Laman, mayor from 1958 to 1972, and again from 1979 to 1980.

SZYMANSKI: Keep Marche.

GUBANSKI: Keep Marche.

KITTA: That will probably never happen.

GUBANSKI: That'll probably never happen. I look at it this way. I won't live that long to see it maybe. Maybe I will.

KITTA: Well, I know this is off the subject here, but this is Pulaski County. And there is no control of any kind. You drive along the highway you see all the junk yards. You got a piece of property in Pulaski County, you can do whatever you want with it. And that's what people are doing. They are making garbage dumps out of it. And –

GUBANSKI: – some of them like to do that.

KITTA: I know. So there is no control of anything.

FRANA: So if it actually became part of the city then there would be more controls.

KITTA: Yeah, yeah.

FRANA: Well, I appreciate you talking about that, because I know that's been kind of a sore subject over the last couple of decades. You want to preserve the memories that you have. They're so good. How often when you were, say, in your twenties, did you travel to Little Rock or North Little Rock, and what did you go there for, when you went downtown? If you ever went to town. Of course, you were living in town **[motions to Tony Chudy].**

SZYMANSKI: When we was young, that's where we went. The picture show.

FRANA: You went to the movies?

SZYMANSKI: Sure, sure.

FRANA: Did you all go there on Saturday for shopping, or Friday night for shopping?

KITTA: Well, back when I was a kid after we moved over here, we had a car. But daddy used it for work, so there were busses running. And the bus runs into Little Rock. So, I don't know, me and my mom and maybe a brother or sister went. And then, we had to go a lot of times to the courthouse to pay taxes, then buy a few things, and then get on the bus and come back home.

GUBANSKI: I think on my side of the family it was not a necessity. You know, you went to buy what you needed or pay your bill. And then some of my aunts lived in town, it was a time to visit. But daddy always – you had to pinch every penny so you made all of that in one trip. You know, you visited your relatives, you paid your bills, you bought what you needed. So for us I would think that we might have went one time a week, maybe, and I didn't go.

KITTA: Maybe not that often.

GUBANSKI: I may have not even went at all. I think when I started high school, that's about the most frequent visits to the city.

FRANA: And what year would that have been exactly?

GUBANSKI: Well, '59 when I started at Catholic High, which was in Little Rock.

FRANA: Now in the '50s and '60s say, if you want to get groceries, and it wasn't something you could grow yourself, where would you go? Were there little businessmen here in the Marche area?

GUBANSKI: Well, Mr. Malachowski was the proprietor. He had a store. And then Choinski [?] started the Blue Hill [store] right across the way here. He gave Malachowski a little competition. So you know the people – whoever lived closest – would go to the closest store.

FRANA: Okay. So basically there would be two places.

SZYMANSKI: That killed Mox.

GUBANSKI: Then the freeway really killed them.

FRANA: What was Mox?

GUBANSKI: That's Polish for Malachowski.

SZYMANSKI: Max Malachowski.

GUBANSKI: But Carl Zakrzewski straightened me out on Max Malachowski. You know, I thought Max came over with the Poles but he didn't. Karl told me that he was like a bartender for some of the Jews in Little Rock, and that he met up with Frances Lukaszewicz. And then somebody bankrolled him into starting that store.

SZYMANSKI: You know he wasn't but about twenty years old when he opened up that store.

GUBANSKI: Is that right? Well his picture's down there. He's not very old in that.

KITTA: One thing that's not very well known either is Malachowski helped a lot of these Polish people during the hard times.

FRANA: And what was he doing?

GUBANSKI: He was a store owner.

FRANA: Which store was that?

GUBANSKI: It was Malachowski's. I don't think Dr. Phil has been over there yet. I was hoping that someone would bring a picture of the store. I couldn't find one offhand.

KITTA: I've got one someplace over here.

CHUDY: Wasn't the original store, if you're facing the house, was the wooden store to the right? Now I've got a picture of that.

FRANA: And it's still standing – ?

CHUDY: No, no it's not. The store is gone now.

FRANA: Okay.

CHUDY: Now, the house is still standing.

SZYMANSKI: The first store was on the east side of the house. And then he built that big one on the corner. And it was a big store. He sold feed, flour and everything else over there.

KITTA: But he'd loan these folks credit out until they grew a crop, and sold the cotton, and all of that. But he –

FRANA: A true country store, a farm and country store. When you were sick, and you were too sick to be taken care of by your mother, where did you go for healthcare? Who were your doctors out here?

KITTA: You doctored yourself.

FRANA: That was it? That was pretty much it?

GUBANSKI: There was one doctor –

FRANA: You put a little onion poultice on and that was it?

GUBANSKI: There was one doctor in North Little Rock, and his house is probably on the historic register, on Broadway, Degenis. That's the first doctor I remember.

SZYMANSKI: A lot of people went over there. He sponsored a lot of baseball, for years and years, Dr. Degenis.

GUBANSKI: And his house is still standing there I think.

SZYMANSKI: After he died his wife still sponsored it. He didn't know none of the players, he just sent a check.

GUBANSKI: You know, most of it was self-care. And then a lot of it – if you knew somebody in the community that was familiar with the kind of illness you had, you went and asked those people for help. And they usually helped you.

CHUDY: Or you died young.

GUBANSKI: Some of them did.

FRANA: You just couldn't get any help?

SZYMANSKI: I lost a brother when he was six months old. Nowadays he'd a gone home –

FRANA: So here's a fun question. Tell me about one of your best friends that you had out here. Not someone who was part of your family, but you considered to be one of your best friends. Or are you all sitting around here together [today]?

SZYMANSKI: We was friends. Usually kinfolk. That was the closest thing. There was a neighbor maybe, or –

KITTA: – well, everybody just helped each other.

SZYMANSKI: That kind of drove the whole place.

GUBANSKI: Of course, probably we got together on a Sunday because, we talked about earlier, you know there was farm work. Now, if daddy caught us playing, we got our butts whipped. Now the kids play all week long, but used to we worked all week long. Maybe they might give you a couple of hours Sunday afternoon to go visit the neighbor kid to play with. That was it. But I didn't have anybody in particular except Eddie Leece. He was my age, and he went to school up here. He lived down here and we lived over there. But since I was the baby of the family, my older brothers and sisters, they didn't want to have nothing to do with me. **[laughs]** You were just on your own. I've been a loner, I even work – you know when I work, I'd rather work by myself. You know? But that was my case. I just didn't really have any particular friends.

FRANA: Let me ask you a different question then. Some of you had sisters. Was it different for the young women in your community? I assume they were doing more cooking, and cleaning around the house, and helping out their mothers. What were their lives like?

SZYMANSKI: They had to go out into the fields too.

GUBANSKI: They did.

FRANA: Did they have different jobs? Did they go work for Vestal Nursery or someplace else?

SZYMANSKI: You know what, a lot of them did. As soon as they got out of the schools, they became maids in town. A guy told me the other day his sister went to work when she was fourteen years old.

GUBANSKI: They went to work for Bearys and Tuf-Nut. Garment factories.

KITTA: Garment factories, yeah.

SZYMANSKI: And they would live with people.

GUBANSKI: I suppose the girls were, like in biblical times, they weren't important. Like my sisters, you know, they had to get out there and work.

KITTA: Pick cotton. Chop cotton.

GUBANSKI: My sister Dorothy always had to bridle the mule, and have it ready for dad. Everybody had a job to do, but the girls – you know the guys went out and got work. But the girls mostly stayed. My wife, she stayed home and she never went to high school. Christine never went to high school. She stayed home and was the baby of the family like me, and the girls went to work and she took care of her mom and dad. Her mom died when she was sixteen, and she took care of her dad. She never went to school. Education for girls – education wasn't important back in those days.

FRANA: Tell me a little bit about the house you all grew up in. What do you remember about the first house you lived in?

SZYMANSKI: The first house? That's where we live now. Two room house, a kitchen and where you slept. There was no such thing as a living room.

FRANA: No parlor for entertaining.

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, that's right. We had it rebuilt later on.

FRANA: Did you cook outside when it got real hot in the summertime?

SZYMANSKI: We didn't. Not in the old house. Nowadays, some of 'em go to the toilet in the house and cook outside.

[general laughter]

FRANA: That's a good point. Things have really changed, haven't they?

GUBANSKI: What about you, Tony?

CHUDY: Well we lived in town. My grandfather, Michael Lukaszewicz, he married a Mary Anne – I can't think of her last name – and she died when she was about twenty-six. And he had

one son, Felix Lukaszewicz. And then he remarried and had six children. It was three girls and three boys. Of course, I don't know when he built the house or anything. I think they got that place up there around 1900. And they built a nice house there. And we just grew up there until I was ready to get married. And that was it. The house was bought then by my momma and my daddy, from my grandfather. And my grandfather lived there, and one of my mother's brothers lived there. There were three of us, my brother Charles and a younger sister Mary Anne. I was in the middle there. So we had a pretty good-sized house. Momma had to take care of it. She never went to high school. I think she went to eighth grade, and that was it. She had her momma to take care of, and she took care of her daddy. I think grandpa died in 1950. And then she still took care of her brother until in the '70s. So she did strictly home-work.

GUBANSKI: Arthur, what about your homeplace? You probably remember your first homeplace up there in Cato.

KITTA: Well my mom and dad, when they got married, moved to North Little Rock. My dad worked the railroad. And, just right when the Depression hit they decided they was going to move back to the country. So my grandpa gave daddy forty acres, and they built a house. It was a nice house. I don't know how they built it. It was a good house, until we had to move. And I remember, in the 1930s when they run electricity through that, they managed to get the house wired up for electricity with one light in each room, hanging from the ceiling. And then we was really living high. And then for a couple of months – and then when the power company used to come and collect, you know, for electricity. Well, come a time momma didn't have money to pay it. It wasn't like sixty cents. Well, she didn't have it, so the guy climbed up on the pole and pulled the switch. He said, "Well, I'll be back next month." We had to go back to coal-oil lamps. Next month they come back and momma had the money to pay him. And they plugged it back in. But I do remember my grandpa's house. Part of it was logs, and then part of it was built out of lumber, with a dog-trot. You know, you heard of dog trots? It had a dog trot.

FRANA: They still have a house like that on the Courthouse Square in Conway that has a dog-trot.

SZYMANSKI: My grandmother – well, you know, where my mother was born – that house still stands down there.

FRANA: Is that right?

GUBANSKI: My dad, when they got moved out of Camp Robinson, my oldest siblings were there, and dad used to walk over here to past y'all's place in Marche. They cleared that property by hand, and he bought that. What I remember is that, daddy, he always added on, and had inside built that two storey house. And I kind of remember a little bit about it but I remember the side porches had a dirt floor. Momma did a lot of cooking on really a dirt floor. Later on as you got money you poured slab. She cooked with that wood stove. You had to split that wood real thin. And you had to fire that wood stove up. It took a job – them women cooked a durned good meal, for an unregulated fire, so to speak. They knew how to do that. I remember mother used to have an iron that you'd just set on that stove, and then when it got hot enough she went out there and ironed. And one day I decided that, "I wonder how hot that thing is." And she said, "Don't touch

it. Don't touch it." I had to do it. And, boy, I got burned, screamed and hollered, and I got a whipping. I remember coal-oil lamps. I remember the lights. Joe Michalak put in the lights. He ran the wiring for the lights. And boy it was a great day when you got a refrigerator, because back then you had ice-men come around and we had an ice box. And I remember the Grand Old Opry. Daddy had an old Philco radio and that durned thing would fade in and fade out. We'd spend half the durned night up there trying to tune that Opry in. And the other thing I remember about that is that I was laying in bed with my dad there, and Ted Koscielny come by, and this is a vivid memory for me. He, as he told us, was engaged to Cathrine Seredynski. He was going to his sister's house, which was down the road from us, and he stopped by and talked to us. I remember that very well. And we still had a kerosene lamp, but you didn't use them lights. You didn't use them because that was money spent. So you'd just conserve. That's kind of what I remember about it. I was modernized, but we still had an outhouse. We didn't have inside plumbing for a long time.

FRANA: Did you have any prized possessions that you recall? Something that you owned that you really felt proud of? You had this radio. I remember my parents talking about how important it was.

GUBANSKI: We got tv and that radio was gone.

SZYMANSKI: You mean now?

FRANA: No, I mean back then. I don't know exactly when, but –

GUBANSKI: I think dad bought me a 410 shotgun. I wanted that 410 so bad he bought it for me. That was my prized possession. I finally got to do grown-up things. Go hunting on my own.

KITTA: Most everything I had was hand-me-downs. And once you got 'em lived it or got done with it, if it was still worth anything you passed it on to somebody else. Really, we didn't have anything to be honest with you.

FRANA: You had nothing to call your own.

GUBANSKI: You might have your favorite dog. When that dog died –. But beside that little shotgun I don't think I had anything else.

SZYMANSKI: I didn't have much of anything because my daddy died when I was six years old. The Depression, you know, you didn't get much then.

FRANA: Did people build the homes together? Did they help each other out? Were there people who were particularly good carpenters and they could help you with particular problems you had?

SZYMANSKI: Indeed, indeed. Some of them were pretty good, and they had the knowledge –

FRANA: And they would do that full time? They would be into carpentry work?

SZYMANSKI: Not necessarily. Usually in the fall, when the crops was all in, then they started building, adding on, or anything like that.

GUBANSKI: My late father-in-law had a sawmill, Jake Wilk. He sawed a lot of that lumber for Poles here. And he helped a lot of them out, on how to build the houses. And the house they built now is just as solid as can be.

KITTA: These guys at the sawmill – they really helped people out. They sawed the lumber for them, and –

GUBANSKI: Now Frank's uncle, Bolick Szymanski, he was an intelligent guy and he built a lot of houses here. In fact, Bolick used to be pretty knowledgeable in English, if I remember right, and he used to assist some of the Poles going to the courthouse and recording certain things.

SZYMANSKI: See they went to that school over there. I don't know if you knew that was a school down there off of Clinton Road, where a lot of people went to school there. My daddy went to school there. My momma's older sister went to school there.

GUBANSKI: But a lot of old folks, they got together and helped build each other's houses.

KITTA: Oh yeah.

FRANA: Mostly wood homes? I noticed there are some stone homes here.

GUBANSKI: That came later probably.

SZYMANSKI: After the war everything started modernizing over here.

FRANA: Tell me about some of these holidays you all celebrated growing up. Christmas or Easter or *Karnawał?*

GUBANSKI: *Karnawał* wasn't really big until back in the late 1970s.

SZYMANSKI: That's right. Father Schneider was here.

FRANA: As a fundraiser for the school?

FRANA: What about some of these other holidays?

SZYMANSKI: I tell you what the folks had around here for enjoyment. They used to have dances at people's houses.

FRANA: Oh, okay.

SZYMANSKI: A lot of Sundays.

GUBANSKI: They had box suppers too I understand. I don't remember those.

SZYMANSKI: That's where they raised money for the church. Those box supper. You know what a box supper is? The girl would fix a lunch in a box. That way the girl's would bring them to this house. And then they would auctioned them boxes off. And the boy that bought that box, ate that lunch with that girl.

FRANA: I see. I see. That's good**. [laughs]**

GUBANSKI: One of the things I remember, Arthur remember? I don't know if Frank – Dyngus? You remember, after Easter?

KITTA: Yep.

GUBANSKI: I don't know how that tradition started, but the guys would get a cedar switch limb. And I think it was more or less a courtship [thing]. They would visit some of these girls that they kind of liked, and I think they switched their legs. I was told I wasn't going to be doing that. But I remember they came to my house, and Leona got on top the roof. We had a two-story house. And she went and got on top of the roof. And we had a Chinaberry tree close to the house, and I forget who that was climbed that Chinaberry tree. Oh boy, she was madder than –

[general laughter]

SZYMANSKI: That was an old custom.

GUBANSKI: Yeah, old custom. A lot of guys picked their favorite girl and, you know, maybe he just tapped her. We don't know. You know, you weren't there when – so anyway some of them married –

SZYMANSKI: Dyngus.

GUBANSKI: But anyway –

FRANA: How do you spell Dyngus?

GUBANSKI: I don't know how you spell it.

SZYMANSKI: D-I-N-gus?[8]

FRANA: Now, where I'm from, they had these Czech polka halls scattered around. When they got too big for a person's house? You'd go there. Did you have Polish music halls?

[8] Actually, "Dyngus."

GUBANSKI: Right here as part of the classroom in that old school that we went to. That became a parish hall, and that's where we had a lot of dances.

KITTA: And before that, they had somebody at home. You know, a bunch of young people get together and say, "Hey, let's have a dance!" You know, so they decided whose house they'd have it. They'd go find the musicians and they'd –

SZYMANSKI: On a Sunday.

KITTA: Yeah. Yeah.

GUBANSKI: I can tell you that back in the '50s and '60s, Leo Luyet had a sawmill out here in Marche. And Leo and the Koscielny boys built a couple of platforms, and when they decided to have a dance they went up there and old Pete Koscielny used to have a lot of them on his place. He'd set that platform out and they just brought it in together or braced it, and that where they had that that. The guys, the musicians, were sitting out there – had a little offset, and then people would go out there and dance. And they had that at weddings –

SZYMANSKI: Even at the weddings they had that dance floor platform out there.

KITTA: You're talking about celebrations? Weddings was the big thing.

GUBANSKI: People looked forward to it, I can tell you.

KITTA: And back years ago, before the parish grew, just everybody – there wasn't that many people – just about everybody got invited to the wedding. And man, they partied.

GUBANSKI: They started at the bride's house, and then they decorated the cars with crepe paper, and blowing their horns all the way to church. And up here they'd have a couple of ushers posted on a hill to stop the traffic, of course there wasn't that much traffic anyway, and let the wedding party come on through.

FRANA: Now, when did you become aware that there were places in the county where drinking and dancing was not permissible. It wasn't a dry county, but –

GUBANSKI: Well, certain places – there used to be a lot of taverns right along the highway. They were off-limits. Parents – I'll tell you, them boys, they had to try them out. **[laughs]** They had to try them out.

SZYMANSKI: Even the grocery store would sell here. You could buy a beer and drink it right there.

KITTA: Well, it wasn't really no problems with the dances or the weddings as long as it was community. But then the outsiders started filtering in. And when that started happening, that's when things started going downhill. And it finally just fizzled out really.

SZYMANSKI: A lot of people moved out.

FRANA: Fishing? You guys did a lot of fishing out here? Is that right?

GUBANSKI: I did.

KITTA: I never did too much. I wasn't –

GUBANSKI: We did what they call hogging, I guess. We had a net and we'd just [go out on] Sunday afternoon and we'd go out there to those Marche lakes and we'd seine those lakes. And oddly enough, as many times as we seined it, we always had fish in there. You always could catch a fish.

SZYMANSKI: When we were young. That's for teenagers. That's the way I did. I fished a whole lot. I fished everywhere: Palarm Creek, Marche Lakes. Every little hole had some fish.

FRANA: What kind of fish were you catching?

GUBANSKI: Oh, just anything you could eat. You know, back then you –

SZYMANSKI: Catfish.

GUBANSKI: – threw it on the table.

SZYMANSKI: Some of those little streams had those stripple.

GUBANSKI: It's a sauger. The real name for it is a sauger. It's a game fish. We ate grennel when grennel was a despised fish.

KITTA: And gar. We ate a lot of gar.

SZYMANSKI: We was hungry.

GUBANSKI: Drum.

FRANA: Traditional Polish food that you recall that you really liked?

SZYMANSKI: Czarnina!

GUBANSKI: Czarnina.

FRANA: Czarnina. What is czarnina?

SZYMANSKI: Usually you make it out of a goose.

KITTA: Goose or a duck.

GUBANSKI: Blood.

FRANA: Is it like a blood pudding?

CHUDY: Naw. It's a soup.

FRANA: A soup?

SZYMANSKI: You'd save the blood from it.

GUBANSKI: Czarnina means czarni or "dark." And what it is they'd use that duck blood or goose blood for coloring.

SZYMANSKI: Ahh, you're eating blood! Look, what about these people who cook that steak and blood's dripping out of their mouth. Of course, it's cooked.

GUBANSKI: Czarnina. Of course, our folks over here, you know, they've got some of the traditional dishes, but down here they had to work so they'd fix what was easy to fix. And you had a wood stove. You know, some of those Polish foods are delicious. Of course, the women had to cook and they had to go right back out and go to work in the field.

SZYMANSKI: You'd have a child one day, and be picking cotton the next.

GUBANSKI: That's right. Some of them did.

FRANA: Desserts that you guys recall? Polish delicacies?

GUBANSKI: Not really. Not that I know of.

KITTA: Fruit pies mostly – peaches, apples, blackberries. Mama'd give us a lard bucket and say, "Go pick some blackberries and I'll make you a blackberry cobbler. So we did. We'd go pick a bucket full of blackberries and whip up a cobbler like you wouldn't believe.

SZYMANSKI: That's right.

FRANA: Were any of you musicians?

SZYMANSKI: A lot of people were good musicians around here. Yes sir.

FRANA: A lot of people playing – what kind of instruments?

GUBANSKI: My dad played the fiddle.

KITTA: The early days was mostly a fiddle and what they called a bass.

GUBANSKI: It was a cello.

KITTA: That went on for years until the wartime. A lot of guys come back from the service – they started playing concertinas.

GUBANSKI: I guess one of our favorite musicians was Walter Szparaga. He was an Army guy and he married a local girl. He had a concertina and he loved to play, and boy I'll tell you what, he put out some great music for this community for years and years and years.

FRANA: Were there accordion players?

GUBANSKI: There were some.

SZYMANSKI: Even now, when we have the *Karnawał* over here. On a Friday evening –

KITTA: Steven and Danny Pruss.

SZYMANSKI: Those accordions would play for two or three hours. Sure, yes, yes. You'll have to come down here.

FRANA: I will have to do that.

SZYMANSKI: Simons, from Conway? She's already disabled, but in a wheelchair. She sits over there –

GUBANSKI: We've got people coming in from Morrilton to try to listen to it, and they just bring a lawn chair and sit down there and listen to all these different –

FRANA: And they dance too?

GUBANSKI: No.

FRANA: Just listen.

GUBANSKI: There've some couples dancing out there on the ground.

SZYMANSKI: Saturday even they have several kinds. All kinds of dancers. Irish dancers. I've got grandkids in that.

FRANA: Whatever it takes.

SZYMANSKI: You know – two of the girls are going to Washington next month, December. Washington, D.C.

GUBANSKI: They are going to take part in a program up there or what?

SZYMANSKI: Some kind of competition or something.

FRANA: Now you all make it sound like life changed pretty dramatically after World War II.

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, you're right. It sure did.

FRANA: Is that one of the biggest changes you've seen in Marche in your lives?

SZYMANSKI: I think so. It really –

KITTA: Basically, it was. It was a dramatic change for everybody.

SZYMANSKI: Before that everything was closed in over here. And after that –

FRANA: Do you think that had a lot to do with the attitudes of the boys when they all came back?

KITTA: Well, they went where they could find better jobs and make more money. And it wasn't available here in the community. So that's the main reason, I'll say.

SZYMANSKI: Even some of the girls went out and like they call them the riveter girls. You know, riveter –

FRANA: Rosie the Riveter, right.

SZYMANSKI: Yeah, some of them –

GUBANSKI: I think the other thing that happened after World War II, is that – You know, my parents when you came home you spoke Polish. By god, don't you speak a word of English. And then when you went up here you had to learn how to speak English. Went out in the workplace people made fun of you because you got a broken English so to speak. But what happened during World War II, a lot of those guys that came in from other places got acquainted with some of these girls, and there's no such thing as outer marriage. You didn't marry anybody outside of your community. You married somebody, you'd better marry a Polish girl, or you'd better marry a Polish man. Well that changed after World War II. Because a lot of the guys came in here and then slowly by slowly and communications and transportation changed. Some of the guys went to Conway, St. Joe's, or different places and got acquainted with some of the girls with the boys. And that's when it's kind of opened up after that.

KITTA: Well, I think one reason was that everybody done married everybody that wasn't related. And that's true. They just didn't have no choice.

[general laugher]

GUBANSKI: And it slowly bubbled out, and then poof it was gone.

FRANA: And I suppose that when you've seen the world –

KITTA: Yeah, that made a big difference.

GUBANSKI: You were just confined here. You was under orders, so to speak.

FRANA: Are there any other big changes that you would point to? Either, you know, things that you saw or attitudes that changed or – ?

SZYMANSKI: Now some of the folks that did live over here thought they could do better elsewhere. Around the turn of the century, about five or six families hooked up their teams to wagons and moved to Oklahoma. I guess they done better over there.

GUBANSKI: [names families]

FRANA: Around 1900 they moved over there?

SZYMANSKI: [names families]

GUBANSKI: I think Maumelle, for me, was a change because – back there, you know we had hunting galore. We were all by ourselves over there. All of a sudden that's restricted. And what happened then is, once that property went up, you know they had a lot of loggers who went in there, and they go in for the profit. They don't care what they leave behind. Well, they damaged the woods, and it slowly deteriorated. If you go up there to those lakes, which you've not been up there, you could see a distance out there. I mean you could see through that wood just fine. I mean you could see deer and squirrel way out there ahead of you. You go up there now you can't recognize nothing.

KITTA: Is that right?

GUBANSKI: Because the trees have been dead and they've been toppled over, and the treetops left in the creek, causing the water to back out. It just really –

SZYMANSKI: I guess a lot of brush grew up too then.

GUBANSKI: A lot of brush. Beavers came in and they just used that as a stabilizing factor. They just made their dams and they just killed a lot of the beautiful timber is gone. Dead – wasted. So to me that's been the big change.

FRANA: There's been some stone mining too in the area?

GUBANSKI: Not really in this area. Right here. Not far away Jeffries was. But not really here. Now my dad told me that he worked in Maumelle when they started building that Acid Plant. He

said he worked for fifty cents a day, and sometimes didn't get paid at all. And Sylvester Kaplon worked over there too.

SZYMANSKI: I worked over there.

FRANA: Is that right?

GUBANSKI: – helping build that place. But that was all hilly and rock there.

SZYMANSKI: – I think it was twenty cents an hour. I don't remember what it was. Common labor. And you'd meet all kinds of people on that –

GUBANSKI: I think the other thing that changed in the community here is that a lot of the old folks that had lots of property have died out, and the kids can't take care of it anymore. They've got jobs and they sell the property out. And that's how more of the development is coming in.

SZYMANSKI: That's right.

KITTA: Yeah, yeah.

GUBANSKI: And I can see that happening in my own family, you know. I expect my kids to do certain things, and they're too busy. And I can see –

SZYMANSKI: My grandmother and them had eighty acres. It's over twenty houses on it now.

FRANA: It's all become a suburban development. What do you think the future is going to be like? I guess I sort of asked this question before: How do you expect things to turn out, and how would you like things to turn out?

SZYMANSKI: You were just talking about this here?

FRANA: Yes, the Marche community.

GUBANSKI: I'd like to see it stay like it is. That's what I'd like to see.

SZYMANSKI: I heard on the news yesterday or the day before. A lot of people moved out of cities – they moved out –and that's going to start coming back. It's too expensive traveling and so on.

GUBANSKI: Well, I'm just accustomed to it. I like it the way it is, you know. I like my neighbors. And a lot of people like me. You know, they want to come out and live by, of course, that's developing more.

FRANA: Well, and they know you, right, don't they?

GUBANSKI: Some of them don't want to know me.

FRANA: A lot of people in modern neighborhoods, they don't even know their next-door neighbors very well.

KITTA: This parish has really grown in the last fifty years. I remember, at one time before we built the new school – I think they didn't have fifty kids going to school here. As a matter of fact, they were considering about even closing it at one time. And some of us said, "No, hun-uh. We can't. Once you close a school in a parish, the parish basically dies" – you know? So we kept it going and built a new school. And gradually, I think we got 180-some kids.

GUBANSKI: We're running right at about 200. Somewhere in that area.

SZYMANSKI: At the church over here the men sat on the left side and the women on the right.

FRANA: Joe was telling me about that. There are still a few who do that?

KITTA: Naw, that's basically –

GUBANSKI: Some of us brought up that way – if I come to church without my wife, I sit on that left side. She comes to church without me, she sits on the right.

FRANA: It's comforting. Right. Do a lot of the kids then go to Little Rock Catholic or Mount St. Mary after they graduate here?

GUBANSKI: Some go to St. Joe's now, because the distance is about really the same.

SZYMANSKI: You up at UCA?

FRANA: Yeah, I live up in Conway.

SZYMANSKI: You know a guy named John Choinski?

FRANA: Oh yeah. At UCA. He teaches there. He's a professor.

SZYMANSKI: I met him here. Now he's some relation to that **–**

FRANA: Is he from this community?

SZYMANSKI: He's from Philadelphia or somewhere. He's some way related to that Timothy [von] Choinski. He's some way related. He told me that he went to Poland and looked up where his family was.

FRANA: Yeah, I know of him, but there's no connection here between – ?

SZYMANSKI: He was here about a couple of years ago, he and his wife.

GUBANSKI: See that Pete Jaworski who was on that tape you've got there. He came from New York, and the way he described it, you know, he had a government job down here and met Pauline Jaworski.

KITTA: I understand that he was in the Navy, and he jumped ship in New York. He came from Poland. He was originally from Poland, and he jumped ship in New York, and joined the Army. And that was during World War I. And then he wound up here at Camp Robinson while he was in the Army.

FRANA: Well, we've covered a lot of territory here in the last hour and a half, are there specific memories you want to share and get them down for posterity, or specific stories that we've missed? Things that you'd like to talk about that maybe people don't know too much about, stories that haven't been passed down so well to your families?

SZYMANSKI: Well, we've been through a lot. **[laughs]**

FRANA: You've been through a lot? **[laughs]** Yeah, that's becoming pretty apparent here!

FRANA: Any final memories. We covered a lot of things. Maybe about your marriages? Spouses? Wives?

SZYMANSKI: I didn't marry a Polish girl.

FRANA: Oh, you didn't! You married a Williams.

FRANA: What did your parents think of that? Did they approve?

SZYMANSKI: Well, they didn't disapprove.

FRANA: They didn't say anything?

SZYMANSKI: They didn't say they liked it. But they didn't tell me. [laughs]

FRANA: You couldn't find a good Polish girl to marry?

SZYMANSKI: Sure, I guess so, but that's the way –

FRANA: How did you meet your wife?

SZYMANSKI: I went on a fishing trip, by golly.

FRANA: Is that right? A trip. It wasn't local here?

SZYMANSKI: See, what it was, my sister worked for U.S. Times. She worked with some people. And that was this girl's momma. They had a fishing trip going somewhere – I don't

remember now – to that part of the state. But anyway, they invited me – wanted to go with them. When they came by to meet them, that's how.

KITTA: [shows his wedding picture] Fifty-six years.

FRANA: You were quite a handsome fellow. You're still are a pretty handsome fellow. You haven't changed all that much. You've still got that strong chin.

[general laughter]

KITTA: [speaks in Polish]

SZYMANSKI: That means, "She's not ours no more."

FRANA: What's her name? What was her name?

KITTA: Magdalena. Maggie.

FRANA: And how did you meet her?

KITTA: Well, that's kind of a long story. **[laughs]**

FRANA: You knew her for a long, long time?

KITTA: Well, yeah. My uncle and her daddy were real good friends. And they had a dance at Aunt Pauline's one Saturday night. Uncle Pete picked me and Cyril up. And he said, "Well, let's go by George's." And Maggie and her sister were waiting for – well, Maggie had a boyfriend and they were waiting for him to come pick her up. And we were going to leave and she said, "I ain't going to wait for him no more, I'm going with you!" And I said, "So come on." **[laughter]** So we went to the dance. And then shortly after that I was drafted into the Army. I was in the Army and I wrote to her one time, and I never did get a letter back. So when I got out, I was kind of – you know – kinda wanting to date her, but she already was dating. So I let it slide until she sent word by her cousin that she'd like for me to come by. And I said, "uh-oh." And so there it went. And so we –

SZYMANSKI: You were in Vietnam? Or Korea?

KITTA: I was in [the service] during Korea.

FRANA: She's very pretty.

KITTA: Thank you.

FRANA: Joe, tell me how you met your wife.

GUBANSKI: Well, we went to school together. She's a little bit older than I am. And of course, her family there basically [kept] to themselves –

KITTA: [Interrupts to share a thick folder of clippings and papers.] There's a lot of information here in this. I'll let you have this. Like for instance we were talking about Camp Robinson. Camp Robinson used to be part of Marche. And here's a –

FRANA: I've got a copy of that **[motions to Centennial souvenir booklet for Immaculate Heart of Mary Church].** Sorry, Joe, we interrupted your story.

GUBANSKI: That's okay. But anyway, we knew each other. And I'd gone into the Marines. I was gone for awhile, but I came home on leave. We never had air-conditioning in that church. Never did. And I came in on leave and I went to church one Sunday. And she sang in a choir up there. And her and Colleen Jenders and maybe Ed Kitta. But anyway they had the open windows up and somebody hollered at me and it was Colleen. She married my cousin Floyd Jenders. And Christine was looking out the window. And boy she smiled and she had coal-black hair. And that smile and my heart fell at her feet. And it stayed there. I just finally got the nerve to ask her out. I was bashful as –. And I finally got the nerve to ask her out. And we married in '68. Four kids, and forty-two years. I'm a little pup compared to these guys, getting married and all that in the '60s. But anyway –

FRANA: We have one more story to tell. How did you meet your wife? What's her name?

CHUDY: Orah Lee. I was working. I had a regular job – when I was in school I had a job at the theaters in North Little Rock. And I was working up at the theater part time. And she worked over at the drug store right next to it, behind the counter. That's how I met her. And we started going out together, and about a year and a half later we got married.

FRANA: What was dating like? Did you go to the movies?

CHUDY: Movies. Going to the drive-ins. We'd go to previews too. They had midnight previews on a Saturday night. And then we got married in '55, and had nine children.

GUBANSKI: I think for me is all these old guys, you know. You know that Arthur picked me up, we walked to school, Arthur in uniform picking me up, his brother Cyril. And Lucien carried me. When this place would get a heavy rain that whole bottomland would flood, and I was just a kid and Lucien would pick me up your momma had him put on his hip boots and he carried me across the water. And Leona would have to pick her dress up and walk. But anyway the old folks, you know, they treated me good. They really treated me good. John Kaplon, the old man, and Ignatius Niedzwiedz. They were just good people. And that's the thing that I remember the most that I miss. They were just good folks. No matter what they did, what kind of life they lived, you know, it didn't matter. They were just good people. And I really enjoyed them. And I kind of miss that.

FRANA: People taking care of each other that way.

GUBANSKI: They was always nice to me, always.

KITTA: Of course, the strange thing is we lived over here at Marche, and there was black folks all the way around us. And we never had no problems. I picked cotton with them. I eat with them. I played with them. You know, they were like anybody else, as far as I was concerned, until I went into the public [school], and I found out that there's people out there that literally can't stand them. And I thought, "What is this sh-?"

GUBANSKI: They understood Polish too. You had to watch what you said. The Greens understood Polish.

KITTA: Yeah, we taught them how to speak Polish.

GUBANSKI: But they were good. They were good. They were hardworking people. I know a mother was home by herself and the chimney caught on fire, and burning like hell. And it happened that Doc Green and the guys were – they had these little cars, you know, had these two cylinders maybe one that had that putt-putt-putt. You'd push them and jump on. But anyway they were going through and their mom was screaming. Fire coming out the chimney. And they stopped and they came up there, and they put that fire out, you know. Just good people.

FRANA: Well, is that a good place to stop for now? If I have more questions would you be willing to answer them?

GUBANSKI: If you like, Arthur has got a lot of documentation and we've got some old pictures, and –

END OF INTERVIEW