Interview with Anna Josephine Therese Murvich
Location: Calumet, MI
February 15, 1983

Subject: Slovenian Ethnicity

START OF INTERVIEW

Diane Trudgeon-Fontana (DTF): My name is Diane Trudgeon-Fontana. I am doing this interview for an oral history workshop which was presented by Professor Russell Magnaghi at Northern Michigan University. This interview is with Anna Josephine Therese Murvich. She was born on November 28, 1915. She is 67 years old. She currently lives at 573 Cedar Street, Calumet, Michigan. The interview is being held on February 15, 1983. You spell the name Anna A-N-N-A, Josephine J-O-S-E-P-H-I-N-E, Therese T-H-E-R-E-S-E, and Murvich M-U-R-V-I-C-H, which may also be spelled as M-E-R-V-I-C-H.

Anna Murvich (AM): I suppose that what I should do first is explain where the people came from, where the Slovenians came from. And to clarify this, I'd just like to relate an incident. A friend referred to us as her Polish friend. And another friend sent me a clipping about Czechoslovakia from the Detroit paper and said "Isn't this where your people came from?" And that is the equivalent of saying the Copper Country is up near the Hudson Bay region. Therefore, since there is so much perplexity as to where Slovenia is I would like to say that it is in the northern part of Yugoslavia, south of Austria and Switzerland and east of Italy and west of Hungary. The people in the Copper Country all came from Austria in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were citizens of Austria. Their emperor was Franz Joseph of Austria. They recorded their heritage or their ancestry on their citizenship papers as coming from Austria. On the church marriage records and on the courthouse records they indicated their cities as being located in Austria. Many of the young men served in Austrian army before they came to this country. The country or state of Slovenia was under the domination of the German race for centuries. The language in the courts, I understand, was German. If there was a problem, they had to hire a lawyer speaking German to represent them in court. The people came here because they heard there was much opportunity in here, there was much work, and in their own country the farm always went to the oldest born son, and there was no other occupation in those early days. There were no factories such as there are today, there was only farming as means of livelihood. After the first immigrants came here they sent glowing reports that work was to be found in the mines here. The earliest people – settlers here – were the Ruppes and the Virtins and a few other families. The Grichars also were early settlers. After them the influx came in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Young men readily found work in the mines. Young ladies came to work as housemaids in boarding houses where the young men rented rooms, and also enterprising men started businesses such as grocery like the Ruppe business and clothing and the Virtin establishment and many taverns. This was the social gathering place for the young men. Young ladies also worked as farm maids. Some of the men who were married sent for their wives, those who were unmarried soon found husbands in the booming town. The way they obtained their money was usually one person arrived in this country and either borrowed money and sent it to send for their families or friends, or they loaned money to them. Several local Slovenian merchants would loan money to individuals to send to Europe to obtain their families, get their families in this country. I know that in my own case my uncle came here first, and as soon as he earned enough money he sent for my mother.

DTF: Okay. May I have your uncle's name?

AM: Ignatz, I-G-N-A-T-Z. L-O-V-R-E-T-I-C-H.

DTF: Could you pronounce that?

AM: Lovretich.

DTF: Lov-ret-itch.

AM: And so in that way my mother came here at the age of 16. This was about 1900.

DTF: And may I have your mother's name?

AM: Mary Lovretich.

DTF: Okay.

AM: My mother and uncle were orphans, and were raised by other people. They also had three other children in the family who were taken to an orphanage and they never saw them again.

DTF: They never saw them again. So you've got aunts and uncles, possibly.

AM: Well, they're probably dead by now, you know, they would be way up in their age. I understand that they went to a Catholic orphanage and the two girls became nuns, and the boy, I don't know what happened to him. But they probably are all dead now because my mother was four when she became an orphan, her father was working in the woods and a tree fell on him and killed him. And her mother either had a child six months later or the child was six months old at the time and she died shortly after. So it happened, a neighbor lady said, "Oh, this girl looks like me," and so she adopted, or she didn't adopt her, she just took her to work at her place. And my uncle was six, and he was taken by some distant relatives, second or third cousins, and the others went to the orphanage. So mother had a hard time, you know, she was used somewhat as a workhorse. And when uncle sent for her she came immediately and the people volunteered to adopt her at that time at age 16. But she saw no part of it. You see, she would have acquired part of the land and the farm. She would be eligible to inherit their property. But they didn't see fit to do it before, so she was anxious to come to America. And neither of my parents ever wanted to go back. They were so happy to be Americans. My dad was fiercely proud of being an American, and he couldn't stand to see anyone not go and vote. I recall as a child a lady was milking her cows down the street, and he said "Look at her, milking the cows when she should be going out to vote!" Nothing would stop them from voting. They were intensely proud of being American, and I think this was true of all of the people who came here; when they came they came with their entire loyalty to America. They had no desire to go back, ever. Not even to visit, they didn't care.

DTF: Would you have any idea what the reason was for that, why…?

AM: Well, it was poverty there, and actually they had no family, now people who had parents living, maybe they would have that inclination and desire. But they didn't. My dad was an orphan too. But he was older. He was 7, and half-sisters sort of raised him until they grew up too. I think he was 18 when he

came here, but he arrived in Pittsburgh. He came into Philadelphia or Pittsburgh – Philadelphia by boat and he always told us that he got on the boat in Rotterdam. And took a boat for a month to come here and he stayed in Pennsylvania for a year or two. Then he went to Minnesota for a year or so and then he came here to work. Where mother came directly from – through Bern, Switzerland to Liouc, France and from there to New York, and then came directly to Calumet; and she was on the boat 6 weeks and she said she was violently, very sick. Everyone was sick and the orchestra played because they thought that ship was going to go down. She said that they wanted everybody to dance to forget the motion of the ship. And so she went to work as a housemaid at the same host where my uncle was living and where the same relatives raised him as part of the family.

DTF: Where was he living at this time?

AM: Tamarack, where this little book that is from Tamarack ____. So what they did then was helped to cook, clean, wash mining cloths, scrub on the scrub board and those days no washing machines in 1900. So, one fine day in meeting my dad they were married. But they never knew each other before they came to this country. They lived apart, I would say like Houghton and Hancock. That distance apart.

DTF: In what area?

AM: In Slovenia. Now Slovenia was a part of Austria you recall. So the people who came to Calumet were almost all from the same area. Within, say, this expanse of the Copper Country. To put it in perspective say my dad might have been born in Houghton, and my mother in Calumet, and the beautiful resort country is up in Keweenaw at Copper Harbor – Lake Bled. It's gorgeous, and the capital would be right near, say, Chassell, you know a little way-out. So Slovenia is not really that large a country. I think it has about two and half million inhabitants. And it's farming, chemicals, car manufacturing today. In those days it did not, it had agriculture. And as I see the latitude of the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, is 46 degrees plus, and Calumet is 47 degrees plus, therefore we are on the same latitude. However the latitude for Slovenia would be 14 degrees and ours would be 88. But the climate would be entirely different. I recall my parents speaking about the peaches and pears and the great arbors they had, where you could never find those fruits growing here in the Copper Country.

DTF: There would be more like a climate downstate in Detroit they can't grow those. Kind of…

AM: Even further south! You see, they are warmed by the Adriatic; the Mediterranean and the Adriatic brings warm air to that area. Therefore they have climates suitable for those fruits. So because it was suitable for grapes everybody made wine there. I supposed if it was a tea growing country they would drink tea but it happens to… or they do drink tea however, but I mean coffee, which is a scarce item there. It's an imported item. But wine would be natural. It grew on their hillsides. So they brought their habits to this country. They wade wine here as well as in their country. But they had to send for their grapes to Lower Michigan or even California or New York. And the wholesalers had made a haul with all of the people here because they didn't buy just a box they would buy a ton of grapes at a time.

DTF: Would you happen and know what types of wines they were made in this area?

AM: Yeah. I don't know if there was name brand, but would be Michigan would make red wine and they would get white grapes from California. I think white and red it seems to be from New York. Because of the habit from the European countries.

DTF: Okay. Would you happen to remember or any of the foods that were particularly Slovenian that…?

AM: Well, one thing was walnut povetica for example - potica. Now they had walnut groves on their land over there, therefore they didn't have to pay an expensive price for walnuts, they just went out on the farm and picked them. And from what I gather, in Europe they don't have, say, 100 acres or 140 acres or 360 acre-farm, they might have up to 20 perhaps. But no one person has a piece of land that's continuous. They have a plot of ground that suitable for grazing, a plot of ground suitable for vegetables, another plot of ground suitable for grape growing – that's usually on the hill side. And each person has, in that way, sufficiency to supply their own family's needs year round. Not one person is only a grape grower and another one only a cattle grower or... They have wheat fields and barley fields and so on. So it's not the same as in the United States. It's very different but every family is self-sufficient in that way. That was one of the things; one of povetica they made and they also had honey hives in Europe too which used in making povetica too, and their own wheat, everything. They had chickens and could use the eggs. Everything was self-sufficient. In fact, a visit to there and the minute you come into the house there's orange juice on the table, orange pop, lime, and an array of sausages and breads and this is all homegrown; their bread is from their own wheat, the meat is from their own cattle. Everything is homemade and everything was packaged the way we do in plastic, and they wanted to give me some to take back but I said I couldn't pass immigration. And then in the day, in their early days here, people had cows and pigs and things like that, and smokehouses and had hams hanging in the smokehouse, sausages. They used to make what they called Austrian sausage. Today in the store usually they say it's Polish sausage, but their small lengths where the Austrian sausage used to be and almost foot long lengths and smoked. In fact, it make it special for Easter with I think it's more pork something. And this is still what they take to Church on Easter Saturday to have blessed.

DTF: Is this in the United States?

AM: Today, yeah. It's smoked differently or longer and has different ingredients in it and costs more too. And you see, other traditions, well that is one of the things they did and still do in our church, in St. Paul's Church here in Calumet. It was called the Austrian Church, which was built by the early people, the settlers. And on Easter Saturday everybody takes their basket or package or assorted foods to be blessed. I understand they do this in Italy and in the Latin American countries too; and in Poland. I don't know if they do it in France, I haven't heard, but I do know the other countries do it. And usually in this basket there are hard boiled eggs, bread, butter, salt, blued piece of horseradish – this is to fill the bitter with the sweet, you know. Probably some fruit like an apple, ham, Austrian sausage, and some sweets like povetica and so on. And this is taken to church and it's blessed and it's the first food you eat on Easter morning. You don't eat any other food before you eat the blessed food, and no crumbs were allowed to fall to the floor and any shells or seeds will to be burned because it was blessed. It was very… They were very fussy about that – you ate it on a napkin so you could burn any crumbs that fell off.

DTF: Now is this a Slovenian tradition also in Slovenia or is this…?

AM: All over, not just Slovenia. It's in South America, in Italy. Some time ago I saw in the paper that the Pope went over houses blessing food in their houses. So it's done in Italy too, it's done in many countries. Especially, more east; I don't about France. I have never heard the Franch people doing that. But I do know that all of the Slavic countries and I think the South American do.

DTF: Okay. You mentioned also they had honey hives over there that they used to make povetica. Do you happen to know or remember hearing of anybody that brought that over here with them and maybe had some…?

AM: I think that there was a man here that used to sell honey.

DTF: But you don't remember his name or…?

AM: No. This was before my time too.

DTF: That's it. So the povetica was made with honey then, not sugar?

AM: Well, I know today, we do it both. Put both sugar and honey in. So whether over there they used just honey, I don't know.

DTF: I see. And when you were talking about the sausage, now so when they came over here they started to make the same types of sausage that they had from over there. They had particular sausage all of their own. Austrian sausage it was called.

AM: Mhm, in fact if you went to the butcher store in the Tamarack store you'd say you want a pound or two of Austrian sausage.

DTF: And it contained pork.

AM: I think pork and beef and spices and it has to be smoked.

DTF: It has to be smoked.

AM: In a smokehouse, mhm. You know they say ,"Buy a ham from down south and the smoked ham and all this," and they'll charge you about forty dollars for a pound of ham. Well, that's the type of hams they had and it was super-duper, I guess.

DTF: Oh sounds good.

AM: So that's one of things that they made. And then there was buckwheat povetica, which was a heavy type of dark povetica, and I can imagine anybody could go on work all day on one piece of it because it was so heavy – buckwheat is heavy. And then there was the other kind of povetica which is, they used to call it prusta; it's a warm povetica which is eaten… made with apples or cherries or whipping cream or in this country you can add pineapple; any kind of filling. And cottage cheese and so on, eggs, and this is eaten warm, like a strudel type, but there's no yeast in the dough. The walnut povetica is made like a cinnamon bread, rolled up. But the apple type is more like a strudel, you hear of strudel. However I've eaten strudel in the cities and it's just one turnover, you know? It's not many layers rolled and rolled together. And then what they did for a pastime, they said, "Wherever there's two or more Slovenians there's song. They loved singing." In Europe, they had no TV or radios or anything, and their pleasure was just to sing. You know, gather outside and sing or have a picnic and sing and they brought that to this country. As a little girl, I remember going to a picnic and they would have stand, you know just as they do, and then they'd sell beer or wine over that stand and food. And everybody would sing with an accordion or two. And the whole woods would resound usually it was up near Gorshe's farm. But I

understand before I can remember they used to have them in Tamarack Park as well. And they… it was joyous time in that regard.

DTF: Did they have any quartettes; did they do that type of singing?

AM: Oh they did a lot of harmony, and beautiful singing.

DTF: Do they sing in the churches also in the area?

AM: We had… the church, our church, the Slovenian… or the Austrian church was built. First was a wooden structure late in 1800s. And it burned to the ground of Christmas Eve. And the pastor escaped in his nightshirt.

DTF: What year was that, do you happen to know?

AM: I think it was 1900, because my parents had to be married in the Italian church. This new church wasn't quite built when they were married I think in 1902. But it was ready I think that following year. And this church was built really at great sacrifice from the Slovenian people, the Austrian people, because their earnings were pitifully small working in the mines. And every week or every pay day they contributed so much toward the building on that sandstone church. And the single men of the church, you know the bachelors who were not married; all were expected to pay for the organ. So this huge pipe organ was built and printed across says 'Donated by the Young Men of This Church' you know. But they had this organ, and they didn't have an organist. So they imported a college graduate in music from Austria to come and play the organ for them.

DTF: Do you remember the name or do you happen to know the name?

AM: Oh, it begins with an 'R' or something… like Raudols or something; I forget what his name is.

DTF: We have stopped tape. So that Ann could look up the name of the organist that came to the Austrian church in 1904.

AM: The man's name was Frank Rady, R-A-D-Y. He was a graduate of the Academy of Music it's in Selja, Slovenia. And he was skilled in playing the piano, accordion and violin, and exceptionally talented with playing the pipe organ. I remember a lady saying he could make the walls tremble with the music and yet he could make it as soft as a whisper. He was exceptionally skilled with the organ, and he just loved it. And under his direction they had the best church choir in the Copper Country and many times the choir would travel to other cities or towns to present concerts. They also presented concerts in the church halls to raise money for the church. The church at that time was named the St. Joseph's church and it was completed, just the basement or the hall was completed in 1904, and the entire building took several years more. It took 3 years to do the beautiful paintings which adorn the nave and chancel of the church. The entire cost of the exterior alone was over $46,600. We were told just recently by a pastor that that money could not even build just the few feet of the altar space in the church – within the church today. It would be almost impossible to go to structure like that. The cost would be prohibitive.

DTF: So this church is now called St. Paul's Church?

AM: It's called St. Paul the Apostle Church and the reason for that is some years ago, probably 10 or 15, the bishop closed several churches in the community; the Croatian church, the St. John's Croatian church, the St. Ann's Friend Church and the Italian Church because they said the population did not justify having that many churches open and have so much to keep it and going. It would cost too much to maintain so many churches. So today the name is St. Paul the Apostle. Church has always had a Slovenian pastor up until about 1940? When the church was first built they acquired several pastors directly from Europe. And if you recall the first bishop of Marquette was Bishop Baraga, a Slovenian who worked among the missionaries among the Indians and the Upper Peninsula, Wisconsin, Illinois. Today they are trying to canonize him as saint. And progress is going along quiet well we understand. And he was instrumental and bringing probably 10 or 12 or 15 other Slovenian priests or Austrian priests at that time to this country to work with the Indians. And about the 4 or 5 Slovenians became bishops of Marquette. I do know there was a bishop Mroz, a bishop Burton who is related somehow to the Burton family here in town; the merchant family. And I think there were a couple of others, I just can't name them offhand but they would be known in Marquette. Therefore, the people had a special pride in their church. You may be interested in knowing that the individual families had to pay, let's see, I think it was 350 dollars each. Let's see… each family would have to contribute 85 dollars and single men 50 dollars each. And the church organizations were all raising money with picnics and plays and so on to try to build it, but there was one thing they were unanimous in as their pride and joy and no sacrifice was too great; the statue is on top of the exterior of the church right above the doors where the statues of Saints Cyriln and Methodius, C-Y-R-I-L-N and M-E-T-H-O-D-I-U-S. The reason they put those two statues outside – they are no longer there for safety reasons – were these two Saints were the two who Christianized Slovenia. They came probably in 1000s and brought Christianity to that land and therefore they called them their patron Saints, because it was the Slovenian church.

DTF: I wanted to ask you: were there any Slovenian holidays that were just peculiar; just to Slovenia that nobody really, that no other nationality celebrated in this area. Do you remember?

AM: Well I know that each individual holy day… ah, name's day is celebrated more so… WAS by the Europeans the name's day was more important than a birthday. And I know you all usually went to church on St. Joseph's day if it was your name's day and so on. But the holy days of the church were always celebrated, you know, but I don't think that was any national one celebrated. You know, peculiar to just Slovenians. I think they observed all the church holidays.

DTF: I see. Okay.

AM: Is there anything else on that line that you'd like to…?

DTF: Okay. While we're talking about the holidays and the different ways that people did things over here as well as in Europe, I would like to know, especially when you're talking about the wine making and the sausage making and the blessing of the food and everything; did people have large gardens here?

AM: Everybody had a garden; not only a garden in their yards, but they would rent a plot of land from the company, that would be the Calumet Hecla, for a potato growing lot, and they would have one or two of these, and they would plant potatoes, you know, wherever they were assigned a plot of land.

DTF: Now the Slovenians did this…

AM: Not only Slovenians, all nationalities would have a potato lot. They would call it a potato lot, and they would harvest the potatoes just for the whole year that way; have enough for their cellars. So, and then they always made sour kraut in the fall with cabbages in the summer, you know, cured it themselves.

DTF: Now this wasn't just Slovenians, this was other nationalities also?

AM: Well, that's a typically German dish too.

DTF: Mhm, okay. What I would like to ask next is: were there… you had mentioned Ruppes and the Vertins and they were all businessmen; what types of businesses then did they have? Could you state specifically ones that you could remember?

AM: Vertin's is still a department store, but at one time they had a grocery as well. And Ruppe, I think, was same thing. I don't remember the Ruppe store, it went out of business before I could remember.

DTF: So it was a department store with clothing and grocery, and Vertin is spelled V-E-R-T-I-N and Ruppe is R-U-P-P-E, and these people are both Slovenian? I didn't know that. And you said Grichars.

AM: The Grichar's were grocery store owners. The grandson… No, the son would be our organist today.

DTF: He is; he's organist in the Church, St. Paul's Church.

AM: And then there was the Stuple family who had taverns and had business.

DTF: Do you happen to remember where the tavern was located?

AM: No, that was before I… They were out of business before I remember anything like that.

DTF: What about now Vertin's is located at the corner of Sixth and Oak? And the Ruppe business, do you happen…

AM: I think that was somewhere on Fifth street near Pine, I think. I'm not sure. I don't remember that at all.

DTF: Okay. And was there, that you can remember hearing, a Slovenian newspaper?

AM: Yes. Mr. Chesarek, Joseph Chesarek was the editor of a paper, and I think it was a Slovenian paper in Calumet. I do not know of the name of it, but I do know that there was a priest in, I think Toronto, that contacted somebody in Houghton and he wanted a copy of that paper so badly and we tried calling all the old people thinking they might have a copy hidden somewhere, and there's none in existence that we know of. I even wrote to this Mr. Chesarek's daughter in California, hoping she would have a paper that her dad had written in or edited… or that was an editor of, and she had none. And he moved from here to go to Pittsburg and was editor of the paper there. But I don't know if it was a Slovenian paper or Croatian paper. And in fact, I had an article sent to me that was written by this Mr. Chesark and he was a very learned man, and he wrote an article about Mr. Ruppe, and I was trying to translate it but my translation is not that good I have to use dictionary so often, but it's interesting reading.

DTF: Um, could you spell this name?

AM: C-H-E-S-A-R-E-K I believe. C-H-E-Z-A-R? I don't know if it's a 'z' or a 's'…

DTF: We have stopped the tape to check on the spelling of Joseph Chesarek, and the way the last name is spelled is C-H-E-S-A-R-E-K. Now you mentioned that he had a newspaper in this area and you stated you didn't know if it was Slovenian or Croatian; did you mean in Pittsburg or did you mean in this area?

AM: He was an editor of the paper here and I think it was located on Sixth Street, near where today's Pierce Hardware is, or the gas company; the Peninsula Gas Company, in there.

DTF: Okay. That would be between Oak and…?

AM: On Sixth Street, between Oak and Elm.

DTF: Okay. Alright.

AM: He really… if his writings were translated, it would give a great cross section of America at any point. And his son… [audio cuts out briefly]… he's now returned and living in Washington and the daughter lives in California. But I don't think they know the language and I don't think they have any clippings of their dad's writings, which is I think, tragic.

DTF: I would think so. And just for the record here; you were talking about the Vertins and Ruppes; do you happen to have any first names on these people when you're talking about Vertin's?

AM: There was the father Vertin, I don't know what his name was; I don't know if it was John or Joseph or what… Matt I think it was. And then he had two sons Joseph and John, and those two boys picked up the business from the father, you know, he started a business first off like the Gardners, the Ruppe's; everybody carried a pack on their back and at first host to host with all these young men boarders going house to house selling. And then they bought a horse and then eventually they started stores; both of them, the Vertins and Ruppes.

DTF: Would you happen to know the first names of any of the Ruppe's that were the beginners…?

AM: Well, I think the father was… is it Peter or Joseph? I know their original great grandfather came to this country and the one I started to, you know, try to translate…

END SIDE A

START SIDE B

AM: …and I was trying to translate, or starting to, was Peter Ruppe, who was born in January of 1842, and he became the first president of Calumet Village. And he also was I think the secretary of Calumet and Arizona Mining Company, where he made his fortune.

DTF: So Joseph Chesarek has was written an article about Peter Ruppe, and you were attempting to translate that article because it is written in Slovenian. There is another blank spot in the tape. I found

one on other side of this tape and it was just about Chesarek's son who is now retired breed general in the state of Washington. I am not quite sure what happened to the tape but rather than trying get everything over again we'll just fill in what information was left out there. It was just about the man who had the newspaper in Calumet, his son. And now did you state something about Washington D.C. that you wanted to get…?

AM: No, he went from Washington where he was at the Pentagon, and he went to retire in Washington, the State of Washington.

DTF: I see, okay. Now I would also like to clarify that you have mentioned that Grichar's had a grocery store in Calumet, and approximately where do you believe that Grichar's store…?

AM: I think it was on Sixth Street.

DTF: On Sixth street, and between what sites side streets; this is in Calumet.

AM: I think it's between Oak and Elm.

DTF: Okay, alright, and that name is spelled G-I-R-C-H…?

AM: No, G-R-I-C-H-A-R.

DTF: I'm sorry, G-R-I-C-H-A-R, okay.

AM: The daughter of that man said that her father came to this country and disembarked at Copper Harbor.

DTF: The daughter of this Grichar that used to own the grocery store.

AM: And he lived in Copper Falls and worked in the copper mines there for a short while before he started a business, a grocery business in town here.

DTF: Where does his daughter reside at this time, do you know…?

AM: Wisconsin somewhere.

DTF: Okay. To go back… to backtrack a little bit here, I would like you to briefly just give a description of when the people came here, your parents especially; I'd like to know where they came from and the dates and so on?

AM: As I said, most of the people came from an area I would say between Houghton and Calumet.

DTF: What was the name of this area?

AM: The people from Novomesto, which means 'new city', are in a territory that is labeled, instead of Copper Country as we are, it's labeled 'Black Country', for no particular reason that I know of, and where my mother came from Crnomelj, is in an area that's called 'White Country'. But it isn't because, that I know of… no reason that I know of for the name; the people are neither black nor white, but they do

wear white garments. Their national costume is white in the 'White Country' and the national costume in my dad's place is black with colored aprons. So whether it is the clothing that labels them so, I don't know. But almost everybody who came to the Copper Country came from either one of those two cities or their environs, mostly from the farm country surrounding. There are very few families who came from the Copper Harbor… so called Copper Harbor region – Crane. Oh, probably I would say maybe half a dozen families or a dozen at the very most, but all of these other families, what was it 350 families, came from Houghton or Hancock; the equivalent distance in there, in Europe. I went back there and visited and went into the churchyards, and to read the tombstones in the churchyards, it was just a revelation: the tombstone names were the roll call of parishioners of our church. It was just fantastic every tombstone had the name of a person in Calumet, or their relatives are in Calumet today, and every stone was familiar; the name was familiar. And no matter if those people were dead 50 or 60 years there were fresh flowers on every grave, it was unbelievable that people would be tending those graves 50 or 60 or a hundred years later. And have fresh flowers on all of those graves. It was almost shocking; unbelievable, but there were fresh flowers on all of those graves. Probably great, great grand-children were bringing fresh flowers there. But the names were all familiar, it was striking. You felt you were at home in your own Calumet Cemetery.

DTF: Now just for the record here, I would like to know the names of your parents… the full names of your parents again, and when the dates… when they came here, where they departed from, any information at all that you have…

AM: He sold part of his family farm to his half-sister to get the money to come to this country, and I as told you my mother got hers from her brother, who sent for her. My dad came from this Novomesto. Now, I'm not giving you the hamlet name, but I'm giving you the name of the main town. And my mother came from Tronomo, and all of the people are from there. I know one gal who sold a family cow to get money to come to this country, and I know a lady who told me that her boyfriend sent for her and they were married within 2 weeks after they got to this country. So everybody has different story of how they got here. How they got the money to come here. Eventually my mother's family farm was sold and they got a part of the property and when I went there, I remember talking to a man on the side of the street working in his garden, and I was trying to locate where my mother possibly could have been raised. Well where she was raised was a country inn and it was torn down, he said right across the street. And he said her family home was down the road a ways, oh maybe a quarter of a mile, half a mile; quarter of a mile, probably. And he showed me the house and it was a huge much house but I couldn't see the inside because the 80-year-old or 85-year-old lady and her son were out in the fields working, and this was after supper. But it would have been interesting to see the interior of the house. So, it's… but, I could see in the distance, the church where she had attended. Every neighborhood has their own church there, every little cluster of houses has a tiny church, and then they have a main church. So, you could be into… go across the street and be in a church because every little neighborhood had its own, and always the church was built on a hill, and often times, a cement stone fence around it. And the reason it was on a hill is because it was protection from invasions and then whenever the bell rang everybody would know what was happening. And the bell rang for the angelus and they stopped everything to pray at noon, at night. And religion today is just as strong as ever in Yugoslavia, it's a communist country. Now I didn't say how… I told you they came from Austria. However, after the First World War president Wilson and the League of Nations divided up the lands of Europe. So they formed the country of Yugoslavia and made six republics out of it all under the umbrella of the country called Yugoslavia. So there is Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Serbia. These are individual states just as we would say Michigan is one of the fifty states. And Slovenia happens to be the one furthest north. So that is why people sometime say why do they call you Austrians or why are you call

Slovenians or why are called Yugoslovs? This is perplexing. It's hard to explain except to say that actually they were Austrians because they knew the Austrian anthem, they swore allegiance to Austria, there never was a Slovenia or Yugoslavia, they wouldn't know the Yugoslovian anthem if they heard it. But because the territory is now under the umbrella of Yugoslavia, the tendency is to say just say they came from Yugoslavia which is the land they came from but not the country they came from. Does that clarify it for you?

DTF: Oh yes. Now you said that your father left Rotterdam – Rotterdamn, Holland I presume. Would you happen to know how… is that the way most Slovenians left Europe or…?

AM: I don't know how my dad first got someone to tell him about America. I have no idea. Some friend must have written to him. There were many, many steamship agencies in Calumet or wherever my dad came to Pennsylvania you recall. But Calumet alone had many booking agencies here. Anybody could go to this steamship line here and book passage for relatives from Europe right from Calumet. The same way they said there were half a dozen stock brokers houses here in Calumet. So it was a thriving business in those days. Millions of immigrants were coming to this country.

DTF: And they were coming in particular to this area for?

AM: Because of the opportunity, work. That's why.

DTF: And you had mentioned before, in the mines.

AM: The copper mines, yeah. That was the mine… many mines were opening here, there was the Tamarack mining company, the Heffa Mining Company, and so on. Eventually they all came under the Calumet and Hecla; they were sold. There was the Mohawk Mining Company, there were many mining companies. But…

DTF: But this was all basically copper mining?

AM: All copper mining in this area.

DTF: Would you happen to know if there were any Slovenians living in other parts the Upper Peninsula?

AM: I don't know, but if there are it's not as heavily populated. The most heavily populated area is Calumet-Loriam. There were some in Baltic and Trimalten, Painesdale, Dodgeville, but really a handful compared to what is here in the Calumet area, Calumet-Loriam area. It seemed that as I say they came from one area over there and they settled in one area here. And that's all from the period about pre-World War I, around late 1800s and 1900s. People in the cities like Chicago, Cleveland and so on have more recent newcomers than we do. We do not have any recent newcomers in this area.

DTF: I see. Was there any time that you can remember that you heard about when there was a migration out of the area?

AM: Oh yes. There were several waves of immigration out. One was after the World War I. There was no more demand for copper; they didn't need to make any more munitions. They had a glut, so the mines closed for a year or 2 years so, and people left for Montana, for Detroit, for Milwaukee, for anyplace they could find work. Then they started work again, and then in 1921 there was a great strike and the

mines closed again for year or two, I don't know what it was. And again people left town. For one thing the mines were closed, for another the strikers probably wouldn't be getting employment back if they were strikers. So another wave left in 1921 for Detroit and Milwaukee. Now, if you will check with the township supervisor or register of deeds or whatever, she can give the population figures for those years, and you will see that Calumet had population of 45,000 and it dropped, now we have about 7000. So gradually each wave took away thousands of people. And so they never came back, after they once left, they never came back to work. To visit, yes.

DTF: So are you saying that a lot of Slovenians left the area along with other nationalities?

AM: Yes. I recall going to a… it was a polka dance, I think it was a Frank Yankovich in Detroit at a hall once when I was down on a visit. One of the residents there said, "Come on, come with us." And we went to this hall and it was jam-packed with people. And it happened that a Governor's wife was to be introduced and say a few words; I don't know if she was trying to get votes for her husband or what, but she said… one of the men said, "How many people are here from Calumet?" And a great whoop went up in the hall everybody's hand was waving in there and I thought, "Don't tell me all these people in Detroit had their origin in Calumet?" It was 100%; either people who were from Calumet or descendants of people from Calumet. It was almost unbelievable. So this Governor's wife was next to speak so she said, "I know but Calumet baking powder, is it that the same?" And it fell like a dud because Calumet has no connection with baking powder, it's strictly copper. [laughs] But that's what I mean about the population having gone to the city, and the same thing with Milwaukee. So, they did leave.

DTF: I don't believe I ever heard you mention your birth place.

AM: Here. In this house, in this room. [Chuckles].

DTF: Right here, in Calumet? Oh, my word.

AM: So, um…

DTF: And could you briefly tell little bit about your background; your growing up, your schooling, anything?

AM: Well, I went to the local schools.

DTF: What would that have been then?

AM: I beg your pardon?

DTF: What was the name of the local schools?

AM: Well, down here to the Lincoln School for about three grades and then the Washington School for a couple of grades and then the Morrison School for a couple of grades and then back to the Washington School for couple of grades and that burned down; we went to the Charles Briggs emergency, you know, broke… a few classes in each school. And the Calumet High School and then I took sick. I got me TB, and I stayed in bed seven years. I had four cures and formulas. I'd walk around in summers and I got sick again. The last time I stayed put until I really stayed well. But I always had it in my mind to go back to school. So I went back to high school when I was 23 and graduated when I was 25. And I...

DTF: What year was that?

AM: I beg your pardon?

DTF: What year was that?

AM: 1941. And from there I… oh and the kids were great. You know they were 7-8 years younger than I. Then I got a job that same age as a secretary; was there almost all of my working life and then they closed up, the strike, and then they closed up the operations and dismantled. And I got a job in Michigan Tech as a secretary and was there 11 years until about a year and a half [ago]. And since then I've worked oh, four times at the Houghton Bank when they needed help as a secretary. They called me when they… for vacation or pregnancy leaves and so on. And while I was that same age yet, Tech offered some courses here at Calumet. So I started taking courses. And so soon they stopped having courses, night school, here so I started to go to Tech, nighttime. So after 10 years I got a degree from Tech, in 1974. And then I was 59 years old, almost 60 years old. [Chuckles]

DTF: What did you get your degree in?

AM: Liberal Arts. You could take it… I could have it Social Sciences, but I needed one more in history to have it in Social Sciences. And since then I thought, "Oh this is boring," so I started taking some more courses so now I am in my third year of German.

DTF: You had mentioned you had went three years to a Lincoln School. Was there Lincoln School in the area?

AM: Right here on the corner, where the Milford Lumber Yard…

DTF: And what is that, Pine and Water Works Street?

AM: Right.

DTF: Oh I had no idea that there was school there at one time, and it was called Lincoln School? Okay, and your parent's names. Would you repeat those one more time please?

AM: Micheal Murvich and my mother's name was Mary Lovretich before she married Michael Murvich. And by the way, I just want to tell you that in Europe in the spelling there is no -ich at the end of the name. The name end is 'c' and there is little 'v' mark on top of it. And that 'v' gives it the sound of 'ch', you know. Therefore to retain the sound of the name as it's pronounced in Europe, we had to Americanize the name by adding an 'h' on it. Murvich. -I.C.H. But in Europe has no 'h'. It has a 'c' with a little tiny 'v' above it. So all of the names have retained the sound have not retained the spelling as it occurred over there. In fact, there was no 'e' or 'u'. It's M-R-V-I-C. There is no 'e'. That's why when we went to school, we went through school M-U-R-V-I-C-H, in church we were M-E-R-V-I-C-H. I think on my dad citizenship papers I think it's M-E-R-V-I-C-H, so it's been a confusion of names. So some of the family use 'e', and some use 'u'. Does that clarify it, too?

DTF: Yes. [Chuckles] Yes it does.

AM: For example, on our church windows, people who donated the color windows have their names engraved in the colored plates in underneath the window. And you'll find names with S-E-M-I-C, but that isn't… it's Semic. ____. Because there's a little 's' mark… a 'v' above the two… the 's' and the 'c'. And the pronunciation of there will would be Shimitz, not as Semic, you see?

DTF: Now is there anything else that you would like to include on this tape?

AM: I will think of a million things after you're gone. So I don't know. Um, in the early days almost everybody belonged to… um, traded from the Tamarack store in Laurium, you saw this booklet Tamarack Town that's just printed? There's a picture of that and the order men used to go house to house getting orders for meat every day, and twice a week for groceries.

DTF: But this wasn't now just for Slovenians, this was for everybody?

AM: No, for everybody.

DTF: But I just want to give you my mother's first impression when she came to this country. She came to Tamarack to live, I told you. And she was amazed that all the houses were of log cabin or of wood, because everything in Europe is of stone or brick. And even the farmhouses are of limestone, all white, and here they were all dark and brown and wooden. And she thought, "Did I come to a country, the land of plenty and golden streets, and to find this?" It was a shock to her. She thought it would be totally different than she found it to be, but at no time would they want to go back, ever.

DTF: That's really amazing. You've just got a wealth of information. I really appreciate the time of you've taking for this tape.

AM: You're welcome.

DTF: And I would be more than happy if you're ever interested in making another one, you just let us know.

AM: But I know I have been haphazard in speaking and hesitant.

DTF: Not at all. You've done beautifully, beautifully.

AM: It's not… smooth. [Chuckles]

DTF: Thank you very much.

AM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW