

**Ann Kraina**

Where: Mary H. Weir Public Library

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 18:04

Ann Kraina was born in Newton Falls, Ohio in 1927 and grew up in Weirton, WV. Her parents were from Yugoslavia and her family attended the Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Church in Steubenville, Ohio. She speaks about childhood memories, the Serbian and wider Weirton community, and Serbian foodways, mainly nutrolls, that she enjoys baking.

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AK: Ann Kraina

EH: Emily Hilliard

00:00

EH: Okay, could you introduce yourself and tell me your name, when and where you were born?

AK: My name is Ann Kraina and I was born in Newton Falls, Ohio in-- you want the date and everything? (laughs)

EH: If you don't mind!

AK: No, I don't. 1927.

EH: And could you tell me about your family and where they were from?

AK: I only have 2 boys, is that...

EH: Oh, I meant your parents and your...

AK: They're from Yugoslavia. I don't know the name of the town and they came to America--my father came first and then my mother came later and they met here and they were in the same town but they met here and got married shortly afterwards.

EH: Okay. And what brought them to Weirton?

AK: Oh, they had relatives here and they said they could get my dad a job and that was the reason he came.

EH: Did he work in the mill?

AK: Yes, mmhm.

EH: Was there a large Yugoslavian population here?

AK: Pretty large, yes. Mmhm.

EH: And where did they live?

AK: They lived in North Weirton mostly. You know, but you know there was some--they called this The Cove. It's really Weirton, but people call it The Cove. It used to be The Cove.

EH: Oh, okay. So it was sort of a separate neighborhood?

AK: Oh...

EH: The Cove?

AK: Well, not really, but it was nicer to live down here than up on, way up in North Weirton.

EH: Okay. And could you tell me about the Yugoslavian community and some of your memories?

AK: Well, they're very strong in their religion. And everyone that I know that came from Yugoslavia is very hard working. And they wanted to improve their station in life. And my dad only went to 6th grade in Yugoslavia, but my son, my oldest son was really very impressed with him because my oldest son has a degree and then a masters and he was working on his Phd and he was amazed at what my father knew. But my dad was a good paper reader, you know newspaper reader.

EH: Okay.

AK: And my mother was more interested in cooking and keeping house than anything, but when she wanted to know something, she asked my dad (laughs).

EH: Were there Yugoslavian newspapers or newsletters?

AK: Well they got letters from there but there was, oh yeah, there was a Serbian paper that came every once in a while, you know.

EH: Okay.

AK: But it wasn't steady. Especially from their hometown, they wanted to know what was going on.

EH: Yeah, my grandma was telling me, her father was from Belgium and he would share a Flemish newspaper that was printed out of Detroit, and he would share it with his neighbor and they would read it together.

AK: Well my mother and dad shared it too, but most of 'em didn't have much of an education. You know, that was a lot of education at that time for my father to have. And he was always the one that wanted to improve everything.

EH: What are some of the Yugoslavian foods and recipes your mother would make?

AK: Oh, nut rolls and she made a lot of fish and let me see. She cooked mostly American after she got established, you know. But she liked the cookies and you know, it's always nut cookies and stuff like that, so she made a lot of them.

EH: Sounds good. Do you make those still?

04:18

AK: Yes, I bake all the time. I even make my own bread!

EH: Whoa, nice! What kind of bread do you make?

AK: What they call healthy bread. (laughs) I have you know, I don't, I don't like the bread that's already made so I use the ones that has all the good ingredients.

EH: Nice. That's the kind I like. (laughs) So did you grow up--were there other Yugoslavian people in your neighborhood?

AK: No, not too many. 'Cause we moved down here and they were left up here. But my friends, the girls, you know, we went to the same school and that's how I kept in touch with them. And I have to tell you, maybe it isn't a good idea, I don't know (laughs) but my mother had a friend from up there. I didn't know this until a couple weeks ago, if you can believe this, this woman had 9 kids. I never knew that! I was real friendly with her, she was about the 3rd daughter in the family, and the girl never said that her mother was constantly pregnant, but I would hear my mother complaining and my mother was trying to teach her about birth control! And her mother didn't know what my mother was talking about, and she says, how could I do that? And she says, "Well don't sleep with him!" (laughs)

EH: (laughs) That's funny!

AK: (laughs) You know, it was kind of embarrassing when I was told. I thought, well that's the way they lived!

EH: How did you find that out?

AK: Well her brother, my girlfriend's brother's, you know he came to visit. He was living in Las Vegas. We kept a close relationship and he said, "Boy, I have to laugh when I think about your mother teaching my mother." And he says that he has 8 brothers and sisters. I says, "Oh you do?" I never knew that that she had all those kids. I knew my mother thought she shouldn't be having so many kids, but she never told me how many she had! (laughs)

EH: So what church did you go to?

AK: The Serbian church in Steubenville.

EH: Okay.

06:25

AK: I'm not a good member there. (laughs) I don't believe I hate to get up and I get up early, you know, really, but going all the way to Steubenville and everything is 2 hours long. My son was an usher at a wedding and he says I'm never gonna be again. 2 hours to sit there and you know, to, not sit, stand, you know when it's a wedding. So he decided that wasn't for him. He was reared as a Catholic. My husband was Catholic, but he was Croatian, you know. But my children didn't keep you know, they're not real good church goers. Neither am I.

EH: What's the name of that church? The Steubenville church?

AK: Oh, it's a Serbian name. I can't think of it right now.

PM: Holy Transfiguration.

EH: Holy Transfiguration.

PM: No, no, no. It's Holy Resurrection.

AK: Oh is it dear?

PM: Yeah.

AK: Look how she knows better than I do!

EH: And is it--it's not Serbian Orthodox?

07:33

AK: Yes.

EH: Okay. Resurrection.

AK: She [Pam Makricosta] always goes to church, all the churches.

EH: Wow. So...

AK: She's an Orthodox too but Greek Orthodox.

EH: Right. And so did your parents, were they--were they members of that church and part of that community?

AK: Oh yes, until they got real old and they couldn't go you know, any more. Too much of an effort and well we used to have to go by bus because we didn't have a car at first. That was one of the reasons we didn't go all of the time. But around Christmas we all went all the time. And Easter. That's about all.

EH: Are there special Christmas and Easter traditions in the Serbian church that you would do?

AK: Well you know, we have a tradition where you put straw under the table where you're going to eat. And a lot of candles. My mother kept that tradition until she died.

EH: Do you know what the significance of the straw is?

AK: Jesus was born and he lived on straw or something like that! (laughs) I'm not too great on this church business!

EH: That's okay! Did your parents, who did your parents socialize with? Was it a diverse friend group or mostly Serbians?

AK: Oh, mostly Serbian, but you know, they were real good friends with the neighbors. They were Italian and Greek and stuff like that. But they preferred the Serbians, because they lived in the neighborhood--there was nothing but Serbians, you know.

EH: Okay. Aside from the food, are there other things that they carried over from Serbia--traditions, games, or music, or dance?

AK: Well music, you know, they had records of the Serbian music. I never understood all they were singing, but (laughs) you know they died about 30 years ago and I forgot a lot of Serbian. You know, 'cause I don't associate with any of 'em, not that I don't associate, nobody speaks Serbian anymore.

EH: Did you speak it growing up at home? Did you--you spoke Serbian growing up at home?

AK: Mmhm.

EH: And then what school did you go to?

AK: Weir High and...

EH: Okay, so it wasn't a Serbian school or anything.

AK: Oh no, no. Nnnh. Serbian, there weren't that many from Weirton that went to church over there. Now the Steubenville people were much more Serbian than we were. They did all the Serbian things. But we were around American people, you know.

EH: Yeah, being close to the church they were able to become insular that way.

AK: Mmhm.

EH: So what is that population like today? They were telling me there's the chicken Wednesdays?

AK: Oh you mean at the Serbian...

EH: Picnic grounds.

AK: Oh yes, my sons--it's on Wednesday. My son's going tonight. He informed me he wouldn't be at home.

EH: But you have to do his laundry anyway?

AK: Oh yes, and then he had all kinds of blankets and things you know. He says, "They're kinda dirty when I throw 'em in the washer I says, "When was the last time these were washed!" He says, that's when he told me. I said, "Why didn't you do it?" He said, "It cost too much money!" The washer and dryer you know, in apartment buildings. But you know, one day I said something about I really didn't feel well. And he says, well at your age what do you expect?" (laughs)

EH: That's nice.

AK: Yeah.

11:55

Oh he's a great kidder, you know.

EH: I'm sure. So what happens at those Serbian picnics?

AK: Oh, it was always nice. They had lamb--that's the thing. Serbian people eat a lot of lamb. And they're nice. We always went. I mean I haven't in the last few years. My husband's dead now so I hate to go down there. Well, I go with the boys if they're going, but the boys don't always go. They have other interests.

EH: And what happens at the chicken night?

AK: Oh I've never been to one. I don't like chicken so I don't go! (laughs) I don't eat chicken or turkey.

EH: Okay. Did your husband know a lot of Croatians in the area?

AK: Yes, kinda. His mother and dad were more strict with that than my parents were.

EH: Okay.

AK: Because when we got married they wanted me to change my religion. I says, "I'm just meeting you people and my mother and dad brought me up. I can't become one of you and leave my mother and dad!" That didn't go over too well!

EH: Yeah, I bet not! I just went to the Croatian Cultural Club in Benwood.

AK: Oh, I've never been there.

EH: It was...I, right now it was basically a bar but I think it used to be more of a cultural center and they had Polka Sundays and that sort of thing. Do you know of any Croatian community members still here?

AK: No, you know. You know, all of 'em it seems after a while they kinda forgot about being Serbian, being Croatian, or you know, even German or whatever.

EH: Right, yeah. Especially when the church, you aren't really active in the church.

AK: Yeah. I belonged to a club there for a while but every time I turned around they wanted me to do some work, you know. And I thought, well, you know, they make nutrolls and sell like at Christmas and Easter and I came over there and worked and they said 10 people were there. There were 5 and we had to do all that baking and I told them I didn't have time. I have 2 little kids, I can't be running over here all the time.

EH: Oh yeah, wow.

AK: But I learned different things because I did go. You know.

EH: What are some of those things.

AK: Well the different kinds of cookies and things like that. You know, and everything that was what they liked--the nut rolls was number one. And I used to make 'em the way they made 'em, but I got a better recipe now. (laughs)

EH: Will you tell me how you make them? Just walk me through the recipe?

AK: Well you have to grind the nuts, and they did it by hand, mixing everything, the dough and all that, where I use the mixer instead of all that but and then you have to roll out the dough and put the nuts on and then bake 'em. But it's a very simple recipe. It's good but the one I have has more of a croissant dough, and I put ice cream in that dough and stuff like that!

EH: Wow, sounds good!

AK: I like to bake, I really do.

EH: Nice. I do too.

AK: Are you from Weirton?



EH: No, I grew up in Indiana.

AK: Oh.

EH: And oh, what nuts. Walnuts?

AK: Mmhm.

EH: What are the other types of cookies that they would make?

AK: Well they made, we made baklava, do you know what that is?

EH: Yeah.

AK: But they had their own recipe. They didn't like the recipe they got from...I don't know who makes baklava. Greek people.

EH: Greeks make it. Lebanese have a version.

AK: Mmhm.

EH: Yeah.

AK: But they had their own version. Our, you know they used to use walnuts in that but the way we make 'em we used almonds.

EH: Oh!

AK: And it made a difference.

EH: I generally prefer almonds to walnuts.

AK: Mmhm.

EH: Sounds good. Well is there any other aspects of heritage or tradition you'd like to share?

AK: Well I can't think of anything, you know. It's been a long time since anybody was interested in the Serbians! (laughs) What I knew I forgot!

EH: Right, they're telling me I need to go swing by the picnic grounds and check out the chicken.

AK: Tonight. Well my son--are you gonna stay there for a while?

EH: Probably not too long--I have to head back to Wheeling.

AK: Well my son doesn't have a phone with him, I could call him and he would meet you there and visit with you.

EH: Oh, that's okay.

AK: He's single. You know, I didn't want you to think I was trying to...

EH: (laughs)

AK: (laughs) Then you could do the washing and ironing.

EH: I don't need to do that!

AK: (laughs)

EH: Well thank you very much!

AK: Well it was nice you know, actually I'll have to think. I didn't realize what you wanted.

EH: Okay.

AK: But if I was more prepared for it I would have been able to tell you more.

EH: Oh that's okay! Well I may come back and actually I should take your address because I need to send you a release form so we can use the interview. So you just write it, if you don't mind.

AK: Well I had a stroke not too long ago and my writing isn't very good.

EH: Well if you want me to write it, I can write it for you.

AK: Ann Kraina. K-R... C

EH: Okay, so Ann

AK: Kraina, K-R-A-I-N-A.

18:04

END OF TAPE  
END OF INTERVIEW