

Interview with John Kovalik

At the Moffet House Museum, Berlin, New Hampshire

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Interviewer – Ken Turino

Crew – Joshua Silveira

Q: Thank you for being here. We appreciate it. We ask everyone to say their name and then to spell their last name. Spell your first and last name and we will start from there. You can go ahead.

0:15 – JK: OK, my name is John Kovalik. J O H N John K O V A L I K Kovalik.

Q: John, were you born in Berlin?

0:30 – JK: Yes.

Q: When was that?

0:32 – JK: February 19, 1930.

Q: John, tell me where your parents from Berlin or I understand they came to Berlin is that true?

0:45 – JK: Well, my father and mother came from the Ukraine which was part of Russia. My father came in 1913 and he had been married to my mother over there for two years in 1911 and he came in 1913 and fifteen years went by before they were re-united when my mother came here in 1928 due to the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Fortunately my mother-to-be came here because I was born in 1930 and then my brother and then my sister.

Q: Tell us a little bit about what your father was doing here in Berlin and how did he get to Berlin?

1:42 – JK: Well, that is a very interesting story because I have a photograph here. There was a man from my father's village, a friend of his that was the first one to come here, it must have been in the early 1900's. He ended up here in Berlin, worked here cutting wood and stuff like that and then finally after working here for a number of years he went back to the Ukraine to his village for a visit. While he was there he told all of the people there, all of the men, that there was a lot of work here and you could make money here. So, that is how my father and seventy-five men in all came to the United States. In 1913 my father came here along with a lot of the others and ended up in Berlin like his friend. Anyway, as I said my mother and father were married in 1911 and my

father expected to make some money and go back, but due to the First World War in 1914 and then the Russian Revolution in 1917 my mother and father they were separated for fifteen years before he found out she was alive and got her here in 1928. In the mean time what is interesting about this story is that fellow, his name was Mike Mazurik and I have his photo here, the first one that came here when all of the seventy-five men left to come to the United States he decided to stay there a little longer so finally when he did return to the United States and going through the immigration in New York City they wouldn't allow him entry again into the United States because the immigration laws had been changed. Somehow or other he ended up in Ontario in Canada and thereafter he and my father communicated and he did come down, I have a photograph here from 1949, to visit us here in Berlin. My father and my sister went up there once to visit his family in Ontario. It is just amazing how the first man that came from that village that came here they wouldn't allow him to enter when he came back. I think about that all the time and my mother and father being separated for fifteen years over there and it is amazing. So that is how a lot of the people , this guy Mike Mazurik that I mentioned he was probably one of the first Russians that was in Berlin and I have a photo of him.

Q: When the seventy-five Russians came over in the early part of the twentieth century, what kind of work...what were they coming over...what kind of work...what were they all coming over to do?

5:05 – JK: Actually they didn't all come to Berlin because I know that there was a family that lived in Boston and he must have been from the same village. He was an artist in Boston and I remember we went down there a couple of times to Boston to visit them. So obviously he came from the same village. So, they didn't all come to Berlin.

Q: Did a large number come to Berlin?

5:36 – JK: Did what?

Q: Did a large number come of the people from the village come to Berlin?

5:41 – JK: Gee, I don't know basically how many came but I remember growing up as a kid that there were 400 Russian people here. That was the most that has ever been here. That's children and parents and so on. They didn't all come from my father's village. I know some of them came from different places there in the Ukraine and so on you know.

Q: Were they working in the lumber industry?

6:16 – JK: Most of them. My father worked in the mill over here for at least forty years. He was a painter. While we were growing up where I live now and where I grew up we had five Russian boarders that lived with us and I slept with a boarder growing up. My

brother slept with a boarder growing up. We didn't have our own beds and rooms you know. Those five borders that lived with us, some even down in the cellar, slept there, they paid fifteen dollars a week for board and room. My mother fed them every day, did their laundry every week and they saved that money so I could go to college and my brother and my sister and ultimately I became an oral surgeon because of the hard work that my mother and father did for us kids. Nobody else did that and so that's how I became an oral surgeon.

Q: That is a good story. I am going to ask you a little bit about the boarders. So these were other Russians?

7:48 – JK: Yes, they were all Russians.

Q: They were coming to do...what were they working at?

7:54 – JK: Well, they all worked the same in the mill you know and all manual labor. One of the boarders that lived with us he was related to my mother and another one was I think my father's cousin because his name was Kovalik too you know, Harry Kovalik.

Q: Did they end up staying in Berlin?

8:23 – JK: Yes. They all lived here and died here you know.

Q: Were the Russian people living in a particular neighborhood in Berlin?

8:38 – JK: They were sort of scattered all over but I knew where everyone of them lived. It is amazing because it is sort of a close knit that church you know they all went to that church and so I knew practically all of them.

Q: Who were some of the families that you remember?

9:07 – JK: Actually there was a family that lived across the street and that was the Buckovitch family. In fact some of them still live...the oldest son he is 91years old now Valodov Buckovitch is still living here and his sister who is 85 still lives in that house across the street from me. There was the Tupick family that lived right up the street from me and also another family called the Zolner family. Then further up the street there was the Pendol family, they were Russians. Down on the street below me there was the Chomack family that lived there and also a Kolinski family that lived there and another family the Toriks, so I knew basically where all of these people lived you know back then.

Q: And what street did you grow up on?

10:14 – JK: First Avenue.

Q: Now it sounds with all of these Russians families around you did people speak Russian?

10:29 – JK: That is basically all they spoke! (laughs) Actually all the people, the Russians that came over, they always talked Russian, but all of us kids that were born and grew up here all we talked was English because when we went outside there were English, French, and Italians you know. You went to school in the first grade it is all English you know so growing up I knew very little Russian when you get right down to it you know. We grew up in the English language.

Q: What was it like growing up in the neighborhood that you were in in the Avenues?

11:05 – JK: I thought it was very interesting. All of my friends were a variety of nationalities. There was a large French family that lived right in back of where we lived and where I live now and then there was some Italians and some English and scattered about were Russians you know. Most of the people though in Berlin were French, probably 90% French.

Q: We have heard that from talking to people.

11:44 – JK: They came down from Quebec, Canada you know. That is how they arrived here again looking for work.

Q: Tell me about the church. Can you tell me the name and was the church central to the Russian community?

12:02 – JK: Yes, pretty much so. It seems like when I was home it seemed that all my father talked about was the church. (laughs) I have a photograph there in one of the booklets that I brought down here I think it is the 1915 that the church started and my father came here in 1913. Yes, most of the people were all active and we were involved in the Russian church. My father ended up being the elder at one time.

Q: What were some of the activities at the Church besides the service?

12:44 –JK: To be very honest with you I never went. My father and some of the others did, but I was too busy and involved with sports to have time for that. They had a Russian school there too. They had the priest there and some of the Russian kids going up there to learn how to read and write Russian but I never did you know.

Q: How about your brother or sister, did they ever go?

13:18 – JK: No.

Q: It is a beautiful building.

13:20 – JK: Yes.

Q: What were some of the traditions that your family, your mother and father, kept up from Russia?

13:37 – JK: They always celebrated Easter. They call that Paska in Russian and my mother used to make the big loaf of bread and food and all that and it was a day of celebration Easter. To me I think that is the most prominent holiday, Easter.

Q: So tell me what was a typical Easter might have been for you as a kid growing up with your parents and your brother and sister. What was it like?

14:15 – Well we looked forward to all the food my mother cooked (laughs)! That was really something and then it was put on the dining room table and the priest, the Russian Priest would come by and bless all the food at Easter. SO that was all displayed on the table.

Q: So there was the special breads I know. Was there a lamb at Easter or was it something else?

14:45 – JK: Jeez I really didn't follow up too much. All I looked forward to was eating what my mother cooked (Laughs)! I was too busy in sports.

Q: What sports were you involved in?

14:58 – Well, I played, of course I was born and brought up on skis here being born in February you know in the winter (laughs). I have been skiing all my life practically since I was born. I was involved in high school in baseball, basketball, but not football. I was too small to be a football player, but I played on the varsity high school baseball and basketball teams. The thing that I am very proud of and that I will never forget, back in 1948 the year that I graduated from Berlin High '48 the year that I graduated they started the New Hampshire Interscholastic Baseball Championship and we had the tournament down in Keene. We went down there and we won, Berlin High School, won the first New Hampshire Interscholastic Baseball Championship and I knocked in the two winning runs. Berlin High hasn't won it since (Laughs), so I am proud of that! We almost won the New Hampshire State basketball Championship that year too. We lost in the finals. SO, I was totally involved in sports. That was my life growing up.

Q: I can tell that! Congratulations on the win. Did you go right to medical study in oral surgery?

16:37 – JK: No, when I graduated my father was a very very smart person. If it wasn't for my mother father I wouldn't be where I am today. When I was about two or three, two years old my father taught me the English alphabet and he had the twenty-six letters on four by six cards and the first letter "A" he would put up over the sill of the door and when he was going to work he would say A, A repeat. I would repeat, he would come home from work and he would say what is that letter? Then B, C , and so on. He would

go back and if I didn't know he would give me a whack you know! (laughs) Then when I was two or three years old he says I want you to be a doctor, some kind of a doctor. So that is how I ended up. I went to UNH when I graduated from high school and I didn't do what my father wanted me to do. I got my Bachelor's and Master's degree in chemical engineering. Then I went into the service and then after I got out of the service I decided that engineering wasn't for me and so I went back and graduated from Tufts Dental and then went on for three year's internship residency program in oral surgery. Then I practiced oral surgery for twenty-eight years up here.

Q: A lot to talk about here. Why did you come back to Berlin after studying at Tufts?

18:13 – JK: Well, I didn't plan to to be very honest with you. It was my second year of my internship residency program in oral surgery in 1963 when my mother died. My father was all alone here and I planned in 1964 when I was going to finish my residency program I was planning to practice in the southern part of the state because there were more population, more people. There were a very small number of people up here, only 30,000 people in Coos County. But my mother died and my father was alone and lonesome and he said come up here, come up here and so that is why I ended up coming back you know, and I am glad I did! (laughs)

Q: Tell me a little bit about...you said you went into the service? When was that?

19:11 – JK: That is after I got in 1953. The Korean War was on and I figured I was going to probably going to get drafted so I applied to the Navy OCS Program and I got accepted. On February 1st of 1954 I started my four month OCS program in Newport, Rhode Island at the Naval Station there and got commissioned in June of 1954 and I served thirty-nine months as a commissioned officer in the Navy. I thought about all that time whether to become a physician or a dentist and I figured well a dentist lived a more normal life. Where I like to ski and fish and hunt and all that and play golf I figured I wouldn't be able to do that as a physician. So, that is why I ended up eventually going to dental school.

Q: When you were in the service you were on board a ship. Where were you?

20:17 – JK: Well, actually I was surprised. When I got commissioned they sent me down to Florida for eight weeks for what they called an aviation ground officers school and the only time I was on a ship they took us out to Pensacola and we went on for a day or two on an aircraft carrier that was in World War II. So, then when I finished that they sent me up to Dover, New Jersey to a place they had called a Naval Air Rocket Test Station, so I ended up my whole active duty career there on land (laughs). I never saw water except for that two day trip on an aircraft carrier just for observation you know.

Q: Were there many Berlin men and women that went in during the Korean War? Any of your friends?

21:18 – JK: There must have been but jeez you know I was gone all the time so I couldn't keep up with them you know.

Q: I see. So you came back to Berlin in the early 1960s correct?

21:35 – JK: Yes. I came back in July when I finished my residency, July 1st my three year internship residency program. I came back to Berlin and I opened up my office in October of 1964.

Q: Where was your office?

21:58 – JK: It was located on Main Street.

Q: During that time when you opened up your office coming back to Berlin after being away for a few years, what was Main Street like at that time?

22:11 – JK: A lot different than now. (laughs) In fact all of the shops did a great business. The sidewalks on weekends were packed you know and we had almost twenty thousand people compares to about ten thousand now. There was a lot of activity. In Berlin back then growing up they had a Community Club, The Berlin Community Club which was a great place. I used to practically live there, all of us. They had eight bowling alleys, six pool tables, and a gymnasium. They had a sports program there, a swimming pool. I learned to swim there and how to play baseball and basketball. We had leagues for the kids and that doesn't exist anymore which for me is a very very sad thing. I think about that all the time.

Q: Do you still have family here in Berlin?

23:21 – JK: I have four kids and my second daughter she lives outside of Berlin in Randolph and my oldest who is a dentist is in North Conway and my oldest daughter lives down in Rye, New Hampshire right next to Portsmouth and my youngest of the four kids is an attorney for H&R Block and he lives down in the southern part of the state right next to Exeter in Newfield.

Q: So some of them have moved down south a bit.

23:58 – JK: Yes, but we see each other frequently. We keep in touch.

Q: Did you meet your wife here in Berlin?

24:04 – JK: No I met her back when I was going to UNH. I think it was in my junior year at UNH when I met her. She was a year behind me and that is basically the reason why I went back to get my Master's degree in chemical engineering. I got my Bachelor's degree in 1952 but she still had another year to go so that is why I went back to be close to her. So, I got my Master's.

Q: When your wife came back here with you to Berlin did she work or was she a stay at home Mom?

24:47 – JK: No, she was just a house mother, a housewife.

Q: You live in the same neighborhood that you grew up in correct?

24:56 – JK: Well, when I first came back I ended up living in Shelburne down there on the North Road. Then unfortunately in 1971 we got divorced, so I ended up coming back to Berlin and ended up living with my father you know. Then when my father died in 1982, he was 92 years old; I got the house where I live now.

Q: Let me ask you a couple of other questions. One of the things that we have been asking all of the people that we have talked to is that part of the reason we are doing this project is to preserve Berlin history and you and your family have a long history here. I am interested to hear from you what you think should be preserved about Berlin's history.

26:01 – JK: One of the things is the history of the paper mill because that doesn't exist anymore. It has all been torn down, but everybody back in the early years all worked at the mill. My father worked there for forty years. That is where he worked all the time and so all the people really lived off the jobs that they had in the mill. Now that is gone you know. A lot of other things...I think the outdoor sports which I have always loved, I have been a skier all my life and ski almost every day during the winter down at Wildcat Mountain. (laughs)

Q: That is pretty good! What did your father think about what happened to the mills? He was living through the time when the change was happening at the mills.

27:06 – JK: Well, actually like I say he died in 1982 and he was 92 and that is probably not...it still existed back then. He never talked about it after that. He was doing his stuff around the house...a big garden and all that stuff.

Q: Was there a Russian cemetery?

27:42 - JK: Yes, he is buried in the Russian cemetery.

Q: Where is that?

27:47 – JK: With my mother side by side there. It is up on the East Side when you go across the 12th Street Bridge and you take a left. Then you go up just a short ways. The cemetery on the right side there it is very very close to the road there. I was there yesterday. I put flowers there all the time.

Q: are there still many people of Russian descent in Berlin?

28:21 – JK: Very few. Extremely few you know. *

Q: And why is that?

28:28 -JK: I think a lot probably have left to look for work elsewhere. The only ones that I know is like the Buckovitch Family, Valada Buckovitch is I think the oldest. He is 91. He is still living and his sister Claudia still lives here. She lives right across the street from me. There are very, very, very few Russians now you know.

Q: One of the other things I like to ask people is, you must have some stories that you want us to capture on tape. Are there any stories associated with your growing up or your work, because you knew a lot of people in Berlin working as an oral surgeon I am sure and raising a family here in Berlin are there any stories about that that you could tell us?

29:33 – JK: Well, I practiced oral surgery here for twenty-eight years. I started in October, when I finished my training, of 1964. Today, is it the 22nd of July? In about ten days, August 2nd of 1992 I quit practicing, not retired, I quit, because my family was frightened that I was practicing because they were suing doctors and my youngest son was in law school and he said Dad quit while you are on top because it only takes one nut to ruin you. So that is why I quit practicing oral surgery. It will be seventeen years August 2nd. I loved practicing oral surgery. It was a variety of problems. Every case that I did was a different case from a broken jaw to some kind of a tumor in a mouth to removing wisdom teeth and so on. I found the work extremely interesting. I would still be practicing today if it wasn't for my kids being frightened. That is why I quit. I didn't retire I quit. I was the only oral surgeon you know in this whole area so everybody knew me because I used to put everybody to sleep. I was well trained in general anesthesia. I had patients coming from Maine, Vermont; you know after a while when I got to be well-known and all the way down to the southern part of the state. I enjoyed it and loved it you know.

Q: You said your daughter went on to become a dentist?

31:35 – JK: No, my oldest in the family my son John Jr. He has been practicing dentistry now for about twenty years or so. In fact his oldest daughter, my granddaughter, just finished her freshman year at UNH you know. Anyway I've got six grandkids now, five granddaughters.

Q: What was it like when you came back and raised your family in Berlin? When you came back, set up your practice had your children here what was it like for them growing up in Berlin?

32:17 – JK: Actually they went to school in Gorham. They lived in Gorham there for a few months. I had an apartment there and then we bought a house in Shelburne so they all

went to Gorham High School. They all loved it. All of my four kids grew up on Wildcat Mountain. They are all avid skiers like me (laughs).

Q: You came back to Berlin you stayed in Berlin, what makes Berlin a special place for you?

32:56 – JK: For one thing I like the fact that there aren't too many people. I could never live in a big city like Boston or New York. That is not for me, although I went to school in Boston. I like the outdoor life. I was brought up hunting and fishing you know and I like the woods and so forth you know. I don't like a lot of crowds, so that is what I love about living up here.

Q: Do you have any good hunting stories for me, or fishing about the one that got away?

33:35 – JK: I did a lot of fishing you know in the streams here you know, the Androscoggin River you know and some ponds up around here you know that I did a lot of fishing in. Just sort of routine sort of stuff you know. Hunting I used to hunt all the time but I never shot a deer. I never got a deer. Once in a while I shot a rabbit or a partridge and that was it you know. I love the outdoor life. It is the beautiful falls when the leaves turn it is just absolutely beautiful.

Q (Josh): Do you remember any specific stories your father talked about working in the mills

34:34 – JK: Gee, I don't recall you know any specific stories except one thing. He worked with a guy that was in his crew that was a good friend of his and his name was George Adams. They were painters in the mill. Yesterday I was in the Wal-Mart and who did I meet? Mr. Adam's son; he had two sons, Gordon Adams and I haven't seen him for years and years you know and he doesn't too far from where I live In Berlin now you know. That was kind of strange. You had this person that my father worked with all that time and I met the son yesterday. It was always basically a routine. My father was an intellectual person. When he came home at night he would read all night. He read novels and he learned English and throughout practically his whole life he used to get this Russian newspaper from New York five days a week called the New Russian Word and he used to go through that at night and read and he had a lot of novels that he read you know. Some of them were translated into Russian you know. In fact when my father was 90 years old he was studying astronomy. In his bedroom on the walls he had a chart with the stars and planets and so on. It is because of my father that I am where I am because he was a purely intellectual person. Like when I was two years old teaching me the English alphabet and wanted me to be a doctor. Nobody else you know the Russians wanted their kids to be that.

Q (Ken): I am going to go back a little bit to your parents. You were just telling us about your father. Tell me a little bit more about your mother. Did she learn English? Did she have a close group of women, Russian friends? Did they meet? Did they go to church regularly? Tell me a little bit more about your mother.

37:10 – JK: When she came you know here she never learned....she was a hard working woman you know, washing clothes, working in the garden you know and so on, feeding the family and the boarders and so on. She never learned English like my father. She knew very little English. She probably could figure out what you said so a lot of times my brother and I we would be talking we would be talking in English because we didn't want our mother to know what we were talking about. So we would talk in English and she would turn to us and say I know what you are saying! (laughs) She was a beautiful woman. I am very fortunate that I had such great parents you know.

Q (Ken): So when she would go shopping, say go down to Main Street or something like that, did you go to help her buy things?

38:08 – JK: No, she always went by herself. Back then we didn't have a car and she used to walk down from upper First Avenue. She would walk down to the...they had a supermarket down there right where the bank is you know, where you go through the drive through you know? Right there where that drive through is there was a big supermarket there that they sold food. She used to walk down there all the time and come home carrying her bags and so on you know; A hard working woman.

Q (Ken): They had a strong work ethic.

38:50 – JK: Yes. We had a big garden, a huge garden in the back which is all grown in with trees and so on now. They planted everything. They planted potatoes which lasted through the winter and cucumbers. A pile of cucumbers would make a barrel of pickled cucumbers you know. Cabbage and you would turn around and make coleslaw in a barrel you know and then we used to eat that during the winter; hard working. Feeding those boarders and I think about that all the time how hard she worked just feeding those five boarders.

Q: Did you have the boarders for a long time then?

39:33 – JK: Yes. Yes. In fact like I say in growing up I slept with one and I have a photograph of the one that I slept with and a photograph of the one that my brother slept with in the corner of the room, so none of us had a dining room or a living room. We just had one room with a dining room table where we ate. I never brought any friends home because I was embarrassed because there was no place to sit down. Where the dining room was there were beds there where boarders slept you know. I always was kind of embarrassed. I envied my friends who had just a family and they

had a living room, dining room, they had their own room you know and so forth and us with five boarders you know. Gee.

Q: How old were you when you got your first room? Your own bedroom?

40:31 – JK: Oh gee, probably after I went to UNH, when I was eighteen you know! (laughs) But any way I used to think you know we didn't have a central heating too much back then and so when I slept with this guy, and I have his photograph, and he was kind of stocky. In the winter time I would snuggle up behind his back in the blankets to stay warm. It was quite an upbringing. Nobody was brought up like I was.

Q (Ken): Did some of the other Russian families take in boarders?

41:19 – JK: Not as many as we had. Some of them maybe would have one you know. I think across the street with this Buckovitch family I think they had one. I think he was related to them.

Q (Ken): When people in the Russian community got married were there traditional Russian ceremonies at the church that you remember?

41:49 – JK: Well, I guess there were but I never went. Like I say I never went to the church. My father was involved as the elder and all that sort of stuff. I remember that when people came over to visit all they talked about was the church. That was the main topic. Back then that church that I have a photographs of, back when I was growing up still maybe fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old, somewheres around there, the Berlin City Bank that held the mortgage on the Church was going to foreclose and there was quite a problem. I remember my father was I think the Elder back then and they went around to all the families and tried to ask for donations so they could pay off the bank you know. Otherwise the bank was going to repossess the church. So, anyway after I remember if married families they asked for a donation like a dollar and single people like fifty cents I remember. After they got through getting as much money as they could they were still three thousand dollars short, and my father put up that three thousand dollars you know, I guess as a loan or whatever to bail out the church. Anyway, I know some of the rumors that were going on after that happened and some jealousy and all that and they were talking that I was going to move into the house eventually where the priest lives now right in back of the church which was totally untrue. That is some of the stuff that I heard you know, jealousy and so on you know. So, it was interesting growing up.

Q (Ken): Are there any other stories that you can think of that we should know about?

44:08 – JK: Well, actually I remember one incident back home when my folks had a party. I was just I think still in high school or whatever, and some of the Russian friends on a Saturday night. My father would buy a lot of beer and wine and whatever and

whiskey. So anyway later in the evening the guy that I slept with who was feeling awfully good and alcohol was like a poison to him. He became very hostile and so on. So anyway, this guy that I slept with was involved in an argument with another one of the guests here. So, my father came up and said to them to knock it off. The guy that I slept with says "oh, so you are sticking up for him huh?" Then he picked up a wine bottle or whatever it is and he came down and hit my father over the head with it and lacerated his scalp and we had to take him to the hospital to get him stitched up you know. Where he got hit, ever since that time, my father lost a good part of his hearing. He must have got hit on the part of the brain for hearing you know. I remember we tossed him out. It was during winter time and we threw this guy out that I slept with out on the porch and he stood outside there looking through the glass window of the porch with one of my skis you know and he was like going to smash the window with one of my skis you know. So any way we did not let him in and I forget what happened and finally we took him back. He was a normal person when he wasn't drinking but alcohol was a poison to him. I will never forget that and my father ever since that time lost a good part of his hearing.

Q: That is an intense story. I am surprised you didn't toss him out.

46:45 – JK: He was terrible this guy. His name was Andrew you know and when he was sober he was fine. He did a lot of work in the garden, always working in the garden and all that. He worked in the mill too, but alcohol was a poison to him.

Q (Ken): Alcohol can do that to some people. So were the Russians drinking Vodka or no?

47:09 – JK: Well, they had it sometimes I guess you know. I never touch any of that stuff you know and my father was extremely moderate. The only time he would take a drink is if there was company you know. I never in my life saw my father drunk or anything like that you know.

Q (Josh): I have a question. You said your mother used to do their laundry once a week, cook for them, so what did the boarders pay your parents?

47:46 – JK: Fifteen dollars a week for that if I recall. They saved that money and that is how I went to UNH you know. They saved the money to pay for the college education for the kids. Nobody else did that. You think of all the other Russians who lived in Berlin and I am the only one that went on to be a doctor. That was because of my father; two years old teaching me the alphabet and telling me that he wanted me to be a doctor, to be independent, not to have a boss with a whip over my back. I will never ever forget that; always always always studying my father, reading.

Q (Ken): Was he involved at all with any of the unions at the mill? Did he get involved in politics?

48:43 – JK: No. No. No. He was not involved in any of that stuff. Just a hard worker you know. He was a painter for most of his working time there.

Q (Ken): Well, it sounds like you had a good experience with your family growing up and they did a lot for you. Those are good stories.

49:09 – JK: Well, I thank God every day for my mother and father, because if it wasn't for them...I always say I had the best mother and father in the world, because if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be where I am today you know.

Q (Ken): I want to thank you for coming in and sharing some of these stories.

49:30 – JK: It was a pleasure. All the Russians even today I can tell you take you to where they lived, every one of them you know.

Q (Ken): Do you have any stories about any of the Russian families?

49:46 – JK: Not that I can think of offhand.

Q (Ken): When you were growing up was Halloween big for kids here?

50:03 – JK: Halloween yes we used to go out on Halloween all the time.

Q (Ken): What did you dress up as?

50:09 – JK: I forget you know a mask or whatever. Trick or treat trick or treat you know.

Q (Ken) Did you play any tricks?

50:20 – JK: Not really you know. Gee even now you know growing up in the neighborhood I remember all the people that lived there. Of course they have been long gone and the people that live there now I go back and give them a history about who lived there before when I was a kid growing up you know.

Q (Ken): Let me ask you one last question because I saw some pictures of the circus in Berlin. Do you remember the circus?

50:53 – JK: Jeez I remember it vaguely the circus you know. I spent an awful lot of time at the Community Club. That is the...I've got to tell you this. I cry about that all the time because growing up we all lived at the Community Club. I learned how to swim there, I learned how to play basketball there, I learned how to play baseball there as a kid. The leagues you know for kids, bowling, eight bowling alleys, six pool tables, and a gymnasium where we played basketball. They held dances there like on Saturday night and there was also roller skating during the winter. Anyway, back when I finished my training and started my practice back in 1964 it was a year or so later in 1965 or 1966 I was put on the Board of Directors of the Berlin Community Club and it came up for sale

for \$27,000 and I and another person from the Board of Directors went down and I met with the Berlin City Council twice. I begged them, begged them to buy the Community Club and I told them I said we all learned how to swim there, bowling and all this and that. They looked at me and they didn't say a word. They just had a smirk on their face. It was like it was yesterday, and so they didn't buy the Community Club. There was another guy that ended up, he had a bowling alley down on the lower end of Glen avenue down right where Irving's Garage is right down there, practically next to it, and his name was Harvey Villeneuve and he had a bowling alley there right next to Irving's Garage. He bought the Berlin Community Club and he made a bar out of it. I remember I went over there a couple of times and he had a band playing. Well, that ended up as a failure and they ended up tearing down that Berlin Community Club. To me that is one of the biggest mistakes that the city of Berlin ever made because now there is no place to go you know. I tell all these young people growing up here now about the community club all the time. We lived there, gee.

Q (Ken): A lot of people have fond memories. We have heard a lot of stories about the Community Club, but I am glad to hear this story about what happened to it because we hadn't heard that.

53:32 – JK: Then it was torn down and being on the Board of Directors I went there twice to the Berlin City Council and they wouldn't buy it.

Q (Ken): Did they tell you why they wouldn't buy it?

53:50 – JK: Just off the record, Walter Nadeau's father was a Councilman then.

Q (Ken): Did they ever tell you why they wouldn't buy it?

54:04 – JK: they never said a word. They just looked at me as I am begging them to buy it with a kind of a smirk on their face you know?

(Still B&W Pictures at the end of the tape)

*** Jackie Nadeau of the Berlin and Coos County Historical Society believes there are many more people of Russian descent still living in Berlin although there are few practicing the Russian Orthodox religion.**