

Narrator: Reverend Martin C. Schmidt  
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located at 1747 Lake Avenue, Wilmette  
Interviewer: Denise Rossmann Christopoulos  
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## INTRODUCTION

While resident pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Glenview, Father Schmidt organized St. Martha Church in 1919. He talks about renting an old empty saloon on Lincoln Avenue as the first make-shift church. Father Schmidt recalls the organization of local men in hauling oak pews from Evanston to the church, the women in preparing the linens for the weekly masses and Poehlmann's Greenhouses donations of flowers for the altar which was once a part of the saloon bar.

Of particular interest is Father Schmidt's remembrances of the roadhouses in town and how they were referred to as the "black eye" of Morton Grove by Archbishop Mundelein. During the Depression years, he developed a rapport with many of the roadhouse owners and used their premises for many church fund-raisers.

Due to his dedication and hard work, Father Schmidt is responsible for setting much of the ground work for the parish of St. Martha until the appointment of the first resident pastor, Reverend Frederick J. Berg in 1922.

MS: Reverend Martin Schmidt

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Denise Rossmann Christopoulos

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

MS: Put yourself back 59 years. All that country then was all open with nothing but farms from Milwaukee Avenue west. And up north toward Glenview and then even to the northeast, around Dempster, it was all vacant. It was woods. Nothing was built up.

Q: Okay, I'm going to start by asking you if you could tell me when and where you were born.

MS: In Chicago on O'Brien Street.

Q: What year?

MS: January the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1884.

Q: What was your mother's and father's names?

MS: Schmidt. Dad was Conrad and Augusta was my mother's. They were from Germany. They were immigrants. They landed at German Central St. Francis of Assisi Church on Newberry and Roosevelt Road. A mile down were the Irish settlement. Holy Family Church where St. Ignatius College is.

Q: What did your father do?

MS: I was just one year old when we moved out to the northwest to the West Side. He was a shoe cobbler. He was in the shoe business on California Avenue. That was almost to the city limits at California Avenue and Bloomingdale Road.

Q: And your mother -- did she work?

MS: She just took care of the store.

Q: Where did you go to grammar school and high school?

MS: At St. Aloysius. That's why we moved out there. That was a new parish just being established. I went to grade school there.

Q: And college?

MS: I went to college at St. Ignatius and two years of high school. Four years graduated from college. St. Ignatius College is only a high school now. The college is Loyola. See, I'm an alumnus of the high school. I graduated from high school in 1902.

Q: And what was college?

MS: 1905. (laughter) And then I went to St. Francis Seminary. It's south of Milwaukee. There's a town just south of the border line of Milwaukee.

Q: Is it in Wisconsin?

MS: It's in Wisconsin.

Q: In 1910 you became a priest?

MS: Yes.

Q: Do you remember your first appointment as a priest?

MS: Yes, way on the South Side. It was German Sacred Heart Church at the Seventies and May Street. It was a German church. And I was there just nine years.

Q: Did you get that appointment in 1910?

MS: 1910. I'll tell you a little story.

Q: Okay.

MS: I was called in on October the 18<sup>th</sup>, 1919, by Archbishop Mundelein. And he said, "We're going to make you a pastor. I'm sending you out to Glenview and Morton Grove." I asked him, "Where is that?" He said, "I don't know. Go out and find it." (laughter) That's how I was sent. In those days, you know, you just went. I found it. I had an idea it was up north, see? I came to St. Joseph here. I knew about this parish, and they had a little church in Glenview. A little mission church. See, the priest took care of that. Now keep that in

mind -- the mission. There's where a lot of people make a mistake where they confuse things. Glenview was a mission of St. Joseph.

Q: What was the mission church called?

MS: Our Lady of Perpetual Help. And then, of course, Mr. Sesterhenn was one of the main men of the town. The priest took me there. Introduced me to him, and it was just before All Saints Day. I had a meeting -- I told him to call the people to the church and to spread it around. I came out here and talked to them, told them I was going to be the first pastor.

Q: At the mission church?

MS: At the mission church. And that I'll be out the first day of November, which was a Holy Day of Obligation. I'll come and say Mass. And, of course, when I came here, now where to live? There was no place for me to live. But Mr. Sesterhenn had under the garage a corner that was kind of partitioned off when you came up a rickety stair, but it was no wider than this. Put a cot in there and a laundry stove.

Q: You were not staying at St. Joseph's while you were organizing the mission?

MS: No, I wasn't staying here.

Q: So you actually did not have a position at St. Joseph's here?

MS: See that's cut off. Had nothing to do with it anymore. It was no more a mission church.

Q: I see.

MS: Well, after I got acclimated in a few days, then I went to Morton Grove.

Q: How many people did you originally have at the little mission church?

MS: Sixty-three families.

Q: Did someone come to you saying that people in Morton Grove were interested?

MS: No, no. The archbishop said it. Then after I was kind of settled in about a week, by bringing my duds all out here, then Mr. Sesterhenn and I came to Morton Grove and met Mr. Harrer and Mr. Loutsch.

Q: You were pastor at the mission church?

MS: Yes.

Q: And this was another mission church?

MS: No, it was no mission. See, there's where the mistake is. It was not a mission.

Q: What was it?

MS: See, it was all explained that Morton Grove was a mission of Glenview or Glenview was a mission of Morton Grove. Even the chancellor -- I couldn't convince them -- each had their own banking. They did not want anything to do with each other -- Morton Grove with Glenview. They were independent, see?

Q: I see.

MS: Well, when I met Mr. Harrer and called and told them the day, they spread it around, and had a meeting in the village hall. So I came down that night and told them, "I'm the pastor of Morton Grove." Now these folks in Morton Grove were Luxemburgers. Now, to interrupt, you know years ago, we were national churches. There was a German church, the Irish church, the Polish. But at Mundelein's time, that was all wiped out. There was no such thing as a German church or an Irish church. It was cosmopolitan. I know when I was a boy, the German would never go to the Irish church, or an Irishman come to a German church. Oh, no, that's their church. That's all settled. We're all national churches. Anybody can belong to it. So, at the first meeting, I said the name is St. Martha. O-o-o-h (makes sound).

Q: And where did you get that name?

MS: Well, I didn't. It was the archbishop's name. He said, "That's the name it's going to have." So I said, "If you object, see the boss!" (laughter) Luckily they didn't. Then I said, "It's not a German church." There it was again, you know.

Q: Because people assumed it was going to be a German or Luxemburg church?

MS: Yes. It's the kind that anybody can belong to it. So every time, I said, "See the boss!" But nobody went to see the boss. Sixty-six families I had in Morton Grove when I started out.

Q: When the people in Morton Grove first decided to organize for their own church, was it strictly on their own?

MS: It was on their own.

Q: They just decided they wanted a church in Morton Grove?

MS: This distance that these people in Morton Grove had to travel to get to St. Peter's was too far. When I had that meeting, I told the committee to look for a place now where we're going to have a church. So they found this store. Now on the corner of Georgiana and Lincoln Avenue was a cottage. See it's all built up now. Then there was two empty stores. There was a brick building there, too. So this place on the corner was the empty saloon. They rented that.

Q: Who paid for it? Did the congregation?

MS: Well, oh, sure. We paid rent. Twenty-five dollars a month rent.

Q: Who did you rent it from?



MS: I don't know who it was. I left that to the committee. I appointed it to take care of that.

Q: Were these the three men that took care of most of the dealings on the committee? Lochner, Harrer and Loutsch?

MS: Yes, Lochner and all of them.

Q: Nicholas Platz?

MS: Yes. All those old timers. So I came down when they got the saloon. I looked it over. There was a bar, so I told them what to do. See, it was a long building. That was the saloon. There was another building next to it the same way. And there was a two-story brick building. So I showed them -- back here to make a partition for a sacristy, se where the priest could dress. And then built a platform, and I took the bar and sized it and cut it off. Oh, it was a most cute little place.

Q: What was the bar used for? The altar?

MS: Yes, just part of the bar. Not the whole bar. Fixed that up. Then we organized the women and they got the linens and the vestments. They had little socials start to pay for these new things.

Q: What about benches or chairs?

MS: Well, the village was kind. The men, every Saturday night, carried these folding chairs from the city hall into here. Then lugged them all back again. But, in the meantime, I was looking around, inquiring at parishes for old pews. And it happened one night, it was after supper. I thought, "I'm going to see Father Smyth in Evanston." He had that big church there at Evanston on Ridge Road. So it was right after supper when I came there, and he was sitting in the yard. When I came there, he said, "Well, young man, what can I do for you?" I said, "Father, have you any old pews?" He said, "Boy, you came to the right place!" (laughter) "I got a basement full of them." Well, I hurried home and got all these boys that had these hothouses and had trucks. I came out with two trucks, loaded them up and chased back. No more carrying chairs back and forth.

Q: Oh, great!

MS: And beautiful pews! They were just like new.

Q: What were they made out of?

MS: Oak. Yes, they were beautiful pews. I could seat about 175 or maybe I'd get 200, squeeze 200 in that place. In this window, there was a platform there. (looking at sketch of make-shift church) You can see it extended more. There's where the choir stood. Then where they got the organ from I don't know.

Q: Was it donated, do you think?

MS: It must have been. Most all the Harrer young children were in the choir. Oh, I had a fine choir. Dandy choir!

Q: Was this built out like a store has a built out window to put things on display? And they stood in there?

MS: See, here's where you enter. Here's the door.

Q: Was it written on the window like that, "St. Martha Catholic Church"?

MS: Yes, it was a window like this. That's how it was. See we painted that on there, you know -- "St. Martha's Church".

Q: How many Masses per Sunday?

MS: Only one Mass, because see in those days, the priest could only binate the two Masses on a Sunday at any time. So, I had Glenview, and I had Masses at 8:00 and 10:00. And it would alternate. One Sunday 8:00 in Glenview, 10:00 Morton Grove. Next Sunday, 8:00 over at Morton Grove, 10:00 over here. Back and forth that way.

Q: Did you hold any confessions and baptisms?

MS: Yes, I'd come down on a Saturday afternoon. Or I'd come in the evenings. It all depended when I'd hear confessions in Glenview, too.

Q: You were busy. (laughs)

MS: Back and forth. Back and forth all the time!

Q: Now, were you still living in Glenview?

MS: In Glenview. See, I lived up under the garage from October to March. There were four little cottages on Grove Street. One became vacant, and I moved in there. Of course, I boarded my meals at Sesterhenn's. I was alone in this little cottage. And, so it was always back and forth, back and forth. At the beginning, Waukegan Road was closed when I came there from Glenview Road to Dempster. It was newly paved. I had to go a round-about way all the time. Take Glenview Road to Harlem Avenue, Harlem Avenue over and then Dempster that way. It was Christmas Even, and I was going to Morton Grove to hear my confessions. I came to Waukegan Road and Glenview Road to make my turn, and here I saw a man moving these horses. So I asked him, "Say, buddy, are you opening the road?" He said, "Yes." I said, "merry Christmas!" (laughter) He had a hay load; still covered with hay. Oh, what a relief that was, you know. I always went that round-about way. And when it was snowing, it was no fun!

Q: No, I wouldn't think so. (laughter) How did you set up the confessionals?

MS: In the sacristy, just a confessional.

Q: And the baptisms also?

MS: Well, no. I didn't have any baptisms.

Q: Oh, you didn't? How about weddings?

MS: No. I had funerals, but those funerals I had right at the beginning. That was St. Peter's. And see for confirmation, I'd unite Glenview and Morton Grove, but it was only a handful. We went to those first records there at St. Peter's. We got those things going, so now get the property. See, in those days, you had to have the money first. Not like today. When a new parish is started, the land is there from the diocese, you get that, they give you a loan. No, not in those days.

Well, anyhow I was saying how I had to go back and forth. See everything was double. If I had a bazaar in Glenview, I had to have a bazaar in Morton Grove, because that's not a mission, nor was this mission. Each one, see. Everything was double. Well, it lasted for four years. That was getting near old and it was growing, too. We bought that land where the church is now. See, that first old church? Three hundred feet. I bought that land.

Q: Did you take care of the financial dealings?

MS: No, I didn't. Of course, I got books, too. But I let them bank it. They had their own bank. But I had to give a report of Glenview, and I had to give them a report from Morton Grove.

Q: Back to the archdiocese?

MS: To the pastoral office.

Q: What did the land look like that you purchased?

MS: Well, that was very open space. I know it was a family, Huscher. It was the only piece of land in one piece -- it was three hundred feet. Guess what I paid?

Q: I have no idea.

MS: Nine dollars a foot.

Q: Did you? (laughs) Oh, that's incredible!

MS: Twenty-seven hundred dollars. Then we got the deed and everything. The deed, like in every church, and the religious schools, that's down in the log in the diocese. So I took the men down to the chancellery office and there's where the deed was -- it's like a bank. Every church has its own box where all the papers and things are.

Q: So the money from the bazaars and the other functions was that money.

MS: Every Sunday, they had bunco. Not bingo, but bunco. I don't know whether they had it after the Mass or in the afternoon, but every Sunday, they played, and that money helped to pay the expenses. And so I say, for four years, it was

getting too much. I couldn't handle it, so I went to the archbishop and told him, "put a new man there."

Q: Were you considered officially the pastor?

MS: Yes, I was officially the pastor.

Q: I've read that when Father Berg came, he was the first resident pastor.

MS: Well, he was the first resident pastor, but I was the original. Father Berg, he stayed there for a while. See, then he took that money -- I guess they had on hand some sixteen thousand -- and got a loan and built the church. The first, original church and house.

Q: So you purchased the land . . .

MS: And he put the church on it.

Q: And you stayed at O.L.P.H

MS: And I stayed there. See I was there twelve years, and I built a school. And a convent.

Q: Boy, you were busy! (laughs)

MS: I say they were nice -- oh, dandy people in Morton Grove. They were workers!  
But I couldn't do it. It was getting to be too much going back and forth.  
Because I couldn't neglect either one.

Q: What constitutes a mission?

MS: If it was a mission, then all of that money collection goes to Glenview. It  
would all go there.

Q: Oh, I see. In other words, you stand alone with your money and everything you  
organize.

MS: Yes. It's just like a little offspring. All of the money would go there to pay  
the expenses of the pace.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Q: How about flowers for the Masses? Did most of the greenhouses contribute?

MS: Oh, Poehlmann's did. August Poehlmann. Oh, for Christmas and Easter! I used  
to haul them over in my car home. I'd give them away. Oh, never short of  
flowers. All that I got from him.

And then here, too, in Morton Grove, right here at Georgiana on the corner  
there's that statue. I dedicated that.



Q: The Women's War Working Circle statue of the doughboy?

MS: Yes. I dedicated that. I know I was invited to come and I remember there was a (pauses) politician -- Hoffman, he was there, too. He was a big-shot. I believe, of course, he got in bad. And I know I came down that Sunday -- I remember there was a ditch there, you know, it was just a hill.

Q: That was just a park originally there on the corner.

MS: Well, it was just woods. But who donated it, I don't know. Because, you see, they did a lot of things that I didn't know about. They were working by themselves. That shows it was not a mission, see? They would do their own.

Q: Did you have any more input after Father Berg came and began to build the building?

MS: No. I don't know anything about it after I . . .

Q: Did you still serve Mass there occasionally?

MS: No, no. See then I had my two Masses in Glenview. I didn't have any connection with Morton Grove any longer when Father Berg came. He took right over. And he was the resident pastor. But he was just the first. That's the same way like here. The people of Glenview thought Father Dussman was the first pastor. No, he's the fourth pastor. (laughs) I was first, then came Father Rengel, then came another -- he was just a short while -- then came Dussman. He was the

fourth. They just had a celebration. I was there, and I was sitting in the sanctuary. Then at the homily, the preacher announced, clarifying that people thought Father Dussman was the first pastor. He said, "The first original pastor is sitting right there." And the whole parish gave an ovation. And they found out that Dussman was not the first one; he was the fourth one, although he did a lot of the work.

I bought land there, too, and had a lot of work. See the little church was in the corner there -- a hundred feet. Then I bought two hundred feet more. There was a Methodist Church there also. And the river goes through there. There was a bridge. And there's Glenview Road. Now this piece of property in here was delinquent on taxes. That property was down in a valley, ten feet deep from the road. Every time it rained, this was one big lake. Mr. Rohl (?) of the parish, he went and paid the taxes on this here piece of property. Now this river went like this (sound of pencil drawing across paper). Now what good is that land? It wasn't any good, but I had foresight. There was a time when improvements would be coming. I was almost the boss -- I ran the town of Glenview. So, when improvements came, I said, "Boys, I want this river to go straight. I want all the filling to go in here."

Q: Oh, my gosh. That's a big project.

MS: So the parish has that whole piece of property, see? Well, I had it up to here, and then Father Dussman brought some of the other property. We had that all pinned in.

Q: How long did that take to fill that in?

MS: Well, while they were improving the town, putting in streets and sewers, they dumped everything here. Didn't cost me a cent!

Q: How clever! (laughs)

MS: These old timers, if they paid their taxes and got that property and played politics then you'd have a big piece of property.

Q: Sure. Good thinking. (laughter)

MS: They thought I was joshing them, you know. This river -- see that's the Chicago River -- it's the west bank and they meet at Morton Grove there at the railroad tracks. That belongs to the state. Their eyes straightened -- monkey with the river? (laughter) If they hear about it after all these years, I'll be in the calaboose for that. I broke up that river. See it just cut up the land. You couldn't use it. That would be always a lake. That whole thing filled in. That was fifteen feet.

Q: Well, how long did it take to fill that?

MS: Well, while they were putting in sewers all through the streets and roads -- concreting in Glenview there -- it was about a year before I had all of it.

Q: Served two purposes. They could get rid of their garbage, and you had good land.

MS: I was the director of the civic association we had at Glenview. Years back, we had what we called Glenview Days. They made me one year even run the Glenview Days. There's a civic association, the fire department, and the Legion. Those three ran Glenview Days. Once in there, I said, "Now, we need a new fire engine." We only had one of these little hoppers going down. So, we got a committee and had different departments bring in engines to test them. And I picked the one out. I said, "That's the one I want. That big Seagrave." "Oh, but, Father, \$36,000!" I said, "That's easy to pay for." So what did we have -- Glenview Days. The proceeds from the Glenview Days is divided up into three parts, each gets a part. There were to Glenview Days, then other things I had, and in a year and a half I had the engine paid for.

Q: That's great.

MS: But that's the way we used to work. When any doings [were going on], they'd always [come to me]. I'd say, "Go to your own minister!" "Oh, no, no."

Q: Well, you knew how to do it!

MS: I always had plenty work there to do. Day and night I was working on these different things.

Q: Sounds like you were an expert at getting funds.

MS: I had a dandy young people's club in Glenview. A hundred and twenty teenagers.

Q: Did you have any in Morton Grove?

MS: No. we used to arrange all kinds of hay parties, sleigh ride parties, and then we had the river to skate on. Not only the young ones, the folks came out, too. You'd have bonfires all over the river.

Q: Oh, sounds great.

MS: Oh, we had great old times. We had a drama club and performed plays. I built stages. At the corner of Glenview and Waukegan Road was a dance hall, and I built a moveable stage. Later on, I put it in the public school, when they put an addition on. I told them how to do like three classrooms in one room. I'd say, "Have moveable walls." Then, you had the stage and you had a big hall. You could move the walls away and have solid blackboards on the sides. I had that done in the city.

Q: When this was getting too much between Glenview and Morton Grove, did you have a choice which church you wanted to stay with when you went to the archdiocese?

MS: No.

Q: Did they want you to stay in Glenview?

MS: No. I did that on my own because Glenview was more built up. Morton Grove wasn't. It was still scattered here.

Q: Still farm land?

MS: Yes. It was just scattered. Glenview had all kinds of stores -- stores and butcher shops and groceries and everything. They didn't have that in Morton Grove. So I stayed here. The archbishop said, "Of course, Morton Grove had a black eye." You see, it was during the Prohibition with all the roadhouses.

Q: Down Dempster?

MS: Dempster.

Q: He brought that up to you?

MS: Yes. Well, I'm mixed with politics now at this time. And whatever these boys do, I've got friends. So I went over to the Dells the first time; I said, "Boys, I want this place for two days." "Okay, Father, it's yours." So, I go to the Ferris Inn, "Okay." The next time I was over there to have the bazaars.

Q: You had a bazaar in there?

MS: Yes, I said, "This place belongs to me for two days."

Q: And they never gave you any problem?

MS: No. I knew all of them -- Mayor Touhy -- the gangsters and all of those places.

Q: Were people in the congregation concerned about them?

MS: No. We all worked hand in hand. I just said, "Here, I want this place."

Q: And you got it!

MS: Oh, there are many other stories that I could tell when I was in Glenview. Oh, so many, many stories. Those were what I was implicated in. Yes, oh those were happy days. When Glenview came, that was a part of my history; I was always kind of a fighter. What broke me up -- I had to leave Glenview -- they forced me to build when banks and everything crashed. A hundred thousand dollar debt. From a little handful of people. Well, I was a nervous wreck, so I had to give up. See that's why Father Dussman came. But he had hard times, too, in paying that heavy debt. See, when banks crashed it was '29, '30. The debt was just climbing over -- none of the priests could pay. It was always getting higher and higher. People didn't have any. The farmers lost their farms. You see, years ago when a farmer could sell an acre for \$600, that was big money. But that's why I blame the Depression on these here real estate men. They came out to the farmer: "We'll give you \$600 for that farm an acre." Why, he jumped. "Sure." But the dumb farmer, he received \$500, the rest on paper. And right away, they put street, sewers in there. Cut up the farm. Then the crash came. The farm went back to the farmer. Now what is he going to do with it? He had nothing. He was broke. Like everybody else. Banks crashing.

Q: When you were involved in this little make-shift church here for the four years and when the First World War came, did that affect the building?

MS: Oh, no, that was going divine. Everything was going nice. That was going good.

Q: Did the archbishop ever say anything to you about cleaning up the black eye spot in Morton Grove?

MS: Oh, no. (laughs)

Q: They didn't want to get involved?

MS: No, you couldn't clean that up. (laughs)

Q: Too many? (laughs)

MS: There were too many of them. I'll tell you another thing. See, when I was at Sacred Heart, before I came out, it was either '16, '17, or '18, one of those years, in the *Chicago Examiner* -- it was a Sunday supplement -- was an article on The Bridge Inn. It was town down now. When I came there, Mr. Miller was running it. But you know what that was? The Monte Carlo of America!

Q: Really?

MS: That's why there was a supplement that showed all these pictures -- it was the biggest gambling joint you could find. It was raided and, all these women on the Lake Shore, they were the gamblers, their jewelry was just disappearing. The husband would say, "Oh, dearie, where's that diamond earring?" The gals were



gambling all the money away. And that's how it got out and they raided the place. They called it the Monte Carlo of America.

Q: You mean the women would go during the day or the night?

MS: Yes. They went there to gamble.

Q: Did you have a newsette or news bulletin when you first started St. Martha's?

MS: No. No bulletins. I don't know if Margaret or Mike Lochner -- see he lives right over here -- whether he knew of any. See, when I came there, his father was still alive. He lived right here in this woods. Mike Lochner was 102 when he died. I saw him there before he died. And see his dad wasn't here. And when I came there, I used to visit and he told me when he was a boy how he and his dad -- oh, there were Indians here all the time. See, that was all Indians. They'd take a load of logs down Lincoln Avenue and bring back a sack of flour.

Q: That's amazing.

MS: And how the Indians would come to his door and ask for food. I know in Glenview, too, I found a lot of arrowheads. Yes, this was all Indians. Milwaukee Avenue was a big trail. I know in our garden at college there I found some.

Q: Many people have wondered why St. Martha's was named as such.

MS: I don't know. When the archbishop told me, he said, "The name is St. Martha."  
Just the same as he said it's a national church. Of course in the beginning, I gave them half and half. I gave them some devotions in German.

Q: Did you?

MS: (laughs) Yes. Then, of course, it petered out. They all settled down.

Q: So they got used to it. Oh, you were sly! (laughs)

MS: Those were the days.

Q: So can you remember any funny experiences that you had while you were serving Mass or anything that happened in that building?

MS: Well, after we got all settled, I thought I'd give the men a little treat, you know. There were about a dozen men. So I arranged a dinner at the Blue Pheasant. Now the Blue Pheasant was a roadhouse at what we called the Four Corners. There's Gross Point Road. That's the east boundary of Morton Grove. See the boundary of the Morton Grove church is Gross Point Road, which runs into Wilmette here. See then over there is Church Street, which separates Glenview. (sound of pencil drawing across paper) And here's Milwaukee Avenue. That was also for Glenview. (writes on paper) Now there's Oakton, see it comes from Niles Center, but it didn't go through. Now Oakton Avenue is part of -- up to Milwaukee Avenue. See that's the boundary of the parish. Now what the boundary of the town is, I don't know for Morton Grove itself. I don't know how far the

boundaries go zigzag. But those were the boundaries of the parish. See that's why I say, all the parishioners were living far west from St. Peter's.

Q: They didn't want to travel that far.

MS: Quite a ways. So that put the parish church where it is in the center of all directions, see?

Q: Do you remember one Christmas when they got the church all fixed up?

MS: They had a nice choice. The young people always had real nice music. I had a High Mass all the time.

Q: You did?

MS: Well, I was talking about that, I was telling you about this here parish, that dinner.

Q: Oh, yes, right.

MS: I thought I'd give them a dinner. So I had passed and saw that place. It was a tavern and a restaurant. We had one in Glenview, the Greenhorn, a speakeasy. See, all these speakeasies had a restaurant. So, I had arranged it beforehand. So we came there for supper. We all got there, and I was saying the prayers. And all of a sudden, it struck me it was Friday, and here was chicken.

Q: And you're leading the group! (laughs)

MS: (laughs) Well, I could easily dispense it. It didn't strike me at that time --  
I was dumb. I could dispense, you know. So, I said, "All right. Wrap up the  
chicken in a doggie bag for each one, and fry fish!"

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

Q: Well, I really found it to be interesting -- this whole little story. The people  
were so dedicated to have their own church . . .

MS: They were good. They worked hard, both men and women. Like take a Saturday from  
village hall to this place, lug all those chairs back and forth, back and forth!

Q: How many chairs? How many people were there?

MS: I would say about a hundred chairs or some hundred and fifty chairs. That's no  
fun. You got to haul them all back again. I know I tried every which way for  
pews . . . and boy! (laughs)

Q: Did you know he had pews in the basement?

MS: No, I didn't. I just took a chance.

Q: What made you go see him?

MS: Well, I had seen everybody else. (laughter) I said I better go see Father Smyth. He was the Irishman, see the Irish church there. He says, "I got a basement full." Oh, boy! I hurried home; it was after supper in the evening in summertime, and got these two big trucks. I knew where the boys were. And we loaded up those pews.

Q: How many families, then, belonged to Morton Grove?

MS: Sixty-six. There were more there than I had in Glenview. Here, I want to give you those. (photos of Father Schmidt) That's what I looked like at the time.

Q: You can just see that you're full of energy.

MS: I was only 35 years old. I don't know whether you heard of a Villa Venice, a big place on River Road and Milwaukee Avenue. It was a big gambling joint, too. But most expensive. It was run by a man named Bouchet (?). And he was known for what we call an expert in high-tone productions. And he always ran there. Oh, it was an expensive place. You couldn't get in there -- they couldn't even rob the place, because in the trees and the woods, there would be marksmen. If burglars tried to get in, they wouldn't last long.

Q: You're kidding?

MS: Yes, see that's right at the river. Toward the last year, they had gondolas -- shows outside on the river. All fancy, you know. He was known as a famous planner of big, fancy, exotic dancers. During the wintertime, he'd be down in Florida having a big place. Well, one Sunday, when I had my last Mass, a young lady was waiting outside. "Father, can I talk to you?" "Sure. What is it?" She says, "I'm one of the actresses from Villa Venice. I want to tell you something." So, by that time, my folks were waiting. I said, "Come on home and have lunch." So, we went then afterwards, she told me.

Now Bouchet (?) would not hire anybody that lives within a thousand miles, because when he had people working, he had complete control over them. He takes their clothes away, everything that they know, and she was telling me all of this. And they're naked during the show. Well, she told me she had lied to him that she was from New York. But she wasn't, she was from Chicago. And that bothered her, and, of course, she was telling all of what was going on. Of course, he fed them, his girls, but anytime there was an extra piece of toast, it was deducted. You see, and they couldn't get away. He took their clothes away. He just held them; they were like slaves. So I said, "Okay. How'd you get here?" She said she walked. Up Milwaukee Avenue to River Road and came down Glenview to come to the church. So I drove her back. I said, "I'll look into it."

Well, I was acquainted with the police department there -- the police on Milwaukee Avenue had a big station. I knew all the boys. I said, "Say, I'm going out and straighten out this here Bouchet (?) up there." He (a police friend) said, too, he heard a lot about him. So we made an evening to go there. It was after supper, oh, about eight o'clock. I went to the station, and we were just going to go out and a friend of his came. And we told him what we were going to

do, and he said he would come along. So we took a bottle along, too. You know, in those days in the roadhouses, some places they didn't sell any liquor. You brought your own, but you had to pay for the ice cubs, set up, a good price.

Q: What year is this?

MS: This goes way back; this goes about, see . . .

Q: Is it during Prohibition?

MS: Oh, yes, it was during the Prohibition. It was like '29 or '28, somewhere around '28 is when this happened. So, we went over there and got in. And we walked in -- oh, it was a swell place, you know. A theatre room and there was a table, and there was a higher area and below there was the runway on the floor, where the shows come to the stage. And we sat there, and we had the bottle, of course -- they didn't know who we were. The show started. I guess it was nine o'clock for the show. The show was nine, twelve and two. There were three shows. When the girls came down, I spotted her. She spotted me, too. So we just sat there. It was short -- the show.

There was kind of a vestibule with chairs, and I looked around after the show was over, and there she was sitting. She had dressed. And then I spied a guy around the corner, and he saw me there. He was a bouncer. Because, first of all, no customer was allowed to talk to the girls or have a girl come to the table or anything or tip them. That was strictly forbidden. And here, he saw me go over there and talk to this girl. So, I told her, "Now, quiet." I said, "It will be all right." I brought her over to the table. So we ordered supper. Of

course, I said, "We want to see Bouchet (?)." So Bouchet (?) came. You think like a gangster, but he was just like a common old sewer digger or something, and they introduced me. This here police, he says, "Father wants to talk to you." So I took him aside, and I said the litany to him. I said, "Ain't going to happen again." You know. So . . .

Q: And what did he have to say to all that?

MS: So, he brought his wife out, too. And after he introduced his wife. Bouchet (?), who I say, he was of no appearance, not like what I expected. And I said, "Bouchet (?), go on your darn old Polack."

Q: (laughs)

MS: That's what he was. He was Polish. He was named Bouchet (?), a Frenchman, yeah, big French! (laughter). But he was, well, there's a name for what he was skilled in. Oh, it was artistic. It was nothing.

Q: Well, why was he doing this to the girl?

MS: Because of this nakedness, a lot of the girls didn't like that. So he'd hold them there. Where are they going to go? They can't be out.

Q: They're like prisoners. Were they being paid?



MS: Oh, they were getting paid, sure. They were getting paid, too, but there was always deductions for when these little things happened or something. Or for little extra stuff. But you know what happened out of that?

Q: What?

MS: Every Sunday, a station wagon with eleven girls came to the church. They went to confession first, and they went to communion. Except one, who was a Jewess. Those girls had to come to church every Sunday (laughter).

Q: Boy, you got power.

MS: I said, "We'll throw you off." And he did make a lot of changes. Well, afterward, he sold out and then it deteriorated and everything else. But eleven girls every Sunday came in a station wagon.

Q: That's funny.

MS: Yes, that was something. Then the girls were happier, too.

Q: He never punished her for being the one to say anything?

MS: No, no, no. We said, "We'll keep an eye on you." Police, too. He (the policeman) said, "We get too many complaints about you." The police said, "Father Schmidt, he's the boss of this corner here -- he can fix you!"

Q: Were a lot of the other people that owned restaurants during Prohibition church goers?

MS: Well, they were. Did you ever go to Hackney's?

Q: Yes, which?

MS: On Lake.

MS: No, that's not their name.

Q: What do you mean that's not their name?

MS: Their name is Masterson. I told you about this Blue Pheasant. That was my first sick call. It was this tavern where we had our chicken dinner. Mr. Masterson lived at that at Four Corners. So, he got sick, he came here to St. Joe's. St. Joe's said, "No, you belong to St. Peter's." St. Peter's said, "No, you belong to Morton Grove." Morton Grove said, "You belong to Glenview." So finally they caught me out in the garage in Glenview. So I went there, took care of him, and he died. This was Masterson. He had a little boy and a little girl. Now over here in Glenview was a Jack Hackney in a little white cottage. That was Jack and Helen. It was a speakeasy. I was there often.

Q: What was it called?

MS: Well, just Jack Hackney, they don't advertise during Prohibition, you know.

Q: You just knew where it was.

MS: There was no bar or anything like that. You sat at the dining room table. Liquor was poured and then the bottle put in the closet again. They were all well-to-do people. They were businessmen.

Q: The white little cottage -- are you talking on Harms Road there?

MS: On Harms Road.

Q: Where the restaurant is today?

MS: Yes, where the restaurant is. Now the girls that served, I don't doubt it that that's Helen. That's the daughter of Masterson.

Q: And her brother is Jack.

MS: Jack. He runs the hamburgers. He's married now, too. He had sons, and they all have hamburger stands. On Lake Avenue. He runs that. So they took them, see, because Mrs. Hackney and Mrs. Masterson were sisters. It's not Hackney's, it's Masterson's. See, that's why I knew about it at the Blue Pheasant when I took them in there for that dinner, because I knew about this roadhouse there. I took him and buried him at St. Peter's then. We went to that church.

Q: Yes, I know where that is.

MS: Most of them are buried there.

Q: Did St. Peter's in Niles Center and St. Martha ever get together on anything?

MS: No, you stay by yourself. You're separate.

Q: Because they were always town rivals. Niles Center and Morton Grove.

MS: You could not get displeas any one, any one side, you know -- no favorites. No, you had to be equal. No, there was a lot of work. Even when I gave up Morton Grove, then I had my two Masses. Eight and ten. Well, there was Golf -- that little town between Morton Grove and Glenview.

Q: Golf Village? Yes.

MS: Now in there, of course, there were no parishioners. All these rich, but they had all manner of Catholic help. So there was a Mrs. White. She's the one that had these horses that always win in the Derby. She came up to me there. She says, "Reverend, can you have an earlier Mass at six o'clock, because all this help, they've got to be on the job at seven." "Well," I said, "I only can say two Masses. It would be an expense to get another man to help out." She said, "Expense doesn't mater." She'd pay all the expenses. So a father came down from Techny every Sunday morning at six o'clock. And a truck load of help came from Golf.

Q: So the six o'clock Mass was mainly just for the help in Golf?

MS: And anyone else who wanted to go, but it was for the help. She paid the bills. She was Protestant, not Catholic.

Q: Dis that go on for a year? There were really three Masses then later?

MS: Three Masses, yes. We always had three Masses then. But she paid for the expense of transportation and paying the Father. This was in the last years I was in Glenview. I also visited the sick in the hospitals every afternoon -- Evanston and St. Francis. At two o'clock, whether you were Catholic or not. And they never forgot that. I brought a lot of conversions.

Q: Really?

MS: Yes. They used to say, "Our minister never comes." I know Father Dussman wrote to me one time, he said, "Marty, what did you do?" He was loaded with people that were grown up. He said, "They told me that they want to become Catholic now." We had some great days. Great days!

Q: It must be fun for you to remember.

MS: Oh. Fifty-nine years ago. That's a long time, but they were happy days. I always had something or was always doing something.

Q: You said you said the Mass in German to start out with -- did most of them speak German?

MS: No, no. Oh, no. See, at Glenview there were no Germans there.

Q: How about Morton Grove?

MS: Well, they were Luxemburgers.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

Q: Was there one family in particular that you were close with while you were at St. Martha's?

MS: Well, there was the Phillips. She was a housewife across the street. He took care of the fire in the wintertime. And she took care of the sacristy because I always brought the wine from Glenview and the other things. And, of course, Yehls who lived next door. And the Loutsches.

Q: Was there a little stove in the rented store for church?

MS: Yes, we had a stove.

Q: Did it keep warm?

MS: Oh, it was pretty warm in there.

Q: Would the women decorate the inside with curtains?

MS: There were no windows except just the store windows.

Q: Oh, no windows on the side?

MS: No, no windows.

Q: Have you ever told any of your friends or anyone you've run into that one of your first churches you served Mass off of a bar? (laughs)

MS: Oh, yes. When the cardinal gave me my dinner when I retired, I always had to tell them stories. Always got to get up and tell them all in the olden days what happened. See, I'm the oldest priest in the diocese. That's alive. In 1910, I was ordained. I'm top of the list.

Q: Were you born in 1884?

MS: '84. Going on 95.

Q: When's your birthday?

MS: January 13<sup>th</sup>. (laughs) My last parish was St. Anthony's on 28<sup>th</sup> Place and Wallace. That was 1950 when I retired. Then I went to the South Side to St. Leo's parish, the Irish parish. There was a pastor who was just appointed. He knew me, so I went there and I used to help out Sunday Masses. That was a

monster parish at St. Leo's. We had St. Leo High School, they had St. Leo's football team. There were nine of us. We had thirteen Masses in a Sunday.

Q: Oh, wow.

MS: We had two places -- the high school and the church. And I always had the two last Masses. I alternated between the chapel in the high school and the church. Oh, monster!

Q: Oh, sounds like it.

MS: I preached in the high school and it was jammed. There was generally about fifteen hundred people. There were two Masses, and three thousand people I preached to. In fact, they were just jammed all around. This church only held about 800. There was over a thousand in there every Sunday. That was something. We would brag about it. Wherever I go, the ushers told me, "See all over the place girls were taking down my sermon." And I used to get letters. They wanted copies of my sermons. Even the children at school. And I only preached for seven minutes. Everyone would say, "Father, you saved my marriage. You helped me out by listening to that sermon."

I remember there was a fine restaurant where I used to go Sunday evenings. The young lady always doodled there at my table, and she mentioned, "Say Father, do you remember you got a letter that asked for a sermon. I was the girl." She is now operator at the telephone. She was going to Mercy High School, and they were bisecting this letter in her classroom. I know it was about love. She asked for a copy of it.



Q: Jus think, you're probably in a lot of memory books.

MS: I say wherever I go, that's the first thing they say, "Father, we'll miss those sermons." I know the school brothers, the deacons at St. Leo's, they always attended my Mass. And then when I was at the church, they'd come over there. See, they'd miss the sermon. They would cross over to the church -- one church was Emmett '78, and the high school was in '79 on Sangamon, half a mile away.

Q: Doesn't that make you feel great to know that your sermons touched people?

MS: It really did. Had some effect. Even the kids, school children. That's something. That's why I say now these priests, they preach for three-quarters of an hour. Why, they don't know what they're talking about.

Q: If you can talk to people and say what you have to say, you hit home.

MS: Then that sticks. If you have a good point . . . but then they talk, always repeating and they forgot what was said in the beginning.

Q: Well, you ought to give them a lecture about that, Father.

MS: I told them about it. When I was in college, from beginning on, even when I was going to become a priest -- I either wanted to be on stage, drama, science, because I was a whiz in arithmetic and chemistry or the priesthood. And I know through college, we always had what we call oratories and stuff outside of classes. I was in for it and stage work. Producing.

Q: All three things you wanted to be are so completely different.

MS: Yes, I know. Because I loved all of them.

Q: Well, I don't want you keep you any longer. It's almost been two hours.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B ENDS