

Immigrant: **Yulia Fedechko nee Chomyk (Khomyk) ID #11.**

Interview dates: **May 23, 2006, June 1, 2006, June 6th, 2006**

Interviewers: **Hania Essenhigh and Arkadia Melnyk**

Photos:

1. **Group picture in Klagenfurt, in 1945 In Austria, Large Ukrainian community of ostarbeiters (Also present Mr & Mrs Kopelciw)**
2. **Yulia Chomyk (Khomyk) (left) and George Fedechko (right) 1943 with Yulia's older brother Ivan (middle) and a friend from the same village and three Polish girls.**
3. **Yulia with new dress (paid by employers) in 1945 in Maria Rain in the District of Klagenfurt, Austria**

Documents (with dates of issue)

1. **Birth certificate issued in the name of Julie Chomik, in Klagenfurt, in Austria in 1947**
2. **Arbeitskarte issued in 1943 in Klagenfurt in Austria**
3. **Certificate of Residence in Maria Rain, Klagenfurt, Austria (English and German), booklet dated 6.8.46 (6th August 1946) on cover issued in reference to the arbeitkarte above. Booklet contains four pages.**
4. **Marriage Certificate issued by the reverend Johannes Oleksiuk of the Greek Catholic Church on January 11, 1948 in the town of Klagenfurt.**
5. **Civil Marriage Certificate issued on 29 November, 1949 in the town of Klagenfurt, Austria.**
6. **Displaced Person (DP) Identity booklet issued by International Refugee Organization (IRO) in Austria in English, French, German, and Russian. Issued to Julia Fedeczko (photograph on inside) on 26.8.1949 (26th August). Two pages are blank for a total of X pages scanned.**
7. **Certificate of Membership in Ukrainian Community issued by the Central Ukrainian Aid Society on 13th, April, 1950 at the camp St Martin, Austria for the period dated from 1st, June, 1945 to 13th, April 1950.**
8. **Letter from the Polish Institute of National Memory sent from Warsaw 29th, June 2000 stating that information on Julia Chomyk's deportation to Klagenfurt for forced labor was on file in the archives of Krawkow. Document consists of letter in Polish, identical letter in Ukrainian and of official stamps.**

Note: The documents listed above have different spellings of Yulia's name and of the places where she has been. This is due to the different transliteration of names from Ukrainian to Polish, Ukrainian to German, Polish to German, and finally Ukrainian, or Polish, or German into English. This should not detract from their

tenure. It also should be noted that the dates of issue of the documents are often different from the dates of record.

Biography:

1925 to 1943

Yulia was born on May 13th, 1925 to Yustin Chomyk (Khomyk) and his wife Mekhailina Rechetar in the village of Cviatkova Velyka in the district of Yaslo. The village was in Ukrainian lands administered at that time by Poland in what was referred to in Ukraine as the Lemko region. In addition to the parents, the family consisted of three girls and five boys. In 1942, one of the boys, Ivan, was deported for forced labor to Austria. He was part of the monthly quota of 'ostarbeiters' (worker from the east) the Germans took from each village and town in Ukraine to supplement the reduced work force in Germany and in Austria because of war. The Germans left it to the village or town administrators to select the people to fulfill this quota. In March 1943 the mayor of Cviatkova Velyka assigned Yulia to that month's contingent. Yulia left her family and village to return only twenty-six years later for a visit.

1943 to 1950

Yulia's first stop was a half-way station probably in Peremeshil (Przmeschl, now Poland) from where she was sent to a farm in Maria Rain in the Klagenfurt district in Austria. That information was recorded, classified, and eventually collected in the archives in Krakow. It was used in 2000 by the Polish Government to tract her down.

Yulia's hosts were a childless couple who expected her to clean the stable, feed and milk their two cows and take care of the lamb. In addition, she worked the fields, cut wood logs for the stove, baked bread, cleaned the house, and did the laundry. The farmers were strict but allowed her to attend church on Sundays and did not discriminate against her over food. She was not paid for her labors but towards the end of the war they bought some cloth and had a dress made for her. They also had the cobbler make some shoes for her. The farmers spoke what was called 'viendish' which is a corruption on the name of their capital and refers to a dialect consisting of words with German and Slavic roots. She found that she could understand most of it so that for her language was not a problem.

It was fortuitous that Yulia's assignment took her near the place where her brother Ivan had been working since 1942. It provided great solace to have her kin near by. Also nearby was working Yuri Fedechko whom she met and eventually married in November 1947 in the town of Klagenfurt.

Yuri was an enterprising young man who worked hard and who had the gift of easy friendships. He found them lodgings in the DP camp of St Martin, in the small town of Villach not far from Klagenfurt, in disused barracks to which he built walls for some

privacy and which were shared by several families. Yulia and Yuri supported themselves with odd jobs.

1950 current

Julia and Yuri applied to emigrate to the United States shortly after their marriage and left Austria on May 6, 1950 for New Orleans. They had two dollars in their possession but one dollar they gave to a family, the Yurkevich, who had no money but two sickly children.

The Fedechkos arrived in New Orleans on July 4 and stayed in that city for barely 6 weeks because the only jobs available was for Yulia as a house maid; Yuri could not find anything. With the help of the Catholic Action Organization who paid for their trip they took the train to Columbus, Ohio where their friends from Austria, Wasyl and Anastasia Kopelciw, had settled.

After Yuri got a paying job with Miller restaurant, they got their own apartment and eventually had two sons, the first Georges in 1952 and the second Stephan in 1954. Columbus became home to them all. At that time Yulia also got a job with the AT&T office in Columbus (American Telephone and Telegraph).

All this time, Yulia had scant news from the family she had left in Ukraine. The German occupier had been replaced by the Soviets who were just as harsh and unforgiving as their predecessors. Ukraine was annexed to the Soviet Union. With good reason, Yulia worried for her parents and siblings and friends for the news from the Soviet Union grew worse over the years. She tried to correspond with them but her letters went unanswered for a long period after the war and then when she did establish contact with her family, their letters were garbled because of the heavy censorship the Soviets put in place to control their people. Only in 1969 when Yulia went back to Ukraine did she learn what had happened to them in the intervening years. After the war the Russians came to the Lemko region and deported masses of people. The Chomyks were deported to Russia but they were not assigned living quarters, nor given work or food. In desperation, Yulia's father returned to Lviv where he found a ransacked house without windows or doors but where he was allowed to move his family. The Chomyks stayed there until conditions improved sufficiently for them to find a more secure shelter. And this was where Yulia visited them. They lived in appalling conditions but they rejoiced that her forced deportation to Austria had been a blessing in disguise. They looked at the photographs she had brought with her of her days in Maria Rain, of her husband and sons, of her house, of her new life in America. In retrospect, she had been the lucky one.

But there was another difference between her and her parents and siblings and that the injustice that was done to her in 1943 was recognized while their deportation and hardships were never acknowledged. That recognition was accompanied with a financial compensation. In 2000 the Polish Institute of National Memory sent her a letter of inquiry asking her to confirm that she was the young woman conscripted to forced labor in 1943. The Polish Government requested papers and affidavits to prove that she had indeed been

taken by the Nazis for forced labor but in return she was awarded \$1,800 and provided with a small pension that is just under \$10.00 a month which she still gets on a quarterly basis.

The monthly contribution is nominal and it always reminds Yulia of the dress and shoes the farmers gave her for her services.

Current Activities

Member of Saint John Chrysostom Catholic Church

Member of the Ukrainian Cultural Association of Central Ohio

Member of the Clintonville Woman's Club

Member of the xxxxHealth Center

Contributor to the yearly United Nations Festival in Columbus

