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## Oral History Transcript - Francis Joseph Kotzur

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## Francis Joseph Kotzur Oral History

By  
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Spring 2010  
Ms. Maria Lagorio  
St. Joseph Catholic School, Edinburg, Texas, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Porcion & Oral History Project  
University of Texas Pan American  
Community Historical Archeology Program  
for the Schools (**CHAPS**)

Taken April 20, 2010

Interviewer: Samantha Wilson (called Samson by Interviewee, age 13)

Interviewee: Francis Joseph Kotzur, a.k.a. Frank (Interviewer's grandpa, age 74)

Information in parentheses was added info/comments by Samantha.

PHONE RINGS.....

Grandpa: Hello?

Sammy: Hi, Grandpa. Can I interview you for a school project?

Grandpa: Sure.

Sammy: I'm gonna ask you a few questions. Is that ok?

Grandpa: Mm-hm (chews some sort of food that cannot be seen over the phone). Sure.

Sammy: Ok....so, where and when were you born?

Grandpa: On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 1935 at home, in McCook. I was delivered by Grandma Kotzur (Frank's grandmother).

Sammy: How many brothers and sisters did you have? What were your parents like? How did all you get along?

Grandpa: One sister, Cecilia. My parents were very devoted Catholics. They were always at church. In 1920 my parents started going church at St. Paul's in Mission. We had

to take dirt roads to church because all the roads to Mission were dirt. And once a month on a Saturday, we went to confession at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Yes, everyone got along. Mom and Dad loved me. Memaw (Grandpa's mother; pronounced mem as in "memory"; and aw as in "awww what a cute baby!") said I was the best thing that ever happened to her.

Sammy: What languages were spoken at your house? Are you multi or bi-lingual?

Grandpa: Polish. My first language was Polish, I learned Spanish second, and when I went to school they made me learn English (which is what he speaks now).

Sammy: Do you know when your ancestors first came to America/Texas?

Grandpa: The Polish first immigrated to Texas between 1840 and 1850. Urban and Frances Kotzur (also spelt Kocur) first came to McCook from Cestohowa, Texas around November 17, 1926. They came because a developer who was developing the valley came to them and said that he would trade one acre of their land for one acre down here. It was good farmland and so they decided to come down here.

Sammy: How old were you when you got married? How did you meet Grandma?

Grandpa: I was 22 when we got married and Grandma was 18. We got married on June 14, 1958. I met Grandma at High School in Mission (Grandpa did NOT attend high school in Mission-Grandma, and Grandpa's cousin/best friend did).

Grandma: There was this girl in school that I was friends with and she knew Grandpa. He came one day to my High School--it was open campus at that time and you were allowed to go to town at lunch and get a hamburger or something to eat--to pick up the girl and a few friends for lunch, and I tagged along. That was how I met him.

Sammy: Did you have kids? Do you have grandchildren?

Grandpa: Yup, six: Judith (aka Judy), Sheila, Thomas (aka Tom), Michael (aka Mike), David, and Francis Jr. (aka Frankie). I have 11 grandchildren. Judy married Jeff Houts and they have three kids: Ryan (now married Lindsey Windley Houts, with two kids), Kyle, and Lindsey (now married to Rolando Cavazos, with two kids). Sheila married Bill Wilson and they have two kids: Matthew and Samantha. Mike married Teresa Vinklerek and they have four kids: Jennifer, Abigail, Kandice, and Stephany. David married Linda Rodriguez. And Frankie married Velma Gacia and they have two kids: Urban and Liam.

Sammy: Describe a typical day when you were my age (school, chores, and hobbies).

Grandpa: When I got home from school Mom would have some kind of coffee cake and a glass of milk that I milked in the morning before school. After my snack I'd have to shuck about three barrels of corn. Then, I'd go to bed because there wasn't much to do. You know, Samson, we didn't have none of those iPods and that kind of stuff. It was always 'early to bed, early to rise'. When I got up in the morning I had to milk the coffee cow (they called it a coffee cow because with the milk they made cream for the coffee). Then Mom would have some breakfast. Then we had to walk to catch the school bus. All of us on the bus would be hoping the bus would break down. It usually did and the bus driver would have us all bail out and walk to the house nearby. My hobby was probably my sling shot. Vincent and me would go down to the caliche pit and pick up some round caliche rocks. Then we would go into the brush and see what we could shoot, usually rabbits and snakes.

Sammy: Were there any historical events that had a strong influence on your life? How did they affect your life?

Grandpa: During WWII we moved to Mission for one year then came back. (1940-ish)When we came back they built Moorefield Airbase. We saw planes flying over head a lot. I once saw two planes collide mid-air. There was a crash at least once a week. And I have one memory that seems like it just happened. I saw a plane fly by and 3 people parachuted out of it. I remember seeing them float down.

Sammy: What types of food did you eat growing up? Did you grow food at home? Who did most of the cooking?

Grandpa: Well, Samson, we ate lots of coffee cake for breakfast. We ate beef, pork and chicken, too. We produced our own meats (we butchered cows, pigs, and chickens), eggs, vegetables, and milk. It was mostly Memaw who did the cooking.

Sammy: Have you moved throughout your life? And how has McCook changed over the years?

Grandpa: Yeah...when I moved to Mission for a year... McCook has changed because around 1950 McCook built its own church. They named it Immaculate Conception because all of the people felt close to the Blessed Mother. And also most of the older people died. And let me tell you Samson, there are no young kids who go into farming in McCook.

Sammy: Have you ever found fossils or artifacts on the property?

Grandpa: Just arrowheads.

Sammy: What kind of technology did you have growing up?

Grandpa: I worked in the oil fields for about a year and a half before I got married. My dad was a farmer and at first he used mules to farm but then he got a tractor after everyone else. There was no running water at my house. We shared a water well with Uncle Nick that was about a half-a-mile away. In 1947 dad and Uncle Vincent dug a well that was closer. Then, in 1949 Dad dug us our own well. And, Samson, water was a *very* precious resource. After we bathed, we saved the water for the animals. We relied on wind to produce water because we used a wind mill to pump it. We had a model A car, but the one I really remember is the 1937, Ford, 2-door car. In the late 1940s/early 1950s we got out first TV (he still has it in his game-room but it doesn't work). It was black and white and was only on in the evening, sign off was after the 10:00 news. At first we only got one channel, later we got two. My favorite show was Amos and Andy. In 1947 we got our first electric lights and ice box.

Sammy: Is there anything else you want to add?

Grandpa: After they built the Moorefield Airbase, we got a co-op telephone line. It ran from the Prukops' to Leon's to Uncle Nick's to my grandma's house then to our house and included the airbase. The girls down at Uncle Nick's got to know the Air Force guys pretty well and one day there was a plane flying by real low. The plane flew over and clipped the phone line and that was the end of the co-op line. Sometimes from the house you could hear the train whistling.

Sammy: What train?

Grandpa: The train that ran from Mission to Raymondville.

Sammy: Oh..... Well, thank you for letting me interview you, Grandpa.

Grandpa: Sure, sure. Goodbye.

Sammy: Bye, Grandpa, I'll see you later.

Grandpa: Uh-huh