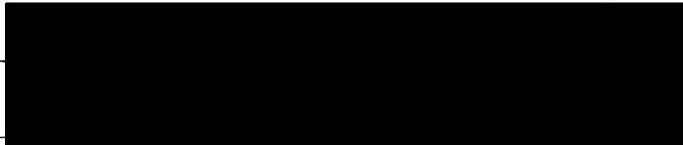


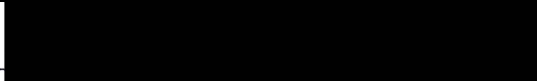
Interviewer: Malvin, Nancy Byrkit

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY


Name: Petras, Theresa Ann Vivod & Petras, Ronald

Date and Place of Birth: 10-13-1917 Bonne Terre, Mo.

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:

10-25-2001 10am - 1:30 p.m.


Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

(over)

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

- I failed to interrupt them when changing tapes or tape sides.
- Ron came in & out of the room frequently.
- A grandfather clock chimed repeatedly.
- At one point Ron had me come to a different room to look at a family tree (Petras). It was too awkward to move the tape recorder, so that section is inaudible.

Theresa Petras and her husband, Joseph, were born in the United States, but their parents were all immigrants. (See attached Family Group Record.) Theresa's family moved to Lincoln Place when she was about a year old. Since then, she has lived her entire life in a one-block area. (As a child, she lived at 1729 Maple Street; as an adult, she has always lived at 1730 Maple Street.)

Her two brothers were older, and she has very few memories of them. Her father did most of the household work as her mother was frail. Her mother also did not let Theresa leave the house much. Theresa also described she and her husband as homebodies.

She recalled several childhood memories of life in Lincoln Place (e.g., taking a bath in a barrel, changing the way she wore her long underwear on the way to school), as well as some of the business people who traveled around the community (e.g., the rag man, the vegetable and fruit vendor, and the ice man) and regular visits to her cousins' house. She also described several holiday traditions, particularly Easter.

She went to grades 1 through 3 at Washington elementary school, then attended St. Joseph's School for grades 4 through 8. Theresa noted that the nuns at St. Joseph's lived quite differently than nuns of later years.

She described several jobs she had while employed at National Enameling and Stamping Company. (She worked there from age 16 until she was pregnant with her first child.) She especially enjoyed the companionship of her fellow workers.

Theresa's parents and her in-laws spoke mostly Hungarian. Her son Ron also remembers Hungarian being spoken at home. She said she doesn't speak it any more because they stopped after her in-laws died. However, she brought out some fascinating postcards that had the message written in Hungarian, and she read right through it. (She said it was because it was easy!)

Most of Theresa's memories are interwoven with the fact that her family had little money. At this point in her life, she really misses being able to crochet and cook the way she used to. (Arthritis prevents her from doing those activities.)

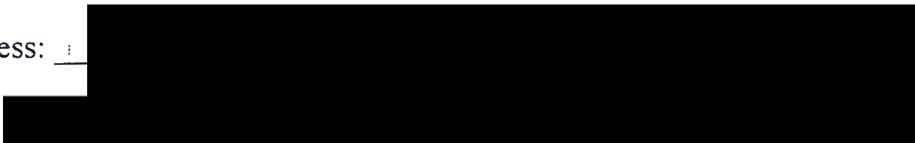
Lincoln Place Oral History Project
Dept. of Historical Studies, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

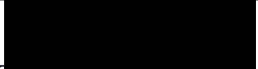
Biographical Information and Family History

Current Information

Full Name: PETRAS THERESA A
Last First Middle

Maiden Name: VIVOD THERESA

Current Address: 

Telephone Number: (home)  (work) _____

Best time/way to reach: HOME

Family History

Years/dates lived in Lincoln Place: 83 years

Address(es) in Lincoln Place: 1729 MAPLE ST

~~now~~ now - 1730 MAPLE ST.

Date and Place of Birth: 10-13-17 - Bonne Terre, Mo

Current Marital Status:
single [] married [] divorced [] widowed

Spouse's name and place of birth: JOSEPH S. MADISON, ILL. 1-31-1888

Mother's name and place of birth (if known): THERESA - VIVOD - ~~DET~~ DETK - HUNGAR

Father's name and place of birth (if known): JOHN VIVOD - 12-14-1890 DETK - HUNGAR

Children's names: JOSEPH W. JOHN RONALD.

Education History

Name of School Place Dates Year/Degree Completed
(City, state)

WASHINGTON GRANITE city
ST. JOSEPH " city

Work History

(current and most important previous jobs)

Job Employer Place Dates

Religious History

Current Religious Denomination: CATHOLIC

Current Church Affiliation: _____

Past Church Memberships (name, place): _____

Activities and Organizations

Please list any organizations to which you have belonged or currently belong, or any activities or affiliations you hold (civic, community, military service, educational, unions or professional, political, or hobbies and interests; include dates and places, if possible):

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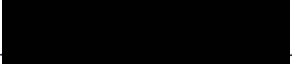
Biographical Information and Family History

Current Information

Full Name: Petras, Ron
Last First Middle

Maiden Name: _____

Current Address:  _____

Telephone Number: (home)  (work) _____

Best time/way to reach: _____

Family History

Years/dates lived in Lincoln Place: _____

Address(es) in Lincoln Place: _____

Date and Place of Birth: _____

Current Marital Status:
single [] married [] divorced [] widowed []

Spouse's name and place of birth: _____

Mother's name and place of birth (if known): _____

Father's name and place of birth (if known): _____

Children's names: _____

Biographical Profile of Theresa Ann Vivod Petras

If all Americans moved as often as Theresa Petras has, United Van Lines and its many competitors would never have been established.

Born Theresa Ann Vivod on Oct. 13, 1917, in Bonne Terre, Missouri, she, her parents, and two older siblings (William and Douglas) moved to 1729 Maple Avenue in Granite City, Illinois, when Theresa was about a year old. When she married Joseph Stephen Petras on Oct. 16, 1937, she made her second and final move—across the street to 1730 Maple Avenue.

On the other hand, although we don't know how many moves they made, Theresa's parents and parents-in-law certainly outranked her in number of miles moved. According to a family tree put together by one of her daughters-in-law and proudly displayed by her youngest son, Ronald, Theresa's father (John Vivod, 1880-1955), her mother (Theresa Korasi Vivod, 1886-1953), and her father-in-law (John Petras, 1885-1969) were all born in Hungary, while her mother-in-law (Anna Illich Petras, 1885-1962) was born in Czechoslovakia.

Theresa's parents were married before they came to the United States. He came over first, then sent money back for her mother to join him. All three of their children were born in Bonne Terre. Theresa surmises that her father was a miner in Bonne Terre and moved to Granite City because he got a job at Union Starch.

John and Theresa Vivod are both remembered by their daughter as being tiny in physical stature. In addition, she describes her mother as being frail. Perhaps because of this, her father did many of the domestic chores. This may also have been part of the reason her mother didn't join the other Hungarian women when they got together for their regular evening "chats" or why she rarely allowed her daughter to leave home. (The only playmate Theresa remembers—a girl who lived across the alley from her—always came to Theresa's house to play.)

One of the away-from-home activities Theresa does remember being allowed to attend was dances at the Hungarian Home. She recalled with delight the annual Fall Grape Festival and the fun of being twirled around by dance partners during the csardas (pronounced char' dash), a traditional Hungarian folk dance. It was after one of these dances that John Petras chose to walk her home.

Until that night, Theresa thought of John as a boy her older brother used to "bum around with" and as someone with whom she considered she had nothing in common. In fact, when one

of her cousins once suggested she try to attract John, her quick reply had been, “Him? I wouldn’t have him if he was the last guy.” Somehow all that changed one evening in about 1935. As Theresa recalls, he “brought me home from the dance, and it just happened.” When John died in March 2000, they had been married for nearly 63 years.

Theresa also fondly recalls how much she enjoyed working at Nesco (National Enameling and Steel Company). She started there when she was 16 and worked off and on—when work slacked off, she got laid off—until 1941, when she was pregnant with their first child. The thing Theresa missed most about not working at Nesco was the contact with the people. (After their son Joseph William was born, her husband didn’t want her to go back to work anymore. Joseph was later joined by two brothers: John, in 1943, and Ronald, in 1946.)

As a child, Theresa, along with many other girls in Lincoln Place, learned embroidery skills from Miss Sophia Prather at the Lincoln Place Community Center. As an adult, Theresa taught herself to crochet, and this, along with cooking, became great pleasures in her life. The beautifully crafted afghans and other crocheted gifts she created over the years are a part of her legacy. She also delights in sharing her favorite Hungarian recipes and hopes to find someone to whom she can pass on the skills required to make them, especially her special Three Layer dessert. (According to Theresa, following the recipe isn’t enough. You have to be able to *feel* what the dough needs.)

Many of Theresa’s memories are interwoven with the fact that for most of her life, her family didn’t have much money. Having a car was considered a sign of being rich (something her brothers and she and her husband did eventually achieve.) Getting a new dress for her first communion, then having her picture taken by a professional photographer probably meant her parents had to do without some things. Since they had very little to begin with, “doing without” was an even greater sacrifice. To cut expenses even further, there was always more than one family living in the house. (When she was a child, her father’s cousin, George, lived with them. When she and Joseph were young marrieds and young parents, 1730 Maple was also home to her parents-in-law and her husband’s brother John and his family.)

Theresa frequently describes her family and its members as simple people, homebodies who never went anywhere. But when asked if they were happy, she says she supposed they were. Perhaps that, plus the memories they’ve created for their children and grandchildren, made them richer than financial success ever could.

–Submitted by Nancy Byrkit Malvin
Nov. 12, 2001