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ETHNIC WOMEN IN CLEVELAND

Oral History Project

Interview with

VIRGINIA KROLL

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Women's Comprehensive program

History Department

The George Gund Foundation

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CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY
WOMEN'S COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM
ETHNIC WOMEN IN CLEVELAND
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with: Marie Kroll
Date: March 13, 1986
Interviewer: Jeanette Tuve

JT: Mrs. Kroll, what was your maiden name?

MK: Marie Adamczyk.

JT: Where were you born?

MK: In Cleveland?

JT: In this neighborhood?

MK: Yes, on 72nd.

JT: Is this the Warszawa neighborhood?

MK: Yes, Warszawa neighborhood.

JT: Where were your parents born?

MK: Both of my parents were born in Poland. My mother in Krakow, and my father in Rzeszow.

JT: Thank you. Did they come to America together?

MK: No. My father came to United States. He had two brothers and a sister. And he came as a teen-ager here to United States in 1904, and my mother came in 1910.

JT: Why did your father come?

MK: Because he was all alone in Europe and his family went abroad. Those older than him were here, so they said, "Let him come and be with us," so the family would be together.

JT: And why did your mother come?

MK: My mother was the only child and her mother says go to the United States if you want to better yourself.

JT: So she came alone?

MK: Alone, yes.

JT: That must take a lot of courage.

MK: Yes, it did.

JT: Did she ever go back and see her family again?

MK: No, because she had no one once her mother died and her father. She had no desire to go back to see the country there. But my father went back to Poland to visit the town and where he was born. That was in 1928 when he went to Poland to visit.

JT: How did your mother and father meet?

MK: At a social function. There was a lodge that had a doings, social function, and my father and mother met at this dance up there. And they got acquainted and they started going together. And my mother worked for a doctor, Hungarian, and a woman and that's how she started in the housekeeping there, working for this doctor and his wife. They had two sons, one that became a lawyer and the other followed the father's footsteps. They really idolized my mother, they loved her, the people up there.

JT: Your mother worked there for many years then?

MK: Yes she did, until she got married.

JT: How did your mother happen to come to Cleveland?

MK: She knew friends here and they started her. When she came in from New York they told her to come in to live with them. She stayed with them until they found a job for her. So there was no, at that time in 1910 when she came, there was not very much work for girls her age. So she started in house-keeping for this doctor.

JT: And how did your father happen to come to Cleveland?

MK: He had two brothers here living and his sister was here.

JT: He came directly to Cleveland?

MK: Yes, he came directly to Cleveland.

JT: What was your father's occupation?

MK: First he went to school, he studied the language. He went to South High, the old South High that was on Broadway. And then he went to work for Superior Foundry on piano plate. They used to make piano plates. So he worked there

for a while until he got married. Then when he got married he got sick and his lungs were being damaged by the foundry stuff so the doctor says you better change your job or get out of there if you want to live. So then the family says "Why don't you get into some business?" So my father bought this property.

JT: And this is at East 71st and Aetna.

MK: He bought this property and it was a home and he built up the two stores in front. And ever since then he was living here, and his family. Raised us girls here in Warszawa. We went to school here and ever since then I'm still here.

JT: What was the business?

MK: My father was a merchant. First of all, when he built it, it was a tavern. But then when prohibition came in he changed it because he couldn't sell beer or liquor, it was just near beer. So he went into groceries and cold cuts and candy and like milk and dairy products that he sold.

JT: How did your father like the idea of prohibition?

MK: He didn't like it at all. And he says that the women got the power to vote and they are the ones that ruined our country with prohibition, because then after while people were making liquor, people were getting blind and sick, you know, because a lot of them didn't know how to make it and they thought they were making good stuff and it just ruined their health. So a lot of them were just getting sick, so my father didn't like it ever since then.

JT: I might point out to your father that the prohibition amendment to the constitution was No. 18 and woman suffrage was No. 19, so prohibition came first. But I know that most men felt like your father did. What language was spoken in your home when you were a little girl?

MK: Well, we spoke Polish and English, both. But my father and mother tried to teach us so we wouldn't forget the Polish language.

JT: Your mother and father spoke Polish with each other?

MK: Yes.

JT: But with you children they spoke both English and Polish?

MK: That's right.

JT: In the business what did they use mostly?

MK: Just English.

JT: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MK: I had only two sisters, no brothers.

JT: Where did you go to school?

MK: St. Stanislaus.

JT: And how long was that?

MK: Eighth grade.

JT: And did you go to school beyond that?

MK: Yes.

JT: Where?

MK: St. Joe's Academy.

JT: On the west side?

MK: No, in Garfield Heights. All of us girls, my father sent us there to Garfield. When I started that's when they just built the school. Granger road was still dirt and that was in 1928. And then two younger sisters, they went also to St. Joe's Academy.

JT: And anything beyond St. Joe's?

MK: Well, then later I went to Cleveland College, that was on Public Square, and meantime my father died so I didn't complete it all. I was there just a year and a half. And then my mother says, "Gee, you better go find work," because it was hard for her to be alone in the business and my two sisters were still going to school. So my mother needed some helping hand to finance us because she paid tuition, you know, for the two girls and it

was kind of hard for her so that's when I went to work.

JT: You were the oldest in the family?

MK: Yes.

JT: Before we talk about what you did in the way of work, is there anything else you remember about your childhood? Any customs? Were you in dramatics?

MK: Oh, yes. At school they used to have the pastor's name day show, and my father was very good at making poetry, so the nuns at school knew my father so he would always have to make for the pastor's name day a poem, and when I would read the poem and show it to the nuns they would say, "Well, you go ahead, you'll be reciting it." Always they had me picked out to recite the poems for the pastors' names day. So, he was very good. He'd see a person or something and he'd make a poem about you, you know. He was very poetic.

JT: Were these poems in English?

MK: Polish. All of them were Polish poems. And I feel sorry today that I didn't keep them and have a memento.

JT: Do you remember any picnics or parties? Did you have a national costume?

MK: No.

JT: Did your mother have a national costume?

MK: No, none of us did.

JT: Did any of the women in the neighborhood?

MK; Yes, there was Mrs. Klonowsky who had them. So my mother used to rent from her for me. Like Constitution Day , 3rd of May that used to be celebrated. It was a big event for the Polish people. We started in the morning with a mass, and then at the monument they would have the wreathes placed--Pulaski and Kosciusko--and that's where they would have a parade and we would march from the area all the way to Wade Park. Then at Wade Park. . . .

JT: That's a long ways.

MK: Yes, it is. And then they would have a certain doing, you know, a short

program, and that's when I took part in the Polish dancing over there, you know. And that's when my mother would rent that costume for me, from Mrs. Klonowsky.

JT: I think it is interesting that you could rent costumes. Aren't they usually hand made?

MK; Yes, they are hand-made.

JT: Mrs. Klonowsky's were hand-made too?

MK: Yes. I have one costume now that probably I'll give it away, Polish costume, that I have here hanging. There are a few people that I might give it to, you know. But I have no use for it so I think I might aswell give it to one of the dancers.

JT: Or give it to an archive.

MK: That's right too.

JT: The Western Reserve Historical Society has a great collection of dresses and clothing of various kinds. They might be very interested.

What kind of dancing did you do?

MK: The Polish dancing, you know, the polka, the oberek, the Kracow dancing. Also my parents had me trained for ballet, and I used to go to Serge Popolov downtown, my father would take me. It was a Russian instructor directed us. So I used to go there dancing, and I went with the ballet to New York to the Grand Central Opera House. We were there for twelve days, I think, or ten days, I don't recall. I was a teen-ager at that time. And we performed for an opera star, her name was Gana Volska. She was the wife of McCormick, some kind of an industrialist. And the song that she was singing in the opera, they needed some kind of a dance, so there was six ballet dancers that went to New York. Toe dancing we did. And. . .

JT: You must have been good.

MK: I don't know how good I was, but then Morgana Park here at that time when I was young, it was a hollow, and there was an ice pond made for skating,

and there I went ice skating after school, and as I was ice-skating backwards there was a boy that came on the ice with sleds. As he came on the sled and I was going backwards, not seeing him of the ice, we tangled up and that's when I met with a big accident. I broke my foot and was knocked out. When I came to I found that I was in the hospital. And that's when my father was really burned up because he knew the damage that I did to my foot. My father asked the doctor and he says, "No, she won't be doing any more dancing." There is bad damage done to the ankle and foot. So ever since then, well, my career was shot, as a ballet dancer.

JT: But you did have another career. You spoke of working. After you finished school, what did you do?

MK: I went to work for fraternal organization, insurance. I did accounting, bookkeeping, typing, working on policies, and all that. And the beauty of it was that it was for the Alliance of Poles.

JT: So you could use your language.

MK: Yes, I could use my language over there because the secretary there, the general secretary, used to write his minutes in Polish, and I would have to translate them into English because when the examiners came in they couldn't read Polish minutes so right there were the English minutes for them to read, whatever took place on that particular day at the meeting.

JT: Do you remember what year you started working for the Alliance of Poles?

MK: 1935 in September.

JT: And did most of the membership then speak Polish?

MK: Well, they spoke both, Polish and English. And then I was also in plays and dramas over there because one of the officers over there had the youth, got them together and he would make plays, you know, certain plays years ago that they would perform. So we used to perform, and then we used to travel, like to Akron, Ravenna, Toledo, Youngstown, and we would perform gratis, you know, and the people that had the show they would charge admission and have like a fund-raiser. So we were just helping out different places

as a fund-raiser for different lodges or clubs.

JT: And having some fun at the same time.

MK: Yes.

JT: Did you continue this after you were married? Did you work for the Alliance of Poles for many years?

MK: No, after I got married, that was during the war, because I got married in 1942, and shortly after that, because my husband was like over age, they weren't taking fellows that age, so that's why we got married. And after we got married they were taking fellows up to 40 years. So then he had to go to the army to serve. First of all he wanted to volunteer for navy because he had an uncle in navy. But he didn't make the grade because his eyesight was poor and they wanted someone with good vision. So after he was gone in the army, here I received a letter calling him to the navy. So then I had to answer back to them that he is gone already to the army. And he was in the country about one month and a half or two months the most when they shipped him to England. He didn't stay in the United States very long in the camps here. And he spent three and a half years in service.

JT: He must have seen some action on the continent.

MK: Yea, he was attached to the 15th Air force so he was with the Signal Corps up there with the 15th air force. So he travelled around in Europe there, from England to Africa , from Africa to Italy .

JT: I know that campaign, yes. Before we go on about your husband, how about your two sisters. Did they stay in the neighborhood?

MK: They are in this area, but they, how do they call them, St. Hyacinths. Off 65th there, off of Union. And Francis up there.

JT: Are they still active in Polish organizations?

MK: Yes, they are.

JT: And they married Polish men?

MK: Yes, both of them are.

JT: And they still speak Polish?

MK: Well, very little. Because the children don't speak it and Grandma Krokowsky spoke mostly in English. So the kids and my sisters speak mostly in English. But they understand Polish, they can speak and read.

JT: How did you meet your husband? Let me ask you first, what was your husband's name?

MK: Joseph Kroll . And I met my husband through his sister. His sister introduced me at a social function, at a dance.

JT: He spoke Polish?

NK: Yes, he spoke Polish.

JT: And he lived in the neighborhood?

MK: Yes, he lived in the neighborhood.

JT: Did you ever think seriously on going with anyone outside the neighborhood? Or anyone who didn't speak Polish?

MK: Oh, yes, I went with other nationality fellows. Yes, I went with quite a few.

JT: Would you have married one if you had fallen in love?

MK: Maybe I would, I don't know.

JT: But you married a Polish fellow, and then he was in the army for three years. And then he came back. And you worked while he was in the army?

MK: Yes, but I didn't work for Alliance of Poles. I worked for Republic Steel.

JT: Interesting. Downtown? Not in the factory?

MK: Not in the factory, no. I was accounts receivable clerk.

JT: Good. And then when the war ended you quit?

MK: Yes. My boss was very much disappointed because I was like an asset to them. Because the job I did replaced a fellow , and I says since war ended and I am going to be back home to take care of my household, I says to my boss that he should give the job back to the fellow that I replaced.

JT: How nice of you. Would you have liked to continue the job?

MK: Yes, I would have, but my husband says we were looking for a home and to start housekeeping so it would be hard to work and try to keep house.

JT: Your husband wasn't interested in having you continue work?

MK: No. So then what happened: My mother was ailing. She had arthritis.

So we lived in Garfield and my husband would come over here and give my mother a helping hand in the store. Because she had a tavern; she operated a tavern. So she paid him some money but not very much , and he also wanted to go back to J. L. Goodman Furniture Store because he was a salesman there, and Mr. Goodman wanted to have him back. And then my mother says "How about you taking the business over?" She was going to sell it to my husband. That's when we went ahead and purchased the business from my mother, so then my mother lived with us together and that's when I started to have the family. I worked here and since then I am still here.

JT: That's wonderful. And you worked sometimes in the business too?

When you were needed or on a regular basis?

MK: Regular basis, because we operated a kitchen. When the foundry needed food so they would come to the corner or the other business across the street. They had a choice, wherever they wanted. So every morning I had to fix lunches and every day something else on the menu.

JT: The foundry is right down the street here?

MK: Right there.

JT: Right out your back window. You didn't even have to go out of your house to serve them. Did you have a Polish wedding?

MK: No. I had a very quiet, small wedding. Because I got married March 19th — St. Joseph's. It was on a Wednesday, so it was a very small wedding because my sister was getting married in May that year and she wanted a big wedding so my mother says , "I can't afford to have two big weddings." And I says to my mother, "No, I don't want a big wedding. I'm going to have a small wedding. So we had about 200 guests, that's all.

JT: 200 is a small wedding?

MK: Compared to my sister's.

JT: How many did your sister have?

MK: One of my sisters when she got married two days after Christmas, it was on a Saturday , she had close to a thousand people.

JT: My! Was that an open church affair?

MK: Yes.

JT: Were you married in the church?

MK: Yes.

JT: Which one?

MK: St. Stanislaus. And I still belong to St. Stanislaus.

JT: And your mother and father?

MK: St. Stanislaus. They were married in St. Stanislaus. And then I was born, baptized, and went to St. Stanislaus until I finished school.

JT: And you were married in St. Stanislaus.

MK: And my children were baptized and all my children went to St. Stanislaus school.

JT: It's more or less the center of the community here, isn't it?

MK: It is. I would say it is the mother church of other churches. Because the way my mother was explaining that at St. Stanislaus, St. Hyacinth's church was formed. You take Immaculate Heart of Mary was formed from St. Stanislaus. Sacred Heart Church was formed and Transfiguration. So all these churches---- St. Stanislaus is really like a mother church.

JT: It must have been a large church.

MK: It was. There were a lot of parishoners, but now it is kind of diminished, you know, because most of them died out and the children moved out of the area.

JT: Did you ever think of moving out of this area?

MK: No.

JT: I don't blame you. You have a very nice, comfortable, homey place.

MK: That's right. And it's close to church, close to shopping, close to the bus line if I want to go downtown. It is very convenient.

JT: And you have lots of friends in the neighborhood.

MK: Yes.

JT: And so, how many children did you have?

MK: Three children. Two boys and a girl. And they are all married.

JT: Did you speak Polish with them?

MK: Yes, I did, and my mother spoke it to my children, but my children wouldn't answer to my mother in Polish. They would answer in English and say, "Grandma, you speak English." They all wanted grandma to speak English. And grandma would say, "I want you to speak Polish." So, my older son was the one that would speak; to this day he understands and speaks Polish. But my other son and daughter, no.

JT: That's interesting. So it is the oldest one who retains the language?

MK: Yes.

JT: When did you get involved again with the Alliance of Poles. As I understand you are now recording secretary.

MK: Yes. Well, see, there was a convention, I can't recall what year it was. It was out of town. And being a delegate from my lodge there, the people that worked in the office--it was a brother and a sister--and the brother was running against the general secretary, and both of them were to the convention, and since he was running and he was defeated at the convention and the general secretary was back. So then this fellow and the sister quit, and the president of the organization, he says, "We better page for Marie Kroll and let her go to the office to help out because since the two from the office that are working are not going to come in. And business must go on; we can't have the office closed. So they paged me and I was just paying my bill at the desk and my luggage was already in the car because the lady that was bringing me home says, "Something must be wrong because they are paging you." So I got kind of upset. I says, "Oh, dear."

So I went back to the convention hall and asked who was paging me. So then the general secretary says "Marie, here are the keys. You go to the office, open the office and let Pat in and you give her a helping hand and ask her what she wants you to do, because I'm afraid there won't be nobody else but you two girls." And sure enough, that's just what happened. And ever since then I got myself stuck in. But I worked short hours for the time being because I had to give my husband a helping hand here in the store. I had to do all the shopping, prepare the food and everything. Later on I got a lady to come in and give my husband a helping hand so I would start the meal early in the morning and when she came everything was ready and I would tell her what the menu was and what was what. So she would help my husband and I would go back to Alliance of Poles. And we worked like that 'til my husband retired. That's 15 years ago. And I worked at the office all the time, but then they wanted me to be the secretary, the secretary that was up there was running for president. And he was defeated. So they kind of figured that he would be defeated so the president called me and he says, "We want you to run for secretary." I says, "I don't want to run for secretary." "Yes. You train one of the girls in the office to do your job." So I trained a girl to take my job. The convention was in September and I had to work to December to close out the year and teach the girl all the procedures for the actuarial reports have to be done, so I trained her. And then, because our bylaws say to be an officer to the central body you can't work in the office. So that's why I had to give up the job in the office and train somebody else because I was going to be secretary for the central body. So now, this year, is going to be convention in Troy, Michigan, so it is going to be the third time that I'll be running for secretary. And so far I don't know. Last time I didn't have no opposition. But this year I don't know if there is going to be opposition or not.

JT: Is this a nationwide organization?

MK: Yes.

JT: How long is the term?

MK: Four years.

JT: So you have been secretary 8 years and probably 12. And you have been associated with the organization almost all of your life.

MK: All my life. Since 1935. That's many years.

JT: What is the purpose of the Alliance of Poles?

MK: It's a fraternal organization. It's a insurance. Life insurance and we have different term insurance , and we help out. We have scholarship funds that we issue to our children for a better education, to better themselves. We help with mortgage loans to our members, and we also have credit union where people invest money in credit union. Then we help if you want to remodel your home or purchase a car so people have somewheres to get a loan from.

JT: So you need an office and bookkeepers and accountants?

MK: Yes.

JT: And don't you have a hall?

MK: Yes, we have a beautiful auditorium in this area. It's well occuppied with different functions. Like now during Lent we have Broadway players that perform, I think this will be the last week for them. They have a play going on, "You Can't Take It With You." And they have very nice plays, like "Sound of Music" "Fiddler on the Roof," there's a few nice plays that the Broadway players perform.

JT: Sounds like a very good selection. You must have a good attendance.

MK: Yes, we have.

JT: What other social activities do they sponsor?

MK: Oh, next month, April, we'll have a bowling tournament.

JT: Do you have a bowling alley?

MK: No, we don't. But we have member groups that go to other places like bowling alleys that are equipped. So our bowling tournament now is going to be in Lorain, Ohio. And in August we're going to have in Toledo, Ohio a golf tournament.

So there's ladies and men that golf, you know, and then they have a banquet. It's a nice social event. And we have ski club for the young people. We have a soccer team.

JT: All of your social life could revolve around the Alliance.

MK: Yes.

JT: Has it for you most of your life?

MK: Yes, it did.

JT: Is the membership of men and women?

MK: Yes, men and women.

JT: Half and half?

MK: Yes.

JT: Has it been customary for the secretary to be a woman?

MK: No, there used to be a man.

JT: You were the first woman?

MK: No, there was a woman before me. Then I was second. But for ninety some years the Alliance of Poles never had a president a woman. But the last convention elected a young lady for president. So she is the first woman in the Alliance of Poles.

JT: That's wonderful. Congratulations to her. And you've been active all your life in the church. Did you belong to any of the women's organizations of the church?

MK: Yes, I belong to Young Ladies Sodality that we used to have at St. Stanislaus church. That was all the young ladies. We had about 300. And I also took part in the choir, St. Stanislaus choir.

JT: So you were busy with the church. Do you belong to the American Polish Women's Club?

MK: Yes. I am an officer over there too.

JT: What is your office.

MK: I'm the treasurer.

JT: They are determined to have you in charge of the records somehow or other. You must be pretty good at that. How long have you been a member of the American Polish Women's Club?

MK: I've been about 8 years there.

JT: And they meet at Higbees and they have programs and so on?

MK: Yes.

JT: And many of your friends belong to it, I suppose?

MK: Yes. We are going to have now Easter Monday memorial mass for our deceased members and after the mass we come back to Higbees and we have our brunch there. And then we are having one of the--we always have a guest speaker, so this year we are having a nun from Ursuline who will speak about her life. A very interesting person. And also we had a card party where we raised funds for the restoration of St. Stanislaus church. So we are going to present the check to the pastor, Father John Kent, Easter Monday at our brunch. He will get the check from American Polish Women.

JT: Wonderful. The American Polish Women's Club must have members from many churches. But they give to St. Stanislaus.

MK: Oh, yes. Well, always our project once a year. We never raise money for ourselves. When we have a project we raise that money for certain things like cancer home, heart association. Last year we donated \$500 to the Statue of Liberty. And this year we brought up, I brought up, how about the restoration of St. Stanislaus church because it needs it very badly. So then the body decided it was all right to raise for St. Stanislaus.

JT: That's quite a noble cause. Do you belong to any other Polish women's organizations?

MK: Yes, I do. I belong to Maximilian Kolby. This ship brought five nuns from Poland--from Poland, brought here. And they're the ones that are like servants to old age people. One of the nuns is like a nurse, one takes a car if you need someone to take you to the doctors, this nun takes you to the doctor, brings you back home and the old people that can't clean

up and upkeep their home or go shopping, these nuns help out. They call them servants of Immaculate Heart of Mary. And we formed a Maximilian Kolby League to raise funds and help these nuns. Also the Orchard Lake in Michigan, that's where the young priests are being educated. We help the Orchard Lake priests in Michigan also. This coming Sunday there is going to be a dinner held at Hilton on Rockside Road and a fund, the proceeds that were made during the year, the director from Orchard Lake will receive a check at the doings. That's this Sunday.

JT: I don't know how you find time for all those things.

MK: That's what somebody says. They called me the other day "Look, your place is pretty clean. How do you do it? You're busy during the day going here and there, you go to the office. I'm in the office practically every day up there, and today at two o'clock I have a meeting with St. Stanislaus senior citizens.

JT: Do you belong to that group?

MK: Yes, I belong to that.

JT: Did we miss any groups?

MK: Oh, yes, there's Halina Singing Society. They are going to have their convention at Stouffer's Inn on the Square. And another place I belong is right there. . . .

JT: Oh, the National Council of Catholic Women.

MK: The Halina Singing Society. See they are going to have an international convention of Polish Singer Alliance of America and that will be starting May 22 up to May 25 of 1986. Choirs from all over are coming to Cleveland and the convention in Cleveland wasn't held for 25 years so the Polish singers really feel honored to have it and we are trying to welcome the out-of-town guests. There will be around 1500 singers and there will be a mass and church, St. Stanislaus Church, on Sunday, May 25 at 10:30 a.m. and then there'll be a brunch and then at noon they are going to start rehearsals

with different choirs and then the concert is going to be at Stouffer's Inn on the Square from three to five and the banquet that Sunday is going to be at 7 p.m. It's a great big event for the Polish singers in Cleveland, Ohio.

JT: It is a big event. Do you have an office in that group?

MK: No. I'm just publicity for them.

JT: Are you the publicity chairman?

MK: Yes.

JT: And you sing too?

MK: Yes.

JT: What do you sing?

MK: Oh, there's a lot of church songs, Polish songs, and some English songs are sung.

JT: Do you sing soprano?

MK: Yes, soprano I sing. Also, in this area, University Settlement. Do you know University Settlement, it's on Fleet there and Broadway and 49th and Broadway? There's two of them that we have and one other little branch is starting on Warner Road.

JT: When you say "we" who do you mean?

MK: Well, it's the people from the area board. There's quite a few people. We have a--Mary Sanders is the director. She's a social worker, you know. So I do volunteer work over there. I'm on the board over there as one of the directors from this area.

JT: What kind of volunteer work do you do?

MK: Well, we go to the meetings and there's certain things that are brought up, what is in our city. Like now our programs are going to be cut because we have a nursery school, and we have teachers that teach music to the children after school, and they have craft, trying to keep the children occupied with different things. The nursery school is one where mother's bring the children

while the mothers are working, and then they come in and pick up the children.

JT: These are mostly Polish children, I presume.

MK: Oh, no, they are of different nationalities, not only Polish.

JT: So this group doesn't have a Polish orientation?

MK: No, not at all. It's all American.

JT: They need a lot more child care centers, don't you think?

MK: Yes.

JT: It's one of the failures of our society that we don't provide that.

Any other organizations?

MK: I can't think of any.

JT: Well, if you think of one, just let me know. You belong to so many I think you must be a very good organization person.

MK: They want to stick me in wherever---just like that Kolby League---they wanted me to be president. And I says, "No, I can't because I have too many functions." Right with the Alliance of Poles that I'm connected, in my lodge that I belong, Sacred Heart Society, my father was a secretary in that group. I'm a treasurer for 50 years in that group, and I have my son being the president of this group, so he's a third generation in that lodge. And now his children belong, so that's already four generations in the lodge. And also, then, the Circle 9, which is the largest circle in the Alliance of Poles. It consists of 16 groups, it's like an umbrella, you know, of all the lodges. So I happen to be the recording secretary up there in Circle 9. And also Polish American Congress, I've been a director up there. And Polish American Congress is going to celebrate Constitution Day May 4th this year, so a lot of people. And the Halina Singing Society is going to take part in it. There's going to be a parade from Washington Park down Fleet to 71st and Broadway and from Broadway to Forman and Broadway where they are going to have a podium set up in front of Alliance of Poles over there and that's

where we're going to have the speakers, president of Polish-American Congress, and certain guests that will be invited to attend this big event.

JT: Interesting. In your home what features of Polish culture did you continue?

MK: Well, at Christmas time we have the vigil of Christmas where we have the wafer and we always distribute and wish the wafer and then we have our meal, you know, regular Christmas dinner. My children are keeping up with it. And at Easter time, again, we have which we call b . And eggs are blessed, we call this our Saturday, a basket of food is blessed, like butter, bread, eggs. And eggs are supposed to remind us of new life, you know, being brought. So our custom--dad used to always give us the egg with a shell and he would hold it in his hand a certain way and you would have to try to break his shell, and if you didn't break it and you broke your shell then you were out, you know. And there was a certain way that he held the egg that the shell wouldn't break for him but it would break for us. So we used to have a lot of fun trying to break the shell.

JT: No one else ever learned how to do it?

MK: No, and he wouldn't tell us. There's a certain way that you hold, you know, something that you can break the shell.

JT: Any other holidays that were special?

MK: Birthdays were always celebrated.

JT: Did you do any special cooking for birthdays?

MK: The only special cooking we did at Easter time and Christmas. It was more of a big feast day for us, you know. With bakery and certain meats and birthdays it was always a birthday cake of different design and always for the children it was like a carrousel cake or a doll cake and as the children grew up we would have different type of cakes.

JT: And your children all learned to speak Polish?

MK: Yes.

JT: Did you speak it at home?

MK: Very little we spoke it at home.

JT: And they still could speak Polish?

MK: Yes, they still could. and talk to you.

JT: But not the grandchildren?

MK: Not the grandchildren.

JT: They don't want to? That's the fourth generation?

MK: Yes.

JT: So you kept it very well for three generations?

MK: Yes. See, I have records and books that if they want to learn, you know, I have four of them. I have a grandson now that goes to Trinity High School so I think I better give him the books and records. I wonder if in school they do teach Polish language there. I have to find out.

JT: Do you think, well you answered this, that your oldest son retains the culture more than your daughter.

MK: That's right. She's the baby of the family, my daughter.

JT: We are hoping to show in this study that it's women who pass down the culture. Does your daughter do the [Polish] cooking?

MK: Yes, she does.

JT: Good. Did your children marry within the Polish community?

MK: Yes, they did, but my second son, his wife isn't Polish, she's Slovenian.

JT: That's close.

MK: Yes..

JT: So it is your daughter who continues the cooking?

MK: Yes.

JT: And she will probably teach it to her daughters.

MK: Probably.

JT: But it is your older son who continues the language and more of the tradition?

MK: Yes. He even has at his bank branch there a charwoman that cleans, you know.

So sometimes he doesn't know how to spell certain things he wants to tell this woman because he won't be in the bank when she comes in, what he wants her to do, so I have to spell certain words so they're not misspelled for the lady when she comes she'll understand what he wants her to do. So she made a remark to him, she said, "Oh, how nice you speak Polish." But he says she should know that my mother spelled it for me.

JT: I can see that you kept a lot of the Polish tradition through your singing. How about your children, are they interested in the music?

MK: No, not so far. My oldest son, his daughter is going to ballet. She's learning how to dance the ballet and she'll have a recital sometime during the summer, so I pass my ballet and toe dancing shoes to her. She's got my shoes. I said, "Rebecca, some day you'll fit into grandma's shoes."

JT: How about Polish music. You sing much of it. Do you listen to it on the radio?

MK: Yes. I listen to Stolarczyk or Sulecki, you know

JT: I know Stolarczyk, I don't think I know the other one.

MK: Sulecki, that's from Cleveland State. They have a program being broadcast. And Repka, our councilman, is from Cleveland State also now.

JT: And you like to listen to the polkas and the modern music?

MK: Yes.

JT: Have the modern American Polish composers turned to rock and roll?

MK: I don't go for rock and roll?

JT: But is it on your radio?

MK: Sometimes, but mostly it's the regular music that people like.

JT: How about your sons and daughter?

MK: Oh, my daughter she attends the ballet. She goes if like now there's going to be ballet so she is going to go. They go to Blossom Center, Symphony. Especially during the summer the whole family goes because you can

be on the tree lawn there and enjoy, you know. And the grandchildren can run around. So we go there.

JT: I was thinking of the Polish program on radio. Do any of your children listen to that?

MK: No.

JT: How about reading the language, do you take a newspaper in Polish?

MK: Oh, yes. The Alliancer that I get is in Polish and so I read whatever we have in the Alliancer and I have over here some of the stuff from the publicity that I did. Here is another organization that I belong to, it's Union of Poles. That's their paper. Here's about American Polish Women's card party that I sent. So I am keeping that.

JT: Oh, here's your card party mentioned in the paper.

MK: Yes. And also it is in St. Stanislaus Bulletin, and it's for proceeds for restoration of the church. So I took it downtown to show the members that we were really well publicized as far as our card party which was a success.

JT: Do your sons and your daughter read the Polish papers?

MK: No, not at all.

JT: They could?

MK: Oh, no they can't. The oldest son could, but my daughter and my other son, no.

JT: Do they wish that they could?

MK: No, they think it is better to speak English language. It's too hard for them, they say, the Polish language.

JT: Have any of your family been interested in politics?

MK: So far, when my father lived he was a politician. He was involved in politics because when I finished school he wanted me to go to law school. At that time Lee Skeel was the dean of Marshall Law School. So I went there for about three months, but I cried practically every day that I didn't like that school. I didn't want to study law.

JT: It's not easy.

MK: No. So then my father talked to Judge S keel and he says, "Let me talk with your daughter." So then one day when I was at school I was called to the office. Everybody at school was wondering why is she called to the office? She did something? So he talked to me and he said, "What is your problem that you don't like the law?" And I says, I don't like it. I'd rather do typing, bookkeeping, accounting and I hate law. My father wants me to be a lawyer and I don't want to." So then he called my father and he told him, he says, "She's got a good idea. Leave her alone, let her go into accounting, bookkeeping, secretarial work. That's a nice field, you know. She's not pleased with law. Leave her alone, let her go." And that is when I switched to Cleveland College.

JT: Well, I think his advice in those years was good. So noone in your family has been much into politics.

MK: No, no.

JT: How do you feel about Poland? Have you been back to Poland? Would you like to go?

MK: No. I have no interest to go to Poland. I'd rather see my country here. In June I'm planning to go to New England. I'll go to Vermont. I've been in Boston, so now this year I'll go to Vermont.

JT: It's a lovely area.

MK: So this is my plan for vacation. I want to go to Vermont and then while I'm over there I'm going to be working on my report for the convention.

JT: I knew it! Do you keep up with Polish politics? In Europe?

MK: No. Not at all. But I have a young lady that lives with me . I've had her now for about four months. Since I'm all alone and it's kind of bad to be alone in this big house, so my lady friend says, "Why don't you get this young lady from Poland to live with you. I'm trying to teach her English because she only speaks Polish, she doesn't understand very much

English So that's why I have her here and she is company to me and she works for Joseph and Feiss. She has family in Europe and she's the only one that is in the United States.

JT: She sounds like an interesting person. How did she happen to come?

MK: I don't know much about her but yesterday was four years that she's here in the United States. Very interesting young lady.

JT: Yes. Does she enjoy working for Joseph and Feiss?

MK: Yes, she does. She wishes she would have something else because she is educated but since she doesn't communicate in English it's hard for her to switch jobs, so she just does sewing which is the next best thing for her.

JT: She is very lucky to have you.

MK: My husband had family in Poland and they wanted--relatives from his mother's side--so he had a cousin that for 30 years was trying to trace the family. Finally she traced to my husband, you know, so I communicate with them over there in Poland, writing . . .

JT: You still do that?

MK: Yes, I still do that. Like for Easter I already sent my greetings to them up there because one of the cousins is a priest in Toron, a little town. So I sent to him greetings and to the rest of the family. As far as my mother and my father, there is nobody in Poland any more.

JT: Well, it is interesting that you do communicate with someone there. And you hear from them regularly?

MK: Yes.

JT: That is the end of my questions. Do you have anything you would like to add?

MK: So far no. What could I add?

JT: I think this is a very good tape, an excellent interview, and we thank you very much.

MK: Thank you for coming. I hope I have been a help with your research.