

**Transcript for Oral History Interview**  
**Conducted for University of Maryland Course HIST428M – Spring 2015**  
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**Interviewee's name:** Edwarda M. Buda-Okreglak, M.D.

**Interviewee's Country of Origin:** Poland

**Interviewee's Current Residence:** Kensington, Montgomery County, Maryland, U.S.A.

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INTERVIEWER (INT) This is Bożenna Buda interviewing Edwarda M. Buda-Okreglak for the Immigrant Voices Archives of the University of Maryland's Center for History of the New America. The interview is taking place March 21st, 2015, at Dr. Buda-Okreglak's home in a suburb of Washington, D.C. I am interviewing Dr. Buda-Okreglak to obtain her recollections about the Polish presence in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area.  
Good afternoon, Dr. Edwarda Buda-Okreglak.

EDWARDA M. BUDA-OKREGLAK (EMB) Good afternoon.

INT I want to start with a little biographical information. When and where were you born?

EMB So, I was born in Poland. Do you really want to know when? [Laughing]  
It is not a total secret. So, I was born in 1949, [laughing] in a town in Poland called Chotcza. Which was by the Wisła River, which is also called the Vistula River, which is south of Warsaw.

INT Umhum, okay. So tell me a little about your name. What does the "M" stand for or how did you get the name Edwarda, also?

EMB So, I happened to be named after both my father and my mother<sup>1</sup>. And you may wonder now why well, I had heard, later on, that if I were to be a boy I would have been named after my mother with the middle name being after my father. But since I'm a girl, I'm named after my father having the middle name after my mother. Now this is kind of interesting because in fact there were times when I was asked whether my parents wanted a boy. And so you, you know [laughing] the dilemma you are in if you have to ask your parents if they wanted a boy [laughter], whether they are willing to disclose. But I kind of suspect that my parents were so happy to have either one that they were so happy to be first time parents that I don't think they thought beyond that.

INT That's a very interesting story. And, so tell me a little bit about your mother and your father in Poland and then how did you all happen to come to the United States?

EMB So, you know, I guess I was destined to come to the U.S. But it was really my mother who was to have come to the US as a young girl but the war<sup>2</sup> intervened and so she did not come. We had relatives here in the US. [EMB was the doctor on call at the hospital that day and received a call about a consultation for a patient there. We had to turn off the recorder for privacy reasons while she was on the telephone.]

INT So we were talking about your coming to the United States. Can you tell us more about that?

EMB So in fact we came as a family to our relatives. Now, what is interesting is that we have had relatives on both sides of the family, both my father's and my mother's who had initially come around the time of the First World War and who had grandchildren the age, which were similar to mine. So, we were coming from a different emigration wave, you might say, that could be a wave. I also went to school, grammar school, with children who came from the displaced camps<sup>3</sup> after the war. So, again, we were different in that sense in that we were coming to relatives because really of my mother, rather than because of some other circumstances like the war. [Noise is from the kitchen upstairs. Her husband was starting supper and did not realize that we could hear the noise.]

INT Excuse me. Just to clarify, you said you went to school with the other children. That was in the United States?

EMB Yes. That was in the United States when we first came here. So in fact, I came here when I was still in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, just about to finish 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

INT And that was in which year?

EMB In April, it was, let me just see, it was just so long ago. 1961. Is that correct?

INT That sounds right. We should also point out we are sisters.

EMB Yes, come to think of it, we are. And there were two of us that came with our parents. And of course we have gotten one more sister after arriving in the US but you're absolutely right. So, what in fact I wanted to point out is that there are different generations and waves of emigration which come during different times and so I don't know whether we were part of a wave of immigration but in any event this is the circumstances under which we came.

INT Thank you. And can you tell us a little bit more about what life was like when you first arrived here, what was the language situation, were you prepared, do you feel you were prepared for what you encountered here or how was it similar, how was it different?

EMB So, my recollections of my life in Poland remain very much idealized. I had been dreaming for a long time about the fields of green grass and wheat fields that I remembered, in fact, making wreaths out of flowers like corn flowers, going searching for mushrooms and the like. I remember what the life of my mother was which was doing a lot of embroidery, likewise my aunt and my grandmother, so. And then we came to the U.S. and I was about 11 years old and everything here of course was different. It's like I remember turning into more of an adult, all of a sudden. [Pauses] I was extremely curious, in fact, what was being said on the plane. We traveled on the KLM airlines and there was something that they were saying and I started repeating that after arriving here, thinking that, you know, anybody who had heard me would be able to tell me what it was and to my surprise nobody seemed to understand [laughs]. I finally figured it out myself. So, I was repeating, "English on the A." So what does "English on the A" mean? Well, I figured out it was the British accent. "English on the Air" is how you would call it. It was English on the Air. Now, it seemed like I just was not able to understand very much or speak very much in the first six months. So, our uncle...

INT You mean English, right?

EMB English, that is right. Not understand English, so our uncle, our great uncle really, would be taking us for some ice cream and of course he would be pronouncing it "Eyes crym," [laughter] so I started pronouncing it "Eyes crym." It was only after six months that I realized that in fact I was pronouncing it wrong. [Laughs]

INT And how did you realize that?

EMB It was like after six months, all of a sudden, I could understand English. It's just amazing. It seems to me like it happened overnight. I'm sure it didn't but it just appeared to be that way. Now, I must say that I tried to be creative in how I spoke the language, too, because there was one instance where in grammar school I was just wondering why one of my classmates was kind of unwilling to show me something, so I, instead of asking, you know, "May I see it?" I was asking her, "May I have it?" [Laughter] I thought to myself, "Hm, I just want to be a little different, original, so if I say that thought I guess she must have understood it literally like yea, I wanted it to myself. [Laughing]

INT That's a very interesting story. Actually, it's several interesting stories. And so, well, you were very successful in school. You graduated grammar school, then you went on to high school. Can you tell us a little bit about high school, what it was like, and how did you decide to choose your profession, your career, and the universities that you attended?

EMB So, I was in a very small grammar<sup>4</sup> school, St. Valentine's Grammar School, in Buffalo.<sup>5</sup> And our classes were very small. And we had wonderful sisters, Felician Sisters<sup>6</sup>, who were teaching us and I still have a picture of my graduating class but I don't recall exactly how many were in there but maybe ten to 15, the most. So, I wanted to challenge myself, to see if I could make it in a different environment. So, what did I do? Well, we happened to live in the part of the city that also had the largest academic public high school. So, I decided, well, that's where I need to test my wings. So, that's where I

enrolled: South Park High School.<sup>7</sup> So, there we had approximately 600 students in our class and there were 4 classes or grades. So, it was a very, very big, and very multicultural, multiracial environment and I really loved that because I, it was something different and something that I needed. Now we had different, in fact, classes and I happened to be enrolled in the honor classes. And, so again, you know, we had special students in those but we also would be going to a gym class where we would be finding other students. We had pep rallies. And so, again, I have very fond memories of my high school days. Now, I was a very studious person and so, and also, I should say that my mother would be a facilitator for that because instead of saying, you know, “Go wash the dishes,” she would be saying, “Okay, go ahead and finish your homework so you don’t have to stay too late.” [Laughs]

INT You mean stay up?

EMB Right. And stay up. So, I loved studying and what happened actually was that I graduated as the valedictorian of my senior class.<sup>8</sup> So, again, you know, this was something that I and my parents were very happy about and because I was such a student, such a studious student, I should say, I was offered a scholarship among others to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. And so I felt extremely honored to have that and I was looking at their programs in the curriculum and again I said okay, I should try to find something which was challenging, So what did I find that was challenging, the most challenging? Well, I saw that they had an accelerated program, a biomedical program of RPI with Albany Medical School, where you could enroll in RPI and then you of course had to make sure that you were continuing to have good grades and then you would have acceptance to the medical school. So I decided that was for me and that’s what I did.

INT That’s a wonderful story. So, moving right along, so how was medical school and how was college?

EMB Well, you know, the experiences again were a little bit different than with high school because what you do notice in college is that no longer are you that one special person. You are now with a hundred other special persons who had been valedictorians of their high schools [laughs] and who are just as motivated to succeed and the like. But at the same time you do have a chance to meet some international students and my recollections from RPI are really of those, likewise those, students I met from other countries. I met a very nice young woman who was a graduate student from Turkey and another one from Taiwan and I am still in contact with one of them. I had in fact also made friendships which were continued through medical school with those persons who did in fact continue the same program as I did. So, college was kind of abbreviated because we had to pack a lot of courses in, not only that, but it seemed like we did not have any summer vacations. In fact, I recall when a friend of mine, a good friend of mine, Eloise, and I decided to go to Harvard Summer School to take some courses which we needed. So, I decided, again, to take something that I had not had yet, and so those were art courses. I took a History of Art course and I also took a course in cubism and surrealism where we had a chance to go to the Boston Museum of Arts. Now, I should also say that even when I was at RPI, I had taken the History of Music, even though I was taking calculus

courses and other courses for my biomedical program, maybe because I thought I should have a well-balanced education. And then, of course, after that it was on to medical school and again you know my life kind of changed. I don't think I remember much what was happening in the world because I was very busy with my studies. I was very busy with my courses, medical school courses, and of course, again, very little opportunity for any summer vacations.

INT Well, that sounds like a very intense schedule that you had and you successfully completed medical school and then it was on to internships and residency and I'm very interested to know how you selected to come to Washington, D.C.

EMB So, in medical school...

INT And that was, excuse me, that was in 1974, is that the year?

EMB Yes, that's correct. But even before 1974, I was getting an idea of what I wanted to do in medicine and you might say that it was a little bit by, the selection was by elimination, like what I wasn't going to do. And also, I suppose, by meeting certain role models. So one of our role models in medical school was a doctor who was trained in Britain and he was at the medical school. And there were a number of students who decided to do summer fellowships outside of the medical school and I was one of them. And so I went to Britain, Great Britain, and I did a summer fellowship after my second year and then again in my fourth year I did a, likewise a, rotation in an English hospital and I think by that time I had an idea of what I wanted to do, that I wanted to go into what is called Internal Medicine and then a subspecialty of Internal Medicine. But, if I may digress a moment, let me tell you how I happened to select, in fact, going to RPI and the medical program, in the first place.

So, when I was in high school, I always thought that I would be a teacher, maybe even a history teacher because history had always held a great fascination for me. And of course, our mother likewise was very much, I think, in favor of my becoming a teacher because it meant that one was to pursue some education and one would have a certain profession. But then in high school, in my second year of high school, one of my friends, Marcia, told me that she was going to be a candy-striper in a hospital because she wanted to be a doctor. I thought to myself, "Wow! I don't know what I really want to be, maybe, I should also become a candy-striper," during that particular summer which was after my second year, after my sophomore year. So, I applied and I ended up as a candy striper in a different hospital. And, so there, you know, what candy stripers do there, they're like little volunteers who, I don't remember whether it was a volunteer job or whether we were paid for it actually. I don't recall those details but I remember my uniform. And of course, our duties were to be messengers, to carry things back and forth, we were to be...

INT Excuse me, it was a candy striper? It was called a candy striper because of the uniforms you wore were striped?

EMB That is right. So they were either pink-striped or they were green-striped.

INT It was white and pink or white and?

EMB White, so it was either pink and white or it was green and white. So I was one of those and I don't remember exactly which one it was. But in any event, on occasions, the candy strippers were allowed to accompany the nurse and even try taking a blood pressure or a pulse and so I did that sometimes and I must say that I felt very inadequate. I thought, "Oh, it was so difficult to be a nurse. I would never make it as a nurse." But, I thought, well. The one time the head nurse asked me what I wanted to be and I said I wanted to be a doctor. So, she announced it to everyone that I was going to be a doctor. I felt my die was cast. [Laughs] Like okay, now I have to be a doctor. How can I turn back? So, that is what actually I think propelled me, that nobody laughed. Nobody thought it was unusual. So I decided to pursue that.

INT Even though most of the doctors were men, at that time?

EMB That is right. That is right, that in fact there were very few women in medicine but the fact that, in fact, nobody was challenging, I thought was a very, very good sign.

INT That's a very, very interesting story and thank you for sharing that. And I wanted to come back to asking you how did you decide to come to Washington, DC, in 1974 for your internship and your residency after you completed medical school. Did you, was it the schools around here, the area, what attracted you, what pulled you here as opposed to going elsewhere? There are so many other places I'm sure you could have gone to, as well. [Some noise from the kitchen upstairs]

EMB So, as you may have heard, medical students go through a matching program. So they put down their preferences and then those applications are submitted then to the medical school hospitals and then they rate them and the like. Well, in my case, I happened to have a roommate, Joy, who was two years behind me and so there was a recruiter who came in to speak with her about, in fact, a scholarship. And I happened to be there and he had learned that I would be applying for internships so, what, he was such a good recruiter that he offered me an internship at Walter Reed Army Medical Center as being one of the places versus let's say Hawaii or San Francisco, if I wished to do that, if I of course would sign up for the army and I would also go through an early decision plan so that I would not even have to go through a matching program. You know, I kind of had to make a split decision there on the spot and I thought to myself, "You know, those are not bad places. Those are like excellent, excellent institutions so what do I have to lose?" I thought this was a great opportunity for me. So, I decided that I would actually act on that opportunity. So then, in fact, I, this is how I ended up coming to Washington, DC, and being an intern at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

INT And then you stayed on, and what kept you here? So, that's what brought you here. And what kept you here?

EMB So, I was an intern at Walter Reed but I had switched to the VA Hospital and the Georgetown Program for my residency. And so again, you know, I must say, that it just

so happened that I was accepted to another excellent program and after that, after my residency I then went to the NIH. So, I thought there were so many opportunities in the area. And when I was at the NIH I was in the Public Health Service. And after that, I had an opportunity to go to Johns Hopkins. So, it was a very good incentive for me to stay in the area because I felt everything that I needed or wanted actually was in this particular area. I did not have to move very far.

INT Thank you. And, so, you also probably had made friends at that time and I wanted to ask you a little bit about what was going on in the Washington, DC, area when you first arrived. I know you were busy with finishing your training and doing your residency but do you have a sense of what kind of things were going on, what you were interested in, what you did in the few hours that you might have had available to you, to do that?

EMB Well, you know, the first thing that I did when I came to Washington was that I learned to drive. [Noise from the kitchen]

[Some background noise, interruption while EMB takes call from staff at the hospital]

INT Go ahead, you want to continue?

EMB So, to continue my story, you did ask me what I was doing in my spare time when I first came to Washington. So, obtaining my own car was one of my biggest achievements. So in fact, one of the things that perhaps I can touch on is that while my life, and perhaps your life, was very idyllic as children in Poland, life was rather difficult for my parents and we should also remember that those were different times. Those were years under Communism and that would have been one of the motivations for our parents to leave. Communism, freedom of expression, and freedom to worship, which was to some extent restricted there. So, when my parents came to the US, after some time I realized that in fact their life was probably even more difficult in the US. And they would many times say to us that they came not only for themselves but for their children. So that their children would have greater opportunities here in the US. So, I thought to myself, “Well, you know, how can I act on that? How can I create greater opportunities for myself?” And so, in my spare time, I also took some courses about how to manage money and about investing because I thought, well, there has to be a way to become financially secure. [Some noise from another part of the house]

INT That was in Washington, DC?

EMB That was when I was an intern and I was either in the hospital working or I was sleeping at home or I attended an evening class [laughs] to educate myself a little bit more about that. Now, sometime after I arrived in Washington here, and by Washington I also mean the Silver Spring area because I had lived, I had an apartment in Silver Spring when I first came here. I became aware, someone had told me, about a Polish Parish.<sup>9</sup>

INT Was that before you came to this area?

EMB No, that was sometime after I arrived here. So it was after. So, I don't remember whether it was in the first or second year or the third year that I was here but I had learned about the Parish and so I started attending it. And, you know, at first it was very emotional for me to just hear the Polish language spoken because I was starting to forget it myself.

INT So you say a Parish. So was it organized? Were there families there? And what, did it meet in a regular place? Where did it meet?

EMB So, it was. I refer to it as a Parish but probably it was not an organized Parish at that time.<sup>10</sup> But eventually, it became a Parish. But it was in fact. It attracted people who had recently come from Poland. It also attracted those who had been living here and had some Polish roots. And some, who did not speak much Polish but maybe did identify with Polish tradition and still wanted to carry it on. So it in fact provided a, an opportunity to hear a Mass entirely in Polish at the time. I think it was the only place, just once a week on Sunday. And, you know, it kind of became like a second family, after a while. I became drawn into it to the extent that I even became a President of the Parish Council as we were trying to build at that time, what was it that we were building, do you recall?

INT A parish hall?

EMB A parish hall.

INT So, just to clarify. The group of people who attended the Polish Mass was trying to form a Polish Parish but there was no one place where you met all the time or was there a regular place that you met?

EMB My recollection is that we were meeting at the Old Saint John's Church. That was my recollection. So, I don't recall others. But I believe that some of the Masses were being held at the Shrine.<sup>11</sup> But I don't recall exactly the time frame.

INT So you said you were with the Parish Council, you were elected to be the Parish Council President<sup>12</sup> and a lot of things were going on. How did the Parish actually come to exist where it is today?

EMB So, I have learned, that to some extent and probably to a great extent, it was through the intervention of a young Polish, I will call him a priest, but I think that his official title was different.

INT Cardinal?

EMB He was at that time a Cardinal and by the name of, you know ...

INT Well, yes, tell us...Karol Wojtyla.<sup>13</sup>

EMB Who was known by the name of Karol Wojtyla and who eventually became John Paul the Second, the Pope, and who of course is our Saint right now.

INT Well, what a wonderful story. So, you met many Polish people and Polish Americans through your work and your, well, serving on the Parish Council and being active in the new Polish Parish and then were there any other areas or organizations that you also were active in?

EMB So, I have to say that while I was still in my training – that was my internship, my residency, fellowships and the like – I had limited time to be engaged in those. So there was a time when I had moved to Baltimore because I was at Johns Hopkins and I would be coming here infrequently. But, eventually, I did move back into the area and this is when I became aware of a lot of the organizations in which I became more active, the Polish American organizations.

INT And I understand that you also have served as President of several of the Polish American organizations – the Polish American Arts Association, the Polish American Health Association USA. And how did you find that working with people there?

EMB So, I think that we are very fortunate to have had organizations which were created which brought together people of similar interests and so among those have been in fact, the John Paul II Friends Foundation which has existed now for some time and I am very happy and proud to be part of that organization, to be on the Board of that one. But the other ones that you have mentioned...[noise from another part of the house]

INT Excuse me, before we move on, I received this album. It's a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the Friends of the John Paul II Foundation from October 2005 and I find that you are in many of the pictures here celebrating that. So I guess you must have been very active even then in it.

EMB You know, I must say that I am happy to hear that because I otherwise may not have remembered all of that but I'm glad to hear and to see that. Yes, thank you for calling that to my attention.

INT Please continue with the other organizations if you would like to say something.

EMB So, I should also preface this by saying that this area certainly does not have as many Polish Americans as let's say New York City or Chicago area but those who are here, I think, try to be, you know, as reasonably active as possible. And so we have had organizations like the Polish American Arts Association, and so both my husband and I have been in it and I have served as President, he has served as President of this organization at one time. We have had the Polish American Health Association which in fact has been in existence now I believe coming to twenty years or so, and I have served as its President also at one time. We have the Polish American Congress and so we try to support those as well. We have supported the Kosciuszko Foundation, as well as the American Center of Polish Culture, and I'm happy to say that I am one of the founders of

the Polish Heritage Foundation. So this is one of the newest foundations-organizations and you may want to ask now why do we need another one but it seems like these organizations sprout up to fill a certain need. So, there was a certain need and so it was created at the time and we're hoping that, although it is a fledgling organization, but it does have a role and will continue to in fact thrive and I hope I will have more time to devote to it. Now, on the other hand, you know, we have some excellent role models like General Edward Rowny<sup>14</sup> who is in charge of a scholarship...

INT The Paderewski?

EMB The Paderewski Scholarship and so again I think having role models like that is very important.

INT That's wonderful to hear. Also, if I could ask you a few questions about what was happening in Poland, the transition that was going on from the Martial Law in the 1980's and then the whole cadre, or the whole group of people of Solidarity<sup>15</sup> who would be coming here and then the whole change that took place in 1989. If you could say how that ... I understand that you sometimes hosted and provided lodging for the Solidarity members when they were here.

EMB Um, your recollection probably is much better than mine. I have to tell you that I have not had the time to be very politically involved but we are always happy and ready to support those who come and who may need lodging but as far as political action, I wish I had more time, [laughs] but maybe when I have more time I will do that.

INT Well, just to kind of also ask you a little bit about what the transition was. I remember you had mentioned at one time that you had gone to the Polish Embassy before the change in government, and then after 1989 there were many more events and many more invitations, I understand you received. And, how did that affect the Polish American community in this area.

EMB Um, again, I must say that I am not the best person to tell you about that, but, you know, with change in government I think that there is greater access to the Polish Embassy. The Polish Embassy likewise is very interested in perhaps showcasing and highlighting some of the things that may be of importance historically in Poland and the like.

INT Okay. You had mentioned earlier that both you and your husband have served as presidents of various Polish American organizations. I would like to ask you how and where you met your husband?

EMB So, you know, again this is a very interesting story in that I kind of would joke sometimes that I was not looking for him but somehow there was a finger of God in that and God has the last laugh. So, let me elucidate that a little bit, perhaps. [Both laugh] So, he happened to be taking his mother to Church and this is where apparently we had met the first time when we were going around the church in a procession and he started talking to me and I actually took offense at it because like we are not supposed to be talking when

we should be praying. However, the next time I saw him I kind of felt a little bit badly about my own reaction and I so was a little bit kinder. And so we had met at a church related activity, it happened to be...

INT Was it the Polish Church?

EMB It was the Polish Church. In fact it happened to be a bazaar, associated with the Polish Church and so that time I was more receptive to having a conversation. So, that's how it started.

INT Oh, that's a wonderful story. So, tell me, so he is also from Poland and he is also committed to the Polish American various activities?

EMB Yes. So, in fact, he is from Poland, born in Poland. He had received most of his education in Poland. And so, he also would remind me that he is my link to the Polish language, culture, and the like. And, you know, to some extent he's right. Our parents were the first ones who spoke the Polish language at home because they wanted us to retain our traditions, our language. But then, when I went away to school, I noticed that I started forgetting the language. But now, in fact, I have again I feel the ability to speak much better in Polish than I did before and that's again I think to some extent it is my husband's influence because he is able to sometimes even correct my grammar and the like. But it also is because we have met younger people coming from Poland who speak excellent language, and you know, I think that we can learn from them.

INT Because this being the Washington, DC, metropolitan area there are a lot of people coming and going.

EMB Yes, and some of them we have met actually through Church.

INT And, you mentioned Polish traditions a little bit earlier. Which Polish traditions do you observe?

EMB Well, we would like to observe all of them, as a matter of fact, maybe in our own way, but we certainly observe Christmas, we observe Easter.

INT Do you observe the "Wigilia," Christmas Eve?

EMB So, yes, we observe a Christmas Eve "Wigilia,"<sup>16</sup> with the breaking of the wafer called "oplatek."<sup>17</sup> And as you know, these are family traditions, so we try to maintain them. And I think this is extremely important for carrying on the tradition by the younger generations. We observe also, of course, the Easter tradition, blessing of the eggs<sup>18</sup> and the like. And again, a family tradition that we would like to and hope to just pass on to the new generations. And perhaps, even get the world interested. You know, you don't have to be Polish to celebrate these.

INT Right. Well, along with all these traditions also goes food. So, tell me, some of the foods that ...for example what do you put in the Easter basket to bless?

EMB So, I am going to defer to you. [Both laugh]

INT Well, I guess we cannot forget the “chruściki” right before Lent and we cannot forget the “pierogi,” the dumplings, because almost every culture has that. So, I notice that at your home you have several different kinds of “pierogi.”

EMB I do and I rely on the experts so I have a couple of, in fact, cooking books and I also know the telephone numbers of those who can make those for me. [Laughs]

INT And these are people from Poland who have recently arrived?

EMB Yes, and who actually, [laughs] who are more than just, what would you say?

INT Well they are probably experts, culinary experts.

EMB Right. They are not dilettantes, the way I am.

INT Well, so are there any other? I know that the Polish Parish has a sale before Christmas and before Easter. And are there any things that, you know, you or your husband particularly look forward to, to buying there? Like, for example, there’s the “chrzan,” the horseradish and with the beets?

EMB You know, I think that we kind of try to partake of everything but I think you could elaborate on that. [Both laugh]

INT Well, this is your interview so we can talk about it later. But, I wanted to ask you, well, is there anything, any one thing, that you would most want people to remember about you?

EMB You know, I think that it is very important to be grateful. I kind of wake up every morning and I feel grateful. I feel grateful to be in this country. I think this is the best country in the world. And I know even though it was very difficult for our parents really to relocate as adults to this country, they did it for us, for the children and for the future generations. So, I am grateful for that. And, you know, grateful to have my faith, to have, you know, family, whether it is nuclear family or extended family. And, you know, hopefully, we will be able to somehow interest the younger members of our family as well as extended families to carry on our traditions. Because I think that everyone should be part of a family. You know, we’re part of a human family but at the same time we have our closer families and this is our way of honoring our traditions and honoring our ancestors as well as our parents.

INT Well thank you. And, before I close, is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven’t asked you or that you would like to say a word or two about?

EMB Well, I would like to say thank you for your interest and thank you.

INT Okay. Thank you Dr. Buda [-Okreglak] for taking part in our project.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Her middle name is Maria.

<sup>2</sup> This was World War II.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to mostly Eastern Europeans who were taken to Germany during World War II to work as slave laborers or to be used as human guinea pigs. After the war ended and they were freed, they had no place to go and ended up in temporary “displaced camps” in Germany. Later, some of them were able to immigrate to the U.S.

<sup>4</sup> The grammar school was an elementary school that went through eighth grade.

<sup>5</sup> South Buffalo was the first place in the U.S. where she lived when she came from Poland.

<sup>6</sup> Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix (CSSF), Felician Sisters, an order of Roman Catholic nuns.

<sup>7</sup> South Park High School was the academic high school in her district.

<sup>8</sup> She graduated in 1968 as valedictorian from South Park High School in Buffalo, N.Y.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to a Roman Catholic Parish where the liturgy was in the Polish language.

<sup>10</sup> This reference is to Our Lady Queen of Poland and St. Maksymilian (Maximilian) Kolbe Roman Catholic Parish in Forest Glen, Maryland. It began as a mission and then became a parish. The building is also known as the historic Old Saint John’s Church, in the same location. The area is linked to Maryland Catholic history and John Carroll, the first bishop and archbishop of the U.S.

<sup>11</sup> The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

<sup>12</sup> She was elected, and served as, Parish Council President at Our Lady Queen of Poland and St. Maksymilian Kolbe Parish in Forest Glen, Maryland.

<sup>13</sup> While still a Cardinal, Karol Wojtyla visited Washington, D.C., in 1969 and 1976. He later became Pope John Paul II. Through Cardinal Wojtyla’s intervention, Archbishop William Baum of Washington established the Polish Mission in 1977 and asked the Society of Christ, a Polish religious order founded in 1932 to minister to the worldwide Polish diaspora, to serve the Polish community. The Mission became Our Lady Queen of Poland and St. Maksymilian Kolbe Parish in 1983. It continues to exist today on the same site.

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<sup>14</sup> General Edward Rowny (born in 1918 in Baltimore, MD) is a local Polish American and a decorated war hero. In 2004, he established the Paderewski Scholarship Fund to bring Polish university students to Georgetown University to study American style democracy. The scholarship is named for Jan Ignacy Paderewski who was a Polish statesman (1918-1921), pianist, and composer.

<sup>15</sup> Solidarity was a Polish trade union that was founded in September 1980 at the Gdańsk Shipyard. It was the first trade union in a Warsaw Pact country that was not controlled by the Communist Party. Its leader was Lech Wałęsa, who was later elected the first president of Poland after the overthrow of Communism there.

<sup>16</sup> “Wigilia” is the Polish traditional meatless Christmas Eve supper.

<sup>17</sup> “Oplatek” is the imprinted wafer shared before the Christmas Eve supper.

<sup>18</sup> This refers to the Polish custom of bringing baskets filled with specially decorated eggs, and other symbolic foods, to be blessed in church on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.