

Interview Transcript: Marie Genca Kotz-11/5/02

M: This is Marian Krzyzowski and I am in Dearborn Michigan at the home of Marie Genca Kotz and today is November 5th, 2002 and we're here to talk about Chene Street. And what I would like to do to begin with is to get a little information about your family, yourself, and how you ended up on Chene Street, and so maybe you could just tell me the names of your parents and where they were from and how they ended up on Chene Street.

MGK: Well my parents were Lucy and Stanley Genca and they originally came from Poland, they, both of them lived in Lublin and I think they must have come here somewhere around 1912 and at that time my brother, who was also born in Poland, he was like three years old when he came here. And I was born here in Detroit, Michigan on Ferry and Chene right next door to the Ochylski meat market and the date--I was born April 25th, 1915--getting up there in age now, but still have very fond memories of Chene. My dad originally when they came from Poland, he got a job at the Ford Motor Company, and the big deal then at that time was that everybody was getting five dollars a day which was an enormous amount of money so dad worked there for a couple of years I think and then he became interested in photography. Somehow he wound up in a business of his own and he had thoughts of Poland of course, and when he lived there before they came here, he was quite active in doing handwork. He was real good at wood working and this kind of encouraged him to go into business of some kind and he chose photography. And originally he worked for the Ballaun studio which was on Chene and Ferry.

M: Can you spell that name for me?

MGK: B-A-L-L-A-U-N. He worked at Fords and then in the evenings and on weekends he would go there and learn the studio business.

M: Can you tell me where you were living at this time? Do you remember the address, where he actually, where the house was?

MGK: Well they lived on, let's see now. Well first of all I think they lived on Palmer near Ferry in that area. And then they moved to Adele Street and from Adele they came to Chene Street and, no, I'm sorry, not Chene Street, McDougall and at that time he started his own little business of photography from what he knew in the home there, and he had his--

M: Do you know where on McDougall, do you know the address?

MGK: Yes, 5448 McDougall and he built the house there before he went into the business and then we belonged to St. Hyacinth parish. And at that time I went to school there and I graduated from the 8th grade at St. Hyacinth's, and that was in about 1927. And around the end of 1928 I think it was or somewhere in through there he found this business that was part photo studio and part a music store which was ran by Kaz Woznicki--Wojnicki--he was an organist at St. Stanislaus parish and dad started the business there so we moved from McDougall to Chene Street in 19--I think the beginning of 1928.

M: What address was that on Chene Street?

MGK: 5901 Chene Street and the living quarters were 5903, there was an apartment upstairs. And also joining the studio was a small little shop that dad rented, a small business place where we had a barber and his name was Mr. Malczewski. I can't remember his first name but he lived on Medbury and he used to come walking in to his little barber shop and we would exchange words every morning, "Good Morning, how are you," and all that.

M: Do you remember what year your father moved from the McDougall location to 5901?

MGK: It was 1927, because I finished, I was in St. Hyacinth's church--school rather--in 1927 and then we moved on Chene Street and I finished the 8th grade at St. Hyacinth's and at that time St. Stanislaus was just beginning to build the first high school that father Lempke, Joseph Lempke, he was the Pastor at St. Josaphat's church and he was transferred to St. Stannie's or St. Stanislaus and at that time the high school came into the first year and so I was --dad and mom sent me to the school there, and each year--the first year was only the 9th grade. The second year of the school we had the 9th and 10th grade. The third year, it was the 11th grade, and then finally in 1932 we had the first graduating class of St. Stanislaus High School which was really a thrill for all of us because it was so hard for the parents at that time to finance their businesses and, it was quite a, as I look back at it I wonder how they did it really, it was a real sacrifice, and something that they loved that was Polish and Catholic. And, when I graduated in 1932 we had fifteen students that graduated--five girls and ten boys. And so that's where--and we continued to do business until--Well I got married in 1952 and that's when I finished my job with the studio and dad had the studio maybe for another year or so and then he had a stroke and he discontinued the business.

M: Can I ask you, do you remember your mother's maiden name?

MGK: Yes, my mother's name was Dudek, Lucy Dudek - D-U-D-E-K.

M: And your brothers?

MGK: My brother was Wallace, W-A-L-L-A-C-E, he was born in Poland, it was Waclaw in Polish.

M: And there were two of you then?

MGK: Yes, uh huh.

M: Ok, so let's now talk a bit about the business at 5901. You've alluded already a little bit already to the structure you had an upstairs living quarters and another little area for the barber. I'm wondering if you could spend a little time just describing physically the building--the exterior and then the business on the inside, the apartment upstairs. And maybe begin with the outside, let's say I'm just someone walking down the street on Chene and I stop in front of your business, what do I see?

MGK: Well, the business itself was on the corner of Chene and Medbury and when we first got

there it had like two store windows and dad later on in the years he remodeled the front of the building. But as we walked, as you saw the building there was like two store windows full of pictures on display advertising our work. And we walked into the studio, the first place you saw was a little office where we took the orders or showed the samples of what you were interested in. And of course we had a little register, one of the old time ones that you used to punch in and turn, and also a showcase where pictures were displayed so people could see what we did. At that time they would decide on what size of a picture they wanted. There was a small postcard that they used to call, that was very popular when we first moved there or started the business because so many people were coming to Detroit from Europe, from Poland, and the first thing they always wanted to do was send a little postcard back home. And because we could speak the Polish language, of course we did a terrific business with that because people, word of mouth got around, and they felt very comfortable coming to our studio and we felt very good working with them. Then as we took in the order--

M: What were these postcards like, can you describe them?

MGK: They were just like a regular post card that you have now, where you send, .the size of it was approximately like the post cards that you send when you travel. And I think at that time they were three dollars a dozen.

M: What years was this, three dollars a dozen?

MGK: 1928?

M: Okay.

MGK: Well the first year we were there. And then after that you walked into the reception room, you know where you had a chance to hang your coat up and comb your hair and powder your nose, and then after that we had another side room we had one for men and one for women sometimes, and we had wedding pictures the gals used to come in and maybe sometimes we'd iron their dresses a little bit that were wrinkled from the trip to the church and to the car and all that. And then after that we had a huge, what we called our gallery, where we took the pictures. And that was a good sized room, plus we had a couple of bathroom rooms there. And the equipment there was very up to date, very old fashioned compared to today.

M: Do you remember what kind of equipment you used?

MGK: Yes, we had a Century camera which was a huge thing on wheels, and it had another wheel to the side where you could raise the camera or lower it to whatever distance you wanted. And of course we had a lot of props around the sides. Chairs and benches like for group pictures or individuals could sit at a desk perhaps or at a comfortable chair, and perhaps read a book, have a book in their hand, or communion pictures where there were children with their prayer books and rosaries and we had displays of little flowers for them and just little extras we could think of to make this picture look a little decorative. So that's about the studio.

M: Ok, and then where was, how did you get upstairs, what was the upstairs like?

MGK: We had an, at first we had an outside entrance from the studio. Between the barber and the studio there was a door, a public door so anybody can walk upstairs and we also had another apartment upstairs come to think of it, which we also rented. And after a few years we remodeled the front of the building, where we had an entrance to go upstairs from the inside of the studio.

M: So what was it like upstairs, describe the apartment or apartments, it sounds like there were two of them.

MGK: Yes, well one of them was a straight three room apartment that we rented and I think the rent at that time was 15 dollars a month. That consisted of a kitchen, and a living room, and a bedroom. And our apartment was a kitchen, two--three bedrooms and a living room. We did not have a dining room, but our kitchen took the place of the dining room because it was a huge kitchen where everybody congregated there. And the usual equipment, we had nice, mom had a nice kitchen set and refrigerator and stove and all that. We had the appliances and, except the refrigerator we had to put ice in it. And of course there's always a sticker in the window for the ice man--how many pounds do you bring up. And my brother and I had the job of spilling out the water that melted under the refrigerator and every once in a while we'd get into a little hot time he says "well it's your turn today," and "No, it's your turn today," and but we got along beautifully, but that was nothing compared to the refrigerators and deep freezers that we have today.

M: Were your rooms, which rooms were facing Chene Street and which rooms were facing Medbury?

MGK: The living room--no, the bedroom, the big bedroom was facing Chene Street. The living room was facing Medbury and the kitchen was facing Medbury. And the two bedrooms were on the inside of the house.

M: OK, so what was your job at the studio, in the business? What were you doing, from you know, when did you start there actually and what did you do?

MGK: Well I started real early, first year of high school I got into it because my dad was anxious to have me involved in it, which I did. I originally never thought I'd go into a business like that but it worked out because I felt I had to help my parents. And I started out just by washing the windows and sweeping the sidewalk and greeting the people. Then I worked in the office. And after that dad got me interested in, or showed me the photography end of it, and then I took a course in oil painting of the pictures which I did for many, many years. And as a result, after that, I even operated the cameras without my dad. I mean I just took over, and he was sick a few times, and I just ran the business with him. And then we got into our dark rooms and the finishing things that we had to do were in the basement. It was a workshop converted into darkrooms and changing the film and developing and coloring, and then I had a little space upstairs where I used to paint the pictures.

M: What about your brother, what did he do?

MGK: My brother helped with us for quite a while, and somehow he wasn't interested in photography and dad saw that he wasn't going to be much help because he did what he could but he wasn't interested in the photography end of it, he was a sales person. And he got into real estate, selling real estate and selling insurance and then after a few years he went into business for himself in real estate and in insurance and he had a big company. He had about--a few people working for him and his business was in Berkley on 12 Mile Road and Coolidge. So that was okay, and then of course he got married and they had a son who became a priest, Father Allen, and then he taught at Catholic Central, Father Allen, and he got to be a Vice Principal and he was very active with the school there. In fact he was there like, maybe 25 years in the school. But unfortunately he died in 1994 and at the age of 64. So that was a great loss for us as a family. And of course dad died in 1956, that was after he closed--had the stroke and he closed the studio, and in 1956 he passed away. And mom lived on Chene Street by herself for a few years—

M: Above the store?

MGK: Above the store and she took care of the building the best she could, with our help of course. And then she became ill and had surgery and after that she came to live with me, and she lived with me for 17 years, here on Middlepoint, And mom died in 1982, and my brother died in 1979, so the only survivor is me, which isn't so good sometimes.

M: You were in the store then up until what year?

MGK: 1952

M: '52, and what happened in 1952?

MGK: I got married.

M: Who did you marry?

MGK: I married Ted, Thaddeus Kotz. Thaddeus, it was Ted, but he had to be Thaddeus on everything official.

M: That's my son's name.

MGK: Is it?

M: Thaddeus

MGK: Yeah, he's Thaddeus, and he was very proud of that name, you know. Any document that had to be signed he would spell it out, and his writing was quite big so it took up the whole line really. And he was quite a nice guy, his family was in business also. They had a grocery and meat market originally, and then--

M: Where at?

MGK: The first one they had I think was on Norwalk, that was before I--

M: In Hamtramck?

MGK: In Hamtramck, uh huh, and then after that, his dad opened up a meat market on Ferry and Dubois, right by the Chene Market. And he was another go-getter, very much business person. Then he opened, he bought a bar across the street from the meat market--

M: What was it called?

MGK: The Kotz, K-O-T-Z bar, and, although I think maybe on Ferry I think it was maybe something else I can't, I just knew very little of it.

M: Was it on the corner?

MGK: Yeah, the grocery was on one corner and the bar was on the other corner.

M: The grocery was probably on the northeast corner.

MGK: No, the bar was on the northeast corner and the grocery was on the southeast corner.

M: Isn't that where the market was.

MGK: The market was on the north side.

M: Oh, we're on Ferry, we're on Ferry, we're not on Palmer, okay, I see, you're right.

MGK: So they were, and of course the Kotz had kids, brothers and sisters that helped with the business. You know, years ago anybody in business had a family they were all working. In fact there was no such a thing that you didn't even think of not working 'cuz that was the way everybody did it.

M: So you were married then in 1952. And then what happened?

MGK: Well, then after we got married my husband was a widower. He was married to a a very, first of all we all were in a group originating at Lutnia Club that's were we all met.

M: On Moran and the Blvd.

MGK: No, they were on Chene and Palmer first

M: Where on Chene and Palmer?

MGK: Above the bakery, right above

M: Above the Palmer Bakery?

MGK: Uh hm, on the corner

M: Where Nowaks had a hall later?

MGK: Yeah.

M: That was Lutnia, okay.

MGK: And then after Lutnia moved from there they went to Medbury and Chene behind the bank there was a small building so they temporarily went there hoping to make bigger things.

M: Do you remember what year that was?

MGK: Oh dear, that was before I was married so that must have been like in the late '40s or '50s. In the beginning of the '50s, I was married in the '50s. Must have been somewhere in the 1950s, no before that. In the late '40s I would say. And then from Medbury and Chene the back store that was there, they moved to the Boulevard, East Grand Boulevard and Moran.

M: So I remember that because I went to Polish school on Moran and the Boulevard. I used to walk down Palmer to Moran. And then my parents used to hang out there because there was a lot of socializing going on.

MGK: Oh sure, they had, we had, that's where our whole club met, not club, but we made a club of all the friends that we made, were making at Lutnia. And to this day there's very, very few of us left but that was one of the nicest things that happened in our lives. The Polish clubs at that time were very active.

M: Tell me a little bit about Lutnia. Tell me what it was and--

MGK: Well, we joined Lutnia. Well first of all my friend and I we went to--

M: Which friend?

MGK: Jenny Czerny, Jenny May was her maiden name. I met her, I went to, well, let's start that again they had a welcoming thing at Dom Polski on Chene and Forest. There was always all the Polish activities, the nice balls and the parties and stuff were always originated there and I met a very nice lady there, Jenny May. And we kind of hit it off and she also lived on Chene Street. Her father was a tailor. And he had a business on Chene and Kirby I think it was, it was Kirby or Fredrick in between there and she was used to belong to the Polish Falcons. So she told me that there's a new club being formed the young set of Lutnia. And she knew a few people there and she asked, invited me to go with her to this social meeting they were having. So we both went there and that's where the friendships all started. And it was the young set of Lutnia that was an auxiliary to the Lutnia singing society, which at that time was all men choir. And they were

really tremendous. They sang at Orchestra Hall and any big Polish doings and at the Polish Days. So we started this young set, and with a group of maybe 20 people, and then out of that they had a dance class and we had an instructor come in and they taught us the *Krakowiak*, the *Mazurka*, the tangos, the waltzes. And there was quite a few of us that were interested in that dancing. And we had meetings and parties and that was all at the Lutnia on Chene and Palmer above the bakery. We had beautiful New Year's Eve parties there. It was quite a large place. So that's where, and then gradually, in between the people mixed with each other and a few of them got married because of being at the club and that's where I met my husband too. But we were like a brother and sister type thing, you know, and all of us were very close to each other. If anything happened to one the rest of them were right there to help you. So I stayed single until 1937. Ted and his first wife, and my other friend married my husband to be, which I knew her very well too. But I had no intentions of getting married at that time. But then she became ill and passed away her name was Agnes and about a year later I married Ted. And at that time he had a daughter who was 7 years old and as of today she is going to be almost 60 and we're still mom and daughter so I have a nice relationship with her. And I have--

M: What's her name?

MGK: Theodora, Theodora Jane Kotz and she was Theodora Esper, from the Esper family in Dearborn and then she re-married a Ron Elliott. He's a retired policeman.

M: So did you ever go to the Lutnia when it went to Moran?

MGK: Oh yes, we used to, but I wasn't as active then. So after we started the young set, then they had a women's choir there that was *Halka* which had nothing to do with Lutnia but I think they merged with them somehow before my time. So at that time then they had the man's choir, the woman's choir and the dance class.

M: The *Halka* was now--where did that start?

MGK: I believe, I'm not too sure, but I believe it started in Dom Polski. Someplace in that Polish area.

M: In the '40s?

MGK: Yes, oh yes definitely. I think I have a picture of that someplace, yeah.

M: okay

MGK: So anyhow, that's how, and then, the young, the girls from the Lutnia, they were like mothers and daughters, well they started another separate singing club. And their, our director there was Kazimierz Obecny. Have you heard about him?

M: I know, I've heard the name, but I don't know--

MGK: Yeah, well he was the teacher and he taught for a long, long time at Lutnia. But I was not

active for too long in the singing because after I got married we moved to Dearborn and it was kind of a different phase of our life then, you know. But we're still close with them, and unfortunately they've had problems with the Polish clubs and it's non-existing to speak of. They've merged again and, and then they almost disbanded but they're hanging on a thread now and there's not much doing but Filarets came in there, another Filaret choir, I think you've, have you heard of them?

M: Yes. Okay so we talked a little bit about Lutnia, and I'm wondering now if we could go back to the street, and if you could reflect a little bit on the other businesses in the neighborhood on the street that you remember. I actually have a number of lists that I've compiled and I have them with me too, in case. I have some names of businesses and stores but, I was wondering if you could begin by you just remembering the stores that you most, you know, most relate to or associate with Chene Street.

MGK: Well our immediate neighbor was Cohen's Jewelry.

M: Tell me about Cohen's Jewelry, I've heard some about--

MGK: They were the nicest Jewish couple that you would ever want to meet. Sydney and Mary, I think it was. They had two children and--

M: Do you remember the children's names?

MGK: I think one of them was Joseph, and the girl--I don't quite remember the girl--but the boy was Joseph. And they, they were like family, really. I mean, real, I don't think either one of them was five foot tall, but just full of energy, and full of smiles and always it was a pleasure to know them for so many years. And the kids were real nice too, we kinda hung together and talked about different things. Not that we, we didn't, well I don't know how to, well anyway, it was a nice family that had it. Then next door to them there was--

M: Can you describe the Cohen Jewelry store?

MGK: Yeah, it was a very small store, it was narrow but it was long. A long building but a narrow front, you know, well not front but the whole building was narrow but long practically the length of the lot. And they had nice things there. They had the regular jewelry and they had two little window displays, and a lot of showcases with different things, and they sold silverware. In fact, I think one of the first things I did--I bought my mother the, an 1847 Roger's silverware that we still have pieces of it today. Then they got into luggage and I think they had a couple of sweepers, too. They were very, very nice people, then next door to them--

M: Let me ask you something...I hope you don't mind--

MGK: No

M: They were Jewish, were they Polish Jews? Did they speak Polish?

MGK: He spoke very fluently in Polish, the man.

M: Do you know what part of Poland he was from?

MGK: No, I don't. And they had a family, a brother or a sister or whatever it was, they had a dry good store. His brother or was it her brother, I don't quite remember. They were, and I don't know their last name at this time but they had a dry good store on the corner of Farnsworth and Chene.

M: Was that Meyer Wolf?

MGK: No, I think it would have to be a Jewish name--

M: Yeah, Wolf.

MGK: Is that?

M: Yeah

MGK: Maybe, I don't quite remember to be honest.

M: Yeah, Wolf Dry Goods was on the corner of Farnsworth and Chene.

MGK: Well they were related, I don't remember now whether it was her brother or his. And they were very close together, they used to drive up with their car and park alongside of our street and talk to us and stuff.

M: A question, a broader question. I know there were a number of Jewish stores up and down the street, Polish Jews as I understand it; and I wondered what was the feeling on the street, the fact that you had Christians and Jews. Was there socializing? If any, what were the kind of attitudes and relationships if they existed at all?

MGK: Well, in our case, there was no problem whatsoever, I don't think there was a problem to be honest. We just got along beautifully, I mean you wouldn't even know they were Jewish by the way we got along. But the names and of course the accent and Mr. Cohen spoke very good Polish. His wife was half and half, the kids didn't, but he did, he was, he didn't mind, he'd sit on the corner, sometimes people going to the market or something and he'd stop everybody and say "Hello, how are you" in Polish, "*dzien dobry, na market idziecie, a co bedziecie kupowac?*" It was very nice, very nice people, and I don't remember too many Jewish people in our area, but there was no such a thing, no animosity between them, none whatsoever, as far as we were concerned.

M: And they lived in the store too? They lived above the store.

MGK: Oh yeah, Cohen? No he didn't. I think they lived on Boston Boulevard, I think, but I'm not sure. There was no living quarters there.

M: Okay, good, go on, I'm sorry.

MGK: That's okay. Then we had a Lewandowski place there that sold newspapers and, like a variety store. And at this time I can't quite remember whether there were two or three brothers in there. And one of them was in a wheelchair, he was an invalid have you heard of them.

M: Yeah somebody was telling me, describing the store as a *kulawy* store, the *kulawys*.

MGK: Oh yeah, *kulawy* would mean crippled, yeah.

M: So then Lewandowski was their name?

MGK: Lewandowski

M: Do you remember their first names?

MGK: One was Louis, I think. He used to sit there by the window, you know, with his wheelchair and people would come in and buy stuff and bring the money to him, and he would just have a little cash drawer or register or whatever and he used to operate from the wheelchair. Very nice man, and they were there for years, *kulawy*. And then next door to them was a lady's corset shop. It was Elite's [pronounced E-lights], it was the name of the store.

M: How is it spelled?

MGK: E-L-I-T-E, and I cannot remember the woman's name. It was a Polish name with a "G" on it, Gawlinski or something. I would be like fifteen.

M: Okay, this is from the '30s, I don't see it on here in the '30s. Lewandowski is on here.

MGK: Yeah, well she was next door to Lewandowski..

M: Okay, I don't see it here--oh, Josephine Golinski.

MGK: Gol.--that's the one, Golinski. [Alice Ewald's aunt. See Alice Ewald interview – MGK]

M: So Josephine Golinski?

MGK: Yeah, Go-- no she's dead a long time.

M: No, but her name was Josephine

MGK: Golinski, I know it was on G, but I couldn't think of the name. Yeah, that's her. She had the Elite Corset Shop, and quite a nice little store too. With all the unmentionables that us women wear.

M: Can you describe the store from the outside, what it was like.

MGK: Again, they were basically all the same. It was just two, an entrance in the middle and two windows on the side, and she also had a little display.

M: What did she have in the window?

MGK: Corsets, stockings, brassieres, slips, you know petticoats like we called them then. Just the usual things that women--underwear mostly. And she was very business-like, she wasn't too sociable to her customers but she had the goods that everybody needed. I mean she was, by that I mean she was very formal, a very quiet person.

M: How old was she, at the time you remember her?

MGK: She was like in her forties fifties, and she was there for a good number of years.

M: And she lived in the store or not?

MGK: I don't think, I don't quite remember. No I don't think there was a living quarter there. Then right after that there was the Schuper bar.

M: Okay

MGK: You got them, Blezenski's?

M: Okay

MGK: Yeah, I remember them. And they--

M: Can you spell Blezenski?

MGK: They were a nice couple too (doorbell rings)

Break

M: So Blezenski--

MGK: Blezenski, yeah, they were a nice couple too.

M: What were their first names, do you remember?

MGK: No, I don't remember their first names. John? John, John, John? They're both dead already, too, now, I went to their wake not--

M: Yeah, Schuper Bar, Blezenski—I saw it on here, you're probably right, it probably is John. John, yes, John Blezenski.

MGK: That's what I thought it was, John, his wife, I don't remember her name. I think there was five children there. I don't remember their names either, they were a little younger than we were. And they had the bar for a good number of years, and--

M: Did you ever go in the bar?

MGK: No, I didn't. I mean we went occasionally.

M: Well can you describe it at all?

MGK: As I could remember it now, it was just an old fashioned bar. You know, with the tables and the bar thing, and it was quite a large one too. They had a few tables, and also stools around the bar. That's about all I could tell you about that.

M: Okay, okay.

MGK: Then after that, there was Ustarbowski shoe store, that was--their daughter is still living. I can't remember her name now. She lives in New Baltimore I know, I just saw her name in the paper the other day.

M: Does she still have the same last name?

MGK: Yeah, I think she does, Ustarbowski.

M: Can you tell me about the shoe store then.

MGK: Yeah, the shoe store was quite a big store there, we used to get all our shoes there; and again the front of the building was primarily the same. It had two side win--two front windows with a door in the middle, and a lot of shoes on display. And then inside, they had the regular long benches, long chairs like for when you sat down for the fittings--and lots of shoes on both sides--women on one side and men on the other side. And then they had a little place in the back, and they lived above the store.

M: Who did the selling?

MGK: Mr. Ustarbowski, and she worked, his wife worked very little, but he was the whole person that ran the whole thing.

M: Can you describe him, tell me a bit about him?

MGK: He was a quiet, very nice, quiet man. Actually we were very fortunate, because all the people around there were, everybody was struggling to make a living more or less, or to make it sound good, to do good things--so we were kind to each other. It was a more of a family type thing. It was more like buddy-buddy, if you have a problem, well let's help you, you know. Not that we had to do that much, but the feeling was there - so everybody knew everybody.

M: Did he speak Polish?

MGK: Yes, he did, uh huh. I don't think his daughter spoke Polish though. And above their store or next door to them was a Dr. Knobloch.

M: Right.

MGK: Dr. Knobloch's wife was a sister to Ustarbowski. You know, they lived next door to each other. And he had a little practice at the--he did a lot of house calls though. The doctor.

M: Did you go to Dr. Knobloch?

MGK: Yeah, my mother took--

M: What was he like, do you remember him?

MGK: He was a nice guy, too, very professional. And he worked a little bit, if I remember correctly, he worked some medical things with the county where he was on call there. So he was just like starting out, you know, he was just a new doctor when they came on Chene Street.

M: Was he Polish?

MGK: Yeah

M: Did he speak Polish?

MGK: Not too much, I don't think he spoke too much Polish but uh--

M: He wasn't Jewish was he?

MGK: I don't think so, no. No, because--I don't know. All of this is coming kind of--

M: Just wondering because the name could be Jewish

MGK: No I'm quite sure--no, they were married at St. Stannie's, St. Stanislaus church so they were both Polish.

M: Okay

MGK: And then, there was a grocery store next to them I guess, I can't quite remember that. He was there for years. If you give me the name I'll remember it.

M: Okay, let's take a quick look here. There was a Stella Burak grocery

MGK: Oh, Stella Burak, that was across the street.

M: Oh, you're right, that's across the street.

MGK: That was quite a store, that Burak. I remember her real well.

M: Michael Baran grocery at 5951?

MGK: Which one? 69?

M: 5951, Baran, Michael Baran grocery.

MGK: Baran yes, yes!

M: Oh, Baran--

MGK: Yeah, yeah, Baran--It had an liquor store too.

M: Tell me about the Barans.

MGK: That was nice too, they were a nice family. A mother and her two sons ran the store, and they had a nice little grocery there but they phased out more into a liquor store then, and that was about one of the first ones in that area. And a real nice mother and...

M: She was Polish?

MGK: Yes, uh huh, Baran.

M: They spoke Polish?

MGK: Yes, the mother, I don't even think the mother even spoke very much English, but she was a very nice, hard working lady. They all were hard working people.

M: Do you remember her first name?

MGK: No, I don't.

M: Do you know if any of them are alive? Or anybody from that store?

MGK: I would think that probably one of the sons should be living because they were younger than we were, but all I remember is the store. You know, the liquor store and then the grocery, but I really can't tell you too much about them, but they were again a very nice family. Then next door to them was a Sadowska that had a bridal shop--

M: Eleanor?

MGK: Eleanor, uh huh. She had a very beautiful store. Small again, like the rest of them. Two windows in front and basically they were all the same, the middle entrances to them. And she

was the beginning of high fashion stuff, you know, for the brides. And she had a very good business, but she wasn't very--she was an excellent business woman no doubt, but I mean but her personality was very formal, but maybe that's what made her business, too, I don't know.

M: Do you remember the name of the store, what was it called on the outside.

MGK: Um, frankly no. I know her name was, maybe it was Sadowska's Bridal Shop, I believe that is probably what it was. Bridal, yea, Eleanor, yeah. She worked in the store practically day and night. She was always there, and she had beautiful stuff though.

M: Where did you get your wedding dress?

MGK: At Jacobson's. [Both laugh].

M: Cheated

MGK: Well she was out of business then.

M: What are we talking, what years are we talking, '30s? '40s?

MGK: We're talking '30s and '40s.

M: Good, good. that's the era we want.

MGK: Sure, because, mostly '30s and '40s definitely. Because we came on Chene Street in '28 and I left in '52 so the basic thing was all between the '30s and the '40s.

M: Ok, so Sadowska's Bridal Shop.

MGK: And that's about all there was on that strip. There was something on the corner, now I can't, was it another grocery store?

M: This just says vacant right here.

MGK: Vacant? Right I think there's two buildings on that whole street, but--

M: Yeah I know. What about the other side of the street, do you remember that?

MGK: Well Burak, that was, that was a beautiful grocery and meat market there. They had a tremendous business, and again family owned, you know. Mother, and they had a daughter, her name was Jenny, who was absolutely terrific. Because you know how they used to buy everything *na ksiazke*, you know, on credit. And at two weeks, you know, everybody would go and pay their bill, and she had such a math. I always will remember her for the math mind that she had. She would look at the numbers then look at them backwards and she would have the correct figure. She added it all in her mind, you know there was no machine, no adding machines, no nothing but she was so fast with it. And then they had a son whose name was

Chester, he was a very hard working young man. And everything was, anything you wanted you could get over there. And if you didn't have the money, well it was *na ksiazke*, you know. And I'm sure that they were taken advantage of somewhere along the line, but you'd never, you would never have a cross word from them. They were open day and night if they only could, you know. Six o'clock in the morning or 12 o'clock at midnight, it wouldn't matter. Just go to Burak's, you know, they had everything.

M: Was it a woman that ran it?

MGK: She had a husband, and then he died and I think she remarried and there was another. Maybe I shouldn't even say that, because I'm not too sure of it. But primarily as I remember, she was the lady of the store and the brains of it. And the hardworking, and of course the kids, both of the children—Edward--I mean Chester and Jenny, they just worked with her all of the time.

M: Can you describe the store, like what was it like?

MGK: Well, it was just, like I say basically every store on the street had the same middle entrance and two side windows. And they had some fruit in the market also, you know, fresh fruit. And they sold some meats, but not too many. But anything else you wanted, if you wanted a shoe string you could find it. If you wanted a plunger you'd get it. It was just an all around store with good people to serve you. Always with a smile and always great, very nice.

M: Did they speak Polish?

MGK: Yes, very much, fluently. Chester maybe not so much, but Jenny-the mother and the daughter were very, very Polish.

M: Do you know if either Jenny or--

MGK: They're all dead now as far as I remember. She died many years ago, and Chester died maybe, I know he's dead for maybe like, see the years go by so fast you say two years here, and it's maybe five. But he died after her, Jenny died first. Oh I know, then when Mrs. Burak went, that's right, when her first husband died, that's right, she remarried and she had two small sons after that. Two or three with the second husband, which they all, the kids were always in the store.

M: Do you remember their names?

MGK: No, I don't unfortunately.

M: Okay. Well who else do you remember on the other side of the street?

MGK: Well, Minkiewicz's but you have them already, with their soda store.

M: Tell me about what you remember of the Minkiewicz's store.

MGK: Well, another hard-working family, very hard working, very nice people. The father was a peach and the mother was too...and so was the daughter, I can't remember her--

M: Trudy--

MGK: Trudy, she was--

M: Gertrude

MGK: Gertrude, yes, I see them every once in a while at church or at some Polish functions and she'll always make an effort to walk across the whole hall and if she sees somebody she knows--very, very nice people.

M: What about the store itself, the candy store, what do you remember about it?

MGK: Well that was quite a melting spot, there for all the kids from St. Stannie's and their parents. You know you'd go in there and get a soda or a banana split or get a hamburger and, whenever you walked in there you'd always find somebody you knew that who you could share some moments with and of course they were very, very nice to the people. And I think she had a brother that died, yeah, he was a very nice young man too.

M: What was it before the Minkiewicz's took over? Do you remember what that was? Was it a candy store and they took over a business?

MGK: You know, it kinda escapes me. It probably was, because they, I think they added the hamburger, the little grill there. But I don't remember the people's name. Then the corner of course was the Commonwealth Bank.

M: Did you bank there?

MGK: Yes, my original checking account was at Commonwealth and I still have the main number from there because the Commonwealth bank was transferred to, bought out by one bank and then another bank. They finally came to Dearborn and there was a Dearborn bank and then Manufacturers bought it now. A couple of times when I've had to reorder checks or something they look at my number on the account and they'll say my God where did you get that number? They know instantly that it's years ago. And I think my first checking account was like 1933 or '34.

M: So can you describe the bank?

MGK: Yeah, it was a small type bank, it wasn't very large.

M: What was it like on the outside, what would you see from the street?

MGK: Well it had one entrance off the corner and of course they had the windows up high. And

inside, I think they had maybe like three or four tellers there, with a little office--or not exactly an office but a space for the manager. And what I do remember about it is the day when the banks failed.

M: When was that?

MGK: 1928

M: Okay

MGK: I think it was '28 or '29. Anyway, we lived directly across the street and of course from my mom's bedroom window you could see everything down on Chene. And the people were learning that the banks closed and they were coming to the bank in droves trying to get in. And you would think that they would break the door down and climb through the windows to get into the bank. And it was closed, for a few days, and I'll never forget the bank closing and what a tragedy it was and how lightly today's people consider money, you know. When I think of how, I think that's why old timers we always think of "Well how much is enough," you know we don't spend it ahead of time, we waited until we had it to buy things. Not that we didn't buy anything on credit, but the money part in those years were people made a dollar, or made two dollars they'd save a dollar. Today, they make two dollars and they spend four, so to speak anyway. So I remember the bank closures and it was sad, it was very sad. Some of the people were there in front of the bank crying, and what are we going to do now we need our money. That was—one I can still see it, that's how vivid it was to me. I don't remember all the details of it but I remember the picture of it and it was sad, I mean very sad.

M: What happened to your money in the bank?

MGK: Well, we got it eventually, but I mean people went there that particular day.

M: For cash

MGK: Yeah. We didn't lose any money on it, but it took a long time for the thing to come back again, and of course the mistrust of the banks. And then there was a couple of Polish banks in Hamtramck that failed at the same time, and they never got their money there cause this was, the Commonwealth was like a more secure bank.

M: What did it look like, I mean color wise. What was the building made of?

MGK: Brick, all in brick.

M: What color brick?

MGK: Red

M: Red brick?

MGK: Uh huh, red brick.

M: Okay. Anything else on the block you remember?

MGK: Well, across the street from the bank on the south side of Chene and Medbury, on the bank side there was a Schram Drug Store, Alex Schram. Very nice people too, and everybody went to Schram's for their prescriptions and stuff and it was a small drug store but the staples were there, for bandages, and you could get your prescription within, you could wait for it if you wanted to, if he had the necessary ingredients. Real nice.

M: Was he Polish?

MGK: No, well he understood Polish but I don't believe he was really Polish, he was like--

M: Jewish?

MGK: German I think. German yeah. But he was a Catholic, he was an usher at St. Stannie's church. He understood Polish but I don't believe he was Polish. There was a lot of them who knew basic words that they could be in the business.

M: Let me ask you again about the Bank of the Commonwealth. Do you remember who the managers were? Do you remember who you dealt with in the bank?

MGK: Well they had a um, golly what was his name?

M: This wasn't Paulus was it?

MGK: No, Kulwicki? Szafran, it was a Szafran, Mike Szafran. Because the bank originally was on Harper and Chene, then they moved it over I think when the expressway came in they came on our corner, I think that's the way it went. But Szafran was the original, first manager, Mike Szafran. He's long gone, but he had a son that was a priest and I think he just died recently.

M: Okay. Okay, let's keep going. Any other stores you remember?

MGK: Well, golly. There was a hardware store there, I can't remember the name of it though, on the same side as the drugstore.

M: [searching through notes] I don't see it listed here. There's something on the other side of the street from you

MGK: A hardware store?

M: Which one are you talking about?

MGK: Werner's was there. Nowak, Nowak was on the other side.

M: Yeah, he was further down

MGK: Closer to Palmer, yeah. Well, coming back to Medbury, next door to, the second door off the corner was the Miller undertakers, Tony Miller.

M: Tell me about Miller undertakers. What did it look like?

MGK: Tony, well it was like, well it wasn't exactly a store. It was like a home, with a side drive and they had a little parking area there, and when you walked in it was the office. And then they had a couple of rooms for funerals. And Tony Miller, and he married Irene Orlovski another good friend of mine, though she's living in Phoenix now.

M: She's alive?

MGK: Yup

M: I'm wondering if she'd be willing to do an interview on the phone?

MGK: Well, I think I have her phone number someplace, but I can't tell you off hand, I'd have to look.

M: And she's in Phoenix?

MGK: Phoenix, uh huh.

M: She goes by Miller though, now right?

MGK: Oh yes

M: Irene Miller

MGK: And Tony, her husband, he was--there were seven boys in the Miller family. Have you heard that one?

M: No, tell me about it

MGK: Yeah there were seven Miller boys, and I think five [actually four of them -MK] of them were undertakers.

M: Wow

MGK: And let's see--there was Tony, Edward, Leo, Joseph, and they had their own funeral parlors in different areas and of course they helped each other, and they had one brother who was a fireman and the rest were all undertakers. And they had one sister, so she was always the queen of the thing. They always used to kid around, how all were brothers and one sister. But she, the last one that died was Leo Miller, and that was like maybe five years ago.

M: It's in Hamtramck right?

MGK: He has a son that's still operating that, Leo Jr.

M: On Campau?

MGK: Uh huh, but I just saw him, I saw the young man, the son rather. He's not a young man, I mean he's not old but he's not no 20s or 30s. He's an undertaker and he told me that he was selling his place in Hamtramck. The sale was going through any day now and he was moving after I think spending 70 years on Joseph Campau. So his name is Leo Miller, Jr. Now he could tell you something about the Millers if you wanted to hear it.

M: Yeah, I would. Do you have a phone number for him? I could probably call him--

MGK: 9222 Jos Campau, is his address I know.

M: So I can just call there. There was another funeral home on the corner, on Medbury, Wasik.

MGK: Oh yeah

M: What was it, can you tell me about it?

MGK: Oh yeah, that Wasik funeral home is about the forth generation now. And it originally, the father and the oldest son started the business. That was before we came on Chene Street, before 1927, and the original one was on Dubois. Dubois between Harper and Medbury. A small brick building, I don't, I did not know either one of them. Then the father died, and then the second son's, grandson, the first grandson came, and it was Jerry Wasik. So they were, they moved across the street from the church then on Medbury, from Dubois. And before they moved there, there was a business there that was the Jozefiak Coal Company. Did you ever hear about them?

M: Just in the name. tell me about Jozefiak Coal.

MGK: Well, it was a real, couple, Polish family again, you know. Both hard working people and they used to take orders for coal and we used to take coal from them and they'd deliver it to the shoot and it goes down the basement wall. And it's really something when you think of gas heat today. But then Jerry, Jerry was a very good friend of my brother's, the two of them were very good friends. In fact, when Jerry got married my brother was his best man. And then after that, after Medbury, they moved to Seven Mile Road, Seven Mile Road and Van Dyke area. And then Jerry had a couple of sons that became undertakers also, this was counting back through the years. Then from Seven Mile Road they moved to Hoover, 13 Mile and Hoover, the Wasik home. And they still are operating on 13 Mile Road, but about a year and a half ago they built a brand new funeral home in Shelby Township, on twenty--on Schoenherr, and 23 Mile Road I think it is. So now, it's the great grandsons that are in there now too.

M: Tell me about the difference between Wasik and Miller, what would make you choose one over the other?

MGK: Well, I really don't know the difference. Well, Wasik's for one, well there was a difference actually, I shouldn't say it that way. Wasik's were more, there were more of them. While the Millers were a bigger family I think as far as undertakers go, but they each had their own business so of course they were spread out a little bit more. And as with personalities, you know some people you can relate to them easier than to others. And Wasik's were very outward, anything in the church you could always depend on them for, and I think people realized that more. Miller's did too, I wouldn't take that away from them, but there was definitely a bigger following for Wasik's than Miller's.

M: Okay. Let me ask you a little bit about the Chene Ferry market.

MGK: Chene Ferry Market?

M: Yeah, can you tell me about the Chene Ferry market? What do you remember of it?

MGK: Awww, every Wednesday and Saturday morning you'd go to the market

M: How did you get down there? How would you walk from your store to the market?

MGK: Straight Chene Street to Ferry, and at first, before they put up the brick walls and stuff it was just all open space.

M: So you remember it before they put up the brick walls? Tell me about what it looked like before they put up the brick walls.

MGK: Just an open street, you know, with all the different farmers coming in. And there was a lot of them, you know, and you had your favorite ones there for the eggs, and for the vegetables, and some of them had better corn or better tomatoes and there were some Jewish people that had their stalls there. And then they enclosed it

M: Do you remember what year they enclosed it?

MGK: Oh, it had to be in the '30s and then it was a big thing because if in case it rained or something or if it was cold you know you were shielded by the walls of the market.

M: Someone told me that the market was set up where more on the Ferry side you had Polish farmers and more on the Palmer side you had Jewish vendors. Do you remember that?

MGK: Well--

M: That Jewish vendors were more like truck farmers.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

MGK: I remember the Jewish people, they were more to the back of the market like closer to Dubois and the Polish ones were, although there were a couple of them they seemed to have their favorite stalls. In the middle of the market I remember there was a couple that were both Jewish but she had such beautiful produce all the time. And she would always say, “*to takie cukro*” we used to call her *cukrowa* you know sugar. She would always tell us how much sugar was in everything. And she lifted up the orange or the apple and she’d like almost hug it, you know, and you’d say well, I got to have that apple, you know. She was a very nice lady too. They were Jewish but they were like in the middle of the market I remember them. But we used to call her *cukrowa* we used to call her because she was always talking about sugar you know?

M: Did she have a husband? Did they sell bananas?

MGK: Yeah. They--

M: Somebody else told me about, I don’t know if you know Mr. Jackowski. He’s your age, actually. He used to work at Spire Brothers.

MGK: I probably know him if I saw him.

M: He described the same couple in the middle of the market

MGK: Oh, did he? Yeah, they were. The market was like up and down, you know, and then about then about half way through the market they had another, stalls going through the opposite, going parallel to it, not parallel but perpendicular to it. And on this side were the smaller ones they had more like people with poultry. And then there was two ladies, two sisters that ran a big market there on chickens. One was Mrs. Sawicki and, she just died recently she was almost 100 years old. And what the heck was her sister’s name? Well they did a real good business there and if you would ask for a nice chicken you’d get one there. And like many of them, some of them too had like *czarnina*, you know the duck soup they had? Well some of them, well not too many but a couple three of them would have a little special place where if you wanted the blood for the soup you would get it. But it was by special order. And during the war when we had the rationing of course the butter was the big thing, you know. We couldn’t get any butter only one pound a month so we would get the cream from the market, from the farmers so they would do a nice business on selling cream. And then you would come home and whip up your own butter. Mother used to get the mixer out and she’d whip up butter. And if you mixed it too long it could be too hard. But that was interesting too.

M: What bakery did you get your bread from?

MGK: Paper?

M: Bakery

MGK: Bakery, oh Niebrzydowski was another one but they were closer to Kirby, Modern Bakery. In fact we have a Modern Bakery supposedly I think it came from Chene Street many years ago here in Dearborn now.

M: Tell me about the Modern Bakery on Chene Street.

MGK: The Modern Bakery on Chene Street, was you could get anything there and it was excellent.

M: Where was it on the street?

MGK: It was on the west side of Chene and was real close to originally it was on the opposite side on Chene around Farnsworth between Frederick and Farnsworth. And then they built or got a new building, I don't remember whether they built it or if it was there but it was a big, big bakery on Chene right near Kirby.

M: On the west side of Kirby?

MGK: Yes. West side, yeah.

M: And who owned it?

MGK: Niebrzydowski. And their granddaughter is still living.

M: What was his first name, do you remember?

MGK: Zygmunt and her name I can't remember. Zygmunt Niebrzydowski.

M: You said it was a big bakery, how do you mean big?

MGK: Big building. And lots of variety of baked goods, you know, the tortes, and the pies and *chrusciki*, all that stuff. *Paczki* anything that was Polish, it was really the real stuff.

M: It was further down the street than Palmer Bakery. So why, was it a better bakery than Palmer Bakery?

MGK: Well maybe not exactly better but I think it's, well I think that Niebrzydowski was better than Palmer as far as their baked goods goes. But sometimes it was idea of how close to the house. You know you want a loaf of bread was pretty much the same. So if you needed any why go five blocks when you could get it in two. And at that time we didn't drive. We walked. [Laughs] Palmer from to us is like three blocks and to Niebrzydowski's it was like five or six. Further down and of course different areas had different things you liked better.

M: You mentioned Werner's early today. Can you tell me a little about Werner's?

MGK: Werner's was--Mrs. Werner was an extremely nice lady. The boys were all nice, all the sons. And you could always meet a crowd there after a baseball game or, we didn't have football like they have today or hockey. But it was mostly baseball. And anything going on in the church if there was a meeting and if you wanted to have a few friends you'd just go there for ice cream. And she did quite a little nice business on *numerki*. [Laughs] On the gambling side. She was quite a little hustler in that. Which was good for the people.

M: Can you describe the Werner's ice cream parlor?

MGK: It was a sort of an open space parlor. Very nice. They had a soda bar and also tables with chairs. You could, just like a little hall type thing. You know. And she had candy and on the showcases with I think a few boxes of candy even if you wanted to get some.

M: Was there a juke box in there?

MGK: Oh yes definitely. [Laughs] Juke boxes were everywhere almost, yeah. And very popular too.

M: Do you remember any of the songs, music that was being listened to at the time?

MGK: Not really. I would assume if I remember correctly it was the popular songs of the day, you know. "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" or "God Bless America." They even played it quite a bit then. And oh golly. When you want to think of the name it sort of goes away.

M: You know you mentioned Jaruga. Can you tell me, what do you remember of the Jaruga store?

MGK: Music store. It was very small. A small store but he seemed to have good records and everything. I have, I think I still have a song sheet for the piano from his store. I'll look into it to see if I, I'm quite sure I have it. And he was very matter of fact. He was just a nice gentleman. And he had two children I think. But they weren't that active in the store. When you went there, as I remember, it was mostly him. He was just a friendly old guy. And Polish music was his forte. He was very good.

M: Somebody described to me that, told me that he would sing a lot in the store. Do you remember that?

MGK: No that I don't. But I wouldn't be surprised if he did because he was a very friendly person in his own way.

M: What kind of instruments did he sell that you remember in the store?

MGK: I think he had a piano. I'm not sure or did he have music there? Accordion probably. Accordion I would say. I think piano.

M: And then next door to him originally, the original location was Księgarnia Ludowa.

MGK: Oh yea, Zukowski.

M: Can you tell me about that store?

MGK: They, that was another family that hung to the business with both feet and both hands, you know. They were always in there. Mrs. Zukowski was a hard working lady. And so was he. He was more outward a little bit then her but she was always in the store. And the two girls, there was Anna and then the boy John. I think there was two boys in fact. But John was in there. He took over the store eventually. Mr. Zukowski also did some printing. a printing business connected with it. Where he made calendars and different office material. And it was a very large store again basically entrance in the middle, with a lot of things on display. I think they had some records and stationary, different stationary. And I think they even sold, somewhere down the line somebody sold newspapers which came from Poland. A lot of Polish displays of papers and magazines, you know, at that time. The current news.

M: Do you remember the store originally was on the block between Frederick and Farnsworth. Then it moved to between Kirby and Frederick. Do you remember when that was? Do you remember, and was there a difference between the stores, do you remember?

MGK: Well the second store was much larger. That I remember. But it's probably in the late '30s or '40s [it was much earlier – MK].

M: What can you say about Mr. Zukowski? I think his name was Martin.

MGK: Yea Martin.

M: Can you describe Mr. Zukowski?

MGK: He was a big, real big fellow. Kind of, I wouldn't say rough, but I mean you wouldn't get by with too much guff with him. He was very firm. But that was his nature. His personality was kind of outward, you know. He spoke what he, he thought what he spoke and spoke what he thought. One of those kindS, you know. Nothing that you'd have to be offended with. Unless you wanted to maybe start an argument with him. But he was very, very good businessman. There for years.

M: And you shopped in the store?

MGK: Yes I did.

M: What kind of things did you buy there?

MGK: You could get the newspaper there. You could get the music sheet there. The magazines. We had some printing done with him. Calendars he had. There was always a big variety of things.

M: Next to the original store on the other side was Raimi Dry Goods. Do you remember them at all?

MGK: I remember vaguely but I don't, I can't say too much about it. Like you said dry goods with curtains. They have a store in Hamtramck too. They did have. I think by now it must be closed too. Everybody needed curtains you know, towels and stuff.

M: There were a bunch of well-known restaurants on the street and taverns. And there are a couple that keep coming up in conversations with people.

MGK: Mazurka?

M: There was Mazurka, Gay Mazurka.

MGK: [Laughs]

M: Martin's and Round Bar.

MGK: The Round Bar, yeah.

M: The Round Bar or Round Tavern. Can you tell me about any of the three of those?

MGK: Well I can tell you about Round Bar. It was like a, it was a big building again. The first floor had a lot of stools and the bar was with all the liquor on the side. And up, they had like a little balcony and that's where the Round Bar comes in too. They had a little balcony and then had a little restaurant up there. And Zosia was the cook for many years there.

M: Tell me Zosia's last name?

MGK: She had a business in Hamtramck. She has a bar that's named after her. But she's out of business now. But everybody was Zosia with her.

M: I know. I'm trying to figure out what her last name was. Nobody remembers her last name. [Legowska – MK].

MGK: I don't think I remember it either. Unless you had program a Polish book of some kind where there is a lot of ads in it. Where the names are—we used to advertise a lot. When anyone had, like the parishes had big banquets or picnics or whatever. There'd always be memory booklet. And of course the business people would, I know I have a couple of those someplace. Not someplace, but I have it among my books. But Zosia, she was an excellent cook. All the soups and everything, pierogi and nalesniki and bigos and all that stuff. And after she sold that, the Round Bar was sold. I think she was like a rental in the Round Bar. And she moved to Hamtramck. I think she's on Yemans now. And she was there for a good number of years. But I think she died now. [she's alive in Warren – MK] But the food was excellent, and it's still good in the place where it's running now. And Mazurka again was the crowning point for us.

We, every Friday we'd go there for fish fry. And they'd have a three piece band there that played all the most beautiful waltzes and tangos. And you'd sit around there and sing along you know, all that stuff. They had a fellow that played the, that was with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. I can't think of his name now either. It'll come to me sometime.

M: What instrument did he play?

MGK: He played the bass. And it was just a nice meeting place. And what the heck was--I can't think of the gal's name. She and her father had it. We spent lots of weekends there. It was just like a fairy tale type thing now when you look it.

M: Can you describe the bar?

MGK: It was kind of simple. It wasn't anything over elaborate. But it was they had the orchestra in the middle of the place. And then they had another room where you, they served the food. And they had a chandelier where they had the, it was whirling around with the different colors, especially when they played the waltzes the whole place just lit up, you know. The atmosphere was great and the waitresses were all in Polish costumes always--*Krakowskie*. Very nice. Beautiful.

M: You're the second person I've talked to who said that was their favorite place.

MGK: Oh yes. All of Lutnia used to go there. For the food too, for Friday. We went on Fridays mostly. And then we'd go back to the club after that. That's why I feel so sorry for the people, our Polish people of today. They don't have these places that we did. Even going to Round Bar or Martin's, you know. That was--

M: Tell me about Martin's.

MGK: Martin's was more of a men's bar actually. I think. There weren't too many women that would go. They went in there but I mean Martin's was just a quick place to get a drink and meet somebody, you know and go. But there was another place also near Farnsworth, I can't think of the name of that bar now. You didn't mention one of the three.

M: The Warsaw?

MGK: Warsaw. There was a lot of dancing in there. Lots. We didn't go there that much but I knew of it and people that ran it were very business like. Very Polish too. Lots of, they had a room in the back that you could have your own private parties there. They'd rent it out to you. Which was nice.

M: What about the Ivanhoe Café? Do you remember that?

MGK: Yes. That's called the Polish Yacht Club. [Laughs] In fact, we're going there next week if we ever get together with Hedy Gaskey and her brother. We were supposed to go there I don't

know how many times and it's either one is out of town or vacations or whatever. And my brother used to go there quite a bit. He knew quite a few people there. I'm kind of anxious to see it now because I understand it's been remodeled and I haven't been there now. But they would stand in line outside for perch dinners there. And they still do I hear. And it's an old building from the outside but as I understand they just did the remodeling on the inside. And you have to walk up a couple of three steps to get into it. And it's right on the corner and it's a brick building right near St. Hyacinth's Church. And as I understand too they're very kind to St. Hyacinth's Church with donations. I just heard recently. Somebody told me. So they close one month a year for vacation. So we were going to go there since September. We made our arrangements and then we found out the place was on vacation so we had to wait another month and now Hedy just went to Rome and she just came back so we had to wait again. But it's quite a well-known place. And there was a big article in the paper about it not too long ago. I think, that I know I have. And there, somebody said that a woman called, where they got the name, the Polish Yacht Club. And she was looking for her husband and she called over there and wanted to know if he was there. And the waitress said, "Yes he's here." And she says "Oh, he's at the Polish Yacht Club!" And the name stuck all those years. Have you heard that story?

M: Yes.

MGK: You should interrupt me.

M: No, no. I want to get it on tape.

MGK: I'm just jabbing away here. I wonder how I'm going to sound.

M: Let me ask you a little bit more about some of the history, not just of the stores but in 1943, there was a major race riot in the city and I've talked to some people who said there were rioters and streetcars turned over and so on on Chene Street [actually on Grandy – MK]. I wonder if you remember that at all. The '43 riot on Chene?

MGK: I don't remember it specifically on Chene. But I remember it being there. But some store windows, I can't tell you which ones in my memory it seems to me that they were broken. And there was some vandalism. But I don't think we got it that bad. As I, I can't recall that we got it that badly.

M: The people that I talked to actually were more down towards Warren and Canfield.

MGK: Canfield. Canfield was the one that, you're right, Forest and Canfield, that area got hit. We were direct opposite about a mile down. So that made a big difference.

M: What about the streetcars? Can you tell me about the street cars?

MGK: Oh yeah. The streetcars were kind of nice. You'd get down, in fact there was a streetcar stop on our corner. And many times when they would wait for the streetcars in the wintertime, especially if it was cold, they'd come into the studio. And wait until the streetcar came, which was great, you know. Because then you had a nice visit with new people. That was quite a thing.

And the streetcar I think was six cents and the transfer was a penny. And then I think it went up to like ten cents later. And you'd take the Baker Streetcar, you'd take it downtown. Meeting on Medbury, you could go all the way to Hudson's or Crowley's or whatever. And coming back you would take the Baker Streetcar again but the return car, the carline was on Grandy, a block down. So, it also stopped on Medbury. So there was no sense in driving downtown you could just get on the streetcar like for our case and then coming home you would just walk from Grandy one block and you were home. So that was very convenient. And then on Forest they used to have a Crosstown which took 'em to the west side of town or the east side also. One would go on Forest and one would go on Warren. Transportation, at least we had it. Now today, where I'm living now, you know, our buses come here once every hour. And if they're late or if they don't come you don't know which it is. Actually we had better transportation with streetcars than we have now by buses. I hate to say it but I'm glad I don't have to ride them but if I did I would certainly remember the better times on the streetcar than what we have now. Although they may not be as fast, it was there. People have to have a car to get around today.

M: The movie theaters in the neighborhood. I can remember the Iris, the Home, the Ritz, the King or Fredro, the Perrien. Which of the movie theaters do you remember? Which ones did you attend?

MGK: We used to Home Theater and also to Iris. Home was near Trombly. It wasn't too big of a theater but they had pretty good double movies. Always a double thing, you know. And a little further down on East Grand Boulevard and Chene, there was the Iris, which was a much larger theater. They had a balcony. And I don't know whether I would say their movies was very, their selection was better but those were the two. And then south of us there was the *Rozmaitosci*, which turned into a Polish theater. That was on Chene between Ferry, between Hendrie and Palmer, I think. And that was more a smaller theater. They only showed movies once in a while. Where the Home and the Iris were every day type things.

M: What was the *Rozmaitosci*? Was that a theater?

MGK: Uh, huh. The building is still there.

M: So that was the one that turned to the Ritz?

MGK: Yea.

M: So when was it called *Rozmaitosci*?

MGK: It was before the Ritz, I think. And I don't know which one was first. I can't remember that [*Rozmaitosci* was first – MK]. Then it turned into, I think there's a bar there now.

M: There may be a storefront church.

MGK: Yeah. Something like that.

M: And you don't remember the Fredro or the King?

MGK: I know it was down further, near Frederick. But they were basically pretty much the same.

M: What about characters on the street? Were there any people that you remember particularly that just kind of stick in your mind? Were on the street, either living, walking, customers or were there people who had particular kinds of, you know, of amusing aspects to their character?

MGK: Not really. I don't remember anybody in particular. There was some that walked all the time just to meet somebody sometimes and to see what they could find maybe a nickel or a dime on the street, you know. But I can't remember anything too specific in that. Would you excuse me just for a minute.

M: Sure

Break

M: You mentioned Werner's running numbers. I know Ligget's Drug Store ran numbers out of there. Any other things you remember about the moonshine and the numbers that were on the street? Whether other stores were involved?

MGK: I don't remember too much about moonshine although I'm sure it was around. But the numbers was quite a thing. The women were very much into numbers. And there was a butcher shop there someplace too, right near Werner's. They used to sell numbers there. And they would have real books on the numbers. They had dream book or whatever somebody talks about something and they'd run and look into the, and they had charts, you know, different ways of manipulating the numbers. Once in a while it would come out that way and everybody wanted the formula. [Laughs] But my mother played the numbers a little bit, you know. I remember her going to the butcher shop and she'd say "*numerka, dzisiaj kupilam.*" She wasn't a fanatic about it but she'd buy one every once in a while. And there was a butcher shop that she used to get it.

M: On your side of the street?

MGK: Right near Werner's.

M: Near Werner's on the same side?

MGK: Yea.

M: So it must have been in the 5700 block.

MGK: And there was a Rosolowska Bridal Shop in there.

M: Yes, Rosolowska Bridal Shop.

MGK: That was right into there somewhere.

M: [Leafing through a Polk Directory] There is a shoe repair, Rosolowska, the New Elk Bar, a bunch of physicians, hard to say but it looks like there are some vacant stores in '34.

MGK: It was like in the half of the block, if I remember correctly. But it was past Werner's though.

M: Beer, a plumber.

MGK: Oh, the plumber was

M: William Katz, plumber.

MGK: No there was another one. A plumber. oh what the heck was his name? Oh dear, I should know that one. My dad's good friend. Leo the plumber! But what was his full name. Leo--

M: Where was Leo the Plumber at?

MGK: Chene

M: Where on Chene?

MGK: Ferry, around Palmer, no no, around Hendrie. Grzegorzewski. I knew it would come to me. Leo Grzegorzewski.

M: And what can you tell me about Leo Grzegorzewski?

MGK: He was just a real good plumber that everybody went to. And in fact, one of his daughters is a very good friend to Gertrude Minkiewicz.

M: I'll have to make a note of that, I'll ask. Because I'm going to see Trudi in a week.

MGK: Are you?

M: Yea. I'm going to see her in a week.

MGK: Trudi is, where does Trudi live now? In a condo some place?

M: She lives on--

MGK: Van Dyke and Ten?

M: No it's further east. I've got the address.

MGK: That's okay.

M: I've got the address, I'm pretty sure I've got the address right here. Trudi Minkiewicz. I'm going to meet with her and Ronnie Kuskowski to talk about Dane Donuts and also with Ann Giannini.

MGK: Ann Giannini that doesn't--

M: Let's see, Minkiewicz. Minkiewicz, I don't have it listed here but I've met with her already and she has a condo. So the 5700 block you said there was a--

MGK: Grzegorzewski, Leo, Leo the Plumber. He was on the other side of the street. Across from us.

M: And do you remember, what do you remember about him? Can you describe him?

MGK: He was a tall very, very private person. Maybe not private, very gentle, much of a gentleman. And he had, I know one of his daughters died very suddenly and it was quite a tragedy for everybody. But Trudi, is it Trudi's friend now? Now she would know Grzegorzewski.

M: There is a meat store here, Joseph Kozlowski, meats. On the same side of the street as Werner.

MGK: Kozlowski, that doesn't ring a bell at all. Maybe that was the butcher shop that I'm talking about?

M: That's what I'm saying.

MGK: Oh, I'm sorry, what number did you say it was?

M: That was 5729, so it was a couple of doors down from Werner's.

MGK: That's probably what it was.

M: So those were the number people too?

MGK: Yea, they were the number people.

M: What about crime? I mean I know that during the '20s and '30s there was organized crime in Detroit. People hear about the Purple Gang and so on. Was there any knowledge of organized crime activity in that—

MGK: In that area? I would say no. Not that I don't remember any let's put it that way. Maybe there was some but I'm not, not—Oh there was a purse snatching here and there you know or a break in. But as far as killings or anything like that we didn't.

M: Somebody told me that, I heard a story about a couple of Polish owners who had the dairy who shot, one shot the other in the thirties.

MGK: Liberty Dairy?

M: I think it was, yeah. No, it wasn't Liberty, it was further north. It was a dairy at the north end of Chene Street. And then somebody else told me about next to Witkowski's men's wear.

MGK: Oh, yeah.

M: There was a guy that was shot.

MGK: I think that was a customer that was shot. Or something, yeah. Well I guess. Witkowski's, I remember them. That was a beautiful store there on the corner.

M: Can you tell me about the Witkowski store?

MGK: Yes, it was a men's department store and it had men's and boys' actually. And they also had a little balcony in the store for the office. In fact I helped out send some circulars from there one time--their advertising things. There was a Mr. Max Witkowski. He was very well liked in the neighborhood and a very active person. He was with the Detroit Lighting Commission also. I know my dad and my brother used to get all their clothes from there. It was right on the corner of Adele and they also had a store in Hamtramck. I think they just closed it within the last couple of years maybe. And I believe the first original store was on Canfield Avenue. Then they branched out to Chene. But they were on Chene. When we came there in '28 they were there already.

M: Very good. Where did you buy your clothes when you were living on Chene?

MGK: Well now. Let's see now how would that go? Actually most of the stores, we had to go downtown. Like to Hudson's there was no big.

MGK: For example, your First Holy Communion dress? Where did you get your First Holy Communion dress?

MGK: My mother made it.

M: Oh.

MGK. [Laughs] My mother was quite a seamstress. She made my communion dress. I remember that. But there was a store on Ferry and Chene that was very, very much into children's things. It was, the name was Kukawski.

M: Can you describe the store?

MGK: Well it was right on the corner of Ferry and Chene. The lady was, I can't remember her

name. They were all in the Polish clubs all the time. So you can probably find their ad in there. And they had all kind of things mostly for children though. But very fancy clothes, christening dresses and holy communion and stuff. In fact, I did some sewing myself too. Then there was a little dress shop right in below where Lutnia used to be. I can't remember the--the son opened up a store in Hamtramck a few years ago but I can't think of the name of it. It was right next to-- have you heard about Zarembski's?

M: Tell me about Zarembski.

MGK: Well Zarembski's was a huge department store. They had women's, some women's clothes, children's and household things like tablecloths and linens and things. And that was run by Mr. and Mrs. Zarembski who was, I know his name was I remember it was Felix. And they had a daughter and a son. But the son died at a very young age and the daughter married Gerald Szymanski who was the orchestra, Polish orchestra leader. And then she was in that store for Szymanski. Dean Gerald's they used to call his orchestra – Dean Gerald's Orchestra. And we also had a Kurzawa Orchestra, Polish orchestra that played at all the dances.

M: Tell me about the orchestras, the Polish bands that were in the neighborhood.

MGK: Well those two were--

M: So what was Kurzawa's first name?

MGK: I'm sure it's in here, probably.

M: And so there was a Kurzawa and Dean Gerald--

MGK: Dean Gerald, yeah, and then we also had another, Joseph Popiel was his name and I forget he had a name for his orchestra, we used to always—oh, Johnny Sadrack. He played. He died a few years ago. He was very, a real Polish band.

M: And he'd play at the bars?

MGK: No, they used to play at dances, Dom Polski and Dom Ludowy and --

M: Did you go to Dom Ludowy?

MGK: Yeah.

M: Tell me about Dom Ludowy.

MGK: Here's that Modern Bakery that I was telling you about. Dom Ludowy was, it was on Harper? Harper? East of us. It was, I believe originally it was a church or something. And then the church was made into a hall.

M: On the east side of the street or the west side?

MGK: The east side. The east side It was, see what happened I'm moving the general idea of the building because you know two blocks of, between Chene and Harper, actually from Harper on were taken up by the expressway. And that did damage to our business also because it divided one section with another. And it was under construction like forever. And people never took the time to come back our way. They went the other way. And that's what kind of hurt there. But Dom Ludowy was like a, it turned more into a hall type thing. You know you could rent it for weddings and funeral breakfasts and meetings for the Polish, and different Polish clubs held meetings there. Just like Dom Polski too. Then Dom Polski also had in the back of the, rear building they had another unit they called *Sokolnia*. It was owned by the Polish Falcons. It was in the same building but not together. You know there was a back entrance and all that stuff.

M: What about your competition? Hoffman.

MGK: We were good friends. In fact, my dad started out with, let's see, Ballaun Studio was in the same place as Hoffman was now. So, dad was going there to learn the business and Hoffman was already working with Ballaun. And Ballaun decided to retire so he sold the business to Hoffman. And my dad branched out for himself and there was also a third party there. Prusinski, no not Prusinski. He was from Cleveland. And he branched out and opened a studio in Cleveland. So there were three of them that were working with Ballaun. But Mr. Hoffman and his wife, we were very good friends.

M: What was his first name? Do you remember?

MGK: Tomasz, Tom and hers was Sophie

M: Were they Polish

MGK: Yeah.

M: Even though their name is sort of German?

MGK: No they were Polish as far as I know they were Polish. Tomasz and Zofia Hoffman. And they had a retarded daughter. Can't think of her name now too, but she--Henrietta! But we were good friends. We were in competition naturally and I don't think either one of us hurt that much in it but we were only like four or five blocks apart. We had specials for communion children. Give them pencil boxes as a gift when they, or have you heard this?

M: No.

MGK: They'd come in to have their picture taken and they'd get a gift from the photographer--a pencil box. So the next one would give a pencil box with a fountain pen in it. Or else give them a fountain pen and a pencil. It was kind of funny but that was just a little drawing card for the kids and they loved it. Just like now you give candy or something to a child and they think it's the biggest thing out. We gave a lot of pencil boxes away. [Laughs]

M: You mentioned Cohen's Jewelry, what about Max's? Do you remember Max's Jewelry?

MGK: Yeah, they were on Palmer. I think they were the same way. They were in competition but I think they were good friends 'cause we used to see them together and I wouldn't be surprised if they didn't buy things together. And just in their own way buy in bulk and both of them benefit from it.

M: Where did you get your jewelry? Where did you get--

MGK: From Cohen's. They were neighbors you know. And they used to come and have their picture taken by us. Many times, the family.

M: Were the Cohen's observant? Do you know if they observed the Jewish holidays?

MGK: Oh yeah. They would close the store. I think everybody observed. In fact, we observed Good Friday with a passion, 12 to 3 nobody would think of having the door open from 12 to 3. In fact, about five minutes to twelve you were closing already. And even the groceries and all that, that was no such a thing as keeping it open. And five to three they'd be lined up at the grocery store to open at three. I mean that sincerely.

M: What about the Christmas time on Chene? I remember someone telling me how special it seemed. Was it? Was the Christmas season, did the stores stay open later, was there more stuff going on?

MGK: Oh yeah. For sale of things for gift wrapping and all that stuff they had longer store hours and they observed holidays very, very well, about closing and opening and stuff. But and I remember we used to decorate the Christmas tree and decorate the front of the store. We always had a big Christmas tree in the studio and the window always had some note of Christmas or Easter or the bunny out there or turkey out now. Nothing much but there was something there. You know.

M: Well I've taken up a lot of your time. So I really want to thank you for all this and I may get come back after I listen to it obviously. I may have some other questions as I go along and if I do I'll ask you to respond to them. So thank you very much.

MGK: I enjoyed it.

Break

M: You mentioned the cigar store.

MGK: Wisniewski, they were on the corner of Chene and Hendrie. And it was a brick building. You had to walk up a couple of steps to it. And newspapers, they were selling the *Dziennik Polski* and *Zgoda* and all that stuff. And cigars. And very nice people, the both of them. I can't think of the daughter's name – Trudi knows them too.

M: Was this the store that also had a cigar store Indian on the side in front of the store? Maybe it was later on.

MGK: I don't remember that.

MGK: Hass Hardware store.

M: Tell me about Hass.

MGK: He was between Ferry, they were between Hendrie and Medbury. And also a family of I think two or three boys with them. Family owned, family working all together. Nice, nice people. They were like in competition with in fact Nowak. Mr. Nowak originally worked for him if I remember correctly. Let's see what else. You're going to have a ball reading all of this [as she flips through the Lutnia Program for Chene Street – MK]. I think we had our ad in here someplace. Polish Village restaurant on Jos Campau. She was on Chene at one time but I don't remember which one, Mrs. Zebrowski, she was very popular, very good cook. Wujek, White Eagle Café on Chene, but that's further down the other way from us. Lendzon's store, have you ever heard--

M: Tell me about Lendzon's. I remember it as a kid actually but tell me about Lendzon's.

MGK: Lendzon's was a big dry goods store. It was not Lendzon first. There was a Lendzon dry goods store between Palmer and Ferry on the east side of the street. They had a basement and they also had a second floor. In the basement they used to carry most of the stuff, kitchen, kitchen utensils and things. And their main aisle was just regular things that people needed the most. The upstairs had a lot to do with sewing. They used to sell bulk material that you could buy patterns for sewing. That was Mr. Lendzon.

M: Do you remember him at all? What was he like?

MGK: Yea, he was a very, what's the word I want to use? I got to be careful. [Laughs]

M: Go ahead.

MGK: In fact, how did that go. Well his daughter used to work in the store there quite a bit.

M: Tell me what was he like?

MGK: He was kind of abrupt. Maybe that's the best word. You'd have to know him to understand him, terrific businessman though.

M: Was he Polish?

MGK: Yeah, oh definitely. And his wife was I would say she was there 24 hours a day if she could. She knew everything about the store. But she never mixed with the people. She was

very private, extremely private. Which is nothing wrong with that but they were two different kinds of people. But they had a terrific business. They had branches in Hamtramck . The one in Hamtramck just closed not too long ago. Of course it's gone into different ownership but they're using the same name. They also had a store here in Dearborn. On the other side of Dearborn on Warren Avenue and Warrendale. But that closed too. So many of these places are closed.

Break

M: Okay, go ahead

MGK: The part about the business end of our studio in fact I think of the majority of studios that did primarily portrait work before the war were badly hurt in a way of the change of our business after the war. Because so many of the young men that went into the service, they were exposed to photography in their line of duty for the country. And they learned, they had equipment that we never even saw. Or never were familiar with in the studio work because ours was strictly portrait and family type thing. And they were doing what we might now call the candid camera business. They had equipment that we never even saw. In some cases probably couldn't afford to buy that at that time. And as a result, when the fellows started coming back from the service almost everyone carried a camera from Europe. The German camera, the Russian camera, the Japanese cameras. And then they would, many times somebody would get a hold of the family of the camera and they would bring it to the studio and they would ask us how to work it. We never even saw it, you know, so how could we give them the information. And as a result that changed the whole perspective of the studio business. Because people no longer wanted family pictures from the studio. They wanted candid pictures that were taken in their home. So as a result a few of us got into the candid work. And I was one of them that started with it. But to be honest with you, I did not like it. It just took away the beauty of our thoughts of pictures in comparison to what they did. We'd go to some homes where they weren't furnished right or they weren't as nice as they should be for pictures. And people thought that those were great because that's the way they—and there probably was nothing wrong with it but it didn't compete with what we did. So as a result the studio, even today I don't think there is hardly any portrait studios in existence. Whereas years ago there was at least three, four in every area. I do believe that the only portrait studio that's in existence now is the Pieronek Studio in Hamtramck.

M: That's actually the studio where I had my First Holy Communion pictures taken.

MGK: Oh did you really?

M: And I asked my mother why there? Cause it was so far away. She said they had a deal with St. Hyacinth. They cut a deal with the pastor. So when we went my mother said the pastor said you go to Pieronek.

MGK: What year was your--

M: '56.

MGK: Now see we were out of business already then.

M: But Hoffman was still around then

MGK: Well Hoffman was not too much longer 'cause he died, I would say in the early '60s maybe.

M: He was still around then because I asked my mother why we went to Pieronek?

MGK: Oh yes, in fact, even like at St. Stanislaus you know we took almost all the graduation pictures. They all came to the studio, individuals, you know. But they booked us for the whole school. For the whole graduating class I should say. And then like we would make one composite of all the graduates on one thing.

M: I've seen those Genca composites big ones, like huge.

MGK: Wall size.

M: Right.

MGK: Today everything is pocket size. In our way of looking back at it, it was kind of sad for all the portrait studios. Because there was several of them. Like you just said, Hoffman, Pieronek, on the west side they had a Mr. Bonish and Ballaun was on the west side. And Modernistic Studio which very good friends of ours too Phil and Virginia Baranski. Phil is dead now but Virginia is a very good friend of mine. They were in the business here on the west side. But nothing there is nothing left of our type of work. So that kind of hurt us as far as that goes. Now the candid were the ones that made it. And some of the fellows never even knew how to hold a camera. But because of the service they learned it. And then it came out to be the thing. Because the people are not going to the studios. I mean you wouldn't think of having a communion picture unless you went to a studio. My great granddaughter is in school now. She just started Catholic school and the first thing they did was take her picture in school by the desk. Well you know that doesn't take her to the studio any more. Which there aren't any to go to but I mean this is the difference that, the war really made the big difference for our type of business.

M: Good.

M: This is Marian Krzyzowski and I'm at the home of Marie Genca Kotz in Dearborn, Michigan, and today is October 15, 2004. And we've just spent a good part of the evening going over some programs from Lutnia. The 30th and 35th banquet programs, 1938 and 1943, identifying individuals. And what I'd like to do now is actually go back and talk about some of these individuals who were associated with Lutnia in the 1930s and 1940s. And maybe we can begin with Mr. Weinfeld, who is listed as *instruktor tanców*. And maybe you could tell me a little bit about how he came to be a director of dance for the group, how people responded to him, and what kind of instructor he was, and so on.

MGK: We were made up of students. We all decided we wanted to dance, and of course we had no idea where to get a teacher, and from different sources we heard comments about Mr. Weinfeld, so we decided to try. And he came down to the club one evening and gave us a trial in dancing and--

M: Was this above Palmer Bakery?

MGK: Yes, it was above the Palmer Bakery on Palmer and Chene. And he made a very good impression on all of us. He was a very kind gentleman and excellent dancer, although he wasn't Polish and there was a little bit of a feedback on that because people were, at that particular time, we were very Polish minded. But anyhow we went ahead and had him as our director and it turned out to be a very successful occasion for all of us. He came down once a week for the dance lessons and--

M: Which day of the week was it?

MGK: It was on a Friday and then we would push to Tuesday. We kind of went from, to satisfy the different people--

M: Evenings?

MGK: Evenings, it was all evenings, yeah. And he was very, he had the right music and the right way of dancing and in spite of him not being Polish he certainly knew how to do the Krakowiak and the Mazur and taught us a lot of nice things which we enjoyed tremendously. He also was connected with the Hungarian Village in Delray. And there were times when he took us, some of our group, as many as could go, or sometimes he chose just a few, to dance over there, and we used to have the dinners with the Hungarian people there and they were just anxious to see us and they were glad. And then that kind of blossomed out into us participating in some Polish activities like the dancers, the Polish dancers that we have now in Hamtramck with Wieliczka and all those, well we were something similar to that, although it was just on a hit and miss thing, and we were very proud to go and we enjoyed it tremendously. And he was our director for quite a few years until, oh, some of us people started to get married and they kind of dropped out of dancing because they were raising babies instead of dancing. However, we had a great time with him and I would say he was a very good director and I for one, especially, and I know the few of us that are left would say the same thing, that some of our nicest memories of our youth were of the dances that we had with him at the Dom Polski and the Masonic Temple and you name it, we were there. It was very delightful and he was a, as I say, I would consider him a very nice person.

M: This program is from 1938, so he was obviously director already by 1938. Do you have any idea what year he might have become the director, when he was included?

MGK: Well we didn't know too much about his personal, he mentioned it very vaguely, and he also was director on the west side, at Laur, I think, he taught. I'm not sure whether he taught there but he was connected with some of those people. But, to be honest, I can't quite remember how we got him, but whoever managed to find him, it was a good choice.

M: And what was the, you said, the opposition to him? Was it that he wasn't Polish? Was it that he was Jewish? Was it, you know, what was the feeling about, the negative feelings about him?

MGK: Well, primarily it was the fact that he wasn't Polish. We had the same problem later on with the men's choir. When we had Obecny--Mr. Obecny, and I can't think of the other man that was, but anyhow, then we got Mr. Van Heusen and he was German. And of course we were, at the time the war was going on and there was a lot of feedback that we were not sticking to our Polish traditions. Although they taught us Polish dance and Polish singing, but they actually didn't speak the language. But as far as personalities they were excellent. But our people, probably even some of us, were a little bit surprised that we had a non-Pole teaching a Polish class. But we did it anyway.

M: Was there any other dance instructor besides Weinfeld?

MGK: Oh yeah, there was.

M: Somebody mentioned a Spanish, a guy who was Spanish, too. Am I right or wrong? Or maybe you guys—

MGK: We had--I can't think of the Polish man's name, he was very popular with Polonia, but they had, other clubs had him and he was--

M: A dance instructor?

MGK: Yeah. And I can't think of his name, I'm sorry.

M: And so, when did the dance instruction kind of come to an end?

MGK: Well we danced, I would say, for five or six years. And then a lot of the boys were going into the service--boys, I mean the men were going into the service. We lost a few of our dancers. In fact, it kind of dwindled down and, as I say, some, we had people that married within our group and start raising families and they just dropped out of dancing.

M: When you met for your instruction, can you just kind of give a description of the evening, what it was like. I mean, did people sort of show up upstairs and--

MGK: Oh yeah.

M: What was it like? What was that hour or two, whatever it was that you spent up there?

MGK: We usually would practice for--well, he would show us what he wanted us to do. He had a dance partner that came with him. She was a Polish girl from the west side, from the Laur club. And it was quite interesting, because we had to stand in line, in a straight line, and then we'd say good evening or whatever, and then the fellas would be on one side of the hall and the girls would be on the other, and he would like tell them to come and introduce themselves to us girls and to ask us for a dance. It was very formal, and the correct way of dancing with somebody, that

if we went to another party to dance, why we wouldn't feel bad if somebody from the other side of the hall came and said, "May I have this dance with you?" And that was part of it, to intermingle us with each other. It kind of broke the ice as far as meeting people. And we had a tremendous time. We really did. I think if any of our dancers would, if anybody from Lutnia would say, "Do you remember the dance class," why everybody would just smile and say, "Do we remember, and how!"

M: And how long did it last in the evening?

MGK: Well the dance class itself was like between an hour or an hour and a half, and of course after he left, well then we just danced between ourselves. And we had a tape recorder that had, we had the tango and like I say the Polish dances and the Polonez he also taught. This was amazing, what he knew, all our traditional things. He was very aware of them. Now where he learned them, I really don't know, but he sure did a good job of transferring it to us.

M: And did you have performances then, where you actually went out and danced for people?

MGK: Yes, we did.

M: So when you did these practices, did you have costumes? I mean what--did you come dressed, or not dressed in costumes? What was the norm--

MGK: For our rehearsals we had no costumes. But if we were appearing anywhere they rented the costumes. In fact for one of the Lutnia's anniversaries, which was in Orchestra Hall. That was the most fabulous thing I'll ever remember in my life, when the hall was packed with people and we came out in the costumes that they rented, and I think some of them even came from Poland. They rented them from a local business person, which one it was I don't quite remember either. But the colors and the costumes were just beautiful. And if they didn't fit, well you took them home and you made them fit.

M: You mentioned, in identifying some of the people in the photographs, there were a lot of marriages that took place.

MGK: That's right.

M: And can you just mention at least some of them?

MGK: Oh sure.

M: Who got married to whom in the club?

MGK: Yes. They had Jenny May. She married Victor Czerny. And Alice--not Alice, but Eugenia Warszawski married Stanley Myczek. And Helen--well, it was just, it was just such a combination of things that we just had a great time. It was just like one family going out, and then it came the holidays, we went from one house to another.

M: So Helen married Henryk Szwed?

MGK: Well, no, she wasn't--that was some girl that Henryk got married to. But we did have some beautiful times. We really did.

M: And you yourself were--

MGK: I was quite active in it too, and I--

M: You got married to--

MGK: I got married to Ted Kotz. At first it was, he was married, his first wife died, and I remarried, and we were all good friends. Never in my life did I think I'd ever marry him, but he was like a brother to me and after his first wife died, I--

M: Her name was--

MGK: Agnes Marek. And they had a young daughter. And at the time I married him, she was 8 years old. And I must say that today she is 61 years old, and I'm still her mother, and she's still my daughter, and fortunately I have two beautiful grandchildren. And happy to say now I have three great-grandchildren. So the ties were there. We were strictly bound together by music and by singing and by going to church together and praying and everything else that goes with it. Wonderful times with banquets and New Year's Eve parties and Dom Polski, in fact it seemed to me many times that we practically lived there every weekend. And us gals always used to laugh that we even had more gowns than street clothes because we were always going dancing there. And it was so beautiful, especially when Lutnia would have a dance, we would go all out for decorations, and we would get drapes, velvet drapes and rentals and whatever we could shake up from our own homes and bring them out. And the fellas would pick us up and put flowers on and palm trees and, depending on what the occasion was for the dance, and surprisingly it ended up that everyone was trying to outdo the other, especially in decorations and we had some beautiful things. And then the orchestra would come in and then the night of the party we'd have all the beautiful Krakowiaks and Polonez and, oh, it was just unbelievable. And Dom Polski was our second home. The first home was our home, actually, but the number one was Lutnia and after that it was Dom Polski because we were all associated with the same thing. But Dom Polski was a beautiful, beautiful place to meet, then that's where we all met. Our whole, there was no question about where do you go. "Let's go dancing." And I kind of feel sorry for the young people of today that they don't have the same occasions and to meet people and, well maybe if people don't care, or maybe we could learn them, to teach them to care, rather. Because they're missing out a lot. And especially when you get to our age now, if you didn't have the beautiful memories it wouldn't be so easy sometimes. It was great.

M: The thing that struck me in doing this study and talking to people was the incredible sense of community that people felt.

MGK: Definitely.

M: That regardless of whether it was the Depression, the war, you know, hard times, people still felt connected to one another.

MGK: Right.

M: And it meant a lot.

MGK: Well I grew up during the Depression and I'll never forget when the banks closed. Our studio was right across the street from the Commonwealth Bank, right around the corner, and unbeknown to anybody the banks closed abruptly the night before or the day after, whatever it was, and I remember saying, looking out from our upstairs bedroom window above the studio, and people were just clamoring to get in to the bank, because they wanted to get their money out, and I thought they were going to go through the roof. And it was so sad and especially as I look back on it now, those were life savings for people. Even in Hamtramck when some of the Polish banks failed, you know, in fact my dad lost money himself there. And never got that back, that's for sure. And those are the things that you live through and you wonder how you sometimes did it. Somehow God gives us the strength to bear what we don't even think of. But it just, that bank closing was something that I'll never forget. Of course the Depression days came after that. And when rationing came in, even during the war, I remember you had to get a stamp for shoes, you had to get a stamp for butter, you had to get a stamp for anything that you wanted to get, a bottle of liquor you had to have a stamp for it, and you had to save those things. And today we have, more or less, maybe not as good conditions in some respects, but they don't compare to what we went through. And somehow we made it, and I think maybe we're better for it. I don't know, but the Depression was, almost killed us, really.

M: Since I spoke with you last, I've come across the names of a number of other photographers in the area. One was Babiarz.

MGK: Yes.

M: Do you remember Babiarz at all? What do you remember about Babiarz?

MGK: Babiarz was, we were on Medbury and, in fact Babiarz was there before we were. He was right across the street from St. Stanislaus church. And he had another brother also that was a photographer. And we were in competition, like with other Polish photographers also, but it doesn't mean that you didn't talk to them or anything. You just wanted to do the best that you could. And he had a smaller studio than we did. And then, of course, we didn't have the biggest either because there were bigger ones than us. But you respected one another because you were in the game together, and--

M: What happened to him, do you know/

MGK: Well he gave up the business, as I remember, faintly, and then I think his health got bad.

M: And then there were, the studios on Canfield, the original studios on Canfield--

MGK: Well, there was Ballaun Studio was on Canfield.

M: Sliwinski

MGK: Pardon?

M: Wasn't there another one like Sliwinski or something like that?

MGK: Sowinski, yeah, I think it was. But Ballaun was on Canfield and he also had a studio on Chene. In fact, that's where my dad picked up photography. He came from Poland, and he went to work for Ford Motor, and then dad was always kind of an aggressive person. He went to night school and learned the language and mom did the same. And he had his studio on Canfield and also one on Chene and Ferry. And so Dad went over there one day and talked with him and asked him if he could kind of learn more about it and Mr. Ballaun graciously took him in. And he got to know the business. And he also met Mr. Hoffman there. And Mr. Prusinski. And then the three of them worked together. In due time Mr. Ballaun decided to retire, and he went to Florida. And Mr. Hoffman bought the business from Bsllaun, and my dad branched out and got his own on Medbury and Chene. And Mr. Prusinski went to Cleveland and opened up a studio 'cause his family was there. So it was kind of like a melting pot of three fellas that worked together, and we all had high respect for each other. Even Mr. Hoffman and Mrs. Hoffman, we were so close together, but we never undercut each other's throats. Naturally you try to outdo each other in their own way, to be honest, but there was no bitterness. If we were in any, I would imagine that if any one of us needed something, the other one would have given it to him.

M: What about Pieronek? Pieronek was also on Medbury. I remember seeing some signs. The Polk Directory for the city showed Pieronek being on Medbury very early on in the century.

MGK: That was before our time. And then he married a gal, I mean a lady from, I think it was from St. Stannie's, her name was Cemborski, his wife's name.

M: Cem--?

MGK: Cemborski

M: How's that spelled?

MGK: C-E-M-B-O-R-S-K-I. And then he moved to Hamtramck. And now that you mention his name, I will tell you that I think he's the last family, the last member of the Pieronek family just passed away last Christmastime, and the studio is now closed. They were the ones that survived the longest. And they were also an extremely wonderful person. He had I think it was three or four sons, and very highly educated in color photography. In fact I think Pat was even associated with U of M, I think. And I remember when Mom died, when my mother died in 1982, I remember this and I never will forget it. I was at the wake and, mom's wake, and a gentleman walked in and he looked around and walked up to the casket and he stood there kind of gazing at mom and so I walked up to him and I introduced myself and he said, "Oh, are you Marie?" And I said, "Yes." And he says, "Well, I remember you from way back," and he says, "I want to tell

you that I'm Pieronek's son." And I thought I was, so overwhelmed by it. Then he said, "I just heard, my son goes to Catholic Central and," he said, "they had on the bulletin board that Mrs. Genca died," and my nephew was a priest for the Catholic Central, so he put the notice up on the board. And Pieronek's son saw it and came home and told his mother and dad about it and wouldn't you know, they sent a beautiful flower after that and he talked with me and he said, I said, you know, "How nice of you to come!" And he says, "How could I forget it?" He says, "Both of our mothers were so involved in the backside of the business." He says, "You know they were there, but you didn't always see them." And so then the two brothers that were left now, they died a month apart. At Christmastime. Just I think a year or two ago. And I know that the building now is still for sale.

M: Right, I saw that.

MGK: They are the last surviving Polish photographers from our time that I remember. I'm glad you mentioned Pieronek because they are really beautiful people.

M: I was going to ask you something else related to that.

MGK: Maybe you wouldn't want this but first the brother died at Thanksgiving time, and the second one died at Christmastime. The same year. I don't know if it was last year or two years ago.

M: They must not have been very old. Was he in his 60s or what?

MGK: Oh yeah, definitely under sixties, yeah, they were young, I think they were younger than I of course, but. No, Pieronek was about as old as my dad.

M: So they were even older. Seventies.

MGK: Seventies, yeah. Because they had boys at Catholic Central. But that was such a shock. I'll never forget when he, you know, he just stood there like this, and then I introduced and he says, "Oh! Are you Marie?!" I says, "Yeah." He says, "Well I'm Pieronek." He says, "I got the news from my son, from the bulletin board," and he said, "I had to come." And I thought that was pretty darn nice. For somebody that, so many years ago, you know, they were, evidently, had good relations talking at home about us like we did, you know. Which was nice.

M: I know what I was going to ask you. Do you have any photographs of your dad and ma?

MGK: Yeah, I should have. That's another sad story which I would rather not tell you about, but I don't have too many pictures of the studio either.

M: All right. But do you have any of them, themselves?

MGK: I think I have a good picture of my mom and I got, I'm sure I've got--

M: Because what I do is I make copies and I've got my digital camera and I can make copies.

MGK: Just between you and I, I'll give you a brief reason why I'm saying that about pictures. I'm not going to tell you the whole story. But my dad was very upset when I got married. And he, like, gave up on everything. And he destroyed quite a few things that we had. I don't have very much left over. However, we tried so hard for a reconciliation. And I must say that before he passed away, thank God, we had one. But my father was an extremely stubborn person. The old Polish guy, you know what I mean? A wonderful father, but I wouldn't want this story to be on tape anywhere. [Laughs]

M: Then, you know, it's very similar to the Niebrzydowski story.

MGK: Oh yeah.

M: He--

MGK: Oh, I didn't know that.

M: She married a guy named Nowakowski--

MGK: Yeah

M: Who lived on Trombly. And she eloped. She eloped, because he was absolutely opposed. They eloped to Indiana and got married there.

MGK: Oh really?

M: Yeah,

MGK: Well you know what happened with me, well one of our biggest things, well, as you can tell from some of these pictures, we were all in the same group all the time. My husband was, he was one of a kind, really [laughs]. And when he was single you know he, we all had good times. And so he started, I know we kind of dated a little bit on and off, but there were three of us girls that we were friends together. So when he couldn't get either one of us to go with him, he took all three of us out. Honest to God, I mean it.

M: Who were the three?

MGK: Agnes and Adele.

M: Oh. Adele Cieslak?

MGK: Cieslak, yeah. 'Cause you know we wouldn't go anywhere separately. And one, I don't mind telling you, one New Year's Eve he asked all of us, each one of us, for dates and none, neither one of us would go with him because we wanted to, you know, we didn't want to go as a couple. We wanted to have fun. Especially in those days, you didn't have a boyfriend like they have today, at twelve or fourteen years old. So what he did is, he said, "You know what?" And

he took us, we were at the club, and he sat us all together and he says, "I'm going to take all three of you to the dance, New Year's Eve." And he did. He got us all three corsages and he picked us up and then he tossed a coin who would he dance with first. That's the kind of a [redacted] we had. And of course I was a year or two years older than him, and Agnes was a year younger than him. So, he says, "Okay," he says, "you don't want to go with me I'll pick the young chick." [Laughs] Well anyhow, we remained friends the whole time. In fact, I stood up to their wedding, [redacted], to his first wife's wedding, and him.

M: That was at St. Stan's?

MGK: No, at Immaculate Conception. 'Cause she belonged there. And at first, when she passed, they were only married seven or eight years and she got a terrible case of cancer, very ill, and I was there all the time, taking, looking in on her and seeing her in the hospital. And she always used to say to me, she says, "Be sure you look in, keep track of her" the daughter. Well it turned out that I am, you know. But that's another long story, but my dad was very opposed to me marrying a widower. With a child. He said that he didn't think that that was a good idea. And yet he knew him so well. So, and then my dad never came to my wedding. So, so now I--

M: It's not unusual, though. It's not unusual, it's actually not unusual.

MGK: I know, I'm almost--but I'm not afraid to say it because that's how it happened and a lot of people know, but you know what? Some of the old timers when I was getting married, when I did get married, my dad wouldn't come to the wedding. So my brother gave me away. And you know what they were saying? It was my fault that my father didn't come. Not that my father, what his purpose was.

M: Yeah, I believe it because like I said, I've heard these stories

MGK: Yeah--

M: more than once in the neighborhood.

MGK: Well, you've just heard another one [Laughs]

M: No, it was bad, very bad.

MGK: Well, I'm not, as I say, he was a wonderful father. But my dad was very possessive. And I was 37 years old when I got married, so you know I was a career girl. You know, he had that in me and I was fair, and I liked what I was doing. In the meantime, my friends are all getting married and, come on, I was dating other fellows but I could have been, I could have been married as a widow now, too, but I just never chose to. You know, you're brought up, there's something in you that you just don't do. Not that I'm against it, but--

M: Do you have any photos handy of either of them that I could see right now? Or are they buried?

MGK: I have a picture of my mother right. My son-in-law just bought some kind of a digital camera, he was telling me that he can take pictures, make a picture, then put it in the computer, and then put it to the printer, and get a picture and I thought, oh my--

M: This is Marian Krzyzowski and I'm at the home of Ms. Marie Genca Kotz in Dearborn, and today is the 15th of February, 2006. And we talked a little bit about the studios, again, the portrait photo studios. And I mentioned Central Art Studio and that I'd seen the ads from the 1919, 1920, that Mr. Babiarz was the original owner of that studio, but then you told me that there was more to, you know, what do you know about the studio?

MGK: Well I remember when Babiarz had the studio and I believe he sold it to Leszko. And Leszko had it for a good number of years with a good business. And Herman Smigielski was a friend of his or became a friend, whatever, and he got involved in working with him. But originally I do not believe he was really a photographer, but he got to be one through Mr. Leszko. And they were together for many years. And then he got involved in a lot of church things. I know he was very much with St. Hyacinth's church way back.

M: Smigielski, yeah.

MGK: Herman, yeah. Then he got, like, different parishes had different functions, so he just helped out everywhere. And then he married a Chrzanowski girl from home whose father was an undertaker. Chrzanowski on Russell and--

M: Sure

MGK: And then another sister or somebody married a Sobocinski, who was also an undertaker. So it was like a little collection of undertakers and photographers in that area.

M: And what happened to Central Art? Did they last as long as you guys?

MGK: Oh they were there for a good number of years. I don't quite remember. I think Leszko became ill. And that was, I think, the end of the business. But he was there for a good number of years, right when my dad was in it, too.

M: I thought you mentioned to me last time that your dad worked at Ballaun on Chene Street.

MGK: Yes, he did. He worked on his other studio on Canfield.

M: He also worked on Canfield?

MGK: Oh yeah. I was there many times on Canfield. It was quite a large operation there.

M: So, you know, he was living on McDougall at that point, or not?

MGK: No. My dad, on McDougall, he started his own little studio right in our home. And then from there we went to Chene, on Medbury and Chene. But when he worked before we went--he

went to McDougall--he worked with Ballaun on Chene Street, who also had a studio on Canfield. So they had two different places, so wherever Dad was needed, they were like shifting around.

M: How would he get over to Canfield? Did he have a car?

MGK: No. Well, he had one eventually, but it was by streetcar, I'm assuming. I don't quite remember that either because I was only in my, about ten years old, twelve years old.

M: Okay, so he worked at Fords also, right?

MGK: Oh yeah

M: So he was working at Fords and then doing these things on the weekends and at night?

MGK: Right. Exactly. He was learning the trade. Oh he was determined to have his own studio.

M: And did, when Hoffman was there, was Hoffman also working for Ballaun on Chene Street or on Canfield or both, do you remember?

MGK: I believe they were working all of them, all three of them worked wherever Ballaun told them to. He was the boss man, and he had the two bigger, I guess the only two studios at the time. So, but he had the helpers with him. And then I think it was the, even Stojny that was on Canfield more so, but--

M: Did Stojny live in the neighborhood? Do you know?

MGK: I don't remember that. I know he ended up in Cleveland. I remember that so well. He was a very nice man. Nice wife, you know, they were, this is all family stuff. I mean, today you, everybody works for themselves, there it was everything was family. If you had any children they at least swept the floor [Laughs], washed the windows or something.

M: Did you ever hear of the Polonia Studios?

MGK: The name is beginning to sound familiar.

M: Szymaniak--

MGK: Oh, Szymaniak

M: Szymaniak. Because I--

MGK: He was on Chene, too.

M: Right. Because I have a photo that I got from Henrietta Nowakowska of her father, Mr. Zapytowski? And it was, it's a very nice portrait from about 1920 taken at this Polonia Studios.

MGK: My dad was, he didn't work there, but he knew him. And I know he used to go there to Szymaniak, too. He was on Chene closer to Frederick or Farnsworth, in that area. Yeah.

M: So that was another studio. Okay, great.