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Oral History: John Bartosiewicz

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Interview with John Bartosiewicz

BRETT: Today is Tuesday, July 18, 2017. My name is Brett Cotter and I'm here with Mr. John Bartosiewicz, and I consent to having my voice on this recording. Do you consent also?

JOHN: Yes, sir.

BRETT: 0:14 All right. So if we could just begin by telling me about your early life, when you were born, and where you were born...

JOHN: I was born June 9, 1958 in Dorchester.

BRETT: In Dorchester?

JOHN: Dorchester. My father had moved. My mother wasn't really from Boston and my dad moved to Boston to buy a business.

BRETT: 0:34 Okay.

JOHN: They met there, they got married, and we lived in Dorchester. My grandmother actually had a house in Dorchester. She was from Poland, my grandfather was from Poland, and, it's funny because my parents met at a Polish dance group trying to just socialize with people. They met, they got married. We lived in Dorchester until I was maybe four or five years old. I started.... Just continue?

BRETT: 1:03 Ya. Well, when did you come to Worcester?

JOHN: I'm going to say when I was about four or five years old, about four years old, prior to kindergarten because I started kindergarten in Worcester.

BRETT: Okay.

JOHN: Yup.

BRETT: 1:13 You mentioned your parents met in a dance group and I'm just kind of curious –was that something that was a communal kind of group or ...

JOHN: They're still in existence actually today. It was called the Krakowiak Polish Dancers of Boston.

BRETT: 1:24 Okay.

JOHN: And they met in the dance group...and the rest is history. [laughs]

BRETT: 1:33 Okay. [laughs]

JOHN: And what's ironic is my wife's from Poland and I met my wife in a dance group in Dudley, Mass.

BRETT: [Laughs]

JOHN: And the rest is history.

BRETT: 1:43 [laughs] So, when you were growing up in Worcester what did your parents do for a living?

JOHN: My father was always self-employed. He was self employed from when he went to Boston up until the day he retired.

BRETT: 1:58 Okay.

JOHN: He was always self-employed and my mom worked with him.

BRETT: 2:01 Okay. So they did a variety of things, or...

JOHN: Ah, they did primarily food. They had restaurants and diners in Worcester.

BRETT: 2:09 Okay.

JOHN: And for a short period of time my father was involved in a couple of other businesses. But for most of the years it was food.

- BRETT: 2:16 Okay. So when you came to Worcester did you join Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish?
- JOHN: Ya, ya. I started school there at the church, I mean - excuse me - at the St. Mary's School for kindergarten, and I was in the school from kindergarten through senior [year] in high school.
- BRETT: 2:31 Okay.
- JOHN: So we were there from the day we moved back.
- BRETT: 2:34 Okay. So when you were at St. Mary's, did they have you take Polish language classes or Polish studies, things like that?
- JOHN: They didn't make you take it, but they did have it and I did take it. There were Polish classes, they offered Polish language, Polish grammar, things like that. And then in high school, there was offered – three or four years I took it – Polish history and culture, taught by the same parish priest. But it was all Polish history and culture.
- BRETT: 3:05 All right. So when you were at St. Mary's what was the atmosphere like? Just describe basically maybe a day at St. Mary's.
- JOHN: Probably from... Well, first of all, we only had nuns. My first non-nun teacher was in the sixth or seventh grade, so we just had nuns; teaching sisters of Holy Family of Nazareth, which is like a Polish order of nuns. And I never had a—for thirteen years there—I never had a lay teacher for homeroom. So I was in nuns' classes for thirteen years. And everything we did from the school—first communions... you know, confirmations—everything was right from the school and the parish.
- BRETT: Okay.
- JOHN: So we did that all there.
- BRETT: 4:17 So was there...what was the biggest difference between a lay teacher and a sister, or—a nun?
- JOHN: [laughs] The difference...well first of all, the first lay teacher I had was a personal friend of my father's, so that didn't do me any good as far as getting away with anything.
- BRETT: [laughs]
- JOHN: But there was, you know, there was the constant praying and the prayers before class, during class, after class. That was consistent throughout. So it really didn't matter. The nuns held you to a certain level, the lay teachers did also, okay? And there was no difference. There was no difference, it's just the shock of going from a nun to a lay teacher. But the consistency was always there for the thirteen years.
- BRETT: Okay.
- JOHN: You always tested the limits of the teachers but...
- BRETT: [laughs]
- JOHN: ...just like anything else.
- BRETT: 5:07 Naturally.
- JOHN: We had actually, in my class, probably through the fifth or sixth grade—most of the kids were all Polish. I remember that some of the families that came in were Irish but that was it. There were Polish, Irish, and a couple of Italians, but my class was primarily Polish. We actually had Polish kids come in from Poland also.

BRETT: 5:25 How many, approximately, of the student population, were actually Polish immigrants versus cultural?

JOHN: Immigrants? That would be less. We were all probably second, third generation Polish. But immigrants? I know when four of them came over into our class like in the fifth or sixth grade. And what they did is they assigned one student to one of the newly arrived kids. And I could speak it fluently, so I had one kid, who is still a friend of mine to this day, and I helped him with English in class because I could communicate with him in Polish. They had, I don't know—four or five kids—whatever, and we were all were assigned a kid that we just hung out with and talked to in Polish, and explained to them stuff in English.

BRETT: Oh, wow.

JOHN: So they used to take a lot of immigrants from Poland into the school.

BRETT: 6:18 Okay.

JOHN: Yup. But the percentage—you know, I had forty-four kids in my high school graduating class, maybe three were born in Poland...that was it.

BRETT: Okay. So, you said you're so close with that person today...

JOHN: Yup. To this day we're friends. Yep.

BRETT: Wow. So...

JOHN: Actually, two of them— one of the other kids. We see each other half a dozens times a week through our associations, or whatever—whatever. We still see each other and talk to each other.

BRETT: 6:52 So, do you think it would be fair maybe to say that St. Mary's was like a family...

JOHN: Oh, without a doubt. Without a doubt.

BRETT: Very close...

JOHN: Without a doubt. Well, there were only forty-four of us in class, so, you know... you knew where everybody was, and was with the class all day. And we played sports after that, and it was like you were with them six days a week for thirteen years.

BRETT: 7:16 So, Our Lady of Czestochowa was, of course, the parish was attached to the school.

JOHN: Correct.

BRETT: So would you maybe want to expand on that? What it was like to be a member the parish?

JOHN: Well, first of all, when you were in school, most of us, we had to be alter boys, okay? So starting in...I don't know, third or fourth grade, we were each—which doesn't happen anymore— but we were each assigned a week of mass. So like once every fourth or fifth week you had to do a week of one of the three masses at the time, whatever they had in the morning. Um—you had to do it. The priests would sit there and they'd let the nuns know that you didn't come in and serve mass and you'd be in trouble the next or that day, unless you obviously had situations, but, you know, everything revolved ... The pastor was the headmaster of the school, the priests taught. So the priests were always around and, you know, we would end up helping to clean out the rectory or clean out their offices. So there was a lot of interchanging parts between the school and the church continuously. Continuously. It was always...it wasn't a

separate entity, it was one big entity, is what it was. So, you know, you had first Friday mass, you had confessions, and you'd end up going down to serve mass. You'd go there to clean the alter and to sweep the floors and to do whatever.

BRETT: 8:32 So, were there any other... Were there any clubs that, like, were a part of the community that your parents were a part of, such as the White Eagle Club or ...

JOHN: My dad was a member of the Polish American Vets, okay? He had come back—he was a World War II vet. So he was one of the original. Not – I shouldn't say the original – he was a member there for a long time. He was also a member of the St. Mary's Boosters at the church which was a, which is a...they help the kids by fundraising. Well, you know, they raise money for the school, for the sports, or if they need a copy machine—whatever. And then he was also a member of the PNI Club down on Millbury Street.

BRETT: 9:15 What did he do in these clubs?

JOHN: Well, with the vets they used to get together, you know, before I was older. You know, those were guys that he grew up with and they all went into the war together. They'd go down and have a few beers and just talk. It was more of a social thing than anything else down at the Polish American [Vets]. It was guys his age that all went to school together way back in, you know... my dad was born in 1926 so... He graduated from St. Mary's and a lot of the guys that he went in service with were also from St. Mary's, so that was sort of like their get-together spot. And again, the PNI.

BRETT: 9:58 What did he do in the PNI Club?

JOHN: Well, he was a member there because I was the president, and am the president. So he would come down and help me out if I needed whatever-whatever. And if I needed whatever help—you know, in his later years, he did that. He was more active at the PAV and very, very active for the St. Mary's Boosters, which is that organization of men within the church, which promoted the sports for the kids. And it was more for the school, money raising for the school. So he was very, very... He got the Diamond Pin, which was a man-of-the-year type of an award. He got it because he was just always constantly—he was always the kitchen man because he was in the food business so he always ran kitchens for communion breakfasts. Fund raisers for whatever—he did cooked up at Worchester Academy field. You know, we had field days. He did a lot of work for the schools, for the kids.

BRETT: Okay. So, um...

JOHN: He'd always say I'd rather go to a St. Mary's basketball game than a Celtic's basketball game. He was deeply attached to the place.

BRETT: 11:02 Wow. There was a lot of pride that comes with St. Mary's...

JOHN: It was deep, it was deep. With him it was like he—he's always said I'd rather go to a St. Mary's High School game than a Celtics game because that was where he came from. You know, he grew up there and he, until the day he died, that was his, his hub. Yup.

BRETT: 11:21 Was your mother a part of any clubs like that?

- JOHN: Ah, she was more active in the Women's Guild in the church. There's a Women's Guild which is similar to the Boosters only it's a bunch of women, and based on them side by side, the two organizations -- My mother wasn't in the Polish Vets or the PNI, she had to work with my father, for, you know, all day, and then at night it was doing more of the domestic type stuff. But she was active in the Guild. As a matter of fact, a couple of times she brought that Polish dance into Boston, into Worcester, to put on performances, and you know, fundraisers for the kids for the school. But she was real active in the school stuff but not in any other stuff where my dad was.
- BRETT: 11:57 So, um, back to Polish immigrants that came into the community—so, of course, you had to help them out, you know, with understanding and learning English and things like that...
- JOHN: Yep
- BRETT: But otherwise was there any, maybe, rift between—not rift, but a distance between the Polish immigrants and people of the Polish Americans? Was there any sort of disconnect?
- JOHN: No, you know, they were all—we were all, for the most part, we were all either... My grandparents, all four came from Poland. So most of us, like I said, were Polish. And we grew up with, you know, we'd have traditional holidays in Polish. So these guys and girls who came, they were nice. They were foreigners but they weren't foreigners to us because we had always been around people like that in the past. So, even though it was day to day contact—we also saw my grandmother once a week though, you know—there was never a rift I don't think. I don't ever think there was a rift between us. Like I says to this day, I'm friendly with at least three of them that I know of. So there was never—no I can't say that... There was never a rift because we were always associated with Polish people. So it was nothing unusual, just the fact that you were with them five or six hours a day.
- BRETT: 13:23 Ya, so were there other immigrants that were not of Polish descent, not the ones that went to St. Mary's but in the community?
- JOHN: No, not that I know of. I know the first time that we had an immigrant come into our school, take for instance St Mary's, I was a sophomore and he was Cuban. And it was like earth shattering, okay? But prior to that it was, there was, we didn't deal with...we were almost like a sheltered community, to be honest. The kids I hung around with, the guys I hung around with, the girls...we were somewhat, you know, we had even people coming in from Dudley, but they were Polish. You know, they were going to school here but lived out in Dudley, Webster, and Clinton. But they were all Polish. So it was somewhat of a sheltered lifestyle that we were living.
- BRETT: 14:14 Those who commuted in to Worcester from Dudley, etc., was there any of a difference between those who commuted and those who just went to school there?
- JOHN: No, because you know why? Because they integrated real quick and they played sports and belonged to all the drama clubs, and the singing clubs. They integrated very well. Maybe less than the Clinton people because

- they probably had a lot arriving and they had one ride home. But I know the Webster and Dudley people, they were there all the time so it was...
- BRETT: family...
- JOHN: Ya! It was just an extended family, only they happen to live twenty miles away. So there was not, there was no disconnect between them.
- BRETT: 14:56 Okay. I'm just curious...the Cuban immigrant that you mentioned...
- JOHN: Yup...
- BRETT: So did this student just go to St. Mary's and didn't go to Our Lady of Czestochowa [Parish] or anything like that?
- JOHN: No, he came...his dad was in a political up-rising there in Cuba. His dad got exiled or thrown out of Cuba and he ended up coming here and he ended up playing basketball with us. He was a hell of a basketball player. But he was the, like I says, but he integrated great too because he lived near me, actually right up here on College Hill. I used to commute. In other words, when I used to drive my mother I would pick him up occasionally if he didn't have a ride or whatever. So they integrated well with us. There was no... But I know he was the first one because it was like whoa. But he integrated very well with us, *very* well.
- BRETT: Okay.
- JOHN: There was never a problem with him, you know...
- BRETT: Ya.
- JOHN: We were all on the same page, I think.
- BRETT: 15:50 Okay. So, this is kind of changing the subject, but you mentioned how you celebrated the Polish holidays and celebrated the Polish customs and things like that, and if you could maybe just reflect on some of those festivals and celebrations that you did by centering on Polishness and anything like that...
- JOHN: The big ones probably were Christmas and Easter. Christmas was always at my grandmother's house. It didn't matter if there was a blizzard, we all went to Babci's house, and you had to go there for Christmas Eve and she always had the traditional Polish food. She loved doing it, she loved having everybody there, and I don't ever remember not going to my grandmother's house for Christmas Eve. It was always a foregone conclusion that we were going to her house. Not that that was the only time—we used to go there every week. She was in the Boston area. She always stayed around there, but, Christmas Eve was big. With the Polish food there was no meat, there was the fish. On Easter, for instance, with the kielbasi and the Polish soup... And the other thing too, to be honest with you is, in my house anyway, we did it almost every day because my father, he was a good Catholic, so he had us saying Polish prayers every day. So it was like customary that, ah, whoever was going to bed, that he would say Polish prayers with us. And we would say a Polish prayer before the breakfast, before lunch, and before supper. It was always inbred, ingrained in us to keep it alive, to be honest. Like I says... Plus the fact—my grandmother on my dad's side, to the day she died, she never spoke English. So if we wanted to talk to her we had to talk Polish. So I was around the Polish-ness, if you want to call it that, seven days a week because of my grandmother. My dad's father died when my father was

like five or six, or something like that. He died like in 1930—whatever—1930. So my grandmother was always parked in the house, at our house. So even though she lived separate, we were integrated with her almost on a daily basis. So in order to communicate you had to talk Polish. So we were involved in that Polish-ness, if you want to call it that, every day of the week. And on weekends we went to my grandmother's in Boston, same thing. Everybody came to Babci's house, you know, my aunts, my uncles, cousins would all come to her house and she enjoyed making Sunday dinners. But Christmas and the Easter were big time, big time. I mean that was like—there was no getting out of that.

BRETT:

[laughs]

JOHN:

[laughs] There was no getting out of it.

BRETT:

18:41 What were some of the customs that you...

JOHN:

She had the Oplatek which was the breaking of the wafers on Easter and on Christmas Eve. There was the fasting, no eating. On Easter I know that you took your last bite of meat on Thursday and you didn't have anything until either Saturday night or first thing Sunday morning. Because it was just...you know, by the time they went and blessed the food, then go to the church and come back with a basket full of food, we just didn't eat meat. We would go to church, okay, we'd go on Good Friday for the Stations. And you'd go some Saturday mornings to the church and get the food blessed. Do you still do that? Does your mom do that?

BRETT:

Ah, yes.

JOHN:

Ya. We used to do that, we still do that. My wife stills does that every year, so... But...and honestly, I remember growing up and my father taking us out to Three Rivers. They'd have Polka bands playing there and he loved polka music. So, up until a certain point I was going out all the time for things like that too. So he kept us really engrained in it.

BRETT:

Okay.

JOHN:

The three of us, me, my brother, my sister...

BRETT:

19:51 So they encouraged you having to learn Polish and ...?

JOHN:

Ya, because just like I said, it was, it was...I had to. Because my grandmother on my father's side, to the day she died, she never spoke English. And my grandmother on the other side, I only spoke Polish to her. It's funny because I used to listen to my mother and her sister. They'd be talking... How'd it go now? My grandmother would be talking Polish to them and they'd be answering in English, and I'd say this is very confusing to me.

BRETT:

[laughs]

JOHN:

So that's how my grandmother on that side learned, but it was funny because you'd be having one conversation in two different languages. But my grandmother was just all Polish from day one.

BRETT:

20:32 The reason why I asked about that because it just, it kind of runs contrary to a lot of other, you know... people who grew up in the neighborhood. They were actually, at least some people were deterred from speaking Polish. So they had to learn English in order to...

JOHN:

Ya, well, I'll give you an example. My son, he's twenty-nine years old now. As I said to you, my wife, she's from Poland. My son couldn't speak

English until he went to kindergarten. Okay? My wife is from Poland and her dad was here for a couple of years on a visit. So my son, my oldest son, like I says he twenty-nine now, he never spoke English, he couldn't speak English until he went to kindergarten —preschool, or whatever it was. So not that I was... Ya, I probably did the same thing as my dad. It's that my son was very immersed in it.

BRETT: Okay. Ya, I know, that's interesting. There are a lot of Polish families who are trying to Americanize their children more...

JOHN: Oh, it's not like we were prohibited. No. I went to school and I obviously spoke English, and you know, I have plenty of friends in the neighborhood up here on College Hill. Where I grew up there were no Polish people up here. You know, I was just as regular as anybody else. But I think that my father made sure that we didn't forget who we were. But, you know, I had a bunch of Irish friends, and French friends, and everybody else. And I was in Scouts at the French church, Holy Name on Illinois Street. So we weren't sheltered. I think my dad just made sure that we all kept it at the back of our minds who we were and where we came from.

BRETT: Okay.

JOHN: Which today, I don't regret, to be honest, you know.

BRETT: Well, it's good to celebrate your culture and things...

JOHN: Ya. I still do it on a continual basis.

BRETT: 22:26 Okay. So, this is changing subject...

JOHN: Sure.

BRETT: It's about John Paul II's selection to the papacy in 1978 which was something that Poles everywhere could, you know, rejoice in. It was monumental. And I was wondering if you could maybe share what you remember of that day.

JOHN: I remember exactly where I was. Okay?

BRETT: Okay.

JOHN: I was at a St. Mary's soccer game. I had already graduated. I was at a St. Mary's soccer game at Marones Park. No, not Marones Park—SAC Park in Shrewsbury. And the kid that I just said to you, that came from Cuba? He came over to bust us and said: Oh, there's a Polish pope! There's a Polish pope! So I said: Ya, okay, Manny, we believe you... we believe you. And I know exactly where I was that day. It had a monumental impact. Just this past year now, at the PNI, we awarded ten thousand dollars worth of scholarships and ... This year's theme of the SA was: What impact is there on college students now? ...like yourself. And one of the key questions of the essay is: How does John Paul II affect you and your family? Just in June we awarded the scholarships and we still try to keep that active in and around Worcester. Like I says, that was our scholarship essay this year. I think they try to keep it going. I was just informed in March and I think the presence of him is still there. You see him in churches, you see his pictures and...you know, wherever...it's still out there. And I think it probably will be for generations... I think. Like I says, we were just there in March, my wife and I, and the half-dozen churches that we did go in, there is still prominent pictures and paintings and whatever of him. And I think it had a monumental impact on a lot of

people who were: number 1 Catholic, and number 2 Polish. You know, because I think it shook the Catholic Church, its foundations that there wasn't an Italian pope. And number 2: Was it a Polish joke or not? But it wasn't. And I think it ended up being a good twenty-five years of a papacy for him. But I remember exactly...it's funny you say that because I remember exactly where I was. And I said that friend of mine, that kid who had come from Cuba—he's the one that brought it to all of our attention. We're alumni, we were two or three years out of high school and at a soccer game and he brought it to all of our attention. Now, like I said, as soon as you started to ask that question, I said...I know where I was that day.

BRETT: [laughs]

JOHN: Like on 9/11, you know where you were. You know, he's had a big impact even on my son. My son had the opportunity to study at Poland, ah, excuse me—in Rome, when he was in college. He studied at the Polish John Paul II home in Poland. He got a scholarship from the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York, and he was just immersed in John Paul II history while was there after he passed. But it was like they were just immersed in it. I think two of his five classes were just the history of John Paul II because they were just continuing that legacy and that was about seven years ago maybe, whenever it was... Yup.

BRETT: 26:03 Yup. So this is also a different topic but it's about Worcester specifically. So in 1960 I-290, the Worcester expressway, was built and it was finished and went right through the Polish-American community. And, of course, 1960 was before your time and you probably don't remember the specifics, the before and after, but ultimately there were people who were living on the western side of I-290 that were in essence cut off from the rest of the Polish community, or at least that's what it looks like on a map. And so I'm just wondering if you think that anyone, any Polish people who were living on the other side of 290, were in any way isolated from other...

JOHN: Well, it's funny you say that because my grandmother, my dad's mom, she lost her house to 290. Okay? They came in and took her house and that's the Endicott Street Bridge of 290, that was my grandmother's house. So she was basically thrown out of her property—I shouldn't say thrown out of her property...whatever they got... It did put a big divide because I remember my father saying that for years. You know, it really affected our family, my father's family, because they lost their house. So now they had to make that decision... How do you say that? You've got the highway, you've got the church, and then you've got the island. We used to call it the island. That was like Millbury Street, Highland Street, Sigel Street... And it seems that there was that divide because my grandmother chose to move up closer to the church. My grandmother, you know, in conjunction with my dad and his brother, they made a conscious decision that she ended up going on the, if you want to call it, the Vernon Street side of 290, and, you know, even though she was literally in the parking lot of the church, now she was a little bit further but she could still walk to church. But they made that decision based on how they lost their house to

290, and they didn't want her... because it would have been a longer walk for her. Because whenever she would have walked, the streets weren't there anymore to get to the church. So she would have had to circumnavigate to get up Endicott. So that was the decision, actually, she ended up buying a house on Richland Street, which is the same street that the school is on. And it was as a result of them losing the house to 290, and they said, no, we're going to buy up there.

BRETT: 28:37 So, besides her did you know anybody else who lived on the other side?

JOHN: You know, I knew people later on. It seemed like the Millbury Street-Highland Street side—we knew less people down there. More of the people sort of stayed up on the... You know what happened? A lot of people who owned houses down there, they moved up there and continued to own the houses down there and didn't even live down there. I knew one guy who used to fix all my glass, Mr. Mikowajcik. He grew up on...it was either Sigel or Lafayette Street. But with 290—I know, because I went to school with his daughter Carol—he bought a house up on Highland Street. He continued renting but they never wanted to live down there because it was like—it was a different section. It was sort of a different section. You know, they sort of stayed on the Vernon Street side of Vernon Hill versus the Millbury Street side. And don't forget a lot of those streets that were there, in existence, Worth Street, Boyle Street—they were all gone with 290... So that was your access to get up. So now they even had to come up through Kelley Square or they had to come up Endicott Street. And a lot of people walked. A lot of people walked. I knew my grandmother, that was the reason, it was that she could still walk. And it was only two minutes to the church, or whatever. So that's why they bought the house on Richland Street.

BRETT: 30:02 Okay. What about the... There are a lot of businesses on that side that were owned by Polish people, like Golemo's is still owned by...

JOHN: Well Golemo's was a lot later. Golemo's didn't start to probably in the 80s. A lot of those businesses that were there, like Millbury Furniture... I remember Millbury Furniture. There was Millbury Street Paint....

BRETT: Vernon's Drugstore...

JOHN: Vernon Drug. You know, eventually that lost its neighborhood appeal and those places went out. Like for instance, where Millbury Furniture used to be, you know, Golemo bought that building and turned into apartments. They didn't have those Polish, you know, the delis that are down there now are all brand new. In comparison to the time, you know, way back when, they were all Polish now you've got three stores that are Polish, that's it. Tom's, Golemo's, that other little deli and that Polish bakery. Those are just remnants I think now of what it was. Because I remember, even when I was at St. Mary's, the whole street was Polish. It was, you know, Chet's—the Millbury Street Paint, then there was, you know, a couple of bars, and restaurants—it was all Polish, it was all Polish. The Charles Restaurant used to be—is where that elderly high-rise is now at the corner of Lafayette? That was Charlie Szaraneta. I remember as a young guy going to, you know, the place in there. Those are all gone, they

left, they left. I think a lot of the people moved out when they did because there's not many people down there at all.

BRETT: 31:37 Do those people still go to Our Lady of Czestochowa as far as you know?

JOHN: Well, I'm on the finance committee of the church so I know that a lot of them don't.

BRETT: Okay.

JOHN: A lot of them don't. A lot of them have moved to the suburbs and they are going to places that are a lot closer. Somebody who lives in Rutland, they're not going to drive forty minutes when they have a church ten minutes away. Or Charlton, when they have a church five minutes away. So a lot of people, you know, they've moved. You ended up in Leominster. You know, people move out, they don't tend to come into Worcester all that often.

BRETT: There are still people who do make that trip but not as many...

JOHN: Not as many, not as many. We live in Millbury, we're only ten minutes away so it's not all that bad. But, you know, I know friends of mine who live way out in Rutland, you know, you take a tent and a sleeping bag to get there. And they are certainly not going to drive in. They go right there to the church right there in Rutland. I know they do, there's one on 122 in Rutland. Another good friend of mine, he grew up in St. Mary's and they end up living out in Charlton, almost in the Dudley ride, and, you know, pick up that St. Joseph's church right there. Why travel all the way into Worcester when you got one five minutes away? When I lived in Oxford I didn't get into Worcester all that often on Sundays. I went to Dudley, to a Polish church in Dudley. So I think the...what do you call it?... relocations of the suburbs has hurt our church, St. Mary's Church a lot, from a point of attendance-wise, money-wise. You know, not that they are hurting, they can still get a good collection. But if they had more of the...if you want to say... if they had more older-younger people, or the younger-older people, however you want to classify them, I think they'd be a lot better off, but that's time, that's attrition, that's what happens, you know.

BRETT: 33:30 All right, well, that's all the major questions that I had. If there are any last reflections on growing up as a Polish American in Worcester?

JOHN: I've been the president of the PNI for the last twelve years, and we continue to be probably the only Polish-Polish club in the city. We had the local Polish dance group, we give our hall to their rehearsals, their practices. We have our student scholarships, and we have a good, broad base of the immigrants that have come over, who like to come down for a cocktail or two in the evening after they get out of work. We have a good size clientele; it's almost like a hub of... My board of directors—I'm the only Pole. I'm the only one born in this country. Okay, so I have six offices—there are fourteen total, okay? I'm the only one born in the United States, so all the others are from Poland. They don't feel that sense of bonding as far as the PNI Club is concerned. And in turn, we help the church. You know, they have fundraisers and we're first in line help out...whatever—so. We just continue, you know, on and on...

BRETT: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

JOHN: No problem.