

## Christine Przybyła-Long

“And she helped four thousand people  
become citizens of the United States”



edited by

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### Introduction

There are more than 9 million Americans of Polish origin, according to the US censuses. Most of them are descendants of the mass migration from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when according to various estimates between 1 and 2 million people came from Polish territories to the United States<sup>1</sup>. This wave was stopped by World War I and then by the US anti-immigration laws of 1921 and 1924. The DP Act of 1948 opened the next larger influx of Polish immigrants and the “Solidarity” immigration in the early 1980s was the last one<sup>2</sup>. The term “Polonia” comprises all those groups together with the Poles arriving in smaller numbers with or without an intention to permanently settle down in America. “Old Polonia” created its ethnic institutions, such as parishes, schools, orphanages, press, fraternal benefit associations, choirs, scouting groups and others. Some of them faded away when their members died or Americanized, others have continued to the

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<sup>1</sup> See: H. Znanięcka-Łopata, *Polish Americans: Status Competition in Ethnic Community*, Englewood Cliffs 1976, p. 37–39.

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the Polish American group see: J. Pula, *Polish Americans: An Ethnic Community*, New York 1995; J. Bukowczyk, *The History of the Polish Americans*, New Brunswick 2008.

present, operated either by the following generations or by newly-arrived immigrants who added their own ideas and structures to Polish American life. The interrelations between various Polonian groups are not easy ones, nor are ethnic identities held by immigrants and their descendants. Most of them do not speak Polish (it is replaced by English often early in the first or second generation) but nurture some kind of continued interest in Polish affairs and some forms of ethnic solidarity. Christine Przybyła-Long represents the second generation of the pre-World War I Polish immigrants. Her life story illustrates the processes and phenomena discussed above but she cannot be characterized as a “typical” Polish American. Her involvement in American (and Polish) political life and her achievements definitely exceed “the average”, yet they show the potential of Polonia.

I met Christine Long in 2012 in Chicago during a session of the Polish American Historical Association where I presented the history of the Illinois State Division of the Polish American Congress in the Cold War era. She approached me and told me how she had helped the Citizens’ Committee in Poland prepare for the parliamentary elections in 1989 from the scratch: from helping to organize the secretariat, setting up equipment, organizing contacts, etc. Then we met in 2014 when I was in Chicago on Fulbright doing the research on post-World War II Polish American history. She knew my research background and invited me to her apartment in downtown Chicago. On April 2, 2014 we spent almost five hours together. The first two and a half were the basis for the testimony presented below as they form a coherent narrative, starting from Christine’s family history in the United States and ending with her involvement in Polish and Polish American affairs in the early 1990s. It was, thus, a life story interview, but more thanks to Christine’s choice than mine. While listening to the recording I realized that I asked too many questions that interrupted her narrative. The fragments that I removed from the transcript were mostly answers to those questions and did not compose well with the rest of the story. The rest of our meeting was an informal talk on various aspects of the Polish American life and viewing documents from Christine’s private archive. We did not tackle the periods omitted in the main part of the interview (e.g. her early professional career).

**THE ACCOUNT OF CHRISTINE PRZYBYŁA-LONG<sup>3</sup>**

**In the Chicago Polish family**

I was born in 1931 here in Chicago<sup>4</sup>, in the far Northwest side, now known as Portage Park, where Jesuit house is<sup>5</sup>. When I went to school at Portage Park Public Elementary School<sup>6</sup> there were no other Poles at all. Zero, zero, zero. My parents came here before WWI<sup>7</sup>. They came by themselves, separately, they did not know each other. My father<sup>8</sup> came in 1911, my mother<sup>9</sup> came in 1909. They met in New York<sup>10</sup>. Each had come for political reasons. They were from the Grajewo–Białystok region<sup>11</sup>. My father had been in jail in Suwałki<sup>12</sup>. He was caught carrying Polish language newspapers. He was stopped by a “miliziant” (not by tsarist police) and started an argument with him. He got shot. They had to explain themselves. As a result my father went to jail. He was in jail, as far as I understood it, for eighteen months. He had been living in Białystok temporarily and that was political but earlier he had been trained as a tailor in Warsaw<sup>13</sup>. He was born near Płock<sup>14</sup>. My mother, on the other hand, was born in Grajewo or near Grajewo. She was an orphan very early on. Her mother<sup>15</sup> died a week after childbirth. Her father<sup>16</sup> remarried almost immediately. He was employed by the monopol<sup>17</sup>. I’ve seen only one picture of him looking very distinguished and my mother seemed

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<sup>3</sup> The account of Christine Przybyła-Long recorded on April 2, 2014 by Joanna Wojdon is in the author’s possession.

<sup>4</sup> A city in the United States in the state of Illinois and the Midwest.

<sup>5</sup> Sacred Heart Mission Parish at 5835 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, was established in 1934 to serve the Polish immigrants of the area. Initially, Jesuits operated a chapel, and in 2001 the Jesuit Millennium Center was opened, with masses in the Polish language and various social services for the Polish community, including a library and an auditorium.

<sup>6</sup> 5330 W Berteau Ave, Chicago.

<sup>7</sup> World War I started in 1914.

<sup>8</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>9</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>10</sup> A city in the United States in the southern tip of the State of New York.

<sup>11</sup> Today’s northeastern Poland.

<sup>12</sup> A town in northeastern Poland.

<sup>13</sup> The capital city of Poland.

<sup>14</sup> In central Poland.

<sup>15</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>16</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>17</sup> Liquor industry.

to suggest that he was a government employee. He had a new child<sup>18</sup>, and then he accidentally – maybe, I’m not sure – died. His new wife<sup>19</sup> visited my mother’s aunt<sup>20</sup>. My mother’s aunt had a successful business in Grajewo at the border<sup>21</sup>, at the railroad station. She was a divorced woman, which was not common in that time. She was important enough in the local community that she had a Sunday salon in which visitors would talk politics and philosophy and important things. The mayor and priest would come or maybe only a minister. They were willing to come to her home so presumably she had some importance.

I grew up in an entirely American community. My generation was in a peculiar position. Because of the Depression. My brother<sup>22</sup> who was 95 when he died, was therefore fifteen years older than I. When he was in high school (and he was truly gifted as far as drawing, architecture, building things) he quit school and I think that was because of the hard times. My father was a small businessman, a furrier and a tailor. In fact, he was good enough when he came to this country, he managed a factory in New York. He was then sewing uniforms, presumably for the American army. He often said that he regretted not going back to Poland by that time. But anyway, they got married and honestly I think he was avoiding the turmoil of the war. He instead later on sold Polish government bonds where everybody lost everything they invested<sup>23</sup>. Poland established itself. He was active and so was my mother in Chicago.

They came to Chicago as a result of this job that he had, managing the uniform factory. As usual, my father did not last long in this job. He thought he knew better than the New Yorkers how to do things. So he ended up leaving them and starting his own business. And that was in a lot of places at various times. He ended up in the northwest side [of Chicago]. My father’s

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<sup>18</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>19</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>20</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>21</sup> The historical border between East Prussia and Poland (and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Russia) went along the northern boundary of the city of Grajewo.

<sup>22</sup> Wesley Przybyła (ca. 1916–2001).

<sup>23</sup> Polish government bonds were distributed in the United States in 1919–1920. The response of Polonia was lower than initially expected and so were the profits from the bonds. On details see: T. Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne aspekty stosunku Polonii amerykańskiej do Polski po I wojnie światowej*, Wrocław 1989, p. 58–96.

store was just a block away from where we lived. My brother Wesley recalls the old Polish neighborhood near Division and Ashland<sup>24</sup> and that they lived there, I don't know for how long. But by the time my brother Eugene was born (7 or 8 years older than me) they were already moving northwest. What instigated that, I have no idea. My guess is that business rather than anything else. And they were never very settled. When I was born...

My brother Wesley, when he quit school, did what many young men did in those days during the Great Depression. He hopped on a train without paying for a ticket and he traveled this way across the country. That was OK, he traveled around, he saw all the country, he wrote letters. He got a job in a cookie factory and his two fingers were cut off in an accident. He received employment compensation and was able to come back. But he was told that he was to proceed to do something. So he went to New York, to New Jersey where we had relatives (my fathers' two sisters<sup>25</sup> lived there) and went to a designing school. And then unfortunately we had the approach of the WWII<sup>26</sup> and he was drafted. He was in the very first American draft in Chicago<sup>27</sup>. He had finished school, got a job here in Chicago, working for a Downtown company and he was doing really well but he was drafted in 1940, before the war began. When the war began he served in the Pacific until the late 1944/early 1945. My other brother Eugene<sup>28</sup> was fortunate enough to be born later. He became an engineer and later worked in aerospace.

What did that mean in terms of Polish American organizations? Obviously, I was not involved during those days after the First World War, with the

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<sup>24</sup> The famous "Polish Triangle" at the intersection of N Milwaukee, Division and Ashland avenues in Chicago.

<sup>25</sup> People unknown closer.

<sup>26</sup> World War II started in Europe in 1939, and the USA joined the war in 1941.

<sup>27</sup> The Burke-Wadsworth Act, passed by Congress on September 16, 1940, imposed the first peacetime draft in the history of the USA. The registration of men aged 21–26 began next month. In 1942 the age expanded to include men between 18 and 37 years old. By the end of the war approximately 10 million Americans were drafted to the army.

<sup>28</sup> A person unknown closer.

Polish bonds. My father was active in Sokol<sup>29</sup> once upon a time. My mother was involved in Liga Morska<sup>30</sup>. I knew my mother marched with other ladies in Humboldt Park<sup>31</sup>.

My experience with Polish American organizations during WWII was dual. One of them was because she [my mother] had gone to Poland for this conference of Dni Morza (Sea Days)<sup>32</sup>. She was a part of the Polish Women's Alliance then, which has become very Catholic now, but she came from that cohort of the Polish Americans who were not very religious<sup>33</sup>. She was very active in Polish American organizations, partly for cultural reasons. She was going to concerts, book groups and meetings. I grew up on tea and cakes. Nobody had babysitters in those days and I had been dragged to all those meetings. She was never a big official but she had at least membership in those groups. There were no other children at those meetings. I was born when my mother was thirty-nine so most people of her age had children at the age of my brothers. The youngsters did not attend those meetings so much. I didn't know other children because they didn't live in my neighborhood. I was going to the Polish Women's Alliance meetings at Ashland. I remember it was a very nice building. There was a very nice auditorium-like room. They would use that space for concerts or other theatrical performances. I took part in

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<sup>29</sup> Sokół, or Polish Falcons of America, was a paramilitary organization, addressed predominantly to the Polish American youth, established in 1887 in Chicago. It trained young Polish Americans to fight for the independence of Poland during WWI. Over 20 thousand of them fought in the "Blue Army" under command of General Haller. After the war Falcons evolved into a Polish American fraternal organization. For the history of the Polish Falcons see: D. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887–1987*, Boulder–New York 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Sea League of America was a unit of the Poland-based Sea and Colonial League, incorporated in 1930, that propagated the idea of Poland as a sea country and drew plans of Poland's colonial expansion.

<sup>31</sup> Located on the West Side of Chicago, in an area that used to be a Polish American neighborhood in the interwar years.

<sup>32</sup> The Sea Days were organized in Gdynia by the Sea and Colonial League between 1932 and 1939, on or around June 29, with the idea to manifest Poland's presence at the Baltic Sea.

<sup>33</sup> Polish Women's Alliance of America is a Polish American fraternal organization, established in Chicago in 1898, addressed to the Polish American women who then felt discriminated in the male-dominated fraternal benefit societies. For the history of PWA see: A. and D. Pienkos, *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation": A History of the Polish Women's Alliance of America*, Boulder–New York 2003.

them. I had no idea what the play was, but it was the first time I was on stage and I couldn't speak those Polish words.

In that early period I remember the first book I've ever received as a gift, autographed by the author, Eric P. Kelly who wrote *The Trumpeter of Kraków*<sup>34</sup>. He spoke at a gathering of one of these groups. [...] And we belonged to the Polish Arts Club<sup>35</sup>, I mean my parents, my mother actually, as my father was not that interested other than for business purposes. She was very much involved in reading. She could read English and other languages, but she obviously preferred to read Polish, that was easier for her. She read the papers every single day. As did my dad. Both them were active. They were big on the free things this city offered. So we went frequently to the Art Institute<sup>36</sup>, to the concerts and as far as these Polish American events were concerned they were often literary or musical in nature. They were usually Sundays. The meetings would be in the evening, either because it was the Polish Arts Club which was cultural or because it was "good works time". And the "good works time" was usually collecting money, particularly for sending overseas. It was things like preparing packages of clothing or food. I remember especially my father: he would wrap packages that other people would send. It could be at Holy Trinity<sup>37</sup> but I am not sure. He would wrap these things and sew them up.

### **The post-World War II years**

In the immediate post-war period they [my parents] were still preoccupied with the things happening in Poland. Especially my mum, because she had been there in 1939. She was talking about staying, she was going to stay

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<sup>34</sup> The book, published in 1928, was awarded the Newbery Medal for excellence in American children's literature in 1929. It tells a story of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Polish noble family who fled to Kraków as a result of the Cossack-Tartar attack on their property in the eastern Polish territories.

<sup>35</sup> The Polish Arts Club of Chicago was founded in 1926 to promote the Polish art, music and literature in Chicago (and broader in the United States). It organized art exhibitions, concerts, literary competitions and other cultural events. In 1948 it became a member of the newly-established American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs (ACPCC). For the details on its past and current activities see <http://www.pacchicago.org> (accessed December 28, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>37</sup> Holy Trinity church was founded in 1872 at 1118 North Noble Street in the Chicago Polish neighborhood (Trójcowo), first as a filial church of St. Stanislaus Kostka parish (Stanisławowo), and since 1893 as a separate one.

longer, through fall. I was housed in my aunt's house in New Jersey. She travelled throughout Poland and that became an important thing. She met her half-brother<sup>38</sup> who was employed by the Polish government in Augustów<sup>39</sup>. I think he was a forester. His wife was among those who were shipped east<sup>40</sup>. And my mother was very fond of her. So there was a correspondence with the Soviet embassy trying to locate her. And there was sending money. Eventually she came by way of Kazakhstan and went back to Poland. There was always this stuff with the organizations, how they worked.

My parents were involved in the foundation of the Polish American Congress<sup>41</sup>. I know my father went up to Canada, for a kind of gathering in one time<sup>42</sup>. I have no idea what it was. There was another gathering in Detroit<sup>43</sup> at one time, which was a big gathering<sup>44</sup>.

I wasn't at the right age so I didn't belong to the scouts with my brothers. And I didn't belong to the dancing groups, I was clumsy and I preferred to read. I was registered for Polish Saturday school numerous times but I would not last. It was stubbornness, because there was no advantage to me for going. To go on Saturdays to Polish school<sup>45</sup> when during the week I would be in fights at the playground because I had that impossible name.

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<sup>38</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>39</sup> A town in northeastern Poland.

<sup>40</sup> During WWII, alongside over 300,000 other Poles resettled from the Polish territories occupied by the Soviet Union between September 1939 and June 1941.

<sup>41</sup> The Polish American Congress was founded in May, 1944 in order to promote the Polish case in the United States, to prevent Poland's falling into the Soviet sphere of influence and to support the Polish American ethnic activities.

<sup>42</sup> It might be the founding meeting of the Canadian Polish Congress in September 1944. The Polish American Congress and the Canadian Polish Congress cooperated closely in their first years.

<sup>43</sup> A city in the United States in the state of Michigan.

<sup>44</sup> It might be the Detroit Emergency Conference of American Unity organized on May 28, 1944 by the pro-Soviet Polish Americans with Stanley Nowak in charge, as an opposition to the Polish American Congress.

<sup>45</sup> Initially, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish immigrants in the larger Polish American communities sent their children to Polish parish schools. However, in the interwar period, due to both on-going Americanization processes (promoted by the federal administration) and economic difficulties caused by the Great Depression, public schools gained considerable popularity among the Polish American parents, while the parish schools Americanized. Polish language, history and culture were taught in Saturday schools where children enrolled on voluntary basis.



And it was a real problem because I was the only kid in that grade school who was Przybyła. It was not exactly an easy name for my teachers to deal with. On the one hand in our class I would draw Krakowiaks skiers and a mountain which I'd never seen, of course, or whatever kind of folklorish knowledge I had, but on the other hand there would be the attempt to forget the fact of this impossible name that nobody could pronounce correctly. I remember a teacher whom I liked who said "That's a stupid name". That was followed by kids at the playground. It was in the third grade. And I got in the fist fights and then I got into trouble. It's a circle: if you fight back, somebody will fight you. So that was a problem. I was not only the only Przybyła, I was the only Christine at school. I was a college graduate before I finally figured out how to answer this, which was very simple: I would say: "I use it as an IQ test: if you pronounce it then you are smart."

You had these people, the Americanized Poles who were just working their way out of the Depression. Many of them worked really hard during the Second World War doing one job or another, and the war ends and DPs<sup>46</sup> arrived on the scene<sup>47</sup>. And that was a very, very, very uncomfortable time. Because I didn't know what the hell was going on. I was still being dragged to meetings so I would be an observer. The community that was here was somehow an argumentative one among themselves. Everybody had opinions, but it was pretty... it was that you argued with your peer, it was not anything negative.

When the immigrants came, who were peculiarly hostile and that was rather odd, I could never understand what was going on and who initiated it<sup>48</sup>. There would be Sunday *manifestacje*<sup>49</sup> and it was not like political arguments

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<sup>46</sup> Displaced Persons.

<sup>47</sup> Displaced Persons Act of 1948, enhanced in 1950, let over 100,000 Polish Displaced Persons, mostly from the occupation zones of Germany, but also from Great Britain and other European countries, enter the United States between 1948 and 1952. Many of them regarded themselves as political exiles and saw the struggle for independent Poland as their main duty. They expected the same from the old *Polonia*. They denied the communist authorities of Poland any recognition and lobbied both *Polonia* and Americans to completely ignore "the Warsaw regime". See: A. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission. The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939–1956*, Athens (Ohio) 2004.

<sup>48</sup> See: S. Blejwas, *Old and New Polonias: Tensions Within an Ethnic Community*, "Polish American Studies", Vol. 38, No. 2 (Autumn 1981).

<sup>49</sup> Demonstrations.

but rather it became a very personalized version of dislike and it was coming from those people from Europe, it was not so much the Polish Americans. They were called names, told they were stupid. They [the Polish Americans] were not very good at defending themselves. I don't remember any of them saying: "What the hell, we were nice to you guys." Many of them, we did, signed the papers that say they would be financially responsible<sup>50</sup>. That's a risk, especially if you don't have a lot of money and you don't know who is coming. And you had these kinds of relationships which were not relationships really, they were on paper. You were being patriotic, you were being whatever and you'd sign the permissions so that the US government let this person in... Nevertheless you would be at a meeting and I remember it quite vividly as... I don't remember the content, I just remember what I could hear and what I could hear was: "you, you, scums of the earth!" that kind of... It was hostility. The tone that I heard from these folks...<sup>51</sup> And so we never actually established relationships with those people because "why bother".

I was going to go to high school. And besides it was my Catholic period and I was busy being Catholic. I was enabled to go to a Catholic school run by the Felician Sisters<sup>52</sup>. The Felician sisters were anti-intellectual, we didn't know that. So I went into all sorts of trouble, because I read books that were not approved. They were not any dirty books or even any anti-clerical

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<sup>50</sup> Each DP applying for an immigrant visa under provisions of the DP Act of 1948 should have had a "sponsor" who signed an "assurance" declaring that he or she would provide housing and accommodation in the United States. In fact, they were not checked if they really fulfilled those obligations and many DPs were left on their own while arriving in the United States. In any case, Polish American organizations encouraged *Polonia* to sign assurances in order to bring as many Poles in need to America as it was possible.

<sup>51</sup> Maria Cieśla from the Polish Museum of America had expressed the similar impression in the interview of June 9, 2014: "The people here in Chicago were very vocal. I don't think it was a big group. [...] I have seen that they were just calling everyone communist."

<sup>52</sup> The Congregation Of Sisters Of St. Felix Of Cantalice Third Order Regular Of St. Francis Of Assisi, known as Felician Sisters, was founded in 1885 in Warsaw by Sophia (Mary Angela) Truszkowska. In 1874 the first Felician sisters arrived in the United States, in a small town of Polonia in Wisconsin. They started educating local Polish American children and publishing textbooks to be used in other Polish schools. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century they were present in various Polish American communities across the USA and ran Polish schools for the growing number of Polish immigrants.

books but somehow I was in a continuing round of trouble although my grades were good. So then when the time came to go to college I was going to another school, a school operated by School Sisters of St. Francis who were largely of German origin<sup>53</sup>. And it was interesting because my mother on the first occasion that she met some said "Well, they're, they believe in training to be smart. That's a good thing. The Felicians were not good for you". And she was right. It was a great time.

As for the new immigrants, it was also the issue of demography, of one class during the Depression years, who muddled along and lived a decent life and sometimes made a lot of money and who became professionally competent and got their degrees. Those people by the time the immigrants arrived on the scene had been ladies and gentlemen of bounty, they were giving, helping find apartments. The group that arrived tended to be younger. There was a natural division.

[...] Some of the people who became "prominent" here were those who got a professional education but who decided to stay in the community. This is why Division street or Archer were such centers. Because it was a self-sustaining community. People didn't mix. That was true of the Polish Jews as well. The Polish Jews worked at the Milwaukee Avenue and Division. Those people stayed in the neighborhood until everybody moved. And that was after the war when people had enough money to move. Not only enough money, but the Jews from the West side were escaping to avoid Blacks. Suddenly the areas that were Jewish emptied out in about a year and a half. And entire neighborhood became vacant. It was the end of the 1950s, early 1960s. Most people moved to Skokie. When the Jewish people got richer they would move further to Glencoe, Winnetka or Wilmette<sup>54</sup>. At the same time you were Polish and got richer... or not you, your children got richer, you stayed, then you would move to Des Plaines as a start or Arlington Heights. There was always this continuous move. What was interesting about this new generation of immigrants, they started out in the suburbs.

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<sup>53</sup> The Congregation of School Sisters of St. Francis was founded in 1874 in New Cassel, Wisconsin by three nuns from Schwarzach, the German Empire. It is part of the Third Order of St. Francis.

<sup>54</sup> Skokie, Wilmette, Glencoe, Winnetka, Des Plaines and Arlington Heights are north-ern suburbs of Chicago.

**“And she helped four thousand people...”**

I intend to have it on my grave stone if I have a grave stone: “And she helped four thousand people become citizens of the United States”. I am truly proud of it. Before that, I had never been terribly fond of Ed Moskal<sup>55</sup>. My parents knew Rozmarek<sup>56</sup>. They thought he was lovely. I also thought he was pretty OK. There was something my mother and my father and Rozmarek were part of some stuff but I had little to do with.

Anyway, I had heart surgery. I was recovering and was asked to sign a letter of support for a man<sup>57</sup> who was running for committeeman<sup>58</sup>. Why not? I had no reason to dislike the candidate and he was our state senator so why not. When Jimmy Carter<sup>59</sup> was running for re-election, all of the local big shot officials in the Chicago Democratic Party were supporting Teddy Kennedy<sup>60</sup>. I didn't like Teddy Kennedy. And I didn't belong to anybody so I could do whatever I wanted. But I did like Jimmy Carter. There were a couple of good things he did during his first term... So my state senator and now my committeeman says: “So you are not doing anything with Teddy Kennedy?” I said: “No, I don't like him.” “OK, would you like to help with the Carter's Advance when he comes to Chicago?” I said: “Sure.” I didn't know anything about advance at that time. Nobody else knew either. It was 1979. Advance, the whole job of going ahead and figuring out what needs to be done and then being there didn't exist. “Yes, I would be very happy to do this.” So I did advance on that thing and it was largely because there was nobody else who was involved from our area who would do it. I was asked then if – because I actually did my job – and one of the people who

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Moskal (1924–2005) was president of the Polish National Alliance and of the Polish American Congress in 1988–2005. In the late 1990s he became notorious for his anti-Semitic statements.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Rozmarek (1897–1973) was the president of the Polish National Alliance in 1937–1967 and the first president of the Polish American Congress (1944–1967).

<sup>57</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>58</sup> A local party leader.

<sup>59</sup> Jimmy Carter (born 1924) was the 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States from 1977 to 1981.

<sup>60</sup> Edward Moore (Ted) Kennedy (1932–2009) was the youngest brother of John F. Kennedy, a US Senator from Massachusetts between 1967 and 2009. He ran against Jimmy Carter for the Democratic Party nomination in the 1980 presidential campaign, but failed.

was one of the White House staff<sup>61</sup> said: "We really could use somebody who knows how to find the right places in City Hall to get things signed when they're supposed to be signed and who knows something about the city... Would you be interested in helping the President?" I ended up working full time all along the 1980 presidential campaign and I wasn't doing advance. Because I am too old, even then I was too old, this is 20-year-old work, not 40-year-old work. So I ended up managing western Pennsylvania in the 1980 presidential campaign. Which meant I also had a go to White House which meant that there were people there who knew my name and who I worked with regularly so I was appointed by the President and I was a member of the National Commission for Vocational Education<sup>62</sup> because I was interested then in the whole business of women returning to academic studies or to finish their schooling so that they could get decent jobs. So I was appointed there until Ronald Reagan<sup>63</sup> didn't want any people who lost to be there. So I had my year, and that was all, not four years. So how it happened that I was in the mill.

The next time was when there was another election and I really enjoyed doing national elections. I am conscious of, it was coming of in the 1980s, that there was no Polish organization, there was nobody I could go to to say "Help me with this in support of the President". And it wasn't because they were all for Kennedy, it was because they didn't really care. That was really sort of silly because then you will be unhappy when they don't get what you want. It makes no sense to me so I started trying to think about what can we do about this. Shortly thereafter, here in Chicago, we started having local school councils. I think it was not in that 1980 run, it was in like 1984. So local school councils which is entirely Chicago, the citizens would be elected to run the school, pick the principal, all that. That would be citizens who lived there. And it occurred to me that there were no applications from Poles in Polish neighborhoods who wanted to be in the local school councils. That seemed pretty silly, now I ... you don't get paid but you get to meet some new people, you get a little bit of power because you get to choose a principal, you get a budget to operate the school. Those are

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<sup>61</sup> A person unknown closer.

<sup>62</sup> Probably National Advisory Council for Vocational Education, established in 1968.

<sup>63</sup> Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) was the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States from 1981 to 1989.

two big things, power is all about the money. So that bothered me. And at the same time I was also trying to get voter registration done<sup>64</sup> because by that time we started to have a little more activity out of some of those who came much earlier. So I decided that even though I was not fond of Ed Moskal I was going to go over because I also knew, by that time I had also become familiar with some of the Solidarity people and so I was picketing, occasionally, not regularly, the Consulate at Lake Shore Drive<sup>65</sup>. So the issue then becomes: how do we get people involved in this stuff. And I knew the Rostenkowski<sup>66</sup> people, by that time. Ewa Wierzyńska<sup>67</sup> had put me in touch with the “Solidarity” guys.

[...]

The relations between the old Polish American community and the Solidarity immigration were not good. Because they were educated, they were perceived as arrogant which they were not and because they had not bowed down to the powers that were here. I was willing for this business of getting Poles to run for local school councils. I worked with the people... When Wałęsa came<sup>68</sup>, when Mazowiecki came to Chicago<sup>69</sup> they didn't know how to do it, I mean the Poles. Chicago was not going to be embarrassed. Richard

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<sup>64</sup> In the United States citizens are required to register in order to be able to vote during elections.

<sup>65</sup> Demonstrations in front of the consulate of the People's Republic of Poland at Lake Shore Drive in Chicago were organized in the 1980s by the Polish American Congress and the *Pomost* group with the active help of the newly arrived “Solidarity” immigrants after the imposition of the Martial law in Poland in 1981. See: Mary Erdmans, *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976–1990*, University Park 1998.

<sup>66</sup> Dan Rostenkowski (1928–2010) was a Polish American US Representative from Illinois in 1959–1995. During the interview Christine Long said also that he “became more Polish after 1980. It became a point of pride. His office served the people who knocked at the door”.

<sup>67</sup> Ewa Wierzyńska (born 1950) emigrated to the United States in 1984, in 1987–1991 was staff assistant of Congressman Rostenkowski. Returned to Poland in 2005 and is active in promoting the legacy of Jan Karski.

<sup>68</sup> The first visit of Lech Wałęsa (born 1943), than a head of the “Solidarity” movement, in Chicago took place in November 1989 although it had been scheduled already for 1981. During the same visit, on November 15, 1989, Wałęsa delivered his famous speech to the US Congress.

<sup>69</sup> Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927–2013), the first post-communist prime minister of Poland (1989–1991), visited the United States in March 1990.

Daley<sup>70</sup> did not want to have a lousy visit by Mazowiecki. They wanted to do it right. The deal was with Moskal to have a committee with many people, including Chris Long who will work on the Advance. She is not going to be connected with City Hall because we have to get somebody into the consulate to talk to the Reds who were horrible to work with. They lied. It was the old guys. I did not have any contacts with them before other than getting a visa when I took my father to Poland in 1975 after my mother died.

So I've worked my way through the whole bunch of the presidential races, in particularly the second Clinton<sup>71</sup>. I had people who were one time friends, I had them in my house: a person who've been an aid to Al Gore<sup>72</sup> when he was a vice-president, who had lived at my home and slept on my floor. We later worked together on Dukakis<sup>73</sup> because my daughter worked for Dukakis in Boston<sup>74</sup> where she was at the JFK school and Dukakis was her professor<sup>75</sup> and then he hired her. So you knew whom to pick up to work with for the presidential race. I knew these people who were in my house and whom I helped on various trips etc. So what we came down to was that the community was making noises about visas which was understandable and I also understand the reasons why that was a hassle.

But I also knew a woman who is now with the World Council on Food Aid, the head of it<sup>76</sup>, because I worked for her here in Chicago, or worked side by side with her. She worked for Neil Hartigan<sup>77</sup> when he was Attorney

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<sup>70</sup> Richard M. Daley (born 1942), was the 54<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Chicago (1989–2011).

<sup>71</sup> Bill Clinton (born 1946) was the 42nd President of the United States from 1993 to 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Al Gore (born 1948) was a 45<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States (1993–2001) and the Democratic Party's nominee for President in 2000.

<sup>73</sup> Michael S. Dukakis (born 1933) was a governor of Massachusetts in 1975–1979 and 1983–1991. Representing the Democratic Party, he ran for the US President in 1988 but lost to George H. W. Bush.

<sup>74</sup> The capital city of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the United States.

<sup>75</sup> Dukakis taught public management at John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

<sup>76</sup> Ertharin Cousin (born 1957) is the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme. Among her other duties, she organized Clinton-Gore presidential campaign in Illinois in 1996.

<sup>77</sup> Neil Hartigan (born 1938) is a Democratic politician in Illinois. He served as Lieutenant Governor (1973–1977) and Attorney General of Illinois (1983–1991), and ran for governor in 1990 but lost to the Republican candidate.



General of Illinois and was trying to help the community. She's black. Now she was in the State Department and I knew she would help me if I gave her a good case. And a good case was: "There we have the community, we worked hard, they actually got a round of voting for Bill Clinton, do we really have to screw it up? Do we really have to say to these people whom we've finally got to vote for Bill Clinton, that we aren't going to pay any attention to what they care about? No, we are not going to really do that. Do something, please." I was making my phone calls on my own to her and saying: "We have to talk to somebody who can help us with that. I will do what I can to publicize an ethnic affair." I was not on salary, this was all for free. She called me a couple of times and said: "OK, Mary Ryan<sup>78</sup> who is in the State Department as an assistant secretary in charge of immigration issues shall see you and we'll see what we can do and you can put together a list of people to attend. And the list should be people who were willing to come to Washington and make a case to Mary Ryan". Then I said: "What about Immigration<sup>79</sup>?" "Well, they'll send their usual representative" and I said: "That won't work, that's the problem. Because Immigration isn't being helpful, and the fact State wants to be nice is beside the point, it doesn't matter. And I am not going to tell those people to come to Washington in order to entertain themselves and to have a party, this is crazy. And it can't work. For that matter, I am doing it on my own dime, you know?" OK. So we were back and forth a bunch of time and finally she calls me and says: "They'll send their chief administrative assistant from Immigration along with Mary Ryan, isn't that good enough?" I said: "You know that's not good enough." She says: "Yes, it has to be the same rank." And I said: "You got it! It's got to be the same rank." "So who the hell is at the same rank as Mary Ryan? Please, that's what we need." Well, then she calls back at night, at eleven o'clock at night two days before and says: "This is not going to work, they're not going to send anybody at Mary Ryan's rank" and I said: "So cancel." Which was very hard to do. Because I already had called everybody, it would have been huge failure and that's very painful. I mean if you put a lot of energy into trying to make something really good happen, very painful

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<sup>78</sup> Mary A. Ryan (1940–2006) was an American diplomat, an ambassador of USA in Swaziland in 1988–1990, and Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs from 1993 to 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service – an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, between 1933 and 2003.



business. At any rate, I said: "Cancel". So then she calls back. It is now two o'clock in the morning and she says: "We got a deal. So come". And I said: "OK, we will come". And I didn't tell anybody as to what had happened. And there was no sign that we were going to win. It was only that we had an appointment with somebody at the same level. OK.

So we come [...] and Mary Ryan starts nicely, and the guys from the Immigration talked hypocritically and it was OK but the issue was not are they nice, the issue was what about the visas. And I had done a lot of work on research on exactly what is the deal with the visas, which is by the way somewhat different now. But I think that two things are still there. The one that says: we have X number of people from all over the world who can come in and then we have X number of people from this country, or that country, or that country who are allowed in<sup>80</sup>. And the two numbers have to somehow come together. What the problem was: it wasn't coming together. And they said as much that the Polish visas had been used up for a long time to come. There were no Polish visas to be had so forget it. And I said: "So you mean to say to these people from Chicago, that no? There's got to be a way. So find the way." And so they talked some more and the beauty of having had Ertharin work on this thing who was running a very big operation, she was the White House liaison between the State Department and the White House, so that if she said to Mary Ryan who said and etc. so it was that nice thing that I wish that we would get that strength here in the United States, would be good. "How about you go and have coffee?" "OK, we're gonna go have coffee". "Well, we don't want coffee now". I said: "We want coffee now. We're going to get coffee so we want to have coffee." And they stayed, the State Department and the Immigration people stayed. And I said "You know, you got to find the way, and a way that's legal and I know you can find the way." And we came back after a while and yeah, they found the way. And the way was, and it was a one-shot deal and would we accept it one time only, adjustment in number of Polish immigrants who can enter or who could have their status fixed here in the United States. "Well, yeah, we would accept that, although we were not in a position to accept anything, these were a bunch of people that I had called up. Well, the deal was that there is distinct number, once a year, this is how many are allowed in but sometimes people

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<sup>80</sup> The system of immigration quotas was first introduced in the United States in 1921 and later significantly modified.

change their minds and sometimes people die and sometimes people say: the hell with you guys, we're going to Germany or whatever and those visas don't go away, they don't disappear, and they are not given to anybody else, rather, these visas exist in Neverland, and they said: Would you accept it as a one-time only that the visas that are available because they had not been used, not only from this year but also from previous years, would you accept those visas for the Polish seekers of visa? "Yeah, we would". And again, we had absolutely zero authority. But we were there and we had the assistant secretary for the Immigration in State and we had the two guys from Immigration and they cut the deal. They made the deal, we didn't make it because we couldn't, we didn't have the power. But it was understood by all the people who were there what the deal was: that the Poles would get those visas and so four thousand... That was a big deal. And the thing that I can especially find is what followed some time later: because I never said that if, frankly, it hadn't been for my friendship with Ertharin Cousin, it would not have happened. We worked together on several campaigns, and I didn't treat her like she was some kind of strange person because she was black. No. And she didn't treat me like I was some kind of strange person because I was Polish. No. It was just we were friends. It was a wonderful thing. It was 4000. That's a lot of visas. And it was only because this stringing of liaison that people relate to one another worked. Sometimes it doesn't work.

Moskal asked me who picked a group of people who were there. I was not going to say I did it. I said: "Oh, I don't know. The Clinton White House has its own ways of making their choices so they made a choice." "Why weren't we asked?" I said: "Wow, as far as I know, there were no official Polish American organizations there." Then I read a piece in a paper in which Ed Moskal claimed that he was the one who made it happen. And I was so pissed off. Because he didn't have to claim credit. I wasn't saying anything, I was being silent.

[...]

I've had more jobs than you can imagine in my life. I like projects. I like to work on something and then it's finished. And I don't have to think about it anymore, until some other time. I worked on the elections in Poland, I had worked on both of the Wałęsa trips to Chicago. Here it is easy. I know the people from Chicago Sister Cities. I was on the Sister Cities and I still am on the Sister Cities Committee<sup>81</sup> and the mayor was in charge of the visit.

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<sup>81</sup> Warsaw is the sister city of Chicago since 1960.

"Well, who do we appoint to work on it? Well, she's done that and she does this Polish stuff. OK. Yeah". And that's the end of them. And so I could do all kinds of stuff and they knew I wasn't looking for a job. And so I would come in and do what I was doing. That was the way it worked. And that was fine because I was happy with that because it would be a project. You could kill yourself for three weeks. But I have this funny heart, I don't treat it properly but that means that this is the limit of my endurance. And then I'm to stop. One of the things that once happened to me when I was managing Carol Mosley Braun<sup>82</sup> when she ran for Senate. I was the first one on the campaign and that was really dumb. But you know, I knew her and I liked her and she knew I got on well with black officials because I had worked for another black member of Congress<sup>83</sup> and we had no money. It's a big state, a hundred and one counties in this state. I used to wake up at three in the morning and I'd say to myself "Oh my God, there is one hundred and one counties in Illinois." Can you imagine? What a crazy way to wake up? But we had less than a thousand dollars in the bank. But I had gotten her on the ballot which is very hard to do for an insurgent U.S. senator. And if you get on the ballot... And I had people to be volunteers. [...] There was no money but I had friends who were feminists in various organizations and I could have a quiet little meeting and I would say: "Look! I know that you don't have any money to give away but you have people and I know that you know what Carol is about as far as the way she votes, where she stands for God's sake, what she said. So it's your job to tell your people they're for Carol. Well, as a matter of fact that's exactly how it worked. But I had a cardiac problem six weeks away from primary election. I was walking in my bedroom to the bathroom and I went down flat. And fortunately my husband<sup>84</sup> was in the room and he popped me on the chest, and I started breathing again, and I went to the hospital, and I had a nice new scar right here. That was the case and I left that campaign because I had to, there's no choice. But that's what happens when you are working intensively on something like this. That's why I can't do it as a job. And on the other hand it's boring to work on things... It's important to do something with the way governments treat people and people treat government. So I think I inherited that from my parents.

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<sup>82</sup> Carol Elizabeth Moseley Braun (born 1947) was a US Senator from Illinois from 1993 to 1999. She was the first female African-American Senator, the first African-American senator from the Democratic Party and the first female senator from Illinois.

<sup>83</sup> Cardiss Collins (added while authorizing the text).

<sup>84</sup> A person unknown closer.

I am an American. But working in Poland was absolutely one of the most wonderful experiences in my life. How did I get there? Tomek Tabako<sup>85</sup> lived in our house for 18 months. Tomek came with Wałęsa and I met him and he said he needed a place to stay. We had kids in college then so we had room. But I said: “We don’t take care of our visitors. You’re in charge of your own food because I don’t really know when I might be around to cook anything. You’re welcome to stay at our place”. I called my husband and said somebody was going to come and he said: “Well, OK.” So he came and it turned out I left, because he’d been with us for a while and I was trying to get a job, a real job and I had letters of recommendation from two US senators, and my mayor, and even from Ed Moskal to say that I was a worker and I would like to be there, all that sort of thing. But I was never... First of all I had done some work with Regime people from the Finance Ministry and some of them got immediately turned into capitalistic-inclining people. But I wasn’t going to be picked up for the Department of Economic, FDN or whatever the initials were. It quickly was apparent that that was not going to be my net – for one thing: I didn’t know enough about establishing the laws, about business. I know a lot about the election law, I know about the laws about business, and I wasn’t really at all interested in it. So I was moaning and I wasn’t able to pick up a job with the White House that would get me to Poland. And Tomek says: “Could I make a phone call?” And I said “Sure, you can”. I didn’t even ask whom he was calling. He called Henryk Wujec<sup>86</sup> and he talked to Henryk and he arranged me to work in Henryk Wujec’s office and in the Citizens’ Committee<sup>87</sup>. And it was a great pleasure. In the first place because people were learning how to do something new. The senate

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<sup>85</sup> Tomasz Tabako (born 1958) is a philosopher and a journalist, active in the underground publishing movement in Poland in the 1980s. In 1989 he emigrated to the United States where he graduated from Department of Communication Studies at Northwestern University in 1995 and received his PhD in 2000. He established Polish Humanities Foundation in 1995 and published *2B: A Journal of Ideas* (1993–2000).

<sup>86</sup> Henryk Wujec (born 1940), a physicist by profession, an activist of the anti-communist opposition in Poland from 1976, in 1988–1990 a secretary of the Citizens’ Committee of Lech Wałęsa that represented “Solidarity” movement in the first semi-free elections in Poland after WWII, in 1989. He was elected to parliament for four consecutive terms (1989–2001).

<sup>87</sup> Komitet Obywatelski przy przewodniczącym NSZZ “Solidarność” Lechu Wałęsie.

was brand new again<sup>88</sup>. And women who worked in that office were most interesting people. They had all come out of the Cardinal's Committee<sup>89</sup>. I brought along a computer with me that died because of the electrical system which was really bad because we didn't have that many computers there at the time. I had this portable computer and it got burned out completely in short order. Well, too bad about that.

But Tomek arranged the job. And it was a marvelous job. Because my job was basically to help people figure out what to do next. Celiński<sup>90</sup> was around and he gave me jobs to do that really worked things together. Geremek<sup>91</sup> and Wujec were wonderful bosses, absolutely wonderful as well as everybody else of that group. Teresa Ogrodzińska<sup>92</sup> became my good friend. I was supposed to live initially in the housing at the Sejm. That was not going to work out. There weren't a lot of English-speakers then. It was like "Hmmm?" My Polish... I can understand everything I hear, but I cannot, cannot bring myself to speak Polish. It was a psychological thing. But that was a problem. I spoke with my parents in English... It was a problem. We didn't make a serious attempt to teach [our children] Polish. After all, I don't speak Polish. Jerry's family doesn't deal with that, never did.

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<sup>88</sup> Senate was abolished in Poland under communist rule in 1947 and introduced anew in 1989 as a result of the "Round-Table Talks" between the communist authorities and representatives of the democratic opposition.

<sup>89</sup> Primate's Aid Committee (Prymasowski Komitet Pomocy Osobom Pozbawionym Wolności i ich Rodzinom) was established in December 1981, after the introduction of the Martial law in Poland with the task of organizing charitable, legal and moral assistance to people persecuted by the regime and of providing public opinion with the information about their fates.

<sup>90</sup> Andrzej Celiński (born 1950) was active in the anti-communist opposition in Poland since the 1970s. In 1989 he was a member of the Citizens' Committee and was elected senator. In 1999 he joined Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, dominated by the post-communists, and remains active on the left wing of the Polish political scene.

<sup>91</sup> Bronisław Geremek (1932–2008) was a historian and an activist of anti-communist opposition in Poland since the 1970s. He served as an advisor of the "Solidarity" trade union during the strike in the Gdańsk shipyard in 1980. After the parliamentary elections of 1989 he presided over the Citizens' Parliamentary Club (Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny) formed by the parliamentarians representing "Solidarity".

<sup>92</sup> Teresa Ogrodzińska (born 1951) is a Polish social activist. She worked in the secretariat of the Citizens' Committee after the parliamentary elections of 1989. Later she engaged in the NGO sector, especially dealing with children's education.

But I have a cousin, now deceased: Father Charytański was a professor at Bobolanum which is a Jesuit House<sup>93</sup>. I had met him during various trips I'd made, so I hustled a place to stay. I also first hustled some money for them earlier on, because they were obviously printing probably stuff that they shouldn't have been printing at that time [1988]. It was supposedly for his catechetical books, but their German printing operation was too fancy for catechetical books, altogether too fancy. They needed hard currency so I came back to Chicago and I found some money for them so they could buy paper in Finland and brought to Poland for their religion books which I never believed were religion books but it really didn't make any difference. There were probably a few religion books that were published or something... So I ended up living in a Jesuit seminary.

I was working one day on a Sunday because we had a job to get finished and a fax came in and the fax was really not intended for me but I took it off the machine. I was the only one there. I took it off the machine and I see that it is a fax written in English from National Democratic Institute, the NDI<sup>94</sup>. They were planning on coming and so my first reaction was "I'm going to fax you back, boys because if you're coming next week I am going to see you because you're going to come to the office I work in so there is no choice in the matter". So I sent them a fax back that said: "I come from Chicago, I've worked for the Illinois Democratic Party, I've been a delegate to x number of conventions, I've worked on the national campaigns and by the way, isn't it nice that we're going to meet in Warsaw to talk about the wonders of Chicago after all?" So they wrote back. They came that week, two guys. We were organizing in the first place, the first meeting, what we were going to do, how are we going to do it, who should we talk to. So it was that thing exactly what I did in the United States, which is: "Well, this guy thinks he is important but he isn't really" because by that time I've been there for

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<sup>93</sup> Jan Charytański (1922–2009) was a professor of theology. He created a Catechetical Center that published textbooks for religious instruction at schools. Collegium Bobolanum is a catholic institution of higher education, part of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Warsaw.

<sup>94</sup> National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, established in 1983, as part of the National Endowment for Democracy, works with individuals, political parties and other organization worldwide to strengthen democratic mechanisms and practice. It receives financial support from federal funds as well as from private donors in USA and abroad. It has "loose affiliation" with the Democratic Party.

a couple of months. "But this guy is really important and this one has buttons to push and who, who knows". So then I got picked up. So I worked on their conference and did the advance which is more than Advance.

We did the trainings for all of the political parties. Because we determined, and I am proud to say I was involved in that, we decided, the NDI, to train the people from all the political parties that had any membership of more than five members (that was the days of the sofa-parties). We were not going to fool around with three guys and their breakfast in the coffee shop, we wanted real parties and we didn't care what their political background was, except we would not take the guys from the Regime. We took the Peasants, but we wouldn't take the Regime people. All we wanted to do was to get a party system in operation. I said: "Well, the first thing is everybody will be from Warsaw." "Yeah, that's a problem." "No, we won't have everybody from Warsaw. How about if we have a rule. I mean we're paying for it, we Americans (now all of a sudden I am no longer a Polish staff), so we have the right to say if there is going to be five people from each party, well, then three of those people have to be from outside Warsaw. Fair?" "Yeah, OK." "And then we also have to be sure that we started building up some females who are other than people who do the food packages when people are in jail. How about that?" "Yeah, we'll insist they have to have at least one woman in each group. So of the five we had to have a mix." And, well, they said: "Are you sure that's OK?" And I said: "What's the matter? You are paying. They got to do it! They want this!" So that was the deal. I ended up with the help of another young person who was on the staff, whose mother was the chief counselor at Żoliborz<sup>95</sup>. Ewa<sup>96</sup>. And Ewa became my helper. And she first of all found the names of all the parties we decided we were to deal with. Found out who was in charge, what were the phone numbers, and what were we to do in order to meet them all etc. And she and I would go out. And I was the non-Polish speaker and I was fine. And she was my Polish. And she could deal with that. And we did Advance. And we went to their offices, they didn't come to ask, we went to them, we wanted to see what it was like. And they wanted to come, to be in this list. The parties decided whom to bring. And it was interesting because one of

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<sup>95</sup> Northern district of Warsaw.

<sup>96</sup> A person closer unknown.



the parties, it was one of the old parties, the KPN<sup>97</sup>, and I said: “Here’s the list, you have five people and one person has to be woman.” And he<sup>98</sup> said: “We don’t have any women.” And the woman who was sitting at the desk<sup>99</sup> said “I’m a woman and I know about these things.” And she said it in Polish. And she knew I understood what she was saying. And I said: “See, you have a woman, right here.” And so she was it. And she was excellent as a matter of fact. But it was an interesting kind of experience, especially in who was nice to us and who wasn’t.

The Peasants<sup>100</sup> were difficult. In the agriculture ministry building was where they were meeting, and we couldn’t get an appointment, and got in finally, we were coming on an elevator which got stuck, of course. And we go down, and we got on another elevator, and were on this elevator with some women who were carrying bouquets of flowers and a big cake. God knows why. But we were all smooshed together. We got upstairs and we did our little interview thing and they kept us waiting at least an hour, I think they were having their cake and then the flowers, somebody must have been retiring or the nameday, whatever, but then they saw us and they were very suspicious. More suspicious than anybody else. And we were very clear, we told them always: “We are not making your choices, nobody is.” We have a comprehensive list, everybody is on it, we didn’t bother to say, except the bad guys, that was their problem.

That was a long period. So we did this thing. And we had people in from lots of other places. The NDI had money at that time. So we had, besides the group attending and we had American staff from the NDI offices, we brought a guy from Hungary, a number of speakers who were Central-Europeans, and it worked well. We had translation staff. It was basically people from Washington who were expert in...

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<sup>97</sup> Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (Confederation of Independent Poland) was an illegal Polish political party, established in 1979 in Warsaw by Leszek Moczulski.

<sup>98</sup> A person closer unknown.

<sup>99</sup> A person closer unknown.

<sup>100</sup> The Polish Peasants’ Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) was one of the three political parties officially allowed in Poland under communism. Its leaders seemed to cultivate some traditions of the Polish peasant movement, but at the same time remained absolutely loyal to the communist authorities of Poland.



We did another thing then, with NDI. When the presidential race was on<sup>101</sup>. And that was a different tiny thing. We brought in two experts for the press people from the Wałęsa campaign and from the Mazowiecki campaign. The two people in charge were kept separate from one another and we made a promise and we kept it that they were not allowed to leak information, the impact, it was timed, so that they weren't in the same country at the same time, isn't that couldn't be phone calls but I don't think they did it. The only overlap was one when it was over with. There was a session with them as to who was going to win. And we all knew who was going to win. Because even though my heart belonged to Wujec and all of those guys, they were my guys, and the Kaczyński people: thank you very much [...]. But the fact was it was a lousy campaign. Not all of which was the result of the candidate. Some of it was the candidate, some of it was, everybody was having a good time chatting and not thinking what work to do.

But it wasn't our job.

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<sup>101</sup> The presidential campaign of 1990, won by Lech Wałęsa. Tadeusz Mazowiecki who was another candidate lost not only to Wałęsa, but also to Stan Tymiński who appeared on the Polish political scene only during that campaign.

*"And she helped four thousand people become citizens of the United States". The account of Christine Przybyła-Long*

**Edited by  
Joanna Wojdon**

**Christine Przybyła-Long is one of the 9 milion Americans of Polish origins living in the United States. Her descendatns came to Chicago during the mass migration from the turn of 20th century and she was born there in 1931. In her account Christine Przybyła-Long tells about her childhood and a life of a family belonging to the "Old Polonia". She gives a lot of attention to the situation of Poles who migrated to the United States after WWII and to her own political involvement into Polish American affairs after 1990, that was crucial in the case of granting four thousand people american visas.**