

Interviewee: Josephine Bylinski
Interviewer: Hanna Solska
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ABSTRACT: Josephine Bylinski was born in Worcester, MA on January 10, 1930 and attended Saint Mary's School and then Commerce High School. Upon graduation, she worked for General Electric Company making clocks for 15 years, and then for David Clark making spacesuits for 32 years. She was always and still remains a very active member of Our Lady of Czestochowa Church.

HS – Today is Thursday, the 8th of September 2016 and I am interviewing Josephine Bylinski. And we start! What is your full maiden name and your married name?

JB - My full name is Josephine Catherine and my maiden name was Bylinski, is Bylinski, and my maiden name is Kijewski.

HS – Thank you. Where were you born?

JB – Worcester.

HS – Thank you. Have you ever married?

JB – Yes

HS – What is the name of your husband? I know that he's deceased, but could you tell me his full name?

JB - Henry John Bylinski.

HS – And, do you have children?

JB – One.

HS – And grandchildren?

JB – One.

HS – What culture/ethnicity do you identify with? Culture or ethnicity, would you identify with? I assume it's Polish, right?

JB – Right, Polish.

HS – Tell me a little about your parents, what you were telling me a little before, how they came from Poland and so forth.

JB – Well they came on the same ship together. And my father was seasick, and my mother took care of him, and when they got here, they got married.

HS – Did they know each other before the trip?

JB – No, they just met on the ship, he was so sick, and she said she took care of him all the time. And she wasn't sick, so she took care of him. They came here and they got married.

HS – Do you know what year that was?

JB – I do not know.

HS – That's a very nice, romantic story. Where have you lived during your life?

JB - Vernon Hill in Worcester. And then I moved down Quinsig [Quinsigamond] Village and I'm still at Quinsig Village.

HS – What was the neighborhood like, generally? Vernon Hill?

JB – Vernon Hill? It was a great neighborhood. Great, everyone knew one another. We had a lot of mothers, everybody watched over each other's kids, everybody knew where the [house] key was; it was under the rug near the door [laughs]. We all got [help]. If you were doing something at home, everybody came, and they helped. It was just a wonderful, wonderful—it was great up on Vernon Hill

HS – So what were the years, more or less, when you were there, that you lived there?

JB – Let's see; I was there from 1932 to 1970.

HS – Great. So that was a very Polish neighborhood.

JB – Oh, it was...all names were Polish, everybody was Polish. Everyone knew what time they went to church, what time they ate [laughs] and many a times if you were visiting, you ate wherever you were, and it was wonderful, wonderful living.

HS – Do other family members live in the same area as you now?

JB – No, everybody moved away, yeah.

HS – Do you think that right now Worcester faces any challenges, or what would you change about the city now?

JB – Oh, the City is nothing like it used to be, you're afraid to go out at night, I don't go out at night. I lock my doors and stay in, it's hard.

HS – And you probably never locked your doors before.

JB – Oh NO! Never, never. It was just great living before.

HS – So you feel that it's not safe?

JB – No, it's not. You're not even safe at home now 'cause they break in the house.

HS – What changes have you seen in Worcester over time?

JB – It's lot of changes, it's just—well, it's not, there's no, there's no sections like there used to be a Polish section, an Italian section and everybody knew one another. Now you've got... I mean I got neighbors, Indians I think, and the others, they're all different, different nationalities, I don't even know who they are.

HS - You don't know your neighbors as much as you used to.

JB – No, not like... no, no.

HS – What do you think about women's experiences in Worcester, in general, how were women treated or what was their experience growing up in Worcester?

JB - Well, I think that women now, they get schooling, so you know, they got good jobs. And, you know, just like when we, as soon as you finished high school, you had to go to work! But now everybody goes to college and they keep going, and they all got... they're nurses, they're doctors, they're, you know, all of them!

HS– So it's improved?

JB – Oh, a lot, yeah.

HS – Is that because families didn't expect to educate girls, or why do think the reason was?

JB – I don't think they had the money years ago. They were just saving money to buy a house or have something for the children.

HS – Where did you attend your school?

JB – I went to Saint Mary's School, and then I went to Commerce High.

HS – In Worcester?

JB – Yeah.

HS – What were your challenges in education? Did you have any trouble getting into the school?

JB – No, I was an average person, and no problem.

HS – You didn't go to college, as you said?

JB – No, in fact, Joe [son] was the first one from my family and the Bylinski family, because he was the oldest grandson, so that was a big thing, going to college, Holy Cross.

HS - Excellent. Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options? Again, when you finished the Commerce School, what were your options?

JB – I just went to work.

HS – So you didn't have, as you said, there was not much options for girls.

JB – You just had to go to work. It was the only thing you could do.

HS – And of course, with age, now that they expect girls and granddaughters get education.

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JB – Yeah, now they go to college, yeah, not years ago, no. Everybody went to high school and then to work, most of them.

HS – Did you work outside the home? Yes, I assume.

JB – Oh yeah, I worked. First, I worked—I used to make clocks for General Electric [when they acquired] Telechron. And then after that, the company moved out, so then I collected [unemployment] for three months, and then I got a job at David Clark and I worked on spacesuits.

HS – Whoa, Worcester is very famous for their spacesuits.

JB - David Clark, yeah, I worked there 32 years.

HS – How were your wages, at the beginning, if you remember?

JB – No, no they weren't good, I made more money at Telechron than I did at David Clark, and then it took time before I got—because I was on piece work at Telechron, so I made good money, that was good money years ago.

HS – How did you come up with the work?

JB – I just went and put my [application] down and they called me, and I got the job. I was just lucky they called me [laughs]. So, I worked 47 years in my life, 15 years at Telechron and 32 years [at David Clark]. I worked a long time.

HS - Besides making money, because of course that was very important, was that the most important, or did working have some other meaning for you, other than making money?

JB – No, we needed the money, 'cause we needed money.

HS – What were your primary responsibilities in terms of housework, at that time? When you worked, when you got home, did you have to do some housework?

JB - Yeah, I had to do housework! Cooking the supper!

HS – There were three girls in your family . . .

JB – Well, see my sisters were married. So, my mother used to work, she used to clean the buildings. So, she had to go in for like five o'clock, when the offices closed. So, I had to serve

my father supper, and sometimes if she had a lot of work, I had to go and help her. So, she could come home a little earlier. It was not easy.

HS – And how did you balance all of those priorities?

JB – Somehow, you do it, if you have to do it, you do it.

HS – You didn't have much time for dating.

JB – No, you didn't have any time for fooling around, you just had to work. It was not easy.

HS – Do you feel that that was a burden for you, to do all this work and at home.

JB – Well, it was, but somehow you do it, 'cause somebody had to help her.

HS – When you were married, what type of work did your husband do?

JB – He was a policeman.

HS – When did you get married?

JB – Uh, in '47?

HS – And he was already a policeman then?

JB – No, he got on after we got married, because he was in the service. And then he came out, and he had little jobs and then finally, he was a policeman, in Worcester, for 32 years. And then he made sergeant and then he worked days and it was a little easier.

HS – Do you consider yourself active, politically?

JB - Not politically, just active.

HS – So tell me about your volunteering or community work, I know that you told me that you are committed to the Guild in the [Our Lady of Czestochowa] church.

JB – Yeah and I kind of help because the fellow next door is a State Representative. So, sometimes he wants me to write out cards for him. So, I do that, and I go to the Guild, and I go to exercise, so I'm never home [laughs].

HS – Very busy! The work you help your State Rep, it's not politically connected, just cards.

JB – Cards, because when it's time for voting, you have to write cards to people, so I write out the cards 'cause I got the time.

HS – Yes, actually today is the day . . .

JB – We voted today

HS – You voted, very good!

JB – I did vote, I showed them, I voted.

HS – At your age, that's wonderful.

JB - Yep, I voted, yes, I did! [laughs].

HS – What role has religion played in your life?

JB – Religion? (Yeah, I was) because you had to go to church. And I was very active at church. Years ago, everybody went to church, we went as a family, so we were dedicated to the church. And I still am, I still go, every weekend.

HS – So you feel like, that gives you a lot of moral support?

JB – Oh yeah, then you see your friends and talk.

HS – I know that you are very involved, you are preparing for the fair . . .

JB – The fair, for the bazaar, yes, I am. I will be busy, making pierogies. Then I'll be baking for the bake sale that we have [at the church].

HS – So, it was always the same Polish church? Our Lady of Czestochowa?

JB – Right, always at that church.

HS – So, the last part is about your health: how have health issues impacted your life, or those in your family? Did you have any problem in your life because of your health or your family health?

JB – No, my father had diabetes and heart, but my mother had arthritis and I also have arthritis. You could see my hands. But no, it does not stop me. I had a hip replacement but I'm still going! [laughs].

HS – So, we should say that it really doesn't stop you.

JB – No, nothing stops me.

HS – What are your experiences in accessing in quality, affordable health care? Do you have any problem with accessing; is it available to you when you need it, health care which you can afford?

JB – I have. I have Blue Cross and Blue Shield, so I have my doctors that I go to and whatever. It's working because here, I am alive! [laughs].

HS – Are you responsible for anybody else's health?

JB – No, I just take care of myself!

HS – Okay, great, so now the conclusion. Now, that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include about women's history in general, not necessarily yours, do you think?

JB – Well, I'd like to see women now, because they have the education, I'd like to see them have men's jobs and get paid as men instead of always trying to bring them down. And yeah, I think they should get paid and get the jobs that the men have. Because a lot of them are taking care of the family and they need the money as much as the men! You know, they got to pay babysitters or whatever they need, and they should be making the same kind of money!

HS – Great, thank you so much!

JB – That's it?

HS – Yes, that's it, thank you so much!