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It is not a f but an f with a slash to make it sound like English w.

Father Richard Cebula
December 19, 1975

Interview No. 16. Tape No. 1. Track No. 1&2.

Ms. Wett: Could we start out, first, so I can get your first name?

Father Cebula: Okay, my name at the present time is Richard

S. Cebula. Cebula means "onion" in Polish. The Polish pronounce it, ^{Tse-boo-lah} Ge-be-wa. I was originally baptised ^uSigmond, and because I

joined the Benedictine Order in 1934, I acquired the new first name

of Richard. I'm the oldest son of John Cebula, Rogischwava, and Radzistawa
Ciszewska (chee-shef-skah) (Rah-gee-swah-vah)

Chicewska. My mother used to be known to her neighbors, as Rhoda Roda
(next-door) neighbor lady

Cebula, because the neighborhood lady across the fence advised her to shorten her name. If you look at the gravestone out at Calvary (Cemetery)

you will see my mother's name is "Rogischwava." It kind of reminds you of the Radziwills (family)

that Grace Kelly married into, and I think the Rogischwava did occupy some territory in the neighborhood of my

mother's people. Okay, then, what else do you need to know?

W: Your age.

C: I'm 59. I was born on Portland Avenue, on 28th St. about 7 blocks from where we're sitting now. My mother and father had come from Poland and met and married here in 1915 ^{or 1916} ~~or 1916~~. What else?

W: Could I have a little background about your family.

C: My family? You mean my brothers and sisters?

W: Your parents, what they did...

C: My mother came over when she was, oh she must have been 16, 17 years old, ^{when} she came over, she was born in '97, she got over in 1913 or 1914, she told me ~~she was~~, she came over on the last ship to leave Germany before the War World. ~~and then~~ my father had come over

I think in 1909. ⁽¹⁹⁰⁷⁾ And he'd ^{come} ~~came~~ directly to Tacoma and went to work in the sawmills. I remember he worked for the Dempsey Lumber and ^{Co. *} Dempsey no longer has it now, on the flats. ^(Tacoma Lumber) And then he later on ^(which no longer exists)

* 1907
2. I checked Dad's passport which I have which no longer exists.

C: worked for the St. Paul of Tacoma Lumber Company. My mother had first of all gone through Milwaukee where she had three sisters and two brothers living. But shortly after she arrived one of her sisters decided to go back to Washington with her family, she'd been in Washington, previously. Her husband had worked in the mines up around Wilkeson, and then when the mines were closed down by strike they had moved ~~toward~~ ^{to} Milwaukee and now they were going back and make a new start out here. My mother came along, she met my father, shortly after she arrived and they were married on the Fourth of July ⁱⁿ 1915.

W: What was the size of the Polish Community when you were ^{growing} growing up.

C: I couldn't tell you, I couldn't give you exact figures because I don't know exactly how many people belong to the parish of St. Stanislaus. I could probably do some research ~~in~~ for instance we have financial records that go back twenty, thirty years around here and ~~that~~ ^{these} might give you an idea of how many Polish families were in this particular parish. ~~When the,~~ ^{When} I was maybe 5 or 6 years old, there was talk of building a larger church and closing down the one in the South End. ^{on 40th and So. J. Latter} It was no longer able to hold all the people who were of Polish decent or who were Poles, and further more, most of the Polish community had settled here on Portland Avenue ^{to work in the mills} and out in the Puyallup Valley to farm. So the church was built here through its clientele ^{Portland} from along the Avenue, and also ^{its clientele} from farms between here and the City of Puyallup. As these farmers, Polish farmers, had children, the children of course didn't know Polish as well as their parents, so they were less interested in going to a church where Polish was spoken and many of those families out in the Puyallup Valley belong to "All Saints" ^{parish} in Puyallup. Some of them occasionally come here but many of them ~~had~~ ^{have} just stopped coming here.

C: There are still some Poles scattered around the city, ^{who} that have descendants and these go to church, say, at Visitation, some to Holy Rosary and, I suppose, other parishes as well. Some of those out in South Tacoma may have not been happy that the church, the new church, was not built right close to them. So they decided to forget about this; ^{about} ~~from~~ that I'm just guessing. But I know some families out there that have never been here. ^{pg 3}

W: Well ^{They} ~~there~~ must have been to able to support the church; there must have been quite a good sized community of Poles in Tacoma.

C: Well, I would guess that there must have been a couple hundred families in those days. Some of the families names have disappeared.

Some of them have changed; for instance, I remember very well ~~are~~

^{Zlotorzinski family;} the Swotazinski you find that some of ~~the citizens~~ call themselves ^{Zinski;} Genski, and ^{still} another group call themselves Slater. We have, well, we

have all sorts of modernizations of names. I know one family here in the parish who's name was () ^{Krochmal} which means "starch" in Polish, but at least one of the descendants calls himself Krockman, now-k-r-o-c-k-m-a-n. And if you search on, you'll find others that

have changed their names similarly, but some of them have stayed fairly consistant. One of my, or two of my, aunts, maternal aunts, married, Sienkiewicz, ^{men} now Sienkiewicz is an outstanding name in Polish literature. Sienkiewicz won the ^{ok.} Nobel prize for literature somewhere around 1910, I guess. But these relatives of mine were

not literary; they were ^a the peasant-type people. And ^{some of their} ~~there~~ descendants have modified their ^{but} name. ^{It was} ~~They were~~ originally spelled Sienkiewicz, ^{but} some of them have changed the c-z, to c-h, others

have changed their name to Sankwich, and I have seen some people move into this area, who are not related to me as far as I know, but they have written Sankovich, and they may have ^{had} that same name originally. ^{Sienkiewicz}

W: Well, then, were most of the people who came about the time that your parents moved here to Tacoma, were most of them peasants?

C: They were mostly from peasant stock. There opportunities for education in Poland were limited, ~~Some~~ of the area that was occupied for instance, ~~the~~, Oh, I can speak of my parents' area which was under Russia; the youngsterⁿ went to school in the morning, in Russian ~~and went to school in the morning, in Russian~~ and in the afternoon they were allowed to use Polish. The amount of education was limited so ^{that} the Poles would not be in ^a ~~the~~ position to raise much opposition to the occupying forces. They were not permitted to ^{acquire} new lands. In fact the occupying country tried ~~to~~, ⁱⁿ some cases, to take the land ^{away} and turn it over to their favorites, either from Russia or ^{from} among the Poles that might be supportive of their efforts. The people who came here were looking for a chance primarily to get a place to make a living, to acquire land, ^T they had very little to offer in the way of jobs. ^{preparation for} In other words they were limited pretty much to finding work they could do with their hands. And so many of them ended up in the mines around Black Diamond, Carbonado, Wilkeson, ^{Burnett} ~~Bernett~~, a place called Fairfax, ^{which} you don't find on the maps any more. Then some ^{found work} ~~landed~~ in Lumber mills ^{on} in the tide flats here in Tacoma. Others went to farming in the Puyallup Valley; those were the days of berry farming, just beginning; and some of them, I'd say, were successful and became comfortably fixed on the berry farms.

W: Was this the area of Tacoma, rather unpopulated, is that why they settled in this area?

C: Well you can go downtown in the Pacific National Bank, on 11th or 12th; you'll see some pictures of what Tacoma looked like around 1870, 1880; you would be surprised how close the woods were to what we call downtown Tacoma now. I can remember seeing pictures of groups

C: of Poles that marched in the Fourth of July parade; ~~these parades~~ these parades would be downtown and I guess various countries were represented in ~~this~~ ^{such} parade; ^{as} they would put on their native costumes. I remember seeing my father carrying a sword, and a number of his countrymen with him. ~~They~~ ^{There} seemed to be a saloon some where, I guess, around 24th and Pacific, where they used to congregate; ~~and from there then they would,~~ well that was the hub of their social life, for the single men I suppose, and maybe the married men. But some of these ^{parades or marching Polish groups} were probably organized by the Polish National Alliance (which is still active). Originally it was drawn up to keep Poles together, ^{and to} furnish them the opportunity to have some sort of insurance to carry them through the trying periods which you know. I mean other nationalities have the same. ^{But} I think that the Polish National Alliance may have organized these parade units.

W: What kind of community life, if any, was there among the Poles here in the Tacoma area?

C: Well, there was a lot of community life, I can remember, shortly after our parish started here, that we would have a weekly card party sponsored by the ^{parish} church. And the hall would be full of people playing mostly Whist. ~~You know Spades~~. Then once a week there would be a dance in the Polish Hall, ~~we~~ haven't mentioned the Polish Hall but on 30th, ^{south} ~~north~~ of the freeway, ^{#5} right now you're on ~~what~~, 35th — but down Portland Avenue five blocks turn to the right and two blocks to the east you'll find what we call the Polish Hall, which ^{is called} the Polish National Alliance ~~which~~ ^{to} meets ⁱⁿ this day. Well that used to be a two-story building when I was a ^{youngster} young fellow and the dances would be held upstairs. They would usually hire a combo of maybe a

C: piano player, ~~or~~ a fiddler and a drummer, who would play waltzes and polkas, and they ^{there} would be Polish people gathered to dance.

They also ~~have~~ had parties marking such things as weddings. Polish weddings are famous because they would ^{often} last at least three days.

They would start preparing the day of the rehearsal and maybe after rehearsal they would gather somewhere to drink and eat and until midnight. The next day the marriage would come off and then

there would be a large gathering for the reception, and, if there was any food left over, they would gather ^{on the} ~~for a~~ third day to eat

it up. And drink it up. They ~~had~~, when a child was born and it was baptised, they would have what they called a Guschina ^a feast, which

the uncles and aunts on both sides would be invited, ~~and then~~ the Poles have always considered a spiritual relationship ^{springing} ~~bringing~~ up between

the parents ^{of the} child, and the godparents, of the child, in fact

they have special terms for them; the godfather of ~~the parent's~~ child is called ~~()~~ ^{and} ~~()~~. And the godmother was called ~~()~~ ^{is called kumoter} ~~()~~ which

means these people ^{become} ~~who are~~ related through the baptism of ~~your~~ ^{the} child.

You refer to them not by their first name but you call them ~~()~~ ^{the baptism (christening) of a baby} ~~()~~ ^{is called kumoter or kumoszka.}

So that would be an occasion for eating and drinking, ~~and then~~ in

this parish for many years there was, one ^{or} ~~sometimes~~ two or three ^{parish}

picnics. They were held out in the Puyallup Valley, ~~what~~ ^{per summer} ~~was~~

called the Riverside area. ^{They} were actually held on the farm of

my Uncle Peter, ^{Ciszewski} they had a dancing platform out there and the people

would gather and dance and there would be races for the kids

and this would go on probably all afternoon, into the early evening.

Then, from time to time there would be plays in Polish, ~~the~~ ^{on} certain

feast ^{days of} ~~in~~ the church, ^{then} the certain incidents in the church-like maybe

the installation of a pastor, ^{would} bring them all together, or an anniver-

sary of some kind ^{would} bring them together. Father Henry, ^{Robicki} was great for

pastor of Sts Peter & Paul ^{from 1924 to 1975}

C: having anniversaries and ~~he had~~ ^{such as} the 75th Jubilee of the Parish.

He ~~had~~ ^{marked with dinners} the anniversary ^{is for} of the various periods of time that he ~~was in~~ ^{had been}

^{in the parish} here, like his 25th Jubilee, ^{or} his 50th Jubilee, and there are pictures around of those occasions and then of course the lodge, the Polish National Lodge, would have events that would bring the groups together and ^{for} different-type pictures of those events. There would be

times like ~~when~~ the First Communion of the children of the ^{parish} church, or Confirmation, that would bring ^{parishioners} them together.

W: What about schooling for the children?

C: Well, the children went to the public schools, for the most part.

ⁱⁿ And areas like Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, the Polish parishes, usually had Polish nuns, and children were expected to

pick up Polish; but, out here, there ^{was} no Polish nuns. Very few, if there were any. And ~~the~~ in our own parish, there was never a

school; so most of the kids here went up to ~~the~~ John L. Rogers ^{Schools,}

which is pretty close, and I'm sure that the teachers as well as the students had problems particularly with the names. Because

so many of these children had Polish ^{names}, because so many of the people had long names that, our teachers (who, were for the most

part, Anglo-Saxon) could not pronounce, ^{for example,} like I know a family that lived close to us, was () and their son was named (Bolestaw);

So when he arrived ~~down~~ ^{School} at Rogers, he told his first-grade teacher that ^{his} name was pronounced, (); she told him, "You will

be Adam ^{Liskoski} (?)". And to this day, he is Adam ^{Liskoski} (?), and he lived ^{up} in

Seattle and you can stop and get the ^{story verified by} truth of of him, if you want to.

Then around here you'll find many people called Ben, with a ^{ski} on the end of their ^{last} name; but ^{they are} really (?), because well the (?) and

the (?) became Adam. This ^{Bolestaw has} is become Ben, and all the Waltets with

Polish ^{last} names that you would find around here are really named ^{Wladyslaw}.

C: And there's no connection between ^{Wladyslaw} Wadiswar and Walter, and that's
 the way the changes took place. And the same way with the Stanleys,
 the Stanleys are really ^{Stanislaw's} Staniswar and if you go to girls' names,
 you can find all sorts of changes, for instance one of my ^{sisters} sister's
 was baptised ~~as~~ Leocadia and there ^{is} a Spanish saint, Leocadia, a
 young 13-year-old martyr; but when my sister went to school, that
 was too long to write, so ^{she} he wrote Leona. Gosh, I know girls
 with the name (Broniswawa) that became Betty's, I can't think
 of any others off hand; well, my mother's, ^{Radziszawa} Rogiswawa, became ^{Roda} Rhoda,
 so there were many changes of names. School people had difficulty
 at time, there not particularly interested in education to what
 happened to most families, first generation sometimes they did
 not complete the 8th grade, It was considered an achievement in that
 first generation when a boy or girl completed the 8th grade. The
 second generation was expected to complete high school but not
 always did ^{they} we do that. Nowadays of course, ^{parents try to get} they try, the third
^{the third generation} generation, ~~they are trying to get them to finish college.~~ But
 you'll find some exceptions where the first generation did go to
 college and University. In South Tacoma ^{there was} there's the Riotrakowski
^{two sons,} family; Father Lawrence and Father James, eventually studied for the
 Priesthood, ~~and~~ they were ordained; they were first-generation Poles.
 The same is true ⁱⁿ with my case. I was the first born of my parents; I went
 through school, graduated from college, went on to advanced degrees.
 People of this parish, ^{who had college education} like Ed Marshall is an electrical engineer
 in Portland, (Edward Stempinski) ^{Warchol who} who was with Boeing ^{Boeing in Seattle} and then; I'm sure that
 you could find others if you looked around. But there never was a
~~Polish~~, there were never Polish classes, of course, in the public
 schools. However, again, the Polish National Alliance did try to ^{teach children} retain
 some command of Polish by offering classes on Sunday for an hour

C: at the Polish Hall. Very few people took advantage of it.

W: Well, since so many of the Poles were almost exclusively of the Catholic faith, and I presume that the Church really was one of the focal points of the community.

C: It was. It brought them together. It was not unusual for the men to congregate in front of the church a half hour before Mass started. Then sometimes the women too. I think in other days ^{earlier} there was more ^{customary} tradition to see the men gathering in little groups and talk ^{together for} a half-hour before the second bell rang to indicate that Mass was about to begin. The women would all go inside. Women tended to congregate more after Mass. They tended to go straight to church when they arrived. I noticed the same in Poland even now. The Polish women, especially the country women, ^{will stay for} would say a number of Masses and they ^{will} say ^{the rosary} rosaries and sing between the Masses. The men, after they hear one Mass, ^{or} they tend to congregate outside and visit... ^{or} go back to their farms and go to work.

W: Was there much in the way of shopkeepers and the like of Polish background to supply the local population?

C: Well, at one time, there was; there was a market here known as the East End Market, owned by ^{a Slovak} John Soltak. And the ^{SOTAK} meat department was run by ^{his brother} this guy Mike Soltak. They were Slovaks; but there is enough similarity between Polish ^{and} Slovak ^{so that} people who speak ^{one of these two} languages are understood by a person who speaks the other. And then there is a market still here on 32nd ^{+ Portland Ave} called ^{Hreha's} Hrerha's, ^{(that's} that's another Slovak), ^{Hreha's} that was true there. Then right across the street from ^{used to} Hrerha's ^{stand} was the White Eagle Market, which was owned once upon a time by a man named ^{Tilenda*} (), who was Polish; he spoke Polish and some of the people who worked for him spoke Polish. Some of the People could buy groceries and meat at least, using their own Polish language, and

* later purchased by Mike Mlynek & then later yet by Bill Voderski — two more Poles!

C: the same was true with saloons; there were ^{was} a number of saloons that were owned by Poles. I mentioned ^{earlier} one on 24th and Pacific; in the early days there were ^{also} saloons along Portland Avenue. ^{Mike Mlynec & Bill Podorski} eventually acquired the White Eagle Market, and Novaks, and ^{The Novaks} were in the saloon business; ^{also, Stan Raczkowski and Joe Jankowski} the () were also in the grocery business. Some of the Poles also looked around, ^{for Polish speaking Jews} when they went shopping for clothes; there were Jewish ^{business} people in Tacoma who could speak Polish. And ^{Poles} they would shop where the Jews spoke Polish. I remember when me and my father, maybe when I was seven or eight years old, went to ^{buy} a suit. It seems to me, ^{for me} that my father and that man talked in Polish.

W: Well, that's interesting; it's an interesting sort of co-existence, that I didn't know existed.

C: Well, the Poles had been very generous to many Jews in ~~to~~ Poland ~~and~~ when they were being persecuted elsewhere. ^{Jews} and at the time, ^{when} my mother was growing up, the Jews were so much in control of commerce in Poland that my mother spoke of going downtown ^{" as "} and going to the Jews. She wouldn't say: "We went downtown, but ["] we went to the Jews to go ^{indicate} shopping in Poland. Because, ^{the Jews} they had gradually assumed control of the retail trade. I've never known very many Jews who worked with their hands. I've known them to be Jewelers ^{or} Tailors or Realtors.

W: I was wondering about that existence, or co-existence, between the Polish population and the rest of Tacoma; was it favorable or was ^{where} there any problems?

C: Between the Jews, and the Poles?

W: Between the ^{Poles} poles and just the general community; did they try to assimilate into it or stay apart?

C: I think at times ~~there~~ there was not enough assimilation, the other day I went ^{for help} to repair a vacuum cleaner and I ended up in a shop here about six blocks from here, and got to talking about old times with a man who owned that shop. Well, he told me that, when he was a young fellow, he had moved into this parish and he found it very difficult to get along because the ^{Polish} people were so clannish, the Poles mix with the Poles and they didn't mix with the non-Poles, ^{who} that moved into the area. At least not enough to suit him. And he was very glad when his family moved out, so there were people who felt that there was a spirit of clannishness and I would say that, when I look back upon our circle of friends, it was mostly people who either were related to us or people we knew at church or people who ^{we} had met through church, so ~~I imagine.~~ *So I imagine...*

W: Was there a very strong feeling of, well of course there was the Polish National Alliance...END OF TRACK ONE, TAPE ONE.

TRACK TWO,

C: I suppose there was a group of Poles and a group of Slavs or Slovaks, there was also a smaller group of Lithuanians. ^{now} ~~the Poles~~ and Lithuanians tended to mix more with the Poles ^{than with} and the Slovaks because the Slovaks had their own church at St. Joseph's, up ^{near} by Holy Rosary. The Lithuanians were never numerous enough to have their own church and I think, by history, they were more closer related to the Poles anyway, so originally the Poles [&] the Lithuanians ^{mixed} were together ^{whereas} and the Slovaks ^{kept to} themselves. Later on as the next generation was born here, the kids of Slovak decent and the kids of Polish decent, and the kids of Lithuanian decent tended to a malganate in what was called the Slavic-American group. And so on Portland Avenue we ^{had} have a baseball team known as the Slavic-American, ^{or} ^I if you go

C: back in the records of newspaper ~~records~~ of the twenties and the thirties, you'll find that there was a Slavic-American team that played in the City League. I ~~can~~ ^{can} imagine that there were dances and entertainment, picnics that brought the Slavic Community as a whole rather just the Poles. But I no longer remember those. We still have a number of Slovaks ^{on the avenue} along here. I have them at church.

W: What has happened to the community since you were a boy.

C: Well, the old timers are dying off. There are ~~still~~ some people who are in their eighties and in their nineties who are alive.

But not very many of them. I would guess that we might have thirty or forty such that are somehow are in touch with this parish.

The first generation who were born of the Polish immigrants has scattered; some have found it necessary to find work elsewhere; lumber mills closed down, ^{and} they had to find work in other areas. And those

that accumulated money probably moved into suburbs away from this particular area. The original families here scattered through out

Tacoma, Puyallup, Seattle. Some of them have gone to California.

But ^{the same is} ~~its~~ probably true of most areas. Children are not satisfied with the housing conditions of their parents and they look around for better circumstances. ~~More of them than not,~~ ^T they have been educated to take better paying jobs. Better circumstances.

W: So ^{they} ~~they~~ basically now, this community, except for a few diehards, ^{has} ~~are~~ scattered all over the city?

C: I wouldn't call them die-hards. ^T there's an interest nowadays in things ethnic. Now my generation, the first descendatns of the Polish immigrants, seemed to be more interested in being absorbed by their neighborhoods. Some of them were even not anxious to get it be known that they were of Polish descent. ^{But} nowadays, with the emphasis on the ethnic, with the blacks, with the Spaniards, ^{get} ~~Mexicans,~~

C: the Indians, the Poles are reviving ethnical factors in ^{their} ~~there~~ lives; ^{they are} ~~there~~ interested in the types of clothing that developed in certain areas of Poland. The Poles are more anxious now to make a trip to Poland to see how their relatives live, what the circumstances are there. And I can't remember seeing in my younger days the Polish children dressed in Polish costumes but I've seen it a number of times around here in the last few years. When we get together, for instance, at the Polish National Alliance ^{Hall}, we sometimes have a play ^{at} which the old Polish costumes are trotted out; but before that, ^{Time} the last Polish costumes I had seen were those ~~that~~ ^{pre-world war I} worn in the parades on Fourth of July; usually these were military costumes, ^a ~~the~~ blouse and ^a ~~the~~ kind of short pants, bloomer-like pants, the men wore, and boots, and some kind of a hat or cap; the men usually carried swords ~~around~~. But I think that nowadays there is more interest in ethnical origins of our families than there used to be.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.

