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YOUR ŚWIĘCONKA BASKET CHECKLIST PAGE 23

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, NEW YORK AND ADDITIONAL ENTRY OFFICES

EMBRACE THE DETERMINATION OF PULASKI • WERE THE FIRST POLES IN MINNESOTA CANADIAN? “RENEW MY CHURCH” PARISHES TO MERGE, CLOSE, OR BE SOLD • NEW LIRA CD OF “CHOPIN SONGS” WOLSKI AMONG 2021 OSCAR NOMINEES • ŚWIĘCONE SWEETS • BŁACHOWICZ MAKES FIRST TITLE DEFENSE

NEWSMARK

Poland tightens pandemic restrictions over Easter

In mid-February, as the Covid-19 pandemic appeared to be leveling off, Poland began easing restrictions. But within a month, the daily number of new cases had soared to 17,260, the highest since last November. Over the next few days, the daily new-infection figures were already in the 25,000 range, and officials feared it could soon top the 30,000 mark. A three-week partial lockdown running over the Easter holidays was declared. Nearly all businesses were ordered to close except for groceries, pharmacies and essential services. Strict distancing was observed in churches, and home holiday dinners were limited to household members and no more than five outside guests. Under a nationwide vaccination campaign five million Poles in this land of 38 million had been inoculated by the end of March. Polish Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said the highly infectious British coronavirus variant was responsible for the majority of new cases. By the first day of spring 2021 from the start of the pandemic in Poland over two million Poles had been infected with the coronavirus and more than 49,000 had died.

Duda and Biden due to confer shortly – presidential aide

The White House and Poland’s Presidential Palace are laying the groundwork for the first meeting between Polish President Andrzej Duda and his American counterpart Joe Biden, Polish presidential aide Andrzej Dera told reporters. Details were being worked out, he said, but added that it was too early to speak of specific dates or decide whether the two leaders would meet in person or hold a two-way teleconference. Defense and security issues are expected to head the list of topics under discussion. Dera indicated with satisfaction that U.S. priorities in those areas have been carried over from the previous U.S. administration.

Murkowski Censured for Voting to Convict Trump

The Alaska Republican party has censured Senator Lisa Murkowski for voting to convict Donald Trump at his impeachment trial and now doesn’t want her to identify as a GOP candidate in next year’s election.

The vote to censure Murkowski was 53-17 at a meeting in Anchorage, a watershed moment for Republican politics in Alaska. Murkowski has been in the U.S. Senate since 2002, when her father, Frank Murkowski, selected her to finish his unexpired Senate term after he was elected governor. A Murkowski has represented Alaska in the Senate since 1981.

When speaking to reporters in Juneau this past February, Murkowski had a sense the denunciation would be forthcoming. She said they can censure her, but “... my obligation is to support the constitution that I have pledged to uphold, and I will do that, even if it means that I have to oppose the direction of my state party.”

Washington Polonia Honors Anti-Communist Freedom Fighters

The Polish community in our nation’s capital commemorated tens of thousands of Polish freedom fighters who struggled against Communism after World War II with a Mass on February 28 at Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish in the Silver Spring, Maryland. Pastor Jerzy Frydrych urged participants to pray for those freedom fighters who fell in battle or were murdered by the Communists. The Washington Metropolitan Area Division of the Polish American Congress sponsored the Mass.

Poland’s Communist dictatorship vilified the postwar anti-Communist partisans, who are also known as “Cursed Soldiers,” “The Indomitable” or “Unconquered Soldiers.” Over 150,000 fought in guerrilla units that stayed in the field after the Red Army entered Poland in 1944. The last of them, Jozef Franczak, was killed in action near Lublin in 1963. Poland established March 1 as a holiday in 2011 to honor these freedom fighters.

Invests in Nuclear Energy

Poland has made a move toward nuclear energy, aiming to cut carbon emissions by about thirty percent by 2030 as compared to 1990 levels. Poland’s Council of Ministers approved an energy policy (PEP2040) to 2040 which aims to reduce the amount of coal in Poland’s generation of electricity from 72% in 2020 to 56% in 2030. The policy includes construction of six nuclear power units. The initial block of Poland’s new nuclear power plant is predicted to be operative by 2033 with yet another six blocks to come every two to three years.

CHRYSZTUS ZMARTWYCHWSTAŁ!

Alleluja!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Alleluja!



Ogień i Woda The Elements of Easter Ritual – Fire and Water

BY STAŚ KMIEĆ



Easter is the most thoughtful and sacred of Christian holidays. A time of quiet reflection and passionate ritual, it shifts from great sorrow to great joy as a celebration of both resurrection and the promise of new life.

Celebrated by Christians since ancient times, Easter has pre-Christian roots, and it is no coincidence that it occurs at the beginning of spring. Just as Christmas replaced the pagan Festival of Saturnalia in the winter, Easter replaced the Sabbath of *Eostre* or *Ostara* – a pagan goddess of spring. It was a time of renewal, birth and fertility. Rituals, whether Christian or pagan gave people hope – reminding them that

Father Witold Bednarz of Holy Spirit Parish in Hrubieszów, Poland, lights the Paschal candle with a flame from the Easter Vigil fire. This is the only time this candle is incensed during the year. It is a sign of Christ, a pillar of fire, light, and guide on the way to salvation.

the darkness of winter is always followed by life-giving spring.

In Poland, Easter is a fusion of pagan customs intertwined with Christian symbolism, but its name – *Wielkanoc* (the Great Night), more closely denotes its Christian origin. The church wisely adapted the seasonal calendar to fit the narrative it wanted to tell, and the priests did not show extraordinary imagination by borrowing old Slavic or pagan customs and calling them Catholic. The winter season of scarcity was rebranded as a time of purification

and was called “Lent.”

For the people, fire has always been a means of deterring evil forces and a symbol of purification. Blessed fire was brought to homes. According to beliefs, it attracted the home’s guardian spirits – the souls of deceased ancestors.

Water was used to cleanse the winter dirt and to awaken nature back to life. It was also utilized to enhance vital fertility forces, as evidenced in the custom of pouring

See “Fire and Water,” page 8

A Polish Prince Turns 86

by Tom Tarapacki

It was 86 years ago, on April 16, 1935, that a Polish prince was born. Actually, he wasn’t born a Polish prince, but rather Stanley Robert Vinton, Jr. It wasn’t until the mid-1970s that the popular singer known as Bobby Vinton became The Polish Prince.

He was born in Cannonsburg, Pa., near Pittsburgh, the son of Stanley and Dorothy (Studzinski) Vinton. His paternal grandpar-

ents came from Lithuania and his maternal grandparents were from Warsaw and Lipno in Poland. The name Vinton was shortened from Vintula.

As a teenager, Stan Jr. became known as Bobby. That’s because the talented young clarinet player started following his father’s footsteps and formed his own big band

See “Polish Prince,” page 15

Stanley “Bobby” Vinton



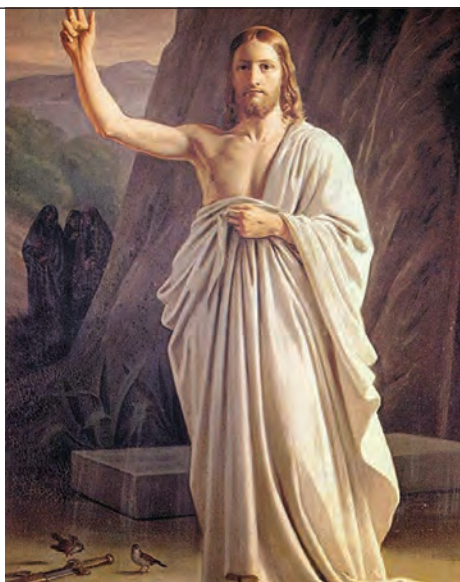
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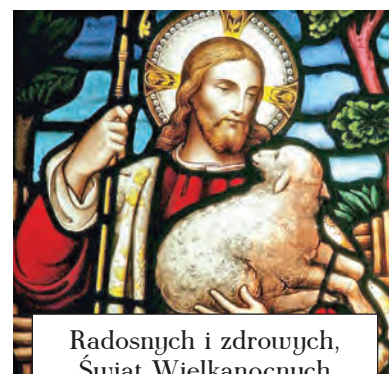
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Happy Easter to All! Wesołego Alleluja!

Josephine Kaszuba-Locke

In memory of my parents,
Kamylla (Dombrowski) and Czesław Kaszuba

Watch next month's Polish American Journal for details on applying for the
2021 Kamylla and Czesław Kaszuba Scholarship



JUST BETWEEN US

Wesołego Alleluja! Happy Easter!

by Mark Kohan

It is hard to believe Easter is upon us. It seems harder to believe it has been over a year since the pandemic changed the way we live. Things are improving, and with the approval of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, we move a little bit closer to “normal.” This Easter, let us consider the vaccines as gifts, which will result in the reappearance of our lives as we knew them.

As the number of COVID-19 cases overall decreases, there are some things we still must forgo, depending on your locality. This may include basket blessing of your *Święconka* foods, Easter Mass, and Easter Monday parties. That is not reason to overlook the practice of egg-writing (*pisanki*) and egg-dyeing, the preparation of symbolic foods, or the celebration of Easter Mass, which will be broadcast on myriad local and national television stations.

Thanks to YouTube, there are countless videos of performances of Polish Easter hymns from both Poland and Polish American parishes. You can also learn how to make *pisanki*, *kraszanki*, and other types of decorated eggs. Unheard of a decade ago, the internet is now flooded with recipes for everything from *babka* to *żur*. Probably the only thing you’ll really miss this Easter is a healthy dousing of holy water from your priest’s *kropidło*.

We wish our readers and their

families a most blessed Easter, and ask the good Lord to bless you and watch over you.

A Few Changes

Like all businesses, we have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our advertising revenue, which depends largely on events in the community, is down by almost 75 percent compared to 2019. Subscriptions have remained constant, and for that we are grateful.

After a review of 2020, we are making some changes to ensure the paper’s continuation. Most noticeable to our readers will be a downsizing of the PAJ’s Bookstore.

Before Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart, and a host of other internet booksellers (and Kindle and similar devices, plus audio book narrators), the Bookstore was a major part of the PAJ’s revenue. That has been shrinking every year for the past five. In 2019, the Bookstore just about broke even. 2020 brought a loss.

When Cleveland’s Thad Cooke came to us in the early 1980s with idea of establishing a marketplace for Polish-topic publications, there were very few media outlets that specialized in this area. At that time, we also had a larger staff that could take care of orders, contact vendors, chase lost orders, handle bookkeeping, and everything else that made the Bookstore a profitable venture. That ship, as they say, has sailed.

Starting this month, we will maintain our specialty market by only offering books authored by current and past PAJ staff. We are cutting back on the gifts we offer from outside vendors. To replace those selections, the PAJ has worked out a deal with Pol-Art to offer its goods to our readers at a discount.

We will continue to offer *oplatki* (Christmas wafers), our line of Christmas cards, wooden Easter eggs, butter and chocolate molds, and other smaller items.

Thank You, Mary Lanham; Welcome David Trawinski

This issue marks the last book review by Mary Lanham. She has been the PAJ’s Book Review Editor for over seven years, replacing Florence Waszkielewicz-Clowes upon her retirement. We wish Mary good luck and much happiness in her work in the Anderson County Library System.

Stepping in to replace Mary is prominent Polish American author David Trawinski, known by many of you as a novelist of historical fiction stories, mostly featuring characters and themes associated with his Polish heritage. He began publishing his writing after retiring from a 35-year career in the Aerospace Industry. David has traveled extensively and sets most of the locales of his stories in towns and settings which he has visited.

David was raised in the predomi-

nantly Polish neighborhood of Fells Point in Baltimore, Maryland, attending Saint Stanislaus Parish K-8 Schools. He half-jokingly recalls not realizing the rest of the world wasn’t mostly Polish until the roll call of his first high school class at the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, of which he is a proud graduate. He holds degrees in chemistry from Towson University and computer engineering and executive MBA graduate degrees from Loyola University of Maryland.

David relived his upraising through his first protagonist, the retired CIA agent Stanley Wisniewski, in his highly-regarded Chopin Trilogy. He followed this with the Civil War/Reconstruction novel “Ever Blooms the Rose,” co-written with his multi-talented wife Marie. He returned to his Polish roots with “The Life of Marek Zaczek, Volume 1,” which is based in the times of Poland’s Partitions. His upcoming release of the World War II novel “The Twins of Narvik” is expected to be released in two volumes in April and June of this year.

As an author, he has been extremely pleased with the comments received directly from his readers, and feels rewarded that so many have appreciated his treatment of the history of Poland, as well as its undying culture. His greatest hope is that the four grandchildren — with which he and Marie have been blessed — will one way pass down these stories to their own grandchil-

dren.

Welcome aboard, David!

Spring-Summer Printing Schedule

A reminder: The May and June editions of the *Polish American Journal* are combined into one edition. There will be no June edition. Likewise, the August and September editions will be combined.

Why Scholarship Support Matters Now More Than Ever

The Kosciuszko Foundation reminds us that, despite the pandemic, requests for financial support from students remains strong. Surveys continue to indicate that the coronavirus crisis has already had a significant impact on many students’ ability to pay for undergraduate and graduate school. As more families face financial insecurity due to COVID-19, donor support is essential to help students pursue their educational aspirations.

By giving, you build the bridge between deserving Polish students and the remarkable achievements that lie ahead of them.

In addition to the Kosciuszko Foundation and our own Polish American Journal Foundation Kamylla and Czesław Kaszuba Scholarship, there are many organizations that can use your help. Please be generous when it comes to supporting groups who are tending to the financial needs of Polish American students.

FORUM

Embrace the Determination of Pulaski in Our Modern Lives

Remarks of Justice Aurelia Pucinski delivered on Casimir Pulaski Day, March 1, 2021 at the Polish Museum of America.

We come together each March to celebrate the life of Casimir Pulaski and to commemorate his death in the cause of freedom.

We hear the history of the man, his achievements and his battles.

We are proud that this Polish man came to America to fight for the liberty we share today.

And we stand in awe of his courage as he faced the enemy and gave his life.

Casimir Pulaski was brave. He fought in battles with a horse and sword and helped save an infant nation at its birth.

We cannot match his bravery on the battlefield. We cannot go out with horses and swords to flay at the threats to our beliefs. Ours is a different kind of battle — an intellectual one.

But we can and should take a lesson from the true bravery of Pulaski.

When Pulaski left Europe to sail the Atlantic for our unknown shores, he showed the same bravery that almost all of us have seen in our families or for ourselves.

Every Polish American knows what it is to come across an ocean to face the unknown.

Every Polish American knows the history of that crossing, either for themselves or members of their family.

Every Polish American knows intimately what it is to give up the known for the unknown, to search for a better life, to risk everything for independence and liberty.

And every Polish American knows that independence is one of our core values, along with faith and family.

The independence to work, to pray, to own a home or business, to provide for our families, to have

our own thoughts and opinions is a cherished Polish value that we all share.

And everyone who is Polish or knows Polish people also knows that their independent streak runs deep.

And every Polish American knows, as Pulaski knew, that independence is not free: it is hard work.

It is also what often fragments our diaspora. And as we fragmented over the past generation, we have lost many of the benefits of cohesion. We are scattered across the landscape of Illinois, no longer rooted in common neighborhoods. We have scattered our focus as well, with different groups turning inward to promote individual strengths. But it is respecting our common goals that makes us strong.

We are all participants in this great tension: the question is how to get back the respect we once had while still respecting each other’s independence.

Like Pulaski, we can make the choice to work on our common goals.

Each family and each organization can work to focus attention on Polish American contributions to this community.

Each family and each organization can join forces to get the attention of political leaders who often forget we are here.

And each individual in Polonia can do the one thing that gets the attention of elected officials: we can all vote.

If we are saddened and depressed that there are now no Polish American congressmen or alderman in Chicago let us take heart in the fearless determination of Pulaski to never give up, to keep at it, to work together using our brains and our ideals to peacefully influence the political life of our community.

Pulaski was not just handed a successful and fearsome Cavalry. He had to build one, had to face challenges from Congress, from other generals, from the enemy. But he did it and left behind his legacy as the Father of the American Cavalry based on his steadfast belief that he could create something that was formidable and necessary.

We can build something. We can build on his ideals by working together to assure that the process of the government Pulaski helped nurture gives recognition to our Polish American presence and values.

Each of us can work in our own communities to participate in local government, events or causes. Doing that brings credit to Polonia and provides the optics of engagement.

Each of us can decide to support

local Polish American candidates with votes and contributions; or better yet, to become a Polish American candidate at the local level. We can create a farm team of tried and trusted Polish American candidates for larger offices at the same time it brings credibility to our values.

And each of us can hold our elected officials at every level accountable for their commitment to our Polish American community. There are 900,000 residents of Polish heritage in Cook County. That is about one in seven. No public official should ever be allowed to forget that or ignore it.

I call on each of us to embrace the fearless determination of Pulaski in our modern lives. I am asking you to be brave. Get outside of the cocoon of Polonia. You have already learned to deal with goal setting, discord, consensus building. Now find some way to put those skills to work in the larger community. Work together with your neighbors and bring our history, heritage and voice to the public life of our communities.

◆ ◆ ◆

Aurelia Pucinski is a Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court.

Wishing All a Happy Easter

Congressman

BRIAN HIGGINS

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Święconka – Polonia's most popular Easter custom

by Robert Strybel

Oplatek-sharing on Christmas Eve and the Holy Saturday food-blessing custom are Poland's and Polonia's two best-known holiday customs. Both are practiced by some 95 percent of all families in Poland and a great many across Polish America. Over the generations they have grown into national heritage rituals.

Throughout the 123 years of foreign partition (1772-1918), during the joint Nazi-Soviet occupation of

World War II and again during the 45 years that Poland was a Soviet-controlled puppet state (1944-1989), these customs uplifted the strips of the Polish people and set them apart from their external or internal oppressors.

It's no wonder then that they were taken by Polish émigrés to the far corners of the earth. In the ethnic communities that resulted, these traditions provided a familiar and comforting haven against the forces of anti-immigrant discrimination. And because these are warm,

symbolic, and generally appealing customs, they have also caught on with many people non-Polish background who have been exposed to them.

Easter baskets are taken to church for the blessing. Long tables are set up inside or outside of churches, and priests come out every 15 or 20 minutes to perform the ritual. In the Poland of yesteryear, priests would perform the blessing in the homes of leading parishioners where a święconka table was set up. Peasant women would gather with their baskets outside where the priest would sprinkle them with holy water on the way out.



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Although suspended for the duration of the pandemic... The Świąconka lives and will survive

by Robert Strybel

Hopefully only the Easters of 2020 and 2021 will go down in history as the years of the pandemic-lock down Easters, with things returning to normal come 2022. But even this year there is a positive note. Easter customs are being suspended over pandemic concerns, but today's stay-at-home mode provide an opportunity to read up on our Polish holiday heritage.

To many Americans (including some PolAms) Świąconka (shfyen-TSAWN-kah) may be hard to pronounce but easy to get attached to. In fact, it is often referred to as one

of two Polish traditions with the greatest popular appeal, the other being Wigilia which includes the sharing of opłatek (Christmas wafer).

RITUAL FOOD BLESSING goes back to pagan times, but in Poland its Easter version was first recorded in the late 13th century. Originally, a priest would visit the local manor house and bless tables laden with meat, eggs, cakes and other delicacies. Peasant women toting their wicker baskets would wait outside so the priest could sprinkle their food on his way out. Later the custom was transferred to parishes.

Over the generations, Polish emigrants have taken this tradition to the far-flung corners of the globe.

The traditional foods all have a symbolic meaning. Eggs symbolize the new life brought about by Christ's Resurrection. The lamb in whatever form is the Lamb of God (Jesus), and bread – the Bread of Life (again symbolizing Jesus). Salt is to preserve us from corruption, and horseradish is one of the bitter herbs of the Passover. Meat and sausage symbolize strength, fertility and abundance while cakes and sweets foreshadow the sweetness of eternal life that awaits those sincerely believe in and worship God.



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KAPLA AND DULBISZ FAMILIES

Wesołego Alleluja!



Photo by Jennifer Klanika

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Palm Sunday (Niedziela Palmowa), in the Bielański Forest, home to one of the largest procession of palm trees in Warsaw. It starts at the main entrance to Cardinal Wyszyński University. The procession is led by donkey-riding children, and the local parish priest. The procession follows a very old medieval rite. Gregorian songs are usually sung, as the procession is accompanied by a brass band.

Wesołego Alleluja!

KATHY SADLOWSKI

1704 Wabash St.
Michigan City, IN 46360



*American Council
for Polish Culture*



Wishes Polonia a Happy Easter
Wesołego Alleluja!

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, our Affiliate Organizations are hosting Concerts, Book talks with authors, and other virtual events, all open to the public. At this time, the date of our Annual Convention is to be decided.

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Detail from "The Resurrection of Christ, The Easter Tomb" c.1616. Peter Paul Rubens.



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Fire and Water. In Slavic mythology, fire was revered above all the other elements

continued from cover

water on Easter Monday. The cleansing power of spring's water was replaced by the power of holy water. In the old tradition on Holy Saturday, the priest blessed water in the morning, food at noon, and fire in the evening.

The Power of Fire

In Slavic mythology, fire was revered above all the other elements. It was opposed to water, which, like the forest, was perceived by the Slavs as a mysterious and dangerous space – abstracted from the human world by its inability to know and domesticate it. As in most primary religions, fire played the most important role in the life of the Slavs, and the deities representing its strength came to the forefront.

The Slavs developed a cult of three types of fire – atmospheric, earthly and heavenly, and it was an essential part of most rites. Fire was considered sacred, as it purified and healed illness.

The heavenly fire – the benevolent power of the sun, required its own ritual. In Poland, sunrise was greeted with prayer. It was thought to be God's face or eye. Therefore, it was forbidden to point a finger at it, and during the harvest to turn one's back to it.

With the arrival of Ash Wednesday (*Popielec, Wstępna Środa*), the repentant revelers from Pre-Lenten pagan festivities would go to church for a mass that marked the beginning of a 40-day period of fasting and reflection, as Christendom prepared for Easter. Priests marked each worshiper's forehead with ash, which symbolizes purification by fire.

Due to the pagan custom of lighting many candles and fires at a funeral – in order to ward off demons, Christianity was initially distrustful of fire. In time, it was viewed as a sign of Christ – the light to dispel darkness.

The Slavic ritual of lighting bonfires on hilltops to celebrate the coming of spring coincided with the kindled fire and outdoor sunrise service celebrating the resurrection. During the solemn Easter Vigil celebration held after sunset on Holy Saturday, which concludes the Paschal Triduum, the ordination of fire and water takes place.

At the opening of the Easter Vigil a "new fire" is lit and blessed. The Paschal candle is the first candle to be lit with a flame from this sacred fire. Representing the light of Christ



Father Pawel Hrebenko using Holy Water to bless święconka baskets.

coming into the world, it represents the risen Christ – a symbol of light and life. In front of the church, the priest lights a fire and says the words of the prayer in which Christ is called *prawdziwym kamieniem węgielnym* (the true cornerstone), giving the faithful *ognia światłości* (fire of light).

The "holy fire" is a light said to miraculously emanate from what is traditionally believed to be the Tomb of Christ on the day before Easter. The light is said to grow strong enough to set candles aflame, and its appearance is one of the most sacred rituals of Easter.

From the blessed fire, the Paschal candle is lit. After being brought into the church, from the Paschal candle, all lamps and candles are lit. Following 40 days of silence, the church bells are rung. Out of the solemnity of Lent, the joyous, culturally distinctive Polish Easter songs burst forth and Mass begins. Upon the conclusion, the faithful bring the blessed fire with burning candles to their homes to light candles, furnaces and stoves.

Blessing of Water

The symbolism of water in Christianity is eloquent and rich in content. Water is a source of life – a sign of rebirth of spirit and body, purification, truth, grace and salvation.

In antiquity, Holy Saturday was without liturgy – a Day of Silence and fasting reflecting the mourning of the apostles. With the ancient custom of *Święconka*, food is blessed with holy water by a priest, who would either visit the home, or have samplings of dishes brought to the church for a communal blessing. "Święcone" was the name of both

the foods blessed by the priest on Easter Saturday and the ceremonial breakfast of those blessed foods on Easter morning.

In the Christian tradition, the custom dates to the 7th century; in Poland it has been present since the Middle Ages, around the 14th century, but the water that priests use to bless food has its roots in pagan times. The consumption of blessed foods was to bring happiness, health and peace. The traditional dishes that are put in the *Święconka* basket have symbolic meaning. It should be remembered that the choice of food was never accidental.

Thorns and other plants that had thorns, for example gooseberry twigs or blackthorn were also blessed in church. They were used to secure the hut and the entire farm against attacks by unclean forces.

On the Easter Vigil, the priest blesses the water and says a special prayer in which he recalls the transformation of water into wine at a wedding in Cana in Galilee and Christ's passage across the lake. He speaks of the blood and water that flowed from the side of the crucified Jesus, as well as the command to baptize.

The Paschal candle is immersed in the baptismal water and the signs of the transformation of water into a sacramental symbol are made. The

meanings of which are in the written sentence spoken by Christ to the Samaritan woman: "Whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst." After the Vigil Mass, the blessed water is made available and brought home.

In the Podhale mountain region, shepherds have their sheep blessed at the church. They take with them, holy water to sprinkle and pieces of the Great Saturday wood, with which they set fire to on the mountain pastures.

Śmigus-Dyngus

We generally associate *Śmigus-Dyngus* with pouring water on each other on the second day of Easter, the so-called *Lany Poniedziałek* (Wet Monday). It was also during the pagan equinox festival – *Jare Gody*, where such dousing took place.

Śmigus and Dyngus were once two separate rites, derived from pre-Christian traditions accompanying the anticipation of spring. In these rituals, water played an important role as a symbol of life, as well as purification followed by rebirth.

The etymology of this word is not entirely clear, but it is recognized that "Śmigus" comes from the Old Polish word "to whip" – "to lash" or "splash." "Dyngus" may have derived from the German word "dingen" (redeem yourself),



Dyngus Day revelers taking dousing to the next level.

or "dingnis" – meaning "ransom." It was about social visits and giving gifts in the form of eggs.

Whipping with willow twigs, a tree associated with fertility, as well as drenching with water occurred. In the church's view, the custom of lashing was associated with the scourging of Christ.

Both rituals were cleansing and matrimonial. The Slavs believed

that water promotes fertility, and the girls doused with it could find which boys they caught the eye of, and which they could express their mutual interest in by giving a gift of eggs.

The first mention of this Easter tradition in Poland come from the fifteenth century, and the Synod of the Diocese of Poznań warned of its sinful character. The Catholic Church, unable to remove this custom from the culture of the people, has associated it with the cleansing power of holy water. After syncretism with Christianity in some regions, it was established that on Easter Tuesday (*Wtorek Wielkanocny*), brides and girls have the right to a reciprocal rematch for the dousing they received the day before.

Blessing the fields with holy water on the Easter Monday in order to ensure the fertility of crops for the coming year is observed in the village of Białoboki in the Przeworsk region. The fields are sprinkled with water, and eggs are buried in the earth in order to protect it from being sown by the Devil.

At one time during the Vigil, there were bonfires in the front of churches, in which *glowienki* (hazel sticks folded into crosses) were fired in the holy flames. The choice of hazel was not accidental, according to legend, it was under the hazel that the Holy Family hid during their escape to Egypt. To ensure their farm's fertility, the peasants took ashes from the fire and spread it over the first spring plowing. On the second day of Easter, fragments of burnt wood were stuck in the ground in the corners of the field to protect from hail, drought and other natural disasters.

Health, strength and happiness were guaranteed by drinking the holy water on that Easter Monday. Only a small amount was tasted, fields were sprinkled with it and the rest was carefully preserved and used in various rituals.

EASTER EMPHASIZES Poland's national character and deep piety, in which religion and custom mix and merge together. Few people consider the meaning and origin of Poland's Easter customs – assuming that's just the way it's always done. Some non-believers would gladly abandon the cultivation of most traditions, treating them as a superstition devoid of symbolism. However, it should be remembered that tradition has always had a social bond – a cultural connection that is worthy to maintain and observe.

Wesołego Alleluja! Happy Easter!

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RELIGION

Russia and Turkey Join Against the Patriarch of Constantinople

by Benjamin Fiore, S.J.

After **Bartholomew I** — Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople (Istanbul), spiritual leader of the 300 million Orthodox Christians — recognized the spiritual independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Orthodox Church in Moscow by granting autocephalic status (self-governance), Russian President Putin condemned the declaration and attacked the patriarch as an American and NATO collaborator and spread misinformation about him throughout the internet. Putin continues to support separatists in the Eastern part of Ukraine who are engaged in a civil war with the Ukrainian government.

Turkish president Erdogan, echoed the charge that Bartholomew was a Western “Fifth column” inside Turkey and increased moves to hinder the freedom of movement and religion of the few Orthodox faithful remaining in Turkey. The efforts of the Ukrainian leadership to move away from Russian dominance and toward the European Union plays a large part in the religious war Putin is waging against Patriarch Bartholomew. The religious independence declaration has removed 1/3 of the Moscow patriarch’s parishes from his control. Paradoxically, Moscow assumed preeminence in the Orthodox world as defender of the Church once the Turks overran Constantinople in the 15th century.

So-Called Equality Act Passes with Pol-Am Support

Alaska’s **Lisa Murkowski** will likely support the bill, while Democrat **N.Y. Rep. John Katko** voted to pass it in the House. **Elise Stefanik** (Republican N.Y. Representative) voted against it. The bill would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, leaving Catholic institutions liable to litigation if they fail to hire and accommodate LGBTQ and transgender persons. Hospitals and medical professionals are in jeopardy if they conscientiously object to abortion or sex-reassignment surgery. Female only spaces, bathrooms and sports would have to give way to reassigned biological males. Religious freedom is curtailed by this act in favor of radical social reconstruction.

Homily Blasts Abortion and Promoters

Fr. William Kosko, pastor of St. Henry’s Parish in Buckeye, Arizona recorded a homily on you-tube against supporters of abortion. To his parishioners he said, “if you are pro-abortion, I am tempted to ask you to leave St. Henry parish. Leave the parish.” Comparing the attitude of those who know about the horrors of abortion and do nothing about it to those who knew the horrors of Nazi concentration and deathcamps but kept silent he declared, “Brothers and sisters it’s 30 years later and it’s still snowing outside. It’s snowing with the ashes of the innocent unborn.” He blames the silence of U.S. bishops for the political success of pro-abortion self-styled Catholic president Biden who opposes the Catholic Church’s

teachings not just on the sanctity of human life, the sanctity of marriage and gender reality.

He criticizes the bishops’ silence for 60 years and their “bad catechesis and cowardice.” He decried the ignorance of the Catholic faithful of the fundamentals of their faith that leads them to misunderstand the Catholic teaching about life, marriage and gender.

Polish Knights of Columbus Commission Pro-Life Bell

Pope Francis blessed a bell, a symbolic “voice of the unborn” at the Vatican that was commissioned by the Knights of Columbus in Poland. The 2000-pound bronze bell will be rung at pro-life events throughout Poland, including the March for Life and Family in Warszawa. Adorning the bell are quotations from Matthew 5:17, Exodus 10:13, the image of an unborn child, and a quote from Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko, “A child’s life begins under the mother’s heart.”

St. Paul the First Hermit Prize

Fr. Michael Czyzewski, pastor of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Church in Buffalo, N.Y. sponsored a St. Paul the First Hermit coloring contest in observance of the saint’s feast day on Jan. 15. While all submissions were praised for their creativity and talent, entrants from **Mary Lou Wyrobek’s** religion class at Our Lady of Black Rock School were awarded prizes by the Pauline father. The prizes were the Fr. Czyzewski’s book *The History of American Częstochowa* as well as chocolate stars and a magnet. Fr. Czyzewski explained the religious habit that he wears including his rosary, the cape, which reminds the monks of Mary’s protection, and his hood which indicates God’s protection and blessing. The class, composed of students from the United States, Burma, Ghana and Kenya, treated Fr. Czyzewski to the song “Po Górach Dolinach” in both Polish and English.

Seminarians Destined for Alaska Ordained

At the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks, Alaska, **Dominik Wojeik** and **Piotr Oprych** were ordained to the transitional diaconate by Bishop **Chad Zielinski**. The two deacons are currently finishing their studies at Cyril & Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. The ordination Mass was streamed live for those who were

unable to attend.

Happy Anniversary to ...

Fr. Czeslaw M. Krysa, rector of the Church of St. Casimir, Buffalo, N.Y. on his 40th anniversary of priesthood. Fr. Krysa has worked energetically to restore the beauty of the Byzantine style St. Casimir’s. He also tirelessly promotes knowledge and appreciation of Polish culture and traditions. Sponsored by the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius College he has produced a series of you-tube videos of Polish traditions and practices such as palm weaving on Palm Sunday. He is also well known for his homemade *krupnik*, for which he follows his family’s recipe. The parish also has preserved a room that St. John Paul II stayed in when he visited Buffalo as a cardinal.

Felician sisters in Connecticut celebrating anniversaries: **Sr. Christine Marie Stankiewicz & Sr. Janice Marie**, 50 years; **Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller**, 25 years.; **Sr. Frances Marion Bonczar, Sr. Janice Marie Gaudette & Sr. Joan Marie Swierzb**, 60 years.

Sto lat to...

Julianna Dziezic on receiving a \$5,000 scholarship to Daemen College, in Amherst, N.Y. from the Catholic League for Religious Assistance to Poland and Polonia. Julianna sings and plays the violin at her parish Masses, was a confirmation teacher, participated in the diocesan youth conference. **Fr. Walter Grabowski**, pastor of St. Gabriel’s Church in Elma, N.Y., and moderator of the Catholic League, presented the award.

Also present at the ceremony were **Mary Lou Wyrobek**, national director, and **Edward Reska**, committee member.

Fr. Justin Rosary Hour Continues Masses and Novenas

A reminder that while the Polish language religious broadcast of the *Fr. Justin Rosary Hour* has come to an end, Masses and novenas will continue to be prayed and the shrine in Athol Springs, N.Y. Archival recordings of program can be found at the Rosary Hour’s website (www.rosaryhour.com) and translation of the Polish programs into English will continue.

The program was on the air from its home in Buffalo since 1931, and was the longest, continually-running religious program in the United States.

Golab, Niedzialek Cited by St. Casimir’s



Faithful service rewarded: (l. to r.): Michal Golab, Fr. Eric Orzech, pastor, and John Niedzialek.

photo and article by Joseph Feckanin

CLEVELAND — St. Casimir’s Church had much to be thankful for during the first week in March.

On March 4, the Feast Day of St. Casimir, the parish marked the nine-year anniversary of receiving news of a signed March 1, 2012 decree from the Vatican, ordering the then-bishop of Cleveland to re-open their church along with 10 other churches included in the appeal.

St. Casimir’s was a leader in the struggle that appealed unjust closings, an action which made world news, as the church was closed for almost three years. The successful appeal to re-open the church, called “The Miracle of St. Casimir,” has given it the moniker “The Miraculous Church of St. Casimir.”

Fire Claims Holy Family Assets

HOOVERVILLE, Pa. — Fire destroyed the rectory and social hall at Holy Family Parish, Feb. 19, with firefighters from two counties battling thick smoke and flames in freezing temperatures.

The **Rev. Karl Kolodziejski** told *The Tribune-Democrat* he had just finished celebrating morning Mass when he detected smoke that he thought was coming from a nearby house.

“After Mass, around 8:30, I went to the kitchen to get my breakfast, and I smelled smoke,” Kolodziejski said, sitting in a vehicle as firefighters darted by. “I smelled wood burning, and I thought it was awful strong for someone burning wood in the neighborhood.

“As I was getting breakfast ready, I heard a crackling sound in the kitchen of the hall, and when I went in, I saw smoke and immediately called 911.”

Kolodziejski said: “I can tell you

With the difficult past year of the pandemic, parishioners decided to recognize two outstanding parishioners for their years of dedicated service. On March 7, the honorees were called up to the front of the church and presented with a Certificate of Recognition, and a special edition Polish Eagle Anniversary Watch with a 24-carat gold plated Eagle on the face of the watch. The presentation was made by Father Eric Orzech to the surprised recipients, Michal Golab and John Niedzialek, who had no idea that they were to be honored. Both men graciously accepted as applause erupted and afterwards gave thanks to God and remarked that the parishioners of St. Casimir’s deserve to share in this day too for all their hard work.

I saw smoke coming from the ceiling, so it has to be in the upper part of the roof.”

Firefighters from multiple fire companies responded, along with EMS personnel. As many as 60 firefighters were at the scene, said Chad Maurer, Hooversville assistant fire chief. By afternoon crews were picking through smoky debris.

No injuries were reported.

Bishop Mark Bartchak, of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, said in a statement that the rectory and social hall were total losses. He said the church itself suffered very little damage, thanks to “a remarkable effort by firefighters” who kept the flames from spreading and cut trenches into the ground to prevent water from rushing into the worship space.

Holy Family Parish is the spiritual home to about 120 Catholic households.

Secularization Adds to Catholic Church’s Problems in Poland

WARSAW — Ongoing secularization is making an imprint on still largely Catholic Poland, a report released by the country’s Catholic Information Agency (KAI) has shown. Over the past 25 years, the most affected have been young people among whom belief in God has declined by 20% and religious practices by 50%. In the total population, 91.1% still identify as Catholics, but only 11% describe themselves as deeply religious.

In 2010, 65% of Poles gave the Church’s activities a positive grade,

but by 2020 that figure had dropped to 42%. The Church’s pedophile cover-ups and the generally anti-Christian attitudes broadcast by global news and entertainment media have contributed to this trend.

Additionally, the pro-abortion marches that started in Poland last October have declared hostility to Catholicism. The movement’s leader Marta Lempart has called the Catholic Church “a woman’s worst enemy.” Some marchers disrupted religious services, and vandalized churches along the way.

MODLITWY

PUBLICATION OF PRAYERS. The Polish American Journal gladly accepts prayers ads for publication. They must be received by the 10th of each month, prior to the month of publication, and must be pre-paid at the cost of \$15.00 each, which can be paid by check or charge. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please call 1 (800) 422-1275 or (716) 312-8088. Send to: Polish American Journal, P.O. Box 271, N. Boston, NY 14110.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. Holy Spirit, You who solve all problems, who light all roads so I can attain my goal. You who give me the Divine gift to forgive and to forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my life you are with me. I want this short prayer to thank you for all things and to confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you, even and in spite of all material illusion. I wish to be with you in eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. Thank you Holy Spirit. That person must say this prayer for 3 consecutive days. After 3 days, the favor requested will be granted, even if it may appear difficult. This prayer must be published immediately after the favor is granted, without mentioning the favor. Your initials should appear after the thank you. Thank You Holy Spirit. J.K.

PRAYER TO ST. CLARE. Ask St. Clare for three favors, one business and two impossible. Pray nine Hail Marys once a day for nine days with a lighted candle. Pray if you believe it or not. Publish. “May the Sacred Heart of Jesus Be Praised, Adored and Glorified Today and Every Day.” Request will be granted no matter how impossible it seems. Publication must be promised. J.K.

Gone Dog is Doggone Cute



Barnard and Pierogi

LEESBURG, Virg. — A puppy didn't wait for stardom to come to her, she went chasing after it.

On Feb. 19, FOX 5's Bob Barnard was reporting live from the streets of Leesburg, on the icy conditions affecting the Washington D.C. area, when he was interrupted by an adorable interloper.

FOX 5 posted the segment to its YouTube channel, which earned over 1 million views.

In the clip, Barnard is helping scrape ice off neighborhood cars and speaking about road conditions in the area, when, around the 1:50 mark, a puppy scampers into the

shot. Barnard is quick to pick up the pup and allows the little canine to join his broadcast.

"I want to get to know this dog," Barnard says in the video as he lifts the puppy up and accepts a few kisses from the excited animal.

Once on camera, the puppy becomes the star of the show.

The dog's owner soon rushed outside, letting Barnard know the dog — in a daring feat of acrobatics — had escaped from its yard.

"She just jumped over the gate," the woman told Barnard, before dropping the dog's name: Pierogi.

New Pomost Officers Elected

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Pomost International held its annual election of officers, March 18, 2021. The results: Michael Pietruszka (pres.); Thomas Wrzosek (v.p.); Gloria LaSota (corr. sec.); Patricia Pietruszka (rec. sec.); and Linda DiPietro Her-raez (treas.).

The group also voted to post-

pone this year's English Language Program in Rzeszów until the Summer of 2022 because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

The next meeting of Pomost International will be held on Thursday, April 15 at the Polish Cadets of Buffalo Hall, 927 Grant Street at 6:30 p.m.

SUPPORT THE PAJ PRESS FUND

In 1978, a voluntary fund-raising campaign was launched by a group of loyal readers of the Polish American Journal entitled "We Love the PAJ Press Fund" in order to help cover rising postage, material and production costs.

Donations to the PAJ Press Fund are also used to support our reader services (postage, telephone, research, etc.), provide newsclippers with stamps and envelopes, and cover extraordinary expenses in producing the paper, most recently, replacing a computer workstation. The Polish American Journal is not a profit-making venture. Thanks to its dedicated staff, the PAJ is published as a "public service" for American Polonia.

Donations to the PAJ Press Fund will be acknowledged in the paper unless otherwise directed by the contributor.

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POLONIA PLACES

Canada Dry Bottling, Milwaukee



by Gregory L. Witul

Canada Dry Bottling Co.
232 West Bruce Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Status: Closed

There is nothing better than a cool beverage on a warm spring day and when the Poles of Milwaukee grabbed a Canada Dry ginger ale for refreshment, they were enjoying the labors of one of their own, Paul Najdowski.

Najdowski was born in the late 1880s in Illinois. Spending much of his early life in the prairie state, Paul eventually married and started a family. In the 1920s, the Najdowskis moved out of Illinois and settled in Tess Corners, Wisconsin, about 14 miles from downtown Milwaukee. At the Corners, Najdowski opened a tavern and grocery store, and being out in the country, used a well for water. This unremarkable well would become the foundation of a beverage empire when it started producing some of the famous sparkling mineral water that Waukesha known for. With a vein of "clear gold" on his property, Paul decided in August of 1928 to convert his basement into a bottling plant and began selling the water as Waukesha Mineral Spring Water.

In the first six months, Najdowski was able to get production up to 100 cases of water a day. Soon he started producing another carbonated beverage for his salesman to peddle. With these two products, Waukesha Mineral Spring Water started taking off and by the end of the year they were selling out every day. In 1929, Paul closed the tavern and grocery store and used the space to install new equipment and could now bottle 350 cases a day. With this expansion of the plant, Paul

brought his son Elmer on to help, purchased a warehouse and office at 1625 South 6th Street and renamed the company Aren Mineral Spring Water Co.

While the Great Depression destroyed the business world, Aren thrived. It formally incorporated in 1932 and would go on to sponsor the Polish Business Men's Club picnic for a number of years. With Paul at the helm as president and Elmer as vice president, the new corporation purchased a new building at 252 West Bruce Street. At the 15,000 square foot Bruce Street location the family was able to increase production to 600 cases a day.

In October of 1941, the company landed a major franchise, the bottling rights to Canada Dry's Spur Cola. Introduced in 1939, Spur was still a fairly new brand being introduced to the market with a big marketing blitz and much fanfare. Landing this line, the Najdowskis had to put all their focus on this new national brand. For 19 months, the company tried to run both the Aren soda line and Spur but by April of 1943, they could not secure enough rationed sugar to support them both. With both sons off fighting overseas, Paul Najdowski decided to end bottling the entire Aren brand a focus exclusively on Spur. When both sons came home after the war, they were able to secure the rest of the Canada Dry brands and they renamed their company Canada Dry Bottling Co.

Being pillars of the community the Najdowskis were easily able to get their products in the bars and taverns across Polish Milwaukee. Pale Dry, Collins, Spur, Quinine, and Hi-Spot were ready to be used as mixers, while Black Cherry, Orange, Root Beer, Grape, and Cherry sodas were available for the underage crowd. The company thrived through the 1950s and early 60s, but soon thereafter the Najdowskis took leave of 232 West Bruce Street and pursued other endeavors.

FILM

Oscars 2021: Dariusz Wolski among nominees and Polish accents in "Quo vadis, Aida?"

by Bartosz Szarek



Wolski

Poland was the first out of the gate for the 2021 international Oscar race with Małgorzata Szumowska and Michał Englert's *Never Gonna Snow Again* as its national pick. Unfortunately, the story of a Ukrainian masseur who becomes a guru-like figure in the gated community of Poland, did not appear on the 15-movie shortlist for the Best International Feature Film category. Inevitably failed to make it to the final 5 nominees announced on March 15, 2021.

Nevertheless, there are some reasons to be contented about this year's Academy Awards. For the first time in his long career in Hollywood, the award-winning Polish cinematographer Dariusz Wolski will compete for the most famous and prestigious award in the entertainment industry — the Oscar statuette in the Best Cinematography category for Paul Greengrass' *News of the World*.

Known for his work on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series and Alex Proyas' cult classics *The Crow* and *Dark City* — as well as his collaborations with Ridley Scott,

Robert Zemeckis or Tim Burton, Wolski is in the running for an Academy Award against such prominent cinematographers as: Erik Messerschmidt (*Mank*), Sean Bobbitt (*Judas and the Black Messiah*), Joshua James Richards (*Nomadland*) and Phedon Papamichael (*The Trial of the Chicago 7*). So, the competition will be fierce. As always.

A few Polish accents at this year's Oscars can be found in the Bosnia and Herzegovina's candidate *Quo vadis, Aida?*, directed by Jasmila Žbanić and nominated in the Best International Feature Film category. Žbanić's film, dealing with the genocide in Srebrenica, is an international co-production managed by Ewa Puszczyńska, who also collaborated with Paweł Pawlikowski on Oscar-winning *Ida* and his follow-up to the award — *Cold War*. The film was edited by Jarosław Kamiński who also worked for Pawlikowski. Not to mention Antoni Komasa-Łazarkiewicz, a Polish composer

cooperating with Agnieszka Holland, who wrote the original score. And a costume designer Małgorzata Karpiuk — responsible for wardrobe and props.

We are keeping our fingers crossed for the nominees and their projects. And the winners will be announced on April 25, at both the Dolby Theatre — the ceremony's normal home — and Los Angeles' main railway hub, Union Station, two months later than originally planned, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cinema.

◆ ◆ ◆

Bartosz Szarek (born 1986, Nowy Sącz) is a Polish film critic, freelance journalist, publicist and festival correspondent. Szarek's reviews appear regularly in top film and music magazines in Poland, including *Kino*, *Ekrany* and *Teraz Rock*. Locally, he contributes to a weekly newspaper and website *Dobry Tygodnik Sądecki*, writing about film and music, covering noteworthy cultural events in Nowy Sącz and surroundings.

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GENEALOGY

Celebrating Easter with our Polish Ancestors

by Stephen M. Szabados

Easter was an important celebration for our Polish forebears, and I find it exciting when I feel I have found a way to connect with my deceased ancestors.

The season begins long before Easter Sunday with *zapusty* or pre-Lenten traditions. Do you remember when the nuns at our school sat us down to list what we were giving up for Lent? Candy was a popular item on our lists. I also remember Sister Valentine marching us first-graders to a pew in the church on Ash Wednesday to be marked with ashes on my forehead. Over the next few years, I started to understand the symbolism of this ritual. Adults in various countries may have also made their lists, but many focused on the merrymaking of Mardi Gras or Carnival. I never experienced a Mardi Gras-type celebration, but I remember the careful steps the nuns had their students do in preparations for the Lenten season.

The general emphasis of Easter starts with the end of Lent and the arrival of Palm Sunday. In Poland, Palm Sunday is called *Niedziela Męki Pańskiej* (the Sunday of the Lord's Passion), *Niedziela Wierzbowa* (Willow Sunday), or *Niedziela Kwietnia* (April Sunday). Lacking a convenient source of palms, my Polish ancestors substituted the spring greenery that would be in blossom in their areas.

In my grandfather's area, Dmochy, the villagers cut willow branches to symbolize the palm branches that the people used to cover the path that Jesus took to enter Jerusalem. The villagers in Dmochy placed the willow branches on the church floor to allow the priest to walk to the altar during the Palm Sunday procession. After the mass, my grandfather's parents took the branches home to place in their homes, barns, and fields to encourage good health, livestock production, and the protection of their homes. They nailed willow branches to the home's main entries and burnt them as incense to drive away evil spirits. They and the other villagers also fastened the branches to plows, tucked them into beehives, and put them under nests.

On Holy Thursday and Good Friday, eggs were colored by daughter Marianna and the other girls and young women of the village. The women did the coloring in secrecy from the boys and men. The colored eggs are called *malowane* or *malowanki* when they used a single color. If they colored the egg with a design, they called it *kraszone* or *kraszanki*. *Pisanki* was the name used for a multi-colored egg with intricate patterns created using a stylus to apply wax before placing the egg in the colored dyes. The origin of eggs as an Easter custom dates back to ancient times to celebrate the beginning of spring. The egg was a symbol of fertility and

played a critical role in many celebrations throughout Poland. In the 1800s, the Poles gave elaborately decorated and ornamental *pisanki* eggs as gifts during Polish courtships.

Always celebrate our heritage of traditional holidays, and let children and grandchildren learn about their ancestors.

In memory of the Passion of Christ, the family and the other villagers spent Good Friday fasting and praying in Church. On Holy Saturday, Poles would go to the church with baskets full of eggs, sausages, and bread called the Easter Basket. The villagers would bring the Easter food to the church for the priests to bless. In the small villages such as Dmochy Kudly, Dmochy Wochoy, and Dmochy Mrozy, my great-grandparents, Leopold, Anna, and the other villagers met the priest at a scheduled place and time to bless their Easter food. The priest made these trips to the small villages in the parish to protect the Easter food from spoiling.

On Easter Sunday, families would attend Mass, then race for their home to meet their relatives for a festive breakfast. The fasting was over, and the blessed egg was

the first food to be eaten. The head of the table gave a slice of the egg to each family member to eat. Children believed they would get the sweets from the Easter Bunny, and sometimes they looked for chocolate eggs hidden in the house. People would wish one another "Happy Easter" and would enjoy the day visiting with friends and relatives.

My grandmother and mom oversaw our Easter celebration. During Lent, my sister and I accompanied our grandmother to a Lenten service for the Stations of the Cross. I think I heard my grandmother call it *Droga Krzyżowa* (Way of the Cross). We attended this service at least once per week. On Palm Sunday, we collected a few palms that my grandmother folded into crosses to pin over our doorways as her family had done in Poland with willows. Easter morning, my sister and I searched for eggs hidden in the house, and we found a basket filled with chocolate eggs and a large bunny. My grandmother prepared an Easter brunch highlighted with ham and other typical American foods. Pierogi and Polish sausage were not available in central Illinois. However, grandma's feast was fantastic. In adulthood, I have

tasted Polish foods and love them. They are now a must for our menu on holidays.

Besides feasting on traditional Polish recipes, how can we come closer to our Polish ancestors during the Easter season?

Enjoy a special snack with our family eating the traditional Paczki on or before Fat Tuesday.

Make egg decorating a family activity with both the simple one-color, two-color, and some family members trying to make the intricate *Pisanki* eggs.

To honor my Dmochy ancestors, I find willows and have our Polish priest bless them. I, then, hang them over our doorways.

Most importantly, celebrate our Easter family feast with traditional Polish foods such as the traditional egg slices, sausages, pierogi, soups, vegetables, and a chocolate egg hunt for the children. (In 2021, the size of this gathering should be smaller, but the use of virtual devices could have our normal attendance using multiple locations.)

Always celebrate our Polish heritage of traditional holidays and let our children and grandchildren learn about their ancestors.

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Warsaw police stop anti-lockdown march

WARSAW — An anti-lockdown protest was disbanded by police before it could proceed on its planned route. Some of the mostly younger marchers brandished placards calling the Covid-19 pandemic a hoax and claiming their constitutional right to free speech and assembly were being violated. Four policemen were injured by aggressive demonstrators.

"This protest was absolutely illegal, since it created a public health hazard," said Health Minister Adam Niedzielski, who advocates a policy of zero tolerance.

Six protesters were detained, 70 were fined and 800 will have their day in court.

Give your kids and grandkids a gift of their personal Polish heritage!

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The Prawdzic coat of arms was shared by the szlachta (gentry) lines of over 500 variously surnamed Polish families including: Baranowski, Ząb, Dąbski Sowiński, Bielski, Lang, Cybulski, Szuba, Trębski Rudzki, Dobrowolski and Gołębiowski.

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POLISH CHEF

Święcone Sweets

by Robert Strybel

SAND BABKA (babka piaskowa): Combine 3/4 c flour, 3/4 c potato starch and 4 t baking powder and sift together. Cream 1 c + 2 T butter with 1-1/2 c confectioner's sugar, gradually adding 4 raw egg yolks, zest rind and juice of 1 lemon and mix well. Gently fold in 4 stiffly beaten egg whites. Transfer to greased, flour-dusted babka pan and bake in 350° oven 1 hr or so. When cool dust with confectioner's sugar or ice.

BABCIA'S CHEESECAKE (sernik babuni): Combine 1-1/4 cups flour, 3/4 t baking powder and 1/4 t salt. With fork mash in 1/4 c butter or margarine. Beat 1 egg with 3 T sour cream and stir into flour mixture with 1/3 c confectioner's sugar. Knead well until dough is smooth and roll out on floured bread-board into a rectangle. Line a 13x9x2 inch pan with

the dough and bring it part way up the sides. Separately, beat 6 eggs with 2 c confectioner's sugar at high speed 5 min, add 1 t vanilla extract and beat until fluffy. Process in food processor or sieve 1 lb farmer's cheese, combine with 1-1/2 c mashed potatoes, add 2 t baking powder, 1/2 t salt, 1 T lemon or orange zest and a pinch of nutmeg. Combine well with egg mixture, transfer to dough-lined baking pan, smoothing out the top. Bake at 350° 45-55 min or until set. Cool well before cutting into portions.

CRUMB-TOP PLUM MAZURKA (mazurek z powidłami i kruszonką): Cut 1/2 lb butter into 3 c flour, gradually mixing in 4 egg yolks and 1 scant c confectioner's sugar. Quickly work ingredients into a smooth dough, wrap in foil and refrigerate several hrs. Divide dough into 2 parts. Roll out one half and fit it into square or rectangular baking pan.

Spread with powidła (Polish plum butter). Coarsely grate the remaining dough, evenly covering the entire surface. Bake in preheated 390°-400° oven about 20 min or until nice and golden. When cool, cut into squares.

WAFER MAZURKA (mazurek na wafli): Get 4 plain, large, square or rectangular wafers at a pastry-supply, gourmet, specialty or European import shop. Place 1 wafer on cutting board, spread thinly with apricot or cherry jam, cover with another wafer, press down gently and spread with canned chocolate of white frosting, cover with another wafer, spread it with jam and cover with a 4th wafer. Cover with clean dish towel, weight down with something heavy (like a large book) and refrigerate. Just before serving spread top and sides with frosting and sprinkle top generously with ground walnuts. Cut into squares and serve.

FOR SKILLED PASTRY COOKS ONLY! EASTER CHEESE DESSERT (pascha): Sieve 2-1/4 lbs full-cream (not fat-reduced!) farmer cheese. Separately cream 5 egg yolks with 1-1/4 c sugar, stir in 1 c coffee cream. Stirring constantly, heat mixture nearly to boiling point, but do not boil. Remove from flame, stir in the cheese, 1 1/4 lb unsalted butter, 3/4 c plumped raisins, 1/2 c chopped blanched almonds, 1 t orange zest and 1 t vanilla. Mix well and place mixture on cheese cloth. Tie cheese cloth into a ball and hang it up to drip-dry, twisting ball to extract moisture. When no more moisture can be extracted, refrigerate in cheese cloth overnight. Remove cheese cloth and decorate cheese ball *pascha* with chopped candied orange rind, slivered almonds and raisins.

RECIPES

My Hate/Love Relationship With Szczaw

by Geraldine Balut Coleman

I have to admit that I try and eat almost anything. How can people say that they don't like a certain type of food, if they haven't tried it? I will admit that this does not hold true for every possible dish one could taste. Take, for example, horse meat, dog meat, or unusual ingredients in certain other cultural concoctions. For me, there are a couple of Polish dishes I refuse to eat. The first is *czernina*! I guess it's more psychological than for any other reason. As a child I saw this Polish

"delight" being prepared from the very first step. Need I say more? It has only been in recent years that I started to eat Polish style *galereta*, also known as *zimne nogi* or *sulze*. I just will not eat anything prepared with pig's feet. There are, however, pork tenderloin and chicken versions that I enjoy.

My busia (Grandmother) Czesława was a fabulous cook and baker. Whatever she created was more than pleasing to the palette. Except that I had a hate relationship with *szczaw*. I have absolutely no logical reason why I hated sorrel,

aka *szczaw*, *oseille*, *sauerampfer*. As a child, I simply disliked the thought and taste of *zupa szczawiowa*. I don't know if it was the look of it, the taste of it, or being told that I had to eat what was on the table or else. I stayed as far away from *szczaw* as long as I could remember. Kids are kids and in many cases finicky eaters. But I wasn't a fussy eater. I remember gathering wild asparagus that was growing on the side of our Michigan country road and bringing them to Busia to use as part of our supper. My siblings and cousins were not pleased with me bringing a vegetable they did not like. Maybe that's why Busia pacified me about that occasional *zupa szczawiowa*.

During this pandemic, I began to sort through and clean out boxes and folders of miscellaneous somethings and nothings. In one box I found memories in the form of French notes and recipes. I came across a couple of recipes with old notations of how delicious those dishes were. Many years ago, my family visited our French friends, the Chillotis, in Aurillac, France. As I remember, Simone was a master chef. During our visit, every French delight she created was a masterpiece. One evening she prepared a light supper with Bordeaux wine, a garden fresh salad, and another course. I was assuming it was a spinach and onion quiche. When I asked her for the recipe, she wrote down - *tarte aux oignons à l'oseille*!



zupa szczawiowa



tarte aux oignons à l'oseille

I couldn't believe it. I had eaten sorrel, aka *szczaw* and loved it! Naturally, I told her about my hate relationship with sorrel. She told me about wonderful recipes that had *oseille* incorporated into them. The French and Germans prepare many fish dishes with sorrel. Simone gave me a few recipes, but I always go back to *tarte aux oignons à l'oseille* and *saumon à l'oseille*, a salmon dish common in France and Germany.

Around the Chicago area, it is difficult to find sorrel seeds. You have to start searching in the late winter and I've found a couple of Polonian stores that carry them. Yes, sorrel is a perennial, but I have a balcony garden and every winter, my perennials do not survive in their pots, except for chives. So, every year I grow new sorrel in my patio garden with hopes of preparing the sorrel dishes I now love.

I thought I would end this ar-

ticle by giving you the recipe for *zupa szczawiowa*. Then I thought, "wait!" Most Polish cooks already have a few versions of this recipe in their soup collection. Instead, I should give you the recipe that brought me back to appreciating *szczaw/sorrel*. Thus, I give you:

Tarte aux oignons à l'oseille

3 c. sweet onions
(Vidalia) finely sliced
3 eggs
1/4 t. salt
1-1.5 c. heavy cream
1/4 c. butter
Pinch or two of nutmeg
1 T. flour
Pepper to taste
10 oz. sorrel, stems off, well-washed
Dash of dry white wine
19" pie crust or pastry shell
5 oz. grated Gruyere

- In pan, cook onion, salt, and butter slowly on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until onions are soft.
- Raise heat to medium, add wine, and let onion mixture cook off for a minute or so.
- Add flour and stir to evenly distribute. Cook for 2 minutes.
- Add sorrel, stir, and cover. Cook for a minute until sorrel is wilted. Remove from heat.
- In large bowl, whisk eggs, cream, nutmeg, and pepper.
- Combine sorrel mixture, egg mixture, and half of Gruyere cheese.
- Sprinkle the other half of Gruyere in bottom of pastry/pie shell.
- Fill pastry/pie shell with mixture and bake at 375 degrees for 30 - 40 minutes until lightly browned.

Bon appétit and smaczno!

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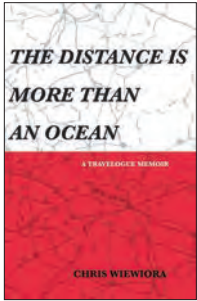
A Month for Memoirs

by Mary E. Lanham

THE DISTANCE IS MORE THAN AN OCEAN: A TRAVELOGUE MEMOIR

by Chris Wiewiora
Finishing Line Press 2020, 23 pp.

In this slim memoir, Chris Wiewiora seamlessly flows from the present to the past and back again. As an adult, Wiewiora travels to Poland with his father, revisiting where he lived as a child.



With lyrical and vivid prose, he contemplates this part of his childhood while examining the present day. Memories bubble up and bump into each other. Instances of buying soda to give to his brother drift to a near drowning incident in a swimming pool. Rising back to up the surface of the present, Wiewiora is reminded of the painting his mother has of the Old Town and muses on the nature of memory and truth.

As a child, Wiewiora moved with his parents who were Evangelical missionaries to Warsaw, Poland during communism. They later moved to Orlando, Florida. *The Distance is More Than an Ocean* is Chris Wiewiora's first chapbook. It was written while he was completing his MFA in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University.

ONE STAR AWAY

by Imogene Salva
Imogene Salva 2020, 312 pp.

All Imogene Salva's life, her mother told her stories about her own childhood. About her family's capture and forced transport and her mother's eventual escape and journey to India.

Salva relays her mother's story with a compelling narrative. Jose-

phine or Zuita as she is called in the book was a small child when her entire family was arrested and ripped from their home in early 1940 by the NKVD. They were herded onto cattle cars along with scores of others headed somewhere unknown. They soon learned that they were bound for the "Inhuman Land" of Siberia to be slave laborers.

Imprisoned in a labor camp, and pushed to the brink, Zuita's parents decide to try to escape their torturers. What follows is a story of perseverance, faith, and hope.



Inspired to share her mother's story with the world, Salva began her meticulous research by asking her mother and her extended family countless questions. She then moved on to reading books on the subject, interviewing other survivors, and even traveling with her mother to India.

Originally from Queens, New York, Imogene Salva visited Poland regularly. She earned an M.A. in TESOL and a BA from Queens College. She is a foreign language teacher and has taught Spanish, French, and Polish. She now lives in Colorado with her family.

Note: All things must come to an end, eventually. After seven years and over eighty articles, this is my last review for the *Polish American Journal*. I want to thank Mark Kohan for being a wonderful editor and for also awarding me a fictitious golden pieróg the one and only time I submitted my article early.

I also want to thank the larger Polish and Polish American community of authors for being so welcoming. It has been an honor to read and review your books. And, as always, support your local libraries.

"A CELEBRATION OF THE WRITINGS OF THE POET VICTORIA JANDA" will be held as a webinar event, Sat., April 24, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The event will include virtual poetry readings and discussion. Janda was a co-founder of Minnesota's Polanie Club, and author of three books: "Singing Furrows," "Star Hunger," and "Walls of Space." The address to access the readings is <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/619823597>. This event is jointly sponsored by PACIM and the ACPC.

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THE PONDERING POLE

The Four P's

by Edward Poniewaz

Within a week, this is what I heard or came across about prayer, palate, purpose, and perseverance. Add or change your own P as needed.

On Sunday, a lady from church was talking about the prayer of Sister Faustina Kowalska often said at the bed of a dying person and how its calming effect and spiritual "release" were powerful. I believe she was talking about the Divine Mercy Chaplet. This was at a non-Polish church.

The February 2021 edition of *Feast* magazine (feastmagazine.com), published and distributed for foodies living in Missouri, Eastern Kansas, and Southern Illinois, mentioned the Café Poland, located in Columbia, Missouri (also previously highlighted in The Pondering Pole). "Café Poland is perhaps best known for its pierogi, but its *lecho* will make any cold winter night more enjoyable." Lecho (leczko) is a stew made of spicy bell peppers, kielbasa, and potatoes. Sounds like an alternative for bigos and there are recipes on the web.

Bob Stockdale, a popular financial guru in St. Louis was remarking on the astute saving and investing sense of **Rob Gronkowski**, tight end, and Super Bowl champion for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers who has an estimated worth of between 45 to 60 million dollars. The story is that Gronkowski has banked his salary throughout his professional football career while living solely off his endorsements and other income streams. I know he has not wasted his talents on the field, but I also hope he will not bury his other "talents" in the sand rather than making meaningful and productive

use of those as well. That said, there is a lesson for young Polish kids and for all kids about work and how to save and invest those necessary checks.

Finally, six of Dr. Seuss's works are being pulled by his estate because of what it sees as containing insensitive racial representations. However, while they are at it, can eBay and Amazon remove the negative and stereotypical Polak joke books in their catalogue? The Larry Wilde "Official" joke books? Granted, some of Geisel's past references and characterizations are not acceptable or preferred for the current era, but his beliefs and intentions were not racist. The Wilde "dumb" Polish stuff though, is bigoted. More on Dr. Seuss later.

Otherworldly Poles

News of the Mars rover Perseverance mission "un-earthed" names for me of Poles in America and Poland who are or were involved since the dawn of the modern space exploration period. All can be found in Wikipedia and astronauts can be found under a "List of Astronauts by Name" search result. Here are some of those individuals.

Steve Jurczyk became the acting director of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) January 20, 2021 — just in time to oversee the Mars rover Perseverance mission. It was a successful operation and landing on February 18, 2021. He is 55 years old and has climbed the ladder of aeronautic research and development on the way to this current position. From an article by Robert Strybel:

"Jurczyk began his NASA career in 1988 at Langley Research Center in the Electronic Systems Branch as a design, integration and testing



Jurczyk

engineer developing several space-based Earth remote sensing systems. From 2002 to 2004, Jurczyk was director of engineering, and from 2004 to 2006 he was director of research and technology at Langley where he led the organizations' contributions to a broad range of research, technology and engineering disciplines contributing to all NASA mission areas."

From August 2006, Jurczyk served as Langley's deputy center director. In May 2014, Jurczyk was appointed as director at NASA's Langley Research Center. There, he headed NASA's first field center, which plays a critical role in NASA's aeronautics research, exploration, and science missions.

Jurczyk has received several awards and citations, was inspired by the pictures of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walking on the Moon and is keenly aware of his Polish ancestry. In 2019, Jurczyk visited the homeland of his Polish immigrant ancestors to attend the European Rover Challenge in the south-central city of Kielce.

Probably the biggest name on

either side of the Atlantic in Polish spaceflight history is **Mirosław Hermaszewski** as the "only Polish national in space when he flew aboard the Soviet Soyuz 30 spacecraft in 1978. He was the 89th human to reach outer space."

A survivor of the Volhynian massacres by Ukrainian nationalist during World War II, he later became interested in aviation and completed a commission as a pilot in the Polish Air Force, flying over thirteen different kinds of gliders and aircraft including the F-16 and F-18 jets. "In 1976, he was chosen from a pool of 500 Polish military pilots to take part in the Interkosmos space programme," sponsored and promoted by the Soviet Union to involve associate Warsaw Pact and other allied countries in Soviet space missions. He is one of the greats.

Hermaszewski's backup for the Soyuz 30 mission was Polish astronaut **Zenon Jankowski**.

There are several Polish American astronauts on the list such as **Karol Bobko** (previously featured in the *Polish American Journal*), **Scott Parazynski, M.D.**, **James Pawelczyk**, and **George Zamka**. You can review their histories and accomplishments in Wikipedia or other sources.

Of these, however, Parazynski is probably the most impressive. First, let me say, Scott needs to get a life or perhaps life has gotten too much of him. He was educated literally all over the world, is a mountain climber (Everest), a teacher, a pilot, a scuba diver, a medical doctor, and an astronaut. Oh, he is also an eagle scout. He is "a veteran of five Space Shuttle flights and seven spacewalks ... In May 2016 he was inducted into the United States As-

tronaut Hall of Fame."

He traces his Polish ancestry back to his great-great-grandparents who immigrated from Krakow. The same place where Copernicus hung out.

Polish or not?

Jon Scieszka, along with Theodor Geisel/Dr. Seuss can be found on the list of *The 100 Best Children's Books of All Time*. Jon was born September 8, 1954 in Flint, Michigan, and is the grandson (on his father's side) of Michael and Anna who "came to America from Poland. *Scieszka* is a word in Polish. It means 'path.'"

Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* comes in at #8 on the list, you can find out more about him on his website (http://www.jsworldwide.com/just_the_facts.html) or check out his story and many of the kids' books he has written or edited on Wikipedia.

Coming in at #1 on the list for his work, *Where the Wild Things Are*, is Maurice Sendak, born Maurice Bernard Sendak, June 10, 1928. "Sendak was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Polish-Jewish immigrant parents..."

THANKS TO Jack Jackowski for leads and guidance in this edition of the Pondering Pole. Please get vaccinated and if you have a thought about this month's topic, have a question, or have interesting facts to share, contact me at: Edward Poniewaz, 3765 Autumn View Drive, Arnold, MO 63010; email alinabrig@yahoo.com. N.B. If you send email, reference the Polish American Journal or the Pondering Pole in the subject line. I will not open an email if I do not recognize the subject or the sender.

A Polish Prince Turns 86

continued from cover

by 16. He began using his middle name to prevent being confused with his bandleader father. Bobby attended Duquesne University and earned a degree in music in 1956 before serving in the Army.

After leaving the service, Bobby signed a record deal with Epic Records as a bandleader. When his records didn't sell, he tried his hand as a vocalist, and had a big hit with "Roses are Red" in 1962. It was the label's first number one hit, and it stayed at the top of the charts for four weeks.

For a period of ten years Vinton was probably America's most popular singer. In the 1960s he had huge hits like "Mr. Lonely," "There! I've Said It Again," "Blue on Blue," and "Blue Velvet," selling millions of copies. The former clarinet-playing bandleader turned into a pop star and teen idol. In 1970s he had had decent hits with "Every Day of My Life" and "Sealed With a Kiss," but Epic Records decided to drop him in 1972. Apparently they didn't see much of a future for Vinton's romantic ballads.

Vinton was wondering what his next career move should be when his mother asked: "Why don't you do a nice Polish song." He had always done songs in various languages in his club act, include some in Polish. But those were mostly lively polkas, and his mother thought he should come up with a Polish song



Vinton, circa 1960.

that was more serious.

With the help of his mother, Vinton started adapting the German song composed by Henry Mayer called *Herzen haben keine fenster* ("Hearts have no windows") that was a hit in Germany and Austria. Bobby, who had spent eight years in a Polish school, came up with lyrics that went from English to Polish:

Moja droga, ja cię kocham,
Means that I love you so.

Moja droga, ja cię kocham,
More than you'll ever know.
Kocham ciebie całym sercem,
Love you with all my heart.

Since he had been dropped by Epic, Vinton had to spend \$50,000 of his own money for the recording. He then shopped the demo to eight major labels, and was turned

down by each one. A song with Polish lyrics was certainly not "hip" at that time. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a lot of negative stereotyping of Polish people, and TV shows like *All in the Family*, *The Tonight Show*, and *Laugh-In* often featured demeaning jokes. One executive told Bobby: "A Polish record? You've got to be kidding me! You've really flipped."

Vinton had butted heads with record executives before. Early in his career he wanted Epic Records to release "Mr. Lonely" as a single, but the label resisted. It was a song he began writing while in the Army, about a soldier who has no communication with home. Eventually Vinton's recording was released as a single, and it went on to spent 15 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, and made it to number one on December 12, 1964.

Bobby thought that "My Melody of Love" had the makings of a hit, and finally someone agreed: ABC Records signed on and the record was released in 1974. The bouncy tune started getting airplay on polka stations, and got strong support from Polish organizations. "But our first big break came in Buffalo, New York," Vinton once said. "Residents there requested the record so frequently that rock stations began playing it." In particular, WKBW, which was then a powerful Top 40 radio station that reached much of the East Coast, helped drive record sales.

The single soon caught on throughout the country. It spent two weeks at number three on the Hot 100 chart in November 1974 and one week at number one on the Billboard easy listening chart. It was Vinton's highest charting U.S. pop hit since "Mr. Lonely" reached number one ten years earlier.

After the success of *Melody of Love*, Vinton told the *New York Times* "I never knew there were so many Polish people."

He got his famous nickname when was in Chicago for a concert in 1974 that was attended by the late Mayor Richard J. Daley. The mayor got up and sang "My Melody of Love" with Vinton, and had so much fun he ended up missing a scheduled dinner with the King of Norway. The following day when he was asked by reporters why he didn't attend the dinner with the Norwegian king, Daley's response was: "Because I was with the Polish Prince."

The song not only revived Vinton's career, it generated a lot of pride among the Polish community. "I never knew there were so many Polish people," the singer told the *New York Times* in 1975. "They came to concerts with Polish flags,

some wearing national dress. They sing to me in Polish and some even say, 'You know, I was Polish but I never talked about it until now.'"

The hit was followed by a gold album, *Melodies of Love*, and another Top 40 pop hit, the traditional "Beer Barrel Polka," also sung partially in Polish. Vinton continued to record, including songs like a Polish-English version of "Wooden Heart," "Santa Must Be Polish," and "She Will Survive (Poland)," a song inspired by the Polish national anthem.

The Polish Prince also had a successful Canadian-produced half-hour variety show, *The Bobby Vinton Show* (from 1975 to 1978), which used "My Melody of Love" as its theme song.

Bobby recorded into the early 1990s, and later focused on live performances. Eventually he opened his own Bobby Vinton Blue Velvet Theatre in Branson, Missouri, spending ten successful years there. In 2015 he contracted a serious case of shingles and at that time retired from live performing and recording. He now lives in Florida with his wife of 58 years, Dolores.

When asked about why "My Melody of Love" had such an impact, Vinton once said: "The Polish people got something with the song that they never had here before — a song that represents their ethnic identity." For both Bobby Vinton and Polonia, it couldn't have come at a better time.

SPORTS

Błachowicz Makes First title Defense



“The Prince of Cieszyn” now has a 29-8-0 record.

by Tom Tarapacki

Despite being a heavy underdog, Poland’s **Jan Błachowicz** defeated middleweight champion Israel Adesanya by unanimous decision in his first defense of his UFC light heavyweight UFC title.

Błachowicz, 38, is the second Polish champion in UFC history (after Joanna Jędrzejczyk) and the first male Polish champion. Known as “The Prince of Cieszyn,” he now fights out of Warsaw. His record is 29-8-0.

Błachowicz was not favored to win against Adesanya despite being the defending champion. It was nothing new for the Pole — he has only been favored to win twice in his past 10 fights. Part of his problem is that he’s not a flashy fighter, and he has a quiet, gentlemanly manner. He also had a horrible start to his UFC career, going 2-4 in his first six UFC appearances. However, when he returned to his old trainer in Warsaw, Robert Jocz, things turned around and he has since gone 8-1.

“Now I think I deserve some respect. I’m the true champion right now,” Błachowicz said after the fight.

BLACK POLE. One of the fighters who helped prepare Błachowicz was **Izuagbe Ugonoh**. Born in Szczecin to Nigerian parents, he grew up in Gdańsk. He graduated from the Jędrzej Śniadecki University School of Physical Education and Sport in that city.

Boxing as a heavyweight, he said that representing Poland is an ‘honor’ for him. “Because I started my career in Poland and had my first nine fights right here, it is obvious that I represent Poland,” he told public broadcaster TVP in an interview.

The boxer said that other fighters are usually surprised that a black

man represents Poland, a country where people of color make up just a fraction of a percent of society. “I used to tell them that I was born here and it is natural for me,” he said.



Walter (l.) and son Wayne Gretzky.

Following a successful career as a kickboxer, Ugonoh became the European kickboxing champion in 2010 before moving to boxing. After going 18-2 he switched to MMA last year and won his first bout.

CANADA’S HOCKEY DAD DIES. **Walter Gretzky**, the father of hockey legend Wayne Gretzky, died at 82.

He was suffering from Parkinson’s Disease and had sustained a broken hip just before his death.

As a young man, Walter was a fine all-around athlete and a very good hockey player, but never got past juniors. He and his wife settled in Brantford, Ontario. Wayne was their first born, followed by a daughter, Kim, and three more sons, Keith, Glen and Brent.

Walter had overcome some serious health issues

in his life. In 1961, the year Wayne was born, Walter was an installer and repairman for Bell Telephone Canada when a work accident fractured his skull and left him in a coma. He came out of it but was left with deafness in his right ear. In 1991, Walter suffered a nearly fatal brain aneurysm, which destroyed his short-term memory permanently. His ordeal was documented in the movie “Waking Up Wally: The Walter Gretzky Story.”

Walter was the driving force behind Wayne’s hockey career. “He was the reason I fell in love with the game,” Wayne once recalled. Wayne often called him “the true Great One.”

His website, www.waltergretzky.com, pointed out: “Walter Gretzky was the son of Polish immigrants. His father came from Grodno Governorate, then Poland now Belarus, his mother, from Pidhaitsi (now Ukraine); they immigrated to Canada via Krakow in Poland.”

PRAY TO ST. ANTHONY. The search for Green Bay Packer great **Ron Kostelnik’s** (below) Super Bowl II ring continues after reports that his son, Mike, lost it went viral. Ron’s son, Mike, 57, had the ring in his

car when he took his daughter Olivia to tour Miami University (Ohio) last month. They only stopped at gas station in Greensburg, Indiana along the way, but when they arrived at the college, Mike could not find the ring.

A native of Colver, Pa., Ron was the son of a Polish American miner. After playing at the University of Cincinnati, the Packers chose Kostelnik in the second round of the 1961 NFL Draft. He was also drafted by Buffalo of the AFL. Ron started at left defensive tackle when the Packers won three straight NFL championships from 1965 to 1967 and helped them win two Super Bowls. The unheralded member of those great Packer lines played for eight seasons in Green Bay, and one in Baltimore. He died in 1993 at age 53.

SLOVAK NAMED NEW POLISH HOCKEY COACH. **Robert Kalaber** has been appointed as the new head coach of Poland’s men’s ice hockey team. The 50-year-old Slovak has been hired by the Polish Ice Hockey Association (PZHL) to replace the departing **Tomek Valtonen**.

Kalaber, a 50-year-old Bratislava native, moved to Poland in 2014 to coach club team JKH GKS Jastrzebie and led the squad to silver and bronze medals in the Polish Hockey League.

Valtonen was born in Poland to a Polish mother and a Finnish father, and moved to Finland at a young age. He had great credibility when he was hired in June 2018; he had been drafted by the NHL Detroit Red Wings and had a command of the Polish language. But it didn’t work out.

Valtonen had taken over from former Sabres coach Ted Nolan in 2018. Nolan was another high-profile hire who had coached in the NHL. He also previously had success rebuilding Latvia’s hockey program. However, Nolan had little success in Poland and lasted a year.

POLISH ADVENTURER PASSES. Polish super-kayaker **Aleksander Doba** died on the very summit of Mount Kilimanjaro at the age of 74.

Doba was not showing any symptoms of

altitude sickness and he was in good spirits, his guides

reported. When they met others near the first peak of Kilimanjaro, he told them he felt in great shape, and shouted, “Wild Africa!” As Doba and his two guides reached the summit, Doba sat down, then lost consciousness. He died shortly afterward, possibly from a heart attack.

Doba’s friendly smile, wild beard and muscular frame became known to the world when he kayaked across the Atlantic in 2017 at the age of 70 and became the first person to cross that ocean three times.

He was named the 2015 People’s Choice Adventurer of the Year by the National Geographic Society. Before the event, producers asked him to say, in English, “Thank you very much” when he walked onto the stage. Doba, who wore jeans to the prestigious ceremony, said, “Polacy nie gesi i swoj jezyk maja,” which translates to: “Polish people are not geese and have their own language.”

Doba has 10 *Guinness Book World Records* to his credit, and spent a full year of his life isolated alone in the middle of the ocean. Rebecca McPhee wrote: “Doba is proof that age does not matter when you are determined. He will remain an inspiration for generations to come.”

UP AND DOWN. **Roman Ficek**, a Polish ultra-marathon athlete, has set a record by running up and down Rysy, Poland’s highest mountain, nine times in 24 hours. Ficek started his endurance feat on Thursday afternoon, and covered over 63 kilometers (39 miles) in total, with only short breaks in a mountain shelter. Nobody had attempted a challenge of that kind before on the Rysy peak. The crest in southern Poland’s Tatra mountains straddles the country’s border with Slovakia and is 2,500 meters (8,200 feet) tall.

PERKOSKI’S NOTEBOOK.

Polish cycling icon **Ryszard Szurkowski** has died at the age of 75. He was one of the biggest names in Polish cycling, winning Olympic and world championship medals for Poland in the 1970s ... Two-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year **JJ Watt** signed with Arizona ... Ski jumper **Piotr Żyła** took the gold in the men’s normal hill event for Poland’s first medal at the 2021 Nordic World Ski Championships in Germany ... **Adam ‘Babyface’ Kownacki** (20-1, 15 KOs) is hoping to avenge his only loss in a rematch with Robert ‘Nordic Nightmare’ Helenius (30-3, 19 KOs) this summer in New York.

Ślawiński Sgraffito Gifted to Canisius College

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Canisius College will be the recipient of a rare Józef Ślawiński sgraffito depicting great Polish contributors to humanity including Chopin, Copernicus, Curie, and Mickiewicz. The work also depicts Poland’s oldest institution for higher learning, Jagiellonian University, also known as Kraków University.

The sgraffito was acquired by Canisius College alumnus and president of the Polish American Congress, Western New York Division, James L. Ławicki II ‘88 from the estate of Józef Poslinski.

Canisius College has elected to

have the sgraffito placed in the College Library.

“It gives me great joy to see this rare and beautiful sgraffito preserved and placed in an institution of higher learning,” said Ławicki. “Canisius College has given so much support to Western New York Polonia through its Permanent Chair of Polish Culture that it is only proper and right that this magnificent sgraffito be placed permanently at the college.”

Sgraffito is a technique either of wall decor, produced by applying layers of plaster tinted in contrasting colors to a moistened surface,

and then scratching so as to reveal parts of the underlying layer. The technique is also widely used in the making of pottery.

This artwork graced the home of Józef S. Poslinski, PE, from 1973 to 2020 and is the result of an unlikely friendship between Poslinski and the artist, Professor Jozef Ślawiński.

The two met in the 1960s through the tightknit Polish com-



munity on Buffalo’s East Side. Professor Ślawiński, known for his large sgraffito murals, needed to find a way to encase and reinforce his works for delivery to various locations where his murals would be displayed. That dilemma got Pos-

linski, a structural engineer, interested in using his skills to help the professor. Plans and designs of steel frames strong enough to withstand the weight of the sgraffitos were made and this relationship led to a personal friendship between the two men.

Both were very proud of their Polish heritage and took offense at the stereotypic view by those outside the Polish community that Poles were not very intelligent. Refute of this viewpoint led to the inception and design of this piece, envisioned by Poslinski, created by Ślawiński.

HAPPENINGS CHICAGO STYLE

“Renew My Church” Parishes To Merge, Close, Or Be Sold



Protestors hold up signs and photos of various churches and demand Cardinal Blase Cupich stop the liquidation of more than 25 churches targeted for closure by the archdiocese during a press conference outside of St. Anthony Church at 518 W. 28th Place in Bridgeport.

by Geraldine Balut Coleman

CHICAGO — The above photo, taken March 3 by *Chicago Sun-Times* photographer Anthony Vasquez, shows some of the protesters displaying their feelings that the faithful are becoming secondary to Chicago Archdiocese goals. They represent the more than 25 churches, including a number that are heavily Polish American, including **St. Adalbert, St. Wenceslaus, Our Lady of Victory, St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr, and St. Thecla.** The Archdiocese tentatively plans to shutter them and sell the properties to developers. Some are on Preservation Chicago's list of buildings that should be preserved because of their outstanding architecture.

Thus, it appears that the Chicago Archdiocese “Renew My Church” controversy has yet to be resolved or is even close to finalization throughout the Archdiocese and especially on the Northwest Side of Chicago. On February 9, the parishioners of **St. Constance** submitted a petition with over 500 signatures urging Cardinal Blase Cupich to reconsider and revoke his decision to combine St. Constance with **St. Robert Bellarmine.** The St. Constance community is disturbed by the apparent decision that includes transferring all of St. Constance's parish records and its financial resources over to the St. Robert's administration. Additionally, a new name may be assigned to these combined parishes. With approximately 80% of St. Constance parish being made up of Polish American and Polish families, the parish as a whole fears losing its Polish identity. They seek to remain as an independent parish within the Archdiocese, thus preserving its Polish character. The initiators of this appeal have announced that they will turn to the Vatican if necessary to plead their case. However, first they want to engage in productive dialogue with Cardinal Cupich.

A few days after St. Constance parishioners sent their petition, the Archdiocese of Chicago issued an official email from its Communication Office stating the following: “A recent decree appointing St. Robert Bellarmine's parish will be reconsidered by Cardinal Cupich and the Archdiocese Presbytery Council during the March meeting. We are aware of the many letters sent to the archdiocese regarding this decision and will provide an update after the council meeting.” Also, Bishop

John Manz, Auxiliary Bishop of the Episcopal Vicariate IV, and Father Jason Malave, the Cardinal's liaison for the “Renew My Church” campaign, issued an assurance and a reminder that “the future closure of any of these churches is not considered. Both churches are needed to support an active ministry in the united parish.” Regarding the appointment of St. Robert Bellarmine as the “main” church, the letter goes on to say: “At our request and with the consent of Cardinal Cupich, we again asked the Presbytery Council to consider changing the parish church at their next meeting, which will take place in early March. We will provide updated information shortly after the council meeting.” Lastly, the letter made the following statement regarding the new pastor of the combined parishes: “The Archdiocese Commission for the Diocesan Priests' Placement Board is analyzing which of the candidates for pastors will be able to effectively maintain traditions, evangelize a nearby community of Polish and English and develop the resilience and potential of the Polish Community for which St. Constance was and will continue to be an important center in the Archdiocese of Chicago.”

Additionally, the parish was also concerned about the future of St.

Maximilian Kolbe Polish Language School which has maintained a very popular and successful existence at St. Constance for 45 years. It has become clear that the vague “Renew My Church” campaign has left many Catholics confused, mystified, and discouraged.

As the saga of “Renew My Church” continues, another scenario arose around the recent closing of **Our Lady of Victory (OLV)**, parish on Chicago's Northwest Side. On February 8, members of OLV filed a formal appeal with the Archdiocese of Chicago objecting to Cardinal Blase Cupich's decision to merge OLV with St. Pascal and St. Bartholomew parishes and the dissolution of OLV by the end of 2021. Parishioners belonging to the “Save Our Lady of Victory” organization expressed interest in having the church designated as a City of Chicago landmark. With its closure, however, parishioners will be asked to consolidate with either the Sts. Pascal/Bartholomew or the Sts. Constance/Robert Bellarmine combined parishes. Approximately 150 signatures of OLV parishioners were attached to the appeal. They wish to prevent the church from being deconsecrated. If the Archdiocese denies the appeal, the group can then seek assistance directly from the Vatican. It is rumored that the Archdiocese is considering selling the OLV campus.

Additionally, there is the **St. Thecla** situation. On February 12, the former St. Thecla School building which includes not only the school, but its gymnasium, and convent, was sold to the Philadelphia Romanian Church of God. The Romanian church plans to use the school for religious, educational, and cultural purposes. The proceeds of this sale will benefit the new St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish, housed on the St. Tarcissus campus. According to a statement from St. Elizabeth: This sale “benefits the goal of the ‘Renew My Church’ process to allow the St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish to have financial and temporal stability for the purpose of spiritual renewal.” However, the St. Thecla Church building, along with some

of its adjoining offices and a small portion of the parking lot, cannot be sold until the church becomes deconsecrated. Thus, this portion of the St. Thecla property is retained by St. Elizabeth.

The questions remain, when will these issues be resolved; and will fewer and fewer Catholics attend mass and support the newly consolidated parishes? They will be answered in the future. Time will tell.

The Fifth “Chopin In The City” Concert

During these unprecedented times, the pandemic has limited us in participating in musical and cultural events. But we still had the opportunity to listen to or view wonderful musical events via YouTube or online. Thus, Chopin enthusiasts

had the opportunity to hear and see the fifth annual **Chopin in the City Festival** which ran for eight days, from February 22 to March 1. The festival was heard by music lovers online throughout the world, not just Poland and the United States. This was made possible through the efforts of well-known jazz singer, **Grażyna Auguścik**, founder and president of the Sounds & Notes Foundation.

The opening night of the fifth year of the festival began on February 22 at the Polish Consulate in Chicago. The YouTube program began with welcoming remarks by Consul Małgorzata Bąk-Guzik and Grażyna Auguścik. The trio of Agnieszka Likos on violin, her sister, Patrycja Likos Nadydal, on cello, and Akiko Konish on piano performed a concert that featured music of Frederic Chopin and Franz Schubert.

The festival continued on February 23 with a concert at Chicago's Piano Forte featuring the Matt Gold Trio with Matt on guitar, Greg Ar-

try on drums, and vocalist, Katie Ernst, on bass. On February 24, the YouTube audience listened to a piano concert by Fred Simon from Pro Musica. On the 25th, violinist Mateusz Smoczyński and cellist Stephan Braun performed from Piekaria Cichej Kobiety in Zielona Gora, Poland. On February 26, pianists Emilia Sitarz and Bartek Wasik performed the Lutoslawski Piano Duo from the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage in Washington, D.C. On February 27, the online audience enjoyed a concert from the Piano Forte where the Grażyna Auguścik Group consisting of vocalist Auguścik, John Kregor on guitar, Jon Deitemyer on drums, Paul Bedal on piano, and Matt Ulery on bass, sang and played the jazz standards of Victor Young.



l.to r.: Auguscik, Bak-Guzik, Agnieszka Likos, Konishi, Patrycja Likos Nadydal

The next two days of the festival included a February 28 performance at The Polish Museum of America in which pianist Svetlana Belsky gave an outstanding one hour educational, cultural, and historical presentation of music from Chopin through Grieg. The festival concluded with a radio presentation from Polish National Radio in Warsaw featuring the Royal String Quartet of Izabela Szałaj on violin, Elwira Przybyłowska on violin, Pawel Czarny on viola, and Michał Pepol on cello, playing works of Krzysztof Penderecki. Although grateful for this year's YouTube concerts, music lovers hope that the sixth Chopin in the City Festival will have live audiences at all of its venues.



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MINNESOTA VOICE

Were the First Poles in Minnesota Canadian?

by Mark Dillon

A book by Canadian author Stan Skrzyszewski suggests that the first persons of Polish descent to arrive in Minnesota came in the 1820s as veterans of both the War of 1812 and an armed conflict between the two leading fur trading companies of the day.

That would make the Polish presence in pre-statehood Minnesota a decade earlier than widely thought, and placed Poles among the founding settlers of what in 1837 would be coined St. Paul, today the state's capitol.

These Poles would have traveled from Spain to North America as soldiers in the British De Meuron Regiment, pressed into service after becoming prisoners of war serving in the ranks of Napoleon's Grande Armee in Europe, Skrzyszewski writes in *Polish Soldiers in Defense of Canada*.

Polish redcoats? Uniforms of the British De Meuron Regiment serving in Canada and upstate New York during the War of 1812. Some soldiers were of Polish heritage.



life in the Canadian wilderness remained elusive. Times turned tough at the Red River Colony where they had settled near modern day Winnipeg. The area produced too much wheat flour that couldn't be easily exported, resulting in falling prices

the officers in the fort and cooked, cleaned and possibly cultivated the officers' gardens."

Did Polish workers also help at the mill and help found the flour industry? An interesting question that's never really been asked.

Several leading historians of St. Paul history leave out any mention of Poles prior to St. Paul's founding in 1837, categorizing the ethnicity of Red River Colony emigrants as Swiss, German or Metis (mixed native American and European), with some dismissing the settlement they created as "squatters."

The Swiss identity of the De Meuron Regiment came from the fact that it was originally organized in 1781 in Switzerland to fight for the British. But by the time of the Napoleonic Wars a generation later, the unit's ranks of Swiss nationals were depleted and replacement lower ranks of troops were likely captured Polish cavalry POWs serving in Italy or Spain during Napoleon's Peninsular Campaign, Skrzyszewski says.

An Officers Club

Writing in 1875, J. Fletcher Williams makes much of the Swiss-Fort Snelling connection, and the Regiment's senior officers being Swiss and Scottish. Four officers were Captains D'Orsonnens and Matthey, and Lieutenants Fauche and Graffenreith. Abraham Perry and Louis Massie were also regiment leaders who built new lives in Minnesota.

Writing in 1908 in *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, I. Holcombe says "the French Swiss and the French Canadians seemed like kinsmen and dwelt together like brethren in unity. The colonists at once set to work and built houses, opened farms, engaged in work at the fort,

for farmers, and recession.

The Poles perhaps also faced religious bias and culture shock. Skrzyszewski quotes the personal papers of Lord Thomas Selkirk, the founder-sponsor of the Red River Colony:

"Since they were neither Scottish nor Presbyterian and were unable or unwilling to intermarry with the Metis or Indians, they never became part of the colony. After nine years of varied hardships, Indian and Metis attacks, internal jealousies and isolation, and finally a major flood in 1826, almost all of them left for the United States."

Among the surnames of people who lived at the colony were Bardowicz, Gandrosky, Jankowski (presumably a variation of Jankowski) and Isaak, Skrzyszewski notes. A 1971 historical marker erected in the area by Polish priests memorializing the first Poles in Manitoba also includes the surnames Kaminski, Kralich, Kwileski, Wasilowski and Sabacki.

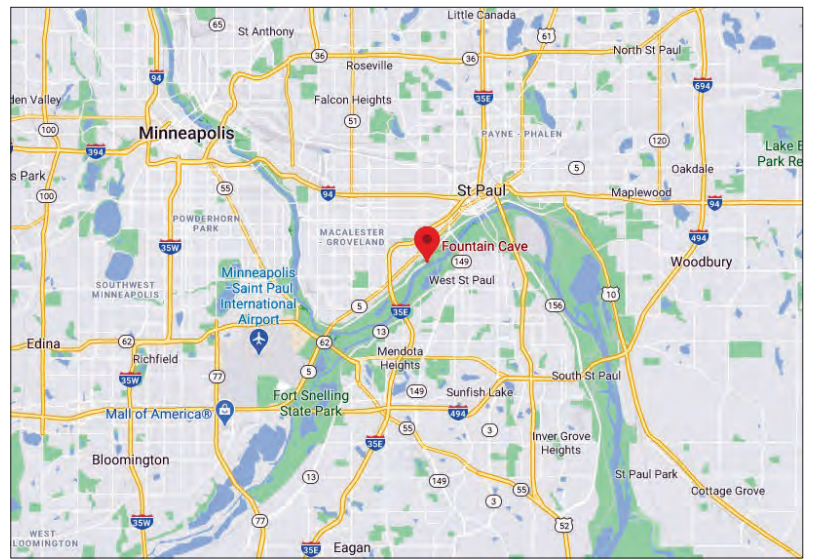
An Invitation, Later Revoked

In 1822 and beginning on June 24, 1826, two groups journeyed to the Mississippi River banks, a smaller group to Prairie du Chien on the Wisconsin side of the river and a larger one settling near Fort Snelling near present day Minneapolis, where a new grain mill that had opened at the fort in 1823 was having quality control problems, resulting in foul-tasting bread.

Skrzyszewski writes "Col. Josiah Snelling, the fort's commander, gave permission to squat on the lands belonging to the Fort Snelling military area. This small camp comprised the first permanent agricultural settler of what became the State of Minnesota. Some of these settlers worked as domestic help for

and were soon comfortable, contented, and hopeful. Many of them had brought cattle with them and their good milk cows were of great value."

However, for conscripted former British Army privates of other



Site of the first Polish settlers in Minnesota? This is the location of Fountain Cave on the banks of the Mississippi River in St. Paul. Polish veterans from Canada may have lived in the area between 1827 and 1837.

ethnicities, perhaps Poles from the Prussian or Russian partitions, the welcome mat was more limited, and their identity ignored. Fletcher Williams noted that the "the names of the other heads of families have not been preserved."

Writing in 1993, Barbara K. Luecke, author of *Snelling: Minnesota's First First Family*, says lower social status settlers along the banks of the Mississippi got the boot when it suited those in command. Fort commanders such as future U.S. President Zachary Taylor were themselves American veterans of the War of 1812, as was the region's native American agent, Lawrence Taliferro, from 1819 to 1839.

"When their use of fuel and forage conflicted with the needs of Fort Snelling, (settlers) were expelled and first settled at Fountain Cave three miles downriver near what is now Randolph Avenue. A second expulsion pushed the mixed group of settlers, whiskey sellers, and ex-soldiers to begin to build around the area of the Upper Landing three miles further downstream. This settlement became the core of Saint Paul and the West End neighborhood," explains Historic Saint Paul writer Jim Sazevich in a blog about the Fountain Cave Historical Marker.

A crackdown on bootlegging became the excuse to evict the riverbank settlement in the late 1830s. History records that Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant, a man of French heritage, was the riverbank area's distillery kingpin, and Fort Snelling military leaders targeted him, his business partners and those thought to be his customers for removal.

It would have been in Taliaferro's interest to get rid of a rogue European ethnic settlement on disputed property to help smooth 1837 treaty talks in Washington being conducted with the Dakota and the Ojibwe tribes, who were concerned about more such settlements.

Buried by Government Road Work?

By the 1840s, Poles emigrating directly from partitioned Poland were choosing other places in Minnesota to settle, notably Winona,

then a booming lumber town. Conflicts such as the Warsaw Uprising of 1831 and the Greater Poland Uprising of 1848 generated the first major wave of Polish immigrants to Minnesota, historian John Radzilowski writes in *Poles in Minnesota* in 2005.

If there are archeological traces of early Polish settlement in what is now St. Paul by British Army veterans — such as buttons, bayonets, kitchen utensils, pottery, and perhaps even human remains — one place to look would be around Fountain Cave and under Shepard Road in St. Paul. However, the cave was sealed up in the 1960s as part of a state road improvement project, and inaccessible today.

Curiously, the site of this possible Polish settlement is a short walk from St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, co-founded in 1872 by Poles and later taken over by a larger group of Czech immigrants who had settled in the same St. Paul neighborhood beginning in the late 1860s after the U.S. Civil War.

Canadian author Skrzyszewski published his work in 2017. He is also the author of *The Katyn Poetry and Song Cycle*, an anthology of poems about the 1940 Katyn massacre. He is currently working on a new book about Laura Blackwell de Turczynowicz, co-founder of the Grey Samaritan nurse volunteer corps.

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TOLEDO

Polish Cultural Center Begins to Take Shape

by Tom Sorosiak

TOLEDO — Progress continues to be made in the planning and construction of a \$3 million Polish Cultural Center (PCC) in the Marina District of Downtown Toledo. The advisory board has secured a \$100,000 grant from the State of Ohio as added seed money for the project. This money will be added to the money already donated by individuals and local businesses.

The PCC will provide to the Northwest region of Ohio, specifically, but also to the entire visitor perspective of Toledo, as a showcase of Polish heritage. Included in the Cultural Center will be an event hall with seating for 190 people, a lounge area for socializing, with beverages and food, a full kitchen, meeting rooms, library/genealogy room, and outdoor seating.

The intent of the PCC is to make available to the public local Polish heritage displays, language classes, traditional Polish food cooking classes, and invited speakers on Polish history, traditions, and culture. The PCC will also serve as a location for many of the various Polish organizations to meet for their meetings.

At the present time, a collection of Polish artifacts from the area has been donated to the PCC for future display. Items include Polish Catholic Church artifacts associated with being a parishioner, letters from family members who came to the United States, photographs, traditional recipes from Poland, books in Polish and English about Poland, and items from Polish churches that once were a part of the religious communities located on LaGrange Street and Nebraska Avenue in Toledo.



One of the acquired artifacts: this historical marker, which identifies the Polish immigrants to the LaGrange Street area and on the reverse side, a history of the oldest Polish Roman Catholic Church, St. Hedwig, built in 1891. Once vandalized, the marker has been fully restored.

Over the next few months, the advisory board is going to be seeking corporate and philanthropic donations to enable meeting the initial financial obligation to begin construction. Four acres of land has been donated, survey and architectural work has been donated, and a 12' x 6' mosaic was created by renowned artist, Sister Jane Mary Sorosiak of Lourdes University. The work, which depicts the history of the Polish in the two neighborhoods of Toledo, along with highlighting the traditions, slogans, events and people of national prominence, was paid for by an anonymous donor.

It is the intention of the advisory board to secure large donations that will be used to honor families or businesses by naming meeting rooms, the event hall, lounge, library, etc. in their family name or business. It would be blessing to have one donor provide the revenue for the entire building project and thus have it named in their honor. People and companies that might be interested in making donations can do so by sending their donation to the Polish Cultural Center, P.O. Box 291, Waterville, OH 43566. There are levels of donations that will be recognized with a permanent display in the PCC upon completion.

*Jeśli w kwietniu pszczoły latają, to długie chłody się zapowiadają.
If in April bees don't fly, lingering cold they prophesy.*



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New Lira CD of “Chopin Songs”

CHICAGO — Despite the pandemic, the esteemed Lira Ensemble of Chicago, which specializes in Polish music, song, and dance, has been busy with a COVID-compliant project: recording a new album — this time the songs of Poland's greatest composer Frederic Chopin.

Lira's “Chopin Songs” CD offers an opportunity to hear all of the great master's known vocal works in a beautiful recording with a booklet of Polish lyrics and English translations.

Some Americans are not aware that Chopin wrote vocal music, but his songs are well known and loved in Poland, where they are often performed. This new album allows Americans to familiarize themselves with Chopin's lovely and varied songs. They may surprise many listeners, because they reflect the many temperaments and talents of the most Polish of all composers. Some of the songs are joyful mazurkas, but others tell sad or tragic stories, including the heart-rending saga of Poland's last uprising before the catastrophic invasions and partitions by its neighbors, which broke Chopin's heart.



Krawczyk

These songs by Chopin are performed by popular Lira soloists: soprano Katarzyna Dorula and mezzo-soprano Anna Mazur Krawczyk. They are joined by Lira's recent new addition — baritone Khary Laurent. The singers are accompanied by the Lira Ensemble's brand-new piano accompanist — Marta Pasek, who holds a doctorate from the Music University of Krakow, one of the best music schools in Poland.

This new album, Lira's fourteenth major recording, was produced by Lucyna Migala, artistic director and general manager of the Lira performing company.



Laurent

Since all the songs are solos, they were able to be recorded during COVID, because only two artists were in the studio and two persons were needed in the control booth at any time.

Lira's “Chopin Songs” will be issued in late April — just in time for Mothers' and Fathers' Day gift purchases. The price of this new CD is



Dorula

\$25.00 with free shipping. However, the pre-issue price is only \$20.00 with free shipping. This pre-issue price is available until May 1, 2021.

Orders for the new CD can be made by phone, using credit cards, by calling (773)-505-8731, or by sending a check payable to the Lira Ensemble



Migala

to the group's temporary COVID address: The Lira Ensemble, 6033 North Sheridan Road #34H, Chicago, IL 60660.



Pasek

Lira is artist-in-residence at Loyola University Chicago, where the Jesuits generously provide the Ensemble with free office space, however the university's offices are closed indefinitely due to the pandemic.

Purchasing or gifting this unusual album not only brings beautiful Polish music into your home or the homes of family and friends, it also helps the Lira Ensemble weather the pandemic, which has devastated performing arts companies by making live performances impossible.

PLEASE HELP US HELP OUR OWN COMMUNITY. JOIN THE...

Polish American Journal Foundation

The PAJF is a non-profit 501c3 organization established to promote Polish and Polish American culture and traditions among members of the public and other Polish and Polish American groups. It does this by organizing and supporting special events, networking, and providing consultation to individuals and groups, which seek to learn more about the Polish community in the United States.

As a national newspaper serving Polish immigrants and their descendants since 1911, the Polish American Journal has a unique perspective on the shortfalls — primarily funding — that have prevented many great projects from getting off the ground. We also have grown increasingly frustrated to see students — future leaders, who are passionate about Polonia — seek other areas of study because they could not secure something as simple as airfare to study in Poland or abroad. Likewise, we see so many talented academicians, scholars, artists, folk groups — the list goes on — whose special projects or areas of study have been dropped for lack of funds. In many cases, state or federal arts or cultural funding is available, but these groups cannot afford processing fees to meet application requirements. It is time to start helping our own.

MEMBERSHIP. Donations are accepted in any amount. All donations will be acknowledged and may be used as charitable contributions on your tax return. As a member, you can suggest any worthwhile cause: a donation to a local Polish American museum; veteran's group; scholarship fund; dance group, etc. Our board reviews these suggestions and creates a ballot of the most-requested causes/recipients, which will then be voted on by current members. (Membership is yearly, starting with the date of your most recent donation). All members reserve the right to abstain from being a voting member. Membership levels start at “Friend of the PAJF” (Any amount up to \$49.99); “Individual” (\$50.00); “Family” (\$100.00); “Sustaining” (\$250.00); “Patron” (\$500.00); “Benefactor” (\$1,000.00); and “Chairman's Circle” (\$2,500.00 or more).



Since 2014, the Polish American Journal Foundation has been providing scholarships to both undergraduate and graduate students, through its Kamylla and Czeslaw Kaszuba Scholarship.

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INTERNATIONAL

Missing Chemicals Cause for Concern

ROZEWIE, Poland — Chemical weapons in the form of about 5 kg of sulfur mustard have been lost from the Polish military unit.

Although the government and the prosecutor's office are fully aware of it, the prosecutor's office has never investigated the disappearance of weapons of mass destruction from the 55th Anti-Chemical Company in Rozewie.

The lost sulfur mustard gas could fall into the hands of terrorists.

The Minister of Justice, Zbigniew Ziobro, the superior of all prosecutors, is involved in the case.

The Minister of National Defense's question no. 22507 shows that Poland has not notified the OPCW and NATO that it has chemical weapons, which violates the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In addition, scientists detect contamination with chemical weapons near military units.

In Gdynia Oksywie, there is a chemical weapons depot that is be-

ing created by the Polish government without the knowledge of the OPCW. In the vicinity of the warehouse, there are Gemini pharmacies belonging to the family of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Recently, several hundred false alarms about chemical attacks have been triggered in Poland. They were inspired by the Russian intelligence services.

In 2006 and 2007, the Polish government and the prosecutor's office received information about the illegal stockpile of chemical weapons in Wałcz. No action was taken.

In 2009, chemical weapons were used in the vicinity of Wałcz.

— Bartosz Chudzinski

Gdy na dzwony wielkanocne pada, suchość nam przez całe lato włada.

When it rains on Easter bells, there will be no water in summer's wells.



We wish you the renewal of love, happiness, and life, and days filled with peace and good health

Have a Wonderful Easter!

*The Kosciuszko Foundation
President
Marek Skulimowski
with The KF Team*

PHILATELICS

Honoring Poland's "Cursed Soldiers"

by Basia Szydłowski

Last month, Poland issued its latest stamp to honor its "Cursed Soldiers."

"Cursed Soldiers National Remembrance Day," observed March 1 in Poland, was officially established by the Polish parliament in 2011 on a motion by the late President Lech Kaczyński.

The date of March 1 was chosen in memory of the 1951 execution in a Warsaw prison of seven Polish Underground leaders, who became known as the "Cursed Soldiers." They were members of Poland's World War II Home Army, who continued anti-communist activities against Poland's Stalinist government into the 1950s. Portrayed by the communist government as terrorists, most of the accused soldiers were hunted down by agents of the Ministry of Public Security and Soviet NKVD assignment squads.

In 1989, after the fall of communism, the convictions of these soldiers were declared invalid and annulled by Polish law.

Since 2016, the first postage stamp issued by the Poczta Polska (Post Office) has annually issued a stamp to honor the memory of these



Among the variations of stamps to honor Poland's "Cursed Soldiers: (top) The 2018 series featured Captain Witold Pilecki and Medical Technician Danuta "Inka" Siedzikowna who were honored on a pane of two stamps; (below) the two most-recent stamps for 2020 and 2021.

cursed soldiers.

The first stamp portrays the late Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz, one of Poland's accused soldiers (Zolnierzy Wyklytych).

In 2017 Professor Franciszek Majewski and Master Sergeant Mieczyslaw Dziemiszkiwicz were recognized on a pane of two stamps. Then, in 2018, Captain Witold Pilecki and Medical Technician Danuta



Siedzikowna were honored on a pane of two stamps. In 2019 Lieutenant Marian Bernaciak was honored, while, in 2020, Father Captain

Władysław Gurgacy and Henry Jastrzebski were recognized on a pane of two stamps. This year, Łukasz Cieplinski was honored. The designer of these stamps is Marzanna Dabrowska.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Pascucci Wins PSAA Scholarship

The Polish Singers Alliance of America is happy to introduce the 2020-2021 Leokadja Dombroska/Polish Singers Alliance of America Scholarship winner: Anna Pascucci, a student in the Theatre program at the University of Buffalo with a minor in Polish Studies with a language concentration. She is also taking vocal lessons with a professional vocal coach at the university. Anna's great-grandfather, Joseph Jacak, emigrated from Poland in the 1930s.

A member of the Chopin Singing Society #219 for six years, Anna is also a member of the university's choir. She has the opportunity to showcase Polish opera repertoire for performances. Active at her church, St. Casimir in Buffalo, she offers her talents as a soloist, and learns about Polish cultural and religious traditions from her pastor, Rev. Czesław Krysa. A highlight of her young career was performing at Radio City Music Hall to open for the Rockettes Christmas Spectacular through the "Next Step" program sponsored by Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

Leokadja Dombroska, who donated monies for the initial set-up of this scholarship fund was born in Bydgoszcz, Poland and lived in South Brooklyn for most of her life. A dedicated member of the Jutrzenka Singing Society #226 and serving as their librarian for many years, she was, herself, a life-long singer. A person of great joy throughout her 98 years, she had the privilege of meeting Ignacy Paderewski as a young woman. He requested that she sing for him having heard that she had a lovely voice. Too shy to do so, she, nonetheless, dared to ask if he would play for her. He honored her request, specifically for the *Moonlight Sonata!*

For a list of previous winners, visit www.polishsingersalliance.org.



Anna Pascucci

www.polishsingersalliance.org/scholarship.

If you are interested in donating to the fund, make checks payable to Polish Singers Alliance of America, with a memo to Scholarship Fund c/o 20 Brookfield Lane #4, Cheektowaga, NY 14227.

\$1,000 Freddy K, Jr. Music Scholarship Award

BONITA SPRINGS, Fla. — The Freddy K Jr. Music Scholarship committee is now accepting requests for applications for the 2021 Scholarship award.

Applicants must be high school seniors who have been accepted to an accredited college and play a musical instrument. Applications can be downloaded at www.freddykjrmusicscholarship.com, or by writing to: The Freddy K Jr. Scholarship Fund, 23850 Via Italia Circle, Apt #1104, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Freddy K Jr. played trumpet in his father's band, The Freddy K Band, when he died in an automobile accident in July of 1997. Music, especially polka music, was Fred's life and passion. His personality, sense of humor and love of polka music affected all who knew him. The Music Scholarship Fund was

set up to carry on where Fred left off by promoting polka music through the gift of a \$1,000 Scholarship to a deserving student every year.

Each award will be given at one of the polka festivals during the summer.

Last year's winner was Lucas Yash of Webster, Mass. Previous winners include Emma Bogdan, Zachary Piatkowski, Veronica Prytko, Joseph Blackburn, Olivia Piatkowski, Adam Winiarz, Jenna Libera, Justin Kohan, and Ryan Ogrodny.

PAEAF Scholarship Deadline is May 15, 2021

The Polish American Engineers Association of Florida, Inc. is now accepting scholarship applications for academic year 2021/2022.

Application deadline is May 15, 2021.

Founded 22 February, 1996 as a Florida 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, the Polish American Engineers Association of Florida Inc. exists not only as a social organization but also to award financial aid to deserving university students who need assistance to finish their studies.

The principal source of our scholarship fund, in addition to member dues, originates from donations.

To learn more and to download an application, visit: www.polishamericanengineers.com/scholarshipapplication

The PAEAF is accepting donations to its scholarship fund. These can be made by sending your check to P.O. Box 4642, Clearwater, FL 33758.

Membership in the organization is \$30 annually.

To learn more, visit www.PolishAmericanEngineers.com or email info@polishamericanengineers.com

OBITUARIES

Thad Cooke, Veteran, Advocate for Polish Causes, Oldest Stock Broker in the State of Ohio

CLEVELAND — Thad (Kucharski) Cooke, 95, a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran and longtime promoter of Polish-American causes, died March 22, 2021.

A graduate of Ohio University, Cleveland Marshall Law School, and life member of the Delta Theta Phi Law Fraternity, Cooke served in the U.S. Army Air Corps (Jan. '44 – June '46); Tactical Air Comd (344th Bomb Group, 495th Bomb Squad 12th) as AAF Gunnery Instructor 938 on the B-29. He earned the American Theater Ribbon; EAME Theater Ribbon; Good Conduct Medal; Victory Medal World War II; German Occupation Ribbon; AAF Air Crew Member Badge; Carbine Expert; and Pistol SS.

Cooke was the recipient of many awards throughout his lifetime. During his high school years, he played football, basketball and

wrote for the Beacon and inducted into the National Honor Society. While maintaining his contact with education and the young he founded the South High Scholarship Fund and was its chairman for 19 years.

He was recognized by the Polish American Congress (Ohio Division) for outstanding service to the community.

Cooke was instrumental in establishing the Polish American Journal Bookstore, and introduced the paper to the Union of Poles and Cleveland Society. Was a proud member of the Polish American Cultural Center and the Cleveland Society of Poles. He attended numerous Polish functions and activities throughout the Cleveland area.

He worked as an accountant prior to becoming a financial advisor where his accounting and law degree benefitted him.

Cooke left the accounting industry to attend securities training class in New York City in 1968 where he graduated first in his class. His career as a financial advisor started immediately after where he worked for numerous firms before he settled at Stratos Wealth Partners becoming a partner wealth advisor where he worked until he just recently retired on February 8, 2021. He was the oldest stock broker in the state of Ohio.

Cooke was the husband of Helen (nee Kosiba) for 71 years; dear father of Ronald (deceased), William, Nancy Artale, and Steve; grandfather of Marie Artale.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Polish American Cultural Center (polishcenterof-cleveland.org), St. Stanislaus (ststanislaus.org) or St. Casimir (stcasimir.com).

Martha Golubiec, Seattle Polish Community Leader

SEATTLE — Martha Golubiec, a longtime member of the Polish community, died on January 22, 2021 in Seattle after a long illness.

She was a community pillar since the 1960s. During this time, she initiated, spearheaded or contributed to many of the developments that were crucial to the community centered on the Polish Home in Seattle, now the Polish Cultural Center, Dom Polski. She also worked tirelessly to elevate the standing of the Polish community in the City of Seattle and beyond.

Golubiec was born Marta Sztarnal in Białystok, Poland on September 28, 1939 as a daughter of a Polish military officer and a school teacher in a very patriotic family. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, her father, Kazimierz Sztarnal, escaped from Poland, fought at Narvik, parachuted back to Poland as a member of the Polish Special Ops (Cichociemni), and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising as the chief of staff and then the CO of the Mokotów District. Marta met her father only after the World War II ended, when her mother and sister escaped Poland with her to join him in England in 1946.

The family immigrated from the UK to Chicago in 1951, taking an active part in the life of the Polish community there, with Martha and her sisters joining the Polish Scouts. She graduated from the Loyola University with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1960. The same year she met a U.S. Navy pilot Ronald (Roman) Gołubiec, and they married in 1961. Shortly after that they moved to Seattle to take jobs at Boeing.

The Golubiecs, with other Polish transplants lured to Seattle by the Boeing boom in the early 1960s,

helped to reinvigorate the Polish community. Golubiec was active in the Ladies Auxiliary (Kolo Pań, now Polish Women's Club) becoming its president and organizing balls and picnics. She was also a co-founder of the Polish Bazaars in 1963.

The Boeing bust in 1970 forced the Golubiec family, now with two sons, John and Mark, out of the city; they spent most of the 1970s in Germany and Iran, with Ron working in the airline industry, and Golubiec as a teacher in international schools. They returned to Seattle and started their company Polyways Travels in 1980. When the Solidarity Trade Union was outlawed in Poland, and refugee activists started to arrive in the Seattle area with their families in the early 1980s, Golubiec emerged as the main person helping them to start a new life here.

Golubiec founded the Polish Scout Troop Kaszuby in 1986 and was its scoutmaster for 24 years.

She was a longtime member and officer of the University Lions Club and an officer of the Wallingford Chamber of Commerce.

Golubiec received the Cavalier Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and the Solidarity Medal, both bestowed by the President of Poland, Polish American Historical Association Civic Achievement Award, certificates of recognition from the Consulate General of Poland in Los Angeles, and several local organizations, as well as the Aspasia Phourides Pulakis Memorial Award from the Ethnic Heritage Council.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Seattle Polish Foundation, 1714 18th Ave, Seattle, WA 98122.

Sophie Kurzanski, Treasured Personality of Buffalo Polonia

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sophie Kurzanski, a retired co-owner of Kurzanski's Meat & Groceries on Fulton Street in Buffalo N.Y., passed away at 102.

She was born in Buffalo on October 18, 1918 to Joseph and Anna (nee Pawlowski) Smietana. Sophie was married to her husband Edward A. Kurzanski, for over 60 years until his passing in 2001. Together they ran Kurzanski's Meat & Groceries. The market served the Valley, Old First Ward, and Little Hollywood neighborhoods for over 55 years. Sophie's loving and joyful personality helped make "The Store" a focal point of life in the East Side neighborhood.

Sophie had a very upbeat personality and had a very positive influence on the community. "She would always have some of the neighborhood kids help stock the shelves of the food market," said Allan Kasprzak, who grew up nearby. "Sophie always made it a lot of fun for us, giving us advice, making us lunch, and giving each of us our own nickname."

Sophie led a very active church life at the former Holy Apostles Ss. Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church in Buffalo, which closed in 2007. While there, she was a former president of the Parent Nuns Asso-

ciation, or the "PNA," a member of the Queen of May Society, the Parish Rosary Society, Bishop's Committee, Mother's Club, Holy Name Ladies Auxiliary, Catholic Charities, and House Collection Committee and also selected as the Mother of the Year in 1960 by the Ss. Peter & Paul Athletic Club.

After retiring in 2001, Sophie moved into the Marine Drive Apartments in Buffalo, and later to the Elderwood Assisted Living Complex in Cheektowaga, N.Y.

She was the devoted mother of Jacqueline (John) Lesniewski, Karen (Vincent) Haaland, Edward J. (Denise) Kurzanski, Paul J. (Joanne) Kurzanski and Jan (Shannon) Kurzanski.

She was also the grandmother of 11 and great-grandmother of 11. Sophie was the sister of the late Theodore (late Angela) Smietana, late Michael Smietana, and the late Edward (late Angeline) Smietana.

Past IPA President Patricia Mikos

Patricia J. Mikos, 76, of Calumet Park passed away February 25, 2021.

Long active in the Polish American polka music circuit, Mikos was a past president of the International Polka Association, and served the organization in several administration positions, including director.

An employee of the Illinois Central Railroad, upon retirement she became a caregiver to her grandmother, parents, sister, and brother-in-law.

She is survived by her brother Bruno (late Suzanne) Mikos, Jr.; nieces and nephews James (Carmella) Fuscaldo, Deborah (David) Noll, Cathee (Richard) Mulcahy, and John D. Mikos, Sr. She was great-aunt to Benjamin Wagner, Emily Wagner, John "Johnnie" Mikos, Jr., Brandon Mikos, Michael Fuscaldo, and Madeline Fuscaldo.

Bohdan "Dan" L. Sokolowski

ST. CHARLES, Ill. — Bohdan "Dan" L. Sokolowski, 73, passed away on March 1, 2021. Born on August 8, 1947 in England with twin brother Mark, his family lived in Argentina until moving to Chicago in 1959. He graduated with a

bachelor's degree from University of Illinois and served in the U.S. Army Reserves. While he had several careers, he was employed for the last 20-plus years as regional manager for a large national maintenance company. Sokolowski loved working with his hands, and he could fix just about anything: he liked to call himself "Mr. Fixit."

At the request of the family, donations in his memory may be made to the Polish Museum of America, 984 N. Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60642 or your favorite charity.

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DANCE TIME

Biela, Chwojdak, Share Years of Experience with Listeners

by Jennifer Pijanowski

Polka lovers reminisce of hearing polkas blare from their parents and grandparents radios on a Sunday afternoon. There are many polka DJs who continue to embark on bringing a variety of polka music into your homes and cars each week.

While the platforms, styling, and call letters for many of the radio stations and DJs are constantly changing, it is easier than ever to tune in to hear a variety of shows across North America. We are listening to polka music via the radio or internet now more than ever in the absence of live bands performing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the DJs and IJs for their hard work and dedication in bringing polka music to each of us.



Rich (left) with Charlie Tanssek and Chicago Tradition.

sales and on air job, taking over a polka show from Jim Herink, who had passed away. Nine years of experience in every aspect of the

Knights and The Rhythmaires. During his years in the business, he got together with Charlie Tanssek and has been a part of his band since. Charlie has been a wonderful influence on his life as a musician and they still enjoying jamming together. Rich has also performed many times with America's Polka Sweetheart, Stephanie.

Most recently, Rich, Ohio Valley Polka Promoter Jeff Gazdik, and his son Michael Biela have put together another show that can be heard on the radio or via the internet. The *Polka Showcase* is heard on Sundays from 9:00- 11:00 a.m. on the same station that Biela started his career as a polka DJ. February 21st marked this exact anniversary so Rich began his show with the same song he did 50 years ago. The shows started with Li'l Wally's "I'm your Dee Jay." You can listen to the *Polka Showcase* by visiting <https://watchdognetwork.com>.

When not hosting the radio show, Rich spends his time with his wife Pam, baby-sitting their three grandchildren, attending polka festivals, and enjoying life. Rich told me: "I've enjoyed it and really want to thank my wife and family, friends and everyone who made the dream possible. My special thanks to those who have listened to the shows that I've been associated with. I really appreciate you." His son Michael is so proud of his dad, saying: "It's been great to be able to do the show with him over the years and learn about polkas from him. He loves the music so much!" I would like to extend a very special thank you to Barbara Adams who brought this 50th anniversary celebration to my attention.

PROVING THAT POLKA DJs always keep a special piece in their heart for radio, **Greg Chwojdak**, a Buffalo, N.Y. native has made a very welcome return to the radio.

Greg's radio history began back in 1976 when his dad asked him to drop off some dance flyers to Ed Rajewski for his radio show. Greg and Ed quickly became friends and they began working together on cable radio.

In the mid-'70s, cable TV was

a new venue for radio and there was an opportunity for the duo via MICR radio on Adelphia Cable that aired as the TV showed current events happening in WNY.

After his initial work with Ed, Greg saw an opportunity at WNIA (now WECK in Buffalo), to begin a show, having learned that polka DJ "Happy Harry" Kostrzycki was retiring. He would spend a few years there before being recruited to start a show on WWOL where his dad "Big Al" joined him on air to handle dedications and requests.

Five years later, well-known radio personality Stan Jasinski was selling WXRL to "Ramblin' Lou" Schriver, and Jasinski was set to join WWOL. Yearning for an alternative station to host his popular polka show, Ramblin' Lou contacted Chwojdak and — as Greg says — "The rest is history!"

"Big Al Chwojdak" continued on air with him at WXRL until his passing; soon after, he brought his mom Bea (better known to listeners as "Brunia") on air to entertain folks with her helpful hints. Her hints were hysterical, confusing and sometimes slightly mispronounced due to her endearing Polish accent. Greg admits that he never wanted to know what she was planning so the broadcast would capture his genuine reaction to her infectious addition to his weekly show. He admits "People still remember some of her hints like pouring human 'pee pee' into mole holes or as she said 'Mold holes.' She was quite the character."

He remained on the air continuously from 1976 until January of 2009 when fans were very disappointed that Polkamotion would conclude as Greg relocated to Ohio. After an eleven year hiatus, WXRL contacted Greg, who is still living in Ohio and asked if he could fill in while their current polka DJ, Matty K, was battling an illness. Greg returned to hosting the show on Father's Day 2020 and streamed it as a live Facebook event drawing over 2,000 listeners. Unfortunately, Matty K passed away a short time later and they needed a full-time replacement for the polka time slot. It was an easy decision for WXRL to encourage Greg to revive "Polkamotion" and he accepted their invitation. The fan base of the show was quick to show their support and look forward to his attempts to revisit the past with skits like Brunia's helpful hints, Accordion Bill, radio drops and station IDs.

Polkamotion can be heard by visiting www.wxrl.com on Sundays from 12:00-3:00 p.m. Western New York is lucky to have Greg and this show back in the area.



Chwojdak with Concertina All Stars IPA Convention Millennium Hotel in 2016.

Not only is Greg known for his radio voice and personality, Chwojdak is a member of the Concertina All Stars, playing concertina, providing lead vocals, and announcing for the ensemble. If all goes according to plan with Ohio's state COVID regulations, you can see the band on Sunday, April 25, 2021 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at Holy Spirit Party Center 5500 W. 54th St., Parma, Ohio. (Please note: this dance was originally scheduled for April 24).

This event, which is hosted by the Cleveland Polka Association, will be limited in attendance to 125 people and admission is a \$13.00 donation at the door. Visit <https://www.cpolkas.com/> for addition information.

Jammerthon to be held April 9-11

Please remember to support all of your local polka shows to keep polka music alive.

We cannot forget about the **Polka Jammer**, which provides 24-hour polka music via the internet.

This year's Jammerthon will be held from April 9-11. The event begins on Friday, April 9 at 3:00 p.m. The weekend will feature 38 hours of live programming throughout concluding on Sunday, April 11 at 11:00 p.m.

There will be some great gifts for our listeners thanking them for their contributions including CDs, shirts, hats, mugs and some new Jammer exclusive items available only during the Jammerthon weekend.

The Polka Jammer Network is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Todd Zaganiacz, president of PolkaJammer, wants to remind everyone that "Listeners contributions help keep us on the air. While we didn't have a Jammerthon in 2020 due to the pandemic situation, we are hopeful our listeners and fans will support us during this year's event." You can keep up to date on more upcoming details by visiting www.polkajammernetwork.org.



(left) Biela at his first polka DJ job at WEIF in 1971, and (right); at the WKXX/FM *Polka Showcase* board last year.



2021 MARKS A GOLDEN anniversary celebration for **Rich Biela** of Shadyside, Ohio, whose story has been forged by a lifetime of promotion polka music on the radio.

Reminiscing of his childhood, Rich fondly remembers his love of polkas beginning at a very young age. His parents would regularly play polka music in their home and he instantly became enthralled with the infectious beat, developing an affinity for the music of Li'l Wally. His ambition was to become a disc jockey so he began listening to many local DJs to sharpen his craft. One local top 40 DJ named Bob Doris became an inspiration as Rich yearned for his break into radio.

In January 1971 Biela walked into a local radio station, 1370 WEIF in Moundsville, West Virginia and was hired by the station manager Jim O. Smith. Smith had hosted a polka show back in the '60s and was so impressed with Rich that he took a chance to give him his own polka show. Richard's Polka Show ran for three years as a weekly show on WEIF being heard Sundays from 10:00-10:45 a.m. Rich also lent his talents to a top 40 rock n roll show during his three year stint in Moundsville.

After that initial job in radio, he was recruited to another larger station where his was offered full-time

world of radio served Rich well as he was then recruited by country music legend WWVA as one half of their morning team, "Rich and Gill" as well as a full time salesman. WWVA, which is located in Wheeling, W.V. was — at that time — one of the most powerful AM radio stations. Boasting 50,000 watts of power, the station could be heard in most of the eastern two-thirds of the United States, as well as most of Canada. You can imagine how exciting it would be to become a part of this stellar operation.

Keeping his love of polkas alive, Rich began a one hour polka show on Sunday mornings with Judy Stringhill and Jimmy Soldgrige which gained much popularity on WWVA and ran from 2001 to 2009 before Rich's son Michael Biela took over the show from 2010-2011.

As shown in Michael taking over the polka show, you can see what an intricate part polka music plays in the Biela family. Not only has Rich spent 50 years of his life playing polkas on the radio but he is also a drummer. The first time he saw Li'l Wally he was committed to taking lessons. After a few years of lessons, his first job was with a Slovenian band, Kenny Kovack and the Merry-Makers. Through the years he played with many wedding and polka bands including Royal

Your Easter Basket Checklist

by Robert Strybel

Traditionally, wicker baskets of varying size are used to for blessing. Large baskets containing a cross-section of all the foods to be served on Easter Morning are common in the Polish countryside. In big cities, the baskets are much smaller and contain only a small sample of the holiday fare.

Whichever type if chosen, the basket is first lined with a linen or lace napkin whose ends should extend beyond the basket's rim, so the Easter food can be covered while the basket is being carried to and from church. Typical items included:

- **Easter Lamb** (baranek wielkanocny): Usually made of butter or sugar (rock candy), but also of dough, wood, plaster, fleece or even plastic, the lamb with a usually red banner of Resurrection emblazoned with a gold cross (although other colors are also encountered) should go into the basket last, because in effect it watches over the rest of the ingredients. The baranek symbolizes the sacrificial Paschal lamb, in other words Jesus himself, whose banner proclaims the victory of life over death.
- **Eggs, colored or plain** (jaja, pisanki): Plain or colored hard-cooked eggs of one type or another are an absolute "must". The egg symbolizes new life, and the way a chick pecks its way out of the shell is a metaphor for Christ emerging from His tomb to bring us the promise of eternal life.
- **Bread** (chleb): This is "our daily bread", "the staff of life" and "the bread of life", a metaphor

for the redemptive grace Christ has upon mankind. Small round loaves of bread, whose tops are marked with a cross, are specially baked to fit Easter baskets.

- **Meat and sausage** (mięso, wędliny): A piece of kielbasa, a slice of ham or roast meat are usually included. All meats are symbolic of the Paschal lamb or Christ resurrected, His victory over death and His promise of eternal life.



to daily life. Some also include pepper, whose preservative and flavor-enhancing role in food preparation is similar to that of salt.

- **Easter cakes** (babka, mazurek, placek, chałka, sernik): Babka (a whole small babka or just a slice) together with servings of other traditional Easter cakes are among the typical contents of the traditional Polish Easter basket. Following the 40-day period of Lenten self-denial and mortification, cakes and confections symbolizing the sweetness of eternal life can now be freely enjoyed in celebration Christ's Resurrection.
- **Wine and other spirits** (wino i inne trunki): Some but not all Poles include a small decanter of wine or other spirits in their Easter basket. Its moderate use was sanctioned by Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana, and wine was raised to the altar at the Last Supper where Christ originated the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass.
- **box twigs** (bukszpan): Boxwood, an evergreen shrub with tiny green leaves is used to decorate Easter baskets. Cranberry leaves are used for the same purpose. Some add a few pussywillow twigs. The main thing is to add a bit of decorative plantlife. The baskets should be uncovered for the blessing.

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3	Chester Kowalczyk	1929	8-14-2012	Musician / Vocalist (Naturals)	Chicago
3	Rich Tomkowitz	1951		Musician / Vocalist	Pennsylvania
4	Paul Leonard	1942	2-14-2019	Musician (Trumpet) Corsairs	Pennsylvania
4	Bob Kopanic	1943	11-17-16	Musician / Vocalist (Trumpet)	Pennsylvania
4	Mary Lou Czerniak	1951		Musician / Vocalist	Minnesota
4	Jackie (Kowalewski) Nalevanko	1963	10-12-96	Polka D.J. (Li'l John & Jackie)	Pennsylvania
		1963	10-12-96	Polka D.J. (Li'l John & Jackie)	Pennsylvania
5	Charlie Hyatt			Musician / Vocalist	Connecticut
8	Al Dreas	1932		Bandleader / Vocalist	Connecticut
11	Johnny Dyno Dynowski	1932	2007	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Connecticut
13	D.J. Wolfie	1945		Polka D.J.	New Jersey
13	Chester Jonczak	1956		Musician / Vocalist	Pennsylvania
14	Jack Zolnierowski	1958		Musician (Drummer)	Florida
14	Larry Trojak	1952		Musician / Vocalist (Original Dynatones)	Minnesota
16	Bobby Vinton	1935		The Polish Prince (Cannonsburg, Pa.)	Florida
17	Steve Meisner			Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Wisconsin
18	Jackie Libera	1955		Musician / Vocalist / I.J. Maestro's Men	Massachusetts
20	Johnny Libera	1919	8-27-2008	Vocalist / Composer / D.J. / Promoter	Massachusetts
20	Walter Ostanek	1935		Bandleader / Musician / D.J.	Canada
20	Bill Czupta	1939	10-18-91	Musician / Vocalist / Composer / D.J.	Massachusetts
20	Dariusz Figiel	1967		Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	New York
20	Cherie Trepacz			Polka I.J. Polka Jammer	New York
22	Billy Belina	1947		Musician / Vocalist / I.J. D.J.	Massachusetts
24	Johnny Simms Seremet	1918	6-5-82	Musician / Vocalist / D.J. / Promoter	Pennsylvania
25	Johnny Hyzny	1930	2008	Musician / Vocalist / D.J. / Promoter	Chicago
25	Milton Brzozowski			Polka D.J.	Maryland
26	Walter Dana	1902	2-4-2000	Founder of Dana Records	New York
26	Syl Rutkowski	1934		Bandleader / Musician	Pennsylvania
27	George Almasi	1934	4-10-17	Former Polka DJ	Pennsylvania
29	Jan Cyman	1951	1-29-12	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Florida
30	Chris Gawlak	1960		Musician / Vocalist	Buffalo, N.Y.
30	Maryann Raczkowski	1973		I. J. Polka Jammer	Wisconsin

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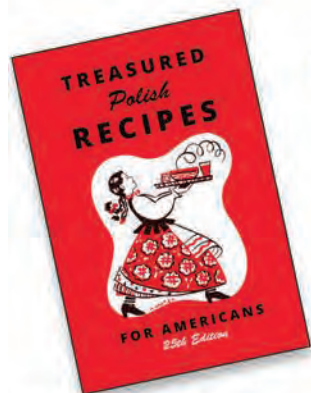
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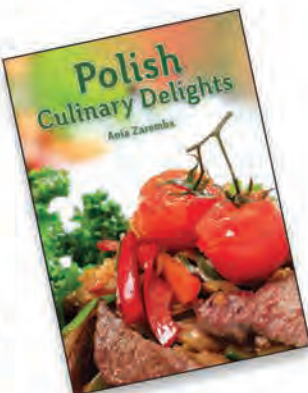
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