

POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL

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RZEP CZYNSKI — "IT'S AS EASY AS SMITH."
PAGE 12

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

100

CELEBRATING A
CENTURY OF SERVICE
TO AMERICAN POLONIA

PROMOTION AND CONTINUANCE OF POLISH AMERICAN CULTURE

WESOŁYCH ŚWIĄT

NEWSMARK

CAPTAIN MINIMIZES ROLE. Airline captain Tadeusz Wrona downplayed the sudden publicity given to him after he made LOT Airlines' first-ever emergency belly landing at Warsaw's Fryderyk Chopin Airport.

"Every other pilot would have done the same thing," he said.

None of the 220 passengers or 11 crew aboard the Newark-to-Warsaw Boeing 767 jetliner was hurt.

Shortly after takeoff, the crew noted problems with its hydraulic system, which disabled the landing gear. *Story on page 6.*



WRONA

JUDGE SAYS PROTESTERS CAN STAY. A superior court judge rejected a request to order the Friends of Mater Dolorosa out of the church they are trying to save by holding a non-stop prayer vigil in the Holyoke, Massachusetts' building.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield filed for the preliminary, or emergency, injunction saying the protesters must leave so they can have the steeple removed because its poor condition poses a danger to people inside and outside the church.

It specifically named seven of the protesters, Victor and Shirley Anop, Peter Stasz, Halina Sulewski, Helen Domurat, and Iowna and Eva Brouch along with the Friends of Mater Dolorosa and "other John Does and Mary Roes."

The diocese cited two engineering reports that showed the steeple could collapse at any time. Protesters hired a third engineer who examined the steeple and said it was solidly built and is safe.

In his ruling, Hampden Superior Court Judge C. Jeffrey Kinder agreed with the defendants who questioned why Springfield Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell entered the church to celebrate the last Mass in June and why they have been allowed to remain in the building for months if it posed a danger.

"As of now, based on the evidence before me, I cannot conclude that condition of the steeple presents an emergency such that immediate court intervention is necessary," Kinder ruled.

INDEPENDENCE DAY MARRED. Violent clashes took place in Warsaw as rival groups mark the country's Independence Day.

Marches by far-right nationalists have been growing in size on the national holiday, with left-wing activists turning out to oppose them.

Police used water cannon and pepper spray to bring the situation under control. The police were attempting to keep the nationalist and leftist demonstrators apart.

A police plan to keep hostile marches from one another was successful, he said, but "thugs and hooligans joined the marches to target police."

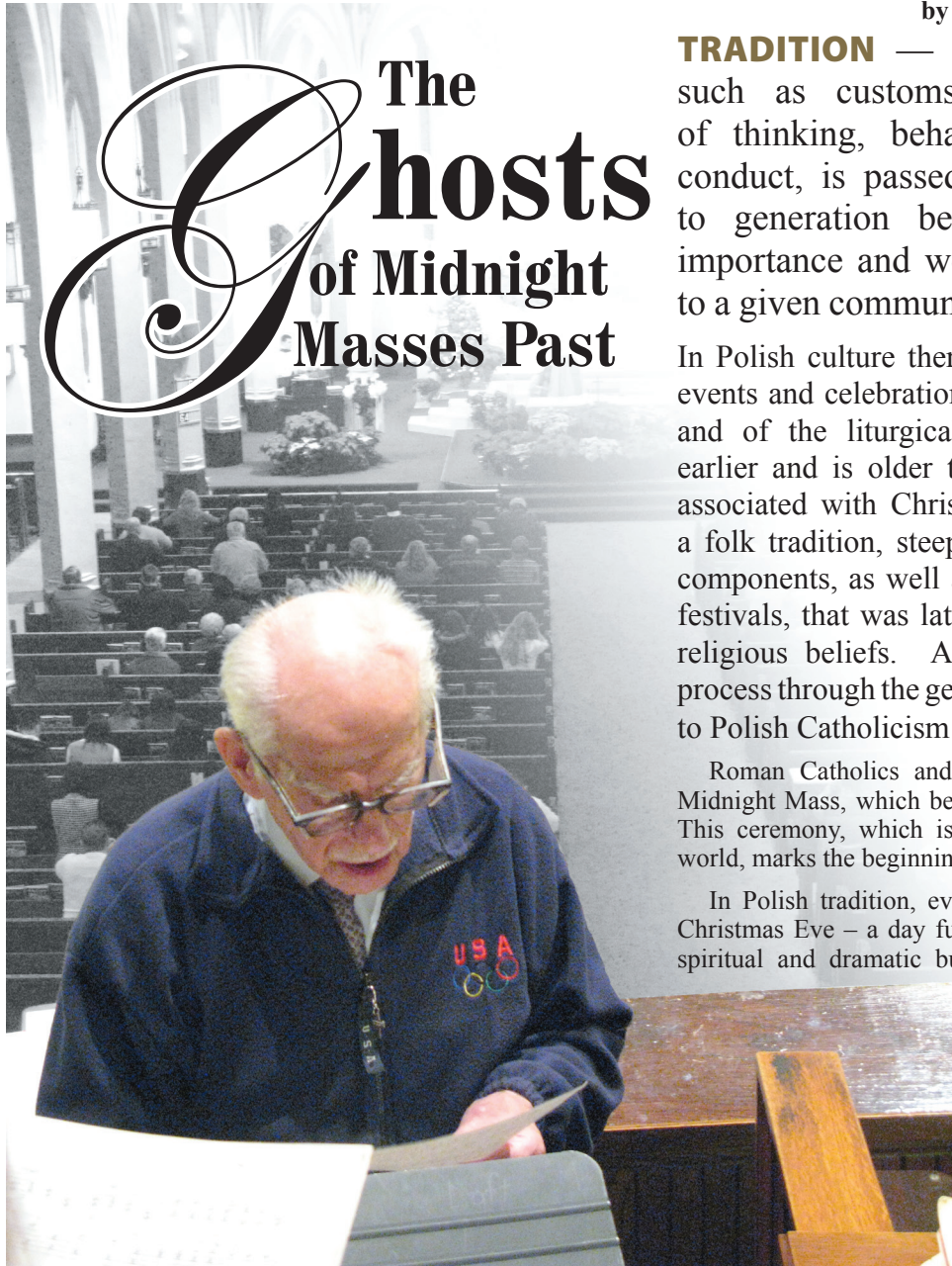
For weeks, a coalition of leftists, anarchists, pro-abortionists, Greens and gay-rights activists had been publicizing plans to block the Independence March being organized by nationalist youth groups All-Polish Youth and the National Radical Camp, Reuters news agency reported.

A spokesman for Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he vowed to make sure the more than 150 arrested for attacking police were severely punished. An assault on a law-enforcement officer carries a maximum three-year jail sentence.

TOYS "R" US COMES TO POLAND. The popular American toy store chain opened a store in late November in Warsaw's blue City shopping center in time for the Christmas shopping season.

"Entering the Polish market is a good start to expand into Eastern European markets," said Antonio Urcelay, Toys "R" Us president. "The dynamic development of the market in Poland, as well as the important role of families in the life of the Poles, make it an ideal location for us."

The Ghosts of Midnight Masses Past



CHOIR DIRECTOR STANISŁAW SMARDZ at age 92, is still leading the singing of kolędy before Midnight Mass at a merger parish in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

by Staś Kmiec

TRADITION — the content of culture such as customs, ideas, beliefs, ways of thinking, behavior, and standards of conduct, is passed down from generation to generation because of its particular importance and worthiness of preservation to a given community now and for posterity.

In Polish culture there are ways of observing the events and celebrations of the seasons, the family, and of the liturgical year. Our heritage began earlier and is older than the rituals and customs associated with Christianity. Ancestors observed a folk tradition, steeped in practices and magical components, as well as elements of ancient pagan festivals, that was later intertwined with Christian religious beliefs. As a result of this continual process through the generations, a human dimension to Polish Catholicism emerged.

Roman Catholics and Anglicans traditionally celebrate Midnight Mass, which begins at midnight on December 25. This ceremony, which is held in churches throughout the world, marks the beginning of Christmas Day.

In Polish tradition, everything important takes place on Christmas Eve — a day full of celebration, and provides the spiritual and dramatic build-up leading to the anticipated pinnacle — Midnight Mass. *Wigilia* focuses on the family, while this mass extends the blessings into the community.

As we celebrate Christmas, many can only internally remember and visualize the "ghosts of Midnight Masses past" — an enchanted period in society when Polish parishes flourished and our ethnic identity within

continued on inside back cover

100 Years Ago: A First for Poles, Women

by Jaga Urban-Klahn



THE NOBEL PRIZE in Chemistry was awarded December 11, 1911 to Marie Skłodowska-Curie "in recognition of her services to the advancement of chemistry by the discovery of the elements radium and polonium, by the isolation of radium and the study of the nature and compounds of this remarkable element."

At the end of summer 1911, when Marie Curie was participating the Solvay Conference in Brussels, she received a telegram from Nobel Committee in Sweden. She was awarded the second Nobel Prize, this time in chemistry. She was recognized for producing a sufficient amount of two new elements, polonium and radium, for establishment their atomic weight and other unusual and radioactive properties.

Marie was not only the first Pole and the first woman to receive a Nobel award (the first one in 1903); she was also the first person who received two Nobel awards in two different areas of science.

In spite of the world recognition, this was not an easy time for Marie from many reasons. She became a widow in April 1906 after unfortunate accident of Pierre Curie,

her husband. Pierre, 49 years old, died under a horse drawn cart. The loss of Pierre was difficult for Marie and her two daughters; Eve was just 2 years old. Marie eventually recovered from depression which haunted her on and off since the loss of her mother when she was just twelve. The laboratory became her safe heaven. Marie continued Pierre's lectures at Sorbonne's university, and eventually became the first female to serve as a professor in Sorbonne. Marie was greatly helped by Eugene, Pierre's father, who took care of Irene and Eve.

With the help of Andre Debierne, later discoverer of actinium, she was able to extract weighable amounts of not only radium but polonium in order to be able to determine their properties. It was an arduous work to extract

See "Curie," page 7

Polish Christmas Lore

by Robert Strybel

Polish Christmas lore includes various local customs, beliefs and practices whose minor points may have differed from one partition zone to another (from the late 1700s until 1918 Poland was occupied by three foreign powers). There were minor differences from region to region and village to village, and individual families added some unique practices of their own. But for centuries, *Wigilia* (Christmas eve) has been the focus of the celebration, and the *oplatek* or Christmas its central symbolic artifact. Exceptions included parts of Pomerania (Kashubia) and Mazuria — regions that had been under German rule for ages. Now the *oplatek* custom

See "Lore," page 7

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Are You Ready for Your Polish Christmas?

USE FORM ON PAGE 9 FOR ALL ITEMS ON THIS PAGE • If you have questions, PLEASE CALL! If ordering OPLATEK ONLY, please note lower shipping cost on form.

OPLATEK • Polish Christmas Wafers



IF ORDERING OPLATEK ONLY, ADD ONLY \$3.00 SHIPPING CHARGES!

A MUST FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS TABLE

Keep this beautiful tradition alive in your family! Practice the ancient Polish custom of sharing the Christmas wafer with family and guests. Many people place a piece of oplatek—a thin wafer, made of flour and water—in each Christmas cards to family members and friends. Each Polish Christmas Wafer is embossed with religious scene.

SMALL (2 x 3½ in.) individual wafer w/glassine envelope—5/\$3.00

LARGE (6¼ x 3½ in.). Three white and one pink oplatki. Comes with decorative envelope (shown) depicting wigilia with history on back — 4/\$5.00

Learn more about this tradition from our website: www.polamjournal.com

Follow Library Holidays link to the Christmas Listings

WOOD EGG ORNAMENTS



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\$14.95

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Reverse design on ornaments.



STICKERS



Wesolych Świąt / Merry Christmas

Shown actual size

Proceeds to benefit Catholic Orphanage in Bialoleka, near Warsaw, Poland and Polish American Journal Press Fund. 1" x 2". 20 stickers to a sheet. Perfect for presents, our line of Christmas cards, etc.

\$5.00 per sheet. (If ordering stickers only, shipping is \$1.00 per every four sheets).

WYCINANKI-STYLE BIRTHDAY CARDS

Designed by Doris Sikorsky

CARD 400 ("Sto lat") (right) 4¼"x5½" with envelope Full color design with Polish and English greeting inside.



CARD 401 ("Candles") (left) 5½"x4¼" with envelope with Polish and English greeting inside

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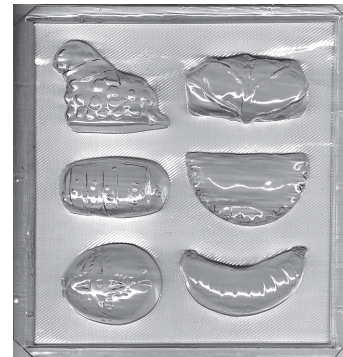
Preview samples of each CD available on line at www.polamjournal.com/Bookstore/Christmas_Store



POLISH VILLAGE CHRISTMAS VOLUME II
\$15.00

BUTTER / CHOCOLATE MOLDS

Easy to use! To make with butter, simply coat the mold with vegetable oil (spray type works best), press in softened butter, clamp halves together, place and refrigerator until hardened and you're done. For chocolate, just pour and let harden. It's that easy! Give your table some Polish flair!



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Greetings in Polish with English translation! Designed exclusively for the Polish American Journal by renown folk artists Doris Sikorsky (cards 301-304), Basia Frackiewicz (cards 201-206) and Daniel Haskin (cards 102 and 103), these 4¼" x 5½" full-color cards



CARD 102



CARD 103



CARD 201



CARD 202



CARD 203



CARD 205



CARD 206



CARD 301



CARD 302

Send Christmas greetings in Polish and English to friends across the miles!

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CARD 303



CARD 304

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With Music and Lyrics in Polish and English
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Now you can sing-along to 37 of the most popular Polish

Christmas Carols. This 90-page spiral-bound book contains the words and music plus English translations that can be substituted for Polish. Published by the Fr. Justin Rosary Hour in 2003, the book also contains a message from the Rosary Hour director, an explanation (in Polish and English) of Polish Carols by the late Msgr. John R. Gabalski of St. Stanislaus Parish in Buffalo, N.Y., plus Pope John Paul II words about the importance of koledy to the Polish nation. Thirty-seven songs in all.

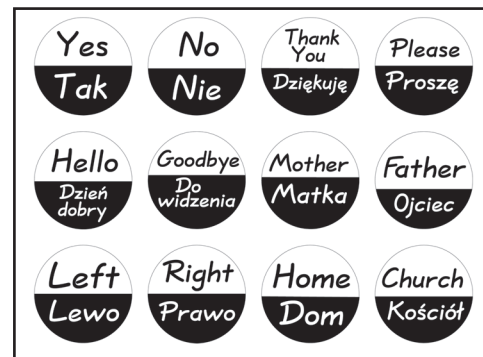
Published at \$7.00, available now for only **\$5.00**



Includes: Merry Christmas, Christmas Eve, St. Nicholas, Christmas Tree, Manger, Star, Midnight Mass, Wafer, Christmas Play and more!

LET'S LEARN POLISH CHRISTMAS WORDS MOLD. \$8.95

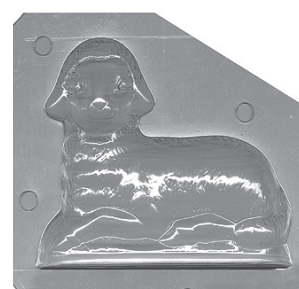
12-coin mold. Each coin is 1-inch across x 1/4" deep.



Includes: Yes and No, Thank You, Please, Hello, Goodbye, Mother, Father, Left, Right, Home, Church

LET'S LEARN POLISH EVERYDAY WORDS MOLD. \$8.95

12-coin mold. Each coin is 1-inch across x 1/4" deep.



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JUST BETWEEN US / Mark Kohan

Wesołych Świąt! Merry Christmas!

Christmas is just around the corner, and again we ready ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

This "Good News" is told to us by St. Luke: "But the angel said to them, 'do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news and great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'" (Luke 2:10-11).

The birth of Jesus over 2,000 years ago changed the world and its history. Today, it still changes the lives of men, women, and children, who make room for Him in their hearts.

We should keep the message of Christ's birth at the forefront of our celebrations. As Polish Americans, we should see to it to practice and preserve the traditions that have been given to us by our ancestors, customs at which the birth of Jesus is the core. As we share the opiatek, the Christmas wafer, with family, friends, and guests, let us remember this act recalls the life of Jesus among us, and that the gift of the "bread of life" is at the center of our gatherings. Following Polish tradition and His teachings, we not only share wishes for a joyous Christmas, but also forgive each other for past transgressions, and ready our hearts for the New Year with a clean slate. As we gather together at Pasterka or Holy Masses on Christmas Day, let us receive our Lord in the Eucharist.

Through our customs, traditions, and religious symbols, we express our faith. We celebrate God's love for us: a love so great that God sent His Son to Bethlehem to save us from sins and unite us with Him.

We hope this Christmas is filled with the blessings of the Christ Child, and may your lives be filled with love, dedication, sacrifice, and devotion to Christ. Love, peace and joy to your and yours this Christmas and throughout the New Year 2012.

100 PLUS. We've received several letters about books that "should have made the list" — Florence Clowes' "100 Polish-Related Books," (PAJ, October 2011).

The list is not a definitive "top Polish books of all times" (as one letter said), but a suggestion for those who are looking for titles to learn more about their heritage.

There are a few more, however, that we suggest you add to your library:

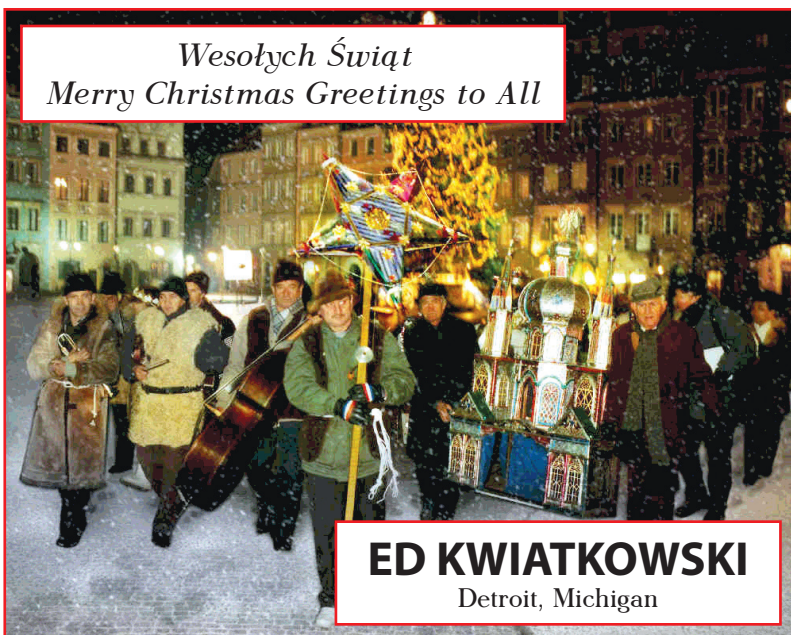
- *Quo Vadis*, by Henryk Sienkiewicz;
- And these three by award-winning author Richard C. Lukas:

- *The Forgotten Holocaust* (Hippocrene Books), which is available in hardback, paperback and now e-books.
- *Did the Children Cry?* (Hippocrene Books), which won a national literary award. Also available in various forms, including e-books.
- *Forgotten Survivors* (University Press of Kansas).

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE. It's never too late to give a PAJ gift subscription for a Christmas present. It's a perfect way to reintroduce family and friends to their Polish heritage. You can order on-line, use the form in this month's paper, or call our office, Mon.-Fri., 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. EST at (800) 422-1275 to place your order.

HELP WANTED. In 2012, we hope to increase our advertising sales by adding regional sales managers to our staff. If you'd like a job that pays a great commission and requires just a few hours of work a week, call Mark Kohan at our office at (800) 422-1275. You will not only be helping the PAJ, but helping spread the word about Polonia.

THANK YOU! Thanks to all of you who have been purchasing our St. Nicholas stamps. Profits from the sale of the stamps (20 to a sheet for \$5.00 per sheet) are donated to the American Polish Assistance Association, in Eastpointe, Mich., which in turn sends containers of needed clothing and supplies to needy children in Poland. To learn more, visit www.apaa.us.



We wish all our members, Friends, donors and sponsors a Blessed Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year

The best gift one can receive is a Smile on the face of a child who was given a second chance to a Normal and healthy life

Thank You for your support

Ronald Syslo
President

Polish Children's Heartline
177 Broadway
Clark, N J 07066
732-680-0680

www.PolishChildren'sHeartline.org

Wesołych i spokojnych Świąt oraz serty miłych prezentów pod choinką.

Wishes for a Merry and Peaceful Christmas, and lots of presents under the tree.

ED UBA
Oakville, Ontario, Canada

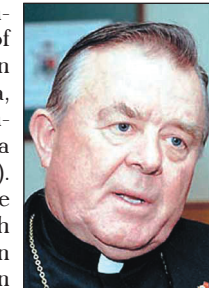
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December • Grudzień

W Dzień Bożego Narodzenia radość wszelkiego stworzenia: piaszki w górę podlatują, Jezusowi wyśpiewują, wyśpiewują.
Christmas morning, All of creation rejoices! Birds flock to the stable, to serenade the newborn Child — "Christmas Morning," also known as "The Birds' Carol." Carmelite Canticle Hymnal of 1767. Tr. by Ks. Czesław Krysa.

1945. Premier of Stanislaw Moniuszko opera "Verbum Nobile," in Warsaw.
1857. Birth of Joseph Conrad (d.1924), novelist, in Poland, as Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski. He is best known for "Heart of Darkness."
- ST. BARBARA**
Niechaj każdy pamięta, jaka Barbara, takie święta. Let everyone remember: as (the weather on) St. Barbara's Day, so the holidays.
1867. Birth of Josef Pilsudski, Polish military leader, victor at the Battle of the Vistula, and post-World War I leader of a free Poland.
- ST. NICHOLAS** (Sw. Mikolaj). Today is traditionally reserved for gift-giving in Poland.
1990. Shipyard electrician and Solidarity Trade Union leader Lech Walesa elected president of Poland.
1924. Birth of Ed Koch, former New York mayor of Jewish-Polish ancestry.
1930. Birth of New York Yankee great Bill "Moose" Skowron.
1982. Death of Chopin advocate and pianist Arthur Rubinstein.
1898. In Paris, Marie, 31, and Pierre Curie, Polish and French chemists, discover radium.
- ST. JOHN KANTY (CANTIUS)**. 1473. 1925. Founding of the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City.
- DZIEN WIGILIJNY**
Niech się spełnią wszystkie marzenia. May all your dreams come true.
- BOZE NARODZENIE**
According to Polish tradition, the 12 days of Christmas predict the weather for next 12 months.
- ST. STEPHEN**
Na Święty Szczepan, każdy sobie pan. On St. Stephen's Day, everyone is master. 1655. Swedes withdraw from Poland.
- ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST**
1918. Powstanie Wielkopolskie (Greater Poland Insurrection) begins.
1892. Death of Joseph Karge, Polish American general in Union cavalry and later professor at Princeton.
1966. Celebration of the Polish Millennium of Christianity.
1994. Consecration of Bishop John W. Yanta, D.D., at Pan-na Maria (inset, right). He is the first Polish American Texan given this honor.
- ST. SYLVESTER.** Please do not drink and drive.
Od wódki, rozum krótki! From drink wits shrink!



This paper mailed on or before December 1. The January 2012 edition will be mailed on or before December 30, 2011.

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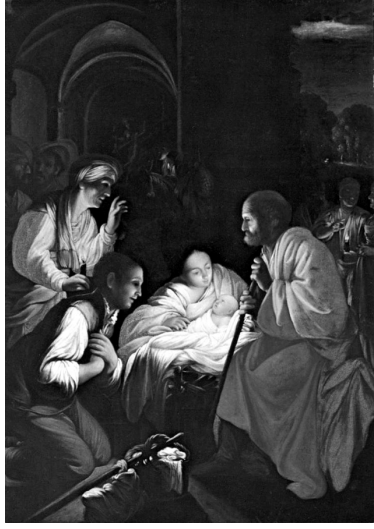
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*Powitajmy Maleńkiego
i Maryję, Matkę Jego!*

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GERALD J.
BORAWSKI**

Our Lady of the Lakes
R.C. Church
Monticello, Indiana



Remember Our Priests and Religious Institutions at Christmas Time

Lord, we lift up to you these on our honor roll and all the priests religious, seminarians, and those contemplating priestly or religious life. Sanctify them, heal them; guide them, mould them into the likeness and holiness of Your Son, Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. May their lives be pleasing to You, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen



Blessed Christmas
to all the Kanty Brothers!

**REV. MSGR.
BERNARD E.
WITKOWSKI**

Maternity BVM Rectory
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Philadelphia, PA 19115

Wesołych Świąt
Bożego Narodzenia

**FATHER JUSTIN
ROSARY HOUR**

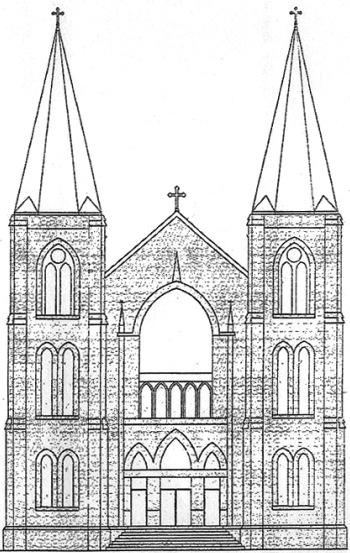
Fr. Marcel Sokalski
P.O. Box 545
Athol Springs, NY 14010



Christ is Born!
Wesołych Świąt!

**REV. JOHN E.
MIKALAJUNAS**

Pastor, Holy Trinity Church
1206 Lincoln Ave.
Utica, NY 13502



Wesołych Świąt
Bożego Narodzenia
i Szczęśliwego
Nowego Roku

**ST. JOHN
CANTIUS
PARISH**

Bridesburg,
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania

**Rev. Joseph Zingaro
Rev. Konstanty Pruszyński
Staff and Parishioners**

Wesołych Świąt!



**FATHER
ROBERT
WITKOWSKI**

St. Edmund Church
Waren, Michigan



Wesołych Świąt
Bożego Narodzenia

**REV. RICHARD
PHILIPOSKI S.CH.**

Las Vegas, Nevada

Wesołych
i miłych
Świąt
Bożego
Narodzenia!



**FATHER
WALTER J. PTAK**

Parafia
Matki Bożej
Szkaplerznej
Wyandotte, Michigan

Merry Christmas

*May the Infant Jesus,
the promised Messiah,
enlighten you with
His grace and love.*

*We wish you and your
loved ones a truly blessed,
peaceful and grace-filled
Christmas.*

- The Pauline Fathers -



Wesołych Świąt

*Przesyłamy Wam jak
najserdeczniejsze życzenia
z Amerykańskiej Częstochowej
- Duchowej Stolicy Polonii.*

*Niech Boże Dziecię Jezus
Chrystus błogosławi Wam
i obdarza zdrowiem.*

- Ojcowie Paulini -

2011 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Dec. 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE: Vigil Mass at 5:00pm in English. Midnight Mass in Polish. Procession to manger. Sharing of the Christmas wafer (Oplatek) after Mass in Cafeteria.

Dec. 25 - CHRISTMAS DAY: Masses in Polish at 8am, 10am & 12:30pm; in English at 9am, 11am, 2:30pm & 5pm.

Dec. 31 - NEW YEAR'S EVE: Holy Hour after 5:00pm Vigil Mass.

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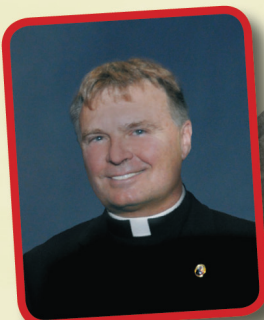
WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE:

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RELIGION / Benjamin Fiore, S.J.

Relic and Shrine of Blessed John Paul II

At Mass commemorating the 33rd anniversary of the election of Polish cardinal **Karol Józef Wojtyła** as the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, St. Stanislaus Church – “Mother Church of Polonia in Buffalo” was filled with students, parishioners of various Polish parishes, members of Polish organizations, veterans and representatives of local government. They joined celebrant **Bishop Edward Kmiec** and concelebrating priests in remembering Pope John Paul II, “the shepherd for the world.” There was a special blessing of the Shrine and the Cultural Center of John Paul II at the church. **Fr. Tadeusz Bocianowski**, pastor of the St. Stanislaus Parish, brought a relic from Krakow – “one drop of blood of our beloved Pope - Blessed John Paul II,” which was blessed and installed at the base of a statue of the late pontiff.

BLESSED JOHN PAUL II SEMINARY DEDICATED. A new seminary for the archdiocese of Wash-

ington, D.C. was blessed by **Donald Cardinal Wuerl**. Located at Catholic University of America, the seminary has room for 30 seminarians. The chapel, dedicated to Mary, Mother of the Church, recalls John Paul II's special devotion to Mary. The chapel has two relics of the late pope, the blood of the pope on the cassock he wore the day he was shot and an amice he wore while celebrating Mass. The altar was built for the papal Mass with Pope Benedict on his visit in 2008 and the altar stone was used by **Archbishop John Carroll**, first bishop in the US. Cardinal Wuerl called the seminary “a manifestation of the New Evangelization” called for by Pope Benedict XVI.

BLESSED JOHN PAUL II: A THIRD PATRON OF EUROPE? Lamenting the fact the Europe seems to have lost its roots, the Vatican's secretary for relations with states **Archbishop Dominique Mamberti** called upon the old World to

“find in its culture and in its roots the necessary strength for a spiritual and human rebirth, citing St. Benedict as inspiration. At a gathering after the Mass before the tomb of John Paul II **Hanna Suchocka**, Poland's ambassador to the Vatican expressed the wish that Pope John Paul II would be considered by all “as a patron of a united Europe able to breathe fully with her two lungs.”

FR. PAVONE VS. BISHOP ZUREK. Amarillo, Texas **Bishop Patrick Zurek** has recalled **Fr. Frank Pavone** to the diocese on a matter of pastoral concern. Fr. Pavone, leader of Priests for Life and associated organizations, has been faced with a deficit of \$1.4 million in 2010 and with questions over the way the books of his organizations have been audited. Rather than attend a private meeting with the bishop, Fr. Pavone instead opted for mediation and cites the complexity of auditing the organizations associated with Priests for Life, which is not in deficit.

PROTECT LIFE ACT PASSED IN CONGRESS. With bi-partisan support the Protect Life Act was passed by the House of Representatives as an amendment to ObamaCare to assure that no taxpayer dollars will be used to fund abortions and to protect healthcare providers who do not wish to provide abortions from government pressure to do so. The bill's sponsor, **Joe Pitts**, R-Penn., co-sponsored essentially the same amendments with then congressman **Bart Stupak**, D-Mich., who abandoned the bill under White House pressure. The compromise

executive order, which led Stupak to change his vote, was deemed to flimsy to offer any guarantee and so the bill was reintroduced by Pitts with co-sponsor, pro-Life Democrat **Dan Lipinski**, D-Ill. Chances of the bill's passage in the Democratic-controlled senate are remote.

CHILDREN'S FAITH LETTERS FOUND. Tucked into the cross which capped a steeple of Buffalo, N.Y.'s Corpus Christi Church was a wad of letters written by grade school children 104 years ago when

the tower was completed. The copper dome and cross had seriously deteriorated over the century and was taken down to be replaced as part of the church's extensive renovations. The existence of the letters had long been spoken of and the discovery confirmed the truth of the story. Leakage and time have made them illegible, with the children's thoughts now known only to God whom they addressed. A collection of new letters will be added to the cross when the top of the steeple is replaced.

“Tryumfy Króla Niebieskiego
zstąpiły z nieba wysokiego ...”



MOST REV. JOHN WALTER YANTA

Bishop Emeritus of Amarillo, Texas
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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.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN. (Never Known To Fail). Oh, most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart and succor me in my necessity (make request). There are none that can withstand your power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (three times). Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands (three times). Say this prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish and it will be granted to you. Grateful thanks, C.C.

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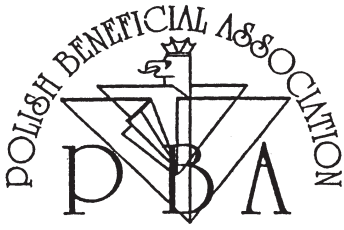
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LOT Airlines First Safe Belly Landing

by Robert Strybel

WARSAW — A new saying going round Poland is "Soar like an eagle, land like a crow!"

It arose in reference to airline captain Tadeusz Wrona who recently made LOT Airlines' first ever emergency belly landing at Warsaw's Fryderyk Chopin Airport. None of the 220 passengers or 11 crew aboard the Boeing 767 jetliner was hurt, but all breathed a sigh of relief after it was all over.

Shortly after the plane had taken off from Newark airport, the crew noted problems with its hydraulic system. They were able to close the wing flaps using a backup procedure, but the landing gear failed to respond. As a result, the plane circled Warsaw for about an hour to burn up excess fuel and decrease chances of an explosion or fire upon impact. Fire-brigade rescuers spread fire-retardant foam along the runway and a fleet of ambulances and medical staff were poised for action nearby, shortly after a request for landing assistance came from Captain Wrona, whose surname is the Polish word for "crow."

Fortunately, everything went like clockwork. Passengers later said they didn't even feel the touchdown, as it was the smoothest landing they had ever experienced. Within 90 seconds after the Boeing 767 had glided to a halt in the slippery foam, all the passengers were evacuated. But things were quite different while the plane was still circling above Warsaw and passengers were told an emergency landing was planned. Some people prayed, others conversed in hushed voices and still others sat in tense, fearful silence hoping all would go well, passengers later told reporters. As the time for the belly landing without wheels drew near, passengers were instructed to assume an emergency position and protectively cover their

heads.

Countless Poles watched the circling and landing on live television, and briefly tensed up when a shower of friction-generated sparks appeared beneath the plane as it slid along the runway. Once it came to a stop, firemen hosed the plane with more foam as a precautionary measure. Word of the incident also spread like wildfire among the throngs visiting family graves on All Saints Day, a national holiday in Poland. And it soon became apparent that Poland had a new national hero, Tadeusz Wrona, who has flown Boeings for 20 years and ranks among LOT's best pilots.

The 53-year-old father of two, a glider acrobatics champion in his own right, is so modest and unassuming a person that TV stations were only able to hunt up a more than 30-year-old snapshot of him

for their initial reports. And President Bronisław Komorowski called an emergency press conference in front of the Belweder Presidential Palace, thanking Wrona and the remaining crew as well as ground support for an operation carried out to perfection. "To all those involved, on behalf of the people of Poland I say thank you from the bottom of my heart," Komorowski said, adding that they deserved state decorations for their heroic feat.

Wrona himself seemed surprised by all the sudden publicity. "I don't feel like a hero. Every other pilot would have done the same thing," he told reporters. He said he hoped the plane could be repaired so he could fly it again. Meanwhile, within a few days he said he'd be off on his next planned flight aboard a different LOT aircraft — this time headed for Hanoi, Vietnam.

NBC SKIT MOCKS POLES, LANDING. Alex Storzynski, president of The Kosciuszko Foundation, is urging all to boycott NBC's *Saturday Night Live* and its advertisers in response to a satirical news report that made fun of Polish pilot Tadeusz Wrona.

Wrona successfully landed his Boeing 767 in Warsaw after the jet's landing gear failed, saving the lives of all 230 aboard.

Storzynski says he will encourage all to boycott the show until Meyers makes an apology.

On its November 5, the SNL news host mocked Wrona, who was being hailed as the "Polish Sully," referring to "Miracle-on-the-Hudson" pilot Chesley Sullenberger.

"A pilot from Poland is being called the 'Polish Sully' after he safely landed a jetliner in Warsaw that had a malfunctioning landing gear; although 'Polish Sully' sounds suspiciously like a pilot who may have just forgotten that his plane had landing gear," said Meyers. "And not to get overly technical, but I believe a 'Polish Sully' is when you land a boat at an airport. Again, not to get technical."

In his letter to NBC, Storzynski asked Meyers if "prejudice is funny?" and called him "not funny" and a bigot."

Letters to NBC should be sent to: Stephen B. Burke, Chief Executive Officer, NBC Universal, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10112.

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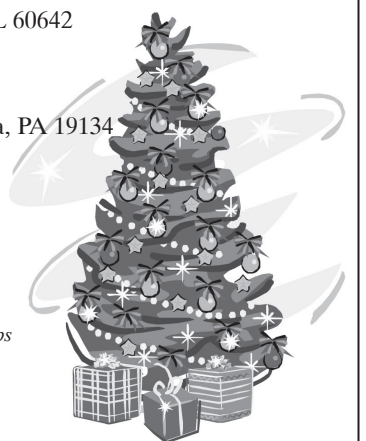
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Curie: Prize in Chemistry

continued from cover

small but measurable mass of radioactive materials: seven tons of pitchblende from Moravia had to be treated in order to get a useful amount.

The Curie's laboratory was considered superior for extraction and measurements of radioactive properties. Thanks to Marie's persuasion during the International Congress of Radiology and Electricity in Brussels in 1910, it was agreed to put forth a standard unit of measuring radioactivity based on the radioactivity obtained from 1 g of Radium and call it "Curie." Still, Marie was treated with prejudice as a woman. When she announced her candidacy for a Chair of Physics in Academy of Sciences, the most powerful scientific body in France, she was rejected. When in January 1911 the members of Academy of Science gathered to vote, Marie was not even allowed to enter and present her work since she was a woman. In spite of the support of many members, she lost.

When Marie returned to France after Solvay Conference in 1911 and after the announcement about second Nobel award, she was greeted with public condemnation. It was revealed by venomous press that she had a love affair with Paul Langevin. Langevin was a renowned physicist, the ex-student of Pierre Curie, who was unhappily married and had sev-

eral extramarital affairs. Marie was neither first nor the last on his list. Langevin's wife revealed intimate letters of Marie to the press. The French press stood viciously against Marie — a woman and a foreigner. Marie was accused of being a home wrecker, a dissolute woman and a Polish temptress. Marie became so close to the public disgrace that a member of Nobel Committee wrote to her on behalf of the Committee suggesting her not to accept a Nobel award.

Marie was not a person who was easily detracted. She attended the Nobel ceremony accompanied by her sister Bronya, and her older daughter Irene, then fourteen-years-old. Marie's acceptance speech confirmed her own credentials in the discoveries of polonium and radium. She was congratulated by King Gustaf.

Less than a month after she returned to Paris, she was rushed to the hospital. She was diagnosed with kidney disease, but she probably also suffered a total nervous breakdown. Her illnesses were probably a consequence of the hard work, radiation effects and the vicious condemnation campaign after the affair. Although Marie did not believe that she would survive a kidney surgery and she instructed Debierne what to do with her precious radium after her death, she was soon back on her feet and ready for work as usual.

The history can be sometimes bizarre. Later, Skłodowska-Curie's granddaughter, Héléne Joliot, married Langevin's grandson, Michel Langevin.

In spite of the previous mistreatment of Marie and Pierre Curie, who was never accepted as a member to French Academy during his lifetime, a special ceremony took place in April 1995. Pierre and Marie were enshrined in the crypt of the Panthéon in Paris. President Lech Walesa of Poland and President Mitterrand of France were presented at the ceremony.

References: Barbara Goldsmith "The Inner World of Marie Curie" Eve Curie "Madame Curie"

For more articles by Jaga Urban-Klahn, visit the Polish Culture web site: www.polishsite.us



THE FIRST SOLVAY CONFERENCE in 1911 at the Hotel Metropole, Brussels. Standing (l. to r.): Robert Goldschmidt, Max Planck, Heinrich Rubens, Arnold Sommerfeld, Frederick Lindemann, Maurice de Broglie, Martin Knudsen, Friedrich Hasenöhrl, Georges Hostelet, Edouard Herzen, James Hopwood Jeans, Ernest Rutherford, Heike Kamerlingh Onnes, Albert Einstein, and Paul Langevin.

RADIUM AND POLONIUM. The discovery of Radium and Polonium change science forever.

Radium is a highly radioactive chemical element classified among the alkaline earth metals of the periodic table of elements. This element has several research uses, and historically it was used in a wide range of industries. Before the realization that radiation was harmful, radium was used as a health additive in personal care products, and its inclusion was an advertising point to make these products appeal to consumers. Unfortunately,

numerous radiation-related deaths occurred before the scientific community realized that radium and other radioactive elements posed a health threat.

Curie named the element radium for the Latin radius, or "ray," in a reference to the element's radioactive properties.

Polonium is an extremely unstable radioactive chemical element which forms as part of the decay process of radium, another radioactive element. Because polonium is a stage in radium's decay process, it is sometimes called radium

F. This element appears in trace amounts in nature, typically in uranium ores, and most of its uses are in theoretical physics.

The instability of this element makes it difficult for scientists to identify its chemical properties.

In laboratories, polonium is used as a source of neutrons for experiments. This element is extremely toxic; exposure to a surprisingly small amount can be deadly.

Curie named Polonium after Poland, to publicize the fact that Poland was not free at that time, but part of the Russian Empire.

Lore: First Wigilia Visitor Predicted Luck

continued from cover

is also widely practiced in those areas as well.

According to one folk belief, if the first visitor entering a home on Wigilia was a male, that was said to bring good luck, but a female visitor foretold misfortune. In the olden days, it was customary for family members to wash in a bucket of cold water brought from the nearby stream to which a silver coin or two had been added, as that was said to ensure robust health all year long. The "the all-year-long" theme ran through many other practices. Children were told to be especially good on Wigilia, for that is how they would be all year. And if a child should have to be spanked on Christmas Eve for misbehaving, that was what was in store for him or her all year long. Grown-ups too were on their best behavior, refrained from arguments and settled whatever debts they owed someone in the hope of being debt-free in the year to come.

Christmas Eve supper or "wieczera wigilijna" was no ordinary supper. It was not even a typical festive meal of the kind served at weddings, on namedays or even Easter morning. Everything about it was special, unique and highly symbolic. It could begin only after the first

star of the evening had appeared in the sky. Traditionally meatless, it featured the gifts of farm, field, forest and river: pasta, grains, dairy products, fish, vegetables, fruits, nuts and poppy seeds. Courses were ordinarily brought in one by one and the family's best crockery were used.

Well into the 20th century, many poor peasants ate the food from common serving bowls with wooden spoons. For quite some time this tradition was also observed in many better-to-do homes, where there was no shortage of china and cutlery, to emphasize a sense of community. Until the meal was over, nobody was allowed to set their spoon on the table — it had to be held the whole time. Except for the housewife serving the food, no-one was allowed to leave the table until the meal was over. Everybody was expected to taste at least a small sample of everything on the table and not to leave anything uneaten on their plate. To do so was said to foretell missing out on various good things in the year ahead.

Originally the supper was eaten in silence, but in time that requirement was eased. Still, it was held that the general mood should be solemn, not frivolous or giddy. Coarse jokes and loud laughter definitely did not befit the occasion.

Various incantations and practices during the meal were meant — as always — to attract good fortune and keep harm away. When pasta or grain dishes were served, someone might exhort: "Mnóż się zboże!" (Multiply, o grain!). "Składaj się kapusto!" (Fold into heads, cabbage!) was uttered when sauerkraut and cabbage dishes made their appearance, and the words "Rodzicie się ziemniaki!" (Grow, potatoes, grow!) were heard when boiled potatoes were brought to table. "Wiąż się groszku!" (Form into pods!) was said to the peas. Those peas were also believed to keep wolves at bay: "Wilku, wilku chodź do grochu, a jak nie przyjdiesz do grochu, nie przychodź do końca nowego roku!" (If you want peas, wolf, do come here, if you don't, stay away all year!)

In some areas, the head of the household would fling a spoonful of cooked yellow peas at the ceiling. The more that stuck, the better a harvest could be expected the following year. In eastern Poland the same was done with *kucja* or *kutia*, a thick pudding made of cooked grain and honey. In the mountain areas of the south a handful of straw from the sheaves standing in the corners was thrown at the ceiling to ensure a good harvest. Since only rarely did a strand or two of straw get caught

on a sliver or rough spot, that practice seemed to have been a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy: a bountiful harvest was a rarity in the poor soil of the hard-scrabble mountain areas.

Various forms of fortune-telling usually centered on the martial prospects of the eligible girls of the family. For instance, they would draw strands of hay from under the table-cloth of the Vigil Supper table. A green strand meant marriage before the end of Zapusty (Mardi Gras), while a yellow one signified that the girl was still in for a wait before someone popped the question. But a dark, withered strand condemned the girl who had pulled it out to a life of spinsterhood. Sometimes the girl who chose the longest strand was said to be the first to go to the altar.

Another practice was to go into the front yard and listen for the barking of a dog. Wherever the first bark was heard, that is the direction from which a suitor would come courting. Girls would also count the pickets in the fence saying "kawaler, wdowiec, kawaler, wdowiec..." (bachelor, widower, bachelor, widower...), the last picket determining whom they would marry.

It was said that at the stroke of midnight the water in wells would turn to wine, but there was only one

catch: only those who had never sinned could taste it. That certainly excluded the rough-and-tumble farm hands, village drunks and other unsavory types who would have loved to sample the miraculous tippie. According to another folk belief farm animals could speak in human voices at midnight, but anyone who heard them would not live to tell the tale.

Our Polish ancestors were not really as superstitious as it may seem at first glance. These beliefs and practices were treated only half-seriously. Mainly they added a bit of diversion to the otherwise drab rural, winter existence of that bygone era.

After the Christmas Eve supper was over, it was common to gather up the table scraps together with any bits of leftover opłatek, the grain scattered on the table and the hay from beneath the table-cloth and take it to feed the livestock. A farmer that kept bees would also tap the hives and inform their drowsy denizens: "Cieszcie się i wy robaczki, Pan Jezus się narodził!" (Rejoice you insects, Christ is born!)

After the above rituals had been re-enacted families would return home and sing carols until it was time to leave for Pasterka. In poor families the singing went unaccompanied and the kolędy were sung from memory. In better-to-do homes a kantyczka (hymnal) containing a wide array of carols and other hymns was brought out, and the singing was often accompanied by someone playing a musical instrument. But gift-giving was not practiced on Christmas Eve in the Polish countryside until well into the 20th century.



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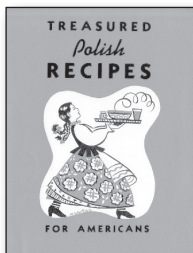
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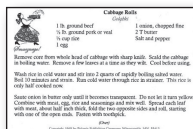

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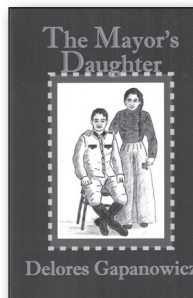
has been researched from old Polish cookbooks and recipes collected from the best of Polish – American cooks. It also contains stories of Polish festivities and customs such as Christmas Eve *wigilia*, Harvest Festival *dozynki* and the foods to celebrate. Recipes included are barszcz, bigos, czarna, pierogi, naleśniki, paszteciki ... a treasure full of Polish delectables. This book is perfect for home cooks or to give as a special gift.


GIFT PACK 12 FAVORITE GLOSS-COAT POLISH RECIPE CARDS
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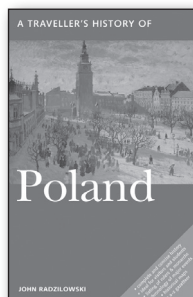
by Polonie Publishing.
Appealing red-ribbon cello packet of the most popular and treasured recipes. A tasty sample treat of 12 dishes from our classic cookbook, including Cabbage Rolls, Turkey Cutlets with Mushroom Sauce, Baked Apples in Red Wine and more. So handy for your recipe box and perfect as party favors or hostess gifts!


TREASURED POLISH SONGS WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS
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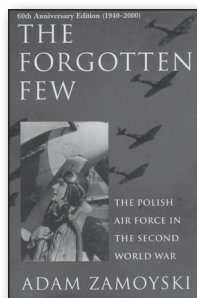
350 pp., hc.
Polonie Publishing
This lustrous book presents a magnificent collection of Polish songs with musical scores for voice and piano accompaniment. Included in this book are folk songs, lullabies, religious, art songs and ballads... solo and quartet arrangements and more. The songs touch upon the joys, daily experiences and misfortunes of the Polish people. They speak the language of their hearts and the spirit of their nation. Enhanced with colorful Wertén illustrations, a feature of this book is the authentic Polish lyrics with beautiful English translations. Both musician and appreciative listener will cherish this book.


THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER
by Delores Gapanowicz
\$12.95

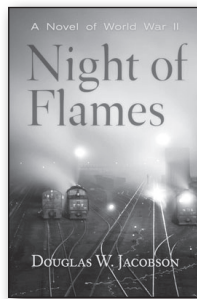
Nightingale Press
2007. 176 pp., pb., ill.
Readers will discover what life was like in rural Eastern Europe before World War I, a way of life that has changed forever. The stories were told to the author by her parents.


A TRAVELLER'S HISTORY OF POLAND
by John Radzilowski
\$14.95

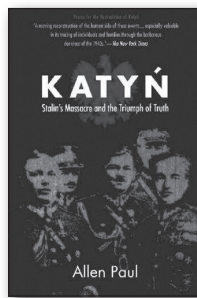
312 pp. ill., maps. pb.
A comprehensive historical survey guides travellers through a history of the people and places from pre-history to today. Includes a full chronology, a list of monarchs and rulers, a gazetteer, historical maps.


THE FORGOTTEN FEW
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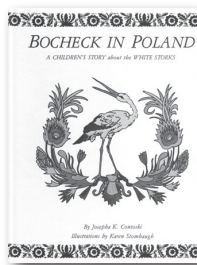
by Adam Zamoyski
hc. 239 pp.
Fleeing to Britain after the Germans captured their homeland, the pilots of the Polish Air Force played an important role in the Battle of Britain and the air war in the European theater. They shot down 745 enemy aircraft, with another 175 unconfirmed, and 190 flying bombs targeted at London. A story of the life and times of these air- men stationed in Britain.


NIGHT OF FLAMES: A Novel of World War Two
by Douglas W. Jacobson
\$16.95

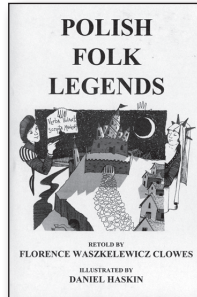
384 pp. pb., McBooks Press
"The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire."
In 1939 the Germans invade Poland, setting off a rising storm of violence and destruction. For Anna and Jan Kopernik the loss is unimaginable. She is an assistant professor at a university in Krakow; he, an officer in the Polish cavalry. Separated by war, they must find their own way in a world where everything they ever knew is gone.


KATYN: STALIN'S MASSACRE AND THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH
by Allen Paul
\$24.95

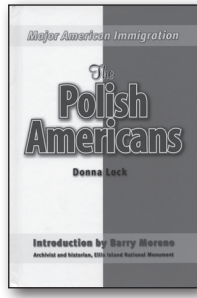
N. Illinois University Press.
2010. 430 pp. pb. 9"x6.5"
Marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Forest massacre, this edition exposes the crime and its cover-up. Twenty years ago, Allen Paul wrote the first post-communist account of one of the greatest but least-known tragedies of the 20th century: Stalin's annihilation of Poland's officer corps and massive deportation to Siberia.

FOR CHILDREN (and adults, too!)

BOCEK IN POLAND
\$11.95

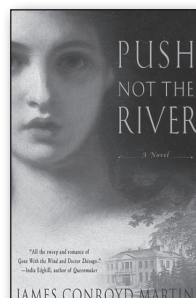
54 pp., Polonie Publishing
This delightful, captivating children's story about the life of storks and many of the Polish customs they encounter. Beautifully illustrated and educational, it is full of adventure, drama and suspense which will be thoroughly enjoyed by adults as well as children. The story won first prize in a literary contest sponsored by the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs.


POLISH FOLK LEGENDS
by Florence Waszkelewicz Clowes
ill. by Daniel Haskin
\$14.95

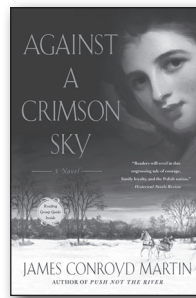
Infinity Publishing, 2010,
208 pp. pb.
Forty legends collected in Poland or researched in many books and periodicals. Poland's first written history by Muenster in 895 states King Popiel reigned in Polonia 246 years before Christ. This is one of the many legends still told by the Poles.


THE POLISH AMERICANS from the "Major American Immigration Series"
by Donna Lock
\$22.95

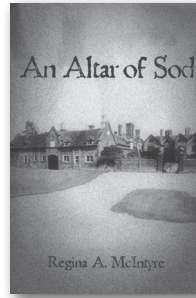
Full color illustrated. Ages 9-12. Mason Crest Publishers. 2008. 64 pp. hc. 9"x6"
Polish emigrants left their homeland for many of the same reasons as did other ethnic groups. Yet in America's melting pot, the Polish have maintained a stronger hold on their traditions and customs than most of the other immigrant groups.

GIFTS MAKE PERFECT CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!

PUSH NOT THE RIVER
by James C. Martin
\$15.95

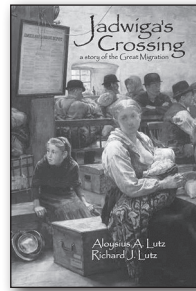
St. Martin's Press. 496 pp.pb. Maps & wycinanki illust. Reading Group Guide
AUTOGRAPHED! This book club favorite is based on the real diary of a Polish countess who lived through the rise and fall of the Third of May Constitution years, a time of great turmoil. Vivid, romantic, and thrillingly paced, the novel paints the emotional and memorable portrait of the metamorphosis of a nation—and of Anna, a proud and resilient young woman, and Jan, her soldier-husband. "Poland's *Gone with the Wind*."


AGAINST A CRIMSON SKY
by James C. Martin
\$15.95

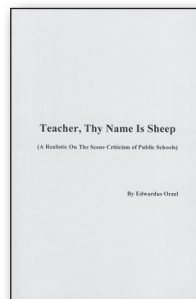
St. Martin's 369 pp.pb. Map & wycinanki illust. Reading Group Guide
AUTOGRAPHED! "You don't have to read *Push Not the River* to get the most from this sequel," says Suzanne Strempek Shea. The award-winning author picks up where *Push Not the River* leaves off, taking the characters 20 years into the fascinating Napoleonic era, highlighting the exploits of the glorious Polish lancers. Having narrowly escaped death amidst the chaos caused by the violent dissolution of their homeland.


AN ALTAR OF SOD
By Regina A. McIntyre
\$19.95

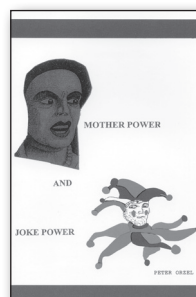
Hats Off Books, 2001, 2010,
304 pp., pb
In 19th century Partitioned Poland, the village of Miska sits almost unchanged on the banks of the Vistula. This is the story of three families who are unforgettably joined by love, pain, struggle and hope. Rich in tradition, the story builds to a far-reaching conclusion.


JADWIGA'S CROSSING: A story of the Great Migration
\$19.95

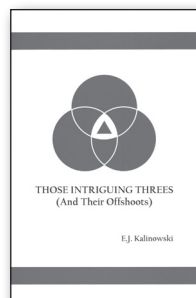
Al and Dick Lutz' Award-winning work. 348 pp., pb.
A perfect gift of heritage ... The experience of late 19th Century immigration, as seen through the eyes of Paul and Jadwiga Adamik and what they went through to make America their new home. Appropriate for all ages 12 and up.


TEACHER, THY NAME IS SHEEP
by E.J. Kalinowski
\$9.95

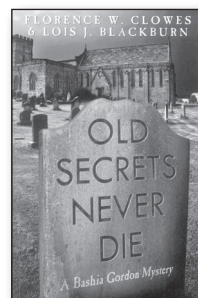
Kalski Books, 2004.
132 pp., pb.
Why are American high school students so undisciplined? Read this book and judge for yourself. The author, a retired high school and junior high school teacher, wrote his opinionated discourse in 1968, and updated it in 2004.


MOTHER POWER AND JOKE POWER
by E.J. Kalinowski
\$9.95

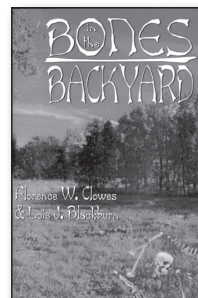
Kalski Books, 1998. 142 pp., pb.
Mother Power is a compendium of psycho-biographical sketches on personalities in various fields. *Joke Power* stresses the deleterious effects jokes have in individuals and groups targeted for derision.


THOSE INTRIGUING THREES (and Their Offshoots)
by E.J. Kalinowski
\$9.95

Self published / Kalski Books, 2009. 166 pp., pb.
Why are there so many threes in the Bible? Have you noticed the amount of triadic construction in nature? The premise of this book is the prevalence of threes in our world and how to observe them.


OLD SECRETS NEVER DIE
A Bashia Gordon Mystery
\$14.95

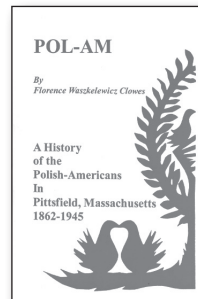
by Florence W. Clowes and Lois J. Blackburn
Infinity Publishing, 2007,
220 pp, pb.
Bashia Gordon, semi-retired interior decorator and amateur sleuth, is at it again. When she learns her friend Connecticut State Trooper Mark Jankowski, is investigating the death of one of her clients, Gladys Goodell, her curiosity takes over. Soon a mummified baby is found in the old Goodell home. None of the Goodell sisters ever married. Whose baby could this be?


BONES IN THE BACKYARD
A Bashia Gordon Mystery
\$14.95

by Florence W. Clowes and Lois J. Blackburn
Infinity Publishing, 2001,
198 pp, pb.
In the quiet corner of northeastern Connecticut, semi-retired interior decorator, Bashia Gordon, turns amateur sleuth when she and her Peace Corps friend, Dottie Weeks, uncover a fragmented skeleton in a septic tank. How did it get there? Who is it?

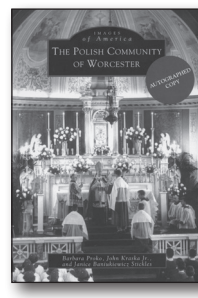
Trooper Mark Jankowski arrives on the scene, and is intrigued by Bashia. Identifying the long-dead victim becomes a challenge for Jankowski. Bashia's curiosity, intuition and Internet research skills keep her involved. Could the bones be the wealthy eccentric who disappeared years ago?

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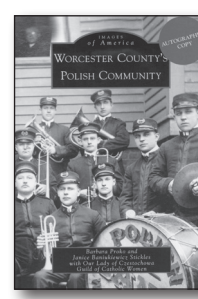
MASSACHUSETTS POLONIA

A HISTORY OF POLISH-AMERICANS IN PITTSFIELD, MASS., 1862-1945
by Florence Waszkelewicz Clowes
\$14.95

Palmetto Press, Vero Beach
2004. 152 pp., 5.5" x 8.25",
photographs, pb.

This is the first ethnic history of the Polish community in Pittsfield Massachusetts, with a listing of the people who originally settled there. Using church records, organization brochures and oral histories the author has compiled a valued history. In the nineteenth and twentieth century Polish immigrants came to Pittsfield seeking work in the woolen mills. They created social, religious, and business organizations, which encouraged others to join them. The north end of Pittsfield is well populated with the Polish community.


THE POLISH COMMUNITY OF WORCESTER (MASS.)
by Barbara Proko, Janice Baniukiewicz Stickle, and John Kraska, Jr.
\$19.95

Arcadia, 2003, 128 pp pb.
AUTOGRAPHED! Acclaimed as "a wonderful tribute" and "long overdue," this groundbreaking book documents the history of Polonia in a large industrial New England city, 1870-1970. More than 220 vintage photos and images—many never before published—paint a vivid picture of immigration, family life, work, Polonia's heart (Millbury Street) and soul (Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish), education, athletics, citizenship, military service, and Polish cultural traditions. 300+ surnames indexed.


WORCESTER COUNTY'S POLISH COMMUNITY
by Barbara Proko and Janice Baniukiewicz Stickle
\$19.95

Arcadia, 2007, 128 pp pb.
AUTOGRAPHED! Lauded as a "community family album" and "a welcome complement to The Polish Community of Worcester," this photo history highlights the seven Polish parish seats of the Worcester Diocese—Clinton, Dudley, Gardner, Southbridge, Webster, West Warren, and Worcester—plus Gilbertville, South Grafton, Uxbridge, and other Central Massachusetts towns where Poles have settled in substantial numbers for more than a century. 225+ historic images, 700+ individuals identified by name.

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HAPPENINGS: CHICAGO STYLE / Geraldine Balut Coleman

Polish American Heritage Celebrated

CHICAGO — Over 300 guests attended the 42nd Annual Polish American Heritage Award Banquet, hosted by the Polish American Congress-Illinois Division (PAC-IL), and held this year at the Donald E. Stevens Convention Center in Rosemont. This event was held to pay tribute to five outstanding Polonians for their contributions to the Polish American Community, Chicago, and Illinois. Receiving the PAC-IL's highest honor, the Polish American Heritage Award, was **Maria Bronny Ciesla**, President of the Polish Museum of America. For over 45 years Mrs. Ciesla has shown a relentless commitment and sincere compassion in preserving Polish culture, who continues to be a Polish American Community leader, keeping Polonia connected and vital with Chicago's ethnic scene. She believes in sharing the richness of the Polish culture, as well as Polish and Polish American history with those of other ethnicities.

The Professional/Business Award was given to **Adam Andrzejewski**, a successful businessman, former Republican candidate for governor of Illinois, and a staunch advocate for the state of Illinois. Adam founded "ForTheGoodOfIllinois," a non-profit watchdog organization that advocates the transparency of public spending in Illinois.

Honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award was **Louis Koncza**. After World War II, Mr. Koncza arrived in Chicago as a displaced person, graduated from the University of Illinois with an engineering degree, and began working for the City of Chicago. As the city's Chief Bridge Engineer, he was instrumental in the removal of the "Z" curve bottleneck and the reconstruction of North Lakeshore Drive, the erection of the Columbus Bridge (the second longest moveable bridge in the world), and the engineering of the rapid transit extension of the Blue Line train from Chicago's Northwest Side Jeffer-



42ND ANNUAL HERITAGE AWARD BANQUET. Front (l. to r.): Anselmo, Spula, and Matynia; Back (l. to r.): Koncza, Andrzejewski, Ciesla, Ptasznik, and Lizak.

son Park Station to O'Hare Airport. Additionally, he was the guiding force in relocation the Kościuszko Monument from Humboldt Park to its present location near the Copernicus Monument at the Adler Planetarium.

The Young Professional Award was given to **Agnes Ptasznik**. Ms. Ptasznik is the Assistant Attorney General for Governmental Representation in the General Law Bureau for the State of Illinois. Also, Agnes was a Community Outreach Liaison for European Affairs for the Illinois Attorney General's Office, handling all media in the Polish language. She is very active as a member of the Chicago-Warsaw Sister Cities Committee, the Polish American Chamber of Commerce, and the School of Leaders for the Polish Community Abroad.

The PAC-IL's President's Award was presented to attorney, **Chester A. Lizak**. In private legal practice for over 40 years, Mr. Lizak is considered one of the top trial lawyers in Illinois, and for many years volunteered at the *Amicus Poloniae* Legal Clinic.

The evening began with the Ma-

rine ROTC Color Guard from Chicago's Marie Sklodowska Curie Metropolitan High School, followed by the Polish National Anthem sung by Ola Podowska, a freshman from the Illinois Institute of Technology and the USA Anthem sung by Aleksandra Krzydłowski, a junior from Loyola Academy, a Jesuit college preparatory high school.

The Master of Ceremonies was Alan Krashesky, ABC-TV anchor and reporter. Mr. Krashesky is not only an Emmy Award recipient, but has, for a dozen years or so, hosted the Polish Constitution Day Parade for ABC-TV Channel 7 news.

After the presentation of PAC-IL awards, there were short remarks made by Mary Sendra Anselmo, President of the PAC-IL, Frank Spula, National President of the Polish American Congress, Zygmunt Matynia, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago, and Professor Piotr Jaroszynski of the Catholic University of Lublin.

Numerous dignitaries attending the banquet included Joseph A. Drobot, Jr., president of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, Teresa Skawski, president of the Legion of Young Polish Women, Judge Aurelia Pucinski of the Illinois Appellate Court, Dorothy Brown, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, and Sharon Zago, representing the Polish Women's Alliance of America, just to name a few.

The evening was filled with entertainment which included cocktail and dinner music played by Anthony Kawalkowski, violinist, and Dr. William Crowle, pianist. A special surprise was added to the evening's festivities: Chicago's south side, Wesoly Lud song and dance ensemble, under the direction of Richard and Michelle Jaminski, provided a special dance tribute to Mary Bronny Ciesla.

The closing musical program was performed by the Wici song and dance company, which provided a breathtaking dance and vocal presentation which encompassed a

one-thousand year history of Poland and Poles as they attempted to fight for national identity and freedom. The performance started with dancing from the reign of Mieszko I, followed by a dance representing the Grunwald period, then a dance during the reign of Wladyslaw Jagiello. The next portion of the ensemble's presentation was dance interpretations of wars with the Ottoman Empire, the 18th century, the Battles of Warsaw, culminating with the Solidarity uprising, and ending with Poland's entry in the European Union. All of this was done through the efforts of Walter Bochenek and Wici's choreographer Magda Solarz.

THE VALIANT AND THE INDIFFERENT: HONORING RESCUERS.

Sunday, November 6, was a



STAWSKI and his granddaughter holding a photo of his parents.

cold, overcast, and windy day. But more importantly it was a day set aside by the Illinois Holocaust Museum, located in Skokie Illinois, to "Honor the Righteous" and mark the 73rd anniversary of the November 1938 Pogrom, *Kristallnacht*. Seven individuals were honored as "Righteous Rescuers." The afternoon program commenced with the acknowledgment of honorees at the Museum's Ferro Fountain of the Righteous.

The honorees were Father Francesco Brondello and Dr. Giovanni Palatucci of Italy, Benediktas Sindikaitis, Stase Sindikaityte-Mineliene, and Kazimiera Mozurkiene of Lithuania, along with **Kazimierz Stanislaw Stawski** and **Wanda Antonina Stawski** of Poland.

In 1942, Mr. and Mrs. Stawski hid Miriam Korn, and their subsequent valor saved her life, and she survived the war. At the request of Miriam, the Stawskis were honored on November 10, 1970 at Israel Yad Vashem's "Avenue of the Righteous." After the Warsaw Uprising, they were sent to Pruszkow's Nazi transit camp and also survived the war. On hand at the Illinois Holocaust Museum to witness the unveiling of a special plaque honoring his parents was Mr. **Stanislaw "Stanley" Stawski**, along with his family and friends. He also brought copies of the document honoring his parents in 1970, written in both French and Hebrew.

The ceremony continued in

the Museum Hall, where over 400 guests were seated with only standing room only availability. The Honorable Alessandro Motta, Consul General of Italy in Chicago, contributed interesting and emotionally-filled remarks.

Their son, "**Stanley**" **Stawski**, took part in the Warsaw Uprising as a member of the AK, *Armia Krajowa*, was captured, and was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. After his camp was liberated, Stawski headed to Italy and joined the 2nd Polish Corps. Two years after the war ended, the British sent his unit to England and when it was demobilized in 1951, Stawski left for the United States. He had \$20 in his pocket. By 1954, he was working as a liquor and wine salesman in Chicago. Six years later, he opened his own company, Stawski Imports, importing beers from Poland and Austria. Today, Stawski Distributing is the importer of beers, wines, spirits, and non-alcoholic beverages from Central and Eastern Europe, Mexico, and the East.

Chicago Polonia was well represented including Jan Krawiec, an Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp survivor and former editor-in-chief of Chicago's *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, and Wieslaw Chodorowski, member of *Armia Krajowa* and the Warsaw Uprising. It is interesting to note that Mr. Krawiec spends his volunteer time working at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.



NEW OFFICERS of LYPW.

LEGION INSTALLS NEW OFFICERS. Not only is the Legion of Young Polish Women (LYPW) commencing its seventy-third year with its contributions to charitable, educational, literary and medical causes, but the LYPW also elected a new board of officers which will continue the traditions of the Legion's founders. At the October 18th annual meeting, the following were elected officers by its members: Teresa Skawski, President; Geraldine Balut Coleman, First Vice President; Anna Budzikowska, Second Vice President; Joan Kosinski, Treasurer; Chris Matuszczak, Recording Secretary; Bozena Hasztrakiewicz, Financial Secretary; Cathy Domagalski, English Corresponding Secretary; Eva Lipczynski, Polish Corresponding Secretary, Mira Link, Historian; Shirley Dudzinski, Parliamentarian; and Directors, Sharon Orłowski and Lori Cioromski. The LYPW has begun to prepare for its **73rd Annual Debutante White and Red Ball**. It has had two debutante teas with two more to follow. The Ball, the Legion's major fundraiser, will take place on February 18, 2012 at the Chicago Hilton & Towers. For information regarding the Ball, contact Sharon Orłowski at legionball@hotmail.com.

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POLONIA OF THE EASTERN GREAT LAKES / Michael Pietruszka

A New Home for the PHC Library

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Olean Public Library observed Polish American Heritage Month during October with a display of Polish American artifacts collected by **Marion Pockalny** ... The **Polish Arts Club of Buffalo** presented Stanley and Eric Pulaski speaking on "The Legacy of Casimir Pulaski: Poland and the United States" at the Harlem Road Community Center in Amherst on October 19 ... The Professional & Businessmen's Association honored **Richard Milewicz** and **Steven Sielski** as its Men-of-the-Year for 2010 and 2011 at its dinner at the Creekside Banquet Facility in Cheektowaga on October 22 ... On October 23, **Polish Falcons Nest 52** hosted its Memorial Mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Rochester ... **Dr. Michal Kaczmarczyk** of the University of Gdansk has been chosen to be a Kosciuszko Foundation Teaching Fellow in the State University of NY at Buffalo's Polish Studies Program for the current academic year. He spoke on "Civil Disobedience and the Limits of the Law" at Clemens Hall on the university campus on the 26th.

"1920 Bitwa Warszawska" was screened at various Toronto area theaters from October 28 through November 3 ... U.S. Congressman Louise Slaughter has joined her WNY delegation colleagues Brian Higgins and Kathy Hochul in co-sponsoring legislation which would add **Poland** to the list of nations participating in the **U.S. Visa Waiver Program** ... The **Polish Cadets** of Buffalo sponsored a Halloween Par-

ty, and John Gora performed at the Ludowa Nutta Dance in Hamilton, Ontario on October 29 ... On October 30, the **Chopin Singing Society's** 112th Annual Concert was held at the Canisius College Montante Center, and the **Polish Legacy Project - World War II** continued the Polish tradition of marking All Souls Day at St. Stanislaus Cemetery in Cheektowaga ... Town of Boston genealogist **Keith Kaszubik** recently donated his "Erie County Alien Declarations Index" database to the Polish Genealogical Society of NYS.

On November 1, the Oratory of St. Casimir in Buffalo's Kaisertown neighborhood held a Mexican / Polish American **All Souls Day** memorial service ... PAJ publisher **Mark Kohan** has been chosen to receive the Skalny Civic Achievement Award by the Polish American Historical Association ... The **University of Toronto Polish Student Association** elected the following leadership for the 2011-12 academic year: Klaudyna Szczupak (president), Nadia Hosseinzadeh (vice president), Marek Lugowski (treasurer) and Basia Waginska (secretary).

Holy Mother of the Rosary Polish National Cathedral changed its mailing address to 6298 Broadway, Lancaster, NY 14086 ... The **Polish Heritage Club Library** is now housed in the Syracuse Polish Home on Park Avenue ... Artist **Jolanta Kolaczek** exhibited her works in Oakville, Ontario on November 5 and 6 ... On November 6, Buf-

falo's **Corpus Christi Parish** collected letters from parishioners to be encased as messages for future generations in the church tower that is undergoing renovation, **Polish Veterans Day** was commemorated at St. Stanislaus Church in Buffalo, and the **Polish Literary Club** of the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester offered a Polish language presentation of Adam Mickiewicz's "Pan Tadeusz" at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church ... On November 8, the **Young Polish Canadian Professionals Association** sponsored a lecture by Professor Artur Nowak-Far of the Warsaw School of Economics entitled "The Polish EU Presidency Role in EU-Wide Crisis Management" at the Munk School of Global Affairs in Toronto ... The **Permanent Chair of Polish Culture** at Canisius College's Polish Film Showcase 2011 was held on campus November 10 through 13 ... The Rochester **Polish Film Festival** was held at the Little Theatre in Downtown Rochester November 11 through 15 ... The Syracuse Polish Home organized an "Andrzejski" party in late November to welcome the new rector of Sacred Heart Parish, Rev. Andrew Baranski.

If you have an item for this column, please send the information by the 6th day of the month preceding the month in which you would like the item to appear (i.e. December 6 for the January issue) at **P.O.E.G.L., P.O. Box 223, Niagara Square Station, Buffalo, NY 14201-0223; E-mail: pietruszka@verizon.net. Wesołych Świąt!**

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PONDERRING POLE / Edward Poniewaz

The House of God

Looking back on the year, one of the big themes that resonated with me more than others was news about a number of Polish churches closing, merging, or being torn down. The worst one of this group in my opinion is Holy Cross in Minneapolis, Minnesota. From everything I have read, the church was self-sustaining and did not need to be merged with anything or changed for any reason. St. Stanislaus Kostka in Binghamton, New York is another merged parish. Another, St. Stan's in Baltimore's Fells Point neighborhood, has been decommissioned and sold for commercial use by our beloved Franciscans. At least the building itself has been preserved. St. Thomas the Apostle in Detroit, Michigan was featured as a Polish American Journal 100th anniversary "reflections" and was demolished ten years ago.

A Christmas wish, for those that do not currently belong or have never belonged to a historically Polish parish is this: plan to attend Mass during the Christmas season at a traditional Polish church. Bring the family including all of the kids. Take in the beauty of the night, observe the architecture and decorations, or think of the names and faces of the people that used to be there or are still there. Next year might be too late.

The first time I attended Polish midnight Mass was something I will never forget. The church was packed but peaceful. It was quiet. I came early to hear the kolędy and the "Dzisiaj w Betlejem" was the first song (as it probably is throughout the world) to break the silence.

It was the combination of the choir and the angelic voices behind me (the Wojtus girls were singing along) made it perfectly beautiful.

Then the lights came up and the Mass began with the blessing of the nativity scene and placing the baby Jesus in the crib. Tall Christmas trees lined the back of the sanctuary and the altar was decorated with lots of poinsettias. The Mass was solemn and prayerful. I really did feel the goodness and spirit of the birth of the Lord that night. No threats, or commotion, or bad news hanging over the congregation's collective head.

It might surprise some of us that bishops really aren't in the business of preserving old churches. They should be in the business of saving souls and if that means worshipping in a grass field, a barn, or a gymnasium, so be it. St. Louis' Father Moglenicki used to say that the church, the building, "really is the house of God." It is Polonia's fortune to have places that raise us up spiritually along with the added dimension of cultural expression. I love that unique combination and want to keep it. Say a prayer that we do and if your words are in the Polish language, that will be just fine.

THOSE DOGGONE NAMES. In case you haven't heard, the St. Louis Cardinals won the baseball World Series Championship this year (yeah!). They acquired Mark Rzepczynski (inset, below) to strengthen the pitching staff, and even though "Rzep" was not our savior in the bullpen, he did a pretty good job in short relief. As you might expect,

his name garnered more attention than his strike-outs. His nickname is "scrabble" among the players, some of whom started calling him just that. (i.e., "Scrabble," and not "Just That.")

To be fair, and as you might expect, most of the players and commentators treated Mark and his name without fanfare, pronouncing it correctly.

"Actually, as Rzepczynski points out, his name is not really that hard to pronounce once you know the trick," said David Waldstein in the *New York Times*, citing Rzepczynski's formula:

"Just drop the R," he said, providing the Americanized version of the Polish name.

"Voilà, it suddenly becomes clear: Zep-CHIN-ski. It's as easy as Smith," said Waldstein.

From what I can tell, he is regular guy and probably just wants to be a Cy Young Award winner. For a positive perspective on the Rzepczynski name game, Google the article by Waldstein of the *New York Times*.

I do need to note that at my college reunion in October of this year, someone actually said, "I always thought you had the neatest name."

There you go. A sincere and heartfelt *Wesołych Świąt* to our Polish American Journal family and friends. I hope you receive a copy of *Water for Elephants* in your stocking. You can watch it right after *It's a Wonderful Life*.

If you have a thought about this month's topic, a question of your own, or interesting facts to share, contact me at: Edward Poniewaz, 6432 Marmaduke, St. Louis, MO 63139; eMail alinabrig@yahoo.com.



RZEP CZYNSKI

POLAND FIGHTS / Douglas W. Jacobson

Poland's 1st Armored Division

Part II

NORMANDY - AUGUST, 1944.

When the Polish 1st Armored Division landed in Normandy, the campaign against Hitler's forces was raging. The Allied armies were struggling to break out while the German Wehrmacht clung tenaciously to every defensive position. The Poles were attached to the 1st Canadian Corps who, along with the British forces of General Montgomery, attacked the Germans from the north. With General Patton's American forces attacking from the south, the Germans fought relentlessly to avoid encirclement. Through the first two weeks of August the battle raged on as the Germans fought ferociously to escape entrapment in the area that would come to be known as the "Falaise Gap." In a fighting retreat, the Wehrmacht eventually reached the town of Chamboise and the last road open to them for escape to the east. The Poles, in the center of the attacking Allied armies, were relentless in pursuit and, on the 19th of August, after a prolonged, bitter struggle seized Chamboise and established a position on the top of nearby Mount Ormel.

From this position the Polish 1st Armored Division had an ideal vantage point over the entire area of the Falaise Gap from which to call in artillery and air strikes. It was a precarious position, however, and they were soon surrounded by German forces on both sides of the hill. Low on fuel, the Poles dug in, vowing to hold on at all costs. The Germans savagely attacked the Polish positions, desperate to dislodge them and prevent the closing of the gap. The Poles, taking heavy casualties, repelled every assault while their radio operators continued to direct the fire of Canadian artillery batteries. Through continuous bombardments

in the flat plains below the hill, German corpses piled up among draft animals and the shattered, burning remains of hundreds of tanks and trucks. The Poles hung on through the carnage as the Americans, Canadians and British closed in until the gap was finally closed on August 21st.

The result was an enormous victory for the Allied forces. More than ten thousand Germans were killed and another fifty thousand taken prisoner. The Polish 1st Armored Division alone captured over five thousand prisoners and destroyed 570 German tanks and 100 artillery guns. The losses to the Poles were 450 killed and 100 tanks lost. So great was the contribution of the Polish 1st Armored Division that Winston Churchill later acknowledged their tenaciousness and valor by describing the battle as, "the Germans trapped in a bottle with the Poles as the cork which would not budge."

The battle of the Falaise Gap was the last hurdle in the breakout of the Allied armies from Normandy. From there they drove on through France to Belgium and Holland where the Polish 1st Armored Division would again be called on to aid in this titanic struggle.

Douglas W. Jacobson is the Polish American author of the award-winning book, *Night of Flames: A Novel of World War Two*, and a frequent contributor to this newspaper. He has written a second historical novel set in Poland in *World War Two*, *The Katyn Order*, which was released in May, 2011. Both books are available online and at any bookstore. You can visit him on the web at www.douglaswjacobson.com.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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I am interested in becoming a member of PAHA. Enclosed is a check or money order for \$30.00 made payable to the Polish American Historical Association.

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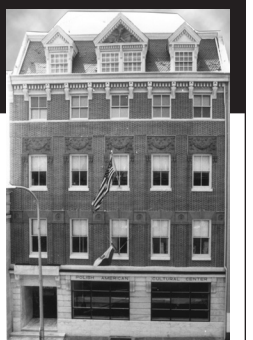
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U.S. Army veteran of 30 years service, having served in World War II in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy; Korea (twice); and Vietnam during those conflicts. Retired as Chief Warrant Officer, W4

Polka MAGAZINE

POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION AND CONTINUANCE OF POLISH AMERICAN MUSIC

The End of an Era: The Legendary Versatones to Retire — Part II

by Steve Litwin

After forty-seven years, over 6500 appearances, 60 albums, and tours throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Mexico, Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones are retiring.

The impact, influence, and dominance of Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones on polka music is unequalled. They set the pace and established a level of excellence that others still follow today.

This month, we continue our series of memories and commentary provided by former Versatones.

A VERSATONES VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE

"It was an honor and a privilege to play with my polka hero and favorite band. From what I recall, I believe I was the last drummer to actually play with Sr. Nobody had the presence that Sr. and the Versatones had when we came to town. Everyone treated us with such respect!"

— Johnny Pilch

"Nearly 25 years ago, I experienced something that will never be duplicated; a chance to play Polka music full time with the Versatones, nearly 200 nights a year, honing my craft, while meeting friends that I still have today."

— Kevin Adams

"I've personally have known Eddie since he was five years old as we were neighbors. When Li'l Wally moved to Florida and Eddie started Bel-Aire records, he encouraged me to start my own band, the Casinos, and promoted the band just as much as the Versatones. He even went and introduced us on the road. He is a real gentlemen and very unselfish."

— Don Ptak

"What an amazing experience for a boy from Minnesota; to grow up to take the stage with a true Polka legend. What a thrill it was to have a ring-side seat, hearing Eddie consistently belt out those tunes night after night."

— Kevin Adams



SIERZEGA

"Let's start with Senior. Working with him was a very special time. He was in command of everything he did. He was at his best. To be a Versatone during this time was great. People loved what was being produced. The people made us feel very special because we represented the Polish people at the very highest level. Even when we went to the Grammy Awards and did not win, the people came out to the airport

with signs and banners honoring us and showing their pride for us. It was amazing."

— Jim (Spangles) Sierzega
Trumpet, vocals, concertina

"Not only did Eddie have fine musicians but also a very unique style that is still imitated today. His band was on the leading edge with playing all new styling of polkas. He and Chet vocalized and harmonized on some outstanding recordings. Eddie asked me to play accordion while Richie Sendra went on active duty with the reserves. We played in Buffalo, N.Y. at the Hearthstone Manor. I will never forget the crowds. It was like playing with the Beatles — just thousands of people. I still remember Eddie handing me about eight albums to get all the songs down. He said Suds don't make a mistake or I'll get you. Which was his way of saying you're going to be 'pranked.' Eddie will always be my Polka Hero and best friend.

— Rich "Polka Suds" Cerajewski

"One way to judge the popularity of a band is how other musicians/bands mimic them. Look at how many bands of today feature both an accordion and concertina, have an accordion or concertina solo near the end of every song with a vocal, a bass player playing with one hand and holding a vocal microphone in the other — these are all things that have originated or became popular by the Versatones. Look at how many bands play Versatone songs."

— Al Piatkowski

"The unique group of musicians, collectively known as 'The Versatones' (original, past and present) is a group of immensely talented individuals who have remained friends throughout these many years. Fans throughout the Chicagoland area and out of state recognize a Versatone by name, voice or face and willingly share their memories and stories about The Versatones."

— Rich Sendra, original Versatone, 1959-1969

"I was extremely blessed to have worked with extraordinary musicians like the late Jerry Darlak and Mike Vinecki, Rich and Jerry Tokarz, Jim Sierzega, Al Piatkowski, Kevin Adams, John Zelasko, Matt Lewandowski, Eddie Blazonczyk Jr, Jeff Yash, Bobby Zima, Eddie Siwicz, Eric Noltkamper, Derek Cooper and a host of other very talented musicians."

— Ed Wolinski

"Eddie signed us to a recording contract and we made *Polish Jam Session* with three other groups. We recorded more tunes which are still in the archives of Bel-Aire records.

"In 1996 I was drafted and went to Viet Nam with the 25th infantry. Upon my return, my group changed and Eddie asked me if I would play piano on his albums. I did so from 1968 thru the late '80s around twenty five years. We made some wonderful music together. My favor-

ite albums were *Polka Concert* and the honky (style) album. Eddie was way ahead of his time with his band."

— Rich "Polka Suds" Cerajewski

"I have to say that working with the Versatones was a special time for me. I was always proud to be out in public or on stage representing the Versatones. The band that I worked with during the mid '80s was exceptional. Everyone worked hard. No matter if it was a small hall of 100 people, or a convention center that held 3000, we performed at our best. Now everyone can't be at the top of their game every day, even Senior had his moments. That is when this group can step up and make it sound as if nothing was different. The caliber of musician was very high. I should say for the most part the caliber of musician was always high if you were to perform with this group."

— Jim (Spangles) Sierzega
Trumpet, vocals, concertina

"As leader of the Versatones, Eddie Blazonczyk, Sr. has earned the respect of audiences and fellow musicians throughout the country. We all miss Eddie, Sr. dearly and we'll now miss (Eddie) Junior and the Versatones. Based on my life experiences I believe that they'll be back again. Good luck Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones. We love you!"

— Lenny Gomulka

"We recorded three Honky style recordings. I played drums on all three. I loved playing honky drums and I really think the people at the dances loved it, too. The health issues in 2001 caused me to retire much, much, sooner than I wanted to, and Eddie Jr. took over leadership of the band. I can't put in to words how proud I am of him, and the job he did with continuing the band for another 10 years."

— Eddie Blazonczyk, Sr.

"Being a member of the Versatones was a dream come true for me. Who doesn't grow up dreaming of becoming a member of The Nation's No. 1? For over three years I played drums and even sang a few and participated in harmonies as well. It was a stepping stone to my musical future."

— Matt Lewandowski

"Eddie knew how to keep his group motivated and he was at his greatest when he was with his audience. Everyone Loved Big Ed as well as his musicians. People say he will never be replaced and most of us agree with that statement.

— Roger Malinowski

"What always amazed me was Eddie's ability to remember peo-

IPA Festival of Bands

CHICAGO — The International Polka Association is sponsoring two events in January to celebrate National Polka Month.

On January 14, the Festival of Bands Warm Up Dance takes place at Polonia Banquets, 4604 S. Archer Ave. Music will be provided by Full Circle from 6:00-10:00 p.m.

The Festival of Polka Bands will be held at the Glendora House,

10225 S. Harlem Ave., Jan. 15. Bands performing include Full Circle, The Music Company, Downtown Sound, Tony Blazonczyk's New Phaze, Freeze Dried, Lenny Zielinski & the D-Street Band, Polka Generations, and the IPA Tribute Band.

For information and tickets call the IPA at 1-800-TO-POLKA.



ED BLAZONCZYKS junior (left) and senior.

ple's names. He had a keen sense about his audience and always tried to give them more than their money's worth on every job."

— Al Piatkowski

"Polka fans came out of the woodwork, out of hiding, and from Albany, Rochester, Syracuse and other areas to see a great artist perform at the Mayfair in Marcy on Friday, June 3. Who was this super group? None other than the Nation's Number One Polka Band, Eddie Blazonczyk and his Versatones."

— Polkagrams News
July-August 1977

"In the studio Eddie was a task master and comedian. He wanted to put out the best product that he could. If a musician would make a mistake and we had to do a retake, he'd always have something funny to say. His line to me is he nicknamed me Knuckles Cerajewski and if I goofed he'd say 'take the gloves off, Suds.' One time Jerry Darlak was humming a song unbeknownst to everyone including Paul Stanczyk the engineer. Paul, after checking all the chords for a ground problem, started to go thru all the tape tracks individually. Sure enough he comes to Jerry's while Paul and Eddie are listening in the control room they hear Jerry humming the song. Eddie tells Jerry you sound like a bee in heat. Jerry said that's the only way he could remember the song. So Eddie said 'be a quieter bee.'"

— Rich "Polka Suds" Cerajewski

"My tenure with the band was from 1998-2002.

"The years I performed with Eddie, Sr. have to be the greatest thrill of my music career. He was a true gentleman, on and off the stage, as everyone well knows. Most fans know Eddie for his performance on stage. His charisma and powerful vocals set a standard that is unsurpassed to this day. But for me, it was the times the fans didn't see. On the bus, in the restaurants, or wherever

we may have been off the stage, his sense of humor and antics always made us laugh and that is when you knew why you wanted to be a Versatone since you heard your first Eddie B. recording."

— Rich Kois,
Versatone 1998-2002

"Being a Versatone was part of a special era and a sincere tribute goes to Eddie Blazonczyk, Sr. for his vision and dedication for making The Versatones the legend that they are today and forever will be. An equally sincere tribute goes to Ed Blazonczyk, Jr. for carrying on the Versatone tradition and bringing home the gold in polka industry standards."

— Rich Sendra
original Versatone 1959-1969

"I have had a ball these last six years performing on stage with the Versatones. This band is truly a brotherhood. It is an honor for me to work with so many of the 'Polka Legends' like Jim Sierzega, Bob Zima, and Dave 'Nigel' Kurdziel, and I will always remember this band as a highlight of my career."

— Steve Rodgers

"While it wasn't always easy and there were some trying times, Eddie raised the bar with his expectation of quality musicianship. Not only did those expectations help the band, but they helped fill the dance halls and helped improve the polka industry. I sincerely hope our performances inspired another generation of young musicians."

— Ed Wolinski

"The *Polka Thriller* album is out and will overcome you with polka perfection. Blazonczyk and the Versatones seem untouched with their stylish and smooth grasp of the industry. *Thriller* is yet another feather in Big Eddie's cap. Blaz is an expert. His control of the music is pure polka know how."

— Polish American Voice
December 1984

"Traveling together was a delight because we were a family. We always looked out for each other and could talk to one another about whatever concerns we might have. This band always set trends or moved forward making music sound fresh. One important factor of this group is we always had time for the people."

— Jim (Spangles) Sierzega
Trumpet, vocals, concertina

"*Everybody Polka* by Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones is another fine effort by one of the polka industry's legendary musical groups. This multi-award winning band has put forth a recording that consists of a whooping fourteen selection. As always, Eddie's vocals shine and he surrounds himself with excellent brass and box players."

— Polka Files Magazine
December 1990

Next month: The conclusion

NOTES / Barb Pinkowski

Just Like Old Times — Almost



TONY KRUPSKI sang some of the Krew Brothers' greatest hits in a medley arranged by Full Circle.



THE CONCERTINA ALL-STARS at St. Stan's. (front, l. to r.): Joe Ryndak, Robert Zielinski, and Greg Chwojdak.

BUFFALO, N.Y. — I hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving! Now, may I be one of the first to wish you a very Merry Christmas! I hope your holiday season will be happy and filled with peace, love and joy. May the newborn Christ child bring you many blessings.

On Oct. 15, **Full Circle** and the **Concertina All Stars** played to a big crowd at St. Stan's Social Center on Peckham St.. This was billed as an old-time, old fashioned polka dance, reminiscent of dances held many years ago. It lived up to its name.

This dance had the feel and the look of dances from a few decades ago. The large wooden dance floor was a dream to dance on, and the music was just fabulous! It was nice to see some new faces and meet friends from the past. Among them was Brownie Zak, who came out with his daughter, Judy.

Some fans were worried about going back to the old neighborhood but everything was fine, as there was ample police protection.

It was special when Tony Krupski sang a couple songs with Full Circle, which worked out a few hits from Buffalo bands from years ago. Krupski did a great job with "Judy" polka and "My Name is Michael" polka. Lots of people flocked to the bandstand to watch and cheer his performance. This turned out to be one of the best local dances of the year.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ... Olga and Mike Dorfi, who celebrated their 50th anniversary on Oct. 8 with a big polka bash at Kuzman's Lounge in Ohio ... **Marty Ryan and Mandy Koslosky**, on the birth of their baby girl, Charlotte. This made Sharon and Marty Koslosky and Joyce and Roger Czarnecki very happy grandparents! This cherished little one is sure to bring lots of joy to everyone! ... **Chris and Ron Cyrankowski** on the marriage

of their daughter, Lisa on Oct. 15. A beautiful outdoor wedding was held in Las Vegas.

IN SYMPATHY. Our sympathy goes out to the family of **Robert Kutas**, who suddenly passed away on Oct. 7. He was the owner of Kutas Food Service ... to the family of bandleader **Eddie "O" Olinski**, who lost his battle with cancer. He was 77 ... and to the family of **Jane Machlowski**, who many will remember as a very active dancer with her friend Benny Kaukus.

GET WELL WISHES ... go out to **Joey Chwojdak**, son of DJ and polka musician Greg Chwojdak ... to **Patrick Coyle**, who is recovering after a stay in the hospital ... to **Tony Blazonczyk**, who was in an automobile accident earlier this year and the vehicle rolled with him inside. He went on the morning of October 12, 2011, for surgery that was supposed to be minor and take about 45 minutes. It turned out to be major and took over 3-1/2 hours. The doctors said there was much more damage to repair that did not show up on the MRI, so they then knew why he was in so much pain.

We wish him and anyone else that is ill a very speedy recovery

AROUND THE TOWN. I heard that the "Halfway to Dyngus Day" party at The Villa on Oct. 22 was very successful. Scrubby and Phocus, and The Touch provided the music followed by a jam session. Manager Mike Fay was very pleased with the big turnout.

The Hard Times Halloween Dance at the Fr. Schaus Knights of Columbus in Lancaster on Oct. 29 had a full house. Many people came in costume which made for a fun evening. Rare Vintage provided a nice variety of music and it was nice to hear such a good mixture. The Club will have its last doing at this hall with a party on New Year's

Eve as this site has been sold to the Variety Club Telethon.

UPCOMING

Dec. 3. Polka Variety Christmas Party with music by Rare Vintage. Call Rich for more information (716) 826-2281.

Dec. 10. Buffalo Polka Boosters Party at the Polish Falcons Hall, 445 Columbia Ave., Depew, N.Y. Open bar, full sit-down meal, music by Cityside. Members are \$25 and non-members are \$38. Please call Chris for tickets as soon as possible. (716) 892-7977.

Dec. 17. Response to Love Koledy Night at Potts Hall, South Ogden St., from 7:00-11:00 p.m. Music will be by the New Direction Band. Sister Johnice, Sister Katherine and Sister Rose will lead the singing of koledy, along with the St. John Kanty choir. Dave Gawronski will make a guest appearance and will play and sing American style holiday music. Call (716) 826-6575. Response to Love is a local food and clothing pantry.

Dec. 17. The Touch plays koledy at Arty's Tavern, 508 Peckham St. at 3:00 p.m.

Dec. 18. The Touch at Sportsmen's Tavern, 326 Amherst St. 3:00 p.m.

Dec. 23. The Concertina All Stars play for a Koledy Night at the Madonna Council Knights of Columbus, 755 Erie Ave. in N. Tonawanda. Music from 8:00-11:00 p.m. No Admission. Free buffet. You are welcome to bring a dish to share. Call (716) 693-5470 for more info.

Dec. 31. New Year's Eve party at Potts Hall, S. Ogden St. Two different packages are available. Music by the New Direction Band.

CORRECTION. There is no change in Full Circle's "Polka Cruise with the Stars V."

The band's 8-day trip on Royal Caribbean's Navigator of the Seas is exactly as originally planned, March 3-11, 2012.

All of the details regarding that cruise are available at www.gonefullcircle.com.

— Polonia Media Network

POLKA INSIDER / Steve Litwin

Take Time to Listen to Koledy, Christmas CDs

It's December and as sung by Eddie Blazonczyk, "Christmas time is here again." Some retail outlets here must think Christmas starts in September and had decorated trees and holiday items on their shelves the last week of that month.

The day after Thanksgiving is the time to start preparing for the season. The plan is developed. The Christmas concertina figurines are unpacked. The Christmas CDs are brought down from the polka office. The decoration theme is established.

Take time this year to make it a Polish Christmas and polka Christ-

mas with koledy and holiday polkas. It really doesn't matter how many are with you for wigilia, or if you have all the Polish foods listed on the menu. What matters is that you *have* wigilia, keep the traditions, and celebrate the spirit of the season. Remember those who made the past Christmases special and treasure those with you today.

To all our friends and PAJ subscribers, Adele and I send wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia!

TOLEDO POLONIA / Margaret Zotkiewicz-Dramczyk

Benefit Dance Packs Hall

TOLEDO, Ohio — These days, it isn't often that polka dances are standing room only affairs. When fans are searching for a seat at a crowded table even before the music has begun, you know you are in for a good time. And when a dance packed to the walls is also a benefit for a very worthy cause, the fun is doubled.

That is exactly what happened Sunday October 30, when the Czelusta Park All Stars, donated their time and talent to Chrissy Schwind-Welsh. Chrissy grew up in a polka family. She is also a former Toledo Polka Queen, so its no exaggeration to say she has supported Toledo polka bands all of her life.

In early 2011, Chrissy learned she had cancer. Having been given a clean bill of health after a routine mammogram, she discovered otherwise through a self-check. She was diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer in the spring of this year. After months of treatment and elective surgery, Chrissy has been given a good prognosis, but the bills for treatment have mounted for Chrissy and her family.

To show their support, a group of Toledo polka fans led by Kevin and Judy Kwiatkowski, Larry and Carol Holt, and Debbie Rybarczyk-Pacer

decided a polka dance was a good way to help Chrissy and her family defray treatment costs.

The dance drew in many of Chrissy's friends, her sisters Sandy and Jenny, brother Jim, and mom Joann. The Toledo and Detroit polka communities were well represented as the Conn-Weissenberger Hall was filled even before Randy and the band played the first polka. Throughout the afternoon, money and prize raffles were held, all with the purpose of assisting Chrissy.

The Czelusta Park All Stars didn't disappoint the crowd as they played a variety of Polish and English music. Randy was joined this afternoon by Eric Hite, Ed Kaczmarczyk Jr., Paul Mocek, and Jim Rutkowski, with guests on stage including Bobby Earl, Joe Zalewski, and Frankie Dramczyk. All band members graciously donated their time for Chrissy's cause.

As Randy and the guys played their final encore, the dance drew to a close with testimony by Kevin and Judy and their committee, and a heartfelt thanks to the crowd from Chrissy and her family for the outpouring of support.

Best of luck to Chrissy as she continues on the road to good health.

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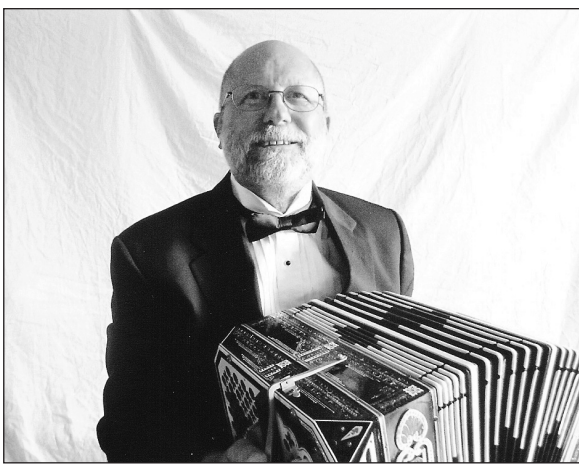
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Marcissuk a Hall of Famer

DETROIT — Ronald Marcissuk, Sr., the son of Wanda (Waltzing Wanda) and Joseph (Polka Joe) Marcissuk — both Michigan State Polka Hall of Fame inductees in 1989 — was inducted into the state's Polka Hall of Fame.

During his childhood, polka music was played on a daily basis in the Marcissuk household with music by Li'l Wally being the chosen favorite. Ron idolized Li'l Wally and learned to read and sing Polish through the help of Li'l Wally song books and singing along with the recordings.

Essentially self-taught on the concertina, Ron and Tony Kempinski started performing as a duo in 1969. In 1972 Ron, Tony and Mitch Kempinski, Bill Kalinowski and Ed Siwiec formed "Detroit's Spirit of Polkas," The



Dynasticks.

In 1977, his early idol Li'l Wally called upon Marcissuk's talents to record a two-album compilation entitled "America's Greatest Polka Band" which featured along with Ron on concertina, Li'l Wally on drums, Marion Lush and Whitey Ryniec on trumpets, and Eddie Guca on clarinet and fiddle.

Marcissuk formed his own band in 1981, The Detroit Polka Authority, in which he played bass. In 1990 he was with Prime Drive, DPA II in 1994, and is now currently playing with Old School.

Marcissuk along with Martin Gazarek, Bob Lewandowski, and Norman Siess were honored at Banquet October 2, 2011 in Owosso, Michigan.

IN MEMORIAM

John Chrzasz, Leader of Michigan Polka Tels

John Chrzasz, leader of the Detroit-based Michigan Polka Tels, died October 19, 2011 at the age of 82.

The Polka Tels recorded ten albums and traveled nationally in the 1960s and 70s. "Tatusiu Waltz" became their trademark song and it was played by many bands at Polish wedding celebrations everywhere. Another feature identified with the Polka Tels was their use of sound effects in their music. Ambulance sirens, elevator bells, and the ringing of an ice cream truck were their distinctive touch with the band. The group played at weddings, fairs, dances and picnics.

John Chrzasz was taught to play trumpet by his dad to play the trumpet but the Michigan Polka-Tels used two saxophones to lead their sound.

Chrzasz was a talented baseball player, having received a contract from the St. Louis Browns pro team. He never joined the team, helping instead with family needs.

He is survived by sons and daughters, Rick (Deborah) Chrzasz, Debra (John) Jurkowski, Carol Chrzasz and Thomas Chrzasz.

Drummer Jimmie Mieszala

CHICAGO — James "Jimmie" Mieszala, passed away on Monday, Nov. 7, 2011 at the age of 59. A classic Chicago style musician he was the leader of the Chicago Magic band and Music Explosion. He also performed with the 47th Street Concertina Club, Chet Lasik's Concertina Jamboree and was also one of the original musicians with Czesiu's Polish Carolers.

Long-time Chicago musician and friend, Ted Kiewicz remembers: "I met Jimmie around 1974, when he was 22 or 23 and he was playing with a group called Danny Sadowski and The Imperials. They did not specialize in polkas and Jim wanted to start his own polka band and asked me to join him around 1976 when he formed the Music Explosion. Jim had a polka musician's bible, and never ceased to amaze me with the caliber of sidemen he was able to call upon. Chet Kowalkowski was one of the first to play full time with us. His best comment was always: 'We sure had a great ride Tadz,' and boy was he ever right."

Jim Mieszala is survived by his loving wife, Cynthia and was the father of Jaime and Jessica Mieszala, as well as Brenda and Brian (Cher) Birno, and Beth (Lucas) Marthaler and grandfather of Dustin, Anthony, and Landon.

A funeral service and Mass was



EDDIE OLINSKI ORCHESTRA, circa 1960. (front, l. to r.): Carl Suhr, Eddie Olinski, and Herky Winkowski. (standing, l. to r.): Larry Struzik, Bob Radominski, Wally Pigeon, John Kuzma, Matt Kantor, and Al Carlin.

held Friday, Nov. 11, 2011 at St. Peter Catholic Church, Slinger, WI with burial at Washington County Memorial Park, West Bend.

Eddie "O" Olinski, Leader, Purple Heart Recipient

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Orchestra leader and accordionist Edward "Eddie 'O'" Olinski, 77, passed away after a battle with cancer.

Born in Buffalo, Olinski dropped out of East High School after his sophomore year and joined the Marines. He saw active service in Korea, and was injured in the line of duty. "I was a gung-ho Marine until I got my ass shot up, twice," Olinski said.

He received two Purple Hearts, and was discharged when he was twenty-one years old.

Tommy Tomlinson, lead guitarist for Hank Williams was in Olinski's troop while both were in Korea. Tomlinson started a band in the camp that rehearsed near Olinski's tent.

Although reluctant to add an accordion to the group, Tomlinson agreed to audition Olinski, and was impressed with the young accordionist's dexterity.

"After our tour of duty was over, we stayed there playing, even after armistice was signed in 1953," said Olinski.

Upon their return stateside, Tomlinson asked Olinski to follow him to Louisiana to continue playing. Olinski declined, and returned to Buffalo, where he formed the nucleus of what eventually became the Eddie "O" Orchestra.

Throughout the late 1950s and into the 1970s, Olinski's polka group was one of the most popular Eastern-style polka orchestras from Buffalo. They toured the United States, and were very popular in Cleveland, following their first ap-

pearance there as guests of polka legend Ray Budzilek. The group was a hit at the 1965 International Polka Convention in Buffalo, an event that led to the formation of the International Polka Association and its subsequent yearly conventions. Over 20,000 people attended the three-day festival at what was then the Thruway Plaza on the Buffalo-Cheektowaga border.

The orchestra's first LP, "Two Guys from Buffalo," was a half-side shared with fellow Buffalo bandleader Walt Jaworski. Produced by Gene Wisniewski and released on Wisniewski's Dala record label, that album was followed by "Polka a Go Go with Eddie 'O's Orchestra," also on Dala. It also released numerous singles.

Over the years, the Olinski Orchestra's roster became a "Who's Who" of Western New York talent. Local saxophone legend and music-store owner Wally Pigeon has been with the Orchestra from its inception.

While polkas were the bread and butter for the orchestra, Olinski utilized his orchestra's brass and reed sections to play a variety of Big Band Music. Expanding the group to thirteen members and adding three female singers, Olinski began to focus on reproducing the Glenn Miller sound. Featuring "The Vignettes," who imitated the sound of the Andrew Sisters, Olinski recorded a CD of war-time classics.

Olinski was active in Buffalo's Independent Musicians Union, serving as its long-time president until the organization merged with the Buffalo Musicians Union, Local 92 of the American Federation of Musicians. He was also a member of the Harmony Social Club and the Owl Picnic Committee, a group of volunteers, who sponsor fundraisers for local charities.

— Mark Kohan

Sturr Treats Fans to "Not Just Another Polka"

FLORIDA, N.Y. — Bandleader and entertainer, Jimmy Sturr and his Orchestra return to thrill listeners with a brand recording entitled "Not Just Another Polka." Winner of eighteen Grammy Awards, Sturr has arrived at a uniquely modern, American take on polka music, with a splash of ethnic style. The disc spotlights the excitement of the music's traditional sound mixed with a wide range of influences, including elements of rock, blues and country.

"Not Just Another Polka" finds multi-instrumentalist, bandleader, Sturr returning once again to his roots with a more straight-ahead

polka sound that puts the focus more squarely on the stellar instrumental and vocal work of the Jimmy Sturr Orchestra.

The CD is available through many outlets online, including CD Baby and Amazon.

Quoted from CD Baby: "We love your Jimmy Sturr & his Orchestra, Not Just Another Polka CD so much that we're going to feature it on the CD Baby front page ... We receive about 300 new recordings a day and yours is one of the best we've ever heard."

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Polish Christmas in American Settings

by Robert Strybel

Everyone reading this column surely knows how important the Wigilia tradition is to people of Polish heritage. It was brought over to the New World by successive waves of Polish immigrants and has survived in one form or another down to the present. That does not mean it is identical with what our immigrants once knew. Old Poland was mainly an agrarian country, hence many of its customs were rooted in the rural lifestyles of yesteryear's peasantry. Feeding table-top hay, Wigilia food scraps and opłatek crumbs to the cattle is pretty hard to do if you don't own a cow.

As a result, many of the individual customs have fallen by the wayside or exist only in the form of Old Country lore shared with loved ones at Christmas time. Others have been creatively adapted to an American setting. In original Polish tradition Wigilia is not only the high point of Yuletide but also the start of several weeks of various celebrations.

For instance, traditionally house-to-house carolers do not begin making their rounds until Dec. 26 (St. Stephen's Day), and Nativity plays and community Christmas parties can be held well into in January. But in America, already the day after Christmas many people are sick of carols, which they have been hearing since November, and have already taken down their holiday decorations.

POLONIANS THEREFORE HAVE LONG been holding various Christmas-linked festivities in early or mid-December rather than on or after Christmas Eve the traditional Old Country way. Prominent among them is a Polonian innovation – the Opłatek-Dinner, a community Wigilia party held at a community center, hall or restaurant. In the Old Country this had originally been a closed, family-only affair held in the home, and the only outsider was the proverbial “lonely traveler” who may

have happened by.

THE COMMUNITY WIGILIA apparently got started in the New World back when the original late-19th and early-20th century immigration was dominated by bachelors or married men who had yet to send for their families in Poland. Come Christmas and they experienced an overpowering urge to share the Wigilia experience if not with their nearest of kin then at least with their “rodacy” (compatriots) That tradition has persisted, except that now it is largely enjoyed by many who have drifted away from the home Wigilia custom, live alone or lack the know-how to prepare Christmas Eve supper from scratch.

In the Detroit area, to which this reporter traces his roots, probably the most elegant Wigilia is sponsored by the Friends of Polish Art, who for years have done more than their share to keep the flag of Polish heritage flying over Southeastern Michigan. Held at the impressive American-Polish Cultural Center in the Detroit suburb of Troy, Michigan, it naturally begins with a clergyman blessing the opłatek which is then shared by all in attendance. The supper is the traditional meatless Christmas Eve meal featuring such delicacies as mushroom soup with noodles, herring in cream sauce, fried mushrooms, fried perch, sauerkraut & mushroom pierogi and, for dessert, fruit compote and almond or poppyseed roll for desert.

A presentation explaining the individual Christmas customs is typical, as is the community singing of kolędy. A Kiermasz Święteczny (Christmas Bazaar) allows guests to stock up on Polish-flavored gifts, books, toys and decorations. Unlike some PolAm organizations which have an “any old thing will do” attitude, Friends of Polish Art events are known throughout the Detroit Metropolitan area for their cultural authenticity and great attention to detail

Probably no single Polonian has done more to set St. Nick's record straight than Attorney Jeffrey Portko of Grand Rapids, Michigan, a leading animator of things Polish in his area and a long-standing activist of the local Polish Heritage Society. Dressed in the episcopal finery of Święty Mikołaj, he has turned up at local schools, clubs and community centers to inform people that all the Santa nonsense is little more than a giant sales promotion that has taken Christ out of Christmas and turned the holidays into a huge spending spree. Portko believes St. Nicholas Day should be observed the Polish way on December 5th and 6th, reserving Christmas proper for the Christ Child. Portko's campaign has received considerable media coverage, generating new invitations to appear and give his presentation.

In the Niagara Frontier area of western New York State, in recent years a local Pol-Am Christmas tradition has been resurrected. The weeks leading up to Christmas are busy ones for Eddy Dobosiewicz and Marty Biniasz, a dynamic duo that has created unique Buffalo “neighborhood and ethnic immersion excursions.” Hundreds of participants have signed up for a series of trips that explored the history and traditions of a “Polish Tavern Christmas” in the historic Polonia district near Buffalo's Broadway Market and in the Kaisertown neighborhood.

“This is an opportunity to experience deeply rooted Polish holiday traditions in authentic environments,” explained Dobosiewicz. There in a spirit of good PolAm fellowship kolędy mingle with polka music and American standards. More on the Buffalo Polonia of yesteryear at: <http://www.forgottenbuffalo.com>.

By contrast, a regional rather than a purely local phenomenon is Chicago's Lira Ensemble, Polonia's closest equivalent to Poland's Mazowsze and Śląsk folk ensembles, which has performed its annual holiday gala

throughout the Midwest for more than 20 years. Led by co-foundress Lucyna Migala, America's only professional Polish performing arts company specializing in Polish music, song and dance, features beautiful, young, authentically costumed singers and dancers, accompanied by the Lira Symphony.

This extremely popular annual event includes beloved Polish carols, music of master Polish composers, folk songs and dances, as well as Polish holiday customs. This year's concert, titled: “Celebrate Polish Carols, Song & Dance” will be held at Chicago's prestigious Orchestra Hall of Symphony Center, 210 South Michigan Ave., Sun., Dec. 4 For tickets and information, phone (773) 508-7040 or 1-800-547-5472.

POLONIANS HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS of celebrating the Nativity, but everywhere across Polish America they have many things in common. As the holidays approach, they start stocking up on Polish delicacies at ethnic delis, bakeries, meat markets and groceries. Some have to drive for miles to find such a source. Those living in out-of-the-way places may order things over the Internet from the growing number of Polish online suppliers. And most will make an effort to get opłatek. Once the organist accompanied by an altar boy used to bring it house-to-house in the old Polish neighborhoods, now it available at Polish retail shops and even online.

But whether they share opłatek in their family circle or attend a community Wigilia, whether they sing kolędy from memory, use song-sheets or simply listen to them off a CD, culturally observant PolAms do all these things to honor the Christ Child's birth. But they also do so in memory of their Polish ancestors who brought all these beautiful old customs with them to the New World. Wouldn't it be a shame if we failed to share them with others?

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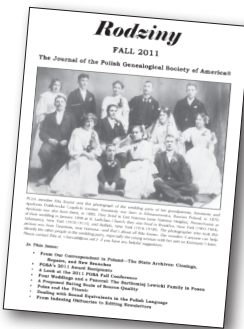
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SPORTS / Tom Tarapacki

Thanksmas Is Coming!

Tampa Bay Rays Manager **Joe Maddon** pays tribute to his Polish and Italian roots — and helps a lot of needy people — with his annual “Thanksmas” celebration. He’s hosting the event for the 6th consecutive year, December 12-14, at Salvation Army Shelters in St. Petersburg, Tampa and Bradenton.

For the past five years between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Rays Manager Joe Maddon organized a group of Rays employees shop, cook and serve a traditional meal of spaghetti, meatballs, sausage, pierogi, salad, Italian bread and cake to hundreds of needy citizens throughout the Tampa Bay area stretching from Tampa to Fort Myers. The idea is not to just provide a holiday meal — it’s always done between Thanksgiving and Christmas, hence the name Thanksmas — but to emphasize that homeless shelters are filled every day.

As he has done for every Thanksmas, Maddon will prepare a traditional Italian/Polish holiday meal for hundreds of needy citizens in the Tampa Bay region. Joe grew up in Hazelton, PA. His father, Joe, was Italian (the family name was originally Maddoninni) and his mother, the former Albina “Beanie” Kloczek, is Polish.

Shortly after being named the Devil Rays’ manager in 2006, Maddon volunteered to help the St. Vincent De Paul organization’s annual Thanksgiving dinner effort in which they fed the homeless and underprivileged. “Some people in his position say they want to get involved just for the sake of saying it,” St. Vincent director Sophie Sampson told MLB.com. “But he said to the guys that day, ‘Wait until I come over here and cook you a good Italian dinner.’ We didn’t think anything of it. And then he called and said, ‘I’m going to do it.’ And

I said ‘Wow!’ It’s exciting that he’s over there doing it.” Five years and some 4,000 meals later, the project has become one of the most effective charitable efforts of the Tampa Bay area.

The Rays have also announced the launch of a new website, www.tampabay.rays.mlb.com, featuring expanded information on the event including updated scheduling information and donation.

WISNIEWSKI RETURNS. James Wisniewski made his Columbus debut after serving an 8-game suspension, and sparked the Blue Jackets to their first win of the season, 4-1 over the Detroit Red Wings “It felt pretty good,” he said about finally getting on the ice. “I was happy with the way I moved the puck out of my own zone.” Columbus entered as the only winless club at 0-7-1, the worst start in team history.

It was clear that “Wiz” impressed coach Scott Arniel. “First of all, the couple times he hit that shot of his that the goalie never even saw,” said Arniel. “Then his outlet passes, outstanding first pass. He made some great reads.” Wisniewski is a tough, versatile defenseman with arguably one of the best defensive shots in the NHL.

Wisniewski was suspended for the remainder of the preseason and eight regular-season games for a hit to the head of Minnesota forward Cal Clutterbuck in an exhibition game.

RISING STAR. Although he is only 21, Wojciech Szczęsny is becoming regarded as one of the world’s top goalkeepers. He plays for Arsenal English Premier League and the Poland national football team.

He had a breakthrough season with Arsenal in 2010-11, which he started off behind 3 other goalkeep-



WOJCIECH SZCZĘSNY

ers, including fellow Pole Łukasz Fabiański, his old roommate at Legia Warsaw.

Szczęsny’s remarkable composure, agility, and command of his area earned him the top spot at the age of 20. It helped that Fabianski suffered a shoulder injury that eventually required surgery. However, Szczęsny took advantage of the opportunity and is now widely considered as the club’s long-term future in goal. Fabianski, 26, is now the back-up, but he hasn’t conceded the starting job to his countryman.

Wojciech is the son of former Polish goalkeeper Maciej Szczęsny. His older brother Jan plays goal for Gwardia Warsaw.

RAINBOW WARRIOR. Miah Ostrowski remembers being teased as a child because his Polish last name is uncommon in Hawaii.

Jeremiah “Miah” Ostrowski, 22, now a University of Hawaii football and basketball player, said he drew on that experience for his role in a series of public service announcements aimed at curbing bullying in Hawaii’s public schools.

The six segments, produced by Waianae High School students, are part of an anti-bullying campaign unveiled Tuesday by Gov. Neil Abercrombie and state education officials. The PSAs feature Ostrowski and other university athletes stressing the importance of embracing Hawaii’s diversity and aloha spirit.

“No one knew how to say my name, and they’d tease me about that,” the wide receiver and point guard said. “I’d always be embarrassed to say my name.”

That’s something Abercrombie said he could relate to as a kid in Buffalo, N.Y., where his last name was unusual but names like Ostrowski were typical. “When someone’s picking on you because of your name, not who you are . . . it shapes what happens with a kid,” Abercrombie said. “These things are real.”

Despite being only 5-9, Miah graduated from Punahou School in 2007 as one of the most decorated athletes in years. He was a first-team all-state point guard for all four seasons of high school, and a first-team all-state receiver his junior and senior seasons.

KUBICA’S COMEBACK. Robert Kubica, who needed five operations following a serious accident in February 2011, has been making steady progress from his injuries. However, he still lacks strength in his right arm, which was badly injured.

The Pole’s manager, Daniele Morelli, recently confirmed Kubica would step up his rehabilitation by getting back behind the wheel of either a road car or simulator, but Renault has not been given any date as to when they can expect their driver to return. Kubica’s potential involvement in 2012 is uncertain.

Kubica, the first Polish racing driver to compete in Formula One,

is one of the wealthiest and most popular athletes in his homeland.

THEY SAID IT

“It doesn’t bother me. We’re going to put forty-six guys out there and play as hard as we can play. Other than that, I’ve got no comment on it.”

— *Houston Texans head coach Gary Kubiak, on claims that his team plays “dirty.”*



“Joe Pavelski can’t skate and doesn’t have the size to compete in the National Hockey League. During the 2003 NHL Draft, that was what 29 teams likely believed about the 5-foot-11, 195-pound forward who was playing his junior hockey with the Waterloo Blackhawks in the USHL. Pavelski wasn’t selected until the seventh round (No. 205) by the San Jose Sharks and Doug Wilson, who had taken the job as general manager about a month prior. Eight years later, there probably isn’t a team in the League that wouldn’t want Pavelski on its roster.”

— *Dave Lozo on NHL.com.*



“A Polish invasion has overwhelmed New Jersey in recent times, with Tomasz Adamek packing in Newark’s Prudential Center, and Garden State residents Pawel Wolak and Mariusz Wach beginning to make waves on the world stage. Unbeaten middleweight prospect Patrick Majewski (17-0, 11 KOs) hopes to join them soon enough. Originally from Radom, Poland, the 31-year-old nicknamed ‘The Machine’ has a no-frills, wear-you-down style about him that has endeared him to rabid red-and-white clad fight aficionados in the Northeast.”

— *Ryan Maquiñana in www.boxingscene.com.*

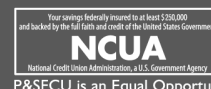
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ST. JOHN — Dec. 11, 2011. Polish Carols, St. John the Evangelist Church, 11301 West 93rd St. 3:00 featuring the **Lira Singers and Lira Symphony**. Call Lira at (773) 508-7040 or (800) 547-5472. The Lira offer CDs of Christmas, folk songs and learning Polish which would be available for Christmas giving. See their website: www.liraensemble.org.

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS — Dec. 11, 2011. Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota (PACIM) **Wigilia Dinner**. A fundraiser for needy Polish orphanages, the traditional Polish Christmas Eve meal will be held at the Gasthof Restaurant, 2300 University Avenue NE, Minneapolis, 6:00-8:00 p.m. This community celebration features breaking of oplatek, traditional foods and singing of kolędy. Tickets are \$35.00, and can be purchased by mail by sending your check made out to PACIM to Paul Rog, 1213 Monroe Street NE, Minneapolis 55413. Be sure to include the names of the people attending and any special seating requirements you may have. For more information, contact Paul at (612) 789-5972.

MINNEAPOLIS — Dec. 31, 2011. Sylvester Dinner/Dance. PNA Hall will have a **New Years Eve "Sylvester"** dance, 7:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m., sponsored by Group 1042 of the PNA. Dinner will be served and also a midnight snack of homemade *bigos* (Hunter's Stew) will be served along with champagne for all. Music by Bago Bago. Price is \$45 per person in advance/\$50 at the door and \$35 for students with a valid school I.D.

Please contact Jan (John) Madej at (651) 628-9846 or Maria Halak at (612) 789-8763 for tickets and any additional questions.

NEW YORK

BUFFALO — Opera-Lytes is pleased to announce a December performance of **"Sounds of the Season,"** a concert of sacred and secular Christmas music. The performance will take place on Sun-

day, December 4 at Corpus Christi Church, 199 Clark St. in Buffalo, beginning at 2:00 p.m.. All are welcome to attend. There is no admission charge, but a free will donation is appreciated.

For further information about this holiday performance, please contact Corpus Christi Church at 896-1050. Information can also be found on Opera-Lytes website, www.operalytes.com

BUFFALO — Bishop Edward U. Kmiec honored **Bishop Edward M. Grosz** and the Vincent and Harriet Palisano Foundation at the annual Curé of Ars Dinner, Oct. 5. The awards are presented on behalf of Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora.

Bishop Grosz, who celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood earlier this year, is being honored for his dedicated service with a genuine priestly heart to God and His people.

The Palisano family and their foundation are being honored for their generosity to the seminary as well as the Diocese of Buffalo. Their donations have provided tuition assistance for seminarians, supported various parishes, Catholic schools and colleges, and the restoration of St. Joseph Cathedral and the Catholic Center, both in downtown Buffalo.

NEW YORK — For the third consecutive year, **Atlas Bank** has been selected for the 2011 Best of Brooklyn Award in the Federally Chartered Mutual Savings Bank category by the U.S. Commerce Association (USCA).

The "Best of Local Business Award" Program recognizes outstanding local businesses throughout the country. Each year, the USCA identifies companies that they believe have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These are local companies that enhance the positive image of small business through service to their customers and community. Nationwide, only one in 120 (less than 1%) 2011 Award recipients qualified as Three-Time Award Winners. The 2011 USCA Award Program focuses on quality, not quantity. Win-

ners are determined based on the information gathered both internally by the USCA and data provided by third parties. Questions about Atlas Bank may be answered by calling (718) 768-4800 and visiting www.atlasbank.com

CARLSTADT, N.J. — Two free Christmas ornament workshops, **"Christmas Pitchers - Dzbanuszki,"** are being sponsored by the Association of the Sons of Poland at its Home Office, 333 Hackensack St., Sat., Dec. 10.

The workshops are at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Please bring scissors, glue, and two or more eggshells. All other supplies will be provided. To reserve your place, call (201) 935-2807.

The workshop will provide samples and patterns along with a supply of colored papers for the creation of one little pitcher.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Paderewski scholarship fund will present **John Robilette**, Classic Romantic style pianist and a Paderewski devotee, in concert to benefit the fund. Italian Embassy Theater, 3000 Whitehaven St. NW, Sat., Feb. 11, 2012. 7:30 p.m.

Prior to the concert, Ambassador Edward Rowny (Ret.) will discuss Paderewski's contribution to freedom and culture, and his life as a composer, pianist, and eminent statesman. By virtue of drafting the Thirteenth Point of the Versailles Treaty, Paderewski became the first president of modern Poland.

Tickets range from \$100.00 to \$50.00. Light supper and wine following the concert included in the ticket price.

Please make your non-deductible check payable to Paderewski Ticket Sales and mail to Edward L. Rowny, 6200 Oregon Ave. NW #345, Washington, DC 20015. Tickets will be mailed approximately one month before the event.

For more information about the Paderewski Scholarship Fund and Ambassador Rowny, see www.paderewskirowny.com or email Ambassador Rowny at erowny@aol.com. Ambassador Rowny can also be reached via phone at (202) 541-0345.

Special Needs Children Benefit from Donations

BROZOW, Poland — Children under the care of Sister Agata Sieczkowska, were happy to show their new coats and winter wear, courtesy of several Polish organizations, including the Polish Union



of America and Polish Falcons, members of Lions Clubs International, and numerous individuals across the United States.

The funds, which will also provided for new curtains and new bed linens, as well as needed updates and repairs, were delivered to Sister Agata's institution by Christine and James Jozwiak, president of the Polish Heritage Festival, which collected the monies.

To help, make checks payable to: The Polish Heritage Festival, Inc., P.O. Box 115, Springville, N.Y. 14141-0115. Attention: Christine Jozwiak. On the "memo" line of the check write, "Special Children with Special Needs" and/or "Spirit of St. Nicholas."

The Polish Heritage Festival is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit charitable organization, and all donations are tax deductible.

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BRAVING THE ELEMENTS. Wawel Castle, Krakow, Poland. May 23, 1976.

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Before Christmas Trees – Grain and Hay

by Robert Strybel

The Christmas tree did not really take hold in Poland until around the mid-20th century. Earlier in the century it had gradually begun appearing in the manor houses of the gentry and in cities, but to a far lesser degree across the country's vast countryside. Incidentally, for Poland the 1950s marked the height of Stalinist terror which also aimed its artillery at Polish Christmas.

The Christmas trees adorning public buildings, schools and state-owned stores were officially referred to as “choinka świąteczna” (holiday tree – sound familiar?) or “choinka noworoczna” (New Year's tree). Government printing plants churned out greetings cards proclaiming “Dosiego Roku!” (Happy New Year) and “Wesołych Świąt!” (Happy Holidays), conveniently leaving out the key term “Bożego Narodzenia” (Christmas).

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the custom of decorating firs, spruces or pines came to Poland and many other countries from Germany. Queen Victoria's German-born husband Prince Albert is credited with setting up a Christmas tree at Buckingham Palace, which helped propagate the custom in Britain and America.

Centuries earlier in Poland, grain,

hay and straw were considered the main Christmas accents. Sheaves of unthreshed grain were placed in the four corners of the manor house dining-room and the one-room peasant cottage alike. But while the gentry gradually gravitated towards more civilized, foreign traditions, the agrarian accents endured far longer in the countryside. There peasants tied to the table legs and scattered it all over the floor in memory of the humble stable where Jesus was born. His hay-filled manger was symbolized by the hay strewn over the table-top before being covered with a pure-white table-cloth. Evergreen branches and sprigs were placed behind holy pictures or in vases.

THE PEASANT COTTAGES of yesteryear were scrubbed spic and span and often whitewashed before its walls were decorated with freshly made wycinanki or paper cut-outs. The procedure was the same at Easter time. The wycinanki usually sported geometric, floral or animal motifs rather than specifically Yuletide ones, but served to highlight the freshness and festive nature of the occasion.

Other festive decorations of the old peasant cottage were various types of folk mobiles, made of oplatek, paper, straw, feathers, etc. and suspended from the ceiling. Because of their wispieness and the fact that they waved in the breeze whenever anyone passed through the room, they were called “pajaki” (literally spiders) – an allusion to filigree cobwebs. Also, loops of strung dried white peas were used to form chandelier-type decorations resembling strings of pearls.

Our Polish ancestors would also suspend an evergreen branch or the peak-side-down top of a fir, spruce or pine from the ceiling or rafters, often over the supper table. It was variously known in different parts of the country as “sad” (orchard) or “podłaźnik” (creeper). It was usually decorated with home-spun straw, paper and eggshell ornaments, ribbons, and edibles such as fruit, nuts,

gingerbread and marzipan (almond-paste) confections. This simple, natural and interesting evergreen bough, which fills the rooms with the scent of the great outdoors, is worth promoting in our PolAm parishes, clubs and businesses. And it is great for small apartments because it does not take up even an inch of floor or table space.

The Christmas tree did not really take hold in Poland until around the mid-20th century.

Even after a regular Christmas tree made its appearance, like the “sad” or “podłaźnik” it too was originally decorated the same way. Eventually store-bought decorations became more common, and in the inter-war period Poland became famous for its hand-blow and hand-painted ball-type glass ornaments. But these were (and are) quite pricey, so many trees sported only one or two such masterpieces, with cheaper ornaments and home-made decorations making up the majority. The electric lights that replaced real candles are now universal, and in today's Poland people are increasingly succumbing to passing, commercially promoted fashions such as all red balls one year and silver and blue ones the next.

IT SEEMS THAT LIKE everyone else these days, Polish Americans are over-immersed in commercially pushed fads, trends and fashions at every turn of the way. It might therefore be a refreshing change to occasionally recall some of the old customs of simpler times. Any Polonian Christmas function could provide a good occasion to set up an old-style Wigilia tableau featuring the above mentioned grain sheaves, straw, hay, evergreen boughs and old-fashion Christmas tree. Candle-shaped Christmas tree lights with yellowish, flame-imitating bulbs might help convey the old-style atmosphere with the safety hazard of real tapers.



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Making this Year's Wigilia the Best Ever

continued from last month
Here are some of the best-known dishes of Polish Wigilia, Christmas Eve supper – the most important family meal of the year. Some recipes have been simplified somewhat and adapted to today's more convenient ingredients and less labor-intensive procedures.

FISH POLONAISE (ryba po polsku). Rinse, pat dry, salt & pepper and flour-dust 2-3 lbs very fresh perch, pike, walleye, whitefish or other firm fillets and fry in hot oil on both sides until fully cooked. Drain fish on paper towel, transfer fish to serving platter and keep in warm oven. In saucepan, melt 3 T

butter and switch off heat. Add 4 -5 finely chopped or ground hard-cooked eggs and toss to coat evenly with butter. Add 2-3 T fresh or frozen finely chopped dill and salt & pepper generously. Toss to blend ingredients. Sprinkle fish with lemon juice and garnish with Polonaise (hard-boiled-egg) topping. Serve immediately.

SAUERKRAUT & PEAS. (kapusta z grochem). Soak 1 c whole yellow peas (sometimes called field peas in English) in plenty of warm water overnight. Next day, cook in same water until tender. Separately, prepare sauerkraut as in preceding recipe, adding only 4 oz diced

Portobello mushrooms fried up with chopped onion. When sauerkraut is fully cooked, combine with the cooked drained peas. Season to taste with salt, pepper and marjoram. If too wet, thicken with a little flour and simmer briefly.

MUSHROOM GOŁĄBKI (gołąbki z grzybami). In 3 T butter, margarine or oil sauté 8-12 oz fresh Portobello mushrooms, washed and chopped fine, with 2 med chopped onions. Combine with 3 to 3-1/2 c preferably slightly undercooked rice, barley or buckwheat groats, cooked with 1 mushroom cube. Add 1 raw egg and mix to blend ingredients. Salt & pepper to taste and

(optional) garnish with 1 T chopped fresh dill and/or parsley. Fill pre-wilted cabbage leaves as usual, drench with 3 c vegetable stock (in which 1 mushroom cube has been dissolved) and bake in preheated 350° oven at least 2 hrs.

NOODLES & POPPYSEEDS. (kluski z makiem): Cook 1 lb pkg of wide or medium-wide egg noodles in lightly salted water until tender. Usually they should be cooked a little longer than the "al dente" directions on package. Dot hot, freshly-drained noodles with a little butter and stir in 1 c or more poppyseed filling (above). Toss gently to evenly distribute. May be served warm,

room temp or chilled. Some like to pour a little coffee cream over their portions. Canned poppyseed pastry filling may be sued instead.

RICE & FRUIT DESSERT. (ryż z owocami). Transfer 4 c hot cooked rice to serving platter, dot with butter and top with fruit topping of choice: stewed fruit, canned cherry or apple-pie filling, strawberry or cherry preserves or powidła (Polish imported) plum butter. Variation: Cooked barley may be substituted for the rice.

CHRISTMAS DRIED-FRUIT COMPOTE (kompot wigilijny). Soak 12 – 16 oz pkg mixed dry fruit, 3 - 4 dried figs, 4-5 pitted dates and 1/2 c raisins in water to cover 2 hrs. Add a little water if all has been absorbed and cook about 20 min on med-low heat from the time boiling begins. Optional: 1 small sliced lemon (which has been scrubbed well before being sliced) and a pinch of cinnamon may be added before cooking. Chill and serve in dessert bowls. Note: Christmas Eve compote may be made with prunes alone or prunes & raisins or prunes & figs. It may also be expanded into the traditional 12-fruit compote (said to symbolize the 12 Apostles or the 12 days of Christmas) by adding other fruit not contained in the dried-fruit mixture such as dried cherries and currants as well as fresh orange wedges. of choice: preserves, jam, plum butter, fruit syrup or canned apple or cherry pie filling.

HOLIDAY HONEYSPICE CAKE (piernik świąteczny). Beat 2 eggs with 1 stick + 1 T butter and 1 c sugar. Stir in 1/2 c honey and 2 T cocoa. Separately, mix 2 c flour with 1-1/2 t baking soda, 1/2 t ginger, 1/4 t cinnamon, 1/4 t cloves, 1/4 t nutmeg, 1/4 t pepper and 1/4 allspice (all spices ground). In batches gradually add dry mixture to moist mixture, finally stirring in 1/2 sour cream. Mix well. Transfer to buttered, breadcrumb-sprinkled loaf pan. Bake in preheated 350° oven about 60 min. When cool, cut in half lengthwise, spread bottom half with powidła (plum butter), replace top half and ice cake with chocolate glaze. Garnish with chopped walnuts.

CHOCOLATE-COVERED PLUMS (sliwki w czekoladzie). Line your kitchen counter with a piece of paper slightly larger than your drying rack. In top part of double boiler melt 2 bars of milk or dark chocolate (as preferred). Impale 12 tender, pitted California prunes on skewer one by one and dip in melted chocolate. Hold it up briefly over the melted chocolate for any drippings to drip back into double boiler. Place on rack and repeat until all prunes are used up. This is something the kids will enjoy making and eating!

SPICED BEER (piwo grzane korzenne). In pot combine 1 qt beer, 3 T sugar, fruit syrup or honey (more or less to taste) and a pinch each of ground cinnamon, cloves, ginger and pepper. Heat to just below boiling, stirring to dissolve sugar (if used), and serve immediately.

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REFLECTIONS / OUR CHURCHES

St. Josaphat Church

691 E Canfield Street, Detroit, MI 48201 at the Chrysler Service Drive



CUD NA WISŁĘ. The 1920 Battle of Warsaw, also known as the Miracle at the Vistula, is depicted on the left side of the church.

In 1889, St. Josaphat Parish and School was established to serve Detroit's booming Polish population. Detroit had diverse advanced industries but an automotive industry was years away. St. Josaphat is a daughter parish of St. Albertus parish, the first established by Detroit's Poles (1872) and where Karol Cardinal Wojtyła celebrated mass in 1976. Still an active community, St. Albertus was closed as a parish in 1990. St. Josaphat holds the title of longest membership (122 years) in the Archdiocese of Detroit among Polish immigrant founded parishes.

The first few pastorates at St. Josaphat were very brief. Then in 1891, Fr. Jan Rzakowski, a teacher at the nearby SS. Cyril & Methodius Polish Seminary, became pastor. During his long tenure, he built a complex beginning with a new church in AD 1900. A reproduction painting of Our Lady of Częstochowa was commissioned and wiped to the original in Jasna Góra. This holy relic has hung on our high altar for well over a century. In 2003, Administrator Fr. Mark Borkowski, attributed the St. Josaphat longevity to the intercession of Our Lady of Częstochowa, and instituted a perpetual novena to Her occurring every Thursday with confession, noon Mass, and Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction.

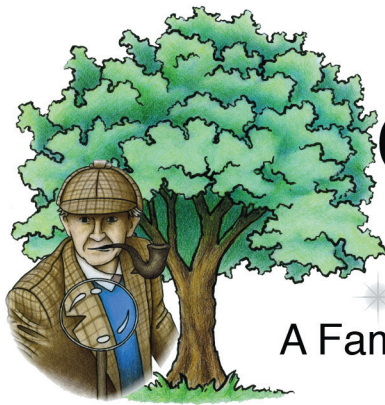
The main altar from the first church is now the St. Casimir transept altar. The elementary and high schools were staffed by Felician nuns until they were closed in 1960.

Known as the *Twierdza Wiary i Polskości*, "Citadel of Faith and of Polish Patriotism," in 1917, St. Josaphat had a mass for 147 of its parishioners that volunteered for the Polish Army. They left to be trained in Canada and then fight their way through France to Poland. Our version of the mural *Cud nad Wisłą*, "Miracle on the Vistula" commemorates the 1920 BVM apparition and military victory. In the mural, any surviving parishioners were likely depicted wearing French blue uniforms.

During the 1960s, instead of modernizing the church, Pastor Fr. Francis Dolot began an extensive restoration. His pastorate culminated with our registries as a Michigan and National Historic Site. In 2003, Fr. Borkowski began another restoration. Our National Parish is Roman Catholic and adjacent to the Detroit Medical Center. Faculty from the relocated Polish seminary now travel far to regularly celebrate Sunday masses, in Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms, at St. Josaphat.

— Rita Wiśniewski
and Dean Wiśniewski

Would you like to see your parish featured in "Reflections"? Please send a photo and a few paragraphs about the parish. While we appreciate full histories, we do not have space to print them. Please provide us with a photo or two of the interior and/or exterior. We can accept digital photos via e-mail if they are of high resolution (300 dpi or greater). Please include: Name of church, year opened (year closed if no longer open), street and city, any identifiable people in the photo, and any special memory you may have of the church. Additional information may include: pastor, school status, or, if closed, name of last pastor, name of new merged parish, etc. All denominations welcome.



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Ghosts of Midnight Masses Past continued from cover

religion was protected. For some, these fond recollections rekindle and continue to keep our heritage alive, if even only in memory.

Pasterka (or *Północka*, as it is known in regional dialect) is a midnight church mass celebrated between the 24th and 25th of December. A close translation of the name would be “Shepherds’ Mass.” It is a reference to the Biblical shepherds, who were visited by an Angel and informed of the Christ Child’s birth. Although other ethnicities and Americans may still observe Midnight Mass, the emotions, imagery, inner feeling, and sense of community are uniquely different with the Polish.

As the culmination of *Wigilia* festivities, *Pasterka* is the most important element of this celebration for those of Polish descent. It is viewed as a wondrous, magical, religious experience — not to be missed. Churches are crowded and many stand through the entire mass.

Preceded and accompanied by communal singing, the mass itself is a joyous and majestic liturgical event. With over 500 recorded carols, Poland is a phenomenon on the world’s scale. Enchanting in melody, folk in origin, and indelible in memory, one of the most beautiful customs of a Polish Midnight Mass is the singing of traditional and beloved Christmas *koledy* (carols). Unlike many of the Christmas songs and hymns of the United States and other countries, the *koleda* is not only a prayer to God, but it is also a musical drama depicting the wondrous tale of the Nativity.

The church is festively decorated with a larger than usual number of burning candles. Bells are rung, incense burned, under the stained glass and the statue icons’ watch the procession enters and the traditional “*Wśród Nocnej Ciszy*” (*In the silence of the night*) is sung.

As a child, I remember visiting my grandparents in Garfield, N.J. After a sumptuous *Wigilia* dinner followed by camaraderie and play with my cousins, the kids would embark on a caroling spree on route to St. Stanislaus Church. We were a unique troupe because we had a repertoire of Polish *koledy*; “*Dzisiaj w Betlejem*” being our key selection. We would meet our families at the church, and if we were lucky we would be seated; if not we would lean against the walls and resist the temptation for sleep. The church was a sea of poinsettias and meticulously decorated with trees elegantly lit in white and blue, with a manger parade I have not seen since. The priest from Poland would “perform” an animated sermon and after two hours, we were exhilarated and exhausted.

Traditionally families visit the *Złobek* (Nativity Crèche) to pray together to the Infant Jesus at the beginning or the end of Mass. Upon the return home, many families perhaps enjoy a toast of *Krupnik* honey-spice liqueur with wishes and tastes of good cheer. Depending on the congregation, other customs borrowed from folk tradition are enacted.

ASHLEY GORCZYCA

St. Barbara’s Church
Lackawanna, N.Y.

“My favorite memory of a Midnight Mass would be the presence of St. Barbara’s Church on that night. As a child growing up, my mother would dress me and my brothers in our ‘Sunday’s best’ and we would head to church following our *Wigilia* meal at my grandmother’s. In the church, the

smell of pine hit you instantly. Eyes were drawn directly to the main altar with the dazzling lights on the Christmas trees. Poinsettia’s filled both the main and side altars and ushers wore their freshly pressed suits. What could be better than walking into a gorgeous church on one of the most important days of the year, and hearing Polish carols being sung by the choir?

“My grandfather, Albin Schenck was the sacristan, and I would go to the church to help set up and prepare. It was the anticipation, the hard work of preparation, and then the partaking in this mass that I recall fondly.

“My entire family belonged to this church, on both my mother and father’s sides. My church may be closed and recently demolished, but the memories of Midnight Mass that I have as a child is something that will stay with me forever. I sometimes close my eyes and am taken back to those days at St. Barbara’s.”

FOLK TRADITION IN POLAND

Gody is the old Polish name for the period from Christmas Eve to Epiphany Eve. In Poland there is a specific character and festive décor that highlights an unusual pastoral atmosphere to this joyous celebration.

Christmas Night — contrary to what the carol states is not quiet, or calm. There is a belief that visiting souls could be cast out of the house through entertainment and merriment, thus expelling them in a ceremonial way — through noise. From all sides gunshots, firecrackers, and banging pots are heard — the louder the better.

It is believed that animals speak in human voice on this special night, while all are at *Pasterka*. Farmers share special pink *oplatki* wafers with all farm animals except the horse. Legend notes that the horse rejected to carry the Blessed Mary on his back during her escape from Egypt.

Just before midnight, all set off to the nearest church. Only small children and infirm elders are left at home. Lights are not extinguished, emphasizing the brightness associated with the birth of Christ. In some vicinities fires are burned.

Everyone attempts to arrive at church as soon as possible, as the first is ensured success and good yields of harvest. Vigil carolers once greeted those on their way by strewn oat seeds across their path. Throwing *groch* (dried yellow peas) from the choir loft before Mass guaranteed a good harvest and prosperity.

Some churches enact the custom of placing the infant figure on the tabernacle covered with tulle. During the initial song, the priest discovers the “child,” shows the congregation, and places it in the manger crib.

Merrymaking festivities continued after Mass, when bachelors visited their neighbors (*po podłazach*), particularly parents of a future bride. With sacks or pockets full of oats, they sang and extended good wishes, while casting showers of grain around the home. These wishes were spoken in the form of verse: *Na szczęście, na zdrowie, na to Boże Narodzenie...*

żeby się darzyło w komorze, oborze, wszędzie, daj Boże... (For luck, for health, on this Christmas ... that it will be received in the chamber, barns, everywhere, God forbid).

The head of the house would pull out a fistful of oats and throw it onto the center of the family dining table to ensure a bountiful table, and to display a house of prosperity. Prepared for visitors, the hosts



THE LAST ŻŁOBEK DISPLAY at St. Barbara’s Parish in Lackawanna, N.Y., where parishioners would gather after Midnight Mass to take a piece of straw from the manger and keep it in their wallet or purse so — according to Polish folklore — they would carry wealth with them throughout the year. The church was closed in 2008 and demolished this past Spring.

offered food and honey *wódka*. Should a young man fail to visit a girlfriend’s home, their relationship would be ended. The greater the number of visiting carolers meant the greater fortune for the family.

One of the most interesting places where Midnight Mass takes place is at the salt mine in Wieliczka, near Kraków. The service is 100 meters underground in the *Chapel of Saint Kinga*.

ED MOHYLOWSKI

St. Anthony’s, Fairfield, Conn.

“Midnight Mass was always the most anticipated event in our parish, and the most well attended of any service. For a child, the prospect of staying up late was very exciting. In order to ensure getting a “good” seat in the church, people would show up as early as 11:00 p.m. to carefully select their seats; they would have come earlier had the church been opened. The organist would play a selection of *koledy* and carols and everyone would marvel at the church decorations.

“St. Anthony’s was founded in 1927, but by the 1960s, very little was conducted in Polish ... the occasional sermon, a few hymns, but for *Wigilia* Mass, things were different... the church was richly decorated with a beautiful *złobek* in front of the Marian side altar, and the entire service was conducted in Polish. Sadly, our church had a dreadful choir, with one vocalist, who sang too loud and off-key, but even that could not put a damper on the wonderful *koledy*...it was magical.”

I contacted St. Anthony’s rectory and discovered that Midnight Mass is now conducted only in English and “normal Christmas carols” are sung.

When my hometown Polish parish — St. Michael’s in Haverhill, Massachusetts closed, along with the Italian and Lithuanian churches, the congregations were directed to merge at the former St. Joseph’s Church — now renamed All Saint’s Church. Our choir under the direction of Stanisław Smardz, was well known throughout Polish circles. The choir had recorded an album of *koledy*, performed on television, and for Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. The arrangements of these

carols, many of them pre-war and handwritten, were unique and not to be found, even in Poland.

When it came to Midnight Mass at their new home, our illustrious choir was *allowed* to sing for a half-hour before Mass; one song during offertory; “*Cicha Noc*” with an English verse during Communion; and then close after an organ recessional, with “*Bóg się Rodzi*,”

as the congregation hastily departed, talking and making a ruckus. At St. Michael’s, everyone would sit in their pews respectfully, until the reverent carol was completed. During the first years at the new church, the choir was recognized as “the Polish choir,” now no mention is made and many assume we must be singing in Latin.

THE FIRST OF THREE MASSES

In the Fourth century, by order of Empress (Saint) Helena, churches were erected on hallowed spots in the Holy Land. The Basilica of the Nativity was raised in Bethlehem near the Grotto of the Nativity. In the fifth century a special form for Christmas Mass was enacted at this location. Since the mid-sixth century Rome was the presence of the celebration on this day with three Masses: Midnight Mass, Mass at Dawn, and Masses during the day. Each year the Midnight Mass from the Vatican is celebrated by the Pope in the Basilica of St. Peter.

SANDRA CIKA

St. Casimir’s, Youngstown, Ohio

“Attending Midnight Mass at St. Casimir’s for me has been a lifelong tradition. I am 44 years old and have been to this celebration 44 times ... and very sadly this year will be my last Polish Midnight Mass. My parish will close in February to merge with other ethnic parishes, as part of the Cathedral of St. Columba.

“Because my Mother and three sisters all sang in the choir, it was an annual race to the church after our *Wigilia* meal had been completed. We would climb the stairs to the choir loft and perform for an hour before mass began.

“I always was fascinated to see the many faces — old and young that would look upward to the choir as they entered or when they heard a personal favorite from the selection we had prepared for many weeks. Some would smile, some would join in, some would cry. As an adult, I realize those tear-filled faces were remembering those who taught them those songs originally, and who are no longer with us now.

“Our post-Mass activities continued as my family would make stops at the homes of close friends who had a “shut-in,” usually a home-bound *Babcia*. We would visit, enjoy some cookies, and bring *koledy*, as a piece of the mass to them so they would feel a part of the celebration. Our church may close, but the memories, traditions, and loyal friendships I gained there will live on!”

TODAY’S MIDNIGHT MASS

In recent years some churches have scheduled their “Midnight” Mass as early as 7:00 p.m. In 2009 Vatican officials rescheduled the Midnight Mass to start at 10 pm, so the 82 year old Pope Benedict XVI would not have too late a night.

Midnight services are losing mass appeal at American parishes, as many churches have yielded to earlier, more “convenient” services of the Christmas Eve rite.

“Our family has gone to Midnight Mass at 10:00 p.m. for the last few years at The Church is Our Lady of Good Counsel,” said Micheline Jaminski, director of Chicago’s *Wesoły Lud Dance Ensemble*.

“One year, we attended Midnight Mass at Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Lemont, Ill. and were impressed that the *Podhalanie* actually came dressed in their *Góralski* (highlander) costumes. It added that special touch of ethnicity to the celebration.”

The Górale transplanted from the Polish mountains to Chicagoland and other areas, such as New Jersey have fiercely held their ground to maintain a “through-and-through” Polish atmosphere to their church worship, and they are not backing down.

POLONIA ADAPTS

“Our *Pasterka* at The Church of the Holy Cross in Minneapolis is generally standing room only,” said Edward Rajtar, Director of *Dolina Polish Folk Dancers* of the Twin Cities. “Ours is dual language, with the majority of singing in Polish.”

My favorite part is watching the second and third generation Polish Americans who don’t speak Polish, participate in the singing of *koledy* — the songs that they have been singing since their youth and continue by passing them on to their children.”

Those originally from Poland are searching for a community to fulfill their religious obligations — that community is Polish. The church hierarchy wants new migrants to integrate with American congregations, rather than remaining in Polish enclaves. Poles will go to American churches, but the culture is foreign — the understanding of the sermons and pronunciation of the prayers difficult for some. Behind the words of welcome in the merger churches there is caution.

“They should be seen as contributing to the whole church and not part of it,” said Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor. “I would hope that they would become more integrated. We want their contribution to Catholic witness and it will be more effective as part of the normal Catholic community.”

Poland’s culture has lasted in spite of a turbulent history, and has accompanied the Polish nation throughout its whole history. With the future of the Polish ethnic church in America in balance and the disappearance of so many Polish parishes and communities, the Polish *Pasterka* Midnight Mass is celebrated less often in the United States. Particularly during the holidays, the Polish community has been deeply affected by this loss of its ethnic identity and the celebration of specific traditions, not encountered in American Catholic services. Our challenge is to retain the knowledge of previous generations before this history is totally lost.

With nostalgic melancholy and vivid memory, I will travel to Massachusetts for Christmas, climb the stairs to the choir loft of a church that is not my own, and sing with Pan Smardz’s “Polish choir” — the choir originally from St. Michael’s Polish Church, and release the *koledy* prayers to the heavens at a Midnight Mass that is *not* Polish... as the Ghosts from our churches and of our ancestors boldly sing, and with a tear...smile from above.

