

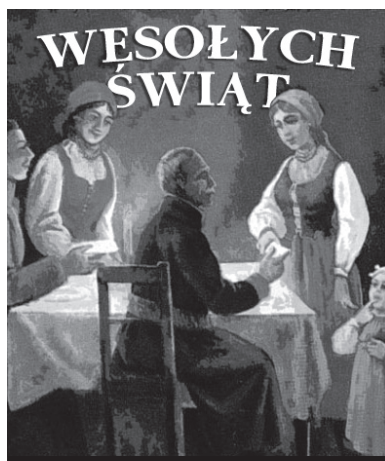
# POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION AND CONTINUANCE OF POLISH AMERICAN CULTURE

ESTABLISHED 1911

DECEMBER 2019 • VOL. 108, NO. 12 • \$2.25

www.polamjournal.com

CHRISTMAS BELIEFS,  
DIVINATIONS, AND  
SUPERSTITIONS — PAGE 6PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, NEW YORK  
AND ADDITIONAL ENTRY OFFICES

**RADEK SIKORSKI VISITS BALTIMORE • CELEBRATING POLISH RIGHTEOUS • SLAIN STEELWORKERS REMEMBERED**  
**CHRISTMAS 1919: REFLECTING ON AMERICANS' INVOLVEMENT IN UKRAINE A CENTURY AGO**  
**PACYGA'S "AMERICAN WARSAW" • MORE WIGILIA FAVORITES • POL-AM PILOT FIRST TO FIGHT AT MIDWAY**

## NEWSMARK

### Tusk Rules Out Presidential Run

Polish ex-Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he would not run in the country's presidential race next year, cutting short speculation that he might decide to challenge incumbent President Andrzej Duda.

Tusk, who is now a top European Union official, told reporters in Brussels he did not want "to hinder the opposition in any way in the process of selecting candidates.

Poland's largest opposition party, the Civic Platform, said it was considering holding a primary election to select a presidential candidate unless Tusk, its former leader, decided to enter the race.

Tusk told reporters the opposition stood a chance of winning the presidency but he said it needed "a candidate free from the baggage of difficult, unpopular decisions."

### Warsaw Expels Russian Diplomat

A high-ranking Russian diplomat was expelled from Poland earlier this year as a result of an operation by the country's counterintelligence services. The diplomat, who served as Russia's deputy consul-general in the western Polish city of Poznań, was expelled in March. Polish state broadcaster TVP Info reported the ousting, citing what it said was newly revealed information about previously unknown Polish counterintelligence operations.

Based on the agents' findings at the time, the man was declared *persona non grata* in Poland.

He was also banned from entering the European Union's free-travel Schengen Area, TVP Info reported.

The Russian "conducted activities incompatible with his diplomatic status, which could have harmed Polish-Russian relations," according to the tvp.info website.

### Restoration Fundraiser Sets Record

WARSAW — Some 250 actors, journalists and public figures have collected a record \$73,000 USD in an annual fundraising drive at Warsaw's Powązki Cemetery.

On All Saints' Day (Nov.) and All Souls' Day (Nov. 2), Poles traditionally flock to family graves to lay wreaths and light candles.

Well-known faces, including actor Maja Komorowska, were out in force raising money at Powązki, the oldest cemetery in Warsaw, for the renovation of historic tombstones and chapels on November 1, 2 and 3. Komorowska has been taking part in the fundraiser for over 40 years.

Marcin Świącicki, the chairman of the Social Committee for the Protection of the Old Powązki Cemetery, said this year's effort was helped by good weather, which encouraged more people to visit the cemetery.

To date, 1,460 tombstones and chapels have been renovated thanks to the fundraiser.

### Sea-monster Fossil Found in Poland

A pair of researchers with the Polish Academy of Sciences excavated the fossilized remains of a 150-million-year-old sea monster known as a pliosaur. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, Daniel Tyborowski and Błażej Błażejowski said the fossil they found in a cornfield in a northeastern part of the Holy Cross Mountains near the village of Krzyżanowice was approximately 10 meters long and was dated to approximately 145 to 163 million years ago. Their discovery was the first pliosaur fossil ever found in Poland.

The researchers note that pliosaurs were at the top of the food chain during their existence, with some growing to twice the size of a modern killer whale and weighing dozens of tons. They are believed to have been the largest predators of their time on land or in the sea.

The researchers also found the fossilized remains of several other creatures in the same vicinity as the pliosaur, such as ancient crocodiles and turtles.

"CHWAŁA BOGU NA WYSOKOŚCIACH, A NA ZIEMI POKÓJ LUDZIOM JEGO UPODOBANIA."



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS (1689). CHARLES LE BRUN (1619-1690). LOUVRE MUSEUM.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, AND ON EARTH PEACE TO THOSE ON WHOM HIS FAVOR RESTS."**

LUKE 2:4-14

## Poland (Finally) Enters Visa Waiver Program

WASHINGTON / WARSAW — A decades-long campaign to allow Polish citizens to travel to the United States without a visa came to an end on November 11 — Poland's Independence Day — when the U.S. Department of Homeland Security named Poland the 39th "trusted partner" in the Visa Waiver Program.

Visa-free travel means Poles will still need to enter data into an online registry system but will no longer need to stand in lines to see a consul, and the fee is down to \$14 from the previous \$160. The move is designed to boost business and tourism, as well as cultural ties.

In Warsaw, President Andrzej Duda said it was "important and good news" for the 37 million people in Poland and around 10 million Poles in the United States.

Poland completed all necessary bilateral security agreements and has met the required B1/B2 visa refusal rate, which qualified it in the Waiver Program.

Poland's inclusion means Polish citizens traveling on passports with embedded computer chips, and who have successfully obtained an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) will be able to visit the United States for tourism and business trips of up to 90 days without a visa.

Citizens of all countries traveling under the Visa Waiver Program must obtain an ESTA, which currently is valid for up to two years.

Polish citizens wishing to travel in the United States for longer than 90 days, or who wish to engage in activities requiring other visa categories (e.g., to work or to study in the United States)

will still need to apply for the appropriate category of visa. Polish citizens who are denied ESTA will also need to apply for a visa.

Getting Poland into the Visa Waiver program has been a hot-button in U.S.-Poland relations. The drive began soon after the country held its first free elections in 1991 following the overthrow of Communist control, placed on Poland after World War II.

Complete details on the Visa Waiver Program (including ESTA) are available on the U.S. Embassy's website: <https://pl.usembassy.gov>, as well as Customs and Border Protection's ESTA website at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>, and the State Department's travel website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

— Compiled from press reports and U.S. Homeland Security releases

## ALMANAC

## December Grudzień

*Gdyby kiedy w grudniu grzmiało,  
wiatrów byłoby niemało.  
Thunder in December  
will bring winds to remember.*

- 1 1944. **Tehran Conference.** Poland is handed over to the Soviet sphere of influence.
- 3 1857. Birth of **Joseph Conrad.**
- 4 **ST. BARBARA**  
*Niechaj każdy pamięta, jaka Barbara, takie święta.  
Let everyone remember: as (the weather on) St. Barbara's Day, so the holidays.*
- 5 1925. Death of Nobel laureate **Władysław S. Reymont.**
- 6 **ST. NICHOLAS** (Sw. Mikołaj). Today is traditionally reserved for gift-giving in Poland.
- 7 1279. Death of **Bolesław V the Chaste**
- 8 1990. Shipyard electrician and Solidarity leader **Lech Walesa** elected president of Poland.
- 11 1949. **Johnny Lujack** of the Chicago Bears passed for 468 yards and six touchdowns in a 52-21 rout of the Chicago Cardinals.
- 12 1501. Coronation of **Alexander Jagiellon**
- 13 1570. Signing of the **Treaty of Stettin** concludes the Northern Seven Years' War
- 14 1980. After four days of meetings, members of **NATO** warned the Soviets to stay out of the internal affairs of Poland.
- 15 1575. Election of **Stefan Batory**, considered to be one of the greatest Kings of Poland.
- 17 *Grudzień ziemię grudzi dla zwierząt i ludzi.  
December is cold for man and beast.*
- 18 1929. Birth of **Cardinal Józef Glemp.**
- 19 1852. Birth of Polish Jewish scientist **A.A. Michelson**, 1907 Nobel Prize winner in Physics.
- 20 1982. Death of Chopin advocate and pianist **Arthur Rubinstein.**
- 21 **ST. THOMAS**  
1898. In Paris, **Marie**, 31, and **Pierre Curie**, Polish and French chemists, discover radium.
- 22 1959. Death of actress **Gilda Grey** (Maryanna Michalska), popular actress of the 1920s.
- 23 **ST. JOHN KANTY (CANTIUS).**  
1981. In response to declaration of martial law in Poland, President **Ronald Reagan** declares economic sanctions.
- 24 **DZIEŃ WIGILIJNY**  
*Na szczęście, na zdrowie ze świętą Wiliją  
Health and good fortune this Vigil!*  
1854. About 100 families from Upper Silesia arrive in **Panna Maria**, Texas to establish the first permanent Polish settlement in the United States. Fr. Leopold Moczygemba holds Midnight Mass under a large oak tree that still stands today.
- 25 **BOŻE NARODZENIA**  
According to Polish tradition, the 12 days of Christmas predict the weather for next 12 months.
- 26 **ST. STEPHEN**  
1655. **Swedes** withdraw from Poland.
- 27 **ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST**  
1918. **Greater Poland Insurrection** begins.
- 29 1966. Celebration of the **Polish Millennium of Christianity.**
- 30 1977. President **Jimmy Carter** visits Poland.  
1994. Consecration of **Bishop John W. Yanta, D.D.**, at Panna Maria. He is the first Polish American Texan given this honor.
- 31 **ST. SYLVESTER**  
*Niech już wystrzelą korki szampana,  
A ty baw się świetnie do białego rana!  
Let the champagne corks become airborne,  
and you will play 'til early morn!*

This paper mailed on or before **November 30, 2019**. The **January 2020** edition will be mailed on or before **January 2, 2020**.

## The Word Became Flesh

by Fr. Leszek Smoliński

Holidays always give hope to man, and with it, much goodness and kindness. Christmas has always been an opportunity to get the best out of the best, spontaneous and good at heart, the ability to enjoy and wonder.

The Bible shows us the meaning of Christmas. An excerpt from the Prologue of Saint John reads: "In the beginning was the Word. (...)

**While the search for God stands at the beginning of all other religions, in Christianity the Incarnation of the Word is the beginning — God's initiative.**

Everything happened through him (...) In him was life and life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness and darkness has not overtaken it (...) The word became flesh and dwelt among us."

The Incarnate Word is the final answer to the deepest religious and moral questions of man. While the search for God stands at the beginning of all other religions, in Christianity the Incarnation of the Word is the beginning — God's initiative. Here, not only does man search for God, but God himself comes to speak to man and show him the way to come to himself and to lead man.

God became man so that man, by His grace, would become a participant in God's life; "That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Love seeks closeness with a loved one, which is best demonstrated by the pain of separation from people who love each other. That is why God has come as close to us as possible so that we too may come closer to Him.

Jesus comes to us as a poor child, so that humanity can enjoy the very gift of life. "Every child being born is a sign of God's trust in man. It is also a confirmation, at least supposed, of the hope that man has for a future open to God's eternity. God responded to this hope of man by being born as a small child in time" (Benedict XVI, 1.12.2007).

How much joy Mary must have felt when she put her hand in the tiny hand of Jesus!

A small child is able to teach something new adult. I remember when once, a mother hurried into the church with her little child. When she wanted to leave immediately, she heard the child's request: "Mom, it's so good here, why don't we stay here any longer? Why are we always in a hurry?"



*Światło zabłyśnie,  
bo Pan się narodził*

*A light will shine this day,  
the Lord is here for us!*

**FR. WALTER RAKOCZY**

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At Christmas, we must ask ourselves "What can I do so God could be born in me, that He would enter Bethlehem of my heart?" In principle, nothing should be done. Nothing but opening. It is worth to stop and let God's Word be born in our heart. This Word can only be heard in silence. You will receive from Him exactly as much as you can make a place for Him in yourself.

Let's ask the newborn baby Jesus in the words of Saint John XXIII: "Help us to know You better and live in a brotherly way like the children of one Father. Show us your beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in our heart love and gratitude for Your infinite goodness. Unite us all in love and give us Your heavenly peace."

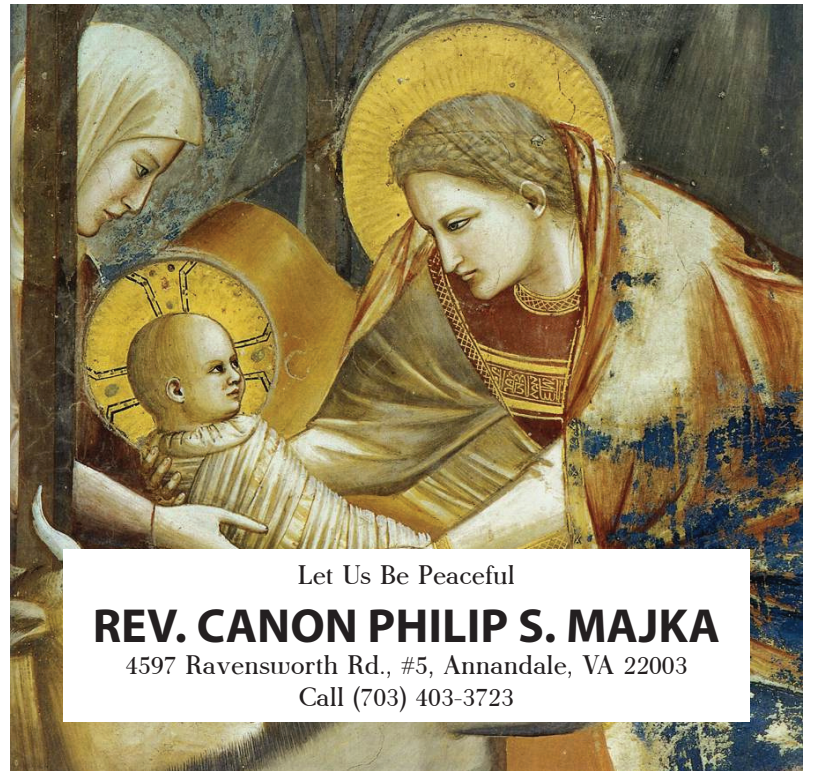
*Fr. Leszek Smoliński is the author of many best-selling religious, prayer, and scientific publications. He emphasizes the faithful have the right to communicate everything that can bring them closer to God and deepen their faith.*



In honor and memory of my parents,  
Marcin and Basia Stelmach

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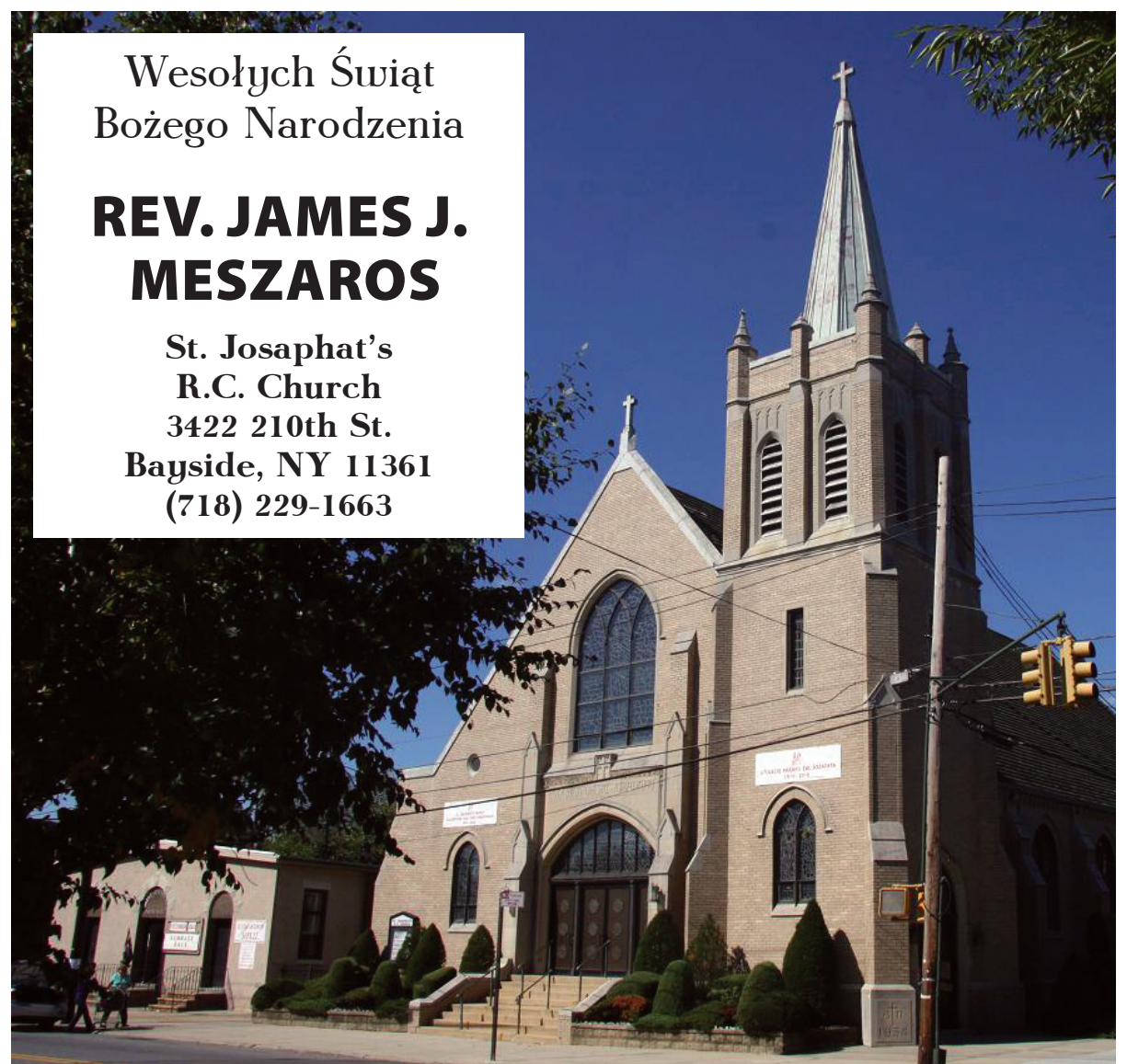
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VIEWPOINTS

# Thank Your Ancestors for the Endless Gifts of Christmas

by Barbara Szydłowski

While there are Christmas traditions that are unique in each part of Poland, there are many which might be considered widespread, and have made their way to Polish communities across North America.

The beloved St. Nicholas has been busy since December 6, delivering gifts to the youngsters, sometimes appearing in the city streets, schools, department stores or private homes. When St. Nicholas delivers presents, he asks the child about their behavior, school lessons and — if he comes to the house — he may ask the child to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

Large evergreen trees, decorated with lights, and decorations, stand in city squares, shopping centers, and near town halls. Blessed wafers — *oplatki* — have been obtained at the church. Christmas cards have been purchased and sent, often with part of an *oplatek* as a symbol of unity with loved ones. Adults often have purchased small gifts for each other to put under the tree for Christmas.

Christmas Eve is a time for the family to be together. Tradition has it that the Christmas Eve supper, *Wigilia*, starts with the appearance of the first star. If there is a family member absent, a place is nonetheless set at the table. However, extra places are set in honor of those relatives who may have emigrated to the United States or other countries. Years ago, the father of the household would step outside into the street to see if there was someone who was far from home, and invite him or her to share in the Christmas Eve supper.

The Christmas Eve supper, lighted by candles, is set on a tablecloth under which is placed a little straw in memory of the Christ Child's birth in a stable. The head of the household breaks a wafer and shares with others at the table wishing each other peace and happiness. Traditionally, there is an uneven number of courses of meatless dishes including dried fruit and cakes. In rural areas, people share something from their Christmas supper with the farm animals, for it has been said they have a gift of speech on this night. Christmas carols are sung before going to Midnight Mass, also known as the Shepherd's Mass, or *Pasterka*.

In the Kaszuby province of Poland, the farmers go into the orchards after the Christmas Eve supper has been served, knock thrice on every fruit tree and tell them the news of the birth of Christ. Then they take sheaves from the house, twist them into straw ropes and wind them around the trees to protect them against winter frost.

On Christmas Day, folks visit relatives, often singing carols as they approach their prospective hosts' door. Children gather in small groups to go caroling and the energetic ones assemble a *szopka*, a crèche and puppet characters to act out the story of Christmas.

In some rural areas of Poland, the evening of Christmas (December 25) is dedicated to young bachelors. These gents assemble, practice singing a few carols and then go from house to house where young ladies reside and entertain them.

The day after Christmas, St.

Stephen's Day, is a holiday and except for essential services, no one goes to work. It is a day for visiting friends. Throughout Poland on St. Stephen's, the peasants throw grain at one another to bring a good harvest. Members of the family throw grain at each other, at friends, and at the animals in the stable. A very important custom connected with December 26 is when all work agreements are concluded, and the farmhand is either rehired for another year by his employer or leaves to seek employment elsewhere.

The scene in the mountains is colorful on December 26. *Gorale* (mountaineers) ride in their sleighs, dressed in full regalia, with their singing accompanied by music on the violin to visit friends.

New Year's Eve, *Sylwester* is celebrated either by attending a lovely ball or attending a private house party. The parties at home usually feature a buffet supper including cakes for deserts and champagne for greeting in the New Year.

Be thankful this Christmas for your wonderful ancestors, who brought these traditions from the Old Country so you may enjoy them with your family.



Szczęście, zdrowie, pokój  
świety winszujemy wam!

**ST. HEDWIG  
CHURCH CHOIR**

Chester, Pennsylvania



To my sister  
**LILLIAN CAPKO**  
Wesołych Świąt  
from your sister  
**CECILIA**



Wesołych Świąt  
Bożego Narodzenia  
**VIRGINIA LUTY**  
Strongsville, Ohio



Wesołych Świąt  
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to our veterans and friends  
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Happy New Year!



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*Dedicated to the Promotion and Continuance of Polish American Culture*

ESTABLISHED 1911

IGNATIUS HAJDUK • Founder 1911-1920  
JOHN DENDE • Publisher 1920-1944  
HENRY J. DENDE • Publisher 1944-1983

USPS 437-220 / ISSN 0032-2792

Published monthly in four editions (Buffalo, Polish Beneficial Association, National, and Digital editions) by:

**PANAGRAPHICS, INC.**

P.O. BOX 271

N. BOSTON, NY 14110-0271

(800) 422-1275

(716) 312-8088

info@polamjournal.com

www.polamjournal.com

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, N.Y. AND ADDITIONAL ENTRY OFFICES

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to:

**POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL**  
P.O. BOX 198  
BOWMANVILLE, NY 14026-0198

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## RELIGION

## Celebrating the Polish Righteous

by Benjamin Fiore, S.J.

**Jonny Daniels**, of From the Depths, an organization of millennials that sustains the memory of the Holocaust as “witnesses to the witnesses,” gathered in Warsaw with colleagues to celebrate the 100th birthday of **Józef Walaszczyk**, the oldest living Righteous who saved the lives of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Poland during World War II.

### Metropolitan of Kyiv Given Human Rights Award

**Archbishop Elpidophoros of America** together with **Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis**, national commander of the Order of St. Andrew awarded the Athenagoras Human Rights Award to **His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphany of Kyiv and All Ukraine** at the annual Athenagoras Human Rights Banquet in New York City. The award to Metropolitan Epiphany recognizes his recent installation as head of the newly established autocephalous (self-governing) church in Ukraine, an act that released it from the dominance of the patriarch of Moscow. The award also recognizes the aspirations of the Ukrainian people “for religious independence and control of their own future and spiritual destiny” as recognized by **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew** and the Sacred Synod of Constantinople, first among equals of the heads of the Orthodox churches.

Metropolitan Epiphany contin-

ues to work for unity among the three disparate Orthodox churches in Ukraine as well to provide spiritual support for the people of Ukraine in their ongoing war with Russian-supported separatists in the eastern part of the country.

### Little Sisters Lose Court Case

The case brought forth by the Little Sisters and their fellow plaintiffs, including **Bishop Zubik's** Pittsburgh diocese, was lost before a liberal federal 9th circuit appeals court in California. The ruling once again forces them to pay for abortions under their health insurance plan, as mandated by President Obama's health care act. Although the Supreme Court twice protected the nuns and their fellow plaintiffs from the regulation, pro-abortion state officials in Pennsylvania, California and other states have filed new lawsuits to force the Catholic order to pay for abortions. The Little Sisters and the other plaintiffs will now have to go back to court.

### New Film on Sendler in the Works

The story of Polish social worker **Irena Sendler**, who rescued thousands of Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, is being produced by Israeli actress **Gal Gadot** through her new production company Pilot Wave. Sendler worked with a Jewish organization inside the Ghetto to smuggle children out and place them either in Christian homes or in

institutions run by Catholic sisters.

She was a member of Zegota, the Polish Council for Aid to Jews, which helped rescue Jews during the Nazi occupation. Arrested and sentenced to death, torture did not get her to reveal information about the rescue she accomplished. Later the underground resistance bribed her guards to release her.

She won named Righteous Among the Gentiles in 1965, made an honorary citizen of Israel in 2001, and revealed the names of the 2,500 children which she kept in a jar in her garden.

### Slain Polish-American Steelworker Honored

One hundred years after his death and burial in Lackawanna, N.Y., **Casimir Mazurek** (inset) received commemorative honors at a ceremony at his newly rediscovered gravesite.



Mazurek, 26, was a decorated wounded World War I veteran, who had worked at the Lackawanna Steel mill for two months when the steelworkers strike of 1919 began. During a demonstration at one of the gates of the plant, plant guards reacted to perceived brick throwing by shooting into the crowd, and hit Mazurek, who died in the ambulance. Another worker, Polish immigrant **Maciej Buczkowski**, was also shot, and died from his wounds a few days

later. Ten thousand people marched with Mazurek's coffin in a procession to the cemetery.

At the commemoration ceremony remarks in honor of Mazurek were offered by the mayor of Lackawanna **Geoffrey Szymanski**, the Erie County Executive **Mark Poloncarz**, CSEA Western Region Veterans Committee, **Amy Owczarczak**, and commemoration organizer **Chris Hawley** of the Eugene V. Debs Initiative. A prayer was given by **Fr. Benjamin Fiore, S.J.**; a military salute followed the

playing of taps.

### Celebrates Anniversary

The **Chopin Singing Society** of Buffalo celebrated its 120th anniversary with a concert at St. Stanislaus B&M church and a banquet. The society holds the record of being the longest standing ethnic choral group in Western New York. The society's annual program of Christmas kolędy, again at St. Stanislaus church, will be followed a week later by its Wigilia dinner.

May you have the gift of Faith, the blessing of Hope,  
and the peace of His Love at Christmas  
and all throughout the New Year!

Najlepsze życzenia z okazji Świąt Bożego Narodzenia,  
aby przyjscie na świat Chrystusa przyniosło ze sobą  
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Merry Christmas and Best Wishes to My Wonderful Friends  
God Bless the Polish American Journal and my friend, Mark Kohan

## Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford to Host Wigilia

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford, Inc. will present its annual Wigilia Celebration on Sat., Dec. 14, 2019. A social and cash bar begins at 6:00 p.m. The Wigilia program, with live music, begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner. The event will be held at the Polish National Home, 60 Charter Oak Ave.

This celebration features the time-honored custom of the sharing of the *opłatek* (Christmas wafer) and a five-course traditional (meatless) dinner. It will culminate with a sing-along of *kolędy* (Christmas carols).

Lilia Kiełtyka, President of the Club said, "The Club is pleased to once again open our most cherished Christmas Eve tradition to the public. The Polish National Home of Hartford is the perfect spot for our Wigilia."

The cost is \$45.00 for members. A cordial invitation is also extended to any non-members who wish to enjoy a typical Polish Christmas Eve experience – cost: \$50.00.

Advance reservations are required, and no tickets will be sold at the door. Reservation deadline is Dec. 8, 2019. Please make checks payable to the Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford, Inc. (PCCGH) and mail to Mrs. Nancy Yiznitsky, 87 Montclair Drive, East Hartford, CT 06118. Call (860) 568-2044 to speak with Nancy about your reservation.

Additional information may also be obtained by calling (860) 659-0356 or visiting [www.polishculturalclub.org](http://www.polishculturalclub.org).

**THE 39TH ANNUAL SZOPKA FESTIVAL & COMPETITION**, sponsored by the Polish Cultural Club of

Greater Hartford, Inc. is being held at the Polish National Home, 60 Charter Oak Ave., on Sun., Dec. 1 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Numerous vendors will be on hand, there will be a Polish delicacies for sale, and *Święty Mikołaj* is expected to pay a visit.

A Polish Buffet will be available for purchase from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Reservations are suggested for parties of eight or more. Please call (860) 247-1784. Admission to the Szopka Festival is free, and open to the public. Free parking is available. The proceeds from this event are used to benefit the Jennie Marconi-Jaworski Scholarship Fund of the Polish Cultural Club, an affiliate of the national American Council for Polish Culture. For further information, please visit [www.polishculturalclub.org](http://www.polishculturalclub.org) or call (860) 841-3477.



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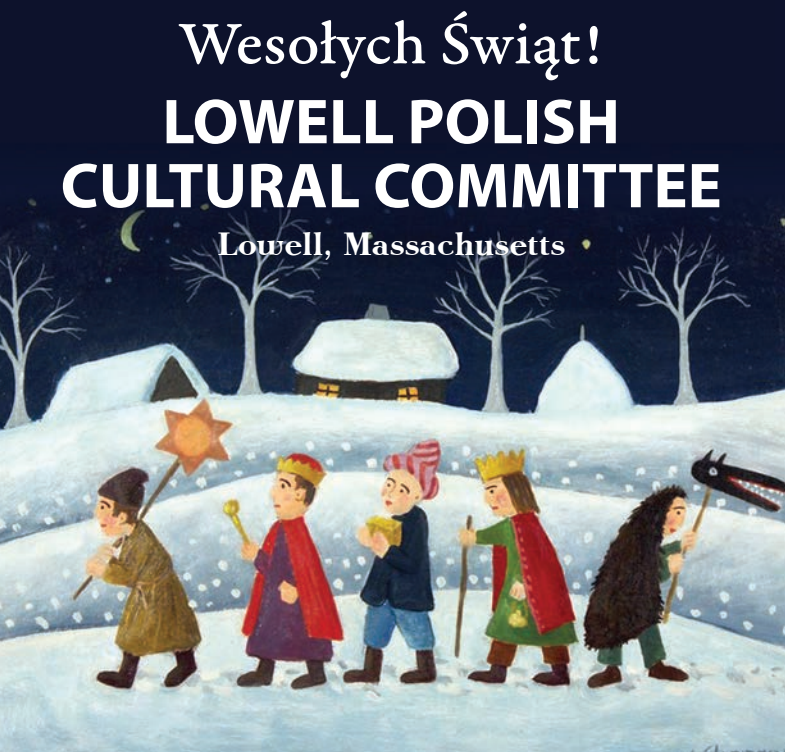
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## PRZESĄDY

# Traditional Polish Christmas Beliefs, Divinations, and Superstitions

by Staś Kmieć

Christmas Eve in Poland – Wigilia, has many beautiful traditions. The communal breaking of the *opłatek wafer*, *kolędy* carols, and the Pasterka “Shepherd’s” Midnight mass are among the many practices beloved by every Pole and many of Polish descent abroad. Most of us will spend this special night with our family at a common table – cultivating tradition and customs. But there exists a stranger side to the way Poles once celebrated – one filled with mystery.

Do you avoid walking under a ladder? Do you sometimes spit over your left shoulder? Do you change your direction when a black cat runs across your path?

Wigilia is full of various divinations, and yes – superstitions. They are related to the weather, life expectancy, health, happiness, marriage and seniority. All activities performed during this day have a symbolic meaning – one of reflection. If you believe the proverb “Gdy choinka tonie w wodzie, jajko toczy się po lodzie” (“When the Christmas tree sinks in water, the egg rolls on ice”), there will be Christmas weather during Easter.

Originating in pre-Christian pagan beliefs, customs to ensure a betrothal or good harvest were a major part of rural traditions. Folk predictions in different parts of Poland tend to be specific to that region, yet, many have become popular everywhere. Today, our understanding of such well-known customs as the number of dishes for the Vigil meal or the significance of the empty place setting is “cut-and-dried,” but if we delve further... it is far more complex.

The belief that December 24 is a day to mark the beginning of a new era was born with our ancestors and passed down from generation to generation. Superstitions allegedly possessed extraordinary power to direct one’s life path for the new year. Although Christmas is associated with a religious rite, there are many secular traditions, which have permanently entered Polish culture.

Growing up Polish, I fondly remember the yearly trek from Massachusetts to Garfield, N.J. to celebrate Christmas at the home of my maternal *Babcia* and *Dziadek*. The ever-growing family of aunts, uncles, and cousins were accommodated in the cellar – where several tables created one long one for Wigilia. I remember at an early age being intrigued by my grandmother arranging cut onions and placing salt inside each. What did this mean?

The end of the year is a time of reflection. There are many superstitions and religious beliefs that the next year will abound in happiness, success and money.

## Wigilia Predicts the Rest of the Year

“Ten dzień jaki, cały rok taki” or “Jakiś w Wigilię, takiś cały rok” – on this day, the rule applies: “As on Christmas Eve, so throughout the year.”

When you consider how perilous life was in Poland during the olden days – harsh winters, the chance of crop failures, famine, and sick-

ness, let alone the threat of constant invasion, you can understand why such beliefs existed. Any form of reassurance that you would survive to next Christmas was embraced. Acting properly on this day gave a feeling of greater control over life’s challenges and unpredictability.

## Clean up your act

This is a time when great cleaning and sweeping of the homestead occurred. An ancient belief was that forces of evil would dwell in all things left dirty on that day. Once order prevailed in every corner, the house was decorated with green branches of coniferous trees that provided magical properties of protection. They were put around religious paintings, and over the doorway. Sheaves of grains were placed in the four corners of the main room of the house to guarantee prosperity.

To ensure a good year, families complied to many bans, orders and other rules. The day would start before dawn. Villagers would run barefoot to the nearest river or stream to bath. A thorough cleansing foretold good health in the coming year and protection against skin infections and other diseases. In an age without proper medicine, people relied on such beliefs for sense of comfort.

“Kto rano w Wigilię wstaje, ten przez rok cały nie będzie ospały” (“Whoever rises early on Christmas Eve, will not be lethargic for a whole year”). It was necessary to get up early as there was a lot of work to be done, but more importantly so that in the next year getting up would not cause any difficulty. Teeth were rubbed with garlic, so they won’t hurt, and a slice of bread dipped in honey with a little vodka, would provide plenty of food and drink. Eating an apple would prevent a sore throat, and a nut – a toothache. To preserve beauty, silver coins were placed on the bottom of the washing bowls.

In some regions, to temper children, they were forced to run around the house three times at dawn, in nightshirts and barefoot. Children had to behave well because if they were naughty and got punished, it foretold that they would have a year filled with spankings. It was also customary for mothers preparing the food to smear their children’s faces with dough. This was meant to ensure that they would be healthy and full during the upcoming year.

On this day, hunters traditionally seek their prey – the successful outcome of which will ensure the protection of St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunting, for the whole year.

- **Do not cut yourself**, catch a cold or get sick for health problems await. But as soon as you sneeze, you’ll be healthy for another year. Perhaps this is from saying when someone sneezes – *na zdrowie* (for health).
- **Minimize stress**, nervousness, and misery. Don’t shout, get angry or cry, otherwise sadness will remain.
- **You must not argue** or quarrel, because discord will stay in the house.
- **There is a ban on sewing**, any alterations or repairs throughout the day, because the year will be spent on constant corrections, improvements, and fixing every-

thing. Pregnant women should not sew or wash on this day, because their child may be born in ill health.

- **Do not speak too much**, let alone interrupt others – you will be very argumentative and willing to reveal someone else’s secrets.
- **Fate will smile at us** if we are smiling, joyful and friendly towards all household members from early morning. Both our smile and good relations with the family will not disappear.
- **Before dinner, all the laundry should be taken down**. Leaving it means that this year’s problems will be carried over to the next.
- **Bring coal or firewood** to the house before dark – if something is brought in after supper to the home, mice will eat it.
- **Don’t count the pierogi** while they’re still boiling, half of them will end up stuck to the bottom of the pot or become torn.
- **You should light a fireplace**, as a sign of a better life and a candle in memory of the dead, so they will keep you under their protection.

## Money Matters

- **To start the day**, you should wash in the cold water in which there are several coins (the higher the denomination, the better). Touch them as often as possible taking in water and washing the face. After washing, place the money in your pocket and do not part with it until Christmas morning.
- **Have a small amount of money** with you during the Christmas Eve Supper, as not to suffer from



a lack of it.

- **Do not borrow money** – this threatens with an empty wallet. It is different if someone wants to borrow money from you, then you will avoid financial problems.
- **Settle all debts before this day** so that your wallet will not be empty.
- **Do not lend anyone anything on Christmas Eve**. It will result in the loss of property.
- **Visit a neighbor and steal** a small, insignificant item; this will ensure wealth for you. You must return this item on St. Stephen’s Day (December 26th).
- **Financial problems await** when you look out the window and see a woman.
- **You should not make purchases**, because you will spend too much money throughout the next year. The exception is buying bread.
- **Financial prosperity will be brought to you** by the coin hidden under your Wigilia plate and a carp scale from supper, once it has been placed in your wallet.

## Preparing Wigilia

According to the Polish custom,

all dishes are meatless and represent the fruit of the earth – a leit-motif of garden, field, forest and water. Those cooking should not let go of the spoon you started using in the beginning; you must hold onto it until the end – you have to serve using it and eat with it.

## What is on the table?

It is not imagined that a tablecloth of a color other than white is on table. This is a symbol of the Blessed Mary’s purity. Place a handful of hay under the tablecloth and sprinkle the table with oats – these are symbols of the poverty in which the Savior was born, and will ensure a good growing season and plentiful food. This custom actually dates back to pagan times and had to do with an ancient agrarian feast – where the hay, oats and crumbs were dispersed outdoors to promote a bountiful harvest.

On each corner of the four-cornered table place a loaf of homemade bread to represent full stomachs during each of the four seasons. A basket or plate with the *opłatek wafer* stands in the middle of the table. Next to it – salt and garlic, which symbolize the fight against evil forces, and blessed Holy candles, a symbol of bright light meaning love and good.

Under each plate, there should be a coin and a carp scale, ensuring luck and financial prosperity in the coming year. Ślązacy (Silesians) put banknotes instead.

## What’s Under the Table?

An old tradition is to place hay under the table. Another religious reference to the Baby Jesus, and being born on the hay in the manger – it is rare these days. Home garden owners should be happy to hear that annoying moles will disappear once and for all if an iron is put under the table. Place an iron ax or sickle and rest your legs against them, so that your legs will be as strong and hard as iron and you will not get cut on thorns. An ax or chain will protect the household from evil. The legs of the table can be tied with a rope to protect the house from thieves and burglars in the coming year.

## An Extra Place

An old Polish proverb says “Gość w dom, Bóg w dom”, which means that the presence of a guest is God’s blessing. Hospitality is a part of the Polish identity and Poles are determined not to leave anybody alone or hungry on Christmas

A remnant of pagan times is setting an extra place for the soul of the dead. This custom has also been observed as adding a plate for an unexpected guest, stray wanderer, or the Christ child in the form of a stranger. It can symbolize the memory of those who cannot spend this year’s holidays with us, or that it is prepared with a deceased family member in mind. During Poland’s many wars, at least one family member was always absent. The extra spot was reserved just in case that loved one might unexpectedly

reappear.

It was considered an unfortunate divination when an odd number of people sat at the table, for this purpose another cover was added. To avoid misfortune, a homeless or lonely person was invited to join to make the number match. In noble homes, a person from the household service was invited to the table.

I remember my grandmother and grandfather taking turns standing – under the guise of bringing the next course, while the rest of the family was seated and ate.

## Crossing the Threshold

If on Christmas Eve the first guest to cross the threshold is a man, health, prosperity and happiness will be ensured to all household members. If it is a woman, prepare for more problems, worries and illness; and an older woman, will bring nothing but misfortune and failure. Depending on whether it was man or a woman on the following day, meant if a bull, cow or non-bearing heifer was to be born in a given pen.

A pregnant woman will know whether she is carrying a boy or a girl once the first visitor enters the house. If the visitor is female, she will have a daughter. In modern Poland, the first person to call on the phone with wishes should be a man.

## First Star

According to the Holy Scriptures, the Bethlehem Star led the three kings to Bethlehem. The appearance of the first star in the sky signals the start of Wigilia, and symbolizes the beginning of the celebration of Christmas. Astronomers have chosen Vega as the “first star”, the brightest star in the northern constellation of Lyra. Before the meal begins, a blessed Holy candle is lit.

## Wafer magic



One of the most widespread traditions is breaking and sharing the *opłatek wafer*. Not only in Poland, but all over the world. This custom is cultivated in, among others, Slovakia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Italy.

In many regions of the country, the wafer is attributed to magical properties and even healing power. We believe that by sharing it, we gain God’s favor. It ensures prosperity and protects from disease, hunger and from the influence of evil powers. Giving the wafer to farm animals protected them from

continued on page 7

## PRZESĄDY

## Do not leave the wigilia table until everyone has finished their meal

continued from page 6

illness and charm. A specially-baked colored wafer was used for this purpose.

The remains of the wafer should be treated with great respect. A piece of wafer thrown into the well will purify water. It was believed that everyone who shares the wafer on will not be hungry all year long.

When sharing *opłatek* with a spouse, be careful not to let a crumb fall on the floor. If that happens, you risk treason in the coming year. There is even a darker side, as anyone who drops their *opłatek* is destined to die within a year. In some regions, the host broke the wafer in as many parts as people at the table, dipped each piece in honey and while pronouncing the names of the household members, stuck it to the window glass. Any particle that slips or falls off spelled death for that person.

Today, when sharing the wafer, participants wish first and foremost for health and prosperity, as well as to make dreams come true.

## Enchanted Wigilia

- **Sit at the table according to seniority** – an old custom to ensure that we say goodbye to this world in that order.
- **An obscure village tradition involves everyone eating each dish out of a common bowl.** Representing solidarity and the whole family “being in it together,” this practice lasted well into the 20th century.
- **Leaving the table before everyone has finished** their meal will herald misfortune. This prohibition does not apply to the hostess or any person serving to the table. Many traditions involve having the entire meal set on the table from the start.
- **You should try every dish,** so that food does not run out on your table and to ensure happiness.
- **In southern Poland,** it is believed there should be white beans on the table to guarantee peace in finances.
- **Place a coin in one bowl** of *barszcz* soup – whoever finds it will attribute great happiness.



## Even Numbers

Poles strongly believe that at Wigilia, there must be an even number of people seated around the table or else there will be bad luck. Having 13 people is the worst scenario because the number 13 represented Judas, the apostle who betrayed Christ. Odd-numbered families would place an extra plate, just to keep things even.

## The Number of Dishes

This is an area of constant dispute. Traditionally, the number of Wigilia dishes must be odd (eleven, nine, seven or five), which will ensure a good harvest in the coming year. Poles believed that this would create “room” for things to even out in the upcoming year, bringing greater food or wealth.

In more recent times it evolved to the number 12 – first to represent the 12 months and later to symbol-

ize the twelve apostles. If one does not prepare 12 dishes, then it reverts to an odd number. In Podlasie, it remains at an odd number.

## The Magical Powers of Foods and Grains

Certain plants, spices and foods are said to have special qualities and have been an important part of Christmas celebrations throughout history.

- **Poppy seed** is considered a synonym for abundance.
- **Garlic is an essential part** and is believed to provide strength and protection.
- **Honey** is believed to guard against evil.
- **Mushrooms** give health and strength.
- **A bundle of grain dipped in holy water** can be used to sprinkle the house to prevent it from burning down.

## After the Meal

Dry blades of hay can be pulled from under the tablecloth to see what the future holds. If the straw is long and straight, there are many years of peaceful life ahead – simple and safe. If it is short and twisted, fate will not be favorable – life will be skewed – winding and not easy. To this day in the Warmia and Mazury regions, matrimonial games related to pulling the stalks were also popular. Pulling out a long and green straw foretold a speedy marriage; a withered, blackened blade means a long wait; and a yellow blade means staying single eternally, and an early grave.

An apple is cut in half (crosswise, from the stem down). Both halves are shown to everyone around the table. If the core is shaped as a star, it means that everyone will get together next year in happiness and health. A four-pointed cross is a bad omen and means that someone at the table will fall ill or die within a year.

For those areas that finish with Kutia – a mix of soaked wheat berry, poppy seeds raisins, nuts, honey and spices. Throw a spoonful on the ceiling, if many poppy seeds stick, it will be a good harvest.

The first person to leave the table after dinner will be the first one to die in the coming year – that is why everyone should get up from the table at the same time.

At the end of the meal, the Holy candle is blown out. If the smoke rises straight up, everyone will be together next Christmas. Smoke moving peacefully across the room means a thoughtful answer; to the window – the harvest will be good; but if it quickly passes towards the door – a death is imminent.

Any leftovers from dinner (crumbs, fish bones, hay and oats) should be buried around the trees to ensure they will bear lots of fruit. Some will not collect the dishes, believing that during the night the

souls of the dead feed on the remnants left on the table.

## Love and Marriage

Polish women found numerous ways to predict whether or not they would get married in the coming year. In Eastern Poland it was believed that girls of a marrying age who grind poppy seed on Christmas Eve could expect a quick marriage. Maidens should never sweep the trash towards the door – this will ward off their admirers. In general, one does not want to “sweep away happiness” for next year.

After dinner, girls would gather the spoons, take them outside, wait and listen to hear a dog bark. The direction of the first dog bark points to where their future husband will come from. A fortune-telling trick is eavesdropping on the neighbors. If a girl hears the word “go” it means she will get married in the coming year. A loud “sit” announces long-lasting maidenhood.

When going to Midnight mass, girls would blindfold each other and touch fence pickets. A straight and smooth picket would portend a resourceful husband, while a crooked and rough one was an indication of a clumsy and awkward spouse.

If a maiden wanted to learn about her future husband’s profession, she would go to a river, dip her hand in the water and pull out the first thing she touched. Iron meant a blacksmith, wood – a carpenter, and leather – a shoemaker.

A sunny day keeps the husbands away – if the weather was gloomy and dark, it meant that women would find husbands regardless of age, wealth or beauty. If the weather was beautiful and sunny, then only the most beautiful women in the village would get married in the upcoming year. By another account – a cloudy sky bodes well for old and rich maidens, while bright skies were favorable for the young and poor.

If you want to find out if you will fall in love, eat an apple and count the seeds. If the number of pips is even, then the answer is positive, and if there are more than six pips, your happiness will be double.

## Weather or Not

Frost on Wigilia was a sign of fertility, a cloudy, overcast sky guarantees an abundance of milk, a clear day promises that the chickens would carry well, and a starry sky determined there will be a large amount of eggs. Rain on December 24 would mark the arrival of an extremely cold winter. However, if on Adam and Eve’s day – “Na Adama pięknie, zima rychło pęknie” (“St. Adam bright, winter will soon take flight”).

Leaving church on Christmas, my grandfather would look at the sky and often remarked “Boże Narodzenie po lodzie, Wielkanoc po wodzie” (“Christmas on ice, Easter on water”). “Wigilia piękna, jutzenka jasna, będzie stodoła za ciasna” (“Christmas Eve is fair, the morrow bright, the barn will now be too tight”) meaning an increase in harvest... and so the foretelling of weather through many proverbs was passed down through the generations.

The weather for the entire year reflected the 12 days from Christmas to the Three Kings. Each day corresponds to the months of the

year.

## Foretelling the Future with Onions

Back to the onion: my grand-



mother explained to me another way to predict the weather for the 12 months of the next year. The outer layers of an onion are peeled away until you have 12 “boats” each representing a month of the year. Line the onions in an east-west orientation. Place an equal amount of salt in each depression and leave overnight. The next morning, the salt has dissolved to varying degrees in each onion. The more water in each onion the more precipitation (rain-fall or snow) in the corresponding month.

## Waking the Trees

An old rural custom involved “waking up” the trees right before midnight mass. The head of the household would go outside and tie the trees around the house with straw or hay. Then, he would knock on the trees three times and shake them shouting “Do you not hear? The Son of God is born!” The other option is to threaten to cut down the tree with axe. This will excite the tree to produce more fruit than leaves.

## The Spirits are Coming

In Slavic pagan times, it was believed that on this night the souls of the dead return to earth. Gates and entrance doors or windows were left ajar for them. The spirits would enter the home in the form of animals, mysterious strangers or invisible entities.



As a result, Poles would be careful not to sweep the floor or dust a chair during Wigilia for fear of disturbing a spirit while it was in the house. Because of their presence, it was forbidden to spit, pour dirty water, wash clothing or spin on a spinning wheel. Sharp objects such as knives, scissors and needles could only be used in an emergency as not to harm the ghosts.

When sitting down to supper, one would blow on the chair so as not to sit on a ghost that came to join in the Vigil. After supper, everyone in the house would start banging loudly on pots and pans to chase the spirits away.

To this day, customs related to the remains of the supper are cultivated in Podlasie. The remnants were placed on a bench that was sprinkled with sand or ash near the stove and left overnight. After leaving marks on the bench, there was a guess as to who of the ancestors came to eat.

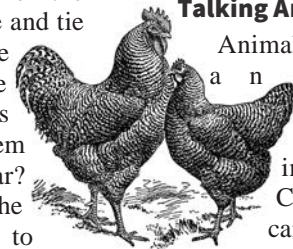
Even in the nineteenth century, it was believed that during supper you could see a person who had died that year – all you needed you do was go out into the hall and look into the room through the keyhole. Then you could see the person sitting together with others in the free space that was left at the table.

## The Tree

According to tradition, the Christmas tree was not dressed until the feast day of Adam and Eve – set aside for several centuries as December 24. As a sign of connection with the names of the first parents, apples and paper chains were placed on the tree, symbolizing the snake and at the same time cemented family ties.

Gingerbread prepared with the addition of honey, and nuts wrapped in gold or silver foil hanging on the tree would guarantee prosperity.

## Talking Animals



Animals have been given an elevated status on this night because of their presence in the stable during Christ’s birth and can speak in a human voice. But for this to happen and to ensure their health and fine offspring, you must share the *opłatek* with them – preferably colored. Whoever may hear them will not live until the morning. In folk tradition there are many tales about the hosts who heard the death sentence from their oxen, when overhearing their conversation.

The day after Christmas, poppy seeds, peas, wheat, and barley are fed to the poultry. This custom assures that many delicious eggs will be laid in the coming year and that the hens and their eggs will be plentiful.

Each household has a different set of traditions for Wigilia according to Poland’s regional variations, marital circumstances and family status, but each has a unique inheritance to hold on to, maintain and revere.

Today, most people in Poland are not familiar with these superstitions, especially urban dwellers. Rural residents are among the few who still keep up the old Christmas Eve customs. Traditions can still be found among some village people who tend to lead a lifestyle closely connected to nature and its cycles of death and rebirth.

It is important to maintain a good mood. It does not matter whether you have 12 dishes or 5, hay under the tablecloth, or an artificial Christmas tree – this is a time to enjoy and cherish your family.

We should be smiling, avoid disputes and quarrels, keep order at home, treat our loved ones with kindness and respect, and take care of our health so that we do not run out of it... and we should spend Christmas Eve as we imagine the whole next year will be.

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**Polish Heritage Society of  
 Rochester Plans Wigilia**

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — The annual Wigilia Diner and Program of the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester will be held Sat., Dec. 14, 2019 at St. John Fisher College's Cleary Auditorium in Kearney Hall. 5:00 p.m. social hour; 6:00 p.m. program, followed by dinner. The event is open to all.

Tickets must be purchased before the event, and can be obtained by calling or writing to: Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, P.O. Box 273, Webster, NY 14580; (585) 899-3710; info@polishheritagerochester.org

The evening's program will include: singing of carols (koledy); breaking of opłatki; music during the social hour; activities for younger children during the social hour; entertainment following dinner by Robert Johnson; and a raffle.

Traditional wigilia fare will be served, including herring, rye bread, barszcz with mushroom dumplings uszka, pierogi, fresh cod, kapusta z grochem, and desserts.



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**"Spirit of St. Nicholas" Fundraiser**

SPRINGVILLE, N.Y. — It's that time of year when all children — no matter who they are or where they live — have Christmas dreams and wishes. And so, once again The Polish Heritage Fest Charity Fund is appealing to help bring Christmas joy to the less fortunate children in Poland thru its annual fundraiser "The Spirit of St. Nicholas," which is dedicated to helping children in Poland with special needs.

"It is because of your annual donations that we can provide these children in Poland with a Christmas to remember. Some are the forgotten children, some come from families living in poverty, some have mild to severe disabilities," said Christine Jozwiak, who chairs the annual money-raising event.

Funds are donated to the Servant Sisters of Mary, who provide care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

"They are witnesses to the poverty and disabilities facing these children," said Jozwiak. "They always send cards of thanks for keeping them in our prayers and in our hearts, and offer their daily prayers, along with the children, for the needs and intentions of the people who remember them."

Additionally, this year the Fund became aware of their effort to establish a Hospice program in

Przemysł, since currently none exists in the area. Organizers are renovating a building for 60 chroni-

cally and terminally ill patients. Plans call for perinatal hospice (which provides medical and psychological care for parents following a prenatal diagnosis indicating their baby has a life-threatening condition), day care, physical therapy, doctors' offices, and a "baby hatch" (also known as a "window of life"), a place for a mother unable to cope with the strain of a sickly child to secretly abandon her baby.

To support this humanitarian effort, send a check payable to the "Polish Heritage Fest Charity Fund," and mail it to: PHF Charity Fund, PO Box 115, Springville, NY 14141-0115. On the memo line, please write "Spirit of St. Nick" or "Special Children." If you would like to donate to help establish the hospice program, please write "Hospice" on the memo line.

The PHF Charity Fun is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

**Society Honors Macielag**

BUFFALO, N.Y. — For his life-long promotion of Polish music and culture, the Chopin Singing Society honored Joseph Macielag at its 120th Anniversary Concert, Oct. 20, 2019 at St. Stanislaus Church.

"It is our privilege to recognize the many musical, cultural, and social contributions Joseph Macielag has made to Polonia and beyond," said the society.

A five-term president of the Polish American Congress, WNY Division, Macielag is a recipient of the Cavalier Order of Merit Cross from the Polish government. He was inducted into the International Polka Association Hall of Fame, and sang Polish folk songs and explained their meaning to President Ronald Reagan during a 1984 visit to Buffalo.

*We wish all our members, friends,  
 donors and sponsors a  
 Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*

The best gift one can receive is the smile on a child's face that was given a second chance to a normal and healthy life. Thank You for your support.  
 — Doreen Patras Cramer, President

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## MINNESOTA VOICE

## Christmas 1919: Reflecting on Americans' involvement in Ukraine a Century Ago

by Mark Dillon

Lvov, Lviv, and Lemberg.

One city. Three names. Multiple levels of conflict in one year – 1919.

A century ago, Minnesotans and Missourians made a positive difference in Lvov, further south and east as far in Kiev. At that time, then-Polish and western Ukrainian cities were torn by five years of violence, just as eastern Ukraine is today.

Doctors from the University of Minnesota who had served in the U.S. military in France, nurses and orderlies from across the U.S. with the American Red Cross and a small group of American Relief Administration (ARA) workers tried to save and rebuild lives in a region that at one point was the single largest source of famine relief aid to Poland.

As many as 250,000 children in and around Lvov were being fed meals in the late autumn and winter of 1919-1920, as many children as in both Warsaw and Krakow combined, according to a 1924 ARA report.

In addition to children from infants to teens, the ARA reported that in 1919 and 1920, some 650,433 free adult meals were also served at university soup kitchens in and around Lvov, more than one in four of all adult meals distributed throughout Poland at the time.

Still being called the Austrian-Hungarian name of Lemberg in ARA reports, the plight of the region's children was the long-term fallout of violence that first began with the Russians' occupation of the city on Sept. 3, 1914 at the start of World War I.

Lvov had not seen since a military conquest since the Swedes looted the city during the Great Northern War in 1704. Observed Pál Kelemen, (an Austrian-Hungarian military officer who became a famous art historian) at the time:

*"The population was pouring out of the city in long columns. On carts, on foot, horseback. Everyone*



Invading Russian troops occupying Lvov on Sept. 3, 1914.

*making shift to save himself. All of them carrying away what they can, and exhaustion, dust, sweat panic on every face, terrible dejection, pain and suffering. Their eyes are frightened, their movements craven: ghastly terror oppresses them.*

**A Cauldron of Change**

Thus began a five-year depletion of Lvov's resources. The city changed again hands in mid-1915 after German troops smashed Russian lines in the Gorlice-Tarnow offensive. The collapsing Austrian-Hungarian Empire would retain control of the city until November 1, 1918 when former Austrian-Hungarian Army soldiers seized key buildings and public utilities to proclaim the West Ukrainian People's Republic.

Rounds three, four and five of conflict came as Poles within Lvov, many of whom were teenagers, rose up to retake parts of the city. A newly formed Polish Army, following Independence on November 11, would march on the whole region and city and defeat the Ukrainians over the next six months.

The conflict became brother against brother. One notable example was Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, the Ukrainian metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church and a strong advocate of Ukrainian self-rule. His brother Stanislaw was chief of the

Polish Army's general staff.

Additionally, during that period, violent anti-semitism and looting resulted in the deaths of several hundred Jews, a community that had lived peacefully in and around Lvov since Polish King Casimir III opened the city to Jewish immigration in the 14th century.

Further east, Kiev also faced intense violence as Communist Bolshevik and White Russian forces squared off against each other in 1919 and 1920.

This was the environment that American doctors such as Major Arthur C. Plankers of St. Paul, a 1917 graduate of the University of Minnesota Medical School, found while serving in eastern Poland and Ukraine in 1919. Plankers, 14 ambulance drivers and 11 Red Cross officers managed to escape to Lvov and then Warsaw ahead of the advancing Bolshevik army the following summer, according to a June 25, 1920 *Minneapolis Star* report.

**Orphans in Mean Estate**

By Christmas 1919 regional food and living conditions were desperate. In December in Stanislawow (now called Ivano-Frantivsk) 80 miles to the south, two Polish American women from St. Louis (Felicia Krutewicz and Anna Michaelowska) planned to create an oasis for

refugees, according to Stanislaw (Stella) Mucha of Milwaukee. All three women were Gray Samaritan volunteers.

"There was no home for Polish orphans," Mucha wrote in personal papers now archived at the Immigration History Research Center in Minnesota. "The only refuge for these homeless little creatures was the Asylum of the Brothers Albert, an almshouse for cripples and beggars. As this place lacked nearly everything, wandering children had little to get the care they needed. So the little orphans took shelter wherever they could."

"Miss Michalowska knew that the American Minister in Poland had some money for charity, sent to him by people in America," Mucha wrote. However, the St. Louis women had to wait until the Bolshevik Army, then under the command of Stalin, had finally been evicted from Lvov and surrounding areas in late 1920 during the Polish-Soviet War before fully implementing an aid plan. Eventually, with help from Warsaw, donations from their Polish American friends in St. Louis, clothing and furnishing from the ARA and the American Red Cross and flour and potatoes from nearby farmers, the two women bought an eight room house and gathered enough resources to shelter 50 orphans.

Added Mucha: "This is just a simple story of what America brought to one town ... We can only recapitulate in figures, figures not cold if one adds just the slight-

est imagination to give them life of the thousands of similar communal tragedies arrested by the generosity of strangers across the sea."

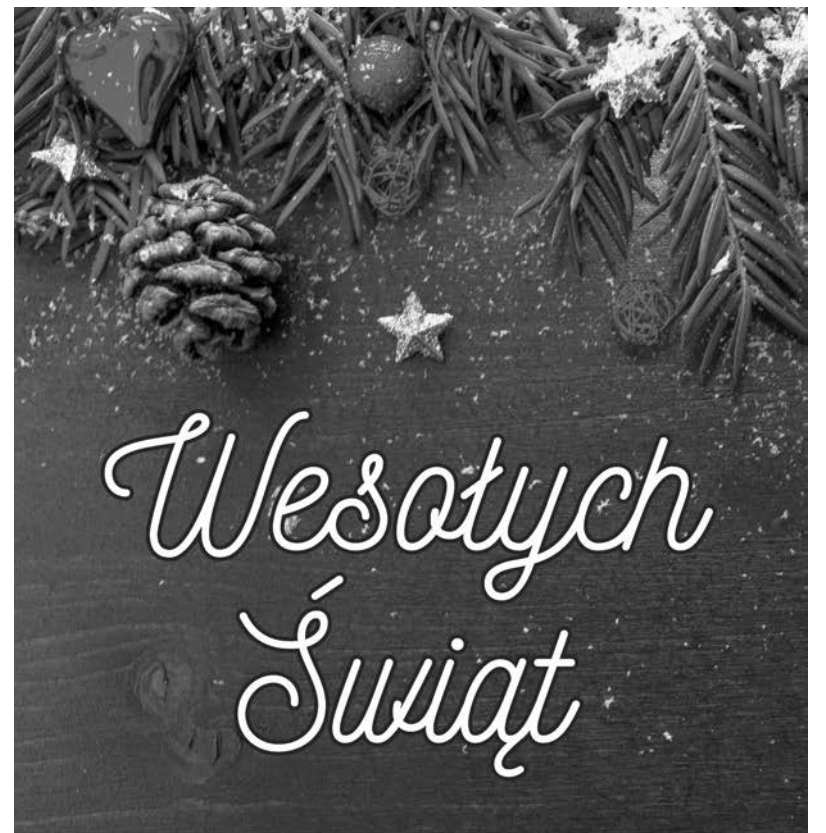
Meanwhile, that same holiday season in 1919, at the Versailles peace negotiations, humanitarian aid was not at the top of the agenda. Rather, some European leaders such as David Lloyd George were complaining that an authoritarian Poland had overstepped its authority by retaking Lvov, and expanding eastward. Some were even arguing, without Poland's input, that the area around Lvov should be awarded to another country.

That did not play well in Warsaw. Shortly before Christmas 1919, Poland's senior community and social leaders were invited to a holiday dinner-dance at the residence of then British Ambassador Sir Horace Rumbold. Most came and ate, but all sat in protest as an imperial band played on. (*Source: Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*).

**TAX CREDIT.** Please consider a year-end donation to the Polish American Journal Foundation.

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## EU's Radek Sikorski Visits Baltimore

by Richard Poremski

BALTIMORE, Md. — Radosław “Radek” Sikorski, is an elected member of the European Parliament located in Brussels, Belgium, representing Bydgoszcz and the Kujawsko-Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland. He who also serves as the Head of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the United States.

Sikorski made a special effort to Baltimore on October 31, 2019, and paid his respects at the National Katyń Memorial. He congratulated the Baltimore Polonia for its patriotism and ability in erecting the striking Memorial, and “for having the political clout in putting it up in such a prominent place in the city, and therefore it will educate the American public about our history and about the two totalitarian parties that occupied Poland during World War II.” The National Katyń Memorial Foundation was very proud to bestow its coveted Honorary Membership upon Sikorski at the conclusion of his visit.

Sikorski also later met with the Polonia and public at the local Polish National Alliance, Council 21 facility. He demystified the workings of the European Union (EU) and its Parliament to attendees, especially in the legal context of Poland's membership and obligations in the EU as one of its 28 national members. Great Britain's undergoing “Brexit” withdraw from the EU, and its many consequences, were covered in detail, as was the present Polish government's resistance to certain serious EU mandates, including threatening sanctions against Poland if it continues with its non-compliance posture.

A Q&A session followed Sikorski's remarks, which covered many related topics, and questions in regards to Poland vis-a-vis the EU. Answering an economics question, Sikorski stated that Poland had has a very favorable net-benefit ratio with the EU by having received billions of euros for major infrastructure and capital improvements since Poland joined the union on May 1, 2004.

Earlier in the day, as on the preceding days, Sikorski was in Washington, D.C. leading the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. They met with



The Honorable Radosław “Radek” Sikorski (left) presenting a floral wreath at the National Katyń Memorial, assisted by Richard P. Poremski, chairman of the National Katyń Memorial Foundation.

members of both houses of the U.S. Congress, members of the National Security Council, Department of State, and think tank administrators.

Sikorski has had the distinct honor to formerly serve the Republic of Poland in the capacities of Marshal of the Sejm, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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“Li li li laj, moje Dzieciąteczko,  
li li li laj, śliczne Paniąteczko.”

**A**s the lovely maiden cradled her dear Child,  
She rocked Him gently, crooning with voice mild.  
“Li li li, my darling, dearest Child of mine,  
li li li, my dearest, lovely, lovely Child.”



Polish Christmas postcard c. 1910. Artwork by Zofia Plewinska.

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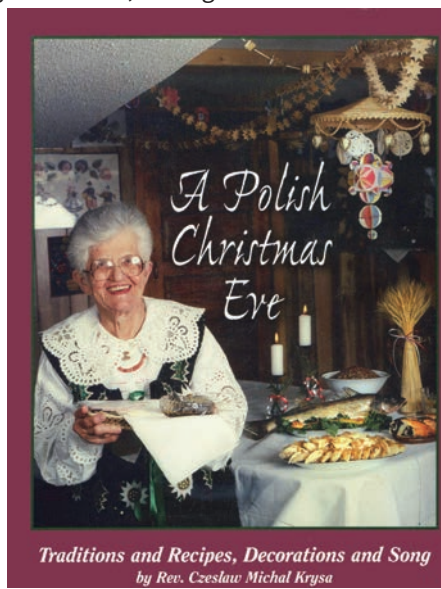


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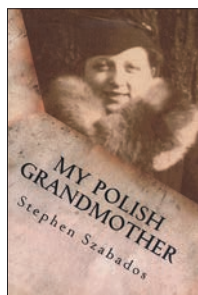


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This book asks questions about her fears when growing up, immigrating to America, and making her new life. How did she face these fears? How did she overcome them? Szabados said by

searching for answers, he found new insights about his grandmother.

As you read Anna's story, ask the same questions about your ancestors. If you do, your view of your family history will definitely change.

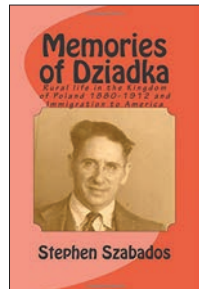


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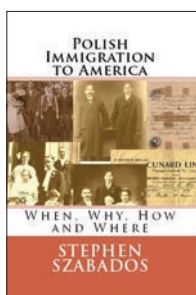
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Gail Engebretson is a native of Wisconsin and the granddaughter of Polish immigrants. She has been working in Early Childhood Development, teaching music for over 40 years.

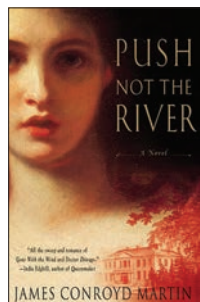


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sequel," says Suzanne Strempek Shea. The award-winning author picks up where *Push Not the River* leaves off, taking the characters 20 years into the fascinating Napoleonic era, highlighting the exploits of the glorious Polish lancers.



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*The Willow's Bend*  
*Chasing The Winter's Wind*  
*War of the Nocturne's Window*



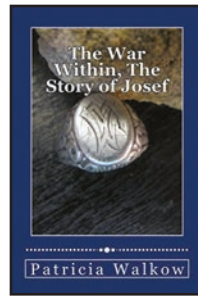
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This series of interconnected novels enticingly tells the story of retired CIA officer Stanley Wisniewski.

Called upon to solve a modern day drowning of an aerospace executive in Amsterdam, Stanley soon finds himself ensnared in a web of shadowy complicity.

Excellent storytelling and vividly descriptive writing deftly explores the Polish history of World War II, (including the Katyń massacre and 1944 Warsaw Uprising), the Cold War, the rise of Solidarity, and the resulting fall of Communism.

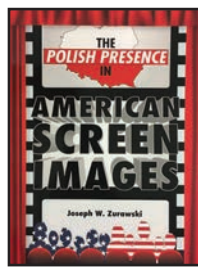


**THE WAR WITHIN, THE STORY OF JOSEF**  
by Patricia Walkow

\$19.95  
ISBN: 978-1519181015  
pb., 357 pp., 6x9

*The War Within, the Story of Josef*, follows a young man's journey through cruelty and kindness, hatred and love, despair and hope. Josef, a Catholic Pole, was forced into slave labor in Nazi Germany when he was fourteen. His life was saved by a young German man—the enemy.

**POLONIA**



**THE POLISH PRESENCE IN AMERICAN SCREEN IMAGES**  
by Joseph Zurawski

\$29.95  
Item 2-682  
Softcover, 355 pp., 6" x 9"; 2018

The most complete, objective and accurate analysis of the presentation of Polish Americans and their heritage as viewed on movie theaters and on television screens in American since 1894.

Prominent author, educator and Polish American activist Joseph W. Zurawski identifies and analyzes more than 1300 films shown in the United States that feature or identify a Polish American character or reference. Soft cover. Published by the Polish Museum of America.

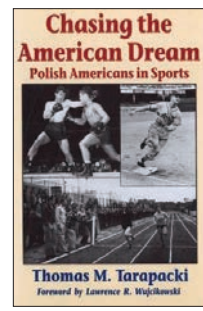


**BUSIA: SEASONS ON THE FARM WITH MY POLISH GRANDMOTHER**  
by Leonard Kniffel

\$15.00  
hc. 59 pp.; 2017, 6.25" x 9.25"  
Item 2-702

The book chronicles one year in the life of a young boy and his grandmother on a farm in Michigan in the 1950s, a time without telephones and televisions. Instead, they cook and

garden and work together to keep the stoves supplied and the cupboards filled. They prepare for holidays while Busia tells stories about life in the old country, Poland. Kniffel is the author of "A Polish Son in the Motherland: An American's Journey Home." He is currently president of the Polish American Librarians Association, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Polish Museum of America in Chicago.



**CHASING THE AMERICAN DREAM**  
by Tom Tarapacki

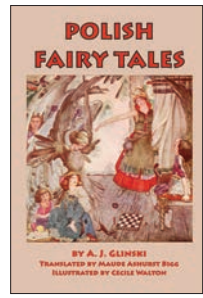
\$11.95 while supplies last  
Item 1-701. h.c.; 151 pp.; 1995; B&W ill.; 6.2 x 0.8 x 9.5 inches  
New old stock.

"Chasing the American Dream" provides an in-depth examination of the Polish American experience with sports: its impact upon their lives, the unprecedented economic and social opportunities it created, the enormous changes it brought to the Polish American community, and the athletes, coaches, and organizations involved.

350 Polish American athletes are noted from the worlds of baseball, football, hockey, basketball, track & field, boxing, wrestling, golf, swimming, bowling, auto racing, soccer and more. Included are some of the greatest figures in American sports such as Stan Ketchel; Stella Walsh; and Stan "The Man" Musial.

Tarapacki is Sports Editor of the *Polish American Journal*.

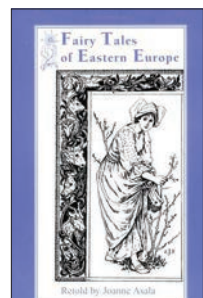
**FOLKLORE**



**POLISH FAIRY TALES**  
by A.J. Glinki  
Trans. by Maude Ashurst Biggs

\$7.95  
Item 1-161  
p.b. 80pp., 6 x 0.2 x 9 inches  
Blurb Publishing.

Translated by Maude Ashurst Biggs and illustrated by Cecile Walton. This beautifully-illustrated edition of A. J. Glinki's classic tales provides a marvelous glimpse into the world of Polish legend and folklore-and reveals its closeness and affinity to the greater European family of nations. Glinki, Poland's master folklore writer, and his nation's equivalent of the Brothers Grimm, spent many years in the mid-nineteenth century travelling all over his nation's lands, listening to and writing down the stories as told to him by the ordinary folk. In this manner, he captured Polish folklore as it truly was—the way that the peasants would tell their children as part of a wide-ranging oral tradition. Bound up in history, legend, moral virtues, and ancient European culture, these classic stories were introduced to the English-speaking world early in the twentieth century.

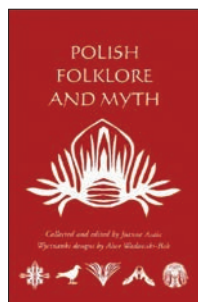


**FAIRY TALES OF EASTERN EUROPE**  
Retold by Joanne Asala

\$12.95  
Item 2-636  
6 x 9 inches  
157 pp., pb.

Many of the plots, motifs, and structural elements in these Slavic tales are found in other stories told around the world.

An apple tree in the Slavic tale, "The Fruit of Everlasting Youth," evokes the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. The ages of man described by the Fate Sisters are quite similar to the ancient "Riddle of the Sphinx." A snake impedes the function of the Tree of Everlasting Youth, again reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.



**POLISH FOLKLORE AND MYTH**  
by Joanne Asala

\$12.95  
Item 2-679 / 6x9 in / 118 pp., pb.

This book of engaging folk stories includes such tales as "The Violin," "The Headache Cure," "Midsummer's Eve," "The Flower Queen's Daughter," "The Legend of the North Wind," "The Flaming Castle," "The Village Dance," and "The Unfinished Tune." The stories were collected by Joanne Asala, with wycinanki (paper-cutting) illustrations by Polish-American artist Alice Wadowski-Bak.

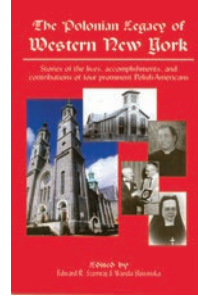
**HISTORY**



**POLAND: A HISTORY**  
by Adam Zamoyski

\$19.95  
Item 1-659  
pb. 426 pp., 5.5 in. x 8.5 in.

A substantially revised and updated edition of the author's classic 1987 book, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and their Culture*, which has been out of print since 2001. No nation's history has been so distorted as that of Poland. "...excellent and authoritative"..."fresh, different, and brilliantly readable."



**THE POLONIAN LEGACY OF WESTERN NEW YORK**  
Item 1-605

\$12.95  
156 pp., sc., ill., b&w photos.  
5.5 x 8.5

Edited by Edward Szemraj and Wanda Slawinska, the book focuses on the lives of spiritual and community leader Rev. John Pitass; architect Joseph E. Fronczak; and Mother Mary Simplicita, whose dedication to vocation and superb leadership of the area's Felician Sisters spans generations. The book also examines the lasting friendship between Buffalo's renowned Dr. Francis E. Fronczak and the composer/diplomat Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

**WORLD WAR II**



**NEW! MY SISTER'S MOTHER**  
by Donna Solecka Urbikas

sc \$19.95  
Item 2-604 sc  
hc \$26.95  
Item 2-604 hc  
312 pp., 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

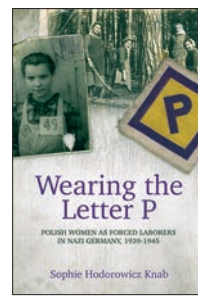
Donna Solecka Urbikas grew up in the Midwest during the golden years of the American century. But her Polish-born mother and half sister had endured dehumanizing conditions during World War II, as slave laborers in Siberia. War and exile created a profound bond between mother and older daughter, one that Donna would struggle to find with either of them. In this unforgettable memoir, she recounts her family history and her own survivor's story, finally understanding the damaged mother who had saved her sister. **Finalist, Best Traditional Non-Fiction Book, Chicago Writers Association**

**NEW! THE VOLUNTEER**  
by Jack Fairweather  
PAJ Price: \$25.95 (retails at \$28.99)  
Item 1-662  
hc.; 528 pp.; 2019; 6 x 1.6 x 9 inches  
The true story of Polish resistance



fighter Witold Pilecki's infiltration of Auschwitz to sabotage the camp from within, and his death-defying attempt to warn the Allies about the Nazis' plans for a "Final Solution" before it

was too late. Over two and half years, Pilecki forged an underground army within Auschwitz that sabotaged facilities, assassinated Nazi informants and officers, and gathered evidence of terrifying abuse and mass murder. But as he pieced together the horrifying truth that the camp was to become the epicenter of Nazi plans to exterminate Europe's Jews, Pilecki realized he would have to risk his men, his life, and his family to warn the West before all was lost.

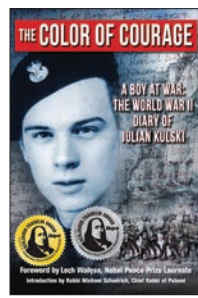


**WEARING THE LETTER "P"**  
*Polish Women as Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany, 1939-1945.*  
by Sophie Hodorowicz-Knab

\$19.95  
Item 2-642

304 pages. 6 x 9 inches

An unflinching, detailed portrait of a forgotten group of Nazi survivors. Written by the daughter of Polish forced laborers, *Wearing the Letter P* gives a voice to women who were taken from their homes as young as 12 years old and subjected to slave labor conditions, starvation, sexual exploitation, and forced abortions and child separation — all while Nazi propaganda depicted them as well-cared-for volunteers. Knab provides an important contribution to World War II history, based on archival and family records, war crime trials, and victim accounts.



**THE COLOR OF COURAGE**  
by Julian E. Kulski

\$19.95  
Item 2-674  
Aquila Polonica Publ., 2012. pb. 496 pp., 6" x 9"

"If there is going to be a war, I do not want to miss it." So wrote Julian Kulski a few days before the outbreak of World War II, in this remarkable diary of a boy at war from ages 10 to 16. Kulski wages his own private war against the Germans with small acts of sabotage. At age 12, Kulski is recruited into the clandestine Underground Army by his Scoutmaster and begins training in military tactics and weapons handling. At age 13, he meets with leaders of the Jewish Resistance. Arrested by the Gestapo at 14, he is rescued and at 15 fights in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

**SLAVONICA**

**SEASONS OF THE SLAVIC SOUL**  
*A Quest for an Authentic Polish Spirituality* by Claire M. Anderson  
Item 1-675  
\$14.95  
ACTA Publications; 2017, p.b., 106 pp., 5x7 in.

What makes Slavic, and specifically Polish, spirituality unique and compelling today? The rich and long Slavic spiritual tradition holds that everyday holiness thrives on different seasons—through Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter and from consolation to desolation and everything in between. Claire Anderson, of Polish descent and currently the Director of Siena Retreat Center in Wisconsin, explores this tradition and expands it by connecting these seasons to the rhythms and practices in her own Polish cultural tradition and the physical world around her.

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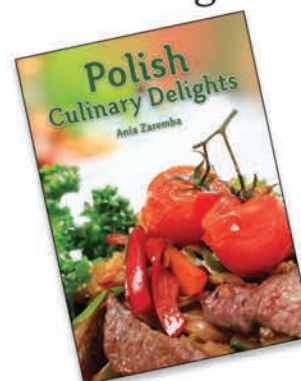
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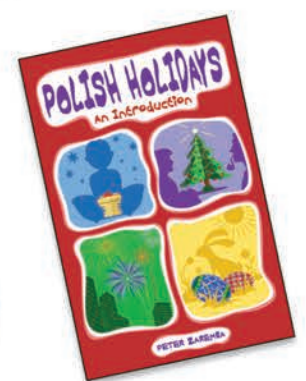
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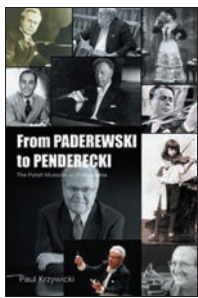
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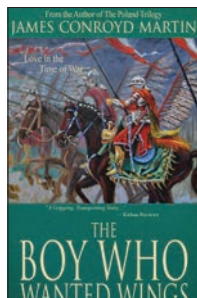


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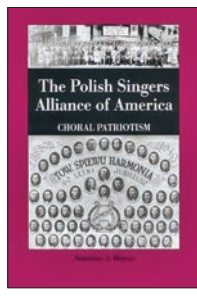
**FROM PADEREWSKI TO PENDERECKI**  
*The Polish Musician in Philadelphia*  
 by Paul Krzywicki  
 \$24.95  
 Item 2-151  
 Lulu Pub. 2016; pb. 396 pp., 6"x1"x9"

Extraordinary stories and accomplishments of 170 Polish musicians whose presence in Philadelphia influenced music in America. Paul Krzywicki, a native of Philadelphia, was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra for thirty-three years, performing in over four thousand concerts, more than 60 recordings and presenting master classes throughout the world. He is currently on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music.



**THE BOY WHO WANTED WINGS**  
 by James Conroyd Martin  
 Author of "Don't Push the River"  
 \$14.95 paperback / Item 2-612 pb  
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 398 pp.

Aleksy, a Tatar raised by a Polish peasant family, holds in his heart the wish to become a hussar so that he could battle the Turks at Vienna (the first 9/11, in 1683). As a Tatar and a peasant, this is an unlikely quest. When he meets Krystyna, the daughter of a noble, winning her love seems just as unlikely a quest. Under the most harrowing and unlikely circumstances, one day Aleksy must choose between his dreams.



**CHORAL PATRIOTISM: THE POLISH SINGERS ALLIANCE OF AMERICA, 1888-1998**  
 by S. A. Blejwas  
 Item 1-660  
 Was \$22.50. Now \$14.95  
 Boydell & Brewer, 2005. 396 pp., Ill.  
 6.20 x 9.30 x 1.20

This book examines the history of the Polish Singers Alliance of America as an ideological organization, documenting the extent to which the politics of the homeland engaged an immigrant and ethnic community over a century.

"A superb treatment of the formation and expansion of the oldest Polish-American cultural organization in North America."  
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 \$9.00, 82pp., pb., B&W photos

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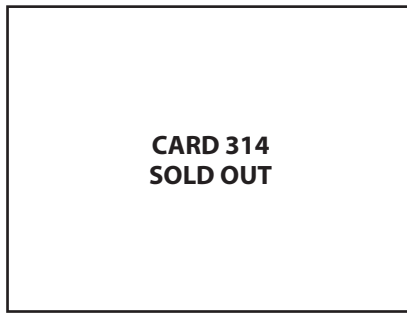
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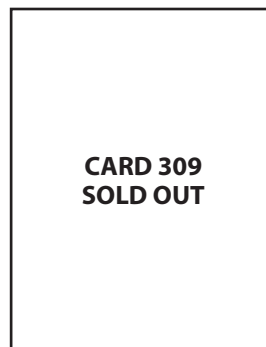
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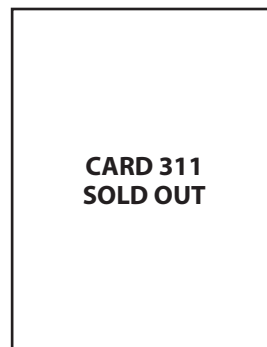
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## HAPPENINGS: CHICAGO STYLE

## Pacyga's "American Warsaw"

by Geraldine Balut Coleman

CHICAGO — On October 30, despite Chicago's first day of measurable snow, over 100 guests filled the Great Hall of The Polish Museum of America (PMA) to listen to **Dominic A. Pacyga** (inset, left) present a lecture and slide presentation on this eighth book "American Warsaw: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Polish Chicago." His book is a compilation of 30 years of research on the immigration of Poles to the United States, especially the Polish diaspora in Chicago. It covers Chicago Polonia over the last 150 years, and is a concise history of Chicago's Polish community. This latest book is the fruit of 30 years of research on the immigration of Poles to the United States, especially the changing dynamics of Chicago's Polish diaspora.

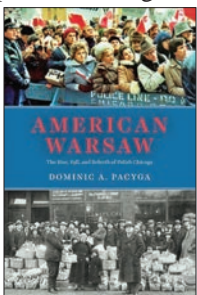
As a third-generation Polish American who was born and raised in Chicago's "Back of the Yards" neighborhood, Pacyga has devoted his research to topics related to Polish diaspora. He writes with flair and lightness but will not avoid difficult or uncomfortable topics. In his presentation, he stated the facts but added his own stories and colorful anecdotes about living on Chicago's South Side. He mentioned that "Poles love two things – to parade and to argue with each other." He spoke of the historical conflict within Polonia regarding the essence of Polishness and who is or is not a "real Pole," and he recalled the age-old Polish American conflict between the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union – a dispute concerning that essence of Polishness as it relates to membership in those organizations.

Pacyga also spoke of the changes that Chicago Polonia has undergone in the last 150 years, including the emergence of Polish ethnic enclaves, and the assimilation of Poles with subsequent immigration waves.

After his presentation, and during the question and answer portion, audience members asked about the history of Polish diaspora organizations, the difference between them and other immigrant communities, and ways to save Polish churches. He proceeded to state that, as a historian, his task is to tell truths that some do not want to hear. He was clear that there are Polish diaspora gangs, and a history of Polish juvenile delinquents, as well as racist and anti-Semitic incidents that happened once and are still common in Polonia.

An award-winning author, Pacyga received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1981. Since 1984, he had been a member of the Humanities, History and Social Sciences Department of Columbia College in Chicago, where he is now Professor Emeritus. His book, "American Warsaw: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Polish Chicago" was published by the University of Chicago Press.

PHOTO: PETER SEROCKI



Heritage honorees.

**50TH PAC-IL HERITAGE BANQUET.** Over 350 guests gathered on October 20 at the Chateau Ritz in Niles, Illinois, to celebrate the 50th Annual Polish American Heritage Awards Banquet of the Polish American Congress-Illinois Division (PAC-IL) and to honor 10 distinguished Poles and Polish Americans for their contributions to Polonia.

The evening began with **Michael Niedzinski**, president of PAC-IL, giving welcoming remarks and introducing the Honorable **Aurelia Pucinski**, Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court, as the evening's mistress of ceremonies. **Mirosława Sojka Topór** began the program by singing the Polish and American National Anthems. Prior to the presentation of awards and dinner, remarks were provided by Frank Spula, president of Polish American Congress, and Piotr Janicki, consul general of the Republic of Poland. Guests were treated to a performance by the Polonia Song and Dance Ensemble of the PRCUA. It consisted of a musical interpretation of the victorious World War II battle of Monte Cassino.

Following the musical program, the Heritage Awards were presented by Niedzinski, Pucinski, and **Bożenna Hasztrakiewicz**, chair of this year's heritage banquet. The Most Reverend **Bishop Thomas Paprocki**, Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, received the Heritage Award. **Richard Owsiany**, president of The Polish Museum of America, was honored for his exemplary public service to the Polish and Polish American community. The Community Service Award was given to **Lucie Bucki** for her outstanding volunteerism, for her work with Polish scouting, and as a medical translator for the Polish-speaking community. Popular and well-known actors within the Polish community, **Ewa Milde** and **Bogdan Łańko** were given the Artistic Award. The prestigious Historian Award was given to **Dominic A. Pacyga** for his numerous books and publications devoted to the history of Chicago's Polish community. Receiving the Media Award was **Jacek Niemczyk**, general manager of Radio 103.1FM and 1490 AM-WPNA, for supporting Polonia through journalism.

**Martin Obrecki**, Chicago police officer and president of the Polish American Police Association, was honored with the Public Service Award. **Tom Startek** was awarded the Philanthropic Award for his many years of philanthropic work within Polonia. **Maria Roszek-Kucharski** was honored with the President's

Award for her 30 years involvement with the Polish American Congress, volunteering her time wherever she was needed.

The dinner began with **Mary Sandra Anselmo**, vice president of the PAC-IL, giving a special toast and **Rev. Richard Milek**, pastor of



Standing (l. to r.): Lodyga, Podraza, Makowski, Wytrzymalski, Baran, Mossakowski. Seated (from l.): Sniezek, Evans, Kukla, and Kalinowski.

St. Constance Parish, saying the invocation.

After dinner, members of the Polonia Ensemble and guests danced the traditional *Polonez*. Violinist, **Anthony Kawalkowski**, played throughout the evening.

**LEGION BEGINS ITS 81ST YEAR.** On October 16, the **Legion of Young Polish Women (LYPW)** held its annual meeting that included the election of its 2020 officers. The LYPW was pleased to announce its new board: **Kathy Lesny Evans**, president; **Pauline Kulka**, first vice president; **Maria Belciak Sniezek**, second vice president; **Barbara Makowski**, recording secretary; **Dorothy Kalinowski**, treasurer; **Anna Wytrzymalski**, membership director; **Marta Lodyga** and **Adamina Podraza**, corresponding secretaries; **Kasia Mossakowski**, technical director; and **Małgorzata Baran**, social director.

These young women begin the Legion's 81st year of uninterrupted philanthropy as "Women with a Cause." Congratulations to all.



Kasia.

**KASIA - ARTIST AMONG MANY.** **Kasia Szczesniewski**, a member of Chicago Polonia's art community, was the only Polish artist among twenty artists to be featured at Chicago's Gallery Studio Oh!. The exhibit of distinguished artists titled "Unlikely Pairings," was on display from September 6 - 27 at the gal-

lery's North Side location. Her two paintings, "Gurgling Stream" and "Winter Orchid" were first presented at the opening *vernissage*, a private showing, to a large audience. Her acrylic paintings are made with special techniques she invented and refined herself.

Kasia studied at the Wrocław University of Technology, where she acquired a solid foundation in drawing and composition. Once in the United States, she continued art education at Harper College and participated in numerous workshops. Self-confidence and continuing education helped her develop and enhance her artistic skills. Her passion for art is evident in her paintings.

PHOTO: DARIUSZ PIŁKA

multi-cultural education and her active support of bilingual students, parents, and teachers, led to her serving two terms on the Illinois Bilingual Education Council and as a member of the Teacher Education Program Approval Section of the Illinois State Board of Education. Through her efforts, Foreman High School attained the largest Polish bilingual program in the United States. She currently teaches Polish language and traditions at North-eastern Illinois University.

Kolak immigrated to Chicago from Poland in 1973 after graduating from the Academy of Education in Krakow with a degree in Polish Philology. She received a master's degree in Slavic Languages and Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a master's degree in School Administration and Supervision from Roosevelt University.

**UJAZDOWSKI DEFEATED RUDNICKI.** On October 13, national elections took place in Poland. As was expected, Polish citizens in the Chicago area were able to vote. For Warsaw's District 44 Senate position, the majority of the voters in the Chicago area voted for well-known Chicago surgeon, **Marek Rudnicki, M.D., PiS, (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)**. However, Citizens' Committee (*Obywatelski Komitet*) candidate, **Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski**, won the election to the Senate in that district with 54.92 percent of the votes.

Ujazdowski holds a Ph.D. from the University of Łódź, is a university professor and a politician and has served as a member of the European Parliament. Coming from a family with a long tradition in politics, Ujazdowski has taken an active role in public life since the early 1980s. As a free-speech activist, he was arrested in 1982 and sentenced for distributing leaflets opposing Martial Law. During his studies at the School of Law in Łódź, Ujazdowski joined the opposition movement, Young Poland (*Ruch Młodej Polski*), and was elected a member of Sejm in the 1st and 3rd through 7th terms.

**CZESŁAWA KOLAK HONORED.** Each year the Chicago Chapter of the Kosciuszko Foundation celebrates *Tadeusz Kosciuszko's Imieniny* (Name's Day). It is on this day that the Foundation honors an individual or a group. This year, on October 28, the Chicago Chapter gave special recognition to **Czesława Kolak**. Many gathered at The Polish Museum of America to honor Czesława for her leadership and dedication to Chicago's Polish community and for promoting the Polish language and culture.

Czesława spent 27 years as a Polish bilingual coordinator at Foreman High School on Chicago's Northwest Side. Her advocacy of

## Merry Christmas!



PHOTO: ARTUR PARTYKA

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## POLONIA PLACES

## Church of St. Stanislaus in Amsterdam, New York

by Gregory L. Witul

**CHURCH OF ST. STANISLAUS  
BISHOP AND MARTYR**50 Cornell St.  
Amsterdam, New York  
Status: Open

For the last two hundred years, immigrants living in the United States have faced a hurricane of adaptation. There are new languages, new foods, new customs, and new ways of doing things. Some found haven by quickly adapting, while others returned home. But for Poles who wanted to hold onto their traditions and religion there was the port of Amsterdam, N.Y. and the Church of St. Stanislaus.

Poles started calling the city of Amsterdam home in 1880 as they arrived with the promise of work in a local brickyard. Sadly, for the immigrants, once they showed up at the factory the foreman refused to hire them. Adaptable, the Poles were able to find work in the local farms, quarries, and eventually mills. For their religious needs, the faithful attended St. Mary's and those who know German went to St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

When in the area, traveling priest Father Felix Orzechowski would celebrate Mass for the Slavs in their native language. With his encouragement, the disparate Poles in the region gathered together and on December 20, 1888 organized the St. Stanislaus Society. From this kernel, funds were raised, censuses were taken, and sites for a future church were scouted. With the help of Father Joseph Dereszewski at St. Mary's, the Society purchased two homes on Cornell Street in January 1894 and the Church of St. Stan-

islaus was born.

Father Dereszewski would perform the first marriage of the parish, baptize its first child, and in March of 1894 celebrate the first Mass in one of the converted homes. With this groundwork laid, the parishioners petitioned Bishop Burke the next year for a resident pastor, and were answered with the appointment of newly ordained Rev. Antoni Gorski.

Guiding the parish through uncertain economic times, Father Gorski was able to secure funding to repair the converted rectory, purchase the 14-acre farm that would become the parish cemetery, and gather some money to construct a new church. As more Poles moved into Amsterdam, both the attendance and the coffers swelled. By the spring of 1896, plans for an impressive parish home were under way. Architect Edward W. Loth of Troy was hired to design the church while Arthur McNeil of Amsterdam was given the contract to build the edifice.

After much heartache, which included Father Gorski not drawing a salary and parishioners mortgaging their homes to fund the project, Bishop Burke dedicated the finished church on June 27, 1897. In time, the space would be filled with some of the finest murals, stained



glass, and statuary found in New York State's Capitol District. Over the next century, a new school would be built, the church enlarged, the cemetery expanded, and stained glass by Guido Nincheri added to the collection. In recognition of the hard work of its parishioners, its artistic beauty, and historical importance, the Church of St. Stanislaus was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Today the Church of St. Stanislaus is a lively parish with a number of societies, outreach efforts, and ministries. If you find yourself in the eastern half of New York State this Christmas in need of harbor from the harsh winter stop into the Church of St. Stanislaus and enjoy of the parish's enduring Polish traditions.

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i Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku*

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*The Polish Singers Alliance of America was founded in 1889 and is the oldest Polish American Cultural Organization in America*



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and a Happy New Year*

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**More Favorites for Your Wigilia Menu**

by Robert Strybel

*continued from last month*

**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 canned poppyseed pastry filling. Add ½ c plumped raisins and a T honey and toss gently to evenly distribute. May be served warm, room temp or chilled.

**TEA-FLAVORED FRUITCAKE** (*keks herbaciany*). In bowl combine 1-¼ c mixed dried fruit (chopped figs, candied orange rind, pitted prunes and dates – all coarsely chopped) and whole raisins. Add 1/4 c chopped walnuts, 1 c sugar and drench with 1 c cold strong black tea, cover and let stand overnight. Next day, sprinkle slightly heaped 1-1/2 c flour with 2 t baking



**HOLIDAY HONEY-SPICE 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

**MUSHROOM GOŁĄBKI** (*gotąbki z grzybami*). In 3 T butter, margarine or oil sauté 12 oz fresh Portobello mushrooms, (washed and chopped) with 2 medium 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 (shown above), drench with 3 c vegetable stock (in which 1 mushroom cube has been dissolved) and bake in preheated 350° oven at least 2 hours

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.

powder. To tea & fruit mixture stir in the flour and 2 beaten eggs and beat to blend ingredients. Transfer batter to buttered narrow loaf pans, dot top with butter and bake about 50 min in preheated, slow (about 330°) oven.

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Item BK2364  
hc 5.5" x 8.7" x 0.50"; 172 pp.; English language version with U.S. measurements  
475 Recipes

Edited by Marie Sokolowski and Irene Jasinski; Illustrated by Stanley Legun

First published in United States in 1948, this book was the first complete book of Polish cookery in the English language. Chapters on Appetizers, Soups, Meats, Poultry and Game, Fish, Vegetables, Mushrooms, Dairy Dishes, Pastries and Desserts. Recipes are included for famous Polish barszcz, for bigos, czarna, pierogi, naleśniki, paszteciki... and hundreds of other interesting Polish foods.

It contains brief stories of Polish festivities and customs such as Christmas Eve (Wigilia), Harvest Festival (Dożynki) and others.

**PLEASEING POLISH RECIPES**



by Jacek and Malgorzata Nowakowski  
\$8.95  
Item 2-678

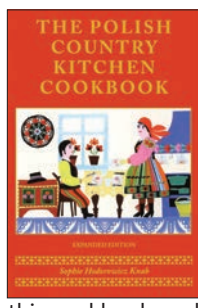
5.5 x 3.5 inches / 160 pp., spiral bound

This little cookbook features a great variety of regional foods, such as hot beer, vegetable soup, leek salad, graham bread, bigos, potato pancakes, dill pickles, nut roll, gingerbread, and royal mazurkas. Readers also will find a table grace and information on dyeing traditional brown Easter eggs.

**POLISH COUNTRY KITCHEN COOKBOOK**

by Sophie Knab  
\$19.95  
Item 2-632. 337 pp., sc;

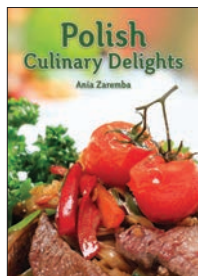
From top-selling author Sophie Hodorowicz Knab comes an expanded



edition to a best-selling book that combines recipes for favorite Polish foods with the history and cultural traditions that created them. Arranged according to the cycle of seasons, this cookbook explores life in the Polish countryside through the year. The *Polish Country Kitchen Cookbook* gives its readers priceless historical information such as the type of utensils used in Poland at the turn of the century, the meaning behind the Pascal butter lamb, and many other insightful answers to common questions asked by descendants of Polish immigrants.

The over 100 easy-to-follow recipes are all adapted for the modern North American kitchen. Illustrations and pearls of practical wisdom ("Household Hints") complement this book.

**POLISH CULINARY DELIGHTS**



\$24.95  
Item BK 2572  
by Ania Zaremba  
sc., 6.5" x 9.25" x 0.5"; 224 pp., color photographs, index; English language version with U.S. measurements.

Polish Culinary Delights was written to bring authentic Polish recipes of the past few generations to the North American kitchen. Besides finding the usual "traditional Polish" fare, this book includes unique recipes created by Ania and others in her family (grandma, grandpa, uncle, etc.).

More than 175 recipes, from soups, appetizers, entrees and side dishes to desserts. Easy-to-follow instructions with helpful tips make it simple to prepare such traditional Polish favorites as pierogi, blintzes, sauerkraut, cab-

bage rolls, bigos, horseradish sauce, paczki, angel wings, mazurka cakes and many more.



**POLISH PIEROGI**  
\$10.00  
Item 2-303  
by Eva Gerweck,  
48 pp., sc.

A collection of "secret" recipes, tips, and more by Eva Gerweck. Fillings, toppings, and a variety of dough recipes as well. Over 150 recipes with regional variations, from New York to California!

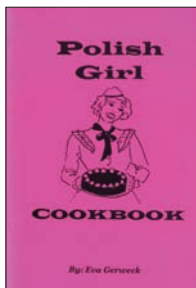
**POLISH RESTAURANT COOKBOOK**



\$10.00  
Item 2-302  
by Jonathan Becklar, 44 pp., sc.

This unique cookbook actually replicates recipes taken from menus of Motor City and surrounding area restaurants. It shows you how to make an entire menu right that tastes and smells just like the restaurant. Soups, salads, dressings, sandwiches, stuffed cabbage, and more.

**POLISH GIRL COOKBOOK**



\$10.00  
Item 2-301  
by Eva Gerweck,  
44 pp., sc.

Another cookbook full of recipes from Detroit's Old Polish neighborhoods. Appetizers, entrees, breads, desserts, and more! Upper Peninsula style pastries, potato salad, pastries, babka, breads, and more.

**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; preserves, jam, plum butter, fruit syrup or apple or cherry pie filling.

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**POLISH CHILDREN'S HEARTLINE** (a non-profit corporation, State of New Jersey) begins its 34th year of helping children. An all volunteer non-profit organization receiving generous donations from Polonia and American supporters makes it possible for over 2000 Polish children to be treated annually by cardiac surgeons and physicians in hospitals in Poland. As requested, equipment critical to pediatric care is provided to seven hospitals in Zabrze, Katowice, Lodz, Suwalki, Bialystok, Grajewo, and Ostroleka. Contributions may be made in memory of and/or honor of family and friends. Each donation is tax exempt and acknowledged. We thank you for your support and ask for your continued support for much help is still needed. "If we don't help our Polish children, who will?" —Doreen Patras Cramer, President

For information call (732) 680-0680 or write POLISH CHILDREN'S HEARTLINE, INC., 177 BROADWAY, CLARK, NJ 07066. e-mail: [childshart@aol.com](mailto:childshart@aol.com) website: [PolishChildrensHeartline.org](http://PolishChildrensHeartline.org)

## SPORTS

## A 1929 King Features Syndicate Cartoon

by Tom Tarapacki

When Polish American athletes rose to prominence in the early part of the 20th century, they encountered many impediments. One of them was their "unpronounceable" names.

Polish Americans were long encouraged to shorten or Americanize their names in order to "fit in." Baseball Hall of Famer **Al Simmons** was originally named **Szymanski**, convinced to change his name so that it would fit in a baseball box score in the newspaper. Other early 20th century major leaguers who changed their names were **Bunny Brief (Bordetzki)**, **Peter Appleton (Jablonowski)**, and **Whitey Witt (Wittkowski)**.

With the influx of Polish Americans into sports, especially football, those long Polish names eventually became commonplace by the 1920s. Polish Americans excelled with many college football teams, particularly the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. The story goes that legendary Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne was once asked how he selected his players, and his answer reflected the large number of Polish and Eastern European players on his roster. "When I can't pronounce them," he said, "They must be good."



However, long Polish names with lots of consonants were difficult for many Americans to pronounce — and many didn't even try. In addition, Polish Americans were often pressured to anglicize their names to become "more American."

The "Gridiron Jawbreakers" King Features cartoon from 1929 was a typical example of the mainstream American press' amusement with the names, which angered many in the Polish American community. It featured **Charlie Piculewicz**, an outstanding fullback for Fordham when the Rams were a college football powerhouse. **Joseph Truskowski** played end for Michigan and captained the 1929 Wolverines. (Also featured was **Octavius "Toby" Uansa**, a star halfback for Pitt who was of Romanian

heritage).

Interestingly, Piculewicz later used the name, "Peck," and Truskowski went by "Truske."

**BASEBALL ROLLERCOASTER.** He has one of those names that people had a hard time pronouncing, especially since he gave it the Polish pronunciation: Fol-tin-EH-vich.

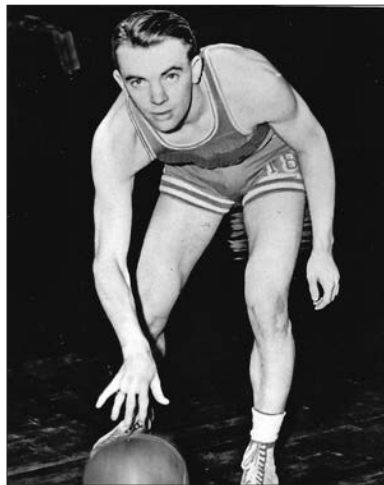
It certainly has been an up-and-down season for Atlanta's **Mike Foltyniewicz**. After having an All Star season in 2018, the 28-year-old right-handed power pitcher struggled this season and was sent down to the minors in June. He regained his form returned to the majors in August. Folt started Game 2 of the NLDS and dominated St. Louis, allowing the Cardinals just three hits and striking out seven over seven scoreless innings in a 3-0 victory. He became just the third Atlanta Braves pitcher to throw seven scoreless innings without a walk in a postseason start, joining Hall of Famers Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux.

The Illinois native then started the deciding Game 5, and it was an entirely different story. He retired just one batter while giving up seven runs — six earned — on three hits and three walks in just the first inning. That's more runs than were scored against him in the whole month of September, when he allowed only five in 30 innings across five starts. Folt had a chance to get out of the frame trailing just 1-0, but Gold Glove first baseman Freddie Freeman mishandled a potential inning-ending double play grounder. The Braves went on to lose, 13-1, and Folt made no excuses. "I just didn't get the job done ... period," he said.

"It gets mispronounced all the time. ... Growing up, my mom would tell me, 'You're just going to have to get used to it,'" he told an interviewer after he got drafted. lot of people just shorten it, though, and call me "Folty."

**MODZELEWSKI TO STUTZ.** Two of the great names in basketball in the pre-1950 era were **Stan Modzelewski** and **Stan Stutz**. Modzelewski set collegiate scoring records, and Stutz starred in pro basketball before becoming a long-time referee. The thing is, they were both the same people.

Stanley Modzelewski was born in the Green Island section of Worcester, and became a three-sport star in western Massachusetts as a schoolboy. He decided to play basketball at the University of Rhode Island, where his high school coach **Chet Jaworski** had twice led



STAN MODZELEWSKI

the nation in scoring and was a two-time All-American.

With the Rams, Stan was mainly responsible for Coach Frank Keane's "firehorse" brand of basketball, which originated the game's fastbreak style of play. Modzelewski perfected the running one-hand shot, and led the nation in scoring three straight seasons (1940 - 42). The 5'11" All-American guard set the national career scoring record with 1,714 points.

So how did he become Stan Stutz? After his college career Stan, like many Polish American athletes, decided to shorten his name. Stan loved the popular sports car of the era, the Stutz Bearcat, so much that he had gotten the nickname "Stutz" Modzelewski. When he opted to change his name, he took Stutz as his new surname.

Stutz then played some independent pro basketball before joining Baltimore of the ABL, and led that team to the 1946 championship. He then went to the BAA and the Knicks and continued his scoring prowess. In 1947 he set a Knicks playoff scoring record (30 points) that stood for over 20 years. Stan returned to the Bullets for one last season in 1948-49.

He then joined the NBA as a referee through 1959, and then became a successful executive with several New York City corporations. Stan was married and had three children. In 1975 Stutz suffered a heart attack while golfing and died at the age of 55.

**SHE'S BACK!** One of the UFC's best female champions could be fighting for another title, as Poland's **Joanna Jedrzejczyk** defeated Michelle Waterson by unanimous de-

cision in a UFC bout promoted as a possible title eliminator for the UFC women's strawweight title held by Zhang Weili.

Joanna, 32, advanced the idea of having the title match at National Stadium in Warsaw, Poland. In 2017, the Poland-based KSW promotion drew a sellout of 57,776 fans to that stadium, which is still the second largest real number for an MMA event on record.

**THE DOCTOR IS IN.** **Dr. Andrew P. Ordon** has been one of the most influential advocates for health and fitness as one of the hosts of the syndicated TV show *The Doctors*. On the air since 2006, the award-winning program is seen in over 140 countries and reaches an average 1.15 million daily viewers in the United States.

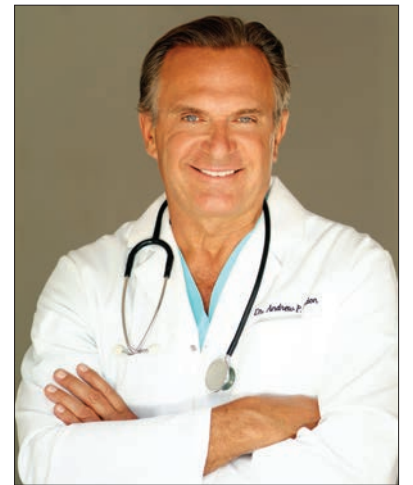
Ordon was born to Polish American parents in Chicago, but he was raised in Long Beach, Calif. Educated at UC Irvine and USC, he became a surgeon in the area of aesthetic plastic and reconstructive surgery. He has a private practice in Beverly Hills and Rancho Mirage, and is also the Medical Director at Beverly Hills Sunset Surgery Center in Dubai.

He was one of the founding members of the Surgical Friends Foundation, an organization of doctors who provide complimentary reconstructive surgery to people who cannot afford medical treatment.

Ordon started making TV appearances as a medical expert back in the 1980s, and in 2007 became a regular guest of Dr. Phil McGraw on the *Dr. Phil* talk show. The following year, McGraw created *The Doctors*, and asked Ordon to be a host.

On *The Doctors*, Ordon displays his expertise on plastic surgery, as well as skin care and anti-aging techniques, but he also delves into other wellness topics. When asked for one way people could improve their health, he responded: "Add activity! It improves not just your weight but your heart, lungs, skin and sleep quality. It doesn't have to be the gym — walk 30 minutes a day."

The 68-year-old married father of two practices what he preaches, spending much of his free time surfing, skiing, and playing golf and tennis.



DR. ANDREW ORDON

**POLISH HERITAGE NIGHT RETURNS.** He's not playing in the NBA right now, but **Marcin Gorat** is planning his 9th annual Polish Heritage Night on February 15th at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Whatever NBA City Marcin played in, he would sponsor a Polish Heritage Night at one of his team's games. They were impressive events that paid tribute to Polish culture, and he was intimately involved in the planning. However, he was waived by the Los Angeles Clippers near the end of last season, and is not currently with an NBA team.

The gala will include a performance by **Edyta Gorniak**, a popular Polish singer known for her wide vocal range. More info: [polishhn@mg13.com.pl](mailto:polishhn@mg13.com.pl).

**GOING TO EURO 2020.** The Polish national football squad has earned a spot in next year's European championships after defeating North Macedonia 2-0 in Warsaw. After eight rounds of fixtures, Poland topped qualifying group G, with 19 points, three more than Austria.

**Przemyslaw Frankowski**, who plays for the Chicago Fire, came in as a second-half substitute and got a goal from close range with an assist from captain Robert Lewandowski. Substitute striker **Arkadiusz Milik** later made the score 2-0 with a left-footed blast from outside the box after another assist by Lewandowski.

In its previous game Poland beat Latvia 3-0 with Lewandowski scoring a hat trick in an away game in Riga.

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Life Lessons from Roots in the Past

reviewed by by Mary E. Lanham

**TIED WITH TWINE: A NOVEL**  
by Pam Records  
Indigo River Publishing, 2019,  
413 pgs.



During Prohibition, Halina, a young Polish American woman, wants to leave her small immigrant community outside of Chicago and go anywhere else. Armed with her hard-won earnings, she plans to buy a one-way train ticket out of poverty. When bootleggers decide to wage war in her town, Halina is caught in the middle and discovers that she has more pressing priorities.

Throughout the novel, author Pam Records portrays how the past intertwines and can even intrude into the present. Halina's parents struggle to recover from the traumas of their past, when German soldiers took over their town in Poland. Halina and her sister Patcja fly ever towards the future, trying to throw off the heavy mantle of an alcoholic father and a stern mother. Even an old friend of Halina's, who is horribly scarred by the scourge of mustard gas, is nearly catatonic, almost frozen in time, held back by the abject

cruelty of war. Other characters such as the mysterious Baba — the healer of the community of Hegešwisch — who doles out folk remedies, represents the old ways. Halina is skeptical as to whether Baba's salves and potions can possibly heal bullet and war wounds of the modern age. When a position opens in the local hospital, and Halina is forced to treat an unexpected patient she must try to reconcile the old traditions and modern medicine.

The excerpt below, where Halina thinks about working at the hospital, exemplifies the contrast of the old and the new:

*It was a chance to be someone else, someone who wasn't all tied down with crazy Old Country ways. She was so ready to be done with the folk stories, babushkas, and polkas—and the guilt over wanting to be more than an ignorant, displaced immigrant.*

*Halina let herself fall into a daydream, thinking about the first few days of her job. She had watched young women on the sidewalks in Hammond, near the hospital. They had looked so pretty and perfect in every way, from their snappy T-strap heels and bobbed hair to long beads and smart little cloche hats with feathers and sparkly baubles.*

*Tied with Twine* by Pam Records is a story about one strong-willed daughter of immigrants who, through her journey to be a healer, realizes there can be no future without a firm rooting in the past.



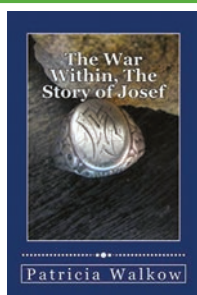
Wishing all  
Christmas Blessings  
with Health and Happiness  
in the New Year 2020

**CYNTHIA ZAVATSKA**  
Ashland, Oregon



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Bożego Narodzenia i  
Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!  
Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year!

**DAVID FRANCYK**  
Fillmore District Council Member  
Buffalo, New York



**The War Within,  
The Story of  
Josef**  
by Patricia  
Walkow

This is the story of a young man's journey through cruelty and kindness, hatred and love, despair and hope. Josef, a Catholic Pole, was thirteen when Hitler invaded Poland. Forced into slave labor in Germany during WWII, he almost died. His life was saved by a young German man—the enemy. Josef's handling of his interrupted youth was anything but ordinary, and he learned enemies are defined by the state...not the heart. A true story. This book has won multiple first-place awards. *Kirkus Reviews* states: "...this is an often satisfying and illuminating story that resonates in today's climate of rising nationalism and debates over ethnic migration and refugee resettlement. A poignant tale with timeless and timely lessons."

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ISBN: 978-1519181015  
357 pp., 6x9

NEW BOOKS

Author of Poland Trilogy Explores Sixth Century Constantinople

With the publication of *Fortune's Child: A Novel of Empress Theodora*, James Conroyd Martin, author of *Push Not the River* and three other novels set in historical Poland, ventures to the reign of Empress Theodora and Emperor Justinian.



**JAMES CONROYD MARTIN** is a retired teacher who has garnered numerous awards for his books, including IPPI Gold Medals for *The Boy Who Wanted Wings* and *The Poland Trilogy*, as well as a Gold Medal from The American Institute of Polish Culture.

**THE STORY.** From a very young age, Theodora, daughter of a circus bear keeper, sets her sights well above her station. Her exquisite beauty sets her apart on stages and in the eyes of men. Stephen, a Syrian lad of striking good looks, is sold by his parents to a Persian wizard, who teaches him a skill in languages that will serve him well. By the time Destiny brings them together, Theodora has been cast off by a governor of a Byzantine province in Africa, while Stephen has been sold again ... and castrated. *Fortune's Child* reveals the enduring bond that, however imperfect, prompts Theodora — as Empress — to request palace eunuch Stephen to write her biography.

**THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY.** Martin started *Fortune's Child* some years ago. An agent, who was trying to sell an incomplete *Push Not the River*, told him to start working on something else while waiting. As it happened, he was taking an Art Appreciation course at a community college. One day they were studying the exquisite mosaics of Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora from the Basilica di San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, and the professor pointed to Theodora and said, "I'm not a writer, but if I were, that is the woman I would write about."

That side comment caused Martin to go down to the Hollywood Public Library and take out a dozen

books on the period and the reign of Justinian and Theodora. "The woman was amazing," Martin said. "She could have been a sixth century prototype for Eva Peron!" He started his novel, but life threw some curves. He went back to finishing *Push Not the River*, as well as resuming a teaching career in Chicago. At last, when St. Martin's Press picked up *Push Not the River* in 2003, he figured his Theodora novel would follow. However, St. Martin's had different ideas; they wanted a sequel. Martin obliged with *Against a Crimson Sky*, and then *The Warsaw Conspiracy*, and *The Boy Who Wanted Wings*, all set in Polish history.

*Fortune's Child*, published by Hussar Quill Press, is available in both soft and hardcover, and from Amazon as an eBook. For details, visit JamesCMartin.com.

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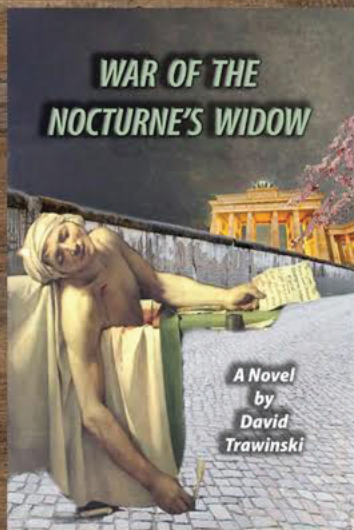
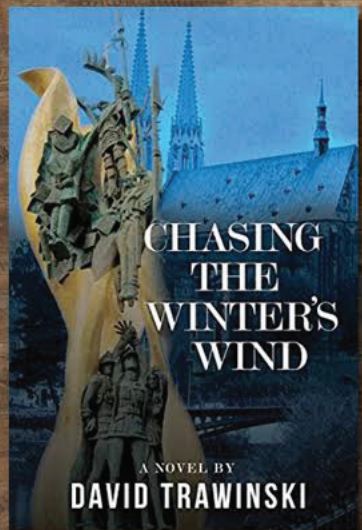
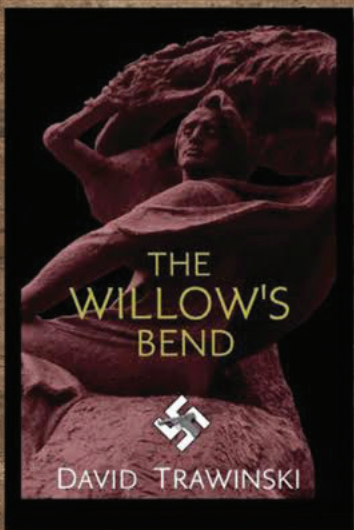
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## GENEALOGY

## Save your Polish Christmas Traditions

by Stephen M. Szabados

*Wesołych Świąt!*

We all love Christmas because it is a magical season, and it is a special time as most families come together. The season helps people forget the cold dark realities of winter and be in a better mind by enjoying the festive celebrations surrounding Christmas. The atmosphere seems to transform many family members, friends, neighbors, and fellow workers into people who are more kind, friendly and generous.

*Christmas is also a great time to capture memories for your Family History. How are you saving these memories?*

My memories start with Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and checking the tree when we got home. I was then shuttled off to bed with a promise that Santa was on his way but would only come after I was asleep. The morning brought excitement and rushing downstairs to what presents were under the Christmas tree. There was nervous anticipation waiting for everyone to gather for the opening of the gifts. When all the presents were opened, and the wrapping paper was collected for the trash, grandma began serving a large breakfast of bacon, eggs, and pancakes.

In the afternoon, relatives began to arrive for Grandma's feast. She tried to follow the traditions her family followed in Poland. Although we had the big celebration on Christmas Day, her parents began their celebration on Christmas Eve with a huge feast. Grandma's

dinner started with the breaking of the Christmas wafer (*oplatek*) which we passed to each person at the table. After we ate a piece of the wafer, the traditional dishes were served, which included cheese, sauerkraut *pierogi*, cucumber salad (*Mizeria*), fish, ham (or Polish sausage), mushroom soup with noodles, herring, boiled potatoes, dumplings with plums and poppy seeds, stewed prunes with lemon peel and a fruit and poppy seed cake.

Grandma told us that after supper, her family gathered to sing carols and tell Christmas stories. The evening's festivities ended with the family traveling to their nearby church to attend midnight mass. We also went to midnight mass on Christmas Eve, but we enjoyed the feast on Christmas Day. Are my grandmother's memories similar to your experience with your grandparents?

Celebrating the Holidays is an essential part of our family history. Write down your memories of Christmas. As a start, ask yourself these questions: Did your family gather on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? Did your grandparents describe their Polish Christmas celebrations? What dishes did they serve? What was the filling in your pierogi? Did you have a cucumber salad? What was the soup — mushroom or chicken? Were the potatoes mashed or boiled? Was ham on your grandmother's table, or did she serve a more traditional fish recipe? My family sometimes had ham or Polish sausage as the main dish. What were the desserts?

What were your favorite dishes? Did someone save the recipes? Are you using some of the recipes today for your Christmas celebrations? I loved all the dishes that my grandma served, but the sauerkraut pierogi and poppy seed cake were my favorites. Grandma's pierogis were perfect. They were still hot when we got to the table, and I always started eating them first after daubing them with sour cream. All of the other food was delicious, but I was still careful to leave room for the poppy seed cake. Grandma's cake was moist, sweet, and the perfect end to the feast.

Have you captured your stories? We need to write them down while they are fresh in our minds. Show your brothers, sisters, and cousins your photos from past Christmas days, and someone will start the story-telling. Write down what is said. Those words will be an extraordinary gift to your grandchildren and great-grandchildren when they read your family history after they are adults.

Honor your Polish grandparents and capture their memories. Their lives are essential building blocks for our roots in America. Celebrate with their Christmas traditions and remember to enjoy the spirit of Christmas every day. These are the memories that will make your family history come alive. Capture them now while your memories are still sharp. Add the memories of your brothers, sisters, and cousins to capture as many details as possible. Also, remember to enjoy the spirit of Christmas today.

*Wesołych Świąt!*

## IN MEMORIAM

## Frances X. Gates, Dedicated to Polish Community

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Frances X. Gates (Dec. 3, 1929 – Oct. 23, 2019), a graduate of Brooklyn College, CUNY, dedicated her life to representing the Polish American community through a variety of organizations, including the Kościuszko Foundation, the Polish Singers Alliance of America, the Jutrzenka Singing Society, the General Pulaski Parade Committee, the American Association of the Friends of Kosciuszko at West Point, the Association of the Sons of Poland, and the Polish American Congress, among countless others over the years. She is the recipient of fifteen national and international awards, among them the Order of Comradeship presented by Poland's late President Kaczyński.



In her early years, moved by the needs of immigrants and the vision-impaired, she tutored such individuals to assist their education and assimilation into the community. Her considerable contributions to the management and direction of Polonia's organizations formed her own life mission: to promote Polish American history and culture to all Americans and to encourage those among our heritage to learn more and share in our pride. She was instrumental in the completion of the Polish Singers Alliance of America *Choral Patriotism* book by Dr. Stanley Blewas, and served as an officer of the District and Central Administrations. She also served as the Singers Alliance's representative delegate to the Polish American Congress for many years.

The Mass of Christian Burial was held on October 29, 2019 at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Brooklyn, where she was a dedicated and active member.

**Eve Przemyski, Home Army Veteran, Slave Laborer**

Eve Przemyski (nee Lada), 96, of West Chester, Pa., was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1923. She was 16 years old when her father was executed by the Germans after being arrested for listening to a BBC broadcast on the radio. In August 1944, she joined the Armia Kra-

jowa (Home Army.) Avoiding German fire, she was a stretcher bearer, running the wounded to makeshift hospitals during the 63 days the Poles fought against a punishing German attack. Later, she was sent to the German prisoner of war camp Sandbostel Uber Bremervörde, then Oberlangen for a year where she was a forced laborer.

Przemyski kept a secret diary, which was published in 1995. The original is now in the permanent collection of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. After her liberation, she worked as a Morse code telegraph operator for the British Army. She met her future husband, Richard, in Rome. They moved to England where they married, and had two children, then immigrated to the United States.

**Karol Tendera, 98  
Auschwitz Survivor 100430**

Karol Tendera, a Polish survivor of Auschwitz who sought to set the record straight over World War II death camps, was sent to Auschwitz after being arrested by the German secret police, the Gestapo. While in the camp, he was subjected to pseudo-medical experiments conducted by German doctors.

After the war, Tendera worked with the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer at the site of former Auschwitz death camp in Oświęcim, southern Poland, and he also worked with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation. Tendera was known for his efforts to counter historically inaccurate references to Nazi German death camps in occupied Poland.

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## DANCE TIME

# Non-Stop Music at Rock 'n Polka Night

by Jennifer Pijanowski

**BUFFALO, N.Y.** — Hundreds of music lovers packed Potts Banquet Hall for the Fifth Annual Rock 'n Polka Night featuring **Crash Cadillac** and the **New Direction Band**. The crowd was treated to four hours of nonstop music by these talented musicians. New Direction charmed fans with polkas,



Krissy Smith and Linda Pietraszewski at the Tailgate Party.

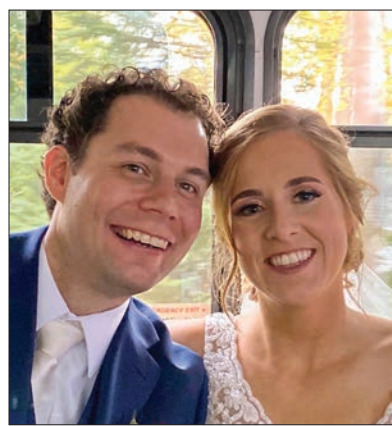
obereks, and waltzes throughout the evening. Many of the local polka lovers turned out and took no time teaching many of Crash Cadillac's dancing fans how to polka. Crash Cadillac brought their own fans and the entire crowd enjoyed their performance showcasing classic songs spanning 1960s-1990s. The greatest part of this event is watching each genre's fans enjoy the "other" music. The dance floor was action packed all night with the crowd staying strong until the very last song of the evening.

Band leader Ron Urbanczyk has recruited a veteran polka musician **Ed Szramka**, who has returned after retiring from polka music for several decades. Ed and accordion talent **Art Gaylor** have been a noticeably positive addition to the styling of the band.

**TAIL-GATERS.** Polish Villa was filled with Buffalo Bills gear for the annual **Knewz's Tailgate party**. Whether you were a Bills' fan or not, the evening granted an enjoyable night. You got high energy polka music and a Polish platter with your \$12.00 admission. The yearly tailgate beckoned local Knewz fans as well as others who traveled from Pennsylvania, Central N.Y. and be-

yond to attend the polka party and the Bills game the next day. The talent of the Knewz never disappoints with their high energy, smiling faces, and quick wit on and off the stage. This performance allowed the talents of **Richie Kois** and **Gary Krupski** to join in the absence of **Brian Urbanczyk** and **Jimmy Weber**. It is always a treat to hear the Knewz and watch the young polka fans dance to their favorite songs.

Brian's absence came for a very good reason as he was enjoying time away with his new bride **Kayla**. Brian and Kayla were basking in the sunshine on their honeymoon in Hawaii. The couple were married in Kayla's hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich., Oct.



Brian and Kayla Urbanczyk.

19. Congratulations to this power polka couple as they begin their life together. Your polka family, especially those of us in your new home of Buffalo, wishes you a lifetime of love, joy, and happiness. Congratulations to this wonderful couple.

**TOP SHELF.** Thanks to Jimmy Weber, there is exciting news on the polka horizon with the announcement of the formation of a new honky-style group, **Top Shelf**. The band, which will play gigs while the members perform with their regular groups, is comprised of Lenny Gomalka, Jackie Libera, Frank Liszka, Al Piatkowski, Larry Trojak and Jimmy Weber.

Weber says that one of the goals expressed in forming the group was to share vocal duties fairly equally given the array of vocal talent. "Another was to offer a repertoire which, while featuring its share of standards, will stray a bit off the beaten path," he said. "The bottom line, however, was to bring all of our appreciation for the honky sound to what we hope will be a welcoming audience. And, of course, have fun doing it."

The best news is that this new band, has been booked at Potts in Buffalo on Feb. 8 and at Polka Fireworks 2020 — I look forward to being right up front for that performance.

**YULETIDE DOINGS.** Both of the local polka clubs of Western New York will be kicking off the magical Christmas season with joyful polka music, holiday cheers, great friends, and delicious food.

**Polka Variety** Christmas party with music by Buffalo Touch will take place Sat., Dec. 7. The event will be held at Leonard 2450 Walden Ave., Cheektowaga, and will include music, dancing and a holiday meal. You can contact club president Bob Wojciechowski at (716) 681 2797 for additional information about this and other Polka Variety events.

As it concludes its 49th year promoting polka music, **Buffalo Polka Boosters** Christmas party with Special Delivery will be celebrated, Dec. 14. Polish Falcons, located at 445 Columbia Ave., Depew, will be the venue for an evening of polkas, obereks, Christmas music, a sit-down dinner, open bar, and a evening of fun. Tickets for the event are \$35.00 for members, and \$45.00 for non-members. Please contact President Chris Tanski at (716) 771-1076 for tickets or information.

**SING-ALONG TIME.** The heart of a Polish Christmas is the beautiful koledy we all associate with our Polish culture. So don't miss out on some wonderful opportunities to celebrate these favorite carols. **Special Delivery** will be hosting a Koledy Night at Potts Banquet Hall 41 S Rossler Cheektowaga. Tickets are just \$5.00 and music will be from 7:00-11:00 p.m. Information



Ralph Kindzierski, Rich and Melanie Schueler, and Joanne Kindzierski — Rock 'n Polka Night



"Matty K" Kushner at the Knewz Tailgate Party.

and reservations can be made by contacting Ted at (716) 668-9101.

Last-minute shoppers will enjoy free entertainment courtesy of **New Direction** at the Broadway Market, Sun., Dec. 22 from 12:00-3:00 p.m.. Stop by at 999 Broadway to pick up last minute gifts, your favorite foods to complete your Wigilia table, and be serenaded by the talents of New Direction.

**SYLWESTER EVENTS.** There are plenty of options to ring in 2020 with polka music this New Year's. **John Gora** will be providing the entertainment for a New Year's Eve Dinner Dance Celebration at the **Burlington Polish Hall**, 2316 Fairview St., Ont. For information or reservations, please contact John at (905) 336-3055 or email john@johngora.com.

**Potts Banquet Hall** welcomes



Marie Liberatore and Jewel Jurgen—Rock N Polka Night.

**Phocus** for their polka New Year's Eve Celebration. A dinner, open bar, and non-stop music set the scene as you ring in 2020 with fellow polka friends. Contact Potts at (716) 826-6576.

Another surefire option for polka fun on New Year's Eve is **Millennium Buffalo**, 2040 Walden Ave., Cheektowaga. Music will be provided by **Special Delivery** and **Cercatina All Stars** for this non-stop evening of polkas and dancing. Overnight packages start at \$229 per couple which includes a Polish buffet, seven-hour open bar, champagne toast at midnight, and a New Year's Day breakfast buffet.

Information for overnight accommodations and reservations for this event, which sells out every year, can be made by calling (716) 681-2400.

## Polka Class: Mollie B Helps School Raise \$5000

**CROSS PLAINS, Wisc. (State Journal)** — The students at Park Elementary School in Cross Plains last week learned how to polka with the help of two icons — one in the polka world and one right at the school.

As part of a fundraiser, Mollie Busta Lange, who goes by "Mollie B," and others came to the school to teach the students how to polka during the school day. Then the students were joined by their family members for more dancing that night, and on the next day the public was invited to come to the school for a show and dance. About 350 came for the sold-out event and the entire fundraiser brought in an estimated \$5,000.

Busta Lange appeared with her Squeeze-Box band in "The Mule," a Warner Bros. film directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. She also hosts a show called the "Mollie B Polka Party" on RFD-TV and on Channel 147 of SiriusXM Radio.

While Mollie B has national star power, Rod "Peanuts" Esser, the driving force behind the event, shines a bright light around the school, where he is in his 55th year as head custodian.

Esser came up with the idea for the fundraiser, which raises money for special education and other school needs. It was an offshoot of a similar fundraiser he requested when the

Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District said it wanted to do something to honor him after he had reached 50 years of employment at Park Elementary. That earlier fundraiser featured country music at the Performing Arts Center at Middleton High School and benefited the MCPASD Education Foundation.

"Peanuts' is an icon in this school and this is something he was really passionate about," Park principal Monica Schommer said about the polka fundraiser.

Not only has Esser been the only head custodian the school has ever had, his parents, Herb and Hyacintha Esser, used to farm the

land it was built on.

"The deal is I just went with the land so I got the job," said Esser, who will turn 80 on Dec. 9. "So I never left the farm."

This is the third year of the fundraiser at Park that Esser says is "all about the kids."

In addition to Mollie B and the Squeeze-Box, which she co-leads with her husband, Ted Lange, others also joined in during the two-day event. They included her parents, Jim and Mary Lou Busta and his Jim Busta Band of Onalaska. Dancers included the Raymakers family from Pulaski and Bruce and

See "Mollie B ...," page 23

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3	Joe Tiberi		Musician	Pa.
4	Gene Wisniewski	1922 3/7/02	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Rockville, Conn.
4	Jack Beachly III		Musician / Vocalist	Pa.
6	Li'l Richard Towalski	1944 3/28/01	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist / DJ	Chicago
7	Alex Meixner		Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Fla.
7	Seth Dzrewicki	1980	Polka D. J.	Mich.
8	Steve Coblisch	1948-	Polka D. J. / Promoter	N.Y.
8	Rocco Naples	1986-	Musician / Vocalist	Pa.
9	Paul (Pookie) Kuharski	1926 6/11/08	Polka D.J. / Promoter	Dubois, Pa.
9	Bob Zielinski	1948 8/23/14	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Toledo, Ohio
10	Pan Franek Piotrowski	1955	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Mich.
11	Eddie Slomkowski		Polka D. J.	South Carolina
13	William Binkiewicz	1963	Bandleader / Musician	Ohio.
15	Darrell Weltin		Bandleader / Musician (New Brass Express)	Mich.
17	Frank Gibala	1943	Musician / Vocalist (Bell-Hops & Versa Js)	Pa.
17	Dennis Motyka	1950	Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Chicago
18	Ray Budzilek, Jr.	1960	Musician (Drummer)	Cleveland
18	Michael Biela	1987	Polka D. J. / Promoter	Wheeling W.Virg. /Ohio
19	Johnny Bomba	1921	Bandleader / Musician	Chicago
19	Tom Goldyn	1955	Musician / Vocalist (Special Delivery)	Buffalo, N.Y.
20	Chet "Hoot" Filipiak	1929 11/1/14	Musician (Hi-Notes / Marion Lush Band)	Chicago.
23	Ken Bartkowiak		Bandleader / Musician / Vocalist	Indiana
25	Kristine Piotrowski		Musician / Vocalist	Mich.
27	Alicia Yesenowski	1933 11/12/11	Polka D.J. / Promoter	Central City, Pa.
27	Helga Leonard		Polka Tour Guide	Pa.
27	Gary Rhamy		Recording Engineer / DJ	Youngstown
28	John Huchrowski	1927 9/3/16	Musician (Violin) / Vocalist	Pa.
28	Lynn Richnafsky		Polka DJ	Uniontown. Pa.
29	Judy Spitat	2/6/09	Polka Promoter / Columnist	Pa.

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<b>JOHN GORA</b> My Polish Roots (New)	<b>TRI-CITY DRIVE</b> Traffic Jammin' (New)	<b>BERNIE WHITE WITKOWSKI</b> Top Shelf Polkas Figure Dancing Polkas
<b>EDDIE BIEGAJ</b> Heroes (New)	<b>WALT SOLEK</b> Tribute	<b>FRANK WOJNAROWSKI</b> Climb Aboard with Frank Figure Dancing Polkas For My Mother King of The Polkas
<b>STEVE HUBERT</b> Alpine Bells Lustigjeden Tag!	<b>BIG STEVE &amp; HIS BELLARES</b> Pod Mostem	<b>GENE WISNIEWSKI</b> Cavalcade of Polkas Jackpot of Polkas Rockin' Polkas Those Polish Girls Tick Tock Polkas
<b>ROSIE AND THE JAMMERS</b> At Last	<b>WESOLY BOLEK</b> Sing Along With Bolek	
<b>RICHE YURKOWICH</b> Button Box Delight	<b>EDDIE FORMAN</b> Tiger By The Tail	
<b>DON PEACHY</b> Music On The Move	<b>RAY BUDZILEK</b> Cleveland Style Polkas Happy Polka Times The Cleveland Sound	
<b>BOX ON</b> This Is Polka (New)	<b>LARRY CHESKY</b> A World Of Polkas The Bartender Great Polkas	
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### POLKA CALENDAR

Compiled by John Ziobrowski

To list your event, please send date, band, location, times, and contact number to:  
**ziobrowskijohn@gmail.com**

#### DECEMBER 1

- Dennis Polisky Polish Cultural Ctr. Clark, N.J. 2-6 (201) 694-2330
- New Tones Holy Spirit Ctr. Parma, Ohio. 3-7 (216) 496-0223
- New Direction Firehouse Bar & Grill West Seneca, N.Y. 3-6 (716) 826-4259

#### DECEMBER 3

- Eddie Forman Aqua Turf Plantsville, Conn. 10:30-3 (860) 628-4216

#### DECEMBER 7

- Eddie Forman/Lenny Gomulka Independence Fire Hall Great Meadow, N.J. 5-12 (908) 637-4300
- Dennis Polisky PNI Club Worcester, Mass. 5-9 (508) 361-2860
- Buffalo Touch Leonard Post Cheektowaga, N.Y. (716) 684-4371
- Polka Family New Orleans Party Ctr. Brecksville, Ohio. (216) 496-0223
- Jimmy Sturr Paramount Theater Middletown, N.Y. 3-5 (845) 346-4195

#### DECEMBER 8

- John Gora Misiuda Hall Toledo, Ohio. 2-6 (419) 691-5684

#### DECEMBER 12

- Buffalo Touch Potts Banquet Hall. Buzz Taping (716) 675-6588

#### DECEMBER 13

- John Stevens VFW Dupont, Pa. 2-6 (570) 472-1152

#### DECEMBER 14

- Special Delivery. Bflo Polka Boosters Christmas Party. Polish Falcons Depew, N.Y. (716) 684-2373
- Dennis Polisky PACC Ludlow, Mass. 5-9 (413) 592-0367

#### DECEMBER 15

- Dennis Polisky St. Joseph Polish Society Colchester, Conn. 1-6 (860) 537-2550
- John Gora Lyskawa VFW Dearborn Heights, Mich. 2-6 (313) 274-4666
- Buffalo Touch Clinton Bar & Grill Buffalo, N.Y. 5:30-8:30
- Jimmy Kilian Lone Tree Manor Milwaukee Niles, Ill. 12:30-3:30 (847) 823-6358
- Joe Stanky VFW Dupont, Pa. 2-6 (570) 47-1152

#### DECEMBER 21

- Special Delivery. Koledy Night. Potts Banquet Hall Cheektowaga, N.Y. 7-11 (716) 668-9101

#### DECEMBER 22

- New Direction Broadway Market Buffalo, N.Y. 12-3 (716) 893-0705

#### DECEMBER 31

- Special Delivery / Concertina All Stars. Millennium Hotel Buffalo, N.Y. (716) 681-2400
- John Gora Polish Hall Burlington, Ont. (905) 639-3236

#### JANUARY 1, 2020

- Dennis Polisky / Eddie Forman PACC Ludlow, Mass. 2-7 (413) 592-0367
- Tony Blazonczyk Glendora Banquets Chicago Ridge, Ill. 1:30-6 (708) 425-3686

#### JANUARY 4

- John Gora Polish Home Syracuse, N.Y. (315) 471-9348

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**Mollie B. Students Loved Dancing**

continued from page 21

Peggy King and their grandchildren, Alli, Polka Jack and Dexter Dewitt, from Wisconsin Rapids. Some of them also appeared in "The Mule."

"I like having fun and just dancing," said third-grader Rosina Beuthin about the workshop held during the day. Third-grader Max Miller said the dancing was "not my thing" but he and fellow third-grader Dawson Hunn liked when they got to try out an accordion. Third-grader Luke Dotte also liked when Busta Lange showed the students the instruments.

Several third-grade girls who take lessons for other forms of dance thought Busta Lange was a great teacher. Third-grader Reagan Breunig, who does a lot of dancing

outside of school, said learning to polka was not hard.

"Everything is so exciting and fun," said third-grader Alexis Esser, who is not related to "Peanuts."

Third-grader Ari Fitzpatrick, who was involved in the workshop last year, said she looked forward to it this year.

"I thought it would be really fun to try to polka dance again because I forgot how," Ari said.

Busta Lange said Park Elementary does an exceptional job of getting the students excited for the workshop before the musicians arrive. Posters about the event, which were drawn by some students and hung around the school, were an example of that, she said.

"I hope they experience the joy of (polka) and always look back at this time," she said.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year  
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- **TUES. DEC. 31ST, NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY 7:00 P.M.-2:00 A.M.** INFO: Mary Kiselus (602) 526-7321

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FILM

# Atlas and the Making of a Promising Polish Director

by Matthew Stefanski

Who has not felt stuck at one point or another in their life – trapped by indecision, immobilized by uncertainty, or simply burdened with something that landed in their lap? Those sentiments are no foreign concept to Maciej “Matthew” Kawalski, the budding Polish director who was inspired by his own lived experiences to write and direct *Atlas*, a short film about getting unstuck.

The serial comedy focuses on a catatonic patient in a psychiatric institution who is a riddle to all around him. He serves as a blank slate for successive interpretations as to the true nature of his condition. A *tabula rasa* on which the viewer, too, is invited to impart their own assumptions, channeled through the various opinions presented by the colorful cohort of characters that are the staff and fellow patients at the facility.

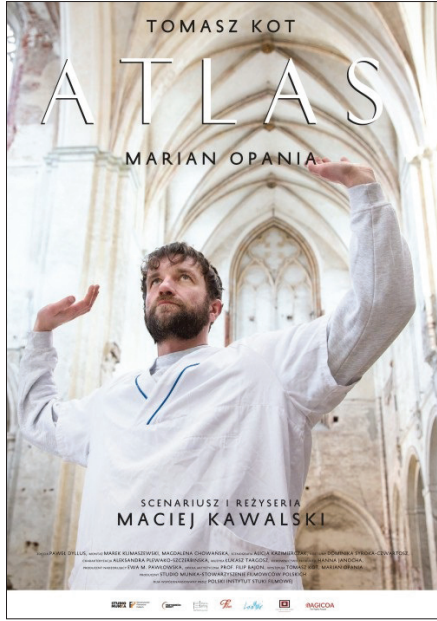
As gossip swirls the viewer is taken on a whirlwind tour of personalities that concludes with an earthshaking twist.

Kawalski wrote the script for *Atlas* during the fourth year of his medical studies, when he was still studying both film directing and medicine. It was at that time that he says he felt stuck, torn as to which passion to pursue in life. A chance encounter with a catatonic patient left a lasting impression on the young medical student, as he realized how quickly others will tell your story, if you are unable to do it for yourself.

“The world won’t wait for us to write our story – the world will do it for us, that’s why we have to be very adamant in writing our own story, in defining ourselves, because if we don’t someone else will, and it might not be the box you want to be put in” explains

Kawalski during an appearance on a morning talk show. The words, befitting of an acceptance speech, are hopefully an omen of things to come for the Polish production.

U.S. audiences should have no problem recognizing *Cold War* star Tomasz Kot, who plays the film’s protagonist, known only by his nickname, The Atlas. He stars alongside Marian Opania, a legendary Polish actor who has over 90 film credits to his name. A hidden star of the film’s on-screen magic comes from its setting, the Lubiąż Abbey, which is a former Cistercian monastery in Southwestern Poland that dates back to the 12th century. The complex’s fortress-like walls and the piercing cold that hangs in the air add to the aura of suspense. The fact that the Abbey at one point also served as a mental institution, which was unknown to the production team when selecting the location, is uncanny.



*Atlas*, directed by Maciej Kawalski, is qualified to be considered for the 92nd Academy Awards.

The film is qualified to be considered for the 92nd Academy Awards and is currently being screened at festivals across the United States. It recently won an audience award at the DC Shorts International Film Festival and Judges’ Citation Award at Syracuse International Film Festival.

Be on the lookout for this curious and comical tale, but even more so, for this promising Polish director, from whom we will certainly be hearing much more, if not during this year’s Oscars, than certainly in years to come. As Kawalski explains, one thing he learned while working on *Atlas* is that, “I cannot live without storytelling. No matter how difficult it is to make a film, and to make a living from it as well, I know after *Atlas* that it is as essential as oxygen to me. It is both humbling and empowering to learn that.”

# PolAm was among first to fight at Midway



Lt. Thomas John “Tom” Gratzek (second row at left) with the pilots of VMSB-241 on Midway in May, 1942. He was the son of Dr. Thomas Gratzek, M.D., and Theresa Ann “Tressie” Olejniczak. He was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, and received his childhood education there. Gratzek flew in Major Henderson’s First Division, with Captain Elmer C. Glidden as his section leader and wingman.

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A new Hollywood movie about the Battle of Midway released on November 8 has a Polish Minnesota connection. It is the role of U.S Marine Corps scout bombing squadron VMSB-241, stationed on the Pacific island.

The *Dauntless* dive bomber squadron’s pilots and crew were among the first to fight the Japanese aircraft carrier fleet at 7:55 a.m. on June 4, 1942, and suffered some of the heaviest casualties, initially losing eight of 16 planes.

Among those killed as the attack began was U.S. Marine fighter pilot **Lt. Thomas J. Gratzek** of St. Paul, awarded a Navy Cross when he “in the face of withering fire from Japanese fighter guns and withering anti-aircraft fire, dived his plane to a perilously low

altitude before releasing his bomb” at the aircraft carrier *Hiryu*. His plane then exploded into the sea, survivors reported.

The Polish American’s father had been the regional recruiting director for the Polish Army in France in St. Paul in 1917, a U.S. Army doctor in France during the flu epidemic and was chief doctor for the local draft board in Minneapolis-St. Paul at the time of Battle of Midway.

Today, the lone surviving plane from Gratzek’s squadron is on display at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia. It was fished out of Lake Michigan in 1991 and restored. The plane had crashed in a Navy training accident a few years after the battle.

— Mark Dillon

## Krupa and Nunes Welcome First Baby

(CNN) Joanna Krupa, an alum of “The Real Housewives of Miami,” is now a mom.

Krupa shared on her official Instagram account Nov. 3, 2019 that she and husband Douglas Nunes are the parents of a daughter born the day before. She is the couple’s first child.

“One of the most amazing emotional and hardest days of my life. Little baby girl Asha-Leigh Presley Nunes born on 11/02/19 at 5:50

p.m. All I can say is women are true warriors,” the caption read on a series of photos on Krupa’s Instagram page.

Well wishes were sent from family and friends, including Polish-language ones from her native Warsaw.

Krupa, a model and animal rights activist, appeared on the Bravo reality series from 2012 to 2013 and was a contestant on “Dancing with the Stars” during Season 9.

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