

# Polish Journey

Newsletter of the Polish Cultural Council • Vol. 14 • Winter/Spring 2016

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have long observed that Americans of Polish descent have an inordinate fascination with their family trees, or their genealogies. It may have to do with the fact that our ancestors came from an occupied Poland, with little if any chance of advancement from their born station in life.

In America they saw an opportunity for themselves and, although proud of being Polish, they made sure that their children were quickly assimilated into the American dream. Mentally, many left the homeland behind.

Often this meant that our grandparents transmitted little information to their children and grandchildren about their lives in Poland. This created a curious gap in the minds of many Polish Americans about their ancestors. Consequently, Polish genealogical societies abound in the US; there are more of them than of any other ethnic group.

On Saturday afternoon December 12th, the PCC sponsored a well-attended genealogy webinar at the University of Pittsburgh. (Thanks to Professor Oscar Swan for his help in getting the technologically equipped room.) The speaker, Kamila Mazurek (kpolgen@gmail.com), a Polish genealogy expert and Polish national,

led us into a wonderful hour-and-a-half presentation, entitled, "What is your Name?" Her fascinating lecture focused on the basis, or root, of many Polish names. Some names were based upon

Dear Friends,  
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Joy, Peace and Happiness to  
last throughout the coming  
New Year, 2016!

*Wesołych Świąt  
i Szczęśliwego  
Nowego Roku!*

Rick Pierchalski,  
Maria Staszekiewicz & the  
PCC Board of Directors



a person's geographic place, others on occupation (Kowalski=smithy), personal characteristics, and simply son of, like Adamczyk, to name a few. Adding a

personal touch to her lecture, last names of participants were submitted and she gave each of us the root or genesis of our names.

She offered a couple of very informative websites where you can learn more about your family origins. For example, [www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/](http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/), is a site where, if you type in your name (with Polish diacritics if appropriate), the site will show you a color-coded map of Poland where people with your last name are dispersed. The map includes the number of people and their top ten locations. There is also a genetic project website where you can send your DNA to their database. (They provide a kit.) The site will connect you with people of similar DNA characteristics in Poland ([www.isogg.org/wiki/Surname\\_DNA\\_projects](http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Surname_DNA_projects)). Another site lists names of noble birth (<http://szlachta.pl/lista-nazwisk.html>).

If you are a PCC member who would like a full genealogical search, courtesy of the PCC, please either email or send a letter to our executive director, Maria Staszekiewicz (pccorg.ms@gmail.com), explaining why you think the PCC should choose your family's name. A committee will select the winner.

**Rick Pierchalski**



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# Chopin Without Borders

*Recollections of the Seventeenth International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, October, 2015, by Eva Tumiel-Kozak*

Few concert halls have witnessed more musical history than Warsaw's National Philharmonic (Filharmonia Narodowa). It is the venue and the spiritual home of the world's greatest music contest, the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition. Its appeal was great. You could sense that Warsaw and the entire country were enchanted by the event. The Competition had its own radio station streaming all four stages throughout Poland and the world. Public television aired each concert and event. Each day, the contestants could be seen and heard on television. We learned about them and heard expert criticism about them. The criticism bothered me because I thought that there was too much influence on the judges from the *grape vine*. (This was definitely against the rules for our Three Rivers Piano Competition.)

Most certainly, this year's Competition was at an extremely high level. There were 78 contestants, chosen from 500 in preliminary auditions. They arrived from all over the world, with high hopes of winning! Ages ranged from 16 to 30. Most contestants had impressive biographies.

Polish Journey is a publication of the Polish Cultural Council, a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization. Please address your correspondence to: Polish Cultural Council, P.O. Box 81054, Pittsburgh, PA 15217-0554, tel: 412.871.3347

"The opinions expressed by authors do not always reflect the views of the PCC."

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They represented the best schools and had many years of experience on the concert stage.

The judges were led by Professor Katarzyna Popova-Zydrón, who is known for her pianism and her pedagogical talent. Some of the other renowned pianists who served as judges included Garrick Ohlsson, Philippe Entremont, Martha Argerich, Akiko Ebi, Andrzej Jasinski, Piotr Paleczny, and Dang Thai Son. Their task, arriving at six finalists, was a difficult one.

In my informal conversations with the judges, I tried to find out about their expectations. Akiko Ebi, from Japan, and the winner of fifth prize during the Tenth Chopin Competition, stressed that, "The interpretation should convey the spirit of Chopin, quality and timbre of the sound, unique Polish poetry of performance." Professor Jasinski spoke about "respecting the score, individuality, aesthetics, spontaneity and virtuosity." Dang Thai Son, the winner of the 1980 Chopin Competition, claimed that "communication from person to person is the greatest strength of Chopin's music." Generally, they have all agreed that the winner must fascinate, thrill, and give freshness to the piece, even if playing it for the 20<sup>th</sup> time. He/she must convey that illusive quality – the spirit of Chopin!

For the winner, The Award definitely opens wide the door to success. The careers of Maurizio Pollini, Martha Argerich, Krystian Zimmernan, and Garrick Ohlsson prove this point.

As always, this Competition surprised with its final choices. Poland had a strong and exciting contingent of 15 pianists, with Szymon Nehring especially excelling. Many people had great expectations for the winner to be from a Slavic country. Nevertheless, the First Prize and Gold Medal went to the 21-year-old South Korean,



**Seong-Jin CHO.** He is a student at the Paris Conservatory, and a winner of many prestigious competitions, among them Tchaikovsky in Russia and Rubinstein in Tel Aviv.

The dominance of North America was also visible: Canadian **Charles RICHARD-HAMELIN** from Quebec, won second place. Fifth place was also won by Canadian, **Tony Yike YANG.** Third and fourth place winners were **Kate LIU** and **Eric LU** from the United States. Russia's **Dmitry SHYSHKIN** won sixth place.

Recently, Medici TV noted the increasing presence of Koreans in Western classical music during the past 15 years, in all 55 big international music competitions. They attribute this unusual phenomenon to the work ethic and the spirit of competition of the Koreans.

It was a privilege and a heartwarming experience to see and to hear such an incredible fusion of talent under the roof of a concert hall which remembers the GREATS! Indeed, Chopin's music is without borders!

# Writing the Kaleidoscope of Poland

by Oscar E. Swan  
Professor of Slavic Languages and  
Literatures, University of Pittsburgh

I have travelled to Poland off and on since 1967-1968, when my wife, Emily, and I spent the year in Warsaw on a fellowship ultimately paid for by the Polish government in return for U.S. shipments of grain. Forty-three years later, when I received a fellowship to Krakow to work on my *Internet Dictionary of Polish*, incorporating the works of earlier Polish literature into it, I became sidetracked on a project that led to the recent publication of *Kaleidoscope of Poland: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015). While working on the dictionary, I came to appreciate that many names of people, things, and events that everyone native to a culture instantly recognizes are just as important as the words one describes in a dictionary. I long ago noticed that foreign critics of Polish cinema generally miss about half of what a movie is about for not understanding the film's cultural symbols. Journalists in Poland expect their audience to be just as educated as they are, and to know without any explanation, for example, what is meant by "Drzymała's Wagon," "Father Ściegienny," or "The November Uprising." I began to collect words and phrases like this, that are a mystification to foreigners, but which people reading Polish literature or history, watching Polish films, or walking along streets named after "Stowacki," "Narutowicz," or "Emilia

Plater" need to know in order to be considered culturally literate.

First of all, I conceived *Kaleidoscope* as a cultural decoder, meant to help initiate visitors to Poland in the basics of Polish national and cultural history, so that they could be well-informed visitors to the country. Little by little, I began to fill in logical blanks, and to expand coverage to include prominent features of Polish geography, ethnicities, wildlife, the Polish language itself, and to add certain topics of my own that I thought I was better able to appreciate than many Poles were themselves. I wrote the book in about half a year and spent the next five years polishing it and running it past a number of Polish cultural historians, to make sure I was not leaving anything important out, or committing any serious factual errors or social gaffes. These readers also helped me to identify important topics in areas where I was no expert, for example, in music, painting, or children's cul-

ture. In the end, the choice of topics and the way I describe them are my tribute to the language, country, and culture that has been the primary object of my scholarly work for the past fifty years or so.

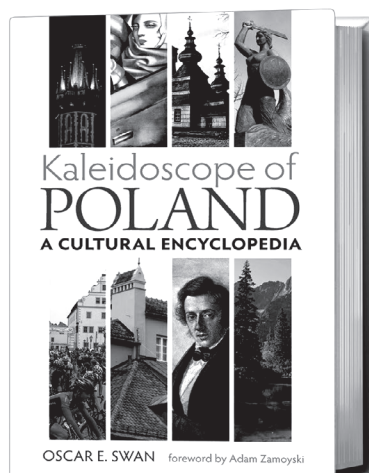
I am sure that I have left out certain persons, facts, or other things that many people will think I should have included. (A few such topics have occurred to me as well.) However, I am just as certain that, no matter how familiar a person is with Poland, he or she will find in *Kaleidoscope* topics that will be new to him or her. Even for Poles the book will serve as a review of many important things they already know about their country without even

knowing that they know them. Even though the book calls itself an encyclopedia, I have kept the articles short and, I hope, interesting. *Kaleidoscope* can be read not just for reference, but also from cover to cover. I hope readers will do just that, and find it as interesting to read as I did to write it.



Oscar E. Swan

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# *Just like Switzerland – A trek to the source of the river San*

By Magda Rybka

Many of us probably remember a famous bon mot by Gerard Depardieu concerning Belarus – “It’s just like Switzerland”.

Well, I think that this metaphor is much more appropriate in reference to the place that I am going to write about today: the Bieszczady Mountains. The arnica-covered meadows, scents which make your head swim, mountains that (for my tired legs) seem like the Alps, and a nice chocolate bar in my backpack should be convincing enough. On the other hand, when I think about our daring expedition to the source of the river San, our cozy Bieszczady Mountains bring the Amazonian jungle to my mind.

No kidding. We had previously made a few unsuccessful attempts to reach the source of the San. Torrential rains, which in a matter of minutes soaked us to the bone, prevented us at least twice from walking further.

But last summer, when our yearning for fresh air, the sense of freedom, and the need for some outdoor activity brought us for the nth time to the Bieszczady Mountains, we finally got our long-awaited prize. We set off from Cisna, which is in the heart of our wild mountains and a long and very winding road took us in about ninety minutes to the entrance of the National Bieszczady Park in Bukowiec. To our dismay, this time there were plenty of cars in the parking lot at the entrance to the National Park. Well, let us not be selfish.



**To the source of the river San - 10 meters**

Everyone wants to be a hero, especially at not too high of a cost. Scared vipers, scarce bears and skinny wolves cannot compete with the dangers of the rainforest.

Still, we took as much water and as many sandwiches as we could carry. We devoured them just after spotting the first picnic table. When we finally hit the road, we realized how scenic the park is. The path led us through a sea of tall grass to the tserkovisko of Benova. It once was a lively, multicultural village with over 500 inhabitants. It disappeared in the course of Polish-Ukrainian battles following WWII. Its population was either killed or displaced in the 1940s. Only graves, stones and crosses are left for visitors. We also saw an old gate which opened onto the church and graveyard. The best known and most moving landmarks are two stones: one is a gravestone with an engraved rose, and the other, a plate with an engraved picture of a fish. The latter one was probably a piece of a baptismal font. Although there are many ghost villages and wild abandoned orchards in Bieszczady, I do find this place most impres-

sive. Its heartbreaking and mysterious beauty, its tranquility and the surrounding landscape render a sense of holiness and sadness. The lights and candles left by tourists, or maybe by pilgrims, contribute to this overwhelming effect.

Anyway, we had to shake off this contemplative mood and gather some energy to walk forward. We heard the joyful whistling of trains on the other side of the San, beyond the border. We admired the view of small towns and villages on the Ukrainian side, which seemed to be teeming with life. It was a consoling thing to see. After a while, we reached a wide road, which was cut into the deep woods. There, we spotted an old giant tractor, which brought to mind Stachura’s Axiliad, and romantic stories about forest people and free-spirits.

The trip was long and offered varied attractions. At times the route required climbing steep rocks and sneaking through some narrow passages, which took us to the highest point, where we could see the proud peaks of the Ukrainian mountains. The panoramic view was really breathtaking. What is most important is that we could relish it in a sitting position, since some good souls had placed nice wooden benches for exhausted tourists.

Later, we had to suffer a walk through the wetlands. Fortunately, there are platforms which make it easier and safer to proceed, and which prevented us from getting drenched or drowned in the marshes. To our joy, there were not too many mosquitoes or other dangerous insects. Except for a few small lizards sunbathing on the path (and escaping from us in a heartbeat), there were no deadly reptiles. Especially, there was an apparent shortage of predatory anacondas waiting to kill us in their coils. So, I may say that we were fairly lucky. We managed to reach the next point of the journey, which was the legendary tomb of a countess. The Gothic atmosphere of this place was especially inspiring for my daughter, who instantly came up with lots of romantic stories and ideas. There is a small chapel in woods, which was built to protect the nineteenth



**A remote mountain hut in the Bieszczady Mountains**



**A beautiful morning in the Bieszczady Mountains**

century graves of Klara and Franciszek Stroinski. They were probably the owners of the mansion and the village, Sianki, which was here before. Now there is only a pile of stones. Rubble of old buildings can be spotted, especially some scary remnants of an old cellar. Beware of twisting your leg here, since you will have to wait long for professional assistance.

After approximately three hours of walking, when we thought that we could not take any more, we finally reached the Polish-Ukrainian border. The border is very well marked and probably well protected, so it is better not to cross it. Now, we had only 10 meters more to accomplish our mission and find the source of the river San. Who would have guessed that the muddy pool which we found could initiate one of the most important Polish rivers and one of the biggest of the Vistula tributaries? We were proud, happy, tired and hungry, but we still had to return home before dusk, before the ghosts awoke.

It was good though, that wolves were not yet howling, the winter was not yet coming and that a small four-wheel vehicle, a genuine miracle of human civilization, was waiting safely to take us back to our wooden hut in Cisna. We thanked God for the nice weather, which made this expedition possible. We got back home before dark. On the way back, we managed to spot some beautiful deer crossing the road. We braked just in time to avoid them.

I definitely hope that my description will not scare any possible tourists from visiting these fabulous mountains. The Bieszczady Mountains, which are located in the south-east

of Poland, offer wonderful experiences for different tastes. If you need more luxury - well, I may say that the infrastructure is developing, so it is quite easy to find comfortable accommodations. Restaurants and bars serve local food and exquisite beer which cannot be compared to any other beer. One may also relish home-made goat or sheep cheese, since there are some certified manufacturers who sell it from their cottages. One may also attend bread baking workshops, which would be an unforgettable experience. Those who visit Bieszczady in search of beauty may enjoy the famous icon gallery in Cisna, or look for artists who settled in local villages to find peace and inspiration. It is also a great idea to follow the route of wooden architecture and see at least some of the small tserkovs, which surprise with their unearthly dignity.

I do not have to write much about scenic views, because they are obvious; but I must say that I can't get enough of them and I am longing for them already.

The only real problem may be the roads. Those which connect major places are good or under renovation. But as you go to remote places, the roads become narrow, bumpy and scarce. There are not many gas stations either. But after all, it is our wild East, so let's not expect too much.

Our car journey from Warsaw was also fairly long because it took about seven hours. The route led through Radom and Rzeszów, but on the way there are also some beautiful historic towns such as Sanok, Opatów or Iłża. So, though the trip is long, it is by no means monotonous. For me, it was worth every minute.

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# Speaking Polish – Piece of Cake

by Veronica Wojnaroski

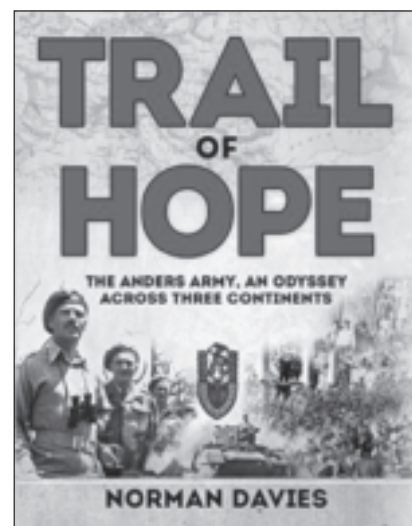
## Colorful phrases

For this issue, our discussion of Polish language topics is brief. However, the topic is delightful and does not require much explanation. Here we present a number of English phrases and their Polish equivalents. Many poke fun by making sense out of nonsense or present the truth by way of an absurdity. It's probably safe to say that most of these phrases would not be found in your standard textbook; so, students of Polish, listen up, if you want to learn to speak like a Pole. All of the verbs in the phrases are in the infinitive form. For practice, conjugate each verb as if you were speaking to someone.

- A Pole won't tell you to get lost, or to go fly a kite. He'll tell you to stuff yourself with hay: wypchać się sianem.
- Poles don't snack. They take something on the tooth: wziąć coś na ząb.
- Poles don't beat around the bush. They wrap the truth in cotton: owijać prawdę w bawełnę.
- Polish people don't nit-pick. They are looking for a hole in the whole: poszukać dziury w całym.
- Polish people don't count their chickens before they're hatched. They divide the skin on the bear: dzielić skórę na niedźwiedziu.
- A Polish person doesn't sulk. He has flies up his nose: mieć muchy w nosie.
- Polish people don't mess things up. They make bigos or brew beer: narobić bigosu albo nawarzyć piwa.
- A Pole does not daydream. He thinks of blue almonds: myśleć o niebieskich migdałach.

- Poles do not speak bluntly. They tell it straight from the bridge: mówić prosto z mostu.
- A Pole is not uninformed. He just fell from the Easter tree: urwać się z wielkanocnej choinki.
- Poles do not simply grin and bear it. They put up a good face for a bad game: robić dobrą minę do złej gry.
- A bad Polish writer doesn't waffle. He pours water: lać wodę.
- A Polish person doesn't just run away. He gives a leg or takes his legs under his belt: dać nogę albo brać nogi za pas.
- A Pole is never a know-it-all. Instead he ate all his wits: pozjadać wszystkie rozumy.
- Polish people will not pull your leg. They will stick you in a bottle: nabić kogoś w butelkę.
- A Pole won't take you apart. He'll mix you with mud or hang dogs on you: zmieszać kogoś z błotem albo powiesić na kimś psy.
- A Pole won't promise you the world. But you might get pears on a willow: gruszki na wierzbie.
- Polish people don't run like hell. They run where the pepper grows or where the devil says goodnight: uciekać gdzie pieprz rośnie albo gdzie diabeł mówi dobranoc.
- Poles won't pester you. They will drill a hole in your belly: wiercić komuś dziurę w brzuchu.
- Polish people don't bite off more than they can chew. They jump at the sun with a hoe: porywać się z motyką na słońce.

*Thanks to Olga Mecking for her MatadorNetwork.com article about these phrases.*



*Book review by  
Jan Napoleon Saykiewicz*

An extraordinary book was published recently. Published simultaneously in Polish and in English, the book presents the story of thousands of Polish citizens, who exited the Soviet Union in 1942 under unusual circumstances. These people, 120,000 soldiers and civilians of all ages, had been forcibly deported to Siberia and Soviet Central Asia, following the invasion of Poland by the Soviet Union in 1939. When the Soviet Union joined the Allies in 1942, the Poles were allowed to leave. The newly-created Polish Army in the Soviet Union, under the leadership of General Władysław Anders, led them from this "inhuman land". Countless lives were saved through the effort and determination of General Anders.

The book, richly illustrated with photographs, is based upon true stories, as told by members of General Anders army. The author spent years of research, retracing the escape and the journey to freedom. Davies takes the reader from Siberia and Central Asia through Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and Italy, and eventually to the final destination in Great Brit-

*Continued on page 7*



## Trail of Hope

continued from page 6

ain. The journey took 1,334 days and traversed 12,500 kilometers.

The book tells the story of the men and women who formed the Polish II Corps, and who showed unsurpassed heroism at the battle of Monte Cassino, and throughout the Allied campaign in Italy. It is the story of soldiers who bravely fought for “our freedom and yours”, and who were eventually betrayed by the Allies.

In his remarkable work, Professor Norman Davies, a historian of Britain and of Poland, and an Oxford Fellow, presents a unique visual and written record of one of the most fascinating episodes of World War II. During the regime of the Polish Peoples’ Republic, many historical facts were suppressed through censorship. Therefore, the saga of Anders Army, and its odyssey through a dozen countries, has never before been fully documented. There are only a few memoirs from that time. Davies’ book fills that void. The book is a “must” for everyone who cares about Polish history. It is also a tribute to the unquestionable contribution of Poles to the Allied victory in WWII.

English edition: Davies, Norman. *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, an Odyssey Across Three Continents*. Osprey Publishing: 2015. ISBN 978-1-47281-603-0.

Polish edition: Davies, Norman. *Szlak Nadziei: Armia Andersa, Marsz Przez Trzy Kontynenty*. Rosikon Press: 2015. ISBN 978-83-62981-05

Jan Napoleon Saykiewicz is Professor Emeritus of Marketing and International Marketing, Duquesne University, and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland.

## NEW STATUE OF WOJTEK, THE “SOLDIER BEAR”

by Veronica Wojnarowski

A new bronze statue of Corporal Wojtek, the “soldier bear” was unveiled in Edinburgh, Scotland in July of this year. The statue, created by sculptor Allan Beatrice Heriot, was a project of the Wojtek Memorial Trust, which counts both Britons and Poles among its members. Wojtek is a diminutive of the old Slavic name, Wojciech, which means “joyful warrior.”

Wojtek was found in Iran and adopted by the soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps. In the spring of 1942, the newly-formed Anders Army left the Soviet Union with thousands of Polish civilians who had been deported to the gulags following the Soviet Union’s invasion of Poland in 1939. While they were at a rest stop in Iran, they met an Iranian



boy who had found a bear cub abandoned after his mother was shot by a hunter. One of the civilian refugees, Irena Bokiewicz, was quite taken with the cub. A soldier, Anatol Tarnowiecki, purchased the cub. The refugees and the soldiers spent three months in a refugee camp near Tehran, where Wojtek was principally under the care of Irena. Wojtek was pampered with condensed milk, honey, fruit, marmalade and syrup. His favorite treats, however, were cigarettes (which he ate and smoked) and beer. Quite

tame and good-natured, he loved wrestling with the soldiers. He was taught to salute when greeted. He soon became the unofficial mascot of all units stationed in the area. With the 22nd Company, he moved through Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

In order to get Wojtek on a British transport ship, the Polish II Corps drafted him into the army as a private. He was listed among the soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company. He went with them to the Italian campaign. With his own pay book, rank and serial number, he lived

among the soldiers in their tents. He was present at Monte Cassino, where he was said to have carried ammunition to the soldiers. At some point, Wojtek was promoted to corporal. A depiction of a bear carrying an artillery shell became the official emblem of the 22nd Company.

Following the end of World War II, Wojtek lived with the 22nd Company at Winfield Airfield near Hutton in Scotland. When the company was disbanded in 1947, Wojtek went to live at the Edinburgh Zoo, where he died in 1963.

This beloved bear has been honored with statues in many cities, the one in Edinburgh being the latest. The film, *Wojtek, the Bear Who Went to War* (in Polish) can be seen on YouTube. Also, many photographs of Wojtek can be found on the Internet.

# Polish Films at the 2015 Three Rivers Film Festival

By Małgorzata Matyjaszewska

Once again, we were happy to present our *Polish Films Sidebar* as part of the 34th Three Rivers International Film Festival. Our thanks go not only to Maria Staszekiewicz for her special efforts to line up the Polish films, but also to all of the members of the Film Committee and the volunteers! Most of all, we are grateful to the audience who support Polish films at the Festival. They recognize our vision. They value contemporary Polish film, even though most of the audience is American. It is our mission, our joy, and our pride to share Polish culture with the Pittsburgh audience.

This year, the selection of films was especially varied and interesting. Many enjoyed visually beautiful film, *Influenza/Hiszpanka*. Of a metaphysical nature, this film, directed by Łukasz Barczyk, is full of metaphors.

*Strong Man/Mocny Człowiek*, directed by Henryk Szaro, is a silent film from 1929. It was accompanied by music, composed and performed by Marcin Pukaluk and was well-received.

A political thriller, *The Photographer*/

*Fotograf*, directed by Waldemar Krzystek, excited the imagination of many. It is about a serial killer, operating in modern-day Moscow.

The controversial film *Body/Ciało*, by Małgorzata Szumowska, generated much discussion. The film concerns an attorney and his anorexic daughter. This film was the recipient of awards at several international film festivals, including Best Actor, Best Debut Actor, Best Sound, and the Golden Lion Awards at the Polish Film Festival.

Probably our most popular presentation was *Those Daughters of Mine/Moje Córki Krowy*, directed by Kinga Dębska. The presence of Dębska, and the producer of the film, Zbigniew Domagalski, attracted a large audience. The discussion following the film was lengthy and exciting. Guests left Pittsburgh enchanted with our city, the PCC, the Festival, and its audience.

Our never-ending thanks go to the Pittsburgh Filmmakers and to the Chicago Film Festival for such a great opportunity to present Polish films. We are all looking forward to next year!



## Bravo Natalia!

Each year, the Three Rivers Film Festival has a part of it devoted to a competitive selection of shorts. It has been specifically designed for artists working in film and video to showcase their creativity to break new ground. This year, from the 100 submissions by local, national and international artists, the panel of judges chose 16 of them. The choices were in various categories, including experimental, narrative, animation, and documentary films. Three prizes were awarded, donated by the Pittsburgh

Filmmakers.

We would like to congratulate 'our own' NATALIA KANIASTY, who received the First Prize for her short film HOME RANGE. PCC was one of the co-sponsors of her documentary, which premiered in October, 2014, in Indiana, PA, to a packed movie house. We are very happy and proud!

For more information on Natalia and her short film, please see the interview by Eva Tumiel-Kozak with her in the 2014/2015 Winter issue of the Polish Journey.



# The Reverend Canon Joseph L. Sredzinski, 1944-2015

The Reverend Canon Joseph L. Sredzinski, a retired priest of the Diocese of Greensburg, died unexpectedly in his sleep on Oct. 10, 2015, while he was visiting Krakow, Poland with high school classmates. A priest for 45 years, he was 71 years old. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Joseph Church Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 11 a.m. with The Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, Bishop of Greensburg, serving as principal celebrant. Internment followed at St. Thomas Roman Catholic Cemetery, Footedale.

Father Sredzinski was born March 19, 1944, in Connellsville to the late Louis and Josephine Ann (Kois) Sredzinski. He earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy from Saint Mary's College, Orchard Lake, Mich., and a Master of Divinity from SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, Orchard Lake. He was ordained a priest by Bishop William G. Connare on May 9, 1970, at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, Greensburg.

Father Sredzinski continued his studies

in Washington, D.C., and in Rome.. He served as a deacon with St. John Paul II at Orchard Lake, MI and also met with him at the Vatican. In 2007, he was named an honorary canon of Lublin Cathedral in Lublin, Poland.

"He was a priest forever," said his sister Patricia Brensy. He loved his work and sharing it with people, and he also enjoyed traveling and experiencing new adventures, she said. "And he kept his ties, and he always knew where his roots were." Brensy said.

During his long career, Father Sredzinski served in many capacities at many parishes and other organizations. In particular, he was the national chaplain to the Polish Falcons of America from 1981.

Father Sredzinski retired from all pastoral and chaplain responsibilities July 1, 2015.

Father Lawrence L. Hoppe, a retired priest from Greensburg, was a long-time friend and admirer. He said that Father Sredzinski "was always out to help others in whatever way he could". He loved



Polish culture, and had traveled to Poland nearly 20 times.

Father Sredzinski is survived by brothers James (Patricia) Sredzinski and Charles Sredzinski of Naples, Fla.; and sisters Patricia (Michael) Brensy and Sister Jolenta Sredzinski, Sisters of the Holy Spirit, Pittsburgh. In addition he is survived by many nephews and cousins, two uncles, one niece, great nephews and a great niece.

The Polish community and the PCC will greatly miss Father Sredzinski, his great personality, and his eloquent Polish.

## A Tribute to Anne Marie Grzybek

By Geraldine Grzybek

ANNE MARIE GRZYBEK, a past Board member of the Polish Cultural Council died August 18, 2015 after a lengthy illness.

We celebrate the life of Anne Marie Grzybek, first-born daughter of Zdzislaw and Dolores Grzybek, granddaughter and god daughter of Michael and Anna Tokarski, sister to Diane Heasley and Geraldine Grzybek, and aunt and god-mother to Michael Wolff.

Marion Garrety stated: "A sister is a bit of childhood that can never be lost." Our parents instilled a foundation of faith and values. Anne Marie exemplified these in her life.

She was very intelligent and well-spoken. She graduated Magna cum Laude from LaRoche College. She was a hard worker and took her work seriously. Prior to her illness, she was the Director of Human Resources at the Heinz History Center. In that field, she had the

opportunity to assist countless individuals to gain employment and to be able to provide better lives for themselves and for their families. Previously she worked at St. Margaret's Hospital, Forbes Health System, and the Auberle Foundation.

She was proud of our Polish heritage. She was enthusiastically involved in her duties as a Board member. Her favorite event was Bal Polonaise, one of the many sponsored by the Polish Cultural Council. She loved the arts. In her high school days, she was a member of the Drama Club, took accordion lessons as a child and enjoyed all types of music. Anne Marie loved a good movie, the Sopranos, the Cheesecake Factory, pretty jewelry and shoes. She could beat the pants off of all of us with games such as Clue and Trivial Pursuit.

The last five years were especially challenging for her as she endured injury and illness.



Anne Marie Grzybek, far right

As a big sister, Anne Marie continued to teach Diane and me the lessons which are important in life: patience, the gift of good health, a kind word and a hug, and faith in God.

Anne Marie's life was a gift to us. Diane and I look forward to the day when we can be reunited with Baba and Dziadzia, Dad and Mom and Anne Marie.

*A sister is a gift of the Heart,  
A friend of the spirit,  
A golden thread to the meaning of life.*



David Motak, the creator of Kącik Kulinaryny, was not able to write his column for this issue of the newsletter. Since it is Christmas time, we have decided to ask the members and readers of the Polish Journey to tell us about their special recipes for Wigilia. We hope that you will enjoy their contributions.

Poland and Italy are probably the only countries where Wigilia is always celebrated festively and with a certain solemnity. The tradition calls for twelve dishes, all of them meatless, symbolizing the twelve Apostles and the twelve months of the year. In the evening, when the first star appears in the sky, the head of the household breaks the Christmas wafer called *opłatek*. Everyone breaks the *opłatek* with each other, exchanging good wishes with the entire family and guests. It is customary to set an extra plate for an unexpected guest and/or in memory of family members who are no longer with us. A bit of hay is spread under the tablecloth as a reminder that Jesus was placed in a manger at his birth.

A beautifully decorated Christmas tree and the singing of *kolędy* (Christmas carols) are integral parts of the celebrations. They add to the special ambience of the evening. Many poets and musicians have incorporated the beauty of Polish *kolędy* into their works. Even Chopin, far away from his country on Christmas Eve, wrote one of his most beautiful scherzos (in b-minor), with the *kolęda*, Sleep Little Jesus (*Lulajże Jezuniu*) in its middle part. An exchange of gifts follows the sumptuous dinner, which lasts usually for several hours. The crowning of this festive evening is the family's visit to the church for Pasterka, or Midnight Mass.

There are many variations of Wigilia dishes, depending upon the region or the

special traditions from which they come. The usually clear red *barszcz* (borsch), with *uszka* is one of the soups served. The *uszka* are tiny pastry pockets formed like little ears. They are usually stuffed with mushrooms.

Mushroom soup, made from dried forest mushrooms, with its distinctive fragrance, is also a part of the Polish culinary heritage. Below, you will find a rather atypical recipe for mushroom soup. It's worth trying.

The Christmas array of fish dishes is led by the traditional *śledź* (herring), prepared in various ways. In Poland, carp farming has been popular for more than 700 hundred years. Certain species of carp are cultivated especially for Wigilia. There are numerous, interesting recipes including carp in grey sauce, carp in aspic, carp Greek style or Jewish style. In this country, the choice of pike or white fish would be probably more appropriate. The fish is usually accompanied by hot sauerkraut with dried mushrooms, a vegetable salad or small potatoes.

Desserts and special pastries are a must at the Wigilia table. Old Polish *piernik*, or gingerbread, is a staple. There are also poppy seed, nut or apricot rolls; gingerbread cookies; and more elaborate preparations, such as *Makietki*. Dried fruit compote (*Kompot z suszu*) is a traditional and popular finale to this festive meal. Never cooked, it is made with various dried fruits, such as prunes, apples, raisins, apricots, pears and figs. It is soaked overnight in water with spices, lemon juice, a bit of sugar and lemon zest. The fruit is drained. Then the liquid is heated and poured over the fruit. It definitely speeds up digestion.

Here are some of the recipes.  
Smacznego!

## Herrings

*Małgorzata Matyjaszewska*

- 1 lb. matjas fillets of herring
- 1 large apple (Fuji or Gala), peeled & diced
- 3 large eggs, hard-boiled & sliced thin
- 1 medium seedless cucumber, peeled, diced
- 3 sour medium dill pickles, sliced thinly
- 1 Tbsp light mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream

- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil
- Freshly ground pepper
- Fresh black bread

Cut the herring into bite-sized pieces. Mix the apple, eggs, cucumber, pickles, mayonnaise, sour cream, and basil in a bowl. Alternate layers of herring and the mixed vegetables in a jar. Let it stand in the refrigerator for one or more days and serve with black bread.



## Herring in olive oil with California prunes & walnuts

*Małgorzata Matyjaszewska*

- 1 lb. of herring fillet, matjas style
- 8oz. walnuts
- 5 oz. Californian prunes, pitted
- 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar or lemon juice
- a few sprigs of fresh thyme
- pinch of chili pepper flakes
- 2/3 cup olive oil

Keep herring filets in ice water for at least 4 hours, or even the whole night, changing the water 2 – 3 times. Dry them with paper towels. Cut filets into small, bite-sized pieces.

Roast walnuts in a dry, hot pan until golden. Cut them in smaller pieces. Cut prunes into narrow strips. In a glass jar, layer portions of the herring with apple cider vinegar or lemon juice, prunes and nuts. Sprinkle each layer with thyme leaves and chili flakes. Alternate the layers until you use all the ingredients. Push down the layers tightly and cover with olive oil. Keep the jar in the refrigerator for at least 3 days. Serve in small, individual glass dishes.



## Mushroom Soup with Sherry

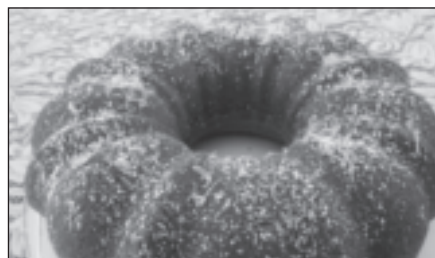
Charles Felix & Roger Guzik

2 oz. of dried Boletus mushrooms from Poland or, if not available, jar of dried Porcini mushrooms  
8 oz. mix of fresh mushrooms: white, shiitake or cremini  
2 Tablespoons butter  
2 cloves chopped garlic  
2 Tablespoons finely chopped onions  
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt  
1 teaspoon of lemon juice  
1 cup sherry  
2 cups vegetable broth  
2 Tablespoons flour

Reconstitute dry mushrooms in a bowl of sherry. If necessary, add a little water to immerse mushrooms completely in liquid. Cover and place in refrigerator overnight.

Next day, melt butter in a stock pot, sautéing garlic and onions. Add the fresh mushrooms, lemon juice and garlic salt. Continue to sauté the mushrooms for 15 minutes. While the fresh mushrooms are cooking, drain the reconstituted dry mushrooms, saving the sherry liquid. Add the reconstituted mushrooms to the fresh mushrooms, stir, and fold the flour into them. Add vegetable broth and simmer another 15 minutes. Stir in sherry liquid and bring to a simmer.

You can save a few dried mushrooms and put through the blender to create a powder that you can sprinkle on top after you have ladled the soup into the bowl. You can also blend all of the soup and serve it with crackers or macaroni. The addition of light cream is optional, as it is usually avoided for Wigilia dishes.



## Piernik/Gingerbread

Barbara Zawadzki

1 cup honey  
3 eggs  
3 cups flour  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp instant coffee in 1/2 cup water

1 cup oil (corn or canola)  
3/4 cup sugar  
3/4 cup light brown sugar  
1 orange (zest and juice)  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
1/2 cup raisins (soaked in rum)  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
a pinch of ground cloves

Combine eggs and both sugars and beat until lighter in color. Fold in flour, baking powder and baking soda. Fold in honey, oil, and coffee. Fold in orange zest and juice, walnuts, raisins, vanilla and spices. Bake in a greased 12 cup Bundt pan at 350 degrees for one hour.



## Makiełki/ Poppy Seed Dessert

Małgorzata Wojcieszynska

Poppy seed paste: Masa Makowa

You can make your own poppy seed paste, or you can buy it ready-made in a Polish store, and add some raisins, almonds, orange peels, chopped apricots, nuts and almond extract.

1 cup poppy seeds  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup honey  
1 1/2 cup of chopped almonds, nuts, raisins, candied orange peel, chopped apricots  
a few drops of almond extract.

If you prepare your own: put poppy seeds into a small saucepan, cover with boiling water or milk, and simmer on a low heat for 40 minutes. Drain in a fine sieve, pressing out the moisture. Then pass through a fine strainer or meat grinder two or three times, or process in a food processor until completely pureed. In another saucepan, melt sugar with honey and add almonds, raisins, orange peel, apricots and vanilla extract. Then add the poppy seed paste, mixing everything together.

## Dough: Ciasto

1 1/4 cup flour  
3 egg yolks  
1 Tbs. pure spirits, vodka or vinegar  
1 tsp. baking powder,  
1 tsp. powdered sugar,  
1-2 Tbs. sour cream.  
light oil for frying.

Mix all the ingredients together. Knead the dough. Then beat it with a rolling pin a few times and let it rest for 30 minutes. Roll out the dough thinly and cut into a small strips, 1-2 inches long and 1/2 inch wide. Next fry the strips in hot oil, turning once, until they turn golden. Allow the strips to cool.

## Cream:

Whip 2 cups of heavy cream with 1/4 cup sugar.

In a fancy glass container, arrange layers of fried strips, poppy seed paste and whipped cream. You should end with a layer of a whipped cream decorated with chocolate and cherries. Use your imagination to decorate this delicious dessert. Enjoy it all year, not just during the holidays.



## Kruche Rogaliki (Crescent Moon Cookies)

Marysia Żioncheck  
(her mother's cookies)

3-4 oz. walnuts  
3.5 oz. powdered sugar  
7 oz. butter  
10.5 oz. flour  
A bit of vanilla sugar (optional)

Place all of the ingredients on a cutting board, and, using a chefs' knife, chop into small pieces. Then knead into a dough. Roll out the dough into thin round strips. Then form small cookies in the shape of a crescent moon. Bake at 350° until fully golden brown. When cool, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

WESOŁYCH SWIĄT! HAPPY  
and DELICIOUS HOLIDAYS!  
from your Editorial staff.





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## News and Notes:

• On Thursday, December 24th, 2015 at 5 PM, tune into **WQED-FM, 89.3**, and start your “**Wigilia**” with the annual **Polish Holiday Cheer**. This one hour special, produced and with commentary by **Eva Tumiel-Kozak**, features Polish music, carols and pastorales, performed by excellent choirs, ensembles and soloists. The program is also streamed across the world.

• On Saturday, January 2, 2016, the **Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish** (3058 Brereton, Polish Hill) will host the annual concert of **Polish Christmas Carols**, performed by **Karuzela Chorus**, directed by **Dr. Neil Stahursky**. The concert will start around 4:45 PM, shortly after the 4 PM Mass.

• Our friend and supporter **Anthony J. Basinski**, a Pittsburgher, and a prominent local attorney now retired, has written a mystery novel entitled **Dead in the Water**. It is available on Amazon. Tony, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, and Viet Nam war veteran, is enjoying retirement. He hopes to make this book a first in a series. And FYI, the book features a Polish character, Assistant US Attorney, Tomasz Janosz. This could make a lovely Christmas stocking stuffer.

• A long-time Board member and an initiator of OSTATKI, **Mike Davida**, has been selected as the **Washington and Jefferson College Visiting Scholar** for January 2016. A former Pennsylvania State Representative and Senator, as well as the last Chairman of the Allegheny County Board of Com-

missioners, Mike is currently the Executive Director for Scenic Pittsburgh, an organization which works to preserve the scenic beauty of the region. He also teaches business law and ethics. Our heartfelt congratulations!

### • Heritage Book Update

This is the final call for interview subjects for our heritage book. We are seeking life stories that are unusual, significant (in art, science, sports, education, etc.) or poignant to include in our book. Interviews will be concluding very soon. If you know an American-Pole or a Polish American whose life has had an impact on society, please call or email **Maria Staszkievicz** at PCC today: 412.871.3347; [pccorg.ms@gmail.com](mailto:pccorg.ms@gmail.com)

