



Polish Journey

Newsletter of the Polish Cultural Council • Vol. 21 • Winter 2023

HONORING RICK PIERCHALSKI

Rick Pierchalski retired as president of the Polish Cultural Council in September 2023, richly topping off his service of 20 years, first as Chairman of the Board and following as president after Merle Addams retired.

Rick joined the Board at the strong recommendation of Addams. Merle, knowing that the PCC needed to change and recognizing Rick's capabilities, knew this was the leader whose expertise would shape the PCC's evolution from a folk-centered ethnic group into a respected cultural organization with a national reputation. Rick's 20 years of leadership helped to build our administrative strength, broaden our public profile and expand our cultural offerings.

Under his leadership, the PCC contracted the position of executive director and focused on building a professional Board of Directors. At the same time, the organization began a revamp and re-focus of its newsletter, the *Polish Journey* with a spot-on name that he created. Today, its talented team now produces one of the most professional newsletters of any Polish

fraternal organization in the United States.

Rick's vision helped the PCC devise and implement a strategy of building partnerships with civic and community institutions that broadened our presence and expanded our range of influence. He helped us achieve our organization's stated goals of presenting the best of contemporary Polish culture through relationships with organizations such as The City of Pittsburgh, WQED FM, the University of Pittsburgh, the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

Rick also led a team in establishing strong ties with national and international Polish cultural organizations that helped build our reputation and financially aid in our mission. Organizations such as the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York, the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Polish American Congress Charitable Foundation recognize the PCC as a legitimate, fiscally responsible organization that produces valuable cultural programs reflecting the best of Polish culture.

Notably, Rick's vision for the Polish Cultural Council resulted in a significant achievement: our hosting of the annual Polish Film Festival in Pittsburgh. These festivals are both prestigious—and complicated to host. Under his leadership, the film festival team established professional relationships with the Polish film industry in Poland and Chicago, allowing the PCC to acquire the rights to show films, introducing Polish cinema to audiences in Western Pennsylvania and sharing new productions every year.

The members of the Board of Directors of the Polish Cultural Council and the entire Pittsburgh Polish community are deeply honored and grateful for Rick's invaluable contributions to our organization, both professionally and financially, during his tenure as president. To the benefit of the PCC, he is not leaving our team. He will serve as a board member as our organization continues to evolve and grow in our mission.

In the next issue of the *Polish Journey*, meet our new President, Czesław Wawrzonek. - PCC Board of Directors

Ostatki 2024 – The Beat Goes On!

Come together with your valentine on Saturday, February 10, 2024
MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND SAVE THE DATE!

Ostatki will be celebrated at the stylish *EDGEWOOD CLUB*- in the heart of Edgewood
1 Pennwood Avenue, Pittsburgh 15218

Drohiczyn, the drama of a frontier town by Magda Rybka



A row of houses in the town of Drohiczyn

Having our attention still focused on Poland's eastern borders, we somehow got drawn to the tranquil town of Drohiczyn. We were there many years ago and cherished some sentiments in connection with this picturesque area. It is worth seeing for the view alone. Drohiczyn, a town of less than 2,000 inhabitants, located on the high banks of the huge Bug River, offers you a glance of the beauty of the region. The town is no longer surrounded by unending forests as it used to be for many centuries, but still it is close to nature and covered in gardens and flowers. So if you are a nature freak like me, you will certainly find some pleasure in wandering in town and its surroundings. If, on the other hand, you are interested in his-

tory, you would certainly be amazed by the complexity of this town's story. Even if the town's architecture is not breath-taking, it is still interesting enough to justify a trip.

Drohiczyn is one of the oldest towns in the Podlasie region. Archeologists discovered here traces of settlements from the 10th century B.C. They also found coins dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries of the current era, which shows that communities there have always played an important role in the "global" trade. For many centuries, Drohiczyn was located on the administrative frontier between the Masovia and Podlasie regions; I am afraid that its inhabitants never knew under whose rule they would wake up on the following day. In the first half of the 11th century it was a subject to the duke of Kiev, Jaroslav the Wise. Soon after, it was taken over by Kazimierz Sprawiedliwy who handed Drohiczyn to the knights of the Order of Dobrzyń. They were supposed to defend the region from the attacks of Yotvingians (Jaćwingowie).

It did not make life in Drohiczyn easier. The area severely suffered from Mongol invasions which subsequently enabled the Lithuanian rulers to take advantage and subdue Drohiczyn. Then, it was again taken by Ruthenians and then by Yatvingians and afterwards again by the Ruthenian duke Daniel Romanovich, who was the only Ruthenian king and got crowned, guess where, in Drohiczyn in 1253. Afterwards,

Drohiczyn was again captured by the Lithuanians and remained one of the most important Lithuanian towns until the Union of Lublin.

I am sorry about the head spinning story, but it gives a taste of what life was like for people inhabiting the frontier regions only a few centuries ago. Of course, it was just the beginning of Drohiczyn's adventurous past. Although now it has a very peaceful aura and a relaxing atmosphere, it experienced all sorts of turmoil in the past.

It changed hands so often that it is really difficult to keep track. It was decimated by the Swedes during the Deluge and later burned by the Saxons. It was not exactly untouched by the unrest of the time of partitions or the Napoleonic wars. Finally, it suffered heavy losses from the Soviets and from the Germans during WWII. Still, the town was usually able to shake off the dust and grow again. It has never been big but it has always played an important role in the politics and the economy of the region.

Its location on the busy trade routes was simultaneously a blessing and a curse. It was burnt and pillaged, but it was also once named the capital of Podlasie. When you notice the number of churches that still exist there, you might also guess that it was supposed to be an important factor in defending Catholicism against the "infidels". It was also occasionally a starting point of religious wars against Yotvingians and Mongols. This is interesting because, on the

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: 412.716.2348

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

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one hand, it always used to be a melting pot of various religions and ethnicities, but, on the other hand, you still can feel there the sense of mission for being “the bulwark of Christianity”. Today the town’s religious function is still important, since it is the seat of the bishop and it hosts a seminar. Except for the huge cathedral, there are also two other big Catholic churches and one tserkov.

First, we visited the Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was built at the site of the former wooden church, (which was presumably ruined by the Calvinists), in the 17th and 18th centuries. It impresses with its stucco rococo altars and pink marble ornaments. The adjacent monastery buildings function now as the diocesan museum. There is also quite a cozy cafeteria. The story of the church and convent was as stormy and complicated as of the town itself. After the November Uprising (1831), it was converted into an Orthodox institution, later it hosted a prison, army barracks, a school and finally it was reconstructed after WWII.

Next, we followed the sound of a celestial Orthodox choir and we found the onion-like domes of the St. Nicholas tserkov. We were not lucky to see its famous frescos and beautiful iconostas as the temple was immediately closed after the faithful had left it.

Afterwards, we climbed the steep Castle Hill to admire the view of the river and of

the town from the observation point on top of the hill. There is no visible trace of the castle but probably the hill still hides many interesting treasures. There are certainly many legends related to the hill. There is, for instance, one tale about prince Drogit, believed to be the founder of Drohiczyn. On our way down, we circled the church of St. Trinity. Again there was a mass so we could not see well the interior, but we noticed the fresh fruit and pumpkins piled at the altar. It was the celebration of giving blessing and thanksgiving for the new crops. It was exciting to visit the mysterious catacombs in the lower part of the church. I felt there as if I were in an Indiana Jones movie and looking for some secret artefacts. Still, I was glad that it was daytime and I was not in these cellars alone.

The church, which was originally founded by Władysław Jagiełło in 1392, and in 1657 handed over to the Jesuit Order, had a difficult and interesting history. It was seriously damaged during the wars and it was partially restored after 1945. In 1991 it became the cathedral of the Drohiczyn diocese.

We also went to the equally interesting and beautifully situated Benedictine church of All Saints. When we were crossing its gate we were almost hit by a speeding car with a nun at the wheel. She must have been in a hurry to fulfil some church duties. It is a relief that we were saved.

The tour would not be complete if we

had not marched two kilometres to the remnants of the town Kirkuk. It once covered a large area. Now there is not much to be seen except for a few damaged headstones. It is always a rather sad sight.

At this point, we were quite tired and hungry. Though the town has a few nice restaurants offering some regional potato dishes, the miserable vegans had to satisfy themselves with falafels served at a small kebab diner. We are grateful to the incomers from the east who feed us in time of need.

Nourished and well rested, we concluded our visit to Drohiczyn by walking to the so called Historical - Cultural Park, where we met a very nice lady who shared with us her knowledge of the local wildlife. We also found there loads of information about Drohiczyn history and its interesting sites. Oh, I nearly forgot to mention that the town has an exhibition of old motorcycles and the museum of kayaking. There are also kayak rental places. If we had had more time we would have taken the opportunity for this relaxation.

An undeniable attraction is also a ferry that can transport you and your car to the other side of the river. It is a simple construction of a platform attached to manually pulled ropes.

As you can see there is no end to the enjoyments in Drohiczyn. It is definitely worth a stop if it is on your way.



Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

SYBIRACY – The Siberians

An interview with Stephan Szewczuk by Eva Tumiel-Kozak

History repeats itself. During the current Ukrainian war, Russia has been exiling Ukrainian children to Russia. In 1939, when both Germany and Russia invaded Poland, millions of Polish families were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Most adults lost their lives, but some children, mostly orphans, survived. Because of the negotiations of Gen. Władysław Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister in exile during WWII, most of the children left Russia in 1941 and 1942, for various countries who hosted them and their caregivers. South Africa accepted over 500 children in 1943 and relocated them to Oudtshoorn, a small town in the semi-arid Klein Karoo.

*During visits to my family in South Africa, I had heard the term **Sybiracy**, a popular and endearing name for the Polish Association of Siberian Deportees in Africa (PASDA), and met one of its members, Jan Szewczuk. Here, at home, I discovered that two PCC members, **Janine Rychalski** and **Krystyna (Krysia) Maska**, had similar experiences. Janine's are told in the book **Lives without Smiles**, by her husband Anatol Rychalski.*

I learned more about Sybiracy and met, via WhatsApp, Stefan Szewczuk, son of Jan Szewczuk, President of PASDA, and instrumental in memorializing the Polish children and their caregivers from 80 years ago. The interview with him, which follows, is dedicated to Janine and Krystyna and the many other exiled children.

ETK: Welcome Stefan to the Polish Journey! Congratulations on all of the noble work you do for Sybiracy! What motivated you to be so deeply involved?

S.Sz.: During South Africa's Apartheid era, the history taught in schools was based on the right-wing conservatism and nationalism and which was very Anglo-centric, barely touching the history of Europe. Very little was ever mentioned about WWII. I began to do my own research.

ETK: Give us a brief history of Sybiracy in South Africa, your organization, and your collaboration with the Polish Embassy and other organizations.

S.Sz.: On the 10th of April 1943, five hundred Polish refugee children, and their caregivers arrived in the Oudtshoorn Children's Home after surviving deportation to Siberia by the Russian NKWD and the subsequent journey out of Siberia. The migration was the result of the negotiations between the Polish Government-in-Exile in London as represented then in South Africa by the Consul-General, Dr. Stanisław Łepkowski, with the Smuts Government in S.A. Many of these refugees remained in South Africa, starting new lives and forming the core of the Polish community in their adopted country, my father and mother among them.

The caregivers created an environment of normal life following their horrific experiences and displacement. It definitely helped to create familial bonds, to be passed on to the next generations. The PASDA, the Sybiracy, was established in 2006 by a group of Siberian Deportees from Oudtshoorn and also from other refugee camps who had decided to start new lives in South Africa. Its mission was to commemorate Polish refugees in the history of Oudtshoorn and in the Polish narrative. The Polish Embassy in

Pretoria is supportive financially and morally of the activities and projects undertaken by the Sybiracy.

In 2013, the Sybiracy affiliated with the South Africa Poland Heritage Project and with the Wrocław University of Science and Technology in Poland. They also work closely with the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, who host our annual South Africa Poland Heritage Conferences and the screening of relevant films on or around August 23.

ETK: What is your organization's mission?

S.Sz.:

- Promote knowledge about Poland, reinforcing Polish identity.
- Enhance the Polish diaspora's fair image abroad,
- Ensure participation in Polish national culture,
- Create an awareness of the memory of Siberian deportee witnesses as a construct of past events.
- Research, documentation and education to try to educate, inform and increase awareness of the South African Polish diaspora in Polish history and heritage.

ETK: In September, you just celebrated the significant 80th Anniversary of this important event. Please describe it briefly.

S.Sz.: Two of the caregivers who created familial bonds amongst the children were Dr. Zygmunt Skowronski, Director of the Polish Children's Home in Oudtshoorn and teacher Elżbieta Masojada. After the Children's Home was closed, Dr. Skowronski organized reunions for the Oudtshoorn Children. Reunions



The Polish Ambassador with Sybracy

followed in 1968, 1988, 1993 and 2003. Over the years the Oudtshoorn children participated in many activities, including the opening of a Polish section in the C P Nel Museum, the Stained-Glass Legacy project in Oudtshoorn's Cathedral, and the erection of a monument to the Polish Refugees of Oudtshoorn at the C P Nel Museum. A full-scale model was presented at the 80th reunion in 2023.

Dignitaries from the Polish Embassy in Pretoria, Western Cape Provincial Government, the Oudtshoorn community and the South African Infantry School, the military unit where the refugees lived, attended the 80th anniversary. The history of the Polish refugees is now being officially memorialized and integrated into the history of Oudtshoorn.

ETK: In 2008, the European Parliament proclaimed August 23rd as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian regimes. What's the significance of such a long-time remembrance for your organization? How do you build awareness among

the members of the Polish community and the younger generations of Poles?

S.Sz.: On this significant day of August 23rd 1939, Russia and Germany signed a non-aggression pact. Included in it was a secret protocol to partition Poland into respective Russian and German spheres of influence. This pact changed the lives of Polish citizens including the Polish Refugees of Oudtshoorn. On or around 23 August the Sybracy screen relevant films under the auspices of the Polish Embassy in Pretoria and hosted by the

Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre. We try to increase awareness in the Polish community and the younger generation by promoting Polish/Kresy identity, culture and heritage. This includes the project of a book – richly illustrated with pictures supporting the text on the history of Poles in South Africa. A draft title for this book is: *South Africa – On the Edges of Polish Identity*.

ETK: Your plans for the future?

S.Sz.: Our short-term plans are:

- To complete the memorial in Oudtshoorn;
- To expand and enhance the Polish section of the C P Nel Museum in Oudtshoorn;
- To solicit funding for a manual promoting Polish/Kresy identity, culture and heritage amongst the younger generation; also for completion of the book.

ETK: Wishing you lots of success in this endeavor. Also deep inner satisfaction knowing how important and how special is the work you and your group are doing with such a success! Thanks for your valuable information for our readers!



A full size model of the memorial

Konsulat Honorowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Pittsburgh Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Honorary Consul, Dr. Jan Napoleon Saykiewicz

The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Pittsburgh was established on March, 1920 soon after Poland regained independence after WWI. The Consulate operated without interruption until July, 1945. After a few months closure, the Consulate worked under new government management from November, 1945 until March, 1950. Since then, the consular area of Pennsylvania has been under the jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Poland in New York City. However, the visible increase in activity of Polonia and the growing needs to restore ties between Polonia and their country of origin after the fall of communism in Poland required a different approach. The Polish Cultural Council of Pittsburgh, an energetic organization consolidating local Polonia in co-operation with the Embassy of Poland in Washington, D.C. tried to restore the old relationship. They developed a joint effort to reinstate consular activities in Pennsylvania.

Their efforts were successful. The presence of representatives of

Poland in Pennsylvania took the form of an honorary consulate in Pittsburgh, in 2007. Two years later, in order to address differences between the eastern and western parts of Pennsylvania, an honorary consulate for the eastern part of the state was established in Philadelphia.

The return of the honorary consulate in Pittsburgh brought about many changes in the functioning of the local community. It reminded local authorities and businesses about the existence of Poland and it created a feeling of pride among numerous groups of Polish Americans and the old and the new immigrants. The new honorary consul's job was significant. It required answering to the cultural, educational, and social needs of local Polonia, and often to the technical need for the pro bono translation of documents. Efforts were made to create an atmosphere of unity in the various groups of Polonia.

Although the honorary consulate cannot by law issue, sign or verify any documents, it provides general information and encouragement and tries to transmit the needs of local Polonia to the Consulate General in New York City or to the Polish Embassy in Washington D.C. The Honorary Consulate in Pittsburgh tried to be helpful with numerous passport needs of local Polish citizens by arrang-

ing visits of Consular representatives from the Consulate General. Unfortunately this has not always been possible. Recent changes in law require that all passport applications must be submitted in person at the Consulate General in the appropriate territorial jurisdiction. In order to assist Polish citizens to apply for passports, or to extend the validity of passports, the consulates general advise that an appointment should be made early enough to get things done on time.

The addresses of the representatives of the Republic of Poland closest to the residents of western Pennsylvania or Three State Area are as follows:

Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York, N.Y.
233 Madison Avenue,
New York, N.Y. 10016
(646) 237-2100;
info@polishconsulate.org

Consular Division of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, D.C.
2224 Wyoming Avenue N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20008-3992
(202) 499-1930;
www.washington.msz.gov.pl

Dr. Jan Napoleon Saykiewicz, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in western Pennsylvania for the last sixteen years, will conclude his mission at the end of Fall 2023 because of his retirement. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland has already developed a procedure to prepare a proper successor to the current Honorary Consul in Pittsburgh. The results will be announced soon.

Polish Film Festival - Polski Film 2023

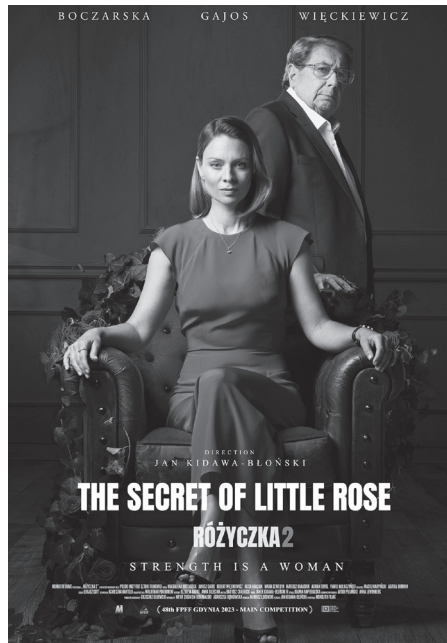
by Barbara Zawadzki

Every October and November, the Polish Cultural Council presents the Polish Film Festival for the Pittsburgh community, showcasing both the most current Polish films and important films from the last several decades. This presentation was in two parts: at the Harris Theater, downtown and the Row House Cinema, Lawrenceville.

This year, one of the highlights was the retrospective celebrating over 50 years of the films of the renowned director, **Jerzy Skolimowski**. His work was represented by *Walkover* (1965); *The Shout*, (1978), *Moonlighting*, (1982), starring young Jeremy Irons, and the newest action movie, *11 Minutes*. (2015).

The famous by now film by Dr. Agnieszka Holland - *Green Border (Zielona Granica)*, set during the most recent humanitarian crisis at the Polish/Belorus border, was released this year, winning the **Special Jury Prize** at the 80th **Venice International Film Festival** and **Fuoricampo Prize** at the **Vatican Film Festival**, given to films that “explore themes linked to the deepest meaning of life and shaken consciences”.

The special feature of the Festival: *The Secret of Little Rose (Różyczka 2)*, just released in Poland on October 27, 2023, was highlighted by the presence of the director, **Jan Kidawa-Błoński** and the



star of the movie, **Magdalena Boczarska**. Their live question and answer session was especially enjoyed by the audience, which filled the Row House theater to capacity. A reception, hosted by **Apteka**, followed.

Among the newest generation of movies were *Dad (Tata)* (2022), director, Anna Maliszewska; *Filip* (2022), director Michał Kwieciński; *Strawman (Figurant)* (2023), director Robert Gliński; and the documentary *Always Fresh Money (Zawsze Świeży Pieniądz)* (2023), director Krzysztof Talczewski.

The Pittsburgh community is able to enjoy these exemplary works of Polish cinematography thanks to the hard work and dedication, and excellent connections of Maria Staszkiwicz and Marysia Zioncheck. Production of the Polish Film Festival in Pittsburgh is possible because of the financial support of the Polish Embassy in Washington, DC, the Polish Consulate General in New York, the Polish-American Congress Charitable Foundation, and by donations from the members of the Polish Cultural Council and also the Pittsburgh Polish community. The proceeds from the movie theater ticket sales are not financially significant to cover the cost of bringing these films to Pittsburgh.

Thank you to Maria Staszkiwicz and Marysia Zioncheck, and to all who made the 2023 Polish Film Festival a success!

Our New Board of Directors *Elected September, 2023*

Officers:

Chester Wawrzonek – President
Marysia Zioncheck – Vice president
Evanne Addams – Treasurer
Terri Barger – Secretary

Maria Staszkiwicz, Executive Director

Members:

Mary Lou Ellena-Wygonik	Rick Pierchalski
Kristine Gutkowski	Eva Tumiel-Kozak
Tara Hutchinson	Lorene Vinski
Margot Morajka	Barbara Zawadzki

Speaking Polish – Piece of Cake by Veronica Wojnaroski

Polish aphorisms - Polskie aforyzmy

The Polish language is known for its folksy proverbs. A *proverb* (*prysłowie*) is a short, pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or piece of advice. The origins and the authors of these are unknown. While some of them may seem a little old-fashioned, many of them are still used in common parlance; for example, *Gość w dom, Bóg w dom, a guest in the house is God in the house; and Co po trzeźwemu myśli, to po pijanemu powie, what one thinks when sober, one says when drunk.*

Polish literary giants, from the 16th century onward, through wars and political upheavals, admired the ability to convey a hidden kernel of a truth, meaning or opinion in a brief and sometimes funny phrase. Thus the authors of these aphorisms are known to us. The 16th century author, Mikołaj Rej, chose not to write in Latin, as was customary, but chose his own native language with the phrase that all Polish school children learn: *Polacy nie gęsi lecz swój język mają; the Poles have the language not of the geese but their own.* The topics often included

thoughts about *words* (*słowa*), *speaking* (*mówiący*), *listening* (*sluchający*), and *writing*, itself (*piszący*).

Bolesław Prus and Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote about the arduous task of writing clearly. Prus wrote *Sztuka pisanania jest sztuką skreślania, the art of writing is the art of erasing.* Sienkiewicz wrote *Im pisarz znakomitszy, tym mniej pisze po literacku, the more superb a writer, the less literary is his writing;* and, *tylko to co przyszło z trudem, czyta się łatwo, only that which comes with great effort is easy to read.*

Here are, in no particular order, thoughts from Poland's great writers about words and speech.

Stanisław Brzozowski

Należy odpowiadać na drażliwe pytanie, zanim zostanie zadane. Touchy questions should be answered before they are asked.

Jan Czarny

Wszystko co mądre, powiedział już ktoś inny. Everything wise has already been said by someone else.

Roman Gorzelski

To świetny kłamca; ma genialną pamięć. A brilliant liar; he has total recall.

Eugeniusz Iwanicki

Filozofem jest ten, który potrafi milczeć w różnych językach. A philosopher – someone who can be silent in different languages.

Ludwik Kondratowicz

Bo słowo w książce – to tylko słowo, A słowo w uściech – to czyn, mospanie! A word in a book is just a word; a word in the mouth is a deed!

Słowami prawdy i kamień przebodziesz. Words of truth will pierce a rock

Tadeusz Kotarbiński

Lepiej nie mówić nic, niż mówić o niczym. Say nothing rather than talk about nothing.

Józef Ignacy Kraszewski

Umiesz prawdę mówić? Naucz się też prawdy słuchać. Can you tell the truth? Learn also to listen to it.

Jerzy Leszczyński

Dalej niż krzyk – dochodzi szept. A whisper goes farther than a shout.

Antoni Marianowicz

Kłamstwo ma krótkie nogi, ale biegnie szybciej od prawdy. A lie has short legs, but it runs faster than the truth.

Najgłośniej krzyczy ten, kto przywołuje do porządku hałasujących. He who calls the noisy ones to order shouts the loudest

Krzysztof Mętrak

W słowach tylko chęć widzimy, w działaniu potęgę. Trudniej dzień dobrze przeżyć, niż napisać księgę. Words convey wishes, while deeds have power; it is more difficult to live one day well than to write a book.



Adolf Howaczyński

Satyryk to jest głupiec, który na słoniu nastawia łapkę na myszy. A satirist is the fool who sets a mousetrap to catch an elephant.

Magdalena Samozwaniec

Śmiech i kpiny – to niejednokrotnie płacz mędrca. Laughter and jokes – often a wise man's cry.

Słowa są nieraz plotkami naszych myśli. Words are often the gossips of our thoughts.

Andrzej Strug

Nigdy – głupie słowo...tego przecie człowiek nigdy nie ogarnie. Never – a silly word. One can never comprehend it.

For more Polish aphorisms and proverbs, see Gałazka, Jacek. *A Treasury of Polish Aphorisms.* New York: Hippocrene Books, 2002



LETS COOK POLISH

We welcome contributions from our readers of their signature recipes for the next issues of the Polish Journey and we welcome any comments you might have.

Remembering Babcia

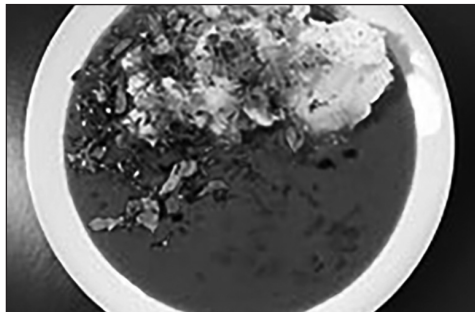
by Mary Louise Ellena

In 1944, before I was on this earth, John Van Druten wrote a stage play called *I Remember Mama*, the story of a Norwegian immigrant family in San Francisco in the 20th century. Despite the cultural differences, that play has always reminded me of my own Babcia. Helen Modzelewski was the matriarch of our family and a fabulous cook and baker of all things Polish. Affectionately known as Baci Helen by her six great grandchildren, life with Babcia elicits fond food memories interspersed with family events!

I have fond memories of Babcia calling me to pick up pączki to distribute to other family members. When Babcia made pączki, she made pączki - dozens that filled a huge washtub, each filled with a maraschino cherry and sprinkled with granulated sugar. On another day, I might be called to pick up chruściki (faworki) or dozens of homemade pierogi - farmer's cheese, potato with cheddar, and sauerkraut with onion. In the summer, she made piccalilli, pickled beets and Polish dill pickles. In between she made gołąbki (stuffed cabbage) and kotlety (cutlets) and a wide variety of soups: green bean, barszcz, flaki, (tripe stew), rosół, (chicken or beef broth), and others. While these were special treats and not regularly scheduled occurrences, they provided the gold standard by which my sisters and I judge all Polish comfort food. Ironically during my many visits to Poland during which I sampled my Cio-cia Terenia's, cousin Jola's, and cousin Beata's cooking, I realized that these

were indeed authentic Polish recipes. To preserve them for future family generations was no easy feat. Babcia's recipes were often just a list of ingredients, often with cryptic amounts: *add enough flour to make a soft dough, or butter the size of a walnut*. Fortunately, since Babcia lived to be almost 97, I had plenty of time to cook with her, measuring cup in hand, to get more accurate quantities of key ingredients. (Getting recipes from my family in Warsaw was not a solution, since metric measures are used there, providing a greater chance of mathematical miscalculation.)

Since the winter months scream for comfort food, I share now my favorite recipe from Babcia:



Polish Barszcz

Ingredients

- 4 whole beets (washed or 2 cups sliced canned or jarred beets)
- 4 cups meat stock (or vegetable stock)
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (or 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar)
- Salt and black pepper
- Optional: boiled potatoes
- Garnish: fresh dill (chopped), sour cream

Instructions

1. If using fresh beets, heat oven to 400 F. Wrap beets in aluminum foil and roast until tender.
2. When cool enough to handle, peel, and slice into strips or julienne.
3. In a medium pot, bring meat or vegetable stock to boil. Add sliced beets, garlic, sugar, lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer 10 minutes.
4. Serve hot with boiled potatoes and garnish with chopped dill and a dollop of sour cream.

RENEW TODAY!

Please fill in this form and mail it with your dues to the address shown below. Thank You!

Keeping Polish Culture Alive!

Polish Cultural Council
P.O. Box 81054
Pittsburgh, PA 15217-0554
www.PolishCulturalCouncil.org

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Polish Speaking? Yes No

I would like to get involved in:

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- Film Festival
- Performing & Visual Arts Events
- Newsletter
- Fundraising
- Polish Language Classes
- Christmas Celebration

Additionally, I would like to support PCC in the amount of \$ _____

Please make your check payable to:

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Polish volleyball prospects for Paris Olympics, 2024

by Edward R. Wojciechowski, III

With less than a year until the Summer Olympic Games kick off in Paris, competitions, qualifiers, and excitement are ramping up. Individual athletes and countries from around the world are putting their best foot forward in order to claim coveted spots in the games. On the volleyball front, Poland has the ability to continue making a splash on the international stage.

For indoor volleyball, both men's and women's teams from Poland recently participated in their respective Olympic Qualifying Tournaments. The women were up first with their tournament being held from September 16th to 24th in China, Japan, and Poland. Competing in Pool C, they enjoyed a home field advantage in Łódź. However, Coach Stefano Lavarini and his squad had their work cut out for them. Pool C consisted of Colombia, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Slovenia, Thailand, and reigning Olym-

pic Champions, the United States. The women's national team had not qualified for Olympic competition since the 2008 games in Beijing where they came in 9th. Until this year. The women's team came in second in their pool, just behind the United States, having only lost to Thailand. Winning 20 of their sets in the competition, they qualified for the Olympics next year.

The men's tournament took place in Brazil, Japan, and China from September 30th to October 8th. The men also competed in Pool C; however in Xi'an, China. Coach Nikola Grbić and his team are looking to break a 5-year streak of placing 5th in Olympic competition, just shy of a medal match.

In order to qualify at this stage, they needed to place in the top two amongst Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Mexico, and the Netherlands. And they did just that. Winning all of their matches and placing first in their pool, the

Polish men's team also qualified for Paris.

Outside of the hardwood courts and onto the sand, qualification looks a little different. And things aren't so set in stone. A point-based ranking system organised by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) will take into account the 17 best performances from 2023 to 2024 for a majority of the teams. The remaining spots will be filled by the duos who win the five Continental Olympic Tournaments.

In the current FIVB Beach Volleyball World Ranking for men, Poland's Michał Bryl and Bartosz Łosiak are in the 12th spot, while Jagoda Gruszczyńska and Aleksandra Wachowicz are 26th in the women's ranking. If nothing were to change, Bryl and Łosiak would qualify for competition in Paris, and Gruszczyńska and Wachowicz would not. Although there is time to spare until the top 17 are solidified, the female duo will need to accumulate more points in international competition in order to qualify at this round.

There's potential Olympic glory for Poland's volleyball teams. The competition is tough, but at this level, it's expected.

All the best in your future endeavours!



NEWS BRIEFS



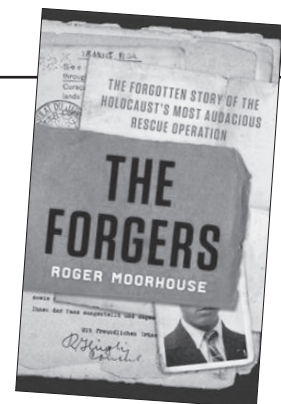
Polish Christmas Chorus Concert

The Karuzela Chorus, under the direction of Dr. Neil Stahurski, will present a concert of carols and pastoralki at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Polish Hill, on Saturday, January 6, 2024 after the 4:30 PM Mass (at approximately 5:30 PM). A free-will offering will be taken. For further information, please email DrStahurski@comcast.net.

British historian's book, *The Forgers*

British historian, **Roger Moorhouse**, has written the book, *The Forgers: The Forgotten Story of the Holocaust's Most Audacious Rescue Operation*. The book tells the story of how, between 1940 and 1943, a group of Polish diplomats and Jewish activists in Switzerland, under

the leadership of Aleksander Ładoś, who headed Poland's legation in that country, forged passports and identity documents for Latin American countries, which were then smuggled into German-occupied Europe to save the lives of thousands of Jews facing extermination in the Holocaust.





US-Based aid for Ukrainian artifacts

The **Smithsonian Institution** and the **Kosciuszko Foundation** in the United States, together with the Polish Foundation Folkowisko have joined forces to help protect and preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage artifacts and to prevent their destruction during the Russia-Ukraine war. Most pieces, particularly at the **Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv** have been placed in storage.

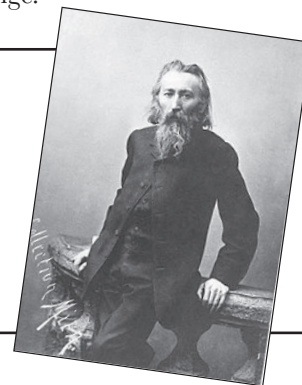
Removed from their displays in museums, artifacts need to be kept in storage areas with optimal

humidity levels and air temperatures. Both excessive humidity and overly-dry air can cause damage, especially to wooden sculptures, icons and paintings. The Smithsonian Institution, the Kosciuszko Foundation and the Folkowski Foundation have purchased and donated the equipment, valued at approximately (US \$40,600), which can maintain proper humidity. The Smithsonian Institution is dedicated to protecting culture in crisis situations. The Kosciuszko Foundation is dedicated to cultural exchange.

Sketches by Jan Matejko at Warsaw's Kordegarda gallery

The exhibit, entitled **Jan Matejko: Preliminary Sketches**, marks 185 years since the birth of one of Poland's most prominent painters and to commemorate the 130th anniversary of his death. There are 43 draw-

ings and sketches that laid the foundation for some of Matejko's most iconic, large-scale historical paintings. 2023 has been declared the Year of Jan Matejko, recognizing his profound influence on Polish art and culture.



British Gift to Polish Library



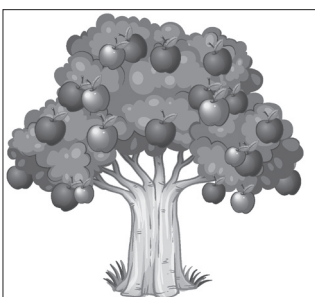
George Windsor, Earl of St. Andrews, presented a valuable 16th-century manuscript to the National Library in Warsaw. He is an English philanthropist, a former diplomat, and a member of the British Royal family. The manuscript was originally in the first Polish National Library in the 18th century. It is *L'histoire de Primaleon de Grece*, published in 1572, a French translation of the chivalric romance, *Primaleón*, by Spanish author, Francisco Vázquez. After the third partition of

Poland, in 1795, the entire collection of that library was transferred to St. Petersburg on the order of the Russian Empress II. Later, many items in the collection were dispersed to many places around the world. Windsor purchased the manuscript in a book market 30 years ago, and only later learned of its significance. Tomasz Makowski, director of the National Library expressed his gratitude and said that "...every manuscript from Poland's first National Library is a national relic".

Polish documentary about Ukraine war wins top prize in Sheffield

The Polish Film Institute has announced that *In the Rearview* by **Maciek Hamela**, a Polish documentary about Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion, has won the Grand Jury Award for the International Competition at the 2023 Sheffield Docfest. The jury said that they "...were stunned

by the brilliant simplicity of this film which makes us fellow-passengers upon a universal odyssey of survival and exodus". At the beginning of the invasion, Hamela volunteered to help transport refugees to safety. He began filming and the refugees opened up to him to tell their stories.



Poland donates 300 apple trees to New York

Poland has donated 300 apple trees to New York City, the city known as the Big Apple, as a celebration of centuries of ties between Poland and America. They were planted at the Carlyle Hotel by the State of Poland Foundation, the Polish consulate in New York and the Tree Time Foundation. Several of the trees have been named after Poles and Americans who had made

a particular contribution to Polish-American heritage, including Tadeusz Kościuszko and Casimir Pułaski. As a symbol of hospitality, health and prosperity, the trees are meant to honor the Polish community for helping to build the "American Dream" and to insure that Poland evokes such associations.



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Thinking about Year-End Planning? Your Donations to PCC Matters

As you enjoy the PCC programs, you may not realize how important donations are to this organization. Quite simply, the Polish Cultural Council needs contributions. Without charitable support through donations and fundraisers, we could not fund operating and program costs. Here's an overview where our money goes.

We intentionally keep our operations streamlined and highly efficient: the PCC has no brick-and-mortar assets, no equipment, and no capital assets with monthly expenses. In that same vein, our annual fixed costs cover a wide range of expenditures, including fees for the Executive Director, Polish Film Festival expenses, the *Polish Journey*, facility rental for the Polish language classes, instructor fees, website maintenance, insurance, office supplies, printing, postage, miscellaneous and other program costs for cultural events. This is an exceptionally frugal budget for an organization with our reputation and cultural impact. And costs are continually increasing.

PCC's most valuable asset is our Executive Director who brings to our organization vast professional expertise and extensive connections in Poland and throughout the

United States. As her own contribution to the PCC, she works at a modest rate, understanding the limitations on the organization's budget.

Fundraising events alone do not cover our expenses. We depend on—and we really need—your donations and membership fees to keep the organization alive and thriving.

While the last few years with COVID have resulted in consistent losses, we are excited now to resume full programming. So please consider a year-end donation to support your Polish Cultural Council. We need you to help us continue to showcase the best in Polish arts and culture!

You can send us a check, scan the QR code below, or pay via our website link: www.PolishCulturalCouncil.org

