

Polanki, Inc.

Polish Women's Cultural Club Newsletter

October [Październik] 2016

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Polish Heritage Month

Polanki Meeting October 14

The October meeting of Polanki, Inc., will be held at Villa St. Francis at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, October 14. Final arrangements will be made for the Soup Festival on Sunday, October 16. Also it is Polish Heritage Month and Polanki is honoring members for their years of service. See the list on p. 4.

SPEAKER: Michael Mikoś will speak about his new book about modern Polish poetry.

HOSTESSES:

Kathy Camacho
Sue Holcomb
Diane Ufnowski
Laurie Ufnowski
Adrienne Zuber

From the President's Pen

I'm back after traveling around Poland for a few weeks. I went to Gdansk, Lublin, Krakow, Zakopane, Wadowice, Auschwitz, Częstochowa, Wrocław, and Warsaw. The people and food were fantastic, and I learned more about Poland. The DNA results are in. My mom is 97% Polish. A native Pole is typically 85% Polish, so the test confirmed that we are in fact of Polish ancestry like my grandma always said. The next step is trying to determine where in Poland our relatives came from. One side of our family came from the Russian partition and another from the German partition. The cooler weather is upon us, which means that the Soup Festival is almost here! Thanks in advance to everyone who is making the annual Soup Festival a success. I know many people look forward to it every year. The new website has launched, so check it out! www.polanki.org. Thanks to everyone who worked on the transformation. Keep up the good work!

Kayaker Aleksander Doba

by Jen Altschul

At 67 years old, a Polish Kayaker completes the longest open-water kayaking expedition across the Atlantic in history.

On April 19, 2014, Doba, who is now 68, paddled the final stroke of his 7,716-mile transatlantic journey, docking *OLO*, his 23-foot kayak, in a marina in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. The Polish native had departed from Lisbon, Portugal, on October 5, 2013, with the intention of paddling 5,400 miles across the Atlantic's widest point and arriving in Florida in mid-February. But storms and equipment failure threw Doba off course, tacking an additional 1,300 miles and two months onto a journey that already would have broken the record for the longest ever solo kayaking voyage. He is one of two people in the world to kayak across the Atlantic without a sail. No one had ever kayaked across open water for this many miles before his journey.



Doba traveled an average of 30 miles a day, often paddling at night, when the temperatures dropped. He slept no more than six hours a day in multiple installments, crammed into his cockpit on his side among five months' worth of food and equipment. Once he got far enough out from the shore, he spent most of the trip naked, deciding it was more comfortable.

When he was too far from shore to see any birds, Doba was surrounded instead by marine wildlife, from fish and dolphins to turtles, whales, and sharks.

"Dozens of sharks checked on me, but one was ready to attack me, and I had to whack his head with the paddle really hard to make him leave," Doba remembers. "On the warmer part of the Atlantic Ocean, flying fish were a big, unexpected attraction. When a few landed on my kayak, I didn't have to eat my lyophilized food for dinner that night."

Doba didn't begin kayaking until the age of 34 and didn't train physically for the journey.

"I consider myself to be a tourist," he explains. "I even do oceanic expeditions as a tourist. And a tourist does not prepare himself too much. I am generally physically active, ride a bike, work in my garden and enjoy walking."

Physically, Doba did not seem to experience any difficulty beyond some uncomfortable and persistent skin rashes caused by prolonged exposure to saltwater. But two months into the voyage, almost dead center in the North Atlantic, Doba's satellite phone stopped working, rendering him unable to communicate for 47 days. Then the AA batteries for his SPOT personal tracking device failed, and the retired engineer had to rig a new, delicate connection using AAAs. He rode through 30-foot waves. He spent 40 unplanned days and nights wrestling with unfavorable winds and currents that sent him paddling in circles around the notorious Bermuda Triangle. Every two weeks, he would make another loop. Three times, he paddled 200 to 300 miles, only to get pushed back by the winds and currents.

Finally, the kayak's rudder snapped in the storm, and, unable to battle against the trade winds with a broken rudder, Doba was forced to retreat to Bermuda to have his boat repaired.

Unloading *OLO* from the sloop that returned Doba back to the exact spot where he had been forced off course, the kayak's so-called wings, designed to act as roll bars to keep the vessel upright, broke. Still unflappable, Doba, who had never cared for the wings to begin with, removed the remainder of the broken

pieces and the navigation light attached to them and used an empty plastic jug and duct tape to reattach the lights to the body of the kayak before waving the sloop away for the final 700 miles of his journey.

“After breaking off those wings, it took me only a few seconds to adjust and start to enjoy such an unexpected improvement of my kayak,” says Doba. “Without the wings, the kayak had greater lateral stability and was less sensitive to wind. It was like my wishes came true. My decision to continue didn’t take longer than a few seconds.”

This was not Doba’s first transatlantic crossing in *OLO*. In 2010, Doba spent 99 days of the First Transatlantic Kayak Expedition paddling 3,400 nautical miles (3,913 miles) across one of the narrowest points of the Atlantic, between Dakar, Senegal, and Acarau, Brazil.

“The First Transatlantic Kayak Expedition was to check myself and my kayak. The second trip was to ‘raise the bar,’” Doba says. “I have two sons and two granddaughters. I hope they will learn not to be afraid to dream, turn dreams into plans, and bring plans to reality. Then there is [the] satisfaction of great achievements.”

–Reprinted from National Geographic on culture.pl, 5/27/2016.

A Bit of Milwaukee Polish History

Just sharing some Milwaukee Polish history that until recently has been very rare. Did you know that all the statues at Holy Hill were sculpted by a Polish-Milwaukeean, Joe Asklar. (1900's) He was known as a carver not a sculpturer.

What is unique is that he was formally untrained in his craft, so what he did, which is considered remarkable, suggests that he was a Polish /Milwaukee genius. You will search hard for any recognition of him by the administrative clergy at Holy Hill; most probably don't know who did those station masterpieces. (His name is mentioned in one sentence in a book in their bookstore.)

If you go to Calvary cemetery in Milwaukee, you will see another remarkable work of art by this Polish - Milwaukee artist. It is a life-sized bronze angel masterpiece that very few have seen. It sits proudly alone in all its majesty on top of a huge piece of granite—a commissioned piece by a wealthy Milwaukee politician a century ago. (It looks like mom; she, as a child, was a model for him—a family tale.)

He was gramps to my mom; she left me with some pictures of him. One shows him carving a bust of Polish General Kościuszko. They say it was sitting years ago in St. Josaphat Basilica. Hope the old folks and new young artists of the community enjoy the Polish history tidbits from my archival Polish/ Milwaukee History.

–Mark Talamantes-Gronkowski



10/1 Joyce Broderick

10/03 Darla Flemming
10/08 Wanda Kosmalski
10/11 Sharon Ann Rzentkowski
10/14 Grace Janusz
10/21 Joyce Hryniewicki
10/22 Patricia Koronkowski
10/24 Anne Gurnack
10/26 Ann Pienkos

Get Well Wishes to

Active member Barbara Rutkowski who had a lumpectomy and is already out and about; and

Active member Kathy Wroblewski came through her brain surgery to remove tumor and will be at the soup festival so give her a hello but keep up the prayers she still has to go through radiation.

Polanki is About . . .

Active members Anna Rogalski and Halina Sosnowski who spent two hours in the library translating marriage vows for a wedding. All the relatives coming from Poland do not speak English. My advice: Get an interpreter for the day.

Community Corner

Norway House Torsk supper dates for 2016:

Oct. 22
Nov. 12
Dec. 10

Polish Heritage Alliance is presenting a three-week series of films in the Veterans' Room from 7-9 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 11—"Nine Days that Changed the World"

Tuesday, Oct. 18—"Lech Walesa: Leader of Solidarity and President of Poland" and "Restoring Milwaukee's Kosciuszko Monument"

Tuesday, Oct. 25—"The Fourth Partition"

For more information, please contact the PCW at (414) 529-2140

Dożynki (A Polish Harvest Festival) presale tickets are now available for Syrena's Oct. 8 Dożynki at Blessed Sacrament. Online syrena-

dancers.com or 414-744-1893. Presale is \$5; at door \$10

Coming Events

October 16 Soup Festival, Norway House
Nov. 18-20 Holiday Folk Fair
Dec. 4 Holiday Bazaar, PCW
Jan. 29, '17 Christmas Party at PCW

Membership Recognition 2016

5 Years

Ruth Brzezinski
Louise Cieslak
Anne Gurnack
Patricia Jankowski

10 Years

Marcia Kordecki
Patricia Koronkowski

15 Years

Lynn Adams

20 Years

Claire Anderson
Lidia Sobierajski
Monika Sobierajski

25 Years

Jadwiga Korasz

30 Years

Teresa Frankowski
Joanna Nowakowski
Kim Swedowski

35 Years

Barbara Spalda

40 Years

Bernadine Jendrzeczek

45 Years

Anna Kozłowski

50 Years

Barbara Milner
Barbara Niemczycki

Scientists are on the Trail of the First Dinosaurs

Fossilized footprints—not bones—are the earliest evidence of dinosaurs and their relatives. In 2010, paleontologists working in Poland discovered 250-million-year-old tracks made by a dinosaur-omorph (a group of animals that includes dinosaurs and a few very close relatives). These footprints are about 20 million years older than the oldest-known fossilized dinosaur bones.



Tadeusz Kosciuszko's *Imieniny*

The celebration of Tadeusz Kosciuszko's *Imieniny* brings back a Polish tradition as well as memories of a significant historical event. On October 28, 1792, the *Imieniny* for Tadeusz, Prince Czartoryski held a party at the Sieniawa Palace for Tadeusz Kosciuszko. Russia had just crushed Poland's army, outlawed the May 3 Constitution and banned the Virtuti Militari medals given to Polish heroes. The officers who received this medal sent the blue ribbons from these orders to their wives and girlfriends. At the party for Kosciuszko, women wore white dresses with black and azure sashes and braided their hair with the ribbons from the medals. The women also fashioned a garland crown on Kosciuszko's head made from branches and leaves from an oak tree planted 100 years earlier by King Sobieski.

—The above is a paragraph from a September 19, 2016, letter to Polanki from the Chicago Chapter of The Kosciuszko Foundation.

How to Survive Everyday Life in Poland

by Natalia Mętrak-Ruda



So, you've just landed in Poland. You've read your share of facts about Polish history, learned a few phrases, and you already know how to survive a Polish business meeting and a Polish dinner party . . .

You think you're pretty much set. Yet . . . in the mysterious land of Poland, there are some things that might still surprise you! You can be thanked, fined or frowned at when you least expect it, so here's a guide on how to behave on the street, on public transport, and in shops.

On the street

When it comes to walking, wandering, and strolling around, Poland isn't that different from other Western countries, except for one thing, crucial both for your safety and your wallet. You have to remember that

jaywalking in Poland is a definite no-no. Really. There are actual fines for pedestrians who cross the street when the light is red—even when there are no cars in sight, if the police catch you, you will be expected to pay. Why? Well, there’s one quite popular opinion about Poles that they like rules and then they like to break them . . . More and more often this law is considered ‘victim blaming’, since pedestrians are weaker and easier to harm, while far more accidents in Poland are the drivers’ fault, but for now it’s better to keep this opinion to oneself and simply wait.



In Poland, children are taught not to jaywalk early on. Photo: Jerzy Dudek

Poles tend not to look strangers in the eye, nor do they smile at them, usually behaving as if they were alone on the street. And watch out! Some surprised foreigners claim that they even tend to suddenly stop or change direction, often bumping into passers-by!

Body language

While Americans, for example, often use smiling as a coping mechanism (to apologize, thank or greet), Poles only smile when they have a solid reason. Cultural differences in the perception of smiling have been recently researched scientifically—interestingly, by a Pole.

In an article published in the *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* (June 2016, Volume 40, Issue 2, pp. 101-116), Kuba Kryś from the Polish Academy of Science focused on a phenomenon called ‘uncertainty avoidance’. When a society has unstable social systems (such as courts, healthcare etc.), people tend to view the future as uncontrollable and therefore perceive smiling—a sign of confidence—as somewhat weird and even consider it a sign of stupidity or dishonesty. On the UA scale Poland is rather low and so Poles tend to think people who smile for no reason are possibly less intelligent.

There’s even a phrase, ‘to smile as a fool at the cheese’ (*śmiać się jak głupi do sera*). On the other hand, a common proverb also states that ‘laughter is health’ (*śmiech to zdrowie*), so don’t be too afraid of showing positive emotions in public.

As for gestures, do what you please: Poles are less energetic than Italians, but more enthusiastic than Scandinavians, so it largely depends on individual traits.

Public transport



Ticket control in the Warsaw metro. Photo: Krystian Maj

Traveling by means of public transportation at first glance seems pretty obvious: you need to check the schedule, buy a ticket (and remember to validate it) and off you go. There is no differentiation between doors (like, for example, in London, where you are expected to enter by the front door and show your ticket to the driver), but you should remember that ticket controllers (often called by the mildly offensive name *kanary*) randomly enter buses and trams or even wait at underground Metro stations. As on the street, Poles avoid touching, rarely initiate conversations, or smile at each other, although some curious passengers have a

tendency to stare at whoever looks a little flamboyant. You are definitely expected to give up your seat to the elderly and to pregnant ladies—this is just a sign of good manners. No surprises yet? Well, there is one peculiar thing . . .

If you stand anywhere near a door, you shouldn't be surprised if someone (most often an elderly lady) asks: *czy pan/pani wysiada?* ('are you getting off'), even if the bus or tram isn't even approaching the stop yet. Why is this person interested in my destination? Isn't it obvious I'm not blocking the door on purpose?—you might ask. They are not really interested and it probably is obvious, but you should either move over or nod and get off at the next stop—ever suspicious, Poles like to be prepared.

Shops and cafeterias



It's always best to have some change.

You take money from the ATM, you go to the grocery store, excited to buy your chewing gum, and . . . *'nie mam wydać'* (I have no change) is what you hear at the counter. One of the first peculiarities foreigners notice when shopping in Poland is that they are often expected to pay with an exact amount of money. 'Can I owe you a *grosik?*' and 'I have no *drobne*' are phrases often heard in shops and kiosks. It's considered quite rude to pay for matches or a bread roll with a 100 zloty bill, and when the exact amount is 22.34 it's best to at least find 34 *grosze*. Alaistar, a teacher from Northern England residing in Warsaw, who often uses his experiences while preparing lessons for Poles, says:

Maybe I find this annoying as I come from a culture where you can buy a box of matches with a 20 pound note and the most you will get is a suspicious look while they check to see if the money is counterfeit. Also, I think there is an obligation to the customer from the proprietor to provide them with change because bottom line they are making them richer. That said, keeping the tills stocked with a steady supply of change, is not only more convenient to the customer but also reduces queues which result as a knock-on effect of the exact money only rule.

Anthropologists explain that the behavior in Polish shops can be connected to pre-war times when salespeople and cashiers held a much higher social position and were not expected to do everything the customer wanted. On the other hand, one might look for the explanation behind this fear of larger denominations in the PRL era, when having a large sum of money was considered suspicious.

When it comes to crowded cafeterias and informal restaurants, don't be surprised if strangers come to your table and ask if they can sit with you. This—apart from being practical and quite trendy in the 'common table' era—is actually a habit acquired during communist times, when staff and tables were scarce and you had to sit wherever possible.

Whether you ate your meal with strangers or with colleagues, it's always polite to say 'thank you' after you've finished. Even if nobody at the table cooked the food, saying thanks for each others' company is just another sign of Polish good manners.



Bernie Jendrzejczak



Judy Chattin and Edith Malson

Polanki at Work

Polanki Newsletter published by

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