

Polanki, Inc.

Polish Women's Cultural Club Newsletter

December [Grudzień] 2016

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Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia

Happy Holiday of the Nativity of God

No Meeting This Month

Polanki does not have a meeting in December because of our Christmas party. However, this year our party will be January 29, 2017. Enjoy the time off and have a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year.

From the President's Desk

I hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving. Advent is upon us, which means Christmas and the New Year are just around the corner. Thanks to everyone who helped out at Folk Fair this year. The cultural and sales booths were both very successful! The Polanki Christmas tree at the Polish Center is decorated. It's quite beautiful. Thanks to the members who helped decorate it. I'm thankful I didn't fall off of the ladder, but it was worth the risk. The weekend of December 3 and 4 will be a busy one for Polanki Members. Polanki is partnering with the Elmbrook Historical Society for The Christmas at the Inn on December 3 and 4. The Dousman Stagecoach Inn Museum in Brookfield will be decorated for a traditional Polish Christmas. On December 4, Polanki will have its annual sales booth at the Polish Center's Holiday Bazaar. Thanks to all of the members who will make these events a success! Don't forget to mark your calendars for Polanki's annual Christmas Party which will be held on January 29, 2017, at the Polish Center. Thanks to all of the members who are working so hard to make the event a special one for all of us. We will not have a meeting in December. Our next membership meeting will be on January 13. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! See you in January!



Barbara Niemczycki's Eulogy (1932-2016)

Good morning. For those who don't know me, my name is Eva Melenchuk and thank you for coming to celebrate Barbara's life.



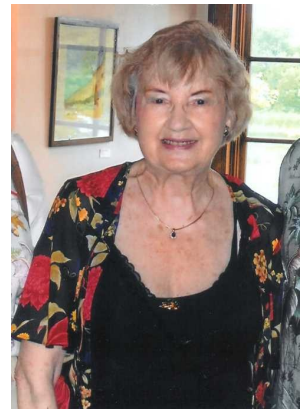
As most of you know, I was not Barbara's real daughter. My mom and Barbara were best friends and I have known her ever since I was a little girl. She and her late husband, George, never had any children but they were always a part of our family. My mother unexpectedly passed away in 1982, and we continued our relationship and together grieved and reminisced. They were always invited to my house for holidays, birthdays and special occasions. One day, I asked her if she could help me translate my Polish grandmother's memoirs, and she enthusiastically agreed. That's when we became quite close and once, when we were reminiscing about

my mom, I asked her if we could informally "adopt" each other, and she loved the idea of having a daughter. After living through her husband's frequent illnesses and subsequent death in 2006, she came to visit a close friend a few times in Florida and fell in love with the warm weather and the Senior community. She then decided to move there against my advice because I was concerned that if she needed help, I would not be near by. She lived there for 7 years and had no regrets about moving there where she met so many wonderful people and had many great memories. Barbara was an amazing woman; she was smart, outgoing, compassionate and a talented painter and crafter to name a few attributes but most of all she was a great mom to me, loving godmother to Chris and caring friend to many here and in Florida.

Being born and raised in Poland, she lived through the horrors of WW2 as a little girl. Her experience of bombs falling all around affected her greatly and she begged her mother to pray the Memorare with her, and it became her favorite prayer since they were not physically harmed.

She arrived on the shores of America to freedom from communism and the land of opportunity. Barbara studied medicine in Poland and became a physician specializing in Infectious diseases. However, because the requirements were different in the US, she could not practice here and became a medical technologist at the old County Hospital.

Polish culture was very important in her life, and she was proud to recently celebrate 50 years of being a Polanki member which is the Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee. She was also a devoted member of the Polish Center of Wisconsin and was very involved in volunteering for both of these organizations. Not only did she share her time and talent but also donated the craft items, water color and acrylic paintings she made. She even had her own art exhibits at the Polish Center. Classical music and reading great literature, especially Polish and WW2 stories was what she spent much of her free time doing; and she absolutely loved symphonies, operas and theater productions. She was passionate about correcting any type of misinformation about the events that occurred in Poland during the war. Her memory was fantastic, and she could bring up all the facts on famous singers, authors, playwrights and, of course, all her medical knowledge.



Barbara gave her love and support whether things were going well or not. Whenever there were disagreements, she valued relationships and would eventually seek to reconcile. When she became sick, as she often did, being a doctor she had already diagnosed herself with cancer. Even when it was confirmed as terminal pancreatic cancer, I never heard her complain about it. She did not want people to pity her, but she was grateful for everyone who reached out to her whether it was a card, phone call or a visit. Her faith grew over the years especially as she dealt with her husband's many illnesses and death. Even though she tended to be private about it, we had many discussions and prayed often about the mystery of our faith and

where God was in all that is difficult to deal with. The sicker and weaker she became, prayer was much more important and she appreciated those who prayed with her or for her.

Spending time with people who cared, listened and spoke with her was what she treasured the most. It decreased her anxiety and helped her to realize the importance of loving each other. I believe that, as she grew sicker and transitioned from her earthly life closer to God who is love. It became clearer to her that when she dies, her body passes away; but love does not succumb. She realized that it goes on, the love we share with each other is never forgotten. It is etched in our hearts and what has been carved there lasts forever into eternity.

Some of you know that in the last few weeks preceding her death, Barbara told us she saw the light one day and a man's face with a beard a few times. This should give us hope that one day we will all have the opportunity to join her where as I frequently comforted her with the knowledge that there is no more death, sorrow, crying or pain. Maybe she can inspire all of us to take a bit more time and effort to love a little more those who God has put in our lives. Barbara, mom, I love you and will miss you but we will we meet again. May God bless all of you.

Member Tidbits

Anne Wall made over 1,000 gluten-free pierogi for the International Food Technology Show at Chicago's McCormick Place.

Bernie Jendrzczak's niece Zea and her husband Ryan are new parents to a 9lb. 7 oz. baby girl, Beatrix.

Barbara Rutkowski started her cancer treatments on December 1.

Louise Cieslak is a member of Friendship Force of Greater Milwaukee. This chapter is part of Friendship Force International. Their mission is to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Louise and her husband volunteer to home host people from other countries visiting our beautiful city. Louise has made friends recently with people from Montreal and Gatineau, Canada. In the past, Brazil, Mexico, and Guadeloupe. The people from Guadeloupe (French speaking) came to learn English. It's a non for profit organization.

Community Corner

Norway House Torsk supper dates for 2016:

Dec. 10, Jan. 28, Feb. 25, Mar. 25, & Apr. 22



12/03	Janet C. Protasiewicz
12/05	Carol Bialek
	Elaine Posard
12/07	Shirley Sternig
12/13	Romaine Bata
12/14	Denna Flemming
12/17	Devon Flemming
12/15	Jane Dunn
	Jean Wroblewski
12/26	Halina Sosnowski

Coming Events

Jan. 29, '17 Christmas Party at PCW

April 24, '17 Awards Tea, PCW

April 30 '17 Pierogi Dinner, PCW

Oct. 15, '17 Polish Soup Festival Norway House

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee announces its 2017 annual Summer Study program

at the School of Polish Language and Culture at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

The five-week Polish language course (July 3-August 5) includes 100 hours of instruction at beginning, intermediate or advanced levels, plus lectures of Polish culture and sightseeing of Warsaw, Sandomierz, and other places of interest. Cost estimate: \$2,975 including tuition, room, and board, and 5 UWM credits, plus round air trip transportation Chicago-Warsaw-Chicago. This program is open to students and the general public.

Also being offered are two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight-week courses as well as two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight-week intensive and highly intensive courses of Polish language in July and August.

For information, contact Prof. Michael J. Mikoś.
Dept. Of Foreign Languages and Literature
UW-M (414) 229-4151 mikos@uwm.edu



Translation

In October I told you about Anna Rogalski and Halina Sosnowski working two hours on a translation for a Polish/American wedding and the Polish guests. The ladies received this letter with a couple of pictures.

This “thank you” note is a little late in coming but I wanted to include a few wedding pictures of Melissa and Mateusz on their wedding day.

At the wedding reception, after all were seated for dinner, they gave me the microphone. I told the guests that I had thought about learning some Polish to give Matuesz’ relatives from Poland a personal greeting. But then, I had to confess that that was impossible for me to do—learn and speak Polish so quickly. I told the guests that I had elicited two lovely Polish ladies (both from Polanki) who had kindly agreed to record a Polish greeting that I could replay at the reception.

Then I played your tape on the microphone. All 225 guests were able to hear the message. The Polish speaking relatives were at the head table—very close to the wedding table. I watched their faces and I felt so happy. They not only understood the message but some cried. The parents of Mateusz, in particular, expressed their appreciation.

I told them how I had enticed you, Halina, to record this message for me. And, then, you had the wonderful assistance of Anno [sic]. So, once again, I thank you both!

Eternally grateful, Patricia Grochowski Reinke

Christmas in Polonia

By Patricia Pehowski Wolfe
(As told to her daughter June Groshek Czarnecki)

In Wisconsin’s Polish community, a farming family celebrates the holiday during the 1940s.

On our family farm and home, we had no electricity or indoor plumbing, but neither did most of our neighbors in the central Wisconsin area called Polonia. Many people of Polish descent lived there. Times were tough then, but we were fortunate.

Our potato farm provided most of our food, and our house had a wraparound porch, four bedrooms, and an attic big enough to play house in. We had two player pianos, although when the pumps broke in of them Daddy chopped it up for firewood. I remember crying hard that day.

In late 1945, my sister Elaine was born in the downstairs bedroom. Candles didn't provide enough light, so the doctor turned on his automobile's headlights and pointed them through the bedroom window. Afterward, Daddy announced that despite the costs, we would have electricity. He knew a man who could get the job done before Christmas.

Getting Ready

The Polish people celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve. The celebration is called the *Wigilia*. At daybreak, Daddy went into the woods to cut down a pine tree. After breakfast, Ma scrubbed the kids in a metal tub in the kitchen. I was the oldest, almost six, I bathed before my four-year-old sister, Phyllis. After we finished, my one-year-old brother, Kenny took a bath in the same water.



After our baths, we decorated the tree with delicate glass and foil ornaments, strung popcorn, and candied cherries. Since we now had electricity, Daddy placed bubble lights on the tree. Filled with colorful oil, the tiny glass tubes bubbled when heated.

Our grandmother, whom we called Busia, Aunt Dorothy, and Uncle Alphonse and his wife, Frances, would be our guests for the *Wigilia*. When evening came, Ma arranged snacks of walnuts, creamed herring, and even a bowl of oranges.

We watched for the headlights of Uncle Alphonse's truck through the big bay window. But when we saw headlights, they were not from his truck. Confused, we watched as an unfamiliar group of people scrambled out of a vehicle and knocked on our door. They were wearing reindeer costumes and deer antlers.



Once in the house, one "reindeer" started dancing while another played lively polkas on his concertina. The dancing reindeer threw hard candies and peanuts all over our dining-room table. Another reindeer played a harmonica. Phyllis, Kenny and I started dancing, and baby Elaine started crying. We were laughing so hard that we didn't notice Uncle Alphonse and Aunt Frances walking in the back door.

One reindeer wanted Ma to drop money into a tin cup. Ma laughed, shrugged, and to our surprise, dropped in a quarter. With money in the cup, the reindeer left, shouting *dziękuję* and *Bożego Narodzenia*, which mean "thank you" and "Merry Christmas." When we were older, we found out that the reindeer were our farming neighbors.

The Family Celebrates

Now that the family was all together, the children were allowed to open presents. Phyllis and I received paper doll cutouts, and Kenny unwrapped a toy airplane. Baby Elaine got plenty of kisses.

At nine sharp, we gathered around the table. First, Daddy broke off the first piece of *oplatek*, wafer-thin bread, and passed the rest to a family member. Each person broke off a piece. We said a prayer holding our piece of the bread, and when it ended we ate our bread in unison.

Now the feast could begin. We ate three types of meat from our farm: Chicken, ham, and a Polish sausage called *kielbasa*. There was steaming rye bread and mashed potatoes with onion bits dripping with sweet butter. For dessert, we had date bars and fruitcake.



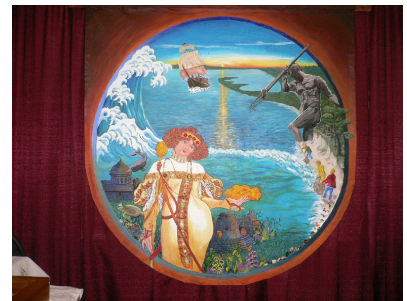
After dinner, the adults played cards. When they didn't want us to hear their jokes, they whispered in Polish. (At school, we were encouraged to speak only in English.)

As midnight neared, Daddy kept with tradition. He set up the old sleigh and readied the horses. Ma placed heated bricks in blankets under our feet. With a snort from the horses, we were off, listening to the jingle of bells and the occasional howls of coyotes in the night wind. Soon the spire of the Catholic church would rise in the distance and we would end the *wigilia* with midnight Mass.

—Reprinted from *Highlights*, December 2016.

Polanki's Cultural Exhibit at Holiday Folk Fair: The Treasures of Poland's Water

Picture this: A stunning and gorgeous hand-painted, three-dimensional mural depicting the Baltic Sea created by Margie Hess. An interactive exhibit showing visitors that real amber floats and fake amber sinks in salt water—suggested by Louise Cieslak at a planning meeting the day after she returned from Poland, perfected by Kathy Wieczorek and Bernie Jendrzczak and using amber from Margie, Anna Rogalski and Halina Sosnowski. A Kashubian costume on display from Ada Dziewanowska's collection, orchestrated by Ewa Barczyk-Pease. Beautiful pieces of amber in unique jewelry, mushrooms, animals, boats, dice, a vase, a lamp, and a cross



donated for viewing only by Jean Wroblewski, Marjorie Piechowski, Hedy Moskaluk, Char Dzimiel, Diane Holytz and Louise. Colorful bookmarks describing amber and Queen Jurata's legend created by Marjorie to give to visitors—sitting on top of a table covered with an extraordinary crocheted tablecloth from Ewa reminiscent of a fishing net (how perfect for a Baltic Sea and water theme). A vividly colored poster featuring Queen Jurata and her legend that was first rescued from Polanki's storage unit by Louise, Margie and their husbands and then brought back to life by Marjorie's printing connections. And, to top it off, a visit by beautiful Queen Jurata herself (or was it Denna Flemming?), dressed in her fineries.

This was the scene at Polanki's Cultural Booth at Holiday Folk Fair. Visitors raved about the mural and were stunned to learn that Margie designed and painted it freehand. Groups clustered around the interactive exhibit, especially when





volunteers invited them to guess which was the real amber and which was the fake. (The children especially loved the guessing game and were so proud when they guessed correctly!) If there was a dollar for every time we heard that the amber cross in the display case was exquisite or that Marjorie's chunky amber jewelry could not possibly be worn, Polanki would have another scholarship to give away. Volunteers were continuously replenishing bookmarks. Having Queen Jurata visit the exhibit was a bonus. And if we would have turned our backs for a second, Ewa's popular crocheted tablecloth would be admired in another home right now!

Thanks to the volunteers who worked before, during and after Holiday Folk Fair: Ewa, Marjorie, Louise (and her husband, Paul), Joanne Barndt, Elaine Posard, Teresa Jankowski, Pat Koronkowski, Helen Miller, Edith Malson, Joanna Gibelev, Denna, Nadine Flemming, Carol Powers, Margie (and her husband, David), Kathy (and her sister, Arlene), and Diane (for use of the display case from the Polish Center).

Finally, a huge thank you to the Planning Committee: Eva, Louise, Kathy, Margie, Marjorie, Camille Shaw and Anne Wal. It was a successful team effort!

Dousman Stagecoach Inn Museum



What a team! My job as chairperson was easy with the enthusiasm and hard work of the committee for this event. Ewa Barczyk Pease brought Ada Dziewanowska's beautiful costumes and Ewa's mother Zofia Barczyk's Polish treasures including a St. Nick costume. If this wasn't enough, Ewa even married St. Nick and brought him to the event. Neal Pease was a real hit with his St. Nick costume. Ewa also revealed hidden artistic talents when she uncovered her play dough herring for the wigilia table. Margie Hess totally handled the children's crafts which were loved by everyone. Her handy person skills also make light work of displays and set up. (When I took over so Margie could have lunch, the children wished the other lady would return.) Valerie brought her trove of hand-made ornaments and decorated the trees and other displays. Laurie and

Diane Ufnowski were set up wonders. No need to micro-manage those two. And when Laurie and her son Michael returned for take down on Sunday, it was like the cavalry had arrived. Kathy Wieczorek was a great help in set up and provided a wonderful presence by working on her military caps in the ladies' parlor. Her presence instigated many questions about Polish culture and she was able to share so much information. And the best was Kathy's return to the museum on Sunday after PCW's holiday bazaar to help take down.



Linda Thayer, the curator at the museum, was wonderful to work with. Her compliments were so nice to hear. The museum provided lunch for volunteers on Saturday including bean soup (the original owner's recipe from the 1800s) sandwiches and cookies. They also invited the committee to join them this summer at one of their teas. Their generosity makes the committee feel very appreciated.

Saturday was alive with the St. Maximilian Kolbe Saturday School students and many parents. The children performed twice and sang all in Polish. Everyone was especially tickled by their rendition of Guantanamera in Polish. The children provided many smiles with their performance.



In the afternoon, we had the pleasure of the choir from The Polish National Church. It was not surprising when I learned that many of the members had been singing together for forty years. Evidently practice does make perfect. They are amazing!

Of course, Geraldine Reszel offered her assistance by storing Polanki's Polish treasures. A special thank you to former Polanka Nina Nowakowski who suggested the museum contact Polanki to give the museum an authentic Polish Christmas.





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