



# Polanki, Inc.

The Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee Newsletter

September (wrzesień) 2020

## **Polanki Membership ZOOM Meeting September 11, 2020**

Out of consideration for the health of residents at Villa St. Francis and our members, Polanki's regular membership meeting will be held on Friday September 11, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. as a Zoom meeting. Anne Wal is graciously providing the Zoom program and will be able to help you sign in. You can access Zoom through a cell phone, a land line phone, a tablet/iPad or a desktop or laptop computer. Here's the log-in information:

### **To Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6579987280>

Meeting ID: 657 998 7280

Dial by your location  
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
Meeting ID: 657 998 7280

**For telephone access only, please call the meeting number and then enter the meeting ID when asked to do so. Then you will be able to listen to the meeting on your phone. This will work on a cell phone or a land line.**

**If you have internet access, please click on the link above to log into Zoom. Your computer will connect you and you will be able to see and listen to other participants.**

**If you have questions, please contact Anne Wal in advance of the meeting at 414-287-1530 or [awal@vonbriesen.com](mailto:awal@vonbriesen.com). She will be happy to run a test Zoom session with members who ask.**

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### **Program:**

Instead of a program in person, we are sharing two stories written by Polanki members who were scheduled to present topics at future meetings, Angela Mischke Pienkos and Ewa Barczyk-Pease. You will see their interesting articles later in this newsletter.



## *From the President's Desk:*

### **Polanki Progress during the Pandemic-The Mission Goes Forward**

Many things have changed over the last few months but the tenacious work of Polanki members continues. Board meetings have been held on Zoom during the summer months and committees are making progress whether meeting virtually or in person following the social distancing and masking guidelines.

The library volunteers, under Susan Mikoś, continue to be available from 11:30 to 1:30 on Tuesdays in the library at The Polish Center. During the summer months letters have been translated, research has been accomplished, and books were lent. In addition, the volunteers have processed book donations and purchased and reorganized shelving. Stop in to see the changes.

Treasurer Jean Wroblewski has been diligent in investing Polanki's funds as well as keeping up with ongoing deposits and monthly expenditures. Jean also would be happy to deposit your membership dues.

Polanki members participated in a sales booth at How Great Thou "Art" All Saints Art Fair, where they sold Bolesławiec pottery and Polish Folk Art. Kathy Wieczorek added a new and very well received Polish fabric face mask. Unfortunately, the weather went from feel-like temperatures in the high nineties and by 1:00 p.m. drove any customers away via a huge storm. Kudos to our hardworking volunteers and the All Saints church for their excellent organization and care about safety during the virus.

Martin Kozon, a Polanki college achievement award winner, Ewa Barczyk-Pease, and Tamara Johnston are completing an exhibit on Solidarity, noting the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Solidarity Movement in Poland.

Some board members were able to tour the progress of The Conservancy for Healing and Heritage. All in attendance were stunned by the beauty and progress at the site. More will be discussed at our September meeting.

Two ad hoc committees are forming: a Development Committee led by Kathy Wieczorek and a By-laws Committee under the leadership of Marjorie Piechowski. Ewa Barczyk-Pease is organizing a Zoom book club meeting for October. Details appear later in the newsletter

The Sunshine Committee is keeping Judy Chattin busy delivering flowers, sending cards and making phone calls. Every Polanki member is a member of this committee and reaching out to members experiencing isolation through a card or phone call would be wonderful. Those in any kind of group living are bearing more of the brunt of loneliness. Touch someone figuratively.

Anne Wal has been making the connection for the Polanki board meetings through Zoom. This will also be our connection for the General Membership Meeting on September 11, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. Look forward to the meeting but even more to the time when it is safe to meet in person.

Stay well.

*Camille Shaw*



## September Birthdays

9/02 Nancy Rydell  
Joanna Frańczek  
9/04 Mirosław Rogalski  
9/07 Judy Chattin  
9/12 Diane Ullstrup  
9/13 Barbara Mueller  
9/16 Joanne Barndt  
9/17 Susan Mullikin  
9/21 Teresa Frankowski  
9/27 Juliane Gaseor  
9/29 Heddy Moskaluk  
9/30 Dana Michaels



Our best wishes to the following Polanki members:

Active member Elena Shebelski is undergoing chemotherapy.

Active member Maria Adamiec is recovering from knee replacement as well as shingles.

Active member Marjorie Piechowski is completing physical therapy following replacement of her right shoulder earlier this summer.

If you know of any other Polanki members who are sick, please contact Judy Chattin, who is serving as Sunshine Co-Chair this year.



Congratulations to active member Jessica Ullstrup and her new husband, Jeffrey Condit, who were married at the Conservancy for Healing and Heritage on August 8.

# MEMORIES FOUND IN A STEAMER TRUNK

by Ewa Barczyk

Old furniture, books, dolls, pottery, so much old stuff... all these various objects encircle us and take up crucial living space. Do they add anything to our lives? We often treat them as an addition to our lives, as a sign of prestige and possession. They tell the story of who we are, the hobbies we have, sometimes the fear or ambition that consume us.

The Polish American Historical Association has a collection of objects on its site that it hopes will engage with the history of Polish Americans. The objects tell the stories of people who traveled across the Atlantic. Most of the objects were to help them fulfill their dreams of remaking their lives anew far away from home.

If you or anyone in your family has such things that came with relatives or are linked to your history, please consider adding it to our project.

These objects are reflections of those who owned them and for that reason I chose to write an entry about a steamer trunk that came into my house after both my parents passed and rather than think of it as just an old piece of furniture, I thought about its travels and what was likely inside the steamer. Here is my short reflection on this object.



This steamer trunk (kufer) traveled with my parents and me from Liverpool England to New York City in 1952 aboard the Cunard Line ship *Franconia*. The trunk was supposedly built by my father and a friend in Diddington where we lived on a school campus in a Polish Resettlement Camp where my dad taught. All my parents' possessions were placed in the trunk for safe passage.



I do remember there were several heavy pots and pans, my Mom's white wedding shoes, a couple of elegant handmade dresses, a photograph album documenting my childhood in England, and an album of pencil sketches of the destruction of Warsaw, my Mother's birthplace. Despite asking many times about the artist, my mother always claimed she did not recall who he was, so we were left to create our own theories.

Also in the trunk were my father's books in Greek and Latin; his report card from the University of Vienna during the war with a photo of him wearing a clerical collar and cassock; papers issued by the Nazi government that certified that he had been injured in Vienna during an Allied bombing in February 1945; a letter from the director of a seminary in Graz at the end of the war to General Anders in Italy asking that my father be released from army responsibilities so that he could resume his studies in the seminary; pamphlets printed by the Polish Army for the soldiers serving in Rome and Ancona; a single piece of paper signed by many teachers testifying that my mother had completed several business courses while in the last POW camp where she was interned in Oberlangen; papers from the Polish government in exile certifying that my mother had fought in the Warsaw Uprising and from the Polish Government in Exile Ministry of Education testifying that my Dad completed the necessary courses for him to teach a school for former Polish soldiers in Diddington near Cambridge; and a white silk parachute -- I recall there was a thin red stripe in the parachute.

So many unexplained objects were held in this trunk — these were all that remained from their previous lives as they left Poland. I wish I could weave a full story of my parents' lives from these random papers. Neither my siblings nor my mother knew why my father was at the university in Vienna while in the seminary studying to be a priest and how his army service fits into this picture, other than being told by family that the Nazis were searching for him in his hometown so he was smuggled out to Vienna. He mentioned that he would help transport people across the mountains to safety. We do not know which mountains, who he was saving and where he delivered them. He told me he took an oath of secrecy and allegiance and could not tell us what he did during the war.

Even though he lived until his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday, he would not break his promise. He enlisted in the Polish army and left at the start of the war and did not return to Poland until the 1960's. He left the seminary sometime after the end of the war and eventually joined other Polish soldiers in England by 1947 and was involved with the Polish Government-in-Exile in London in establishing schools for Polish soldiers arriving in England. He met my Mom in London at a Polish Club where she settled after arriving with army transports from Ancona, Italy with the Polish II Corps under Gen. Anders likely in 1946.

I have found much written about the Polish Resettlement Camps created by the British Government to absorb the demilitarized Polish soldiers and their families who chose not to go back to a Communist Poland. In 1949, the Committee for the Education of Poles turned an American war hospital, then Polish hospital, into a co-educational Polish Secondary Modern Boarding school with over 300 students, many of whom arrived from Siberia via the Middle East or Africa and their studies had been interrupted by the war. I was born in a hospital in Cambridge, shortly after the camp was started. We lived in corrugated metal Quonset or Nissen huts, which were called "beczki" or barrels by the residents. They were divided in half and each side was assigned to a teacher and family. I recall we had a coke burning cast iron stove in the middle which I was told to never touch so I had a big fear of such stoves.

My parents decided that there would be more opportunities in the United States for me and the British government was giving free passage for Poles to resettle elsewhere. The steamer trunk traveled by train with us to Liverpool and then to New York aboard the Franconia. Ellis Island ship registries do state that the three of us arrived in January 1952 with a trunk and two suitcases. The trunk was with us for a while in New York and then briefly in Connecticut while my father looked for work before deciding Chicago held more promise and where many of their friends resettled.



For more information on this and other camps,  
see: <https://www.polishresettlementcampsintheuk.co.uk/diddingtonschool.html>

A word about my mother's papers, which are more self-explanatory. She fought with the Home Army (AK) in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and was shipped out in cattle cars with the soldiers after the Germans crushed the uprising, being marched to several camps as the war front shifted. Oberlangen, near Holland, was her last imprisonment – it was the only female P.O.W. camp in Europe but the conditions were extremely hard. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the camp was freed. My mother would tell us, with tears in her eyes, about this unbelievable day when all the German guards ran away into the forest when they heard that a British army division was approaching. Much to the women's amazement, the soldiers in British uniforms were Polish soldiers of Gen. Maczek's 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured division, along with Gen. "Bór" Komorowski, who was commander of the Warsaw Uprising. My mother, along with many others, went to Ancona, Italy where Gen. Anders' army was located and where they could find a safe place to stay. How she got there over war torn Europe is another story.

See my mother's bio note: <https://www.1944.pl/powstancze-biogramy/zofia-kusmierska,26063.html> and interview: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/zofia-barczyk,3383.html>

I recall the trunk lived in a large walk-in closet in our house and I would sneak in there occasionally to admire and try on my Mom's old but still lovely clothes. So, what happened to these items? My Mom turned the parachute into a pretty dress for me which I wore to church and in the Corpus Christi procession in Diddington but it got some burn holes in a house fire shortly after we got to Chicago so it was discarded at some point after my younger sisters wore it as well.

My mother's papers were donated to the Uprising Museum in Warsaw where she has an oral history on file, the wedding shoes got ruined in a flood in their basement, the war pamphlets were donated to several university libraries and museums, and I still have some of my father's books and papers. I still have hope that I can do more research in trying to add more to his wartime story. The trunk represents the conclusion of my parent's odyssey which began during WWII.

I wish I had asked my parents more about these things while they were still alive, but they lived for the future and did not like to dwell on the past. Thus, the trunk, which still has a sticker indicating Cunard Line, remains in my house as a gentle reminder of the dreams that led my parents to pursue a new and better life in America seven decades ago. Sadly, I will never know the full stories of all these objects, but I cherish them for their rich history.

**Reprinted from Polish American Historical Association**

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## **Upcoming Community Events**

**Polonia Sport Club** is having its Harvest Festival (*Dozynki*) on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Free admission, no parking fees. Polish Mass at 1 p.m. at the Chapel. DJ Szymon of Silver Orkiestra at 2 p.m. Delicious Polish food, desserts and beverages. Soccer games, games for kids, fresh air and friends. Annual Raffle Drawing at 6 p.m.—prizes of \$5,000, \$350, \$300, \$150 and \$100. Raffle sponsors are Swendrowski Insurance, Rozga-Walloch Funeral, and Bruskiwicz Funeral. For tickets, contact Teri Jankowski (414-559-9301), Helen Foszpanczyk (414-331-5372) or Rick Rabiega (414-810-8158).

### **Polish Center of Wisconsin Events:**

Polish Center Piwo Patio Party & Café: Every Wednesday in September, 4 - 8 p.m.  
Open to the Public, Indoor & Outdoor... Rain or Shine

September 24: PHA General membership meeting

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## **General Polanki News and Information**

### **Polanki Library by Susan Mikoś**



The Polanki Library has an excellent collection of books and movies that are perfect for these slower times. We have temporarily suspended regular public hours, but our volunteers are ready to help. We can provide information via phone or email, arrange library visits by appointment, and offer curbside pickup or even delivery.

Although we were unable to access the library at all while the Polish Center was closed, Polanki volunteers have begun working again. We are using this time to eliminate the backlog of book donations and better organize our collections.

Due to the Gift Shop closure, Polanki moved its large glass display case into the library, which required us to rearrange shelving and other furniture. It took a lot of time and effort,



but in the end, our space will be more efficient. Special thanks to Juan Camacho for his expert assistance with furniture moving and set-up!

Because of illnesses and quarantines, our volunteer group has shrunk, but we still manage to have a good time. We could really use some additional help from Polanki members. Whatever your interest or abilities, there is plenty to do and we will try to find something that suits you. We have been working mostly on Tuesdays from 10:30 to 12:30 but other times would be possible. Call/text 414-628-1937 or email [sgmikos@yahoo.com](mailto:sgmikos@yahoo.com) for more information.

## **Polanki Polish Book Club will meet again but via Zoom**

**DATE: SUNDAY November 1, 2020**



**TIME:** 3:00 p.m. (remember to move your clocks one hour back as it's the end of daylight savings time)

**BOOK:** *“Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead”* by Olga Tokarczuk

Olga Tokarczuk, writer and activist in Poland, won the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature among many other international awards for her writing. This book was originally published in Polish in 2009 and translated into English in 2018 by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. It was made into a movie titled “Spoor” that was shown at the Milwaukee Film Festival and can be viewed online. The setting is a remote wooded region in contemporary Poland and deals with murder, astrology, and environmental issues, among other topics. It is a bit quirky with droll humor at times and very well written.

*Photo retrieved from Wikipedia*

You can borrow the book from your local library, buy it from local bookstores or Amazon. There is a paperback edition available for \$12 with free shipping.

If you have any questions, contact Ewa Barczyk (414-412-6456) who will moderate the discussion via Zoom. We will send out the Zoom link shortly.

## **Kościuszko Monument by Susan Mikoś**

Gardening at the Kościuszko Monument slowed a bit during the pandemic but our dedicated group of volunteers keeps going. From Polanki, it includes Kathy and Juan Camacho, Heddy Moskaluk and Mary Schumacher, and Halina Sosnowski. Judy Ramazzini has recruited several men from the neighborhood, without whom we wouldn't be able to do what we do. Dan Jankowski, a professional horticulturalist, has developed the mini-garden around the boulder in front of the monument into a year-round marvel of continuous blooms and winter interest. The Parks Department provides mulch, and we spread it around the trees and flower beds. The Parks Department also cuts the grass, but we pay a landscaper to fertilize and apply weed control.

In order to avoid another major restoration effort during our lifetimes, we are following a regular maintenance program for the monument itself. Every two years or so, the monument is cleaned and waxed. Every ten to fifteen years, the wax buildup may need to be removed and re-applied. The work is done by a local firm –



Vanguard Sculpture Services, Ltd. They will be cleaning and waxing the General sometime during the month of September.

Of course, all this maintenance comes at a cost. Fortunately, the successful fundraising effort that Polanki helped to spearhead generated enough donations to set up an endowment fund. We invested a portion of it with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, with the hope that it will grow and enable us to maintain the monument into the future.



*Photo courtesy of Judy Ramazzini*

### **Fund-Raising Opportunity for Polanki**

Polanki members now have the opportunity to raise money for Polanki through Amazon Smile and through on-line purchases of Bolesławiec pottery. Details are shown on the handout sent along with this newsletter. For more information on either topic, please contact Jean Wroblewski, Polanki treasurer.

### **Letter from Kathy Wieczorek to Polanki members:**

Under these difficult pandemic circumstances, not-for-profit organizations, including Polanki, are facing difficulties in obtaining support to fulfill their missions. Festivals and other art and craft fairs have been closed or have limited social distancing participation. At this time, it is unclear how future fundraising venues will be organized this year and beyond.

During the months of COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and other mandates, Polanki continues to use its checking account funds to pay its fixed expenses, such as monthly storage rental fees, postal fees, insurance premiums, credit card fees, and community membership renewals. To sustain these normal operating expenses, I secured a quarterly donation of \$500 on July 1, 2020 to relieve Polanki of some of these on-going expenses, but this amount does not cover all expenses. The next quarterly \$500 donation will be October 1.

As we move forward to support Polanki's mission now and in the future, Camille Shaw asked me to chair a Development Committee with the objective of thoughtfully pursuing opportunities to financially sustain our club. As the appointed chairperson, I want to build a Polanki team to explore and develop innovative fundraising possibilities.

Other skills helpful in this effort are experience in not-for-profit donations, solicitations, capital campaigns, grant writing, marketing and retailing. Additionally, specific legal and financial expertise in cultivating legacy donations and estate planning will be required to handle sensitive matters.

All recommendations to advance Polanki's mission will be forwarded to the Board for approval and passed on to the membership for voting, if necessary.

Polanki's president and treasurer are supporting members of the Development Committee, but I am hoping other members will consider stepping forward to help Polanki reimagine itself as we go through these uncertain times. If you would like more information or are interested in volunteering your talents and support for the Development Committee, please contact Kathy Wiczorek at [kwiczorek@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kwiczorek@sbcglobal.net) or phone [262-785-1196](tel:262-785-1196).

As always, your loyalty and commitment to volunteerism and to Polanki are greatly appreciated.

Kathy Wiczorek  
Konfederatka Cap Artisan

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## **At First Just a Beautiful Idea**

**By Angela Mischke Pienkos**

At the invitation of Camille Shaw and Marjorie Piechowski I'm sharing some memories about *Polanki*, an organization that has more than fulfilled its founders' high aspirations since 1953.

My first memories about what was to be *Polanki* go back to a snowy February night when I was 11 years old. My mother's friend, Harriet (Jadzia) Gostomska and her daughter Marilyn (later Bogan) had invited my mother, Aniela or Angela Dubiel Mischke and me to their home. But this get-together turned out to be much more than another lovely evening.

Earlier my Mother had shared with Harriet her experience, before our family's move to Milwaukee, as a member of a Polish women's club in Chicago, *Legion Mlodych Polek*. Harriet, who had been born in Poland but had lived in Milwaukee since childhood, had long been involved in its Polish activities. She had come to see the need for a revival of Polish community cultural life which she believed had greatly declined over the years.

Together Harriet and my Mother came up with an idea – why not a create a new organization solely dedicated to promoting an understanding and appreciation of Polish culture? What is more, as Marilyn and I sat at the

Gostomskis' kitchen table, we watched with great interest as they immediately started phoning women they knew who they thought might be interested in joining them.

Already on March 7, 1953 twenty-five women attended what became the founding meeting of the organization they named "*Polanki*."

From the start, Marilyn and her cousin, Barbara Jegier (Milner) and I were "junior" *Polanki* members too. What wonderful times we had in taking part and helping out in all those many, early and diverse *Polanki*-sponsored events – like the Easter Tea, the Folk Fair, musical and TV programs, lectures, and more. No proposed activity, once agreed on, seemed too difficult to achieve.

At first, just about all of *Polanki*'s members spoke Polish and demonstrated a great deal of knowledge about Poland. The early meetings themselves were held in the Polish language too. In time, members began speaking in Polish or in English (and sometimes in both languages at the same time!) Despite my age, I enjoyed participating in these lively and informative monthly meetings and also looked forward to enjoying the beautiful and tasty refreshments that were served! This went on until I began my graduate studies in Madison and Poland.

In 1968, I was back in Milwaukee, my graduate studies completed. I then rejoined *Polanki*. Once again I was active with my Mother in helping her prepare the thousands of *Chrusciki* for *Polanki* events, participating in Folk Fair, serving on its scholarship and programs committees, and being elected as its vice president. As *Polanki* approached its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary I was asked to write its history as a way to share *Polanki*'s wonderful story and its many contributions with members of the greater Milwaukee community. As I look back on this publication, my one regret is that in 1973 the technology did not yet exist to inexpensively include photographs that would further illustrate what *Polanki*'s members had already achieved.

There are so many *Polanki* members who I recall who did so much in those early years to make *Polanki* what it is today. Harriet Gostomska, my Polish language teacher Maria Laskowska, Reggie Sobczak, and, of course, my Mother. Janet Branden and Rita Michalak who came soon after as well! And so many many others! Such talented and hardworking activists!

Today, after 67 years of observing and participating in *Polanki* it is truly a joy to see its members of today continuing to share their knowledge of the Polish heritage and culture so well and successfully

*Sto lat!*

Dr. Angela Pienkos taught History at Ripon and Alverno Colleges before she was appointed Chief Administrator of Divine Savior Holy Angels High School. Later she became the Polish Center's second Executive Director. A past president of the Polish American Historical Association, her publications include the history of a great national organization, the Polish Women's Alliance. Angela, a sustaining member of *Polanki*, is Mom to four sons, and Babcia to eleven delightful grandchildren.



*Photo courtesy of Angela Pienkos*



## **2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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<b><i>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President</i></b>	Anne Wal (414) 287-1530
<b><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</i></b>	Laurie Ufnowski (414) 525-1094
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<b><i>Membership</i></b>	Maria Adamiec (262) 960-0924
<b><i>Newsletter Editor</i></b>	Marjorie Piechowski (414) 963-9055

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## **OTHER POLANKI POSITIONS**

<b><i>Sunshine Co-Chairs</i></b>	Edith Malson (414) 744-9412 Judy Chattin (414) 425-7965
<b><i>Advisors</i></b>	Ewa Barczyk-Pease Susan Mikoś
<b><i>Auditing Committee</i></b>	Judy Chattin Sue Konecny Heddy Moskaluk
<b><i>Web Master</i></b>	Dana Michaels



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Polanki, Inc.  
P.O. Box 341458  
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[www.polanki.org](http://www.polanki.org)

*Editor* *Marjorie Piechowski*

*President* *Camille Shaw*

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