

Mark Marian Piekarski

Mark passed away peacefully and surrounded by family on August 28, 2007 after a brief battle with kidney cancer. He was 55. Born in Chelmno, Poland, Mark joined the struggle to free Poland from communist oppression very early. In late 1978, he joined the clandestine organization known as Wolne Związki Zawodowe Wybrzeża (Coastal Free Trade Unions), the precursor to the Solidarity movement. In cooperation with Andrzej Gwiazda and Bogdan Borsewicz, he published the underground newsletter Robotnik Wybrzeża (Coastal Worker). This newsletter was printed by Mark in his home in Tczew. This effort resulted in the formation of Solidarity in August 1980. Mark took an active part in the well-known strike at the Lenin Shipyard where Solidarity was born. After 16 months of legal activity of the Solidarity Free Trade Union, Mark was imprisoned under martial law in Ilawa and Kwidzyn.



He immigrated to the United States with his wife Jolanta and two young daughters, Celina and Agnieszka, in 1982 as a political refugee and started his own landscaping business. During the whole period of martial law in Poland, Mark remained very active in the political and social arena. When the Polish Communist dictator Gen. W. Jaruzelski arrived at a UN session in New York, Mark organized a group of Poles to fly to New York City to protest Jaruzelski's visit. For almost a decade he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Polish American Congress Northern California Division. Mark was cofounder and publisher of the weekly "WIADOMOSCI," addressed mainly to the Polish community in the Bay Area. He was also cofounder of the organization FREEDOM, whose main goal was to raise funds for support of the underground resistance movement in Poland.

Mark also nurtured many other passions. He was well read and enjoyed many hours discussing philosophy and history with close friends. He and his wife Jolanta camped and hiked extensively throughout Northern California, and enjoyed sailing on the San Francisco Bay. They also made many memorable trips together, to worldwide destinations such as Mexico, London, Chicago, New Orleans, Memphis and Hawaii, as well as frequent visits to their grandchildren in the Washington DC area. Mark and Jolanta also took every opportunity to attend Blues festivals and other live music performances. As an avid fan of Blues music, Mark managed the MOFO Party Band and organized successful tours for them throughout Poland and other parts of Europe. The band will return in September 2007 for their third European tour, including stops in Poland, Germany, Belgium and the Czech Republic.

Mark is survived by his loving wife of 34 years, Jolanta; his father, Stanislaw of Tczew, Poland; his daughters, Celina Corridore of Gambrills, Maryland, and Agnieszka McPeak of New Orleans, Louisiana; and his beloved grandchildren Gabriel and Maya. In lieu of flowers, the family prefers blood donations to the Red Cross or other blood bank of choice, or contributions to the Blues Foundation's HART Fund, in memoriam of Mark Piekarski, 49 Union Avenue, Memphis TN 38103 (<https://www.blues.org/hart/>).