



Polish Profiles

The President's Godchild

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss, Ph.D.**, Executive Director
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Every family history has some legends filled with little white lies, but when it comes to the aristocracy, the legends are numerous and the lies are whoppers. Almost every aristocratic family in Europe claims that their beginnings were in Rome and so it was with the Polish-Lithuanian aristocrats, the Radziwills.

Legend has it that an illustrious Roman, Palaemon, who was a descendant of King Pontus, settled far away from Rome on the amber-rich shores of the Baltic sea in Lithuania. This supposedly happened in the days of Julius Caesar. However, another legend says that the Radziwill's roots can be traced to the High Pagan Priest Lideyko in Lithuania. In truth, the Radziwills do not go back to the Romans no more than they derive from the Pagan High Priest Lideyko. They were simply an old Lithuanian family. The earliest appearance of the Radziwill's name is in the Charter of the first Polish-Lithuanian Union in 1401. A Radziwill was among the signatories of the Polish-Lithuanian Union.

Not all of the Radziwills fit into one family portrait. It was an extremely colorful family whose members married into many Royal Families in Europe and served many masters. Most of the Radziwill men were Chamberlains, Chancellors, or Voivods in Lithuania. However, there were also those who served as Prussian Generals or Adjutants to Wilhelm I and Frederick II. One Radziwill became a Cardinal, another a Bishop, and one married King Sobieski's sister, and yet another was deranged. On the women's side, Anna Radziwill was Regent of Mazovia. Another, Sofia, married a Batory and was the grandmother of that memorable Polish King, Stefan Batory. A third Radziwill woman, Barbara, married the Polish King Zygmunt August Jagiello.

The Radziwills had peculiar and amusing nicknames. One was called Sierotka, another Brodaty, and a third, Panie Kochanku. Others were called Rybienku, Czarny, Zdrajca, and Pomylony. Anna Radziwill's nickname was Nieznosna.

Antony Henryk Radziwill, born in 1776, had three children. The oldest was Wilhelm, next was a daughter, Eliza, and the third, a son, Bogusław. Eliza was a well-known beauty and the great love of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Antony's first born son, also called Wilhelm like the Kaiser, served as a Prussian General, but his grandson was an Adjutant to Marshal Józef Piłsudski. Henry's second son, Bogusław, was the great-grandfather of Prince Stanisław Radziwill, who married Lee Bouvier, the sister of Jacqueline Kennedy.

The winds of war brought me from my native Silesia in Poland, first to Germany, then to Italy, and finally to England. There in the late forties and early fifties I was studying at the Royal College of Art. I supplemented my small scholarship by working as a waitress in the Polish Club, "Ognisko Polskie". At least a few times weekly Prince Stanisław Radziwill visited the club, for a black cup of coffee and "szarlotka". Mostly, he sat alone. Sometimes my future husband, Wiesław Mirecki, who was the director of the Émigré Theater in London, sat next to him. Mirecki was a distant cousin of Radziwill through his mother.

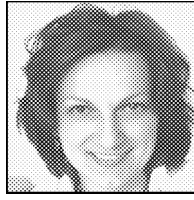
Stasio Radziwill, as we called him, didn't make any special impression on me or the other waitresses. We had among us a prince, who played the piano there, a countess, who was a waitress, and another aristocrat who made pastries in the kitchen to go with the coffee. So when a Radziwill came in it was no big deal.

Radziwill always looked pretty tired, wearing a modest jacket with leather patches on the elbow. One day the news reached us that Stasio Radziwill was going to marry the Yugoslavian -born widow of a wealthy Englishman. The wedding made big news in the London tabloids.

Wiesław Mirecki, who by then was my husband, decided to return to Poland for good. He was a professional pre-war actor and was invited to work at the National Theater in Warsaw and later to take over the Dramatic Theater in Zielona Gora. Mirecki made his rounds of farewells among them to Prince Radziwill. He found Stasio in a bad mood and on the verge of divorce from his wealthy Yugoslavian wife.

It all started with a Mediterranean cruise on the yacht of the Greek shipping magnate,

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Flirting with the Titans

Justyna Ball

Barbara and Roger just had their 50th wedding anniversary. To celebrate, they traveled to Long Island to visit the church where they got married and were hoping to spend a night at the same motel. Although Roger had some objections remembering the rail road crossing nearby and the sound of the horn waking them up at night, for which Barbara's sober response was, "We both wear hearing aids now, so what do YOU care?"

After the stop at the church, the couple found the motel, now called "Hollywood," and Barbara went in while Roger waited in the car. As soon as Barbara walked in, she noticed some changes - one being the reception desk that used to have a glass window, now the receptionist was reachable to customers, separated only by a counter. The woman measured up the guest from head to toe and asked, "How may I help you?" "I need a room." "How many hours?" Barbara paused but surely answered, "I need it for the night." The receptionist slowly walked around from behind the counter, approached Barbara, and whispered in her ear, "Mam, I don't think you want to stay here..." "I don't?" The receptionist shook her head "We have... mirrors."

So Barbara went to Roger and explained the situation to him. "I don't think this is the place," she summed up. But while they were driving off, the train went by and blew the horn.

These are the sure signs of times changing. Long Island's fields where potatoes used to be grown and sold are now turned into golf courses. Summer "cottages" now have boathouses and helipads. But that's the "upscale" Hampton's community and this is still Farmingdale...

The "Cheetah room" offers mood lights, wall and ceiling mirrors and in room - DVD movies. The Dark Dancer room features ...a stripper pole with stage. The rates are calculated from 3hours days (before 4pm) and 3hour nights (after 4pm).

That may be too much excitement for both Barbara and Roger, who are in their 70s. The "When the mood is Romance" theme and the "rental discount card (rent 7 times, the 8th is on us!)" did not convince them either.

The mood in Jurata, the small Baltic sea resort on the Hel peninsula, last week wasn't romance, although there was some flirtation in the air. Presidents Bush and Kaczyński

embraced, surely had lots of eye contact, spoke softly through translators, walked through the woods, although never alone.

Kaczyński used his best assets... his cute granddaughter and a dog. And it wasn't just any dog; it was a copy of The First Dog, Barney.

The dog actually played a crucial role; some even went so far and suggested that "Tytus" should replace the existing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anna Fotyga. Four legged, he seemed much friendlier, does not answer solely with a "no comment" and actually barks when expected to bark. Polish TV reported that in the American media, Bush's visit in Poland was overshadowed by Paris Hilton's going in / out of jail. Any world affairs were secondary to the fact that the heiress to the Hilton hotel empire did not like prison food, cried out for "mommy," and was escorted out, and soon afterwards, back to the jail cell. "C'mon, can't you design clothes from there? Can't you have a fashion column "Stripes are so 'in' this coming season!" But seriously, I feel sorry for kids like Paris, Britney, and Lindsey. They act in a ridiculous way because they are allowed to. We want to read about them. We put them on a pedestal, and we love to see them come crashing down. The question remains: WHERE ARE THEIR PARENTS?

Something tells me that even if it were not for Paris, there wouldn't be a glimpse of that visit because it would give importance to Poland's affairs. The American media coverage of the anti-missile shields controversy, yes. Reports of Bush and Putin exchanging opinions, statements by Angela Merkel, yes, yes. Tell the world about the Polish government's official accusing Tinky Winky (one of Teletubbies) of being gay, most definitely yes. To give Poland any meaning, no.

The importance of Poland playing a major role is downplayed. Polish public opinion non-existing.

Prof. Lewicki, the great promoter of the shields and anybody from Gazeta Wyborcza hope that although radar may be installed in Azerbaijan, as Putin suggested, the shields still have to be placed in Poland. According to Putin, they may be placed in Turkey or even Iraq. And since the Americans are building a \$650 million U.S. embassy there, the largest in the world, why not. The problem is, it's not what Bush and his neocons had in mind. It won't cover the new "Eastern European" frontier.

Putin, black - belt, German fluent speaking ex-KGB agent is bright, he knows Bush's plan and he has a field day destroying it.

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The Views of our columnists and letter writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the News of Polonia.

Calendar of Events

Jun 17, Sun - Polish University Club 60th Anniversary Celebration, Los Angeles, reception after Mass at the Polish Parish Hall in Los Angeles. Information - Anna Prejna at 626 919 2006. Ad on page 6.

17, Sun 11:00 a.m. PNA Lodge 700 meeting in Los Angeles.

23, Sat noon - 2:00 pm, PACN 25th Anniversary Celebration and Meeting History Department University Hall - Loyola Marymount University - 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles; RSVP and info (310) 831-5620 or (714) 544-3329.

24, Sun 2:00 - Polish American Congress Annual Meeting - Election of officers. Polish Retirement Home (Szarotka) 3400 W. Adams Blvd. (east of the church). AD on page 5

27, Wed, 11:00 a.m., American-Polish 4th of July Celebration in Clubhouse Six at The Polish Club of Laguna Woods. Information at 949 206 9122.

Jul 7 - 8, Sat & Sun, Suligowski's Regiment at "Old Fort Mac Arthur Days", 3601 Gaffey Street, San Pedro, CA <http://www.geocities.com/fortmacarthur>.

11 - 14 American Council for Polish Culture convention in Dearborn, Michigan.

25 - July 31, 2007, The Polish Club of Laguna Woods invites you to Alaska, Information and reservations call Ron 949-770-9133.

28, Sat, 9:30 to 4:00 p.m. - Polish Genealogical Society of California, Information at: www.pgwca.org and President @pgsca.org

Aug 26, Polish Patriotic anniversaries of the 20th Century, Yorba Linda.

Sep 15 - 17, Dożynki, Yorba Linda.

28 - 30, The 2007 Paderewski Celebration, in Paso Robles, information: 213-821-1356 or polmusic@usc.edu.

29, Saturday, 5 p.m. Polish Festival at Clubhouse 2 in Laguna Woods, Information: Irena Lawyer 949 206 9122.

Oct 4, Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Dedication of the Paderewski Monument at USC followed by reception and the Annual Paderewski Lecture-Recital. Free admission.

Nov 11, Sunday, Polish Children's Rainbow Fund has its annual bazaar in Szarotka, 3400 West Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, Information: Natalia Kaminska 626 282 4686.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka zbyskoopet@aol.com ★

Apology - mistake

In the May, 2007 issue of the News of Polonia it has been brought to our attention that the name of a very big contributor to the success of the Constitution Ball was omitted when it came to "special thanks." A "special thanks" to Irene Ujda who worked very hard to organize the dances of "yesteryear" - the Polonaise, Minuet and many others. Irene also conducted dance classes prior to the Ball. Many of her friends who participate in that type of "era dancing" were in attendance at the Ball. Thank you for your efforts and contributions. ★