

Dr. Stefan Wilk from I

teaching hospitals in the region, where he also started a school of x-ray technology, the first of its kind in Los Angeles.

Dr. Wilk's wide-ranging education and expertise led him to initiate many programs in the various hospitals and learning institutions that he had graced with his knowledgeable presence. Author of a pioneering work in tomography and image diagnostics, Dr. Wilk also translated several key books on radiology from German into English, including *The Human Spine in Health and Disease* (1959) and *Borderlands of the Normal and Early Pathologic in Skeletal Roentgenology* (Third American Edition, 1968), the latter considered a key text in the field of radiology for several decades. Author of numerous scientific papers and articles, Dr. Wilk was widely recognized as a leading specialist in the field of radiology throughout the United States and some of his early research on tomography helped lay the groundwork for the development of CAT scan technology. During the 1970s Dr. Wilk obtained his amateur radio license and conducted some of the first transmittals of x-rays via television. Dr. Wilk was the recipient of many awards, including the 1962 Special Award from the Radiological Society of North America, the 1978 Doctor of the Year Award from the Queen of Angels Hospital, the 1983 Distinguished Service Award from Santa Marta Hospital, and the 1986 Regina Angelorum Award.

Dr. Wilk's other important contribution in the field of medicine is Children's Medical Care Foundation, which he endowed and chaired for many years since its inception in 1981. The Foundation is based on providing the most promising young Polish pediatric physicians with funds for a specific period of practical training at the world's leading medical schools. Over the past two decades, the Foundation's scholars received training at such prestigious medical schools in the United States as the University of Southern California, Harvard Medical School, and Columbia School of Medicine, as well as universities and medical schools in Paris, Frankfurt and Zurich. Dr. Wilk's Children's Medical Care Foundation also helps sustain pediatric hospitals in Poland and the Ukraine. Dr. Wilk's exemplary charitable efforts on behalf of children's health have been recognized by the Polish government in 1990 with a Cross of Polonia Restituta, one of the highest honors that can be bestowed by the Polish government on a civilian, soldier, or a foreigner.

In 1952, Dr. Stefan Wilk married Wanda Harasimowicz, a Detroit native who moved with her parents to California in 1949. During their many years together, the Wilks' love of Polish music led them to establish and endow numerous organizations that promoted Polish culture. Together with his wife, Dr. Wilk was the founder of the Polish Music Reference Center (now called the Polish Music Center) at the University of Southern California in 1985. The Wilk endowment provides for the operation of the Center's staff and their generous support over the past twenty years has led to countless concerts, book publishing, creation of the PMC website, and establishing of a unique library of manuscripts, scores and books relating to Polish musical culture. Ars Musica Poloniae, another charitable foundation established in 1992 by the Wilks, facilitates a variety of projects in Polish music from publishing and recording to scholarships for Polish students in Los Angeles.

Due to his unprecedented philanthropy and promotion of Polish music, Dr. Wilk received the Directors' Award from the USC School of Music in 1983. Together with his wife, he also received the Gold Medal from the Polish Composers' Union in 1988 and the Polonia Award from the Polish American Congress in 1989. Dr. Wilk also received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Warsaw in 1990 for his outstanding scientific, educational, and humanitarian achievements.

Throughout his long and productive life, Dr. Wilk's guiding principle was to help others, just as he was helped by numerous individuals and institutions during his early years in Poland and Switzerland. A brilliant intellectual, scientist, medical pioneer, and

ambassador for Polish culture in the United States, he was instrumental in transforming and enriching the lives of many people, earning the respect and gratitude of society for his far-reaching generosity and good will.

Dr. Stefan P. Wilk is survived by his wife, Wanda, daughter Diane Wilk Burch and her spouse, Michael Burch, grandchildren, James, Katherine, and Richard Burch, as well as Dr. Kenneth A. Harris - a nephew whom Dr. Wilk helped to raise - his wife Terri, and children, Michael, Bryan and Kimberly. ✠

Marek Żebrowski

Editor's note: It is a little known fact! The first issue (four pages) of the News of Polonia was printed on May 22, 1995. A few days before, we received a letter from Dr. and Mrs. Wilk congratulating us for our effort, wishing us success in our endeavor, and a generous donation to help the News of Polonia "get started." ☐

Areté**Eulogy for Dr. Stefan Wilk
By: Konrad Wilk**

"Picture a pattern of trees, stark and black against an ashen sky. Their branches are etched sharp against the drab neutrality. Their pattern is fixed and will not change. The gray has no quality, not even the vibrancy of sight behind closed eyes. More than winter, this is certainty; the final image found in the eyes of a dead man. Now ask: do you want peace and quiet?"

Those are the opening lines from Greg Bear's novel of a future Los Angeles entitled - Queen of Angels, a Los Angeles which Dr. Stefan Wilk inhabited for over half a century.

I was born at the Queen of Angels hospital, now known as Hollywood Presbyterian in 1970, where Dr. Stefan Wilk, worked, taught and prospered since becoming Director of Radiology in 1959 and then named in 1978 Doctor of the Year. This is the first instance where our lives intersected. For me it is my personal human convergence point. Where the life and destiny of one man was to be indelibly shaped by another.

For had it not been for Dr. Stefan Wilk, the Wilk family would not be the prosperous and proud American family that it is. My very existence is linked to this man in a domino effect that culminated in my adulthood. I come here to honor and remember him, both as a Wilk, and as an individual who seeks inspiration and guidance from one of the few self-evolved men to ever exist.

In 1962 Dr. Stefan Wilk invited his older brother, my grandfather Joseph Wilk from Poland to the United States. This is a domino effect, as along with my grandfather there came his wife and children. Dr. Stefan Wilk is my father Roman Wilk's paternal uncle. By most standards this makes him a distant relative of mine, and reciprocally makes me a distant relative of his. But the reality of his relationship towards me is much more complex.

The destiny of the Wilk family was shaped by the many hurricane winds of the 20th Century.

Stefan Wilk was born in 1917 on the eve of Poland's rebirth as a Nation-State in the south eastern Galician region of the fabled Polish city of Lwów.

*"We are from the Polish Florence,
Seven-hilled city like the Fiesolan,
City of wit, music and the mind's
dominance.
And the prettiest girls in all Poland.
We are from the city of talent and ideals,
Temperament and flash of lightning,
Drama, and the stars, and zeal,
Panoramic views enlightening
Of the Battle of Raclawice Fields.*

*We are from the city of street born poesis,
Bred by the public stones, and formed
As if those stones were then transformed
Into inspiration pure,
And this sank into stone once more
To stand as monument
Within the city's very heart."* -

Marian Hemar

From there he benefited from solid Catholic education in the *City of the Immaculate* - known in Polish as Niepokalanów a religious school founded by St. Maximilian Kolbe who was then not yet recognized as a Saint and very much alive.

I wonder whether this spirit of Father Kolbe followed Stefan Wilk throughout his life? The Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo, who wrote of the Polish saint, would have thought so, he was like me, a great believer in convergence, the crossing of paths. Why are some men martyred and others spared? Is it not because each man's destiny is different, and his ultimate role is revealed in concentric layers, throughout his or her life?

The Wilk siblings of Stefan Wilk's generation, Józef, Stefan, Wiluś, Mania and Halina were thrown all over the world. While my Grandfather Joseph held down the home front only to be deported by the Soviets along with his wife Tonia and children, the nephews of Stefan Wilk: Alex, Roman - my father, and Vladimir to Siberia after the Second World War, spared that calamity Stefan Wilk had made his way down to Yugoslavia where he joined the Polish Division attached to the French Army, and then following the French collapse evacuated to Switzerland. For his destiny was to lie elsewhere, he had a different path to follow.

** I have taken the liberty of sprinkling this eulogy with literary excerpts because Dr. Stefan Wilk was a man of great learning who enjoyed complexity and would have, I think appreciated the effort. He studied hard in Switzerland at the Medicine University of Zurich where he first became a doctor and later received his doctorate in Biochemistry and still later at Bern University where he specialized in radiology.

Many years later when I complained to him about not being interested in something, stating that my mind did not work in a way conducive to the field he suggested I study, he said "Konrad, you must discipline your mind so that it does what you demand of it, otherwise you are just wasting time."

Areté - that ancient Greek notion of goodness, excellence and virtue, but also discipline. That is what Dr. Stefan Wilk sought, and that is what his destiny was to be, and that is what his legacy is.

** His life was an endless application of his talents to further evolve his own mind and to give of himself in a humanitarian way. He recognized that he had been helped by many people along the way and so he wished to give back and help others. To this end, he founded the *Children's Medical Care Program* and was the principal founder of the *Children's Medical Care Foundation*. He was lucky in having met the love of his life, Wanda Harasimowicz Wilk who shared his passion for learning and for the advancement of the humanities and for charity.

One of Uncle Stefan's great passions which he shared with his wife Wanda was music, to this end jointly with Wanda he set up the Polish Music Center at the USC School of Music, and later helped found the Wilk Prize in Research in Polish Music.

Uncle Stefan was a busy man. There was his career and family life, their daughter Diane and the many day to day activities that occupy and distract all of us. By the time I was old enough to appreciate Uncle

Stefan, he was no longer a young man. I was a young lad who was - due to my parents divorce - alienated from the Wilk family. I could easily have slipped away and been forgotten.

This is where that special bond, that convergence point comes again into play. He was instrumental before I was born in establishing a base for the Wilk family here in America, a country he loved as much as he was proud that he was Polish. Had he not done that, had he not brought his brother, my grandfather over here, my mother Liliana would never have met my father, and as a consequence I would never have been born.

My mother's parents, Marian and Alicja Burakowski met Dr Stefan Wilk, shortly after I was born, when he, his wife Wanda and their daughter Diane visited Poland. My maternal grandfather was from the same Galician region, from the fabled City of Lwów. The two of them knew the same streets, the same buildings, the same cobblestones, for both had gone to see plays at the Skarbowski Theater and both had taken strolls in the Łyczakowski cemetery, and both had left due to the winds of war.

Uncle Stefan reached out to me and for this I am most grateful. He saw in me a young Wilk in need of guidance and inspiration and if I was a bit standoffish, he knew this too having been young once as well. Uncle Stefan had the psychological foresight, wisdom gained by an international experience, and the personal understanding of the anger and resentment a young man may feel. He saw this in me and reached out to me. He could easily have ignored me. After all, I was his brother's grandson, not his. But that was not Uncle Stefan's way. Leave not unto others to do what only you can do.

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