

**Justyna Ball from 2**

it all," a local "pain in the rear end" guy, Lindsey Smith. He asked me why Polish people never organize and never fight, and he meant during wartime. I began to choke, so I needed to take a deep breath. I then started telling him about Poland being partitioned for 125 years but fighting vigorously, regaining independence for only a short period of time, before being simultaneously attacked from the West and from the East. The explanation became too confusing to him, because I entered some forbidden territory - the taboos that he was not familiar with. I guess he expected me to fit all that into a "one sentence" answer, so I just rolled my eyes and let him go back to his hot dog and beans.

The idea of Hitler invading Poland, because he wanted to kill all Jews seems so much more logical and easier to digest.

When talking to my American girlfriends, I have to be careful what I say because they often misunderstand. When asked about my (Polish) husband's habits, some look for any hint of Tennessee Williams' "Stan Kowalski" to justify the stereotype. No, his mother did not spoil him, nor does he drink, or have an aggressive side. Once I mentioned that my cousin was pregnant, and the quick response was: "You Catholics have so many children." No, it was her first pregnancy and average Polish couple has 1 child. When I mention that black Americans are amongst the players in Poland's basketball league, someone said "they cannot be any good then."

Americans like to call themselves the champions of the world although they never compete with anybody else but themselves. I try to imagine an Italian or Norwegian team, any team, calling itself the best in Europe without playing against any other European teams.

I bet we also cause some confusion by not being extremely fat or hopelessly stupid. We do eat kapusniak and pierogi, but that's not all we eat. On holidays, when we stack up on Polish food, my daughter snacks on mushrooms or pickles in brine as if there was no tomorrow and my son overdoses on horseradish at times. But besides that, we are very open to other types of cuisine just like other Poles are.

At Christmastime, my friend, Carol, tries to please me by saying: We are going to have kapusta and "pierogi." Then she says the same thing at Easter. Carol, Easter requires a different menu...oh well...

Can you get me some kielbasa? Which one? Oh - so there is more than one??

Those stereotypes may be the reason young Polish Americans are sometimes drawn away from "Polish culture" as we know it. What seemed appealing back then, to our parents or grandparents does not appear so attractive to 20 or 30 year olds. We must start thinking about other links that bind us together. And if you think that polka festivals will be that bond, connecting us with the younger generations of Polish Americans, you are wrong.

It does not even tie us with other Polonias around the world. It is an exclusively Polish-American tradition. And it has nothing to do with Poland either.

I can just hear my opponents grinding their teeth. Bury this newspaper in a jar

inyour backyard, and see for yourself in 20 years.

So start reinventing yourself to the newer generation of Polish Americans. Find the connection. For the Jews, it is the Holocaust. For us, it could be history in general with the Polish Holocaust being part of it.

Or children and grandchildren somehow have to find a way to the country of their ancestors and discover Poland on their own. Your job is to encourage them to take that trip and maybe even study there. Learn the true culture from the experts, and touch the history. They can shed their discomfort of discrimination while having the experience of their life.

That 420,000 Poles living in the UK already look at things differently, and when they return, they may bring back not just money, but their experiences and another perspective.

Our son, Francis, a student in Warsaw now, one day while riding a taxi, exchanged some opinions with the taxi driver. And he suddenly realized that this man shared our views on Poland's economy, US politics, media etc. The reason? He lived in Germany for a while.

I found many many friends here, intelligent, who, even if not quite knowledgeable about the Polish "side of the story," at least allow themselves to listen to unknown facts about the war times. And then there are others whose idea about the rest of the world is minimized to a few stereotypes. Those are the ones who have an answer for everything. TV stations, press prepared them with all the "right" answers. They knew why you were going to say it even before you said it.

You become what the media has already prepared for you: labeled, and you are expected to follow it or at least don't do anything radical to shake it. On your arrival, as a immigrant, you are boxed. So what, that the times changed everywhere else, here, in US, it all stays the same. We never noticed that this 20s dance polka has past long time ago, and made a way to foxtrot, tango, cha-cha and so on. For many Americans, it is we who move ahead while the rest of the world stands still.

It is true that some of us do not represent Poland well, with required respect. We have scum among us, oh yes, we do! but we are not any different from other ethnic groups. Poles in Poland blame Polonia for a bad image overseas, and we intend to blame the government abroad.

Quite the contrary, for obvious reasons, the American abroad was often a tourist and not an immigrant worker. Until now, Europeans encountered only those Americans who had money. In 1985-86, when the dollar value was the highest, and our family lived in Germany, we witnessed how many Americans were buying and shipping

German luxury goods to the US. And when Europeans travel to US, they never wander off to the areas where poor Americans live.

Just as American media does not show how the rich in Mexico, Puerto Rico or Poland live. Forget rich Poles as we never even see average Poles.

It may all change with the dollar losing its value with such speed: \$1.59 for 1 Euro, \$1

is worth 2.14 Polish zloty. Those of us who travel already know it.

I do not think Paul understands it. He rarely leaves his house.

Since Poles, on almost every level, are so used to migrating, what others see is the whole range of characters including the poorest, the noble and the scoundrel. The Polish poor seek a change, because they know there is a better life awaiting them somewhere. They may come to change their mind later on but at least they tried. Our, American, homegrown poor may migrate only from state to state.

As a little boy, our son asked, "Why do we say, God bless America? Why not other countries?" It occurred to him only because he had already traveled outside the US. Other kids probably did not, and such a question never came to their mind.

"God made me special," says a quote above the bed of one of the kids that I know.

Again, why me? What about everybody else?

The longer I live, the more I come to the conclusion that, despite our different origins and paths that lead us to this point, people here or there, are the same.

The only difference is that Americans are told over and over about the greatness of their nation. They won't see their weaknesses or faults, and even if they are miserable balancing on the poverty line, they won't seek a better life anywhere else. See, Poland's so called "white trash" does not sit still: they travel, and ours does not.

Where to? This is heaven on Earth after all. □

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**ACPC Youth Leadership from 4**

- high school graduate as of June 2008, or college/university student or graduate
- not over 26 years of age.

Acceptance into the leadership conference is based upon recommendations from teachers, organization leaders, or others who are familiar with applicant's achievements and goals. Daily active participation in all scheduled events is required.

The ACPC Youth Leadership Conference registration **fee is \$400**. Housing at George Washington University and one meal per day, along with most other conference expenses are generously made possible by the American Council for Polish Culture. Transportation to and from Washington, DC as well as each student's optional expenses are up to the individual and/or local supporting ACPC Affiliate groups, Polish club or student organization, etc.

The application form is available from the ACPC website, [www.polishcultureacpc.org](http://www.polishcultureacpc.org) (MS Word or PDF format) or by contacting the Youth Leadership Conference director:

Irena Mirecki, Conference Chair,  
 ACPC Youth Leadership Conference  
 4041 - 41<sup>st</sup> Street  
 McLean, VA 22101

The following must be received by the YLC Chair by **May 16, 2008**:

1. completed and signed application form
2. release form, signed by parent/guardian for participants under the age of 21, by applicant if 21 or over
3. student's resume
4. two letters of recommendation
5. check for \$400 payable to ACPC-YLC

In the event of non-acceptance or cancellation, all fees will be refunded. For more information, contact Irena Mirecki, YLC Chair at [irena@mirecki.us](mailto:irena@mirecki.us) or Richard Wiermanski at [rwierman@verizon.net](mailto:rwierman@verizon.net). □

**Legal from 3**

Contractors need to be particularly careful about "abandoning" a project, which is a frequent basis for loss of license. If you have a disagreement *with* an owner or employer about a project, you should always put your position in writing. It is better to demand payment in writing, and only upon continued non-payment, leave *the* jobsite.

**IV. Contract**

The written contract forms the basis of the various relationships on a construction project. It is always a good idea to put your agreements into some written form that defines their respective rights and duties.

All construction work Performed on residences must be done with a written contract. Business and Professions Code 7159. That is, for *any home* improvement work done by a licensed contractor, there must be a written contract.

A home improvement contract must contain certain information, including:

1. Name, address & license number of contractor.
2. Dates on which work will begin and end.
3. Payment schedule. Initial down payment cannot exceed \$1,000 or 10% of the contract, whichever is less.

There are certain other special requirements applying to work on swimming pools.

Moreover, all extra work or change order work shall be documented in writing. Section 7159 (h).

Any violation of these rules not only will make it difficult if not impossible to collect for work performed, it is also a violation of the contractors license law and the contractor can be fined up to \$5,000.

**V. Breach of contract and damages**

Either the contractor or the owner can breach a construction contract.

As indicated above, not every type of breach can be covered. However, some of the typical breaches are:

- a. Failure to make payment.
- b. Delay.
- c. Defective plans and specifications.
- d. Material breach resulting in abandonment, thereby allowing recovery of reasonable value.
- e. Failure to grant job site access.
- f. Acceleration.
- g. Interference with the contractor's performance.
- h. Failure to approve shop drawings.
- i. Failure to approve and process change orders.
- j. Failure to inspect and approve work on the critical path.
- k. Failure to deliver owner-furnished equipment.

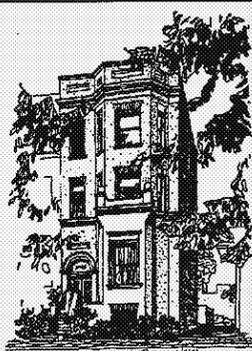
1. Wrongful termination and ejection of the contractor from the job.

In fixing the amount of contract damages, the general purpose of the law is to give compensation that is designed to put the plaintiff in as good position as he would have been in had the defendant performed according to his contractual obligations. California Civil Code section 3300. □

**Pope John Paul II Mass from 1**

some of the countries represented were: China, the Philippines, Lithuania, Vietnam, Samoa and the Arabic Community. (Pope John Paul had travelled to well over a hundred countries during his pontificate.) She then gave a very moving talk about her experience seeing the Pope. In 1979 he came to Poland. (This was during the height of communism, and the communists did not want him to come to Poland.) This was one year before Solidarity and two years before martial law was declared. She saw him in Warsaw at a huge gathering. His first words (again) were "Do not be afraid." Poland badly needed his help and guidance. He made the country feel brave and strong. He freed Poland and other countries from communism - peacefully. He was indeed extraordinary.

Sto lat to Richard Wideryński, Michael Dutkowski, Consul General Paulina Kapuścińska, and all who made this memorable event possible. □

**Whats Your Legacy**

Many people talk about leaving their will to worthy causes, but don't have a will, and do not realize it requires a will to do so. The laws of most states make it clear that personal property goes automatically, by law, to your nearest relative, even if they are quite distant ones, unless you have a legal will that says otherwise. If you have no relative, it goes to the state. More than half of all adult Americans die without having made their wills. Most of them undoubtedly planned to do so, but never got around to it. Some had wills but didn't keep them current. When you have a will, you should update it every few years as conditions change. Also, always name an executor who will carry out your wishes. Besides money, non-cash possessions can also be used an contributions and various donation plans can be carried out. Be a philanthropist: leave your stocks, bonds, real estate, art, valuable collection or insurance to continue the Polish - American traditions. Your will is the most important way of giving. When you're gone, it is a legacy that is not forgotten. In your will, you can specify what you would like your donation to be used for. For help in making your will, contact a competent lawyer. **The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that needs your help and legacy.**

**The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc.**

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