

Polonia Alpine Skiing from

Wednesday morning we woke up to six more inches of fresh snow. The sky was partly cloudy but no wind, perfect for skiing. Winter Park Race Department had a few wrinkles to work out before we could get started with two runs on the giant slalom. There were a total of 68 participants, less than the last few years. The Tetry Club President told us the weak economy was the reason.

I got a little concerned when we started lining up in the starting gate for the Giant Slalom. Almost all racers had lycra racing suits, shin guards, downhill racing poles, and of course helmets. These people take this seriously, I thought.

I thought I had blazed down the race course until I saw my time: about seven seconds slower than the leader. Seven seconds is an eternity in ski racing. I thought there was something wrong with the timer, but my second run was not much better, faster by a second and a half. I asked one of the Górale who just came down the course how often do they ski. He said they ski on a little hill in Illinois almost every Saturday and Sunday, and train on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays after work. Wow, that's a little better than my seven days this year... without any training.

Medals were awarded in about ten different age categories, and also for men, women and children. Youngest participant was about 7, oldest 77! My wife got a silver medal in her group, and I got a bronze in mine. Needless to say neither group was the most competitive or numerous, but no matter. We have two very nice mementos of this event. A skier ahead of me, who was far superior, fell, and did not finish and hence was disqualified. Consul Paulina skied in the giant slalom race outside of competition. She complimented us and thought we represented California quite well (We were the only ones from California). Most of the racers were from Chicago, but a couple flew in from Poland, Canada, and New York.

Wednesday evening there was a kielbasa grill behind the hotel. Tetry Ski Club had flown in from Chicago a selection of Polish delis from their sponsor Bobak's Sausage Company. There were polish pickles, bread, and spirits of course, all from Chicago. We mingled and met some of the club members. One of them was Andrzej Golota, the Polish boxer now living in Chicago, who twice fought for the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship, albeit unsuccessfully. He is a gentle man, and very proud of his 9 year old son, also Andrzej, who already is a great skier. Another member is a well known Polish doctor, who accompanies Polish alpinists as they scale the 8000 meter peaks in the Himalayas. Last month's National Geographic article had a great story about them. The doctor is also an excellent skier.

Next day we woke up to a glorious blue sky. This was a slalom day. The event started and completed without any hitches, but with the same results for us. We got some medals again despite same mediocre times. In the afternoon those who wished could participate in the Super Giant Slalom (no medals awarded). Never having done one of these before, I chose to participate. Same results as in the Giant Slalom, but very exhilarating. I find few things in life as exciting as flying down a race course on fresh snow. Wow! I get "goosebumps" just thinking about this again.

Thursday evening was the Awards Banquet. Almost all who were lucky enough to be in a good group like us got a medal or a trophy. The overall winner was Jan Zieliński from Chicago. The fastest time belonged to Szymon Gasienica from... Chicago. Yes, he from a very famous Polish skiing family. He would have won the overall event as well had he not crashed in the second run of the Giant Slalom. Both got nice trophies sponsored by the Polish Consulate General in Los Angeles. I am lucky that I did not win, not sure how I would have been able to bring it back with me on the plane.

This event was a good example of what Polish Americans can do. The event was conducted very professionally. Everything was well organized and ran smoothly. Results were computerized. Medals were awarded in multiple categories. First day's event, the Giant Slalom, ran a little late, but

that was the fault of the Winter Park race department, not the Tetry Ski Club.

But to make this event a true Polonia Ski Championships we need better attendance from Poles living outside of Chicago. Till now Tetry Ski Club has not done a good enough job in advertising this event. I am hopeful that by reading articles such as this, Poles from all over the US, including California, will support this outstanding event next year, at the 11th Polonia Alpine Ski Championships. I know we have a lot of accomplished skiers in LA who can represent California quite a bit better than my wife and I did this year. Perhaps even win a category or two?

I will make sure that the info about next year's Championships is publicized in the local Pol-Am media as soon as it is available. The scuttlebutt is that next year's event will be in Sun Valley, Idaho, one of the premier and most scenic ski resorts in US. Hope to see more Californians there! □

Israeli Youth at Ghetto from 6

It is difficult to describe the huge Polish investment in the event. It is also difficult to describe the reverence shown by the hundreds of non-Israeli invitees to the speeches delivered by the two presidents, the singing of the El Maleh Rachamim memorial prayer, the Israeli national anthem, the Hebrew prayers, and the entire ceremony. It appeared that everyone was doing above and beyond in order to honor the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto heroes.

Yet at the same time, a few meters away, the jungle was going wild. On the Israeli side where the youth delegation members were concentrated, everyone behaved as though they were in the middle of some feast on a Tel Aviv traffic island.

Only the barbeques were missing, but we had snacks, soft drinks, loud giggling, and screaming. Some students were lying on the grass while listening to their iPods. We also had group gatherings, a mini-festival of storytellers and jokers, short naps, smoking, whispers, the occasional game of „catch" accompanied by cheerful calls, nuts and seeds, and childish, embarrassing, and exaggerated panic upon hearing the gun salute. It was all there.

Teenagers have not learned a thing

Indifferent teachers were also there, busy searching for a comfortable spot to lean on. We also had Education Ministry representatives with hands in their pockets who observed what was going on without doing a thing - overall, what we had there was a great shame. With the exception of several dozen youths who bothered to follow the ceremony and hold up flags, the Mideastern party continued according to plan and with no connection to thememory of the Jews who fought the Nazis.

One of the teachers explained to me that the Education Ministry is at fault because it did not bothered to organize chairs for the Israelis and the ceremony was long. Another teacher said the students had trouble following the speeches in Polish, and therefore lost interest in what was happening around them. This explanation could have been valid had I not seen with my own eyes the lack of interest and zero respect displayed by most students to the symbols of the State of Israel during President Shimon Peres' speech - delivered in clear and fluent Hebrew. I will make no mention of the students' attitude to the Polish national anthem and other speakers for obvious reasons of shame.

At the heart of Warsaw, a few meters away from the Rapaport Warsaw Ghetto monument, after eight days, three concentration camps, two ghettos, and dozens of stories - the Israeli teenagers proved on the last day of their journey that they have not learned a thing.

Perhaps they know more about the Holocaust, but in all matters related to manners, culture, education, and respect to others - they scored a humiliating failing grade. And with this grade they returned home, to Israel, to their parents and education system that have indeed put them on a plane to Poland - but sent them there without any moral baggage. □

Warsaw Man from 8

he application and was told by the Consulate that they were unable to advise on the progress of any applications. May I enlist your help in obtaining my Citizenship through you in Poland? I am currently living and working in London, whilst I await my Citizenship. Any help that you can give on the matter would be gratefully appreciated.

NICOLE CHESSEL,
e-mail: nic076@hotmail.com

A: The delay you are experiencing is par for the course. Since Poland joined the European Union the volume of such applications has vastly increased, and the bureaucrats are not equipped to handle the extra work load. The normal wait is 5 years which can be reduced to 3 years if the applicant marries a Polish national. In a few special cases, decided by the President of Poland, fast-track citizenship may be possible. I have no way of assisting you, as I am not connected in any way with Poland's citizenship-granting authorities, nor am I a legal expert. Engaging a citizenship lawyer might be helpful, although that is quite pricey.

Q: I was wondering if you have any idea how to go about finding a list of Polish Dance Schools in New Jersey? I've used Google Search for hours and can't find what I'm looking for.

VALERIE,
e-mail: valeriebrooklyn@hotmail.com

A: I suggest you contact the New Jersey Division of the Polish-American Congress which should be able to point you in the right direction: 177 Broadway, Clark, NJ 07066; Phone: (908) 862-2050, (908) 862-1700; Fax: (908) 862-1029;
e-mail: Ludwik@domaexport.com

Q: I was asked whether the Poland's Central Address Bureau had an e-mail address and learned that it had changed its name and location. For some years now I've been telling people to write to the Biuro at ul. Kazimierzowska 60, 02-543 Warsaw for information on the addresses of their relatives in Poland, but I'd hate to give people bad information.

FRED HOFFMAN, Genealogist, Chicago, IL, e-mail: wmfhoffman@sbcglobal.net

A: Yes, the Centralne Biuro Adresowe is now called the Wydział Udziałnictwa Informacji (Information Access Section) and is part of the Interior Ministry's Citizens Affairs Department. It is located at: ul. Domaniewska 36/38, 02-672 Warsaw, Poland, and the phone number is: (+48 22) 849 18 38. This office can provide the address of all living Poles on condition that the party being sought agrees to have their data released. Inquiries should be directed to the above postal address or phone number. They do not list an e-mail address, probably so as not to get swamped with more inquiries than they are equipped to handle.

Q: We were considering buying a used Polish Fiat for our apartment in Krakow. What year do you suggest and what problems have you come with this vehicle I should know beforehand?

JOHN BLACHA, Waterford, MI,
E-MAIL: tapjb@earthlink.net

A: I would suggest a low-mileage Polish Fiat not more than two years old. Cars that are five to six-years old tend to show rust and in damp weather may have problems with the electrical system. All in all, however, a Fiat is your best bet in Poland, because even mechanics in remote villages know how to repair them in case of a breakdown and service and spare parts are cheaper than with most other makes. For an economical small car I would recommend the three-door Fiat 600 hatchback or the five-door Fiat Panda, a kind of mini-SUV.

Q: I am a 20-year-old student of Polish ancestry seeking a Polish penfriend. My great-grandfather came to America from Poland in 1869. My interests include weight-lifting, outdoor pursuits, history and genealogy. Could you please help me find a penpal my age in Poland? Another question! Can a Polish-American serve in the Polish army?

ANDREW OSANTOWSKI,
1790 E. Parnall - Jackson, MI 49201

A: Perhaps someone reading this column will decide to reply to your request. Nowadays, however, nearly all penpal contacts are done by e-mail. I suggest you contact the following Polish penpal website: <http://www.krykiet.com/contact.htm>. In general, a person needs to have Polish citizenship to serve in Poland's armed forces. Possibly some exception could be made in extremely special cases, but ordinarily it would be out of the question.

Q: If my husband gets reassigned to Michigan, we may be moving there this summer. I would like to enroll our 10-year-old daughter Amy in a Polish dance group and wonder where I might find some addresses. No address please.

MARYANNE KOWALSKI, Lackawanna, NY

A: The Polish Art Center of Hamtramck, MI, has compiled an extensive listing of Michigan's Polish dance groups. I suggest you get in touch at:
hamtramck49@yahoo.com

Q: I am interested in the town crest of Wilamowice, Poland. My assumption is that it predates or has its origins prior to the 20th century, as most Polish iconography does. In addition to dating the adoption of the crest, I would like to learn about its heraldic/geographic meaning.

DALE DENDA, e-mail: fpavp@aol.com

A: The municipal crest of the village of Wilamowice in southern Poland's Bielsko-Biala area is the all-seeing eye of Divine Providence in gold set against a blue shield. (You can see it at the village's Web site:

<http://bip.wilamowice.pl/BIP.aspx?js=1>).

According to village official Eugeniusz Bilczewski, the symbol was found on the façade of a 200-year-old building (no longer standing) in which his ancestors had operated as an inn. He did not know exactly when it originated as the Wilamowice crest but suggested that after the 1241 Battle of Legnica, when the country lay in ruin following the Mongolian invasion, the Polish king brought in colonists from Western Europe including Holland, Flanders and Scotland to re-cultivate the region. One of them may have brought the symbol along. For more information please visit www.instytut-genealogii.com and/or www.polgenresearch.com.

Q: This is probably a strange question, but we used to have Warsaw Falcon dill pickles in Syracuse, New York. Now they are gone. Would you happen to know what happened to them or where I might purchase Warsaw Falcon dill pickles.

JANIS JONES, e-mail: jijones@ocwa.org

A: It's a perfectly good question and I can only hope you find this answer adequate. The Warsaw Falcon Pickles were made by a company called Bay Valley Foods out of Green Bay, Wisconsin, which has permanently discontinued the product. They do not carry any other Polish-style products. If you want to inquire of complain, their customer service line is 1-800-236-1119. □

POLAM
Federal Credit Union
(Southern California)
Has opened an office at
1700 N. Tustin Ave.
Orange, CA
In the same mini-mall which
houses Polka Deli and
Continental Travel
For additional information
(800) 404-5137