



Polish Profiles

IT IS JUST A FAREWELL

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

I was never good at saying goodbye. I have been writing this Polish Profile's column for the past 13 years. Altogether I have written 170 Profiles. Don't think that I am tired of writing them - no, that is not the reason. It is AGE my dear readers, as simple as that. I walk slower, I forget things, the usual signs that come with age.

That doesn't mean I will stop writing altogether. Oh, no! I have just finished writing a book of over 400 pages under the title, "Who Will Do The Crying." Now comes the part where I will go through the book once more with an editor. The book is of interest to a Hollywood producer who wants to make a movie based on it. Agnieszka Holland, the Polish-born director is interested in directing it. So, you can see I will not sit idle.

Then there are the Polish children. In the last ten years I have brought from Poland 211 youngsters for a two week "Summer of Dreams Vacation" to the United States. I wanted those children to believe that everything in life is possible. That we have not forgotten them. Of course I will not be able to do it on such a large scale; but I will continue to open the doors for those youngsters, who come mostly from orphanages. Last Christmas four 15-year-old youngsters came to stay at my house. I will do the same for Easter.

The Jan Karski Institute that I established six years ago, as well as the Jan Karski award and scholarship will continue on, not in the United States but in Poland. I have already sent to Poland all the Jan Karski Awards, memorabilia, letters from many world leaders written to Karski, his desk and chair, and Karski's paintings. Once I couldn't manage the Institute anymore I decided that Poland is the right place to have it moved. A beautiful large villa has been given to house the Jan Karski Institute. No, it is not in Warsaw; nobody there was interested in it. It is in Ruda Śląska, a large industrial city in Upper Silesia. You might ask, why Silesia? Because I am a Silesian. So was my grandfather and my great grandfather. Also not far from Ruda Śląska a school was named after me. I also established in Silesia "A Silesian Children's Foundation" a couple of years ago. Silesia was always good to me and bestowed on me the Silesian Achievement Award for my literary works; a novel "The Road Across the Bridge," a play "The Nightingale Alley," and a book of 12 short stories. Each one has a Silesian background and theme.

Of course I was helped to place the Jan Karski Institute there. My great friend, the very well known film director, Kazimierz Kutz, also a Silesian, helped me enormously. I am sure many of you remember Kutz's movies like "Sol Ziemi Czarnej" or "Paciorki Jednego Różnca." He no longer makes movies, but is a Senator representing Silesia.

The International Jan Karski Institute for Tolerance and Dialogue has been officially opened on November 17, 2008.

Thank you for reading my column. I wish a "Happy Life" to you all. □

Editor's note: We are extremely sorry to see Kaya leaving our "News of Polonia Family of Writers." Kaya was kind and let us know about six months ago that she wanted to attend to some other projects. We wish her the best results in whatever she does.

The first (4 page) edition of the News of Polonia came out on May 22, 1995. Polish Profiles has been with us since the beginning. Gene Zygmunt, our buddy since the Polish American Radio Program days contributed many Profiles on the radio and she accepted the challenge to do a monthly column in the News of Polonia. Her third column was a letter to our readers telling us that she no longer can write Polish Profiles (because of terminal cancer).

In a conversation with Kaya, I told her about Gene. Kaya said she thought it would be fun doing a monthly column and would be happy to do it. Kaya wrote a book, *Polish Profiles* which included all of the stories she wrote in the News of Polonia.

Kaya, you are a wonderful person who treated us well when we visited you... Thank you for all of the wonderful Profiles. We shall miss you! God Bless you!!!

Betsy and Marty

What will happen to Polish Profiles??? We have asked several people if they were interested in writing the column... and one person did express an interest. We shall see!

One reader suggested that we should "recycle" some of Kaya's historical stories. Another suggestion was to "bring back" some of the articles that were of "historical interest." Someone also suggested having guest writers with interesting Polish-related experiences to share with the readership.

Maybe a combination of the three... Kaya's articles, bringing back some articles that were of "historical interest", and seeing if we receive Polish-related articles/stories from some of our readers.

We will do our best to bring you the best articles/stories available.

NEWS OF POLONIA

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

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GOT SNOW?

By: **Justyna Ball**

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com/>

Scenes from a winter wonderland are only pretty if you accept the notion that they are soon to be something of the past or if you are looking at them from afar. Here in the center of the snow making machine, it is just plain brutal.

This winter season, Central Massachusetts experienced some major snow and ice storms. As a result, 1 million residents were without power for at least a couple of days. Then when power was restored for most, some 100,000 were still left in the darkness for another week. And that was even before Christmas ... Now, try to imagine the Christmas Season minus Christmas lights and music! Although "roasting chestnuts over an open fire" somehow still makes sense. You drive through the area in the evening, and it's pitch black. No street lights, no alarms, police telling people to stay in their homes to prevent break-ins... Some went to shelters. I'm sure that the local kids loved the time off ... until they realized that without power, there is not much to do these days besides a round of scrabble perhaps?

I bet some residents received generators as early Christmas gifts. Forget about the Tiffany's friendship bracelet. How about a new shovel decorated with a red bow?

Considering my own town was somewhat spared (we only experienced a 12 hour long reminder of how it was in New England in the old days) but up north, in neighboring towns, it was a site of a true disaster.

I mean, when I, in my living room, watch via satellite, Polish news live from Holden, Massachusetts, reporting on the state of emergency there, it's not good.

And when there is street after street "decorated" with oversized icicles and the electricity pole collapses right behind the reporter, and sparks create some special effects, you know there will be no school tomorrow.

Two days after the storm, we drove through the area, and only then realized the scale of the disaster. The main roads were cleared up for the most part, but one just needed to look on the sides of the streets where the trees had their tops

missing as if a tornado came through. Most houses were still covered with ice, I mean entire buildings with cars parked in front, completely covered with ice as if "glazed." Quite a site!

The live Nativity at Heifer Farm in Rutland had to be cancelled. Radio announcers encouraged listeners to check on their elderly neighbors.

We searched for batteries and candles throughout the house, listened to the news via a transistor radio, and during daylight, actually tried to catch up on some reading.

In Sturbridge, Pizzeria Uno's was packed (with a waiting period of an hour) as after a couple of days, you crave a hot meal. The supermarket next door was surprisingly empty, supposedly because, as someone commented, "if your fridge isn't running, what's the point of buying food?" Coolers buried in the snow outside would be my idea of survival...

But then again, my people came from the North. During Christmas Season, we kept a hare hanging outside the kitchen window (so it would be extra crispy!) before Jacek's grandpa made a tasty pate out of it.

Back in the 90s, here in New England, we did experience a heavy snowstorm. It was one of those "winters of the century." Back then, we lost power for three days. Help was on its way from ... Canada. For us, the electricity being shut down meant no heat or cooking. We had hot water, but who wants to take a shower when you get icicles in your hair before you put your pants on?

Since the phones did not work and cell phones were non-existent, we did not know if any of our friends had power so we didn't know who to invade. Who should we bunk with? Some were lucky to have a wood stove that not only provided heat, but cooked meals or at least hot drinks. We did pull out our tiny camping gas stove and tried to heat up some Progresso soup. Francis built an igloo ... for fun.

In the evening, Jacek took the kids and set up a large sleeper sofa with all of our blankets and comforters. The kids slept in their ski pants and turtlenecks. I comfortably slept in my own bedroom, wearing my regular nightgown, covered with only...a down comforter made by Jacek's grandma. The only problem that I had with it was that it wasn't quilted. So the feather filling traveled from one

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Calendar of Events

Feb 25 - ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES Our Lady of the Bright Mt. - noon, 7:30 p.m. Pope John Paul Center - 8:30 a.m. (Eng) 3:30 p.m. (Lat) 5:30 (Eng) 7:30 (Pol)

Feb 26 to Mar 1 - Catholic Religious Education Congress - Anaheim Convention Center Katella Ave. West of Harbor Blvd. Polish American Congress will sponsor a booth.

Mar 4, Wed, 12:00 noon, Collapse of Communism in Europe Public lecture by **Jürgen Kocka** (Free Univ. - Berlin) at 314 Royce Hall - UCLA. Limited Seating. RSVP to Jim Robbins jrobbins@international.ucla.edu Reception hosted by Consuls of European countries who will discuss upcoming events commemorating the fall of communism in Europe.

5, Th, Noon, "Adam Mickiewicz, The Life of a Romantic" by Roman Koropecik; at UCLA 10383 Bunche Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

25 - 27, XI International Polish Alpine Ski and Snowboard competition for a trophy funded by the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles in Loveland, Colorado. Information at www.tatrskiiclub.com

29, Sun 1:30 p.m., PAC General Meeting, Sala Kaszubska, Polish Parish in Los Angeles.

Apr 4, Sat, Noon, Ninth Anniversary of the Polish Club and Easter Celebration at Clubhouse Six, the Polish Club of Laguna Woods; Information: Irena (949) 206-9122

5, Sun, Noon, Traditional Easter Celebration and Ninth Anniversary of the Polish Club at Laguna Woods, Information: Irena 949-206-9122.

11, Sat, Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church - 3424 W. Adams Blvd. - Los Angeles

Traditional Blessing of food baskets Every half hour - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. Egg Hunt on the grounds of the Szarotka Retirement Home

3400 W. Adams Blvd., Sponsored by the Polish National Alliance Info: 626-836-5889.

Pope John Paul Center 3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda Traditional Blessing of food baskets Every half hour - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - Egg Hunt at noon - church grounds.

April 12 - Happy Easter

18 and 19, Sat. & Sun., Spring Bazaar, Polish Parish in LA

19, Sun., Cathedral Mass to honor Pope John Paul II CANCELLED Info: 562-426-9830

19, Sun., 9 pm, CBS Channel 2 - "The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler" Based on the Courageous True Story of 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Irena Sendler, who is credited with saving the lives of 2,500 Jewish Children during WW II.

23 - May 3, Tenth Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles. Info: Wladek 818-982-8827.

May 2, Polish Tea Party, Polish Club of Laguna Woods. Info: Irena 949-206-9122.

30, Commemoration of 218th Anniversary of the Polish May 3rd Constitution "Poland Forever", Depictions of famous Poles in history, dinner and dancing to the Pasadena Elks Lodge, Info: Marty 626-577-9797.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbyskoopet@aol.com ★

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