



Alliance News

Toledo-Poznan Alliance quarterly newsletter — Winter 2007

Thank you...

A huge thank you to the Dozynki planning committee for your involvement, dedication, and hard work in making this year's Dozynki a big success. Katie Macaro for your hard work with the invitations and the program. Walter, Rose, Lorraine, Marcy and Stella for being in charge of the silent auction and the raffle. Janet, the church music. Pat, the publicity. Rosalie for reservations and seating, John for the cocktail juice. Irene and Carolyn for being gracious hostesses. Ursula for doing a great job soliciting ads and sponsorships. Nobody does it better than Ursula! Rob for being the best MC in town. Norm, for that beautiful wreath and other decorations. It was a great team effort and all of you were a great group to work with.

Bardzo dziekuje!

Kathy Grabel, Chair Dozynki 2007

More Dozynki comments...

This year's Dozynki is now just a memory. There were other people who contributed to the success either by their ideas/suggestions, and participation or contribution such as Denny Kutylowski, who also makes the TPA known to the entire world by putting us on the world wide web. THANK YOU, Denny!

Fr. Paul Kwiatkowski presided over the Mass (a third one for him on that Sunday). It was beautifully done and many of us sang Polish hymns that we still remember from so many years ago. Did it bring fond memories for you? It did for me when I was a young girl still living in Poland and many of the Polish hymns we knew by heart.

Many of you who attended the Mass, thank you for your participation. The attendance was beyond my expectations. Because a Mass was added as a new part of the Dozynki celebration, we thought participation would be sparse, but we had between 75-100 people. Fr. Paul wanted to make sure that his sermon was especially

meaningful, so he kept us extra long. Just about everyone who attended the Mass was also in the procession too. The accordion player who led the procession, along with Fr. Paul and Fr. Piotr, made it especially festive by his lively music. The Polish and American flags were a nice touch that was not in the plans, but whoever brought them, we made sure they were in the church on the altar and carried during the procession. Thank you for the flags.

"Jeszcze Polska nie zginela..."

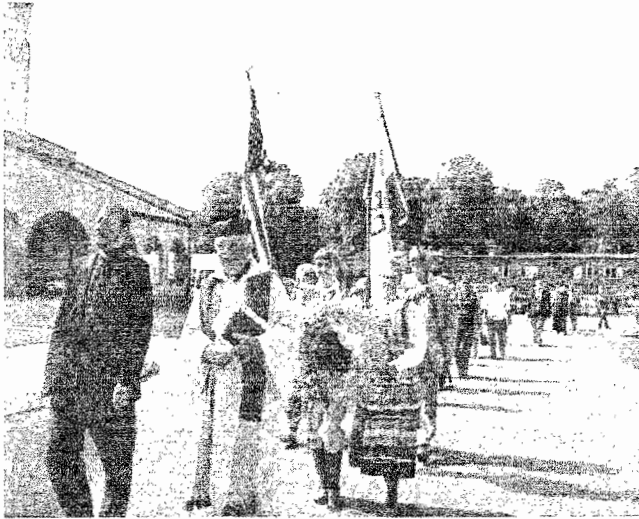
The representatives of Echoes of Poland, Piotr Jakimeczuk and Dania Gnida, carried the beautiful *wieniec* during the procession. The wreath was made by Norman Beczynski. Their participation during the Mass and the procession and later dancing with the Echoes of Poland is very much appreciated. Their performance was superb and different this year from previous performances.

The indoor procession with the Echoes of Poland presenting the traditional staples of life, bread and salt, which traditionally was always presented to the landowner and his wife, Pan and Pani, was offered to the host, or in our case, the chair of this year's Dozynki. The Echoes danced two fabulous dances representing two regions of Poland, Lublin and Wroclaw. It was extremely well done. The pianist was fantastic. The scheduled pianist, Irina, got sick and unable to perform that Sunday, but their sponsors brought in Olga Meade who certainly was an excellent substitute playing dinner music as well as Chopin's pieces. Fr. Paul Kwiatkowski did an interesting presentation on Poles immigrating to Toledo. Apparently his longer version was presented months earlier at another Polish event, but his 15 minute presentation at Dozynki was just long enough and provided interesting facts about our ancestors coming from Poland.

The raffle table and the silent auction table, always a very popular segment of the annual Dozynki, were again filled with scrumptious Polish baked goods, and Polish items purchased in Poland, or donated. Thank you to all of you who donated. The proceeds from Dozynki will again be donated to the orphanage in Poznan. Thanks to all who attended and for your support of our cause.

Kathy Grabel

Procession from Mass to the dining hall
Dozynki 2007



A Courageous World War II True Story

The Zookeeper's Wife, by Diane Ackerman. Published by Norton, c2007.

Jan and Antonina Zabinski were Polish Christian zookeepers who managed to save over 300 people in Warsaw, Poland. Using Antonina's diary and other contemporary resources, the author recreates Antonina's life as the zookeeper's wife, responsible for her own family, the zoo animals, and their "Guests" – resistance fighters and refugee Jews, many of whom Jan had smuggled from the Warsaw Ghetto. The empty zoo cages were used to hide these doomed people who were code-named after the animals whose cages they occupied.

The Zabinskis' young son, Ryszard, risked his life carrying food to the Guests, while also caring for an eccentric array of creatures in the house (pigs, muskrat, foxes, badger, and more). With hidden people having animal names and pet animals having human names, the zoo's code name became "The House Under a Crazy Star."

The audacity of the Zabinskis' mission of mercy shows courage and coolheaded ingenuity and by Diane Ackerman telling this story, illuminates the profound connection between humankind and nature. Read this book! It is available at finer bookstores and your local public library.



Pat's Corner...

Mazowsze

On Friday, November 16, 2007 I had the pleasure, and I do mean pleasure, of seeing Mazowsze. For anyone who does not know, they are recognized as Poland's cultural ambassadors. In the last 50 years they have performed more than 6,000 shows in cities around the world. They were performing in Detroit at the Center for Performing Arts – Music Hall that evening.

The troupe's founders, singer/actress Mira Ziminska and conductor/composer Tadeusz Sygietynski, dedicated themselves to preserve the rich music and dance traditions of Poland after the devastation of World War II.

An ensemble of 65 dancers and singers were arrayed in a seemingly never-ending series of handmade costumes, one more beautiful than the other. I would say this was the most beautiful only to recant, for the next performance was even more spectacular. I understand that some costumes weighed more than 30 lbs. This made their energetic gravity-defying leaps, twirls and lifts even more impressive.

They had about 20 different performances from various regions of Poland. I am sure that we all clapped so hard that our hands were a bit sore. This is a performance I will always remember.

Pat Konwinski, contributing writer

Reminder: January is membership renewal month and you will be receiving an invoice. Please remember to renew and be in the know about TPA.

Wesolych Swiat!



Remembering The Traditional Polish Christmas

Polish Christmas traditions are a special collection of formalized rituals. To those who are more familiar with the Americanized holiday season, which begins the day after Thanksgiving, they might wonder by the time mid-December comes around why Poles who follow the traditional rites and ceremonies aren't quite yet into full swing. Well, traditionally the Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve and lasts until Candlemas on the second day of February.

Christmas Eve day the house is thoroughly cleaned and the Wigilia supper is prepared. Some hay or straw is tucked beneath the table linen as a remembrance of the manger. The Christmas tree is decorated and the children keep watch for the first star of evening signaling the gathering time for family to share oplatki (blessed wafers) and consume the traditional 12-course meal. Then, it's off to Midnight Mass, Pasterka, which means the Shepherd's Watch. Christmas Day itself is spent in rest, prayer, and visits to various members of the family.

St. Stephen's Day is known as the second holiday. This is a day for visiting friends and expressing Christmas greetings. And when night begins to fall, you can hear stamping and jingling, and then Christmas carol singing outside. These are carolers who carry an illuminated star - Herody, who began their wandering from home to home. In some districts, the boys carry puppet shows called szopki. These are built like a little house with two towers, open in the front where a small crib is set and before which marionettes sing their dialogues.

One important characteristic of New Year's Day was bread-baking. Different animals were shaped from the dough - sheep, rabbits, geese, and cows. Godparents often gave these bread animals with best wishes to godchildren as presents.

On the feast of the Epiphany, the priest and the organist visit the homes, bless them and write over their doors the initials of the three wise men - KMB (Kasper, Melchior and Balthazar) with the numbers of the century and the new year, separated by crosses. This inscription along with the palms from Palm Sunday and blessed candles from Candlemas Day, were a united force to protect the household from disaster. Three Kings day was also the traditional day to take down the Christmas tree.

But, in the strict sense of tradition our Polish Christmas season didn't officially end until Candlemas Day. In American Polonia it is hardly even relegated to a footnote in the history of Polish tradition. But, if you know a little something about it, you come to realize why it is the logical and suitable conclusion to the celebration of Christmas.

Candlemas is a festival that commemorates the ritual purification of Mary after the birth of her son. It also marks the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple. This goes back to a Jewish tradition that women were considered *unclean* after the birth of a child and were not permitted to enter the Temple to worship. At the end of the 40 days, the mother was brought to the Temple or synagogue and ritually purified. Now she can go to religious services again, and generally go out in public. So we celebrate the ritual Purification of the Virgin Mary, the specified forty days after she gave birth to Jesus (at least we used to).

The Feast of Purification is called *Candlemas* because that was the day on which the year's supply of candles for the church were blessed. Christians were observing Candlemas in Jerusalem as early as the 4th century A.D. By the middle of the 5th century, candles were lit on this day to symbolize that Jesus Christ was the light, the truth and the way.

Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia!

Denny Kutylowski, contributing writer

=====

Pierogi, anyone?

