



# Our Polish ANCESTORS



THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

OCT. / DEC. 2016 VOL. 25 No. 4

## A Good 'Polish' Boy

By Trina Goss Galauner

The Cleveland Indians baseball team had a great showing this year in the World Series but the Chicago Cubs came out on top this time. It certainly was an exciting game to watch. Two teams who hadn't won a World Series for decades gave it all they had to break the cycle. It was back in 1948 when the Cleveland Indians last won the World Series. And there was a good 'Polish' boy who figured greatly in that championship series.

Once upon a time, there was a farmer named Adam Gromek who left his village of Pniewo, Lomza, Poland (Russian Poland) in 1911 and set sail to the U.S. to meet his brother, Ignatz, in New York. These brothers were likely two of the many Polish laborers recruited to work for one of the auto manufacturers in Detroit, Michigan. Adam and Ignatz made their way to the area of Detroit called "Poletown" where they obtained work at the Fisher Body Company, later a division of General Motors. A couple years later in 1913, a young 16 year old girl named Josefa Opęchowska came to the U.S. She was from Szczepankowo, Lomza, Poland (Russian Poland) and arrived at Quebec, traveled through Canada and was admitted to the United States through Port Huron, Michigan. She went to live with her uncle, Jan Modrzelewski. Two and a half years after that, Adam Gromek and Josefa Opęchowska were married in Detroit at St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Church. They eventually settled on the other side of the tracks at 424 Newton Street in Hamtramck. It was here that future World Series pitcher, Stephen (Steve) Joseph Gromek, was born on January 15, 1920\*.

Steve was a typical first generation Polish American. His father was an assembler at an auto factory and Steve and his sister, Jenny, were schooled by the priests and nuns. He attended St. Ladislaus High School where athletics was not a priority. The school only fielded a softball and a basketball team. Steve was recruited by the priests to coach both programs as a 15 year old. He played softball for his high school but playing hardball was his passion. His father once said, "All you think of is play, play, play. There is no bread and butter in this baseball. Better you should peddle papers." When he graduated, his devout Catholic upbringing influenced him into seriously considering the priesthood. But his love of baseball overcame and he went to play for an American Legion team in Hamtramck. It was here that Cleveland baseball scout, Bill Bradley, discovered him and signed him on as an amateur free agent



1952 Bowman Baseball Card  
Steve Gromek

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### Welcome

If you are not already a member of the PGSGC and would like to become one and receive this quarterly newsletter (cost is \$24.00 per year), please contact Membership Chairman, Ron Kraine, at [ronkraine@aol.com](mailto:ronkraine@aol.com) for more information.



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## Letter from the President

It's hard to believe that as 2016 comes to a close I'll be wrapping up my 24th year as President of our organization! We will be having the election of officers at our December 6th meeting and I hope to be back next year as president to make my term a milestone 25 years! My long time secretary, Sonia Chapnick, is stepping down to do more traveling. I thank her for her commitment to our organization and wish her the very best in her worldwide travels.

Our November meeting was a memorable one as it was the 25th anniversary of our annual party. The weather was beautiful and we had a nice turnout. I saw some members that haven't attended a meeting for quite awhile for one reason or another.

The food was, once again, fantastic! My thanks to all the members who brought food items to share, they were all delicious! The spread could have rivaled any Polish restaurant in the Greater Cleveland area. A special thanks to California member MaryAnne Duplaga Whary who for the past two years has sent a special cash donation to be used to buy pastries for the members.

Last, but not least, a **BIG THANKS** to Anthonette Baciak and her two daughters and son in law who ran the kitchen and saw that the food was set out for the cafeteria line. After the party, they saw that the pots and pans etc. were all cleaned up. If you missed this year's party, make plans to be there for the November, 2017 party.



My granddaughter, Lauren Alberto, myself and Fr. Jason  
PGSGC Annual Party 2016

Remember, we don't have meetings scheduled for January and February. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 7th. A parting thought: "Genealogy is like prospecting for gold, the more you dig, the better chance you have of finding gold!" (JFS 10/11/16)

On behalf of my fellow officers, I'd like to wish you a **MERRY CHRISTMAS** and a **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

JOHN, RON, BEN, & SONIA

### Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland

c/o St. Mary's PNC Church

1901 Wexford Ave.

Parma, Ohio 44134

[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohpgsgc/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohpgsgc/)



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**NOTICE:** Your yearly membership will expire on December 31, 2016. To retain your membership, please submit your \$24 yearly dues, along with the form below to Ben Kman, at the address shown on the form. THANK YOU ...

The Polish Genealogical Society



**THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF GREATER CLEVELAND**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

New Applicant

Renewal

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Surname

OTHER SURNAMES YOU ARE  
RESEARCHING

**THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND** is an organization dedicated to encouraging interest in collecting, preserving and sharing genealogical information. We invite anyone to join who is interested in tracing their family history. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month (March, April, May, June, September, October, November and December) at 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary's PNC Church parish hall, 5375 Broadview Rd., Parma, Ohio. We have winter break in January and February and summer break in July and August.

Programs include: Guest Speakers, Individualized Workshops and Social Hour.

A One Year Membership includes: Enrollment on our active membership list; A packet of information containing various forms and materials to get started in genealogical research; and a subscription to our quarterly newsletter, "Our Polish Ancestors" delivered via email (paper copy upon special request).

Your completed **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION** will be filed with the Secretary and Membership Chairman upon payment of annual dues (Jan. thru Dec.) of \$24.00. Dues for new members joining mid-year would be \$2.00 times the number of months remaining in the year. Make check payable to: "Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland" and mail to the Treasurer/Ben Kman, PGSGC, 170 Bellus Rd., Hinckley, Ohio 44233.

**USE REVERSE SIDE IF NEEDED**

Please indicate what contact information we can publish online and otherwise for genealogical purposes. Your contact information will not be used for any other purpose.

email

mailing address



*A Good 'Polish' Boy continued from page 1.....*

with the Cleveland Indians.

Bradley sent Gromek to the Logan Indians of the Mountain State League in 1939. Later that year he was transferred to the Mansfield Braves in Ohio. Steve was a 6'1" lightweight infielder playing shortstop when one day in 1939 he took a hard swing at a pitch and tore his left shoulder. It would change the course of his career.

In 1940, Gromek was sent to Fargo, North Dakota where they needed a hitter. But due to his injury, he could not perform, despite trying to learn to hit left handed. So Steve was moved to the Flint Gems in the Michigan State League. He considered quitting baseball and getting a job in the factory. His father had become unemployed due to medical reasons and he was attempting to support his family on a minor league salary. He thought his baseball career was at an end until Flint's manager, Jack Knight, gave him hope and made him a pitcher. Within a year, he was ready and the Cleveland Indians called him up from the farm team on August 18, 1941.

Steve struggled a bit as a pitcher for the Indians at first. Overhand pitching wasn't natural for him. He was sent to play for Baltimore in 1943 where he discovered a sidearm throw was much more successful for him. When he returned to play for Cleveland in the 1944 season, he had gained about 20 pounds and was able to deliver a wicked sidearm fast pitch. His successful season won him a starting pitching position for the 1945 season which would be his best season. It seemed his pitch could deliver infield pop ups and fly balls to the outfield. In his off season in 1946, Steve married Jeanette Kayko.

But, according to Gromek, Indians manager, Lou Boudreau, didn't have confidence in him. During the infamous 1948 season, he spent most of his time as a relief pitcher. But in Game 4 of the World Series, Boudreau gave starting pitcher, Bob Feller, an extra day of rest and put in his "4<sup>th</sup> best pitcher" as he referred to Gromek just before the game.

Steve Gromek delivered in Game 4. Going against pitching favorite, Johnny Sain, of the Boston Braves, Gromek held the opponent scoreless except for one home run in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning. Manager, Lou Boudreau had a first inning double which brought in a run and the first African American to play in the American League, Larry Doby, cracked a homer in the third inning to score the game winner for the Indians with a score of 2-1 in front of a Cleveland Stadium record of 81,897 fans. Later in the locker room, Doby and Gromek have an impromptu embrace for a press photo, which stirred some controversy at the time, a black man and a white man with arms around each other. Gromek told the press later that he didn't think anything of it. The two men were just teammates. "He put his arm around me and squeezed me so hard I thought he was going to break my ribs. We were both so happy", Gromek said.



Cleveland Plain Dealer photo of Gromek with Larry Doby after Game 4 of the 1948 World Series

The Cleveland Indians lost Game 5 at home and went to Boston for Game 6. "The ball sailed toward left field, an easy fly that eventually came to rest in Bob Kennedy's glove for the last out in the final game of the 1948 World Series" as was written by Harry Jones, Staff Correspondent of the Cleveland Plain Dealer. And the rest is history.

Gromek became a starter for the Indians in the 1949 season but not for long. He quickly became a relief pitcher again despite a low ERA (earned run average). He would struggle with this the remainder of his time with

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## Poland 2014: A Journey.....Part 4

by Ben Kman

**The following is the story (offered in quarterly installments) of member Ben Kman's 16 day journey to his ancestral villages in Poland in September 2014.**

### Day Thursday September 11

Today is the halfway point of our trip and we leave Znin to head North then East. After breakfast, we pack up the car and say our goodbyes with another round of teary-eyed hugs and kisses. We get in the car, everyone is sniffing a little bit, and with some last waves goodbye we pull out of the driveway. I don't think my parents anticipated how hard it would be to say goodbye to relatives. We backtrack our way to Bydgoszcz then jump on a highway following the GPS's directions. Almost immediately, I see a toll gate and start to curse. I really didn't want to get on a toll road but now there was no turning back. We stop and get our ticket then drive on.

The highway is brand new and we cruise along on our way to Sopot. Eventually, the highway ends and we work our way to the center of Sopot. The previous evening, I sent a message to the girl we were supposed to meet in Sopot, to coordinate a time and a place to rendezvous before going to visit the cemetery of my maternal grandmother's sister, Janina (Rychlinska) Kuncewicz. This morning I still hadn't received a response so we just followed the GPS's directions to the center of Sopot. As we drove around trying to find a place to stop, I ended up in a residential area and tried to cross a pedestrian only street. A "local" accosted me and made various hand gestures signifying my lack of IQ so I ended up backtracking and working my way out of the tourist area of Sopot. We found a gas station where I stopped to check for any messages but found that I didn't get cell service in Sopot for some reason. I asked the attendant where I could get free wifi (pronounced wee-fee in Polish) and he directed me to a mall down the street. We ended up going inside and sitting next to a McDonald's and took advantage of the mall's free wireless. I was sending messages to the girl on Facebook and I could see confirmations that she was reading them but she never responded.

Sitting in the mall, you would never know you were in Poland with the exception of a few Polish words on some signs. This was a top notch place and the people coming and going were fashionable and dressed to the nine's. After 3 hours, we decided to try to find the cemetery on our own and left the mall.

The traffic in the Trojmiasto (Gdynia, Sopot and Gdansk) area was unreal, which made it difficult to stop and ask anyone for directions. Eventually we realized it was best just to move on and make our way to Paslek for our next family visit. This was a huge disappointment for my mom who was looking forward to visiting Janina's grave. We slowly made our way past Gdansk and out of the city congestion and the traffic lightened up. We stopped to get some coffee (gas stations are EVERYWHERE now) and I programmed Paslek into the GPS. I was having some difficulty programming locations into the GPS and inadvertently selected Nowa Pasleka from the choices on the list. We were headed in the correct direction so I continued following the GPS's instruction. Eventually, we went through a small town and crossed a VERY rickety bridge which seemed very odd. A short distance over the bridge the GPS announced "osiagnales twoj cel!" or "you have reached your destination". I looked at the map and saw we were next to a large body of water. As I zoomed out, I realized we were on the coast of the Baltic Sea (and as we found out later, probably less than a mile from the Russian border). Don't forget, next to the northern part of Poland there is an area that belongs to Russia (Kaliningrad) but is not connected to Russia. This is what we were near. Check out Nowa Pasleka on Google Maps.

After everything that happened or didn't happen that day, this just added to the adventure. I corrected the GPS



and we headed off in the correct direction this time. This part of Poland is very “un-modern” and very much a throw back to what it was like in 1990. We were literally driving on a “road” that consisted of two strips of concrete with grass in the center.

We backtracked to the point where we made the wrong turn and worked our way to the “real” Paslek. The GPS was spot on and took us to the exact block our relatives lived on. A cousin-in-law was sitting in the parking lot waiting for his wife and saw us. As we talked, his wife came down and they got us pointed in the right direction to the flat where we would be spending the night. Two hours later, we finally said our “hellos” to the Sochas and, of course, had to sit down to have something to eat. Over our meal, introductions were in order again and everyone wanted to know how the trip was going so far. We sat and talked for a while then went to bed after a very long, trying day.

That evening, I checked my messages on Facebook and the girl in Sopot who we were supposed to meet finally responded saying that she couldn’t take us to the cemetery because she had to work. Then she told us approximately where the grave was. I responded back to her asking if we returned to Sopot on Saturday if she would be able to take us then. I never received a response. I will go back to Sopot one day and I will find the grave but I will always know that my mom never had the opportunity.

If you’ve ever travelled independently, you know that these kinds of days happen. We accomplished nothing today other than getting to the Sochas. The overall plan was to go to the cemetery, stop in Gdansk to take a quick look around, and then continue on to Paslek. Depending on how the day was going, perhaps we would have time for a quick stop to see the Baltic Sea (we weren’t too far off from doing that anyway) or a drive by Malbork Castle. Yes, that is ambitious, but the stars were not in alignment for anything that day. Hopefully tomorrow would be a better day.

## Day Friday September 12

After yesterday’s fiascos, we were looking forward to spending time with the Sochas today. They are relatives on my paternal grandmother’s father’s side. The Sochas came from the village of Jawornik Ruski, near Bircza. (Before that, in the early 1830s, my Socha ancestors moved from Mrukowa, near Samokleski, to Jawornik Ruski). After the war, the Sochas, who we were visiting, moved to Paslek. I “found” them when I was visiting the neighboring village of Huta Poreby and spoke with an old woman who turned out to be a relative. She gave me the address of the Sochas in Paslek and we’ve been in contact ever since.

If you recall, I gave my parents the rules of engagement when visiting family before we left. When we arrived at the Sochas last night, my mother complimented the perfume our hostess was wearing. In response to that, she jumped up, went to her room and brought the bottle of perfume back. She then apologized profusely that she didn’t have a new bottle but that she would go to the store in the morning and pick up a bottle for my mother. Mom sat there blinking her eyes at how quickly her compliment turned into a gift buying mission. So before breakfast, our hostess went shopping and stopped by the store to buy the perfume. Unfortunately, the store was closed so she could not purchase it. Over breakfast, she was very apologetic, explaining the situation and offering her own partial bottle to my mother. This all required a lot of explaining and a profuse number of refusals to assure our hosts that it was ok for us not to take the perfume. In case you thought my rules were a little dramatic, real examples help to show what kind of situations you can encounter.



With our cross cultural incident behind us, our relatives had various side trips arranged for us in the morning. We started our day by taking a walking tour of Paslek. It is an old, walled city. We walked around and saw the



old Teutonic castle, town hall, several city gates and portions of the city walls. Just outside of the city walls there was an open air market and next to that was a construction project that was converting/renovating an old park into a huge playground/park with many things for kids to play on as well as exercise stations for adults. There is a lot of stuff packed into the area and it was visually overwhelming. While we were there, they were putting the finishing touches on the park in preparation for its grand opening.

From the city, we went to a local park for a walk. Not far from the city, it is a nice park with several lakes, canals and rivers. It has a playground area, a swimming area, a fishing pier, picnic tables, a gazebo, walking trails, etc. We were the only people there but I am sure it is crowded during the summer vacation season and on nice weekends. We spent some time wandering on the trails and looking at the canal system that was originally built by the Germans who populated the area prior to the war. There are various mechanisms for controlling the water level in the lakes and canals as well as an aqueduct to divert water away from a river to a canal. At the end of one trail is another larger lake where we stopped to take a rest and enjoyed the view. Slowly, we made our way back to the car and went home to have some lunch.

My cousin Mariusz was expected home from work at 3:30 so we waited for him to arrive then we sat down to eat. Golabki! These were just plain stuffed cabbage without any sauce. They were fantastic! Mariusz's mom shared her secret for cooking the cabbage. She puts the whole head into a plastic grocery bag with a little water then microwaves it for a couple of minutes. She then peels off any leaves that have softened up and puts the cabbage back in the microwave for a couple more minutes. My mom tried this when we got home and she was very happy with the results.

During the course of our conversation the evening before, we got to talking about the foods we make at home. This led into a discussion about their smokehouse and grill at the *dzialka* (JOWka). For those not familiar with the tradition of *dzialki* in Poland, people who live in the cities in blocks have no yard. However, during communist times, it was almost mandatory to have some land to have a small garden to provide food for your family. A system of ownership of small plots of land on the outskirts of a city developed. People bought these plots and gardened, raised flowers and generally relaxed outside. Many times a small *chata* (hut/cabin) was built there. It could be a simple shed for storing tools or a small cabin where people could spend the night. The point is that most city dwellers have at least one of these and they are part of the culture of the country.



When we finished up our meal, we took a walk to the *dzialka*. The one that the Sochas have is very close to their block so it was a short walk. Most of the garden was harvested already and a few flowers were still in bloom. Of course we needed to sample plums, tomatoes and other end of the season crops despite just having finished a huge lunch. We saw the grill pit that Mariusz built as well as the smoke house, swing and enclosed patio on the *chata*. The property was very well maintained and neat. We wandered back to the block, stopped by Mariusz's garage to see his workshop and then went to see his "high volume" smokehouse. At Christmas time, he smokes whole hams, turkeys, sausage, bacon and gives it away to the whole family. We sampled some of his work and it was delicious.

We trudged up the three flights of stairs to the flat. Sitting down we started conversing and joking around. Food starts to come out again even though we just finished our big meal no more than 2 hours ago. Then the Pepsi was put on the table. I immediately knew what was coming but I couldn't warn my parents. If you are visiting with



relatives and Pepsi or orange Fanta show up on the table (along with a lot of food), prepare yourself for a long night of drinking vodka. I could tell my parents were confused because this was the first time they were offered a soft drink while we were in Poland. Then the bottle came out and they realized what was going to happen.

The FIRST bottle was a clear Debowa (oak-flavored) vodka. I've had other oak-flavored vodkas that tasted more like whiskey. This was excellent with just a hint of oak and a subtle sweetness. My mom who hates vodka actually enjoyed it. This was well frozen and started the evening off right.



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Cleveland. When the Indians proposed a salary cut, Steve made it clear he wouldn't mind going back to Detroit to play.

Gromek was traded to the Detroit Tigers in 1953 where he became a starting pitcher and logged another five years of major league baseball. In 1957, Steve Gromek retired from professional baseball. He spent one year managing and playing for the minor league team the Erie Sailors. After that he stayed involved with community baseball. He helped organize the Brother Rice High School baseball program and founded a Pony/Colt baseball league in Birmingham, Michigan. Baseball was his life.

All three of his sons played baseball at some level. Steve's oldest son, Greg, and middle son, Carl, both pitched for the Florida State Seminoles. After college, Greg spent four years pitching for the Detroit Tigers. Gromek's youngest son died of a brain aneurysm during a baseball practice in 1969 at the age of 16. The Birmingham baseball league that Steve founded named their field after Steve's son, Brian.

In 1981, Steve Gromek was inducted into the National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame. On the Cleveland Indians 100th Anniversary in 2001, Gromek was named one of the "Top 100 Greatest Indians".

Steve Gromek died on March 12, 2002 from complications after a stroke. Plain Dealer staff writer, Gordon Cobblestick, once wrote that Gromek was...."what your mother, as well as his superiors in the Cleveland baseball organization, knows as 'a good boy.' That is to say, he lives cleanly, goes to church and is good to his folks." Steve Gromek was a "World Series" kind of guy.

\*All online and print sources that I researched indicate Steve Gromek's birth year as 1920. Although, it is interesting to note that he is listed as a female infant aged 10/12 months on the 1920 census in Hamtramck which was enumerated on January 12, 1920.

### **Further Reading:**

Marrazzi, Rich and Len Fiorito, *Baseball Players of the 1950s: A Biographical Dictionary of All 1,560 Major Leaguers*, 2009

Holmes, Dan, *1950s Tiger pitcher Gromek was famous for a photograph*, Detroit Athletic Co., January 12, 2012

Porter, David L., *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports, Baseball*, Greenwood Press, 2000





# PGSGC Family Tree

By John F. Szuch

Since I didn't have any comings or goings about our members to report, I thought I'd devote this article to our annual party. I've also included photos of vintage Christmas cards that were sent from relatives in Poland to my Grandparents, John (Jan) and Bernice (Bronislawa) Malicki. My Mother and I lived with my Grandparents on Avon Ave. in Cleveland, Ohio. Fortunately, I loved these cards with sparkle glitter on them and saved them in a cigar box. The cards, which had hand written notes inside, date from the late 1940s into the early 1950s.



Like most kids growing up in the 1930s and 40s, Christmas was the most magical time of the year. Probably at the top of my list was going to Christmas Mass at Our Lady Czestochowa on Harvard Ave. I loved all the carols and decorations which included a nativity scene. The kneeling angel that nodded her head in thanks when you inserted a coin in the slot in the sea shell she was holding was my favorite! I can still see it vividly as if it were today, not 70+ years ago!



## Schedule of Presentations for Upcoming Meetings

- Jan: NO MEETING
- Feb: NO MEETING
- Mar: TBA
- Apr: TBA



## Remember When: Altar Boy Edition

by John A. Prokop

Well I do have to admit this will be a rather unusual edition, as I am sharing a lot of personal feelings and observations about what it was like to be an altar boy. They call them altar servers now and girls are allowed to do this special service. Both of my daughters were altar servers when they attended Catholic elementary school. However, it just isn't the same as it was years ago. So, read along as I tell you about my experiences when I was an altar boy from the 4th to 8th grade.

My earliest recollection was altar boy Training. It took place in the "old school building" with Sister Mary Alcantra, who was in charge of the altar boys. Her tasks included basic training, advanced training, making out schedules, conducting inspections and enforcing discipline. We affectionately called her Sister Mary Alcatraz because she was like our warden.

Training was our "boot camp" and needless to say, she took her job seriously. Practice was 30 minutes every day after school. When she handed out those old and worn red Latin missals, it felt like I was touching and connecting with something, or someone, from out of the past.

When we started we read as a class, then as individuals. We read the words very slowly and reverently being so meticulous in our pronunciation. We were constantly reminded that these were sacred and holy words and Latin was the language of the "Holy Mother Church". We started with the "Ordinary of the Mass", but it was anything but "ordinary". It required total memorization and repeating those Latin words distinctly with a slight rhythm. Somehow it began to sound like a Gregorian chant, which made it easy to learn and remember.

When we mastered the language of the "Holy Mother Church", we moved on to learning the synchronized movements of serving Mass. This included synchronized kneeling, bowing of your head, ringing bells and chimes, playing with fire (lighting candles, charcoal, incense, and carrying lit candles) and other solemn behaviors of being up on the altar. Forbidden behaviors included picking your nose, rubbing your eyes, yawning, cleaning your fingernails, daydreaming, or the worst offense heaven forbid, was scratching an itch!



Altar boys assembling outside Sacred Heart of Jesus Church  
Ca. 1953



Sacred Heart of Jesus Church altar boys  
Ca. 1905

You were issued your own cassocks for the year, one of each color, red, black and white. Your name was in each one. Surplices were small, medium or large. Protocol dictated which you wore and when. White shirts were preferred and required for Sunday masses, weddings, holy days or when you would be in Procession (also known as holy parades). Procession regalia included colorful capes, cuffs and cords to wear. Shoes had to shine (you could never wear tennis shoes), hair had to always be neat, cut and combed. Cleats were forbidden on shoes because Sister Alcantra said, "they make you sound like a horse walking down a brick street".

Serving 6:00am mass was the hardest task on the weekends. It meant no sleeping in and when it was snowing or raining you

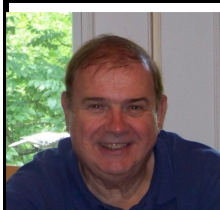


had to leave extra early and wear protective gear. The sacristy was always warm in winter and usually cool in the summer. Your conversations were always soft spoken and there was something so special about being so close to the altar like you were closer to heaven. The church had a special aura to it when it was dark. It was mysterious yet familiar and made you feel insignificant, yet special and protected. When it was 10 minutes before mass, we would light the altar candles and turn on the rest of the altar and church lights.

Serving for weddings was a real treat and I never missed one, or got a substitute. They were happy and special events. Everyone was dressed "to the nines". Brides and bridesmaids were pretty to look at and admire. When the ceremony was over, the "Best Man" came looking for you to give you anywhere from \$2.00 to \$5.00 for serving. They knew you were on your own time, got up early on a Saturday morning and had to dress up. Serving for a wedding was like winning the lotto!

Other special mass responsibilities included pouring wine that was going to be consecrated and burning incense (which surely must smell like heaven). Serving mass was mystical, sacred and special. You got to do things that not everyone could, or would ever do. You felt like it was almost a calling and could possibly lead to something more in your future. It sure did make you think about becoming a priest, even if for a short time in your life. Some made it and listened to that calling and others didn't. I didn't, so I guess that calling just wasn't loud enough.

*From the St. Casimir Alumni Newsletter of E. 82nd and Sowinski Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. Reprinted with permission.*



John A. Prokop is a freelance writer and has published articles about growing up on Cleveland's East Side Polish neighborhood (Poznan,) in the 1950s and 1960s. He attended St. Casimir Grade School (Class of 1962) and then Cathedral Latin High School (Class of 1966). He is also the Prokop Family Historian and Genealogist and has studied Genealogy for about 5 years. John tries to capture and record his feelings of the times, culture, food, religion, people and relationships, as he perceived and lived them. He also chronicles personal information about his family genealogy, which is often rarely recorded or documented. John currently is retired and lives in St. Petersburg, Florida with his wife, Laura, and their two married daughters, Holly and Jennifer.

#### *Poland 2014: A Journey.....continued from page 8*

On previous trips when I visited the Sochas, they would show me videos from their trips back to the ancestral village. I believe they try to go back every couple of years and it is usually a large contingent of the family that makes the trip. So when we started our drinking and feasting session, I asked if they had visited the villages lately and if there were any movies. It would be good for my parents to see where we were going to visit and to hear some of the family stories. Out came videos and we ended up watching two hours of footage from some recent trips. Interestingly, in one video, they were visiting the cemetery in Siedliska nad Sanem and showed a consolidated grave for several family members. Since we were going to be in that area, I verified where the cemetery was located to ensure we could visit and document the grave.

Another tidbit that came out was that Mieczyslaw Socha (our host), who was born in Huta Poreby, made a hand drawn map of the cluster of houses that were around his father's home. Each home on the map was labeled with the occupant. Of course, none of these homes exist anymore because everything was destroyed during the UPA fighting in the area. He also had a photo of the area where the houses stood.

The evening continued through the second bottle of vodka, then the third. New people arrived and some left. There are all sorts of little games and sayings Poles have to find an excuse to drink more vodka. One used during our visit was "lightly" twisting the cap to make sure the bottle is still sealed (of course the top always comes off and then you have to drink the bottle). There are all sorts of charades of this kind and the end result is always the same. The evening eventually wrapped up with conversation, joking around and the last drops out of the third bottle of vodka. This was our last night with the Sochas.

**To be continued in the next issue**

The Polish Genealogical  
Society of Greater Cleveland  
c/o St. Mary's PNC Church  
1901 Wexford Ave.  
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### About Us

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month (March, April, May, June, September, October, November and December) at St. Mary's PNC Church parish hall, 5375 Broadview Rd., Parma, Ohio. We have Winter break in January and February and Summer break in July and August. St. Mary's is located on the corner of Broadview Rd. and Wexford Ave. in Parma, Ohio. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM and are usually over before 10:00 PM. There is ample parking in the parish parking lot. The entrance is on Marietta Ave. Membership dues are \$24.00 per calendar year.

At many of our meetings, we have guest speakers who address the group on subjects in which we have an interest. The subjects may include genealogical matters, Polish history, heritage and traditions. When we do not have a guest speaker, we have **"Show and Tell"** nights when fellow members discuss their genealogical problems, ask for advice from anyone with a similar problem, tell us of their discoveries, or let us know what they've learned about their ancestors.

Our group maintains a library which is a popular resource our members enjoy. It contains various books, maps, pamphlets and newsletters from other genealogical groups. Materials can be borrowed from the library for a period of one month. We employ the honor system with regard to borrowing of books and other related materials.

We also keep a surname research list. This list includes the surnames of our ancestors which our active members are researching. In the past, members have discovered that they were investigating names that other members were also researching.

We publish a quarterly twelve page newsletter entitled, *Our Polish Ancestors*. Articles for the newsletter are selected that are of interest to our membership. Many are based on materials gathered from the many fine research facilities in and around the Greater Cleveland area, such as: The Cleveland Public Library, The Western Reserve Historical Society, The Cuyahoga County Archives, The Family History Centers and the many Polish-American churches in this part of northern Ohio. Articles written by our membership are always welcome.