



Schedule of Speakers for Upcoming Meetings

February—Member **Ron Marec**, who travelled in Poland in 2004, will speak on the topic:

Impressions of Poland Today.

March—Member **Trina Galauner** will address the group on the topic: *Organizing Your Genealogy.*

April—Member **Ben Stefanski II** will address the group on the topic: *New Housing in Slavic Village.*

May—Member **Raymond Vargas** will address the group on the significance of “*Polish Constitution Day.*”

June—**Walter Wright**, Director of Commercial Development-Tremont West Development Corporation, will speak on the topic: *A Brief History of the Tremont Area (The Southside).*

September—To be announced

October—President **John Szuch** will address the group on “*Polish Heritage Month.*”

November—To be announced.

December—Election of Officers and Christmas Party (For members only)

Thank You—to member **Michael Klepek** for donating two books to our library, *The Polish Way* by Adam Zamoyski and *The Russian Civil War* by Evan Mawdsley.

In This Issue

Addresses and Surname Research Lists—From time to time we publish the names and addresses of our members and the surnames they are researching. The last time was in 2002. It behooves us to let our members know who their fellow members are. Also, if one should find that a fellow member is researching the same surname, it gives our members a way to “link up” with one another. Phone numbers have not been included since some members have unlisted numbers and don’t wish them to be published. Where we have e-mail addresses, they are included on the last line of the address. Here is the way that we hope this works. Should you find that a member is researching a surname that you are interested in, you can e-mail him/her if an e-mail address is given. If an e-mail address is not given, then you must either send them a post card or write to them.

The surname list that our active members are researching is quite lengthy so it will be published in two installments, in this issue and the next. If you wish to add any new surnames, you can e-mail me at: edjmendyka@aol.com or drop me a line by “snail mail” to the group’s postal address. We publish these lists for the benefit of our members only.

Walt Pluchinsky’s Story—Member **Walt Pluchinsky** was in Poland a few years ago and witnessed what he thought an unusual event. He wrote a short article about it, *Silent Minority*, and shares it with us. Thank you Walt. And while we’re on the subject, we encourage all our members to share with us any of their experiences, be they while traveling on the road in Poland or in their genealogical pursuits of their ancestors.

Received In The Mail—The latest issue of *Polish American Studies* arrived in the mail. The entire issue is devoted to articles about the “polka” and its effects on the Polish-American communities at large. So, a polka is a polka, is it not? And what’s the big brouhaha about it? Not so fast, mister, one has no idea what all the ramifications are; how the polka is viewed from the standpoint of musicology, how the polka is a symbol of Polish-American culture, and how it effects all manner of things.

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The articles got me to thinking about the polka and its effects on the Cleveland community. This will have to get a little personal but that's the only way I can write it.

In 1952 I was discharged from the service and returned home to Cleveland. And it proved to be exactly the right time for someone who loved the polka and Polish-American music in general. It seemed that a "polka-fever" had gripped the town. Lil Wally was coming into his prime and there was no one better at doing what he did, playing and singing Polish music for the dancing public. His records were selling like hot-cakes. But he was from Chicago. Here in Cleveland his music helped spawn a number of polka bands, probably the best known being Ray Budzilek. The Slovenians had Yankovic and the Vadnal brothers and they played their own brand of polkas. But there were a lot of three and four member groups that played around town and they were always in demand, playing at various taverns and bars.

On the west side of town, along W. 25th St., there was the Rendezvous Bar which had polka music on the weekends and a "postage-sized" dance floor. The place was always packed with people bumping into each other on the dance floor. And that seemed to be the charm of the place. After bumping into someone, you could apologize and maybe strike up a conversation. Very often, two girls would be dancing together and this was an ideal way to get acquainted and ask one of the girls for a future dance. The place was not that large and the setting was sort of intimate. There was only a three piece orchestra but they played a lot of the "old-time" songs" and it was always a pleasure to be there. The Arena Bar on Clark Ave., close to W. 25th, would have polka music from time to time but not too often.

On the east side of town, there was also a lot of action. And no where more,

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GAWRYSZEWSKI	KUZIUS, TERRY & THERESE	JAGODZINSKI	MAREC, RONALD & JUDITH
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GILLIHAN	GILLIHAN, HOWARD & ALICE	JAMBROZY	JAMBROZY, ED & RICHARDA
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GLOD	SLUSARSKI, EUGENE & WANDA	JANOWICH	ZEHMS, DONALD & MARYSUE
GLOMATY	TROUT, DAVID & KAREN	JANOWICZ	ZEHMS, DONALD & MARYSUE
GLOWACKI	SCHMIDT, PATRICIA	JANOWITZ	ZEHMS, DONALD & MARYSUE
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GRABIEC	TROUT, DAVID & KAREN	JEMIOLA	SLUSARSKI, RONALD & LORI
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KAROLEWSKI	WRUBLEWSKI, DOLORES	KUC	DZURELLA, BARBARA
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MORYTO
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 NEDZA
 NERKOWSKI
 NISKEY
 NONA
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 NORRIS
 NORRIS
 NOSEK
 NOVAK
 NOVOTNY
 NOWAK
 NOWAK
 NOWEK
 NOWOGRODZKI
 NYCZ
 OBLOJ
 OCHOCKI
 OGORZALEK
 OKONIEWSKI
 OKUNIEWSKI
 OLBRYCH
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 PALSHOOK
 PANEK
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 PARISI, GARY & NANCY
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 SYZDEK, BRUNO & PHYLLIS
 SYZDEK, BRUNO & PHYLLIS
 SYZDEK, BRUNO & PHYLLIS

Silent Minority

As we studied a topographical map on the wall in the hallway and discussed the day's upcoming activity, we heard a loud whisper in a Slavic accent, "Will you be quiet. We are meditating". Somewhat startled, we turned around to see a young man with shaved head, wearing a black robe tied around the waist, awaiting our reaction to his request.

My friend John and I were staying in the Watra Inn, a quaint lodging in the village of Bukowina Tatrzenska, which overlooked the beautiful snow-capped Tatra Mountains in southern Poland. When we checked in the day before, the proprietress promised us an eight o'clock breakfast downstairs. She mentioned something about musicians also staying the night at the Watra. We were on our way to breakfast when confronted, and we complied with the request to be quiet. The man retreated down the stairs, as several women, also wearing black robes, emerged from their rooms and followed him.

We delayed following them down the stairs, partly because we were still somewhat confused by the ordeal, and because we were unsure if we were to go directly to the dining room, without a formal invitation. Waiting a few minutes for something to occur, in which nothing did, we beckoned each other to quietly proceed downstairs from the third floor hallway. The stairs were very squeaky, even though we tried to tip-toe so as to minimize any noise. Reaching the main floor and finding no one in the office, we continued down the squeaky stairs to the lower level, assuming it to be the location of the dining room. It was then that a clang from a gong broke the silence and caused us to suddenly stop, as we came to the bottom of the steps.

Right in front of us, in a side room, was a group of about 14 young people kneeling and meditating, with heads bowed. About half were men, all with heads shaved, wearing long black robes. All of the women also wore long black robes, and they had long ponytails. No one spoke, and all appeared to be in deep thought, oblivious to our presence or to the noises of the stairs. Several bamboo poles, backpacks, and cymbals were scattered on the floor. Respecting the man's earlier request, we hesitated, waiting for the activity to cease, before we crossed the hall to the dining room. Minutes passed, and nothing happened; only total silence and meditation, on our part as well as theirs.

Finally, the proprietress came down the stairs and beckoned us with an "I don't know" gesture to follow her. We proceeded up the stairs, then outside, and down to the dining room by a back entrance for breakfast. She quietly served us breakfast, and we tried to be as silent as possible, even though we were behind closed doors. John and I talked in low tones, and we were careful not to bang the dishes or silverware. Then, it happened again. Another man, having the same attire, opened the door, approached us with a scornful look, and asked us for our silence, because they were meditating next door. As a result, we tried to be more careful in our attempt to honor their request. Suddenly, the silence was shattered by nine loud chimes from the large wall clock, announcing the hour, and we amusingly gestured to each other as to what reaction the group would have, since the noise was much louder than our activity. Nothing further happened, and we finished breakfast, fortified to meet the day's challenges.

The proprietress entered the dining room through the back way and advised us to follow her to her office on the main floor. As we were paying our debts and making telephone calls, the meditation ceremony ended. The participants emerged from the lower level, proceeded up the stairs to their respective rooms, happily conversing with one another. Several went outside and immediately started to light up cigarettes and carry on a dialogue in the Polish language. They joked, and the conversation was boisterous.

Reconstructing the situation, with help from the proprietress, it seems the robed guests were a group of

Bhuddists from Poland and nearby Slovakia. They chose the Watra as a meeting place for meditation, because of its prominence in peaceful surroundings, similar to those of the Himalaya Mountains. They reserved the Watra for several days, thinking they would be the only ones there, and they asked that we be evicted, because we might disrupt their activities. Of course, that did not happen.

I never really thought much about Bhuddism, let alone thinking I would disrupt one of their meditation sessions. Also, I never anticipated that Bhuddists would be in the Tatra Mountains, in predominantly Catholic Poland, in this day and age. And most of all, I never anticipated I would be part of a silent minority, catering to the spiritual requests of Bhuddists, who, as human as the rest of us, have worldly desires. Live and learn.

Continued from page 5

then at The Golden Goose on East 123th St. off of Miles Rd. This was a cement block building next to some railroad tracks that sat back off the road, with a big parking lot and a side entrance. One walked into the place and immediately faced a long bar. The dance floor was off to the left and one went through an open double set of doors to get to it. It was a good sized dance floor with a wooden railing around it to separate the dancing area from the table area. The music started at 10 P.M. so it behooved one to get there at about a quarter to the hour to get a good table. Once the music started, it seemed that all the “dancing fools” in Cleveland heard the “call” and the party started. And these were no clodhoppers, although even they were welcome and would have a good time doing their best. These were young people, in their teens and twenties for the most part, who knew how to step with the beat of the music and even sing along with the vocalist if they knew the music. The greatest torment for them at this time, was not to have a partner when one of their favorite pieces was being played by the orchestra. But this didn’t happen too often. The really good dancers never lacked for partners and they never refused anyone. And they would rather dance than eat. In all the years that I went there back in the fifties (and that was practically every weekend), there was never a fight or a brawl. These folks only wanted to dance and sing and dance some more. They would drink some but it seemed that nobody got really stinko. It was a wonderful place to go to have a good time in those days.

Then on the way back to the west side along Harvard Ave., if you wanted to stop for a nightcap, there was always Ptak’s Bar which had polka music until closing time. And the dancing there was fast and furious. Many folks don’t know what all the fuss is about the polka. A person just goes out there and goes round and round and if you’re not use to it, you can get dizzy. And sometimes one wonders what it is about the music. It must touch some kind of a nerve ending or something that affects people to varying degrees. If you have it bad, you dance till perspiration drips from nose and forehead and your shirt clings to your body from all the sweat. These were the days before air conditioning and it’s a wonder that more people didn’t have heart attacks on the floor while they were dancing. On the far east side, there was also Yankovic’s and The Spotlight with polka music.

Then there were the parish festivals and they all had to have a polka band for a couple of days for their parishioners. Nothing during Advent or Lent, mind you, but any other time of year, it was AOK. They would bring in a name band from out-of-town, someone with a reputation for having sold a lot of records like a Wojnarowski from New England or a Henry and the place would be filled to capacity. The Aragon on West 25th St. would sometime bring in Lil Wally or Wojnarowski on a Wednesday, during the week, for a guest appearance. On the weekends the Aragon catered to the “big-band sound” customers so they thought they’d bring in Lil Wally during the week and see what kind of a response they’d get. They found out when polka-lovers filled the enormous dance floor with their shouts and foot-stumping. It was glorious to be there and be a part of it all.

In the decades that followed a gradual change took place. The “dancing fools” probably got married and raised their families. But that didn’t mean that polka music died. One could still go out of town to the various festivals and dance til you dropped. There’s still Seven Springs in Pennsylvania where twice a year, on the 4th of July weekend and sometime in Nov. the polka fraternity gets together. There’s Wildwood, New Jersey where they have a blast every year. The music is continuous from noon until 2 in the morning and if you haven’t have enough, there’s a bar across the street from the boardwalk where you can enjoy polka music til closing (3:30. I think). Then there’s Ocean City, MD where you can polka-party with your friends til all hours. And the beat goes on!!!

Ed Mendyka

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Everyone who is interested in Genealogy, and more specifically Polish Genealogy, is welcome to join our group. We meet the first Tuesday of the month from September thru June at St. Mary's PNC Church; 5375 Broadview Rd. (corner of Broadview & Wexford); Parma, Ohio. Parking is available in the parish lot, the entrance of which is on Marietta Ave. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM and usually end at 9:30-10:00 PM.

Membership dues are \$20.00 a year.

President:	John F. Szuch 105 Pleasant View Dr., Seville, Ohio 44273	(330) 769-4603
Vice-President:	Ronald Marec 3316 Elsmere Rd., Shaker Hts., Ohio 44120	(216) 752-5713
Treasurer:	Richarda Jambrozy 1492 Lewis Dr., Cleveland, Ohio 44107	(216) 226-1548
Secretary:	Sonia Chapnick 7897 Gildersleeve Circle, Kirtland, Ohio 44094	(440) 256-8392

Please submit all correspondence to: PGSGC Newsletter, c/o the return address above.
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